

Don't go it alone



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

On numerous occasions, I have written about the dangers of hiking, hunting, and basically recreating alone in the woods. I always encourage the buddy system, safety in numbers, someone else to help in the event of a visit from old Murphy of Murphy's Law fame.

The buddy system, to me, is especially important in this day and age, for people on the trail in wild areas close to town. Everywhere, there is an increasing number of homeless people, and those not so homeless, that chose a trail in the woods as a place to commit crimes against lone and sometimes defenseless sojourners. Having hunted or fished in the wilds of 4 continents, I can honestly say I have been more afraid of the 2-legged interlopers than I have ever been of a wild animal, to include lions and elephant.

Whenever I have presented a column about the subject and offered tips for those who still insist on being alone, I get a fair amount of push back. One

instance that stands out involved a gentleman who was a retired game warden from another state.

We exchanged a series of emails, eventually calling it a draw, neither one of us able to change the other's way of thinking. He professed that he has hiked, hunted and fished alone for over 40 years, and the secret is to be prepared to handle any type of emergency, and all was right with the world. He believed that going in the buddy system was fine for those who had an inadequate amount of survival knowledge.

Fast forward 3 years, and I get another email from the gentleman, explaining a situation that he encountered, and by a single stroke of luck, he was able to survive. He relayed a story of him hunting, alone as always, in a remote wilderness area. Along about evening, he laid down his pack and rifle, to walk a few yards away to glass from a ridge, the draw that lay below.

He stepped out to the edge of the ridge, and slipped, tumbling down 50 feet, before coming to a stop. He suffered a compound fracture in his leg, and was completely unable to move, finding himself up the preverbal creek without said paddle, as his pack, first aid kit, survival stuff, and rifle, were all on top of the ridge.

Unable to make a fire, call for help, eat, drink, let alone move, he pondered his inevitable fate throughout the night. The following morning is

where the luck plays into this thing. Another hunter was walking along the same ridge and saw the victims pack and rifle. He shouted out, and our very lucky friend answered back. The rescue took the rest of the day, but other than a long healing time, this man is a lucky individual.

In a quick review of a few missions that our search and rescue team were on, I find a similar pattern. In a neighboring county, a man took off for a day hike. He did not let anyone back home know he was going or where he went. He did have a pack, but it was of little help.

The man was several miles into his hike when he slid down a very steep talas slope, falling and sliding several hundred feet. He badly broken body was well hidden in debris at the bottom, and he was unable to move.

By the time someone noticed he was missing, it was too late, as this man boarded the last train west, succumbing to his injuries. If he had someone with him, who could have called for help, or even someone in town who would have seen he was overdue, this story might have had a happier ending. Hypothermia was listed as the cause of death, so death came slowly.

Another mission that has a similar scenario, involved a man who went off hunting with a buddy, but the 2 decided to go off in different directions. The man, who later was

the victim, was 70 years old. He had no communication device in which to stay in touch with his buddy.

My guess is he became confused, and as night began to fall, cold, as he did not have extra clothes or a pack, nor did he have means to build a fire. In his confusion he wandered around aimlessly in the woods.

A massive search began that late afternoon, involving multiple agencies, including our own. Aircraft were eventually called in, and on the 3rd day, his body was found, several miles from anywhere he was supposed to be. I venture to say, with a little more equipment and a walkie talkie or cell phone, he might have communicated with his buddy, and the ending would have been a happy one.

Then there is the mission that involved an older lady who headed up to the Forest Boundary for an afternoon hike. This lady was a very experienced hiker and knew how to take care of herself. Problem was, she did not bring any survival pack, food, or extra clothes with her, as this was just a quick little hike.

As expected here in Colorado, a snowstorm blew in, and in a matter of a couple hours, this lady was hopelessly lost. She wandered several miles, stumbling onto a cabin, closed for the season. She had just enough cell battery to get a text off to 911, stating she is by a brown cabin, somewhere



Take a friend or two on your next trip in the woods. Not only is it more fun, it's safer. (Courtesy photo)

near the forest boundary.

Deputies found her car, and the dispatch people were able to ping the GPS location of the text. The search and rescue people, using a very advanced mapping/plotting program called SAR/TOPO, found the lady in a very short time. The last train west stopped, but since it was a full load, she did not board. She managed the ordeal without a hitch, from her own actions, seeking any port in a storm (the cabin), good work from all the rescue people, and a great big dose of luck.

