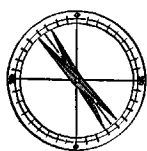
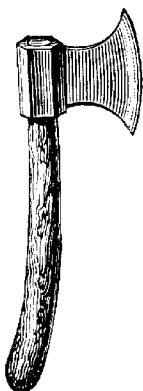
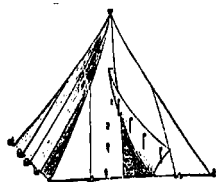


BUSH CRAFT 101



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A Field Guide to
— the Art of —
WILDERNESS
SURVIVAL

Dave Canterbury

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to all the frontiersmen and woodsmen who came before me who have passed on their knowledge through their writings and journals. Without these individuals we would not have so much information from which to glean our current knowledge, and without their dedication books like this one would be impossible.

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— Introduction —

“Preconceived notions, especially when one is fairly brought up in their influence, are most difficult to shake off.”

STEWART EDWARD WHITE, *CAMP AND TRAIL*, 1907

“Bushcraft” is a term for wilderness skills and is the practice of surviving and thriving in the natural world. To effectively practice bushcraft, you must master a unique skill set that includes firecraft, navigation, trapping, creating shelter, tracking, and the use of tools, both modern and primitive. Wise hikers carry few essentials and tools with them on their journeys; instead of extra equipment, they carry the knowledge and skills needed to create necessary items straight from the landscape. To thrive in the woods without the modern comforts available today takes determination. Like any hobby, it requires dedication and knowledge that may in certain circumstances save your life. Many bushcrafting skills are essential to surviving in the wild in an emergency.

Turning to the not-so-distant past, you’ll find that some of the most influential men in history took life in the wilderness as a serious endeavor as well as a euphoric pastime. They reconnected with nature, conserved resources, and worked to preserve the natural world. Theodore Roosevelt is perhaps the most famous president associated with exploration, preservation, and life in the wild. Working with John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, he

improved the protection of the United States' natural wonders, preserving 230 million acres of wildlife habitat across the nation. Within thirty years of the turn of the twentieth century, folks in the United States were rediscovering what it was like to spend time in nature and finding a release from the day-to-day life. Writers and authors such as Horace Kephart and E.H. Kreps captured this new craze by using the terms "woodcraft" and "camping." They followed in the footsteps of their predecessors such as George Washington Sears "Nessmuk," who was an innovator in tramping and traveling in the woods for recreation—not survival. More recently, Les Hiddins, the Australian "Bush Tucker Man," Mors Kochanski, the Canadian bushcraft and survival instructor, and Ray Mears, the famous English woodsman and instructor, have all brought the practice of bushcraft to contemporary audiences.

Why would anyone, in this era of modern conveniences and incredible technology, leave a comfortable life behind in pursuit of a simpler, but potentially hazardous, tramp in the woods? The reasons are many, and the benefits are numerous. Practicing bushcraft is a great way for you to enjoy the outdoors. If you feel you're trapped in an urban environment, a good tramp is a way to return to the wild, turn off your electronic devices, and escape society's constant pressures. In addition, the abilities you hone in the bush can become lifesaving skills when it comes to disaster preparedness and survival situations.

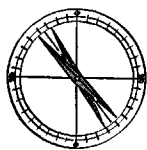
Nessmuk said it best when he explained, "We do not go to the green woods and crystal waters to rough it, we go to smooth it." That is a powerful statement, especially in this day of modern convenience. Many believe that to "smooth it," or to be comfortable, means that we need lots of gear and gadgets. In reality, you need very little equipment to succeed in the wild. Instead, you need knowledge of the natural world. This book gives you that knowledge in a short span of words, but it must be complemented by

your own experience and time in the bush to gain your own “Doctorate in Woodsy Knowledge” (a term coined by Mark Baker).

This volume is the perfect companion for outdoor enthusiasts as well as those new to practicing bushcraft. It was written from personal experience, research, and many days and nights afield within several different environments and ecosystems. Guided by my experience, you’ll discover all you’ll need for expeditions, from preparing your pack to setting up camp to choosing tools and supplies. This handbook also includes clear instructions on navigating, fire-making, trapping, fishing, foraging, and more. You’ll even learn the best ways to conserve resources, both natural and man-made. The tried-and-true instructions, tips, and tricks found here will give you the important bushcrafting skills you need to transition from indoor living to surviving—and thriving—in the natural world.

