



You got away from it all, but now where are you?

By PAUL R. HUARD
Copley News Service

U h-oh — that trail you're following looks more like the road less traveled than the path back to your car.

You thought the trailhead was just a couple of switch-backs away, or over the next ridge or up by some trees. You keep walking, but no luck — and now it's getting dark.

Let's face it: Everyone gets lost now and then, even if it's in a supermarket parking lot. The difference is getting lost during a hike means help isn't just a cell phone call away.

Surviving has a lot more to do with common sense and planning than foraging for wild greens, having a big

knife or building a lean-to the Swiss Family Robinson would admire.

You'll need to stay warm, dry and in one piece until you can get yourself out of this mess. You might have to wait for help if you can't find your way home, the weather changes drastically or you are facing injuries.

Before you go on any trip outdoors, tell a responsible person your travel plans. Write it down, if possible.

Include details such as your route, number in your party, when you will return and who to call in case you are overdue. Carry a map of the area and a compass, and know how to use them.

Stick to your route and your deadline; notify your contact if there are any changes. Search-and-rescue workers

can't find you if they don't know where to look.

If you become lost, if weather conditions or injuries prevent you from returning to base, your strategy is the acronym STOP:

Stay: Stop at the first sign of trouble. Don't panic, don't run, don't scream for help. Sit down. Take a few deep breaths. If someone is injured or not coping, administer first aid or calm them down. You got into this situation, you can probably get yourself out of it, too.

Think: If lost, mentally review your last hour of travel. Get out your map, orient it and look for landmarks that will help you estimate your position.


If you've lost your compass, use improvised methods to determine bearings, such as

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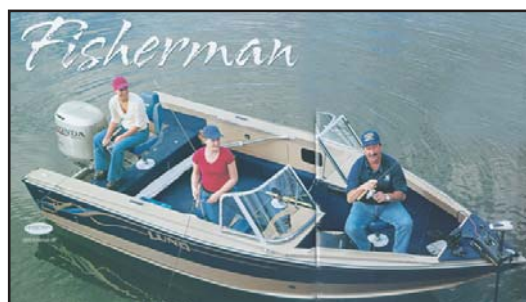
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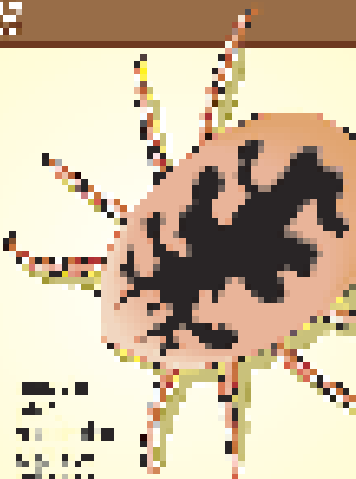
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OUTDOOR LIVING

Tick Attacks



Observe: Look around you. Are you running out of daylight? Are you hopelessly confused about your position? If the answer is "yes," you need to start observing what resources are at hand. Where is the nearest water, firewood, shelter, a clearing to place signals?

Plan: Make careful deliberate plans on how you will deal with this predicament. Remember the "Rule of Threes": You can live three minutes without air, three hours without proper shelter and clothing, three days without adequate water, three weeks without food. Do the math and you will know what you need to do to survive.

Get out of the wind, cold, rain or snow. Start a fire as soon as possible. With a little luck, you'll experience a little inconvenience that you will live to tell about.

the direction of the sun. If you've lost your map, too, sketch your immediate area in a notebook or scratch it in the dirt or snow.

Put the clues together. What you remember from the map, what you can see and your determination of the compass points will probably help you realize where you are in a few minutes.

Are you running out of daylight? Are you hopelessly confused about your position? If the answer is "yes," you need to start observing what resources are at hand. Where is the nearest water, firewood, shelter, a clearing to place signals?

What is in your pack and pockets that will help you remain warm, dry and reasonably comfortable while you are waiting for help? No matter how short the trip, a hiker should never venture down the trail without a pocket knife, waterproof matches

and fire starters, map and compass, headlamp with spare batteries, a "space" blanket, warm clothing, rain gear, a filled water bottle, high-energy reserve foods such as nutrition bars, a first aid kit that includes insect repellent, climate protection such as sun block and a hat and emergency signals such as a whistle and signaling mirror.

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