

Take better pictures of game animals



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

My first camera was a Kodak Instamatic. It was a cheap little box that you inserted a cartridge preloaded with film. The cartridge had 12 pictures, but if you were sitting high on your wallet, you could buy one that gave 24.

There was an expiration date on the film, so you only had so much time to take the pictures. For inside shots, there was a thing called a flashcube, but we won't go there today, lest we begin to date ourselves.

These pictures were then delivered to a Photo-Hut, a small booth usually located in the middle of a shopping mall parking lot.

You turned in the cartridge and in a short time, you got back an envelope of the worst pictures you ever saw in your life, but not until you paid a handful of cash for it. It would be, "Here is a picture of me standing way off in the distance holding a large brown trout."

Digital cameras, like we use today, made photo life much easier. You can not only snap hundreds of pictures and videos, depending on the size of your storage and the number of batteries you carry, but you can view the picture immediately on the screen. If it came out crummy, simply delete it away.

My grandfather took all the pictures for our family. He used little light meters to get all the proper readings, and basically drove everyone crazy, just making sure everything was perfect. He then had everything



When preserving a special memory, spend a little time taking a picture worth a thousand words. (Mark Rackay/Special to the MDP)

developed into slides, and the entire family had to sit around for hours on end looking at the slide presentation.

For outdoor folks, especially those who fish or hunt, pictures are the best way to preserve the memories forever of a big trip. Pictures are also a very good way to pay proper respect to the animal, so taking good pictures is key.

Carry the right camera. The El Cheapo digital cameras will take far better pictures than the point-and-shoot film cameras of my youth. For a camera, I like the compact size, something with a 10-power optical zoom and enough megapixels to get clear pictures and plenty of detail.

The small size works for me because I can put it in my pants pocket or in a side pouch of my pack. That way, it is always with me. There are much better cameras with different lenses, but for me, I don't want to lug it around.

If you choose a camera that has rechargeable batteries, always get a spare. Charge them before you leave on the

trip. You do not want to be looking at your trophy elk of a lifetime and have the batteries be out of juice.

Some cameras use conventional batteries, like AA or AAA. If so, get the lithium batteries because they last longer, don't leak, work in the cold, and don't drain out as fast. I was on a very wet and rainy trip in Canada once, and the standard batteries in my camera drained out overnight. I had to keep the batteries out of the camera until ready for use, and that got to be a pain.

Most of us have a cell phone, and it is a necessary survival tool for outdoor adventures. Today's cell phone usually has a far better camera than anything that used film. You can download apps to allow you to edit and order prints, all on the phone.

As a precaution, I carry both a camera and a cell phone and a digital camera. On a trip, or with a trophy fish or game animal, I snap some pictures with both, just in case one gets lost, and to add some diversity to the kind of pictures I take.

When you are taking a shot of a trophy-sized fish or animal, take a little time to prepare the trophy first. Wash away any blood, dirt, and debris, and anything else that may ruin the picture and send the wrong message. Pay real close attention to the surrounding area. An empty beer can you didn't notice will ruin the picture when you look at it later.

Position the hunter or angler so the "hero" is directly centered behind the fish or animal. It creates less dead space and gives some scale to the size of the trophy. Don't be afraid to shoot some pictures zoomed in and zoomed out.

Look at some fishing and hunting pictures in the magazines and study the positioning and backgrounds. I try and model my shots after the professionals.

For antlered game, my favorite pose is to place the animal in a bedded down position with the legs up underneath the body. Try and position the animal so the antlers are silhouetted against the sky. Remove vegetation in front or behind the animal that may

cause a distraction in the photo. Try and keep vehicles out of the picture for the same reasons.

Since digital cameras allow us to take so many pictures, get shots from all kinds of angles. Move in close, farther back, and get right on ground level so you are almost looking up with the picture.

Try some shots with the flash, without, and even throw in some black-and-white pictures. Get some pictures with just the hunter or angler, and some with other people who were a part of the trip. Turn the camera so you have vertical and horizontal shots.

I have a bad habit of taking pictures too far away from the subject. You generally want your subject and animal to mostly fill the shot. Fortunately, digital pictures allow us to zoom and edit when we get back home, and home is where you should do the editing, not in the field.

Pay close attention to light. The best light of the day usually occurs the first hour of the morning and the last hour before sunset. I

prefer to have the sun at my back but be very aware of the shadows that are cast in your pictures. Overcast days usually mean shadowless pictures.

Fish lose their color very quickly when removed from the water. For the best pictures that really show off the colors, take the shot as soon as you can when the fish is caught. This is why those "catch and release" pictures look so good.

When we took all our fishing pictures in the Keys, we tried to get folks to remove their sunglasses. In the bright sun, most people wear sunglasses, and the prescription types like me usually have glasses that darken automatically when outdoors. The problem with dark glasses in bright sunlight is when printed up, it looks like you have two black holes where your eyes should be.

I remember the days when my camera sat around so long, I didn't remember what the pictures were. Getting the film developed was always a surprise to see what was on the roll. In my case, it was usually a bunch of blurry and overexposed pictures of fish and game I took with my little camera. At least with the digital camera, I can shoot more pictures and have a better chance at getting a good 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 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

CPW proposes changes to commercial use fee, regulations

SPECIAL TO THE MDP

Colorado Parks and Wildlife is proposing changes to commercial use fees and regulations on CPW properties.

Authorized commercial agreements and permits at CPW properties may be impacted by the creation of a standardized fee structure, as well as administrative and regulatory changes. Impacted agreements could include Commercial Use and Special Use Agreements for State Wildlife Areas and Special Use and Special Activity Permits at State Parks. Approved changes would go into effect on Jan. 1, 2025, at the earliest.

CPW encourages interested parties to familiarize themselves with available content on the Engage CPW webpage (<https://bit.ly/EngageCPW>).

Why is CPW proposing changes?

- To provide a consistent and transparent process statewide for all commercial use activities on CPW owned and managed properties.
- To provide standardized statewide forms to make the process easier for activity and event permittees.
- To provide a statewide standardized fee structure for commercial use within CPW.
- To rewrite CPW commercial use regulations and internal policies to reflect our merged agency.
- To increase consistency by clarifying and further defining terms related to commercial use.

The public feedback period on Engage CPW will close on June 3.



Event at Lory State Park. (CPW/Verdon Tomajko)

CPW staff will then finalize proposed changes to be considered by

the Parks and Wildlife Commission for approval later this year. Any

public comments after June 3 should be directed to the Parks and Wildlife

Commission at <https://bit.ly/PWCpubliccomments>