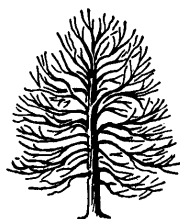
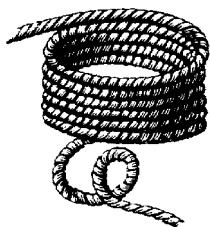
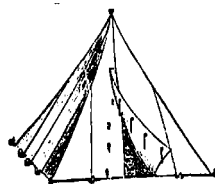
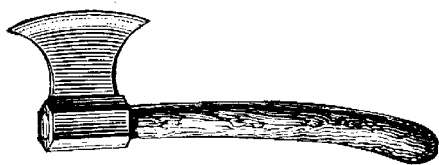
It is my belief that by understanding natural resources and learning about the items that make the difference between comfort and misery, you can attain an almost euphoric experience when spending time on the trail or in the bush. With this book as your guide, soon you’ll be enjoying the wilderness as well—without the need to smooth it. To that end, I present this writing to you, inspired by my heroes and mentors of the past as reclamation and a more contemporary version of bushcraft from my experience in the eastern United States.

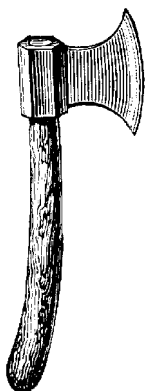
—*Dave Canterbury*



PART 1

Gearing Up





Chapter 1

YOUR PACK

“The man, who goes afoot, prepared to camp anywhere and in any weather, is the most independent fellow on earth.”

—HORACE KEPHART, 1904

When you practice bushcraft, you are a self-contained unit: You must carry all you need on your back and on your person, everything necessary to sustain you for the duration of your trip. (You must also include anything you may need in an emergency.)

THE FIVE Cs

You can organize the essentials based on the **Five Cs of Survivability**. Within these five base elements are all the tools and knowledge you need to be prepared for emergencies as well as to become independent of the trappings of the urban jungle. These items are the hardest to reproduce from natural material, take the largest amount of skill to reproduce, and control the conditions that most directly affect your body’s core temperature. (They can

also be used to process raw items to help control your body's core temperature.) These items, along with your ability to dress for the current conditions and knowledge of the natural world, make it easy to pack a light kit and enjoy your time "afoot."

The Five Cs are:

1. **Cutting tools** to manufacture needed items and process food
2. **Cover elements** to create a microclimate of protection from the elements
3. **Combustion devices** for creating the fires needed not only to preserve and cook food, but also to make medicines and provide needed warmth
4. **Containers** to carry water over distances or to protect collected food sources
5. **Cordages** for bindings and lashing

These items, along with knowledge of the landscape and a few items to secure your food, will be the core of what you pack and carry. You can then add a few things for first aid, navigation, and repair to make your life "smooth" while on the trail and in camp. Does that mean you need a plethora of items that will be miserable to carry or will be so cumbersome as to make you regret the trip within a few hundred yards? No; rather you must choose the right elements for your kit, and you must ensure that these items are of the best quality. In addition, you must make sure that they will perform several needed tasks well.

CORE TEMPERATURE CONTROL, COMFORT, AND CONVENIENCE

The Five Cs are largely intended to help you control your core temperature, comfort, and convenience. When packing or creating your kit, understanding these elements will help determine which items are truly important and which are only added weight.

Your first priority in any kit is to maintain your bodily functions and core temperature in any weather condition. For this reason, items such as combustion devices, clothing, and containers to process water will be of the utmost importance. If you look at comfort, these are the items that you will want to provide a comfortable night's sleep. Sleeping at least four solid hours per night is crucial to enjoying your time afoot. (You can gauge someone's experience level in the woods by how well he or she sleeps at night.) Convenience items are those that you don't have to pack but you would like to bring along to make things enjoyable or to make some tasks a bit easier. By focusing on core temperature control and comfort when planning your packing, you will make room for convenience items that make for memorable times in the wild.

