

HIKES

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trailhead, marked for the upper Cascade trail is located at the top of the campground. Check out more details about this hike, and possible extensions into a longer hike at: hikingwalking.com and search for the Portland Trail description, under featured destinations of Southwestern Colorado. Delta County residents can travel east to the West Elk Wilderness area taking the Kebler Pass Road (Colorado 12) towards Crested Butte. The Cliff Creek Trail, featuring a hike to Beckwith Pass, is a 4.7 mile round trip to the top of Beckwith Pass and back, and wanders through one of the largest Aspen groves in Colorado. This hike is rated moderate because of its elevation gain of about 1000 feet over 2.35 miles to the summit of the pass, but it is easy even for young hikers if you take it slow with a few snack breaks. The wildflower fields, mature aspen stands, and amazing views

are worth the trip! This year the wildflowers have outdone themselves and are as tall as most hikers as you make your journey up this magical trail. How to get there: From Hotchkiss drive east on Hwy 133 to the Kebler Pass turn off, following Hwy 12 for 17.9 miles. You will pass the Lost Lake Campground turnoff and turn off on the signed Cliff Creek trailhead. Drive up the dirt access road for 0.2 miles to the trailhead parking area. A trail description and trail map can be found at www.hikingwalking.com under central Colorado featured trails, Beckwith Pass via Cliff Creek. Mesa County residents have the Grand Mesa National Forest right in your backyard! After driving up through the Pinyon-Juniper, Oak brush, and finally into the Aspen, you reach one of the most beautiful hikes on the Grand Mesa. The 2.8 mile Mesa Lakes trail loop begins at the Mesa Lakes Campground above Powderhorn Ski Area. You can add another 0.7 miles

with a short out and back to Lost Lake, which involves a moderate climb with stunning views. This trail has the added value of fishing opportunities at Mesa Lake, South Mesa Lake, and Lost Lake. How to get there: From Grand Junction, head west on I-70 to exit 49 for Highway 65 South towards Mesa/Collbran. Go 25 miles to Mesa Lakes Lodge. Drive into the lodge area and turn left just before the cabins. Follow the paved road to a parking area just beyond the trailhead. A map and short description of the Mesa Lakes trail can be found on www.alltrails.com/trail/us/colorado/mesa-lakes-trail. For more outdoor safety tips, trail game ideas, and hiking trails, visit the Friends of Youth and Nature website: (www.friendsofyouthandnature.org). FOYAN is a non-profit that promotes opportunities for youth and families to get outside, experience outdoor activities, and explore nature.



A few good fall hikes with kids with two girls measuring the diameter of a tree during a fall school field trip near Dave Wood Interpretive trail on the Uncompahgre National Forest (Submitted Photo/Anne Janik)



Put together a survival repair kit for your outdoor gear, it may just save the day. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/Mark Rackay)

Survival Kit For Your Gear

I was on a moose hunt in Newfoundland several years ago. The excursion called for 10 days in the heart of a wilderness area. Anyone who has ever been in moose country knows that there is water everywhere. I am pretty sure the country is just one big floating bog. The moose seem to navigate the terrain quite well, as for me that was another story.

The outfitter suggested I bring a pair of knee high rubber boots, similar to the Muck Boots brand. The advice was spot on, because I wore them the entire hunt. I had a pair made by Lacrosse, that was insulated and very comfortable to walk in.

The remnants of Hurricane Jose were blowing through for the first couple of days, bringing torrents of rain. Rain gear and those boots protected me from the elements very well, for a while. I noticed that my left foot felt like I was standing in a bucket of water.

I dismissed the problem because I assumed I had just gone into the water over the boot top. Someday, manufacturers will remedy the big leaking hole at the top of all boots and waders, but that is a story for another time. I figured I would drain the boot that night, back at camp.

Upon returning to camp, I removed the offending boot, bilged all the water from its recesses, only to discover the problem was not the big hole in the top. I had torn a 2- inch gash in the side of the boot, creating a venting system where I did not want a vent.

