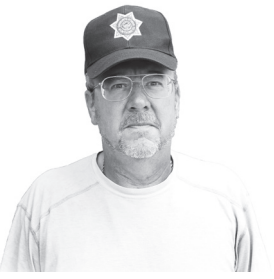


Little known survival items



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

Seems just about every outdoor magazine, blog, or outdoor and survival related website has an article about using regular household items as survival tools. I recently read one about 20 things you can use a broken cell phone for in an emergency.

I never got much past the second or third idea. Apparently, the lost person can remove the glass screen from your broken cell phone and use it as a knife. Would it not be better to have a knife in your pocket? I carry two pocketknives always, everywhere I go. To me, the cell phone was pretty much worthless when you could no longer use it to call for help.

What got me really thinking about this was a story I read about a search and rescue mission for a missing hiker out of Pennsylvania. A man was reported missing after he failed to return from a hike with his dog.

An extensive mission was launched, including aircraft, foot searchers and the police. The overnight search produced no results and searchers were concerned because it was an exceptionally cold night, and the missing man did not have much with him in the line of survival gear.

It was a hunter who found the man and his dog the following morning. The hunter reported the duo was cold, sore, and hungry, but otherwise doing well. Once the hiker stopped hearing the helicopters overhead, he knew he had to settle in for the night and do something to ward off the cold.

While the man did not have a survival pack, he did remember to bring along the most important tool in the toolbox, his brain. He used his ability to remain calm, avoid panic, and be resourceful to come up with a solution. He used his hand sanitizer as a fire starter and with a pocket lighter, made a fire to keep him and his pup warm throughout the night.

Since the pandemic, just about everyone has a bottle of hand sanitizer stuffed in a pocket, purse, or pack. Using it as a Firestarter makes perfect sense, considering the main ingredient is ethyl alcohol. The man kept his head and used a household item in his pocket to save his bacon. A small bottle of hand sanitizer can also be used to clean out minor cuts and help prevent infections.

My wife is one of those people that have a Chapstick in every pocket. She suffers from chapped lips and uses lip balm regularly. A tube of lip balm has several uses in an emergency, besides just repairing cracked and dried out lips.

The wax in lip balm can be used as a fire starter in a pinch. A cotton swab, or a cotton ball, can be coated up with the lip balm and lit with a match. While it will not burn for hours, it is probably enough to get a fire going in an emergency, if that is all you have. I would not rely on it during

a snowstorm or really windy night. For those situations, a road flare is magical.

Chapstick lip balm can also be rubbed across small cuts to help control bleeding. Numerous times I have cut my hand or finger, and get blood all over my equipment, pack, hunting rifle, clothes and whatever else is near. I never have a band aid when I need one, but the Chapstick works in a pinch. It also stops the itching from bug bites.

One item I carry around is a heavy-duty garbage bag. My original idea was to stuff my water-resistant pack in the bag during a rainstorm. Water-resistant means just that, not waterproof. The zippers are usually the weak link, and you don't want to find out they leak after the storm has passed.

I tried the pack covers, and they work to a point, if the rain or snow is light enough, but for a gully washer, the garbage bag is the answer. Throw in the pack and tie it off. The bags have many other uses including, a makeshift poncho, a ground cloth under your sleeping bag, making shoes, or to keep shoes dry, and you can even use one as a sleeping bag in a pinch.

Dental floss is something else that can be used in a pinch. Besides saving the day from a piece of annoying food stuck in your teeth, it can be used as a pretty strong string for gear repairs, shoelaces, and tying a tarp to a branch when making a lean-to. Once, on a Canadian Wilderness trip, we sutured up a gaping wound on a member of our party with dental floss and a sewing needle.

My absolute favorite do-everything item to have



You might not think of normal pocket items as survival tools, but many things work in a pinch. (Photo/Mark Rackay)

around is duct tape. It is one of the most versatile things to have, both at home and in the field. You can repair clothing, shoes, equipment, tools, and even waterproof your tarp seams. Duct tape can be used to help control bleeding. I use it as a band aid because it sticks well and is waterproof. Put it on your feet for blister control or twist it up and make a pretty strong rope.

You don't have to carry the whole roll with you. You can wrap half a dozen yards around an old credit

card and stick it in a pack pocket or make several and scatter them around in your equipment. You can't have too much duct tape.

The point of this column is not to get you to stuff all your pockets with junk from around the house. I would rather see you hit the woods with a properly stocked survival pack. The idea is to realize the best tool you have with you is your brain. Keep calm and do with what you have, where you are.

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Bill that would ban the killing of beavers in Colorado adds to contentious wildlife debate

Animal protection groups say there is no limit on how many beavers can be taken from state or federal land in Colorado, while hunting and trapping advocates say the bill's supporters are subverting ongoing talks

By MICHAEL BOOTH
THE COLORADO SUN

Wildlife advocates are backing a bill to ban the killing of beavers on Colorado public lands, while hunters and trappers point to the proposal and a flurry of recent actions as a concerted effort to block all hunting in the state.