PACKS: AN OVERVIEW

Now that you know the philosophy of packing, you need something in which to carry your gear. There are many different packing configurations and brands on the market today, and the choices in colors and style are almost endless. I have never been a fan of packs with lots of pockets and compartments; whenever you look for a certain item, finding it becomes an ordeal. Keep things simple; our mentors of the past believed the same. The most basic carry means a **bed/blanket roll**, **rucksack**, **pack frame**, or **pack basket**. Some of these can be combined for further comfort or versatility. In the following sections, we'll consider a few improvised strategies for packing, as well as some more common options available today.

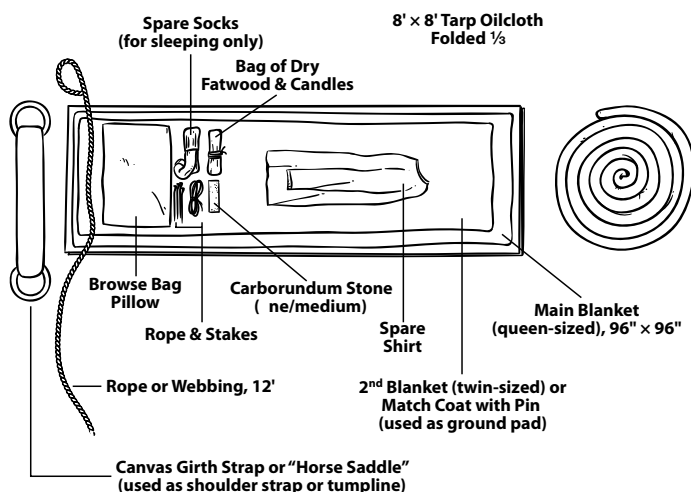
CARRYING YOUR WOOL BLANKETS

If you plan to use a wool blanket and not a sleeping bag, you will need a queen-size 100 percent wool blanket and a twin-size

100 percent wool blanket combined for bedding; this will suffice in temperatures all the way to freezing. To create this carry option, lay a **tarp** on the ground, folded in thirds (8' × 8' is a good minimum size). Then fold the queen blanket in half with the twin folded in half on top of that. To this you will add other elements of the kit that you won't immediately need, as they will be confined to this roll until you set camp. Spare clothing and some dry tinder are good things to put inside this roll for dry safekeeping.

Once the roll is laid out on the ground, fold in half a piece of rope or webbing of 12' length and place it at the end of the roll. Roll the rope up into the rest of the bedroll; when it's in the roll, a loop will extend from one side, and the two tails of the rope will extend from the other side of the roll. Feed these tails through the loop and tie them off. You will then need to strap the roll together by using two lengths of cordage around the outside of the roll, and knot them off. In this configuration, you can wear the roll as a single strap, or the rope can be divided to form a backpack-style carry.

Blanket (folded in half, lengthwise)



Assembling your bedroll

RUCKSACKS

A **rucksack** is a common name for a backpack, and there are hundreds on the market today. Again, lots of pockets and compartments in a pack can create problems; stick with designs that feature a large bucket-style compartment and a couple of outside pockets for easy access to important or often-used items. A pack large enough to fit a pack basket, or about 35–50 liters, is more than large enough for many days in the field. The most important thing to remember when selecting a rucksack is the overall durability of the pack and all its component parts, such as straps, zips, and buckles. Canvas packs are great, but a heavy material (with a denier of 500+) will work as well. For the beginner, military surplus is a good place to start. Military surplus materials have been tested to withstand much abuse, and if you inspect them, you'll usually find them to be in good order. They will serve you for many years at a very good price.

PACK BRANDS TO CONSIDER

When selecting a new pack for purchase, be sure the company has a good reputation and long-standing experience in producing packs. Remember: Your pack is your lifeline when you're off in the woods by yourself. A lifetime guarantee is money well spent. Duluth Pack Company has been in business since the late 1800s, and today holds to the same quality and guarantee as the company's creator. These packs are among the best if you choose a rucksack option. As far as surplus packs go, Swedish mountain rucksacks, U.S. ALICE (All-Purpose Lightweight Individual Carrying Equipment) packs, and USMC ILBE (Improved Load Bearing Equipment) packs are difficult to beat for time-tested durability.

