

Take Things Out of the Pack



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

One of my favorite outdoor pastimes, is sitting in the woods, emptying every pocket in my pack, searching for something I know I put in the pack. Some of my packs have more pockets than a politician's pants when he is campaign fund raising. This became such a problem, I was starting to miss out on hunting and fishing time, as I was always searching for something in the pack.

In an attempt to solve the problem, I invested in a large "top-loader" pack. This one had 2 small pockets that kept papers and passports handy while flying, and everything else had to fit in the very large main compartment, for my hunting and personal gear. I chose a Canadian hunting trip to try it out. Problem solved, right? No so fast chum.

The main compartment contained everything from rain gear, extra socks, jackets, ammunition, lunch, snack, first aid...you get the idea. Now, instead of sorting endlessly through pockets, I simply dumped the contents of the pack and kicked through everything until I found what I was searching for. Then, I simply spent the next 2 hours trying to fit everything back into the pack so I could resume my hunt.

That pack went at the last garage sale and I am trying another. The new one has some pockets and 2 separate main compartments. The outside odds are this pack will not make the cut, but I remain optimistic at this point. If you can relate to some of these problems, there might be another way to fix things.

To start with, it might be time to remove some of the stuff in your pack. I am the kind of person who is always adding things to the pack, for that "just in case" moment. When preparing for the next trip, I put more stuff in the pack, but fail to remove any of the stuff from the last outing. Eventually, the pack evolves into its own entity, going on fishing trips without me. The pack will leave early, fish all day, clean and eat the fish at creekside, then come home in the



It is possible you may be carrying some things around you can eliminate. Remember, weight is everything. (Courtesy photo/Mark Rackay)

evening and tell me lies. It is quite the equitable relationship when you get right down to it.

Redundant clothing is one thing to get rid of. You should always dress in layers, moisture wicking base layers to insulation middle layers, and something waterproof for the outside. Get it down to the basics. You don't need extra t-shirts and pants or shorts. Sure, a nice set of clothes for sleeping in would be nice, but do you want to stuff the pack cram full of bulky clothes? Rethink the amount of clothes you carry as that is usually the majority of the bulk in the pack.

One area I trimmed long ago, is the collection of hatchets, axes, and large knives and machetes that go along with me. Sure, you might look like a woodsman with a large axe

strapped to the outside of the pack, but unless you are going to build a log cabin, leave that thing at home. Most trips you take, there is little need for a double bitted axe, bow saw and a machete. Lighten the load.

The same could be said for the large "bowie" style knives. I admit they do have a purpose, and in a survival situation, they can help with many chores that a small blade is incapable of. The small knife will usually get the job done but may take a little longer. Besides, when was the last time you needed a knife for anything other than gutting out a trout, or whacking off a hunk of salami or a piece of cheese?

Another area I see people lug to much of is cooking utensils and dishes. The vision of trout and potatoes frying away in a cast iron skillet on the

fire is nice, but not if you are the person who has to lug the skillet. Most of our camping meals when backpacking are going to be dehydrated or freeze dried meals in small plastic bags for easy packing. A pot to boil the water in, a couple sporks, and that small knife on your belt should get it done. Add a mug to drink your hot coffee out of and leave everything else at home.

I always carry snacks, candy bars, peanuts and power bars. When out, I graze on them, then throw in some more for next time. Once, I emptied the pack and found snacks with dates older than my kids. It was time to put fresh snacks in and old snacks out. Good idea to keep an eye on that.

The last things I recommend leaving at home is all the little techie gadgets we carry around. I see laptops,

extra power sources for the laptops, I-Pads loaded with games, Kindles, and the list goes on and on. Personally, I am in the woods to get away from all that stuff.

The one exception is a cell phone for keeping contact with someone back home in case an emergency arises. I also carry a small back-up power source for my phone that is good for 2 or 3 charges.

There are all kinds of apps that can be downloaded onto your smart phone. Topographic maps showing terrain, features and trails are available for free. First Aid, survival books, edible plants, knot tying, and loads of games for the game addict, are available. It is much easier to carry the cell phone than a laptop.

I find that lightning up the pack is important as I grow older. I no longer have to spend the extra

money on trusses, and my chiropractor does not see me as often. I still spend half my time rummaging through the pockets of my pack looking for something. I need to come up with some kind labeling and indexing system.

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. Personal email is elkhunter77@icloud.com For information about the Posse call 970-765-7033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org

GMUG staff departures and welcomes

STAFF REPORT

The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests recently announced staffing changes, including the appointment of Deputy Forest Supervisor Tony Edwards to a new forest, and the arrival of acting forest supervisors.

Edwards was an appointed as forest supervisor for the Pacific Southwest Region as the Forest

Supervisor for the Sequoia National Forest in California.

"I am honored to take on this new role and contribute to the success of the Sequoia National Forest. The unique ecosystems and diverse landscapes of this region inspire a deep sense of responsibility and I look forward to making a positive impact in my new role," he said.

Norwood District Ranger Megan Eno has

been appointed the acting deputy forest supervisor for a 120-day assignment.

"I am excited for this opportunity to serve the GMUG in a different capacity for the coming months and learn more about our partners and communities across the forest," she said.

Additionally, the GMUG welcomes Jason Lawhon on a 45-day temporary assignment and Jim Pitts for a 75-day assignment

as the new acting forest supervisors. Chad Stewart, GMUG forest supervisor, recently accepted a 120-day temporary assignment as the deputy regional forester for the Rocky Mountain Region.

Lawhon assumed leadership Jan. 14. Pitts will take leadership Feb. 25. Both come with a wealth of experience and expressed excitement about their assignments.

"I am looking forward

to the opportunity to learn about the forest and explore the surrounding areas and communities," said Lawhon.

"I'm immensely grateful for this opportunity to support our neighboring forest and excited to learn about the GMUG and all it has to offer," said Pitts.

Finally, the GMUG also welcomes new Norwood Acting District Ranger Tanner Hutt. Hutt joins the GMUG from the Rocky

Mountain Region, where he has served in the Co-operative Fire Program for the last 18 months.

"I am extremely excited to return to the Western Slope and even more excited to join the GMUG. The best part will be working in the Norwood area and with the amazing people that call the Western Slope their home," said Hutt.

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