



MEMBERS UPDATE

September, 2018

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Caved In! How They Survived Being Trapped

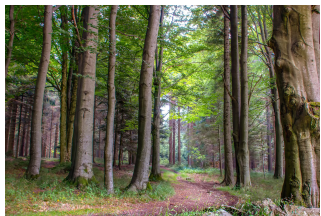
For many of us, being trapped in an enclosed space for hours or days at a time is so terrifying, it gives us the willies just thinking about it. Read the incredible stories and the lessons learned from the brave survivors that made it out alive.



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Top 6 Deer Rifles Under \$500

As we close in on the 2018-2019 hunting season, many deer hunters are feeling the itch to pop off and buy a brand new bolt-action. But why settle for just any old “deer rifle,” when you could get the last rifle you’ll ever need, and at an insanely good price too?



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Can You Hear What the Forest is Telling You?

Did you know that the Gold-winged Warbler can predict an incoming storm? That catfish start jumping in advance of an earthquake? Or that Blue Jays will alert the forest when they spot an animal trying to be stealthy? It’s incredible what you can learn if you know how to read the signs.



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Wildfire Nation: Escaping an Inferno

Hopefully, you’ll never have to experience what it’s like to be in the path of a rapidly advancing wildfire. The number of wildfires is currently spiking across the Western US and can develop anywhere drought conditions persist. That’s why it’s critical that we all know what to do.



HOW TO SURVIVE BEING TRAPPED IN A CAVE (AND OTHER EXTREME PLACES)

The world collectively held its breath as a recent daring rescue mission was carried out in Thailand. Twelve boys were trapped in a cave, along with their soccer coach, and oxygen levels were getting dangerously low. Divers selflessly took food and fresh water to the stranded group to keep them alive before they could be extracted. But before any of these heroics happened, the group had to survive with almost no supplies for nine days.

How did they do it? And how did every person who has ever gotten trapped in a cave, mine, well, etc. survive? Let's take a close look at how you can survive if something like this ever happens to you.

YOUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO MAKING IT OUT OF A CAVE ALIVE

Imagine for a moment that you're getting ready to go spelunking. We're going to use this scenario as a case study for what to do – and what not to do – if you want to make it back to the surface alive. This composite study uses many of the things people did right – and very, very wrong – after getting stuck in a cave.

2 Be aware that the Thailand cave rescue is the exception, not the rule. There are hundreds of

stories of people getting stuck in a cave who either didn't survive the experience or who were the sole survivor of a large group. Because of this, you must take the proper precautions and be prepared to help save yourself as much as possible.



In fact, the tragic end that famed spelunker Floyd Collins suffered in Crystal Cave back in 1925 is often a more accurate depiction of the experience. Of course, Collins' death 125-feet below the surface can be traced to him not following many basic survival tips, as we'll point out.

You might be wondering if seasoned spelunkers such as Collins have ended up dying in a cave, how can novices survive? Simple. By avoiding his mistakes and following these important safety tips.

Remember: getting too arrogant or sloppy to take the proper precautions is every bit as dangerous as being a novice. And no matter what you do, don't let yourself be used for someone else's commercial profit as Collins did. He probably wouldn't have died in a cave if he hadn't gotten stuck while looking for a way to entice more tourists as part of the so-called Kentucky Cave Wars.

1. PROPERLY PREPARE FOR YOUR ADVENTURE



First off, you should never explore a cave, mine, etc. without being properly prepared. This means wearing the right clothing, carrying water, food, and an emergency blanket, letting someone else know where you're going, buddying up with a more experienced spelunker, taking a flashlight, and so on.

3 Regarding clothing, it's highly advised that you steer clear of cotton and choose polyester or polypro

layers. This will keep you warmer than cotton, and it also won't retain moisture as easily. If you properly prepare and let someone on the outside know when to expect your return, you probably won't have to wait nine days for authorities to locate you.

Floyd Collins failed to follow every aspect of this first crucial step, and it cost him his life.

2. LEAVE A TRAIL FOR THE RETURN TRIP

It's easy to get turned around inside a cave or mine. Minimize the risk of wandering around for days by marking your trail. You can easily do this by tying ribbons around rocks every so often.

3. DEALING WITH THE ONSET OF A DISASTER

Let's assume you've followed steps one and two, but disaster still strikes. After all, the Thailand soccer team couldn't leave the way they came in, and the same thing could happen to you. Alternatively, you could become injured or get lost because you failed to leave a proper trail.

The most important thing is to not panic. Take stock for where you are and what you have with you. If you didn't bring enough supplies, you may have to get creative like the soccer team did (they drank drops of water that ran down the cave wall). If you're with someone else, DON'T separate unless it's a true matter of life or death.

In Collins' case, after getting stuck in one area, he kicked a rock while trying to scale a wall. This caused a rock slide that ended with a seven-ton boulder on top of his left foot.

4. FOCUS ON REMAINING AS WARM AND DRY AS POSSIBLE

In our case study, you've gone into a cave and gotten lost. One member of your party may even be injured. Now, toss cool temperatures and some standing water into the mix. What do you do?

It's imperative to keep your body temperature up. This means keeping your clothing dry. Hopefully,

you'll also have a poncho or plastic bag with you that can double as a poncho because this will protect your clothes and provide another layer of insulation.

If you have no choice but to temporarily wander into the water, it's actually best to remove your clothing and put it in a waterproof bag. That way, your clothes won't help bring on hypothermia. They also won't get wet enough to bog you down.

