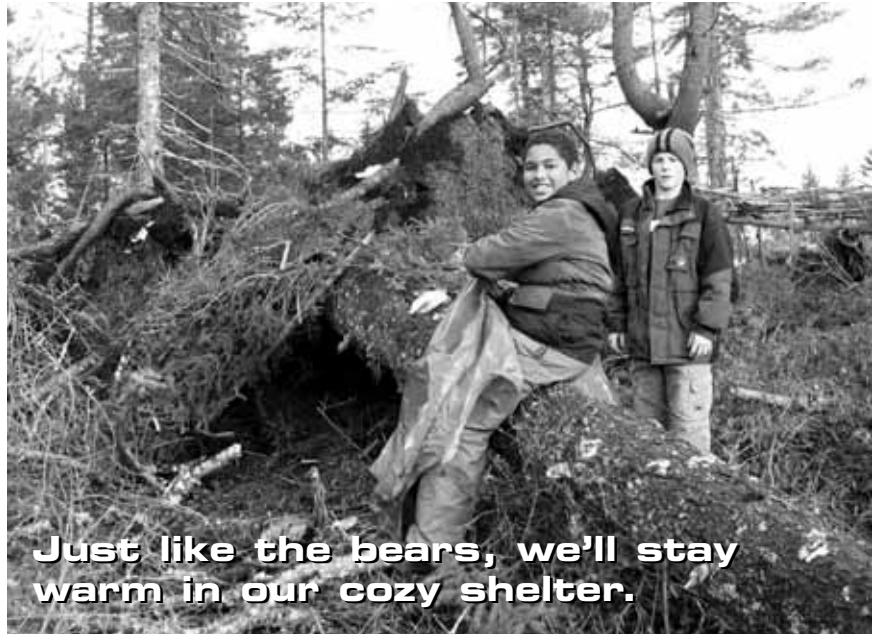


# SURVIVORMAN HIKE



by Bob Loney

'Survivorman' is a hit TV show on 'The Outdoor Life Network' starring Canadian Les Stroud (<http://www.survivorman.ca/index.html>). On each program, Les is abandoned in a remote location with no food, no shelter, no fresh water, and few tools or equipment. His task is to survive alone in the wild for seven days without outside help. He's been dropped into the Canadian Rockies, a Costa Rican rainforest, Arctic ice-floes, a Georgian swamp and the high Sonoran desert. Before submitting this article, I sent Les Stroud an e-mail asking for permission to use the name of his program for the article. Les not only granted permission, he encouraged me to write the article.



Photographer: Song Lee

We designed a 'Survivorman Hike' to help our Scouts develop survival skills in a safe simulation, and it's been one of our most popular outdoor activities. Before our outing, several meetings were held teaching survival skills. The youth practiced using

techniques they would need to know if they were ever lost.

On the day of the event, the troop hiked to a predetermined location (we didn't actually get lost) where the youth paired up. Each pair of Scouts received a bag of items and a list of

## A WELL-EQUIPPED SCOUT SURVIVAL KIT

- Compass
- Small lighter or waterproof matches
- Small hand lens (magnifying glass)
- Candle (for light, firestarter when damp)
- Whistle
- Knife or multi-tool
- Emergency snack bar(s)
- Duct tape wrapped around a pencil (not a pen – a pencil will write on damp paper, and can be sharpened with a knife)
- Waterproof paper or small pad in a zip lock bag (so the paper doesn't get wet)
- Couple of bandages in a zip lock bag
- Needle and thread (you can use fish line for thread, if it fits through the needle, or use dental floss. It is thin, light and comes packed in small untangled containers)
- 2 metres of aluminum foil (for signaling, making a pot for boiling water, cup to drink)
- 4 metres of light wire (for making snares or shelters)
- Fish and snare line: 50 ft (15.25 metres) of heavy 80 lb test fishing line (lighter than rope or wire – can be used to fish, tie shelter together, repairs); and/or 50 metres of 3/8" rope
- A few nylon cable ties (for quickly fastening shelter poles together)
- Fishhooks in safe container
- Safety Pins (3) - Used for quick repairs of clothing and other gear
- Personal medication
- Water purification tablets. (Buy a bottle for the whole troop. Divide so each Scout gets a few tablets and a copy of instructions for use. Store in a small ziplock bag. Tablets go out of date and no one normally uses a whole bottle.)
- Emergency blanket
- Insect repellent or lip moisturizer (for comfort only)
- 1 - 2 large orange garbage bags (use as a poncho, signal, tarp, etc.)
- Small picture of your family (survivors don't give up hope, often thinking of their loved ones to keep them going)
- Check supplies at least once yearly.

