

Pack time again



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

During the 2025 hunting season, our Posse SAR team was called to find two hunters who were lost in a Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) hunting area up in the Cimmaron. The call came in the form of a text to 911 around 7 p.m. We were on scene searching within an hour. It was a typical cold and clear night, with temperatures lowering into the single digits. A second text came in from the lost pair, sounding very desperate. They were sitting in one place with a fire going. The victims were a teenage boy and his father, and they had been without water since the previous morning, so dehydration was setting in. The boy was showing serious signs of hypothermia as well. Suddenly, this becomes a four-alarm emergency. I write an article about carrying a survival pack and provide a starter list to get folks thinking about what to bring. I cannot stress enough the impor-

tance of having a pack like this with you, together with the knowledge to care for yourself while in the woods. Every year we come to the aid of people stranded, hurt, or lost in the woods, and more often than not, they have no survival gear. What could be an inconvenient night for someone, turns into a life-threatening problem. Begin with making a small survival pack. Keep it small and lightweight so you can carry it with you all the time. It will not help you if it is sitting in the truck. Probably 90 percent of the missions that search and rescue conducts are for folks who have no survival kit with them. Being unprepared turns a minor inconvenience into a life-threatening four-alarm emergency. Let's take a look at the basics to include in your pack:

- Compass, maps and GPS with extra batteries
- Signal mirror and whistle, sound making device to help searchers locate you
- Knife and multi-tool
- Flashlight with extra batteries-I prefer lithium as they hold power better in the cold than alkaline, don't leak, and last longer. I also carry a small headlamp for walking and using for tasks
- Fire starter-waterproof matches, metal match and flares; carry at least two types and some tinder for wet conditions. I use the product called Wet Fire.



A pack doesn't have to be huge to carry the things to keep you alive in the woods, but you do have to bring it. It does no good sitting in the truck while you are in the woods. (Courtesy photo/Mark Rackay)

- Drinking water-a hydration bladder or camel back works well. Life Straw-this is a small, personal water filtration device. You can safely drink from a puddle with one of these.
- Food-high energy foods, power bars, nuts, trail mix, jerky, fresh for the trip
- Cell phone and extra power source. These extra battery chargers can be had for around ten bucks, are very small and weigh mere ounces.
- Rain Gear or poncho because Colorado weather changes by the minute
- Space blanket bivy-

much better than a blanket as you can crawl into a bivy to stay warm, like a sleeping bag

- Duct tape-good for just about anything from first aid to repairs
- Toilet paper-you just never know about how old those snacks were
- My personal first aid kit contains the basic life-saving items, including a tourniquet, Israeli Compression Bandage, Combat Gauze, a couple band-aids, and some Tylenol. The kit carries just the basics to save a life. All the other things I can deal with back at camp. Again, if the kit becomes too expansive, you will not lug it with you, and it does no good sitting at home when you are in the woods.

for search and rescue folks in finding you.

If you have no service, try moving around to higher locations. If all else fails, send 911 a text. Sometimes a text will go through when a call will not. Remember the motto: call when you can and text when you can't. The good folks at the 911 centers can receive texts and reply to the text conversation. The two guys at the beginning of this story did not have enough cell service to make a call and the text to 911 saved their lives.

If you hunt in a group and go separate directions, make sure everyone knows where everyone else is going. Set times and locations to meet up and communicate any changes to each other. The small, hand-held walkie talkies work great for this. You can monitor them or set check-in times with each other.

Have a responsible contact person back home. This person should have names, descriptions, vehicle, and personal information of everyone on the hunt. I can't stress enough how this must be a responsible person. Choose someone who will be available 24/7 for the entire duration of your hunt to receive updates from you. Schedule a call-in time with this person for routine check-ins. For the several hunts I take each year, my wife is my call-in partner. She knows my trip itinerary for every step of the trip. Make certain this contact person knows your itinerary and where your camp is. Notify them of any changes and have set check in times. Instruct them to call the WestCo Dispatch or 911 if you are overdue. Information they provide to search and rescue folks will save countless hours looking for you.

For those of you who carry a GPS, turn it on and use it whenever you are away from your vehicle or camp. Before you start out, take a GPS coordinate of your starting point. We once had a man who

brought a GPS but did not turn it on until he was lost. He was able to give us his exact location but had no idea where his truck was parked. Needless to say, we found him quickly and it was a happy ending.

At your starting point of your hunt each day, leave a note. This note, which is sometimes referred to as a "backpacker note" can be left on the windshield of your vehicle, tied to the tent or taped to your ATV. Just state which direction you went off on foot and the area you plan on hunting in. This gives search and rescue a great start on finding you, again, saving time that could be lifesaving.

One thing for certain here in Colorado; the weather is going to change. I have seen temperatures drop 40 degrees in 30 minutes and sunny skies turn to raging blizzards. Carry some extra clothes along. It might be a balmy 50 degrees in the morning. A front can push through, bringing rain changing to snow, all by afternoon. Prepare for the worst and hope for the best.

We were able to locate the lost guys around 4:00 AM and got them delivered to a waiting EMS truck down by the highway around 8AM, a long night for all. The two guys forgot water, figuring since it was cold, they wouldn't need as much to drink. Bad idea.

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Weiser joins lawsuits against rollback of Endangered Species Act protections

DAILY SENTINEL
STAFF REPORT

Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser joined a coalition of more than 20 attorneys general in two lawsuits that challenge new federal rules that the coalition says threaten the survival of imperiled species. The lawsuits were filed against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service, which proposed new rules that remove some protections for wildlife under the Endangered Species Act, according to a news release. The proposed rules would make it easier for private companies or individuals to modify or degrade the habitats of listed threatened and endangered species. "Colorado is home to over 30 threatened and endangered species that are critical to stable and healthy ecosystems," Weiser said in a statement. "The changes by the Trump administration put threatened and endangered species and their habitats at risk, undermining the comprehensive protections Congress mandated under the Endangered Species Act. Our state is known for its great outdoors and responsible wildlife management. I will do everything I can to protect its wildlife and environment." Both rules make changes specifically around the alteration or damage of endangered and threatened wildlife habitat, removing protections and making it more difficult to classify critical habitat for protection, according to the release. Weiser joined 21 other states' attorneys general in filing the lawsuits, including New Mexico and Arizona. The complaints will be available on coag.gov when filed.

Phil Weiser, Colorado Democratic gubernatorial candidate, answers questions from the public during a debate with Democratic candidate Michael Bennet at the Western Colorado Economic Summit at Colorado Mesa University on April 23, 2026. Weiser defeated Bennet in the Democratic primary election on Tuesday, June 30. (Larry Robinson / The Daily Sentinel)