



You don't have to use a flashlight that will illuminate a city when in the woods. A low power light will last longer. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

Flashlights: Less can be better



camp before darkness.

As we were slugging it out, fighting our way

a mountaintop overlooking the valley. Bright lights have a place in first

and 25 minutes, just long enough to leave me in the dark without extra bat-

dark. I carry lots of extra batteries instead.

Another little tidbit I

Every trip I take, I continue to learn a few things, usually the hard way. I



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

We were in Newfoundland hunting moose during their annual rut. My guide Chad and I were 3 miles into the bog from where we beached the boat.

The boat represented our means of transportation across several miles of a large lake system to camp.

Several things came into play that afternoon, each bringing a new set concerns. First was the remnant of Hurricane Jose, which savaged other areas of the Caribbean, was due to hit us with torrential rains and 35 mph winds.

Second was nightfall was about two hours away, and with the storm, it would turn dark quickly as the sunset. Lastly was a big bull moose just down the draw from our location. He would answer our calls and flash an antler, but was wary about stepping out in the open.

Chad and I both had good rain gear and decent boots. I predicted that the moose would give in to our calls, and step out. I further predicted that the storm would not arrive until later that night and we would be safely back at

it out, fighting our way across the tundra in the black dark with rain pelt-ing our faces raw as it was being driven by the heavy winds, I made a realization. I had absolutely no future as a prophet.

The bull moose got bored and faded back into the trees, just before dark; a darkness driven by the heavy cloud cover from the storm that hit at nightfall. How could I have been so wrong on all three predictions? Easy. Murphy, of Murphy's Law fame, was in the bog with us.

The real lesson of that fateful night came into play as we inched our way out of the bog. The 30-minute hike in the daylight was already two hours old, and we still had a ways to go. Chad's flashlight had given out, and he had no extra batteries. I was on my spare set of batteries and the light was weakening as they were petering out. We were looking at a long and very black dark night.

We found the boat but were out of flashlight when we got there. The waves were pounding the shore from the 35 mph winds, and the visibility... well, there was none. We made the decision to stay at the shore until morning, in the dark, with no flashlights.

I am one of those people who like a really bright flashlight; a flashlight that can shine on your house back in town from

lights have a place in first responders pack. In law enforcement we used lights like this looking for bad guys and missing people. The bright light can temporarily blind a bad guy, giving the officer time to react safely. With very high output lights comes a drawback, low battery life.

Bright flashlights do have a place in the woods. When you are looking for your vehicle or camp, hoping to catch a reflection of something in the distance, the bright light can be ideal. If you find yourself in a similar situation to my evening in the bog, the bright light is great for an hour or so.

Next time you are out in the woods at night, try an experiment. Bring along a low output flashlight, something in the 40-lumen range. Give your eyes some time to get used to the darkness and switch on the light. You will be amazed at how little light you need to safely navigate your way through the woods.

Many flashlights come with multiple brightness settings. For example, I now carry a Fenix TK09 flashlight in my pack. It has a low (50 lumens), medium (450 lumen) and a high setting (900 lumen). With all three settings, I can cover a wide assortment of lighting needs in the woods.

The battery life expectancy of this light on the high setting is one hour

dark without extra batteries. On the low mode however, the battery can last 37 hours, and that is enough to last a week of night missions.

Some people prefer a headlamp to a handheld flashlight. Wearing a headlamp keeps your hands free for other tasks while you are in the woods. Streamlight, Surefire and other companies offer brightness adjustable headlamps as well.

You should also carry extra batteries with you. I prefer the lithium batteries to regular alkaline. Lithium work better in the cold, don't leak and ruin your electronics, and last longer in devices like GPS units and cameras.

As a side note, when traveling, you can't pack lithium batteries in your checked bags. TSA requires that all lithium batteries stay with you in your carry on bags. When I am on a trip of a week's duration, I may have 30 or 40 batteries with me for all my equipment. The TSA agent looks at me like I am a camouflaged Eveready bunny.

You can purchase flashlights that are rechargeable, and many of my friends prefer them to carrying batteries. Rechargeable just doesn't fit my needs. I use a rechargeable light all night long, and then forget to recharge it, although I don't remember this oversight until the next night when I am deep in the woods after

batteries instead. Another little tidbit I learned that night on the shore of a Newfoundland lake was that, without any light, it is impossible to find anything in your pack or one of the many assorted pockets attached to said pack. This was a real problem in the pouring rain when I was searching for something to eat.

I discovered the Nite Ize SpotLit Carabiner Light. This little charm sell for under ten bucks, gives off a glow for 20 hours on a pair of button cell batteries, and is enough light to read by or see in your pack with. I clip a couple on the zippers of my pack and I always have a light handy to find things with, like the bigger flashlight.

usually the hard way. I am completely out of the prophet and fortunetelling business after that trip. Obviously I am not a good gambler, unless of course, I do the exact opposite of what I predict.

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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