

Rationing water



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

It's amazing how many survival myths, not to mention every other subject, is broadcast to the masses on television, and more recently, social media. These internet philistines will preach on about a subject they know nothing about, and sometimes the masses adopt the words as the truth. Occasionally, these myths can have serious consequences.

I was watching an old "Gunsmoke" television show episode the other evening. In this episode, our hero, Marshall Dillon, found himself stuck in a desert after chasing some bad guys. The Marshall only had a few ounces of water left in his canteen, and was rationing it, drinking only a mouthful twice a day.

The internet has become a misinformation highway. While it is true that much can be learned from proper research on the internet, the user is bound to verify the source of said infor-

mation as credible. People are more likely to believe misinformation if it comes from in-group sources (a group you can identify with), rather than out-group sources (a group you don't identify with), thereby judging the source as credible. There is also the emotional factor involved. People are more likely to believe false information that appeals to emotions like fear, and the survival business definitely has enough fear to go around.

Take the ration your water bit. Hundreds of thousands of people watched Marshall Dillon, and probably consider him a reliable source, sad to say, but probably true. These same people go on a hike and forget all but one canteen of water and ration that water all day in the hot August sun. The myth lives on when they profess this knowledge to others.

A single ounce of water passes through the human body very quickly, with the majority being absorbed within a few minutes, depending on activity level, current hydration level, and any excess water leaving the body through urine within a short time frame. Your water also will lose that water through perspiration and normal exhalation. The same process and timing stand if you drink 12 ounces of water.



If you are at a place where water is everywhere, like Victoria Falls — located on the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe and twice as large as Niagra Falls — you probably don't need to worry about water rationing. (Photo/Mark Rackay)

I remember reading in publications from the Boy Scouts, back when I was a kid a century ago, or so it seems, that talked about the necessity of rationing water in an emergency. There are also many survival stories running around about someone who survived by rationing water.

One such story dates back to 1981, where a young sailor from the U.S. Navy was stranded in the Atlantic Ocean, on a small life raft. The sailor was stranded for a total of 76 days. During the final month of his ordeal, he carefully rationed his collected rainwater, consuming only one pint per day. He made it and lived to tell the tale of his journey. Tales like this help fuel the myth.

You are on a hike through a sandy and loose rock desert canyon on a hot and dry July day. Why you chose this summer

day for a desert hike might raise other questions about intelligence, but it is a good scenario for this case. You are lost and have been for several hours.

Finding a rock outcropping that provides a minimum amount of shade, you pause, because your body is pleading for a long drink. You pull out your water bottle and notice there are only a few ounces left. Your body wants the water, but your brain tells you to save it. You put the bottle away and continue, hoping to find a water source.

The physical needs of a sailor laying around in a floating raft are much different than the lost hiker in the desert. An adult, at home and relatively inactive, needs about two quarts a day, whereas a hiker in the hot desert can have water needs into the gallons.

Dehydration comes on quickly and can be unnoticed, until it gets serious, and then it may be too late. It can lead to diminished motor skills, physical strength, tiredness, bad decisions, and eventually, death, the last train west. Remember

the desert animal, and desert hero to everyone, the camel. In the desert during an emergency situation, the best place to carry your water is in your body, not in your water bottle.

Use the time with the water in your body to perhaps find more drinking water or consider other ways to help limit your water loss. Start with the basics and be like most members of the animal kingdom, don't move or exert yourself during the heat of the day. Do your walking and exertion in the morning hours, late evening, or at night. Spend the daytime heat of the day laid up in the shade.

FEMA, states in their Food and Water in an Emergency Guidelines, to not ration water. "If supplies run low, never ration water. Drink the amount you need today and try to find more for tomorrow. You can minimize the amount of water your body needs by reducing activity and staying cool."

Dress accordingly, by wearing only light-colored clothes, long sleeves, long pants, and a wide brimmed hat. Cover as much skin as possible, even your face. Fishing guides on the flats of the Florida Keys are a perfect example of how to cover up for the heat of the day. They even wear sun gloves, and their entire body is protected from exposure to the sun.

