OUTDOORS

The freedom of chubs and the Gunnison River

"What I love most about rivers is: you can't step in the same river twice. Pocahontas. from the 1995 animated movie of the

same name.



Outdoors

By Paul Zaenger

One who knows living river systems that ebb and flow in time is Brian Kinnear. He might not have sung the same words captured in the song Just Around the River Bend in the Disney movie classic, but he understood those sentiments, which stem from the Greek thinker Heraclitus.

Kinnear studied the Gunnison River in the mid-1960s; its flows, its power, and its feral and boundless nature. Californiaborn, he studied fisheries at Humboldt State University, and worked for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Alaska was still an unrefined frontier in those years. He and his partner, researching fish in the bush, were out of provisions as the supply plane was delayed. Reduced to wild blueberries and pancake batter, he gained a new appreciation for nutrition when the plane landed with a new load of Spam.

While fulfilling a graduate assistantship at Colorado State University, he saw a bulletin board flyer announcing a National Park Service study at Black Canyon.

Undaunted by Black Canyon's remoteness, Kinnear landed the study and moved into a trailer on the South Rim. The monument was fairly undeveloped in 1965; there was no phone or electricity. Even more, he had to hike regularly from rim to river to check on his sampling stations, studying river flows and changes, and he conducted a survey of fish species.

I enjoyed visiting with him earlier this summer, comparing river notes, knowing the river he knew has changed from the river I know. That spring Gunnison flooded at 10,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), a large torrent, but tapered back in June.

He was on his own. The solitude was abundant. "This was high living," he said of the freedom he felt in the canyon. River habitat and species gradually became known as the summer advanced. Plants were pushed back from the shore in those days, river flora has changed, and water temperature



The Gunnison River floods and recedes through the seasons below the cliffs of Warner Point. Living rivers have much to offer us if we take the opportunity to put our feet into them. (Photo courtesy of National Park Service)

fluctuated.

Streams meandering through the meadows above the town of Gunnison warmed during the day. Those warmer waters didn't reach the middle portions of Black Canyon until night. The thermal inversion was important as one of the fish species he found relied on that change.

Kinnear recorded eight types of fish among the seven stations along the 14 miles of river. They varied from trout to suckers to dace. But in one location, he found the bonytail chub. An ancient species (goes back well before the carving of Black Canyon), little was known of this fish at the time, and only a little more is known today.

They are predators who prefer to feed at night, growing to almost 2 feet in length. Considered an elegant swimmer (the Latin name for them is Gila elegans - "handsome in water") they are a smaller fish competing with much larger fish in the same rivers.

Like a paleontologist searching for living fossils, Kinnear found that the presence of these chubs, in their breeding colors, added a fierce element to the living river. The species had muscled in on a piece of aquatic territory in a tough riverine neighborhood among larger fish "ruling the roost."

Kinnear took on an added challenge that fall. The river flow declined to 130 cfs. He and ranger Bill Hoy made a through-canyon trip starting at East Portal. Few people have taken on this challenge; perhaps as many as 50 since 1900 have taken this perilous trip without kayaks.

It isn't for everyone, but he was enriched by the adventure, soaking it up "like a dry sponge soaks up water." The gates on Blue Mesa Dam closed the following year. He and Hoy were the last to have experienced the completely undisciplined Gunnison River.

Rivers and the life within are always changing. Even now, when I step into the Gunnison it is different than when Kinnear did some 55 years ago. With or without the dams there would be a different feel, a different sense of the life force. But today it almost feels safe, regulated, and secure.

It appears that we've given up some of that wild world. The chubs and other species are certainly gone, but there could be a lesson for us today. Chubs and the Gunnison can remind us that the more sheltered and safe we make our world, the less untamed and free our lives become.

Paul Zaenger has been a supervisory park ranger at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park since 1993. Other park assignments include Mount Rushmore National Memorial and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.



Using multi-purpose survival tools

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Tips from the Posse By Mark Rackay

My first survival tool was presented to me on my 8th birthday. It was a pocket knife with several tools, besides the blade. The accessory tools consisted of a small awl, can opener, bottle opener, a standard screwdriver bit and a cutting blade.

The first thing to notice was that my grandmother was no fool. The blade, no matter how much I tried to sharpen it, could not cut peanut butter. I had no idea what an awl was used for and never really had much need for the other tools.

That knife represented my first step in outdoor survival and independence. When trusted with a knife it meant you were a man. It made no never mind that I promptly lost that knife within a week of its presentation because I was old enough to be trusted with a knife. Another two years passed before I was awarded a second knife.

Multi purpose outdoor tools have been around for quite some time. The first tool most people think of is the Swiss Army knife. The television show

'MacGyver" made the Swiss Army knife popular for a while. He used his to get out of all kinds of predicaments throughout the series. The Swiss Army

knife was first produced in 1891 in Ibach, Switzerland. The original company, Karl Elsener, later became Victorinox, and later acquired Wenger, all of these names being familiar with outdoor people.

The term "Swiss Army knife" was coined by American soldiers after World War II due to the difficulty they had in pronouncing "Offiziersmesser," the German name that meant "officer's knife."

