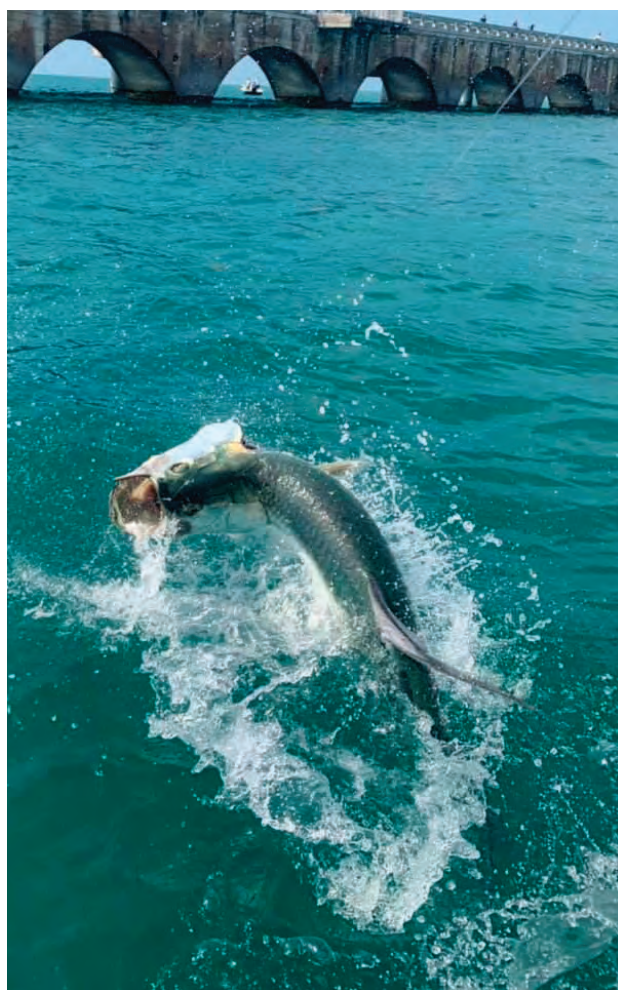


Friday the 13th is hard on outdoorsmen



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay



It is at this point the line will probably break on this tarpon, especially if it is Friday the 13th. Murphy just loves Friday the 13th. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

We had a fabulous day in the backcountry, as the snook and redfish were all over the baits we threw at them. They ate everything presented without the slightest hesitation, making this guy feel like a master angler.

The evening found my wife and I sitting on the dock enjoying a couple glasses of man's best friend, and wondering what God was smoking to produce the spectacular sunset that enshrined the Gulf of Mexico. We were also safe in the knowledge that the hurricane, some 200 miles away near the coast of Cuba, was forecast to pass well to the west, sparing us its wrath and fury.

But Murphy, of Murphy's Law fame, is a devotee of hurricanes, always happy to prove the point that anything that can go wrong will, and at the worst possible time. Murphy is probably a relative of somebody you owe money to. The next morning, Friday the 13th, Hurricane Charley made a wobble, and changed course coming right up our boat wake, giving us both barrels with 135 mph winds and 20 inches of rain. Murphy loves hurricanes.

According to folklore historian Donald Dossey, the unluckiness surrounding the number 13 dates to a Norse myth. The story goes 12 gods were having a delightful dinner party in Valhalla, safe in the knowledge that the trickster and practical joker god, Loki, was not invited. Loki crashed the party as the 13th guest and arranged for the god Hoor to shoot Balder with a mistletoe tipped arrow, killing him deadlier than tax reform.

I was enjoying a June Friday the 13th, spending the day fishing on a new-to-me Maverick flats boat. It was rare for me to get a Friday off from work and I was

thrilled to enjoy a quiet day on the water. Apparently, Murphy loves quiet days on the water.

The used, but in great shape 115 horse outboard motor, decided it was time to expire, permanently, and with a bang. It blew up some 35 miles deep into the back waters of the everglades. It was well after midnight when the tow boat delivered my sunburned, dehydrated carcass to my dock.

The official name for the irrational dread of the day, the 13th, is called paraskevidekatriphobia. Try sounding that out when you have a headache. The fear of the number 13 is a form of triskaidekaphobia. Perhaps this explains why most buildings, hotels, and offices do not have a 13th floor, or even a room numbered 13.