Scouts Canada's *Fieldbook for Canadian Scouting* contains another version of a survival kit, as well as more tips for survival. Your Scout Shop sells basic survival kit items as well as the SAS Survival Book by John 'Lofty' Wiseman.

the survival skills the pair had to demonstrate. Based on the three most important survival skills, we focused on building shelters, making fire for warmth and obtaining safe drinking water. (Scouts working with fire should have their Match and Fire Permits.) Tasks were to be accomplished with only the items provided and/or anything found in the wild. In some cases, Scouts received no equipment or tools at all. We also had Scouts do some activities that didn't turn out so well; so they could see what doesn't work. After debriefing, this helped them decide what they'd rather put their energy into when faced with a real survival situation.

Teams can be judged on speed, best design, workmanship and productivity or you can award prizes to all. Prizes for our 'Survivorman Hike' included low-cost survival gear such as emergency blankets, whistles, folded tinfoil and duct tape. But in the end, everyone was a winner as they are now "prepared" if they are ever in a survival situation.

## Sample Survivorman Hike Tasks

### Shelter:

- Make an insulated shelter for cold weather (supplies: 20 m of rope)
- Make a waterproof shelter (supplies: two orange garbage bags)
- Make a quick shelter in less than 1 hour (no supplies).

### Fire:

- Start a fire with a magnesium stick and cotton balls with petroleum jelly
- Start a fire with a magnifying glass
- Start a fire with two AA batteries and fine steel wool.

### Water:

- Obtain safe drinking water with a water filter and a water bottle
- Obtain safe drinking water with a large piece of tinfoil (for making a cup) and matches
- Obtain safe drinking water with a large piece of tinfoil (for making a cup), a bandana (for filtering) and a water purification tablet
- Obtain safe drinking water with a garbage bag and a large piece of tinfoil (for making an in ground still).



Photographer: Bob Loney

Watch for more articles from Bob in November and December on how to build shelters, light a fire without matches and gather water using an in-ground still. After these articles, you'll be well equipped to do your Survivorman hike next spring. If you can't wait, Bob suggests the web sites listed here. X

– Bob Loney works with the 1<sup>st</sup> Bedford Scout Troop in Bedford NS. His troop, when they're not getting "lost," is quite active outside.

Linking to Strategic Directions #1 and #4.

## BEFORE YOU GO

In keeping with Scouts Canada's Leave No Trace camping ethic, it is important to select a site where the impact is ecologically acceptable. Then gain permission from landowners before cutting saplings, digging holes and making fire pits. Youth need to know how to survive if they are lost; yet still respect nature and the land.

## SURVIVOR RULES OF THREE

You can normally survive this long if you don't have the following necessities:

- 3 minutes without breathable air**
- 3 hours in extreme temperature (establish shelter, fire)**
- 3 days without water**
- 3 weeks without food.**

## FIVE STEPS TO SURVIVAL

**Step One: Stay Calm.** Don't panic. People have died in the woods trying to find their way out. Stay put. Look after any immediate needs (injuries) and think of shelter.

**Step Two: Shelter And Fire.** A healthy person can survive for several weeks without food and several days without water, but in many cases only several hours without proper shelter from the elements. Shelter and a fire should be a first priority.

**Step Three: Water.** You should drink water even if you do not feel thirsty. An adult should drink at least a couple of litres per day (more in hot climates).

**Step Four: Signal.** Use a whistle, mirror, emergency blanket or fire!

**Step Five: Food** is probably not something you need to consider unless you are reasonably sure that rescue will be a long time coming.

– taken from <http://www.m4040.com/Survival/Primer.htm>

## Web sites for Survival Skills:

- Hoods Woods - <http://www.survival.com/> Offers a book on survival techniques and more.
- M4040 - <http://www.m4040.com/Survival/Primer.htm> Offers many survival tips, including a survival primer. (FM 21-76 US Army Survival Manual download is a great resource)
- Google Outdoor Recreation - [http://www.ehow.com/list\\_1076.html](http://www.ehow.com/list_1076.html) Offers clear instructions on how to do (just about) everything. Scroll down to Wilderness Skills.