

This blog is about something I have only very rarely seen discussed. Even so, it is one of the most vital subjects in prepping, and one must be prepared to deal with it.

Before that, we need to discuss our bags or kit. Items in your go-bag can be broken down into three categories, which really define how much of a prepper you are.

Category 1 – Consumables.

These are items that can be used for a limited time and then can no longer be replaced. Many beginning preppers have bags stuffed full of these things. Food, toilet paper, medicines and other sundries are some of the items here.

Category 2 – Transitionables.

Yes, I made up that word. This covers a class of items that enable the transition from “modern living” to “primitive living”. A tent is a good example. One cannot live in a tent forever. It is a temporary shelter at best. The idea is to live in the tent while building or finding a more durable structure. Weapons are another form of transitionable. Unless you have a black powder rifle or a longbow, resupply of these items depends on acquiring premade ammunition that you cannot reproduce yourself. The life span of a transitionable is limited.

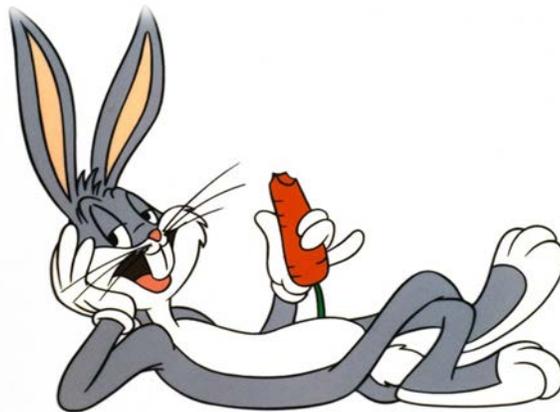
Category 3 – Durables.

These are items that really do not wear out. Knives, hatchets, or a stainless mess kit are some examples.

A good bugout bag will have a mix of these things, but will concentrate mainly on the latter two categories.

Which brings me back to the original post, the item no one will talk about.

Bugs.



Not the rabbit.

Most people who have thought out their packs fairly well probably have some DEET or bug spray in their kit. The big problem is that it is a consumable. What happens when it runs out?

When I was a very young man, I worked for a surveyor in the country. We spent all day most days of the week deep in the woods in all kinds of terrain. People cramped up in an office think this must be glorious. It is not.

I remember one day in particular, we were in a valley near a fairly steep cliff, hacking our way through heavy briars to our next point. It was blackfly season. They were incredible. They did not bite aggressively (thankfully), but they would fly into your eyes, ears and nose in a never ending stream of irritation. They literally drove us insane. We could not make clear decisions, we could barely see, and smoking would not keep them away. It was brutally hot, and covering up to protect your body just made it worse. Bug spray had no effect at all. In the end, after several hours of this we had to abandon the job for the day.

Ticks are another hazard. There is no way to avoid them. Some are so small they really cannot be seen. I came off one job with over forty (we counted them) attached to every part of my body. Bees are another issue. Yellow jackets made our lives miserable. Every fifteen feet we would hit another nest and have to go off running. Usually when we stopped we would be on top of another nest. More running.

Ants seem to find you when camping as well. Big red ones normally. They like the shelter a tent provides and come exploring.

So yes, bugs are a big problem in many parts of the country.

Here is what I did learn, much of it the hard way.

A mosquito net headwrap helps keep bees and biting flies off. You can even sleep in it and sleep through a cloud of mosquitoes.



Smoke from a campfire will keep the levels down, but you need to be in it. Needless to say you will smell like a smoked sausage, but it will help with the mosquitoes.



When camping, stay as high as possible and stay away from lakes, ponds or still water.

Mosquitoes have active and inactive times, even at night. I noticed they calmed down considerable after 11 pm and did not pick up again until just before dawn. Of course they prefer the shade to sun anytime so pick a campsite in a sunny location.

Stay off the ground to avoid ants and ground crawlers. A hammock works well.



Bees are active mainly through the fall season, becoming more aggressive as the first frosts draws near. After one or two good frosts, they are done. Look for them in small holes in the ground usually near an object like a wall or fence. They rarely like to be out in the open with nothing around, preferring the base of a tree or old stump. When walking in the woods during bee season, use the “stop and stare” technique. Take a moment to stop and stare at the ground where you intend to walk. The movement of bees in and out will quickly become evident.



For ticks, we have tried everything. Even Brewers Yeast tablets. No luck. Best bet is to roll socks up over long pants, tuck shirts in and wear long sleeves. Wear light colored clothing so they can be seen easily and make frequent checks. Ticks will crawl uphill (on you) as far as they can go, so they will usually turn up under your shirt armpits or under your collar. To remove them quickly and easily, we carried a roll of scotch tape and just ‘pressed’ them off. Then fold the tape in half and they cannot escape. We used to write the date on the tape and stick them to the wall, why? So if we came down with Lyme symptoms we could have the tick tested.

Some research is needed into the methods the natives used as well. Sweet Flag, sweet Basil, and Juniper oils are said to be effective, I have not tried these. Of course they also rubbed themselves down with rancid bear grease, so not everything is as romantized as it seems. You may remember Rae Dong Chong is “Quest for Fire” smeared with a thick clay as well.



So we conclude my rant for today about BUGS, one of the real unmentioned difficulties of prepping.