The outfitter gave me a repair patch that had the adhesive already on it. I stuck the patch over the offending tear, waited 15 minutes for the adhesive to dry, and was back in business. The patch worked well the entire trip, never failing. I cannot imagine what the trip would have been like, padding around with one foot in a dry boot, and the other in a bucket of bog water. Trench foot would have been the least of my worries.

We all should be carrying around some survival gear for the “just in case moment” whenever we recreate outdoors. We should give some thought to the survival of the other gear we lug around. Whether you fish, hunt, bike, camp, hike, ATV, or take photo safaris, you have a pile of equipment and gear to use in your chosen sport.

Gear will fail. Tents tear; boots leak, clothes tear, bike tires will go flat, and anything mechanical will fail. If you doubt that, let me introduce you to my old pal and long-time associate, Mr. Murphy of Murphy’s Law fame.

Carry a pocket sized repair kit, suitable for just about any type of field gear emergency. The kit is small enough, demanding as much space as a small first aid kit, and the contents



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

are cheap in the store but irreplaceable in the field. Since your gear can be your lifeline if you have trouble, why not take your gear seriously and build a repair kit.

Duct tape and a patch kit

Everything from rubber boots, tears in tents, hydration bladders that spring a leak, all can be saved by a little tape or patch. A leaking water container is useless but can be saved in an instant. The tape and patch takes up the space of a credit card, especially when you wrap 10 yards of tape over an old one. I have seen race cars held together with this stuff so they could finish a race.

Dental floss and a needle

A tear in fabric will only get worse if not attended to. Rip a hole in a pack and all your gear will fall onto the trail as you hike along. The needle and thread can also be used for emergency suturing if you have the knowledge to use it.

Zip ties

I carry a few of these all the time. From holding up tarps to keeping misplaced wires and hoses in place, the uses for a zip tie are endless.

Safety pins

Several are clipped into the inside of my pack at all times. If you don’t have time to sew, these pins provide a temporary fix. You can also pin items to your pack that you need to keep handy. I prefer safety pins to needle and thread. If you ever saw my sewing, you would understand why.

Super glue

This wonder glue repairs and sticks to everything, including your skin. The tube is small, occupying little space. Once you open it, better get a new one because they dry out quickly.

Waterproof matches or lighter

This little kit is a great place to throw another lighter or matches. You can never have enough fire building tools. Having a lighter handy in this kit gives you easy access to heat for the frayed ends of rope or webbing and other plastic gear.

Wire

A few feet of small gauge steel wire can be used for many repairs, such as mending fishing equipment

or flashlights.

Razor blade

Very few things are as sharp as a razor blade, while also staying small and lightweight. Since repairs often dictate cutting of materials, a back-up blade can be an asset. One other thing I mention would be a Leatherman type tool. These wonder tools come in all types of configurations and a variety of tools. The basic ones have a file, knife, slotted and Phillips screwdriver, can opener, awl and pliers. These tools have everything needed for emergency repairs. It is like carrying an entire tool chest with you in the woods. The problem is, while they can handle just about every task, they really can’t handle it well.

I say that part jokingly, but here is a real example. If you find a loose screw on an expensive hunting rifle, or the bail of your favorite spinning reel, the Leatherman will probably tighten it up, but at a cost. I have had to tighten a loose torx screw on a scope ring with a Phillips bit, or similar repair in the field. It always ends badly when you try a “quick fix” on a thousand dollar piece of equipment.

For those of you in the same predicament, I recommend a specialized multi-tool. Real Avid makes just such a tool for hunters using a bow or rifle. The tool has all the special sized bits for your sport. A similar tool is available for the fishing crowd having to make repairs on expensive fly reels.

This entire kit takes up very little space and weighs around two pounds with the multi-tool. If my outfitter did not have the repair tape for my rubber boots, I would still be nursing a case of trench foot from 10 days in the swamp water. I carry some with me now.

All of this reminds me of something my old high school shop teacher told me. He explained that the standard screwdriver was the most misused tool in the shop. Thinking back on that, he was right. The screwdriver was designed for nothing but turning a screw. We use it for a chisel, pry bar, opening paint cans, hammering on the handle, hammering with the handle, and the list of misuse goes on. And yet, the standard bit screwdriver on my multi-tool is used almost as much as my knife. I should say misused.

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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