Animal protection groups say there is currently no limit on how many beavers can be taken from state or federal land in Colorado, at a time when biologists and forestry experts are making beaver-created wetlands a keystone strategy in fighting the growing wildfire threat. House Bill 1323 would ban all private beaver kills on Colorado public lands. The bill language applies the ban to Colorado's U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management acreage as well.

"Colorado is in a crisis. We have had increasing wildfires. We are in drought conditions. We have a historically low snowpack. And we need every ally we can get in this fight against increased wildfires and drought," said Samantha Miller, a wildlife advocate with the Center for Biological Diversity. "As we know,

Colorado is also in a budget crisis. We can have more beavers for free. They make fires harder to ignite and slower to spread, and they create those natural wet corridors that firefighters often use as breaks. And so the hope is, while we're in a budget shortfall and while we are in a pretty desperate drought and wildfire situation, we can use these free allies to help us and protect us naturally."

Hunting and trapping advocates, meanwhile, say bill supporters are subverting a monthslong series of stakeholder talks about tweaking hunting and trapping regulations simply because they couldn't reach a consensus. They say the animal rights groups' real long-term agenda, allegedly backed by Gov. Jared Polis, is to stop all taking of wild animals, pointing to the recently failed vote to ban mountain lion hunting and efforts to protect reintroduced gray wolves no matter the cost to ranchers.

The animal protection groups are also pushing Colorado Parks and Wildlife for a major overhaul of licensing and rules for commercial taking of furbearing animals. Commission hearings last week over that

issue drew big crowds and raucous commentary in Westminster.

"Everything they do is an end around. They sat through those working group processes," said Dan Gates, of the nonprofit hunting and trapping defenders

Coloradans for Responsible Wildlife Management. "They advocated for them, and before they're

even at full completion, they want to circumvent them and try to turn around and invoke their will and their way and their perspective and their opinion on everything."

The efforts have the support, Gates claimed, of Polis and his husband, Marlon Reis, who has advocated for animal welfare issues. "The governor is a lame-duck governor. He's trying to accomplish what he wants to get done through the end of the session, and they're doing everything they could possibly do," Gates said.

The governor's office countered Tuesday that Polis sees a place for everyone, including hunters and anglers, in Colorado's outdoor life.

"The governor has not taken a position on this

bill and will review the final version of the bill if it reaches his desk," said Polis communications director Shelby Wieman. "Beavers are an important part of the conservation of Colorado's streams and wetlands. Successful beaver restoration



One of the artificial dam structures built along Beaver Creek to begin restoring wetlands and attracting beavers and willow growth back to Kawuneeche Valley. (Kawuneeche Valley Restoration Collaborative)

can improve watershed health and resilience and the governor fully supports the beaver restoration work and plan of CPW."

The beaver protection bill comes, Gates said, at the same time the animal rights groups have successfully petitioned the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission to ban commercial sales of furbearing animals or animal parts, such as beaver, bobcats, red foxes and pine martens. The beaver-focused legislation would apparently take the commercial use of beaver fur one step further and say beavers could not be taken from public lands for any reason.

The hunting, fishing and trapping advocates want "scientific" decisions on safe

levels of harvest for various animal species to stay with the biologists at Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

"This is not something that you can manage on one end of wildlife management and then turn around and expect the legislature to

engage," Gates said. CPW recently completed an overarching beaver management plan that did not contemplate a public lands ban on killing

beavers, Miller acknowledged. "The bill fills that gap by providing a clear public lands backstop that helps the strategy succeed," she said.

Polis, his office said Tuesday, takes each animal and wildlife issue separately.

"While the governor didn't have a position on the citizen petition (on furbearers) and doesn't take positions on petitions, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife staff recommended opposing the petition, we are committed to working with stakeholders to craft a rule that supports sportsmen and women while conserving and restoring furbearer species in Colorado per the intent of the successful petition," Wieman said.

Nor did Polis support the failed 2024 effort to ban mountain lion hunts, she added.

Advocacy on the beaver bill will likely intensify a yearslong wildlife and animal protection debate, amplified by emotions over the gray wolf re-introduction narrowly approved by state voters in 2020.

The hunting and trapping advocates' warning of universal takings bans is a "fear-based talking point" used for fundraising, and "it's fundamentally false," said Miller, who counts herself an avid angler.

Every beaver counts as Colorado dries out from increasing heat and decreasing precipitation, Miller said. Meanwhile, not only are there no current limits on the number of beavers that can be taken, the state has no idea how many are shot or trapped because there's no tracking system, she said.

"This proposal is specific: It protects beavers on public lands because removing even one beaver family can damage an entire wetland system and reduce water-shed and wildfire resilience," Miller said. "It strengthens Colorado's beaver management strategy by preventing recreational take from undermining restoration goals."

The bill, which was introduced in early March, has been assigned to the House Agriculture, Water & Natural Resources Committee and is awaiting a hearing.