Before you head out alone, give everything a real going over. I get it, the reason I go to the woods is to get away from people, but no matter how prepared you might be,

there are circumstances a person alone cannot overcome. That train is coming, make sure you don't get on it.

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 several 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

Filmmakers and wildfire experts convene in Telluride for climate change panel

Telluride Foundation hosts 'Adaptation: Protecting our communities from the threat of climate change'

SPECIAL TO THE MDP

As wildfires and other climate related natural disasters become more frequent and severe, how can our communities prepare and adapt to this new reality? The Telluride Foundation is hosting an event to explore how to think about adapting to these threats, including an exclusive sneak peek of "Adaptation," a short documentary in development from Spruce Tone and SLOMotion exploring unique experiments and research by the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS).

Behind the walls of their state-of-the-art facility, engineers simulate wildfires, recreate hail, and hurricane-force winds to understand how

humans can adapt to the climate crisis.

Following the screening is a panel discussion with filmmakers and wildfire experts about the research and innovation to protect homes against wildfire and improve insurability happening on a national level, new legislation occurring in Colorado to help address the housing insurance crisis and work being done locally to protect homes from wildfires. "Adaptation: Protecting our communities from the threat of climate change," promises to shed light on this issue impacting countless communities nationwide and innovative solutions in the climate space.

"We believe that the Foundation has a unique and valuable role in preparing for and responding to wildfires or other disasters, extending beyond our traditional fundraising and grantmaking. Our longstanding history as a trusted resource within

the region equips us to respond effectively in times of crisis," said Telluride Foundation President & CEO Jason Corzine. "We will continue to work with regional governments and wildfire organizations to explore how we can best support community partners implementing this work and help amplify county/emergency management communication and marketing efforts to all members of our communities."

The panelists bring a wealth of expertise and unique perspectives to the conversation: Matt Mikkelsen, Co-Director, Adaptation / Co-Founder, Spruce Tone. Mikkelsen (He/Him) is a sound recordist, audio engineer, and documentary filmmaker based in Duluth, Minnesota, and is the Co-Founder of Spruce Tone. He has worked as a sound designer, director and producer on several award-winning documentaries and podcasts, but

has also devoted much of his professional career to observing, recording, researching and preserving natural soundscapes.

Steve Hawks, Senior Director for Wildfire, Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety. Hawks (He/Him) joined the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) in 2023 and currently serves as the Senior Director for Wildfire. In this role, Hawks works to advance wildfire policy and code development, manages IBHS's post-fire analysis research, assists with the Wildfire Prepared Home program and develops future designation program opportunities.

Jamie Gomez, Executive Director, West Region Wildfire Council. Gomez is the Executive Director of the West Region Wildfire Council. Gomez first began working with the Council in 2013. Gomez has a diverse background in natural resource science and manage-

ment and has worked in several capacities to assist landowners and managers develop and implement projects that serve to improve conditions while meeting landowner goals. Kate Harris, Chief Deputy Commissioner, Colorado Division of Insurance. Harris has spent her career working at the intersection of public health and public policy, primarily on the implementation of the Affordable Care Act in Washington State and Colorado. In 2019 she joined the Colorado Division of Insurance as the Deputy Commissioner for Life and Health Policy. In 2023, Harris moved into the role of Chief Deputy working across the Divisions' portfolio of insurance regulation including health programs, property and casualty and climate change related issues, as well as organization strategy and operations.

The panel will be moderated by Hayley Nenadal, who is a ten-year Telluride

local. She has worked in the filmmaking and film festival industry for more than 20 years. Nenadal is the founder of and a Producer at SLOMotion film and has a resume that includes Industrial Light and Magic, Sundance, Mill Valley, Telluride, SXSW and Coast film festivals. She focuses on bringing films to light that focus on the human spirit and climate change solutions. Recently, Nenadal was part of the team for the film 4DWN, which played at Mountainfilm and won a Telly Award. She is also a producer on the film Adaptation.

The panel discussion will be held on Thursday, Feb. 27 from 5:30 p.m. — 7 p.m. at the Sheridan Opera House. The event is free and open to the public, though an RSVP is required. To RSVP, please visit <https://Tellurideadaptation.eventbrite.com>.

This story was originally published by the Telluride Daily Planet.



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