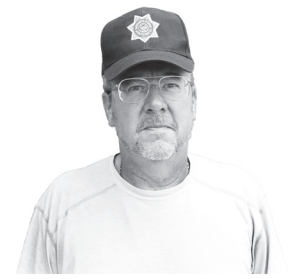


A SOUND IN THE WOODS



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

We had a night callout for a couple of gentlemen who had to make an emergency landing with their paraglider. It was on a cold winter's night, with plenty of snow on the ground. The area was on Cottonwood Mesa, on the far side of Dry Creek canyon.

A posse brother and I were working our way along the bottom of a very steep ridge that followed Cottonwood Creek. The time was after the midnight hour. We knew we were getting close to the area where these two men went down, so we decided to use the old "give a yell" method and see if we get an answer. We shouted until we were both hoarse and hyperventilating. I hadn't yelled that much since the Bulls won the championship in '98.

To cut to the chase, we found the men a half hour later, not 150 yards from where we were calling and searching. Later, I asked the two guys if they heard us calling, and the answer was no. I was absolutely shocked they did not hear us in the still of the night, as loud as we were yelling.

This prompted me to research this a bit and try to find out why they did not hear us. When looking for someone, searchers often yell the name of the missing person, while others give a whistle a blast. Many store-bought survival kits include a small plastic whistle for signaling



Instead of carrying whistles and horns, the best signaling device might be slung on your shoulder. (Courtesy photo)

purposes. Hunters have used the three-shot rule with rifles, and searchers answer with one shot. It has walked many a wayward person to safety.

We all should know that making noise can greatly assist searchers in finding you when lost. This is especially true if you are injured and cannot make a signal fire or move to a sound you hear. The great realization to me is that the sound might not carry as far as you think it does.

Sound is measured in decibels (dB). Normal conversation is between 60-65dB. When you reach 140dB, such as the sound of a jet engine, you have reached the threshold of pain and hearing damage. A shot from a .357 magnum revolver can expose a

shooter to 165dB for two seconds, which is equivalent to over 40 hours in a noisy workplace.

The question becomes, how far away can a person hear a particular sound. As a rule of thumb, a person can hear a shout 100 meters away, normal conversation 20 meters away, and a whisper up to 10 meters away. This also assumes there is no other background noise. You certainly won't hear a whisper at 10 meters on a crowded street corner at rush hour.

According to the inverse square law, it can be shown that for each doubling of the distance from a point source, the sound pressure level decreases by approximately 6dB. If you start with 100 dB, at 1 meter it will be 94dB, and every time the

distance doubles, another 6dB is lost.

A human yell is around 100dB, and a signal whistle is around 110dB. It is safe to assume the sound will carry several hundred meters, but you may not be able to hear it. If the rescuer is walking in crunchy snow, has a radio with communications to other searchers, or is engaged in conversation with someone, the sound probably will not be heard past 150 meters. I offer our search mentioned above as exhibit A. They did not hear our yells on a still night, probably because they were walking in crunchy snow and talking.

During bitterly cold conditions, it seems you can hear a pin drop from a half mile away. That's because even though sound travels faster

in warm air, it travels farther in cold air. While sound goes farther in the cold, other things can alter the distance. Snow, for example, absorbs sound. Snow muffles all the little noises you might ordinarily hear reverberating off the ground.

This brings us to something like firearms as a signaling device. The universal distress code is three evenly spaced noises, and that can be a gun, whistle, yell or air horn. (Arrows won't work). Responders will answer with one or two blasts if they hear your signal. After that one for one as they try to move toward you, or you move toward them.

The gun is my favorite tool for signaling. Most firearms, from shotguns to hunting rifles and

handguns, will produce around 150 to 170dB. Bigger does not mean louder. The gun is my American Express Card because I never leave home without it. Here again, three evenly spaced shots, in a safe direction of course, you don't want to shoot at your rescuers. The responders will answer with one or two shots if they heard it. I can't count the number of people we have walked out using this method.

Depending on conditions, a handgun, which uses a much faster burning powder than a hunting rifle, can be heard up to a mile away. A hunting rifle, with its slower burning powder, can be heard up to 2 miles away. Keep in mind, at distance, the sound will not be very loud. If you are walking, talking, or there is a wind, you may not be able to hear it. At a half mile, a shot may only be 40dB, depending on all the variables.

Bottom line is to make all the noise you can when you want to be found. Do everything you can to be seen as well as heard. Remember, the rescuer may be someone like me who is so deaf from years of racing boats and firearms use, he might not hear it. At least he can probably see you.

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. For information about the posse call 970-765-7033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org

BLM to discuss transportation, access plan, as well as mining history trail

Southwest Resource Advisory Council meets Nov. 14 in Dolores

SPECIAL TO THE MDP

The Bureau of Land Management's Southwest Resource Advisory Council will hold a meeting on Nov. 14 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Tres Rios Field Office, 29211 Colorado 184, Dolores, CO 81323. The meeting

is open to the public. Participants unable to attend in person can join via the Zoom platform. To request virtual access, please register in advance: <https://tinyurl.com/SWRACNOV> (link redirects).

"This will be our fourth and final South-

west Resource Advisory Council meeting of 2024," said District Manager Stephanie McCormick. "I truly appreciate our RAC members, who remain consistently engaged in offering their informed insights and recommendations on the management and conservation of our public lands in Southwest Colorado."

Planned agenda items include an overview

of field office updates and a presentation and discussion on the Tres Rios Field Office Transportation and Access Plan for Travel Area 2, Dolores, Montrose, and San Miguel counties (TAP2) and a proposed trail interpreting the area's uranium-vanadium mining history. A public comment period is scheduled for 2 p.m. Individuals who want to

make a statement during the public comment period are encouraged to submit a written copy of their statement for the administrative record.

The Resource Advisory Council will also attend a field trip on Nov. 13.

All 15-member Resource Advisory Councils in Colorado are forums for providing advice and recommendations to the BLM on various resource

and land management issues. The Southwest Resource Advisory Council advises the BLM Colorado Southwest District, consisting of the Gunnison, Tres Rios field, and Uncompahgre field offices.

For more information or to RSVP for the field trip, please contact Maggie Magee at 970-240-5323 or dmagee@blm.gov.

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