Several years later, I finally saved enough money to buy my dream flats boat. It was a beautiful Actioncraft, powered by a Mercury 150hp Promax. I took delivery on a Thursday evening, took her straight home, and got her outfitted for a maiden voyage the following morning.

The next morning, sunrise caught me skimming the waves in the new vessel, some 15 miles from the boat launch, when the lower unit seized up, ending

all forward progress. The motor would work in reverse, but only at slow speeds. The reverse ride back to the dock lasted only slightly longer than forever, and yes, it was Friday the 13th. Murphy loves new boats and motors.

The superstition around the number 13 spread south throughout Europe, becoming very well established along the Mediterranean by the start of the Christian era. The power of the unlucky number was further cemented by the story of the Last Supper, which was attended by Jesus Christ and his disciples on Maundy Thursday.

The 13th guest to arrive was none other than Judas Iscariot, the disciple who betrayed Jesus, leading to his crucifixion on Good Friday. But the concept of unlucky Fridays stretches even further back in biblical tradition.

Friday is said to be the day that Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden from the Tree of Knowledge. Friday was also the day Cain murdered his brother, Abel. It was also the day Noah's ark set sail during the great flood. Apparently, Murphy loves Fridays.

A Thursday found me deep in White River National Forest, doing some scouting for

the late elk season that opened on the upcoming Saturday. I had just four days off, absolutely having to be back in town the following Monday for work. I had seen plenty of elk, and was convinced I would score Saturday, with no problems. Yeah, right.

The next morning, you guessed it, Friday the 13th, saw the first of two back-to-back blizzards. Not only did we spend several days in a tent watching the wind driven snow pile up, we never got to hunt. It did not clear up enough for us to get out until the following Wednesday. Murphy just loves snowstorms and hunters.

A possible theory why we associate 13 as an unlucky number may be because it is so irregular from our thinking. There are 12 months in a year, 12 gods of Olympus in Greek mythology, 12 inches in a foot, 12 in a dozen, 12 apostles, and even in mathematics, 12 is considered a sublime number. The number 13 just seems to push over the edge, and into the abyss.

It is not that way everywhere. In some Spanish countries, it is Tuesday the 13th you better watch out for. In Italy, the bad day is Friday the 17th. To an Italian, hitting 12 is fare tredici, to hit the jackpot.

For the worst day should be a Monday the 13th, in January, with a blizzard pushing in, on a full moon, in a leap year. Let's get all our suffering done once every four years. I am not sure whether Murphy just loves the number 13, or if it is Fridays. Either way, we need to be careful today.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press, Delta County Independent, and several other newspapers, as well as a feature writer for several saltwater fishing magazines. He is an avid hunter and world class saltwater angler, who travels around the world in search of adventure and serves as a director and public information officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org



This is the time of year to control hoary cress, commonly known as white top. (Linda Corwine McIntosh/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

Tips and tricks for your May garden



Gardening A to Z

By Linda Corwine McIntosh

I know, I know. We're all a little more than tired of what seems to be relentless gale force wind. But somehow or another we gardeners seem to suck it up and get out there, or manage to make the most of the days when it's actually a nice day. So let's get gardening.

Of course the spring moisture that we were blessed with earlier has caused weeds to be extremely happy. If you're wanting to get control of them, you should know that there are a few categories of weeds.

The first is annual weeds that only live one season but tend to produce a lot of seeds for the next season.

The second group is biannual weeds that are a little baby plant the first year and come back as an adult plant that produces a lot of seeds the second year. With these guys you have to deal with both stages of the plant.

Another group of weeds are the perennial weeds. Some of these weeds are extremely invasive and hard to kill because they have a long stout root system

and can even reproduce through the roots as well as by the tons of seeds that they generate.

Small annual weeds can often be controlled with organic herbicides that give quick results but may need repeated treatments. These products often kill the top of the plant and not the roots so they will come back until you convince them that you're the boss. Using products such as glyphosate (Round up) will only kill actively growing weeds and grass. It won't kill nearby plants unless you get the product on them. A broad leaf weed killer such as 24D (Weed be gone) will only kill broad leaf plants, not grasses.

On the other hand, glyphosate will kill grass. There's even a product that will kill young new spring grasses and not hurt most flowers, making it a great product for controlling weedy grass in flowerbeds.

Pre-emergent herbicides such Preen or corn gluten that is made from corn, will keep weed seeds from germinating. Using these products in the spring before weed seeds have germinated will control a lot of the summer annual weeds. Winter annuals that germinate in late summer will need to be treated in late summer.

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