This is one time that cotton clothing is your friend, as cotton fibers will hold your sweat longer than other materials and help to preserve any perspiration and moisture in your skin. Of course, you will

have to have something dry to change into come nightfall, as wet clothing in cooler temperatures can lead to hypothermia.

Don't wait until it is a crisis to begin conserving through dress, shade, and less strenuous activity. Saving up until you are almost dead will only make things worse. Breathe through your nose, not your mouth, as mouth breathing causes more water loss. Don't suck on buttons or stones to keep your mouth moist, as that is another myth. There is not water is stones, and you could swallow one and choke to death.

There is another long-standing myth about drinking your urine in a survival situation. I hope we don't have to debunk how bad an idea it is to drink urine, the waste your body is removing. You could, however, pour it on your clothes and cool yourself off to help prevent water loss from sweating. It would have to depend how bad off I was before I considered that one.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press, Delta County Independent, and several other newspapers, as well as a feature writer for The Nautical Mile, and other 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

Join Colorado Parks and Wildlife for the 16th annual Grand Mesa Moose Day

SPECIAL TO THE MDP

Did you know Colorado's Shiras moose is the state's largest big game animal, with adults weighing 800-1200 pounds and standing up to 6 feet tall? Or, despite their size, moose can run up to 35 miles per hour and are excellent swimmers? Have we piqued your interest? Do you want to learn more about the Shiras moose? Join Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the United States Forest Service on top of the Grand Mesa for the 16th Annual Grand Mesa Moose Day. The free event will take place at the United States Forest Service Visitor Center on July 25, from 10 a.m. — 2 p.m.

Today, Colorado's moose populations are thriving, thanks to successful reintroduction efforts by Colorado Parks and Wildlife. With a population over 3,000 statewide, images of moose walking through towns, on popular hiking trails or ski slopes are everywhere and recorded almost daily. With the continued growth in the state's moose population, the public's curiosity about the largest big game species in Colorado continues to grow as well.

"They are fascinating

animals and it's great they are doing well in Colorado," said CPW's Northwest Region Wildlife Viewing Coordinator Trina Romero. "Recently, we have seen an increase in moose being spotted in neighborhoods and while we're out enjoying nature. This festival is a great opportunity to learn about moose and how to view moose safely and ethically."

Throughout the day, experts will present moose biology and history presentations and demonstrate how biologists transplant and track moose.

List of Activities:
10 a.m. Presentation — Mission: Moose (Moose viewing and safety with Trina Romero)

11:30 a.m. Presentation — Moose Biology (Genevieve Fuller with outdoor drone demo)

12:30 p.m. Interview with a Moose (A fun interactive "talk" with a moose mascot — kid oriented)

1 p.m. Colorado Moose in Action (moose films by Ed Sauer & Sandra Schroth)

1:30 p.m. Presentation — Walk on the Discovery Trail (USFS staff)

"Most people see moose by accident while hiking, fishing or camping," said Romero. "If you suddenly

see one, be sure to keep your distance. If you are searching for moose, be prepared with a camera, binoculars or a viewing scope. Perhaps the most important thing to remember is to keep dogs on a leash and far away from moose."

Event Details:
What: Grand Mesa Moose Day

When: Saturday, July 25, 10 a.m. — 2 p.m.

Where: USFS Visitor Center — 20090 Baron Lake Drive, Hwy 65 — Top of the Grand Mesa

To get there, take Highway 65 from Interstate 70 by Plateau Creek, Exit 49, or drive up Highway 50 from nearby Delta and follow it up to the USFS Visitor's Center.

Visitors are encouraged to bring water and bug repellent. We know that Colorado's weather can change quickly, make sure to plan for afternoon rain showers and/or cooler weather.

For questions about the annual Grand Mesa Moose Day, contact Northwest Region Wildlife Viewing Coordinator Trina Romero at trina.romero@state.co.us with "Grand Mesa Moose Day" in the subject line.

For more information on wildlife viewing, including moose, visit our website.

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