

Keep your gear safe

You have had one of those days on the mountain where things did not go as planned. The fish were not biting, got caught in a sudden cloudburst and broke your favorite fishing rod. You take solace that you are almost back to your campsite, where you can kick back with a cold adult beverage and watch a mountain sunset.



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

Your camp comes into view and immediately you notice that all is not right with the world. The place looks like your teenage kid's room with stuff strewn everywhere. For a moment, you thought Murphy had stopped by, and with nothing better to do, completely trashed your camp. That expensive Yeti cooler with the pain relieving adult beverages is missing. You take a mental inventory and notice much of your equipment is gone. Batten down the hatches Momma, because you have been robbed.

We head up into the mountains to leave all the toil, crime, and hustle and bustle of the city behind us. With the encroachment of civilization into our mountain recreation areas, so comes the crime. When you are in the outdoors, it is easy to forget that crime is there too.

I have had the same concern with leaving my truck parked, somewhere northwest of nowhere, for several days while I am off hunting. The woods don't exactly have lighted parking areas, with 24-hour security to keep things safe. I decided to seek a little help on this problem, and will share my findings and ideas with you.

I had a long talk with Adam Murdie, the Montrose County undersheriff. Aside from having 23 years experience in Colorado law enforcement, Adam and his family are avid hunters, recreational shooters, and general outdoor enthusiasts.

"We have numerous calls for vehicle break-ins and campsite theft up on the plateau each year," said Murdie. "Most occur during hunting season when there are a lot of vacant campsites because folks are off hunting."

"The thefts are usually from unlocked vehicles and expensive items left in the bed of pick-up trucks, or left out at campsites. Things stolen are usually coolers, chainsaws, gun cases, lanterns and other gear. Mostly items that are easily grabbed and easy to sell," continued Murdie.

I was on a trip in Canada, where we drove far into the wilderness, until the road ended in a large parking area. This was the pick up place, where you left your vehicles and a helicopter carried you a hundred miles or so back to your camp and hunting area.

I saw two guys coming out who had a brand-new chest freezer and a new generator stolen from the back of their truck while they were off hunting. These guys did not have them chained or locked, just left in the bed of their truck. I thought about asking them, what did you think would happen, but kept quiet as they were already distraught.

"The obvious answer is to keep things locked up, but remember, a lock only keeps an honest guy honest. Lock it up anyway, why make it easy for them?" Murdie offered.

He offered the following ideas to



(Above) A locking tool box is one way to keep gear secure and out of sight of thieves. (Right) Adam Murdie, left, and his son Jake, are an outdoor family. Adam offered some tips to help keep your gear safe when you are enjoying the outdoors. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/ Mark Rackay)

- help keep your gear safe while you are away from your vehicle or camp:
- Don't leave any valuables in plain sight. Any high-dollar items should be locked in the vehicle, to include coolers, cases etc.
 - Items in the vehicle should be covered with a blanket, so not visible from the outside.
 - Lock your vehicles, windows closed, and lock your campers. Close any point of entry.
 - Trailers for ATV, campers and utility trailers should all have a tongue lock on them when you are not around.
 - A locking toolbox, fully secured to the bed of your truck, and kept locked at all times, is a good place to secure valuables such as chain saws. These lock boxes are available in smaller sizes that work well on trailers when anchored properly. I have also seen lock boxes used in the bed of side-by-sides.
 - If you park your ATV somewhere, take your keys with you and lock up any storage boxes.
 - The whole idea is to never leave anything in plain sight or anything that is easy for a thief to grab and go. It would be preferable to always have someone left behind in camp but that is not always practical.
 - I think back to my law enforcement days as an investigator, working on a rash of car burglaries. The burglaries occurred at night, when nobody was around. Eighty-five percent of them happened to cars that were left unlocked. Seems like a no-brainer to lock your car.
 - Campsite and vehicle thefts in the backcountry are not a common problem, but they do happen. It is best to



keep your camp secure, just in case a thief named Murphy decides he wants to pillage your camp. Yes, Murph can be a thief too, and not just the captain of mayhem.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and an avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and serves as a director and PIO for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org

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