



Most of the places we retreat in the back country, like here, don't have bathrooms, showers or laundry facilities but you can still keep things relatively clean. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

Key to cleanliness:

Tips on how to stay — and keep — clean outdoors



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

The worst part about my camping trips as a kid was the fact, I had to come back home, home to the wrath of a surly grandmother. A grandmother who has just discovered a large deposit of dirty clothes, dirty camp dishes and pots, and most annoying of all, a dirty grandson, smack in the middle of her freshly mopped kitchen floor.

While it might be true that smelled of a myriad of aromas, to include fish, motor oil, smoke, fish bait, sweat, and some things I won't mention, my appearance was another story. I came home in the same clothes I left with four days ago. Add to that a fresh assortment of dirt, cuts, scrapes, lacerations and contusions, and I would say it was a pretty good camping trip. My grandmother made a good impression on me, possibly several, about the mess I made in her kitchen.

Since everything used in the camping trip had to be carried to camp in a World War II surplus pack frame, I had to be very conscious about weight. The food I brought weighed more than me, so I had to leave nonessentials, like soap, dish soap, towels, washcloths and extra clothes at home. One must make sacrifices when enjoying the outdoors.

Keeping up with cleanliness while camping is very important. I, and I assume

all of you, don't make very good sick people. The last place you want to be sick is while in the outdoors, a long way from your comfy bed and bath. It is tough enough to be sick at home, but in the woods, special problems can arise.

Poor hand washing and improper cleaning of cooking and eating utensils cause most stomach and intestinal upsets. Cooking and eating while on a camping trip makes proper cleanliness even more difficult. Extra care must be given to proper food storage as well, since you don't have your thermostatically controlled refrigerator and freezer along.

Proper hand washing before touching anything that will go into your mouth is paramount in preventing illness. Using hand sanitizer on the trail is easy but try and wash your hands with soap and water after using the bathroom and before meals. Good old-fashioned soap is the best thing there is for removing bacteria.

Before I take off on an extended backcountry hunt, I always clip my fingernails extra short. Bacteria love to hide under your nails and keeping them short also means there is less of a chance of ripping a nail off. Torn off nails can lead to an infection, so clip them short before the trip.

Your feet take a beating on the trail. Feet spend all day in a dark, warm and damp environment, creating a perfect breeding ground for bacteria. On breaks, take your boots off and allow them, and your socks, to dry out a bit. Switch to a clean pair of socks each day and wash out the dirty ones so they are fresh for the following day. If space allows, bring

changes of under garments and socks for each day on the trail. Longer trips will require you to do a bit of laundry on the trail.

A good rule of thumb about bathing on the trail is to only bathe in the larger rivers and to always use a biodegradable soap. In smaller creeks and streams, it is better to fill a bucket with water and bathe with biodegradable soap, and take a "bucket bath" a couple hundred feet away from the stream.

If your trip takes you to a lake, especially the high country lakes, you will want to avoid getting into the water at all and stick with the "bucket bath." You are probably wearing bug repellent and sunscreen, and you don't want to contaminate the lakes with those chemicals.

For your "bucket bath" take the time to heat up the water. Not only is it more pleasing, warm water does a better job of removing sunscreen, bug spray, sweat, and dirt from your face, body and feet.

I carry a package of wet wipes in my pack, even on day trips. When you can't wash up with stream water, or don't have a bucket along, a wet wipe can really do the trick. There are many types and sizes available. Once the package has been opened, they have a tendency to dry out, so check them before you leave.

It is a bad idea to sleep in the same base layer and underwear you have been wearing all day in the woods. A set of clean extra clothes does add weight and take up space, but they will keep your body fresher and reduce your chances for an infection.

A few words about the so-called biodegradable soaps may be in order here. Many people believe

you can wash your hands, dishes and utensils directly in the lake or stream if your soap is biodegradable, but they are wrong. Soap of any kind is not good for the water and the aquatic critters that live there.

The proper use and disposal of soapy water, and it says so on the label of the biodegradable soaps, is to use sparingly and at least 200 feet from the lake or stream. To dispose of, dig a hole 6 to 8 inches deep and pour the dirty water in it. This allows the bacteria in the soil to completely and safely biodegrade the soap product.

I still come home from my trips looking grungy and dirty. After all, isn't that the reason we head to the backcountry in the first place, to get away from all those rules? Nowadays when I come home and dump my gear and clothes on the kitchen floor, I no longer have to listen to a surly grandmother. What I do have to listen to is a surly spouse who rules the house with dictatorial impunity and I "happily" clean up after myself. Maybe my grandmother did teach me something.

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Rainbow trout, the aquatic energizer bunny of the Gunnison River

Learn more about an angler's favorite catch

Early morning quiet seems to permeate the atmosphere along the river in Black Canyon National Park. The Gunnison River's flows are diminished after years of drought and the rapids lack their usual thunder. Box elder and juniper trees shade the river's shore. I look for rainbow trout in the clear running water, but they do not show themselves.


Trout are highly sought after by anglers during the most prolific of insect hatches (stone fly) which typically occurs from late-May to late-June. It's no matter for me. My fly fishing skills are poor and the fish are completely safe from my abilities. But their presence in the Gunnison, one of the most coveted fly fishing streams in North America, provokes questions about them and us.

I soak my feet in Gunnison's waters and think on fish. Among all animal species that have a backbone, fish lead the way — arising some 530 million years ago. Rainbow trout, as we know them, are a relatively new species among fish. They evolved as glaciers of the Wisconsin episode retreated some 40,000 years back.

The rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) arose in lakes and rivers of the Pacific Northwest and particularly the Columbia River drainage before and after glaciation. There are six subspecies of the rainbows, all of them sought by anglers.

Gravel bars in the Gunnison River provide spawning beds for adult trout at two to three years of age. Several thousand eggs can be laid (per female), and fertilized, but almost none of them will survive to the fingerling stage. Although this isn't unusual for trout and its part of their biological process, it seems like a lot of effort without much to show for it.

The first rainbows were transferred from California to the Gunnison, near Sapinero, in 1888. Within 10 years, an angler hooked a 12 pound fish near the town of Gunnison. Brown and brook trout were also brought



Outdoors

By Paul Zaenger

to the Gunnison which scrambled the fishery.

Part of the problem in the Gunnison is that whirling disease was introduced to its waters more than 30 years ago. Wildlife officials and fisheries biologists at Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) made heroic efforts to rescue the crashing population in the early 1990s. You can read about their ongoing effort online.

Over the decades, predators and the unruly habitat pushed the rainbows into an increasingly wild character. CPW biologists stepped into the cause of saving the fish below Crystal Dam because this 100-year strain of fish is unusual to find. The Gunnison River takes on a rowdy nature when it floods, and this pushes the rainbows to their limits.

The rainbow trout is the energizer bunny of the Gunnison River. Check out any household battery. They are all pretty much 1.5 volts (unless it's the rectangular 9-volt battery). The trick with these batteries isn't that they have unlimited power, but that they are available for long periods of time — whenever you need them to work.

The Gunnison River, since 1888, has tremendous floods, often well over 10,000 cubic feet per second (cfs). If you filled a basketball with water, that would be a close equivalent to just one cubic foot.

At 12,000 cfs the river expends more than 2.75 million horsepower. Compare that to a brand-new Ford F-150 pickup at 400 hp. Rainbows have adapted to river velocities by swimming lower in the water column or catching the upstream end of eddies or pools that lie along the river's edge.

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