



A .22 LR pistol can be a fantastic survival weapon. Lightweight, economical and accurate, the .22 LR can fill many needs for the outdoor person. (Submitted photo/Mark Rackay)

## I'll take the .22 long rifle

One question that I seem to field, more than any other, is what handgun cartridge is the best for backcountry survival. It seems that whenever I put forth an opinion of a particular caliber, I am met by a series of collect obscene phone calls, blaming my wrong answers on my lack of brain cells. If you will bear with me for a few moments, let me try and justify my answer to this question.

Just about everyone has fired a .22 long rifle (.22LR) at some point or another. Inner city folks probably shot one at the carnival; one of the gallery guns shooting a CB 22 short. Farm and country people probably grew up around the .22 long rifle cartridge.

Let me start out by saying that I am referring to backcountry survival, not armed conflict with the cookie monster or the impending zombie apocalypse. I am talking about a survival tool that you will carry with you in the woods, not as a weapon strictly for self-defense, although in the proper hands, the lowly .22LR is extremely effective.

Peter Hathaway Cap-



### Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

stick, author of "Death In The Long Grass," claimed to have once killed a rogue elephant in Kenya, while he was a Kenyan government hunter working on culling herds that were rampaging through villages. He did not recommend this practice, but I cite this as evidence of the potential effectiveness of the .22LR in the proper hands.

Remember that weight is everything. When you have to carry a pack around all day, every pound counts. A handgun in .22LR will weigh less than other handguns of larger calibers. Ammunition is also much lighter for a .22LR as a brick of 500 rounds weighs about 3 and a half pounds, while 500 rounds of 9 mm ammo weighs about 13 pounds.

The .22 LR is the perfect

round for training and practice, small game hunting, developing shooting skills and introducing new shooters to the sport. The cartridge is not overly loud, has virtually no recoil, and is one of the most inexpensive cartridges to purchase.

The Smith & Wesson Company was the first to introduce a .22-caliber rimfire cartridge way back in 1857. The first .22 used a 30-grain lead bullet over 4 grains of black powder and did not have a whole lot of punch.

Development of the .22 went back and forth over the next 30 years, always changing the length of the case in an attempt to improve performance.

In 1887, the J. Stevens Arms & Tool Company finally took the 40-grain bullet and seated it in a longer brass case, calling it the .22 long rifle, and the rest is history. The Stevens Company made such famous rifles as the "Stevens Favorite." Your grandfather probably grew up with a Stevens rifle; I know mine did.

The most inexpensive cartridge firearms to purchase are the .22s. Ammunitions is generally

very affordable, especially compared to many other of the larger cartridges. As an example, a box of 50 rounds of .22LR will set you back 3 to 5 bucks. A box of .357 magnums will run you over 30 bucks.

The lower cost means you can afford to practice more. Shooting a thousand rounds in practice from your .22LR is actually quite affordable, especially compared to the other larger cartridges, and practice is the key.

And speaking of training and practice, the .22LR has absolutely no recoil; so new shooters will not develop a flinch, or other bad habits that will impede accuracy. The sound is not eardrum shattering, so newcomers can concentrate on aiming, safe gun handling and proper trigger control without worrying about getting beat up from noise and recoil.

In a survival situation, you are going to be looking for protein to fill your grumbling belly. You are more likely to run into small game, like squirrels, rabbits, and birds, than you are to try and harvest an elk, although it is possible.

I might point out, that it is not legal to hunt big game in Colorado with a .22LR, but you can hunt many types of small game with one. Be sure to stay current with the current regulations posted by Colorado Parks and Wildlife. We are talking about strictly a survival situation and what you do to survive is your own decision.

One of the most useful purposes of a gun in the woods is for a signaling device during a survival situation, and this is where the .22LR will fall short. While it does make a noise, it is not near as loud as a big game hunting rifle or larger caliber pistol. You can counter that by simply carrying a whistle.

There are hundreds of pistols and revolver made in the .22LR cartridge. Visiting some of our local stores and putting hands on is important, to find one that fits you well and also fits in the budget.

Some folks will opt for a rifle in .22LR over a handgun. The rifles are more accurate, thereby increasing your

effective distance to your quarry. There are a number of takedown type rifles that weigh in at around 5 pounds and will fit nicely in a backpack. Do your homework to find out which will work best for your outdoor lifestyle, or be like me, and get both.

There you have my case for the .22LR as a backcountry survival weapon. I must not be alone in my thinking because anytime there is some type of problem, like COVID, or financial crash, the .22LR ammunition is the first to disappear from the shelves. Ok, let the collect obscene phone calls commence.

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