The knife is currently produced in many variations. One series, called the Swisschamp, has eight layers of tools providing 33 functions. You will find a blade, nail file, wood saw, fish scaler, scissors, pruning blade, pliers, hoof cleaner and dozens more tools.

What you will find in a tool such as this is that while it has the capability of many functions, it does not do any function particularly well. That seems to be the problem with most multi-tool products on the market over the years. If you really had to use some of the tools for some serious business, strength, size, and durability will all come into play and it's usefulness will be brief before breakage or injury to the user.

For example, the blade

does not lock in the open position, and as any outdoor person will testify, this is a recipe for an unwanted donation of blood when using the blade for a serious chore. This knife is fine for a person around the home and yard but best left out of a serious survival kit.

Another interesting multi function tool is the Skachet. The Skachet has been around since the mid 1960s, manufactured by the Follins Corp. in Japan, and later sold by the Charter Arms Company during the 1980s. This company also made the AR-7 survival rifles.

The Skachet was considered a "do it all" survival gimmick, spawned by the Cold War. The name came from the words hatchet and skinner. Like most tools of this type, it can do several outdoors tasks but none particularly well.

The tool has a small skinning blade on one end that turns and runs the length of the tool. The other end has a small flat face that can be used as a hammer. In the center is a hole, whereby you can install a stick and use as a handle for your hammering or chopping chores.

I fail to see anyway this tool could be used as a skinning tool or a knife. There is simply no feasible way to hold it. Using a stick as a handle will probably result in the stick breaking, launching the tool

See TOOLS page 8

<u>Local</u>



From left, Swiss Army knife, Skachet, Sportsman Saw and a Leatherman tool. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/Mark Rackay)

TOOLS

FROM PAGE A7

into places unknown. Surprisingly, these things have some collector interest and command a fair amount of money. That said, I would still leave it out of my pack.

A tool that I fell victim to purchasing is called the Sportsman Saw. I purchased mine around the mid 1970's. This tool is shaped like a small hand rip saw, with a coarse tooth blade on one end, and a somewhat finer toothed blade on the other.

The very tip has an inch-long knife blade, while the handle has a hammer on one end and a place to carry matches in the handle on the other. All of this comes with a leather sheath. Upon seeing it, I just had to have it.

The tool does have a fair use as a saw blade. It can be used for branches or as a game saw. The drawback is the handle is only large enough to allow two fingers for your power stroke, immediately limiting the size of any wood you want to saw.

The matches are held in place by a cap that requires a screwdriver blade to open, and that means you have to carry a screwdriver in your pocket if you want to build a fire. The knife blade is useless, as is the hammer because you must hold the tool by the saw blade to use. Another tool that requires you to donate some blood every time you use it.

One survival tool that stands out above the others would be the Leatherman tool. The original, called the PST (Pocket Survival Tool) was first marketed in 1983. It was a hand tool that was easily carried and capable of a multitude of functions.

Leatherman tools are made with quality and safety in mind, unlike some of the other multi-tools out there. The knife blade locks open, as does the saw blade. This feature alone can greatly reduce the personal injuries sustained as a punishment for using the tool. The Leatherman tools are available in many different configurations. Look them over carefully or you could wind up with a tool designed to help a sailor. Knot tying and sail tools are of little use to someone in the woods trying to build an emergency shelter.

There are many companies making tools similar to the Leatherman but most lack the quality. Lack of quality in an emergency renders the tool you have been lugging around as useless on the day you really need it. A Leatherman lives in my pack and I have used mine for years.

Like most multi-function outdoors tools and gadgets, the Leatherman does lots of things, but none of them really well. It is however, better than anything I have used over the last 50 years.

I would like to throw in something here against those "store bought" survival kits. For a 20-dollar bill, you can purchase a pocket size, pre-made survival kit. Similar to the pre-made first aid kit, there will be a score of things you don't need, a couple you do, and missing will be what you really should have.

I believe a survival kit is a living and breathing item. It grows and changes, as do my needs, the season, and the duration and location of the trip I am going on. Spend some time assembling your own personal kit and think about each item you put in it.

Multi -function tools will continue to be invented, and eventually, there will be one I will have to have. When my family moved to a new house many years later, I found my first knife on top of the refrigerator. It still baffles me how I lost that knife up there.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and serves as a director 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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PET OF THE WEEK

Fall is a 2 year old Lop English Bunny. There are 4 bunnies at the shelter currently. Their adoption cost is zero.You can visit the bunnies at... **Montrose Animal Shelter**, 3383 N. Townsend Ave.

Fall

The fee for a cat is \$30. Kittens younger than 1 year are \$50. Dogs are \$60, and puppies are \$75.

The shelter is open from Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm Saturday & Sunday, 9am-3pm All animals adopted from the Montrose Animal Shelter are spayed or neutered before going to their new homes and receive some vaccinations. For more information about Fall and other available pets, call 240-1487 or visit www.montrose.animalshelternet.com

For outdoors or survival related questions or comments, feel free to contact him directly at his email elkhunter77@bresnan.net



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SELECT DOG SWEATERS AND COATS

While Supplies Last

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