

Homework pays off for hunters



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

My grandmother always told me that when I find something I like, I will learn to excel at it. Perhaps this explains why I never did very well in grade school; nothing interested me. The teacher didn't teach about hunting and fishing, she would drone on for hours about the French Revolution, as if it was all my fault.

I never understood the reasons I was held back two or three times in grade school. I am not sure how many times, because I was never very good at math, which might have been a contributing factor to why I was held back.

The biggest drawback with school had to be the homework. It was bad enough I had to stay awake in school, but to have to come home and do more of this school stuff on my own time was pure tyranny. After school was supposed to be the time I went outside to hunt or fish, so the day was not a total loss, but my grandmother insisted on homework first. By the time I was done whining, complaining and just plain arguing about it, and actually settled down to do the homework, it was dark, and the entire day was a waste.

My grandmother was right about not minding studying and homework as long as the subject interests me. I can study books for hours, practice skills endlessly and even do a bit of research, as long as it is all outdoor related.

There are outdoor skills that not only can be fun to practice, but could save your life. Let's start with fire-making. Sure, we all know how to build a fire in the woods, and we understand the importance of a fire to our survival in an emergency. On any given day, I can build a roaring blaze with a pit, a few dry logs, 10 pounds of



Learning to be good with a cast net requires much practice at home — homework worth doing. (Mark Rackay/Special to the MDP)

kindling, and a box and a half of kitchen matches.

Sure, it is really easy to start a fire with lighter fluid and some dry logs while you are on a camping trip with the family. What about when you are stuck overnight, not positive where you are, and the rain is coming down? Can you put together a lifesaving blaze in short order under adverse conditions? Probably not without doing a little homework and practicing it at home.

Next time out, try building a fire the hard way. Seek out some dry wood and tinder, without the help of the chainsaw. Make fuzz sticks or use cattails or similar kindling items. Set your fire up in the standard teepee arrangement, or better yet, use the platform style to get the wood off the wet ground.

Without the use of any accelerants, light the fire using a spark device, metal match, or a single waterproof match. Mimic everything the way you would have to do it in an emergency. The idea is to make your practice as realistic as possible. If you are out in the rain or snow, better yet.

I am not a big believer in those fire bows and friction fires. I have tried on a number of occasions and it all seems too tedious to me. Imagine having to make a bow and try to remember how the guy on the sur-

vival show did it when the snow is flying and you really need a fire. For my emergency pack, a road flare is magic; matches and lighters, second place.

The same can be done with navigation. When you take a day hike, instead of just plodding along on a familiar trail, get out a map and compass and do it the old-fashioned way. Plan the trip out on the topographic map at home.

When you get to the field, use your map and compass to take the hike you laid out. Practice using landmarks for navigational references and find them on the map. Try using the sun or your wristwatch as a compass and see if the actual compass agrees with your findings. This way, if you are ever caught without the compass, you know these skills and how to use them.

The same can be said about using the GPS. I know that every time I bring the unit out, I have to start all over again in familiarizing myself with the unit. You don't want to have to take a refresher course in a full blown, three-alarm emergency, so being well schooled in the operation of your unit can and will save precious time.

Knot-tying is a skill anyone who enjoys the outdoors can benefit from. Learn how to join two ropes by using a sheet bend. Make a

lifesaving loop that won't slip, using a bowline, or an adjustable loop for when you have to make guy lines for a tent or tarp.

Tying proper knots is a skill that can be easily learned at home. Sitting in the house over the long winter months, it is a perfect homework assignment. When you are afield, knowing how to make these knots, by habit because you practiced at home, can save a life, or in the very least, be more efficient.

Hunters know that doing their homework by practicing shooting their rifles or bows, can make the difference between a mis or a successful hunting trip. The same can be said for the fisherman. Practice those fishing knots at home. An improperly tied knot can cost the loss of the fish of a lifetime. Ask me how I know.

Casting skills can and should be practiced at home, especially fly fishing. I learned how to fly fish for tarpon and bonefish by casting in my lawn with 9 weight and 12 weight rods during the off season. With that practice in hand, hitting the waters with a renewed confidence, I became very successful on the water.

My grandmother was right about finding something that interested me and not having a problem doing the homework to become a master at it. I just wish I could have been good at something that could have made me a bunch of money so I could spend more time in the great outdoors. Maybe in the next life.

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Colorado Parks and Wildlife is sending out notices to deer hunters who will be mandated to submit their takes for chronic wasting disease testing. (Wayne D. Lewis/CPW)

Hunters being notified of CWD testing

SPECIAL TO THE MDP

Colorado Parks and Wildlife has selected specific deer hunts for mandatory chronic wasting disease testing in 2022 to inform how and where to fight the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease.

Beginning in early October, CPW will be sending letters to Colorado rifle season deer hunters who have been selected for mandatory CWD testing.

CPW will require mandatory submission of CWD test samples (heads) from all deer harvested during rifle seasons from specific game management units to better evaluate the infection levels of CWD in herds. There will be no charge for mandatory testing.

Find the hunt codes selected for mandatory testing of deer on pages 21-31 of the 2022 Colorado Big Game Brochure, <https://tinyurl.com/bigcpwgame1>

CWD testing locations

A complete list of CWD testing submission sites along with hours and locations can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/chronwastecpw>

CPW is continuing the use of temporary CWD submission sites to assist those who are hunting in remote locations.

Where has CWD been found?

The results of annual mandatory testing are yielding new insights into varying infection levels in deer herds throughout Colorado. As of April 2022, CWD has been detected in 40 of 54 deer herds, 17 of 42 elk herds, and 2 of 9 moose herds. The estimated proportion of sampled animals that are infected (or disease "prevalence") appears to be rising in many Colorado herds.

Testing in 2021

- More than 7,000 samples tested statewide (includes all species)
- None of the 14 elk herds targeted for mandatory testing had prevalence above 5%
- CWD prevalence in harvested elk appears to track prevalence in mule deer bucks harvested in the same game management units
- Six mule deer herds were included in mandatory testing for a second consecutive year and the results confirmed the 2020 prevalence estimates

What is CPW doing to address CWD?

CPW is working to ensure long-term health of deer, elk and moose herds. Over time, this means minimizing the number of animals that get infected and die from this disease.

To date, management actions have been prescribed for half of Colorado's 54 deer herds with the goal of reducing infection levels to below 5%. More information about the plan to manage CWD is available in the Colorado Chronic Wasting Disease Response Plan, <https://tinyurl.com/chronicwastecpwplan>

What are the health risks to humans?

CWD is a prion disease that affects Colorado's deer, elk and moose. The disease course generally lasts two to three years and is always fatal. Although there has been no evidence that CWD has yet been transmitted to humans, the Center for Disease Control, along with CPW, recommend that hunters not eat the meat of a CWD-infected animal.

Note: All websites beginning with tinyurl.com redirect to the CPW's pages



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