Any pack system should include a waterproof bag large enough to fill the main compartment to ensure that contents are kept dry—no matter the conditions. After you've set up camp, you can remove the bag and use the emptied pack for gathering camp

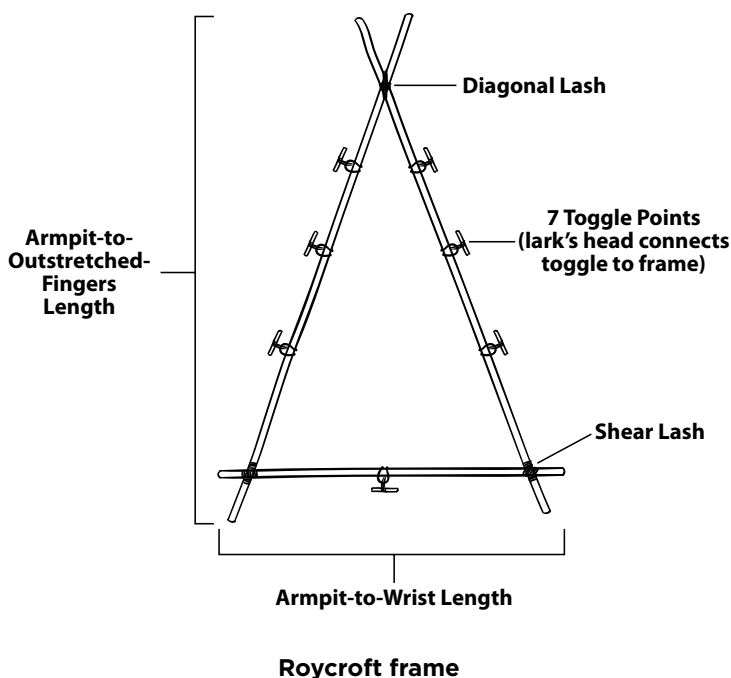
resources such as firewood. If you want to combine a rucksack with a bed/blanket roll option, the pack can be of smaller size; simply adding “D” rings from any saddle shop will allow the roll to be hung from the straps at waist level. Many of the packs and frames available include a waist belt that is padded to help distribute the load, and most can be removed if you find they are in the way or if you want a lighter load.

PACK FRAMES

Pack frames are my favorite system for carrying gear into the field. You can use them as a standalone item or combine them with other items. The versatility of external frames has been all but forgotten today. The most popular improvised frame today is the **Roycroft frame**, named after Tom Roycroft, an outdoorsman who taught the construction of this type frame to Mors Kochanski, the famous Canadian bushcraft and wilderness survival expert. This simple triangle can be constructed within minutes and can last many years if the lashings are correct and the wood selection is wise. To create this type of frame, first cut three components (easily made from a single hardwood sapling), and follow these lashing instructions:

1. Cut a lumbar slat or split piece of hardwood approximately 2" wider than the lumbar region of your back (or about the length of your armpit to your wrist).
2. Cut 2 pieces 1–1½ times the length of your arm from armpit to outstretched fingertips.
3. Shear lash (See Chapter 3) both longer components about 1" in from the ends of the lumbar slat, and then cross and diagonal lash them about 4" from the top to create a triangle.
4. Once the frame is complete, create 7 toggle points for tying gear to the frame. The strap for the frame is made from a 12' long

single piece of rope or webbing by making a lark's head knot passing through the top X of the frame. Then wrap the rope around the ears of the lumbar piece, tying around your waist to secure.



An advantage to this frame is that it does not have crossbars within the triangle frame, which would dig into your back. Other frame types with crossbars cause the pack's load to push through the frame and into the back, causing discomfort over time. To pack the Roycroft frame, you can use a similar method to making a bedroll. Again, use the tarp as the outermost component. Instead of rolling the gear up in the tarp, fold the tarp around the gear, ensuring that the last fold becomes a flap to shed water. Lash this to the frame using cordage in an X fashion, and tie it off with a jam knot or similar knot before adding straps and donning the pack.