For this case study, let's imagine that you can't protect your clothes in this manner, yet you must swim a short distance to try to get to safety. When you reach the other side, it's smart to take off your clothes, wring them out, and, if possible, allow them to air dry for a while. This is where your emergency blanket will come in handy.

Floyd Collins had no viable options for warmth; he didn't have the right clothing with him, nor did he have a hardhat for protection. To make matters even worse, it was only 16 degrees F in the cave.

5. RATION, RATION, RATION



There are two common scenarios for getting trapped in a cave: flooding or getting physically stuck. Either way, you have to make the best of whatever supplies you have. In our case study, we'll say that the way back is flooded and the way forward is too tight to navigate.

At this point, you'll have no choice but to set up camp in any area that's dry enough (or, at the very least, where water isn't over your head). Gather all your supplies together and make a rationing plan.

Although the human body needs at least 1,200 calories per day to keep operating at peak efficiency, you can technically survive at least 21 days without food, but ONLY if you have enough water.

Due to this, you'll need to ensure you're able to drink fresh water daily throughout the ordeal. Always bring more water than food. It's common for rescuers to take at least one to two weeks to find people trapped in cave. You should prepare yourself for a minimum of 14 days and ration accordingly.

Rescuers were able to initially get food and water to Collins, which was a very good thing since he didn't have nearly enough supplies with him.

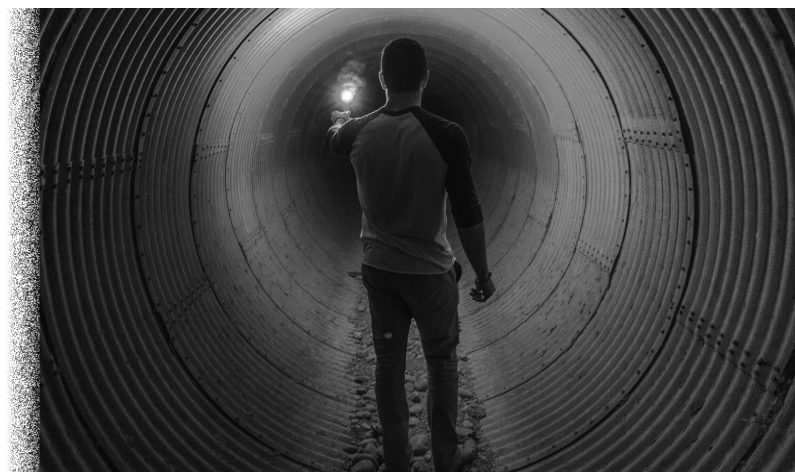
6. CONSERVE OXYGEN, ENERGY, AND MENTAL HEALTH

Now that you're stuck and know your rationing situation, conservation has become the next critical requirement.

You may need to move around some to keep warm, but don't do it enough to break a sweat. Make a conscious effort to control your breathing. In Thailand, the team's coach taught the boys how to meditate, and this helped keep their minds calm and slowed their breathing. Again: don't give into panic. That's the quickest way to ensure you won't survive.

7. CONSERVE LIGHT

Don't let your batteries run out. Turn off any flashlights when they're not imperative. And NEVER try to make it out of the cave without light unless that's your last resort. As you're waiting for rescuers



(or for the flooding to recede), you may need to move some without light - especially if your batteries do run out. Crawling is generally safest in this scenario.

Floyd Collins couldn't crawl, nor could he make his light last. Unfortunately, he only had one light source with him.

Sadly, many like Collins who've gotten trapped in a cave didn't survive. But the vast majority of them weren't prepared for the possibility of getting trapped. Remember: staying in one place will help rescuers find you. Following all the guidelines of this case study example will also dramatically increase your odds of being found alive.

AN INSPIRING STORY OF MINE SURVIVAL



Much like the cave example, there are several cases of people never resurfacing after getting stuck in a mine. This time, though, we're going to look at a real-life case study that involves 33 miners who were all successfully rescued after spending more than two months stuck underground.

Known as the Chilean Mining Accident, this story of survival began on August 5, 2010. Unlike the stories involving cave incidents, the men who became stuck were working in the mine. Therefore, they had no good reason to have an extraordinary amount of supplies, although the mine had been reported as unsafe to management before things took a potentially deadly turn.

HOW DID 33 MINERS GET STUCK 2,300 FEET UNDERGROUND?

The mining group was doing their normal daily work routine when a geological shift – likely caused by the mining company's unsafe conditions – caused part of a long helical roadway in the mine to become completely blocked. Initially, two groups had been mining in the same area, but one group was close enough to the collapse to make it out in time.

Early efforts to reach the group were thwarted by the unstable environment of the mine. In fact, a second collapse happened on August 7. This was followed by a long delay due to outdated mine shaft maps. As a result, the location of the miners wasn't uncovered until August 22. At this point, the miners had already been stuck for 17 days, but their epic fight for survival was far from over.

SURVIVAL: STRETCHING SUPPLIES

The miners were fortunate enough to be able to access an emergency shelter. This 540 square foot area contained benches, along with some food and water. However, it wasn't designed to help people exist for a long period of time, so they had to ration supplies meant for only two or three days.

By the time the miners were located, they'd each lost approximately 18 pounds. However, they had managed to stretch their meager supplies for more than two weeks by splitting only one can of tuna per day among all 33 men. Removal was still far away, but new supplies were delivered via a tube shortly after the initial rations ran out.

KEEPING FEAR AT BAY

Another major problem the miners faced was a lack of oxygen caused by ventilation issues in the emergency shelter. On top of which, they had to keep their fear at bay and maintain their mental health. To deal with the first issue, they spent most of their time in the 1.2 miles of tunnels that they could still access.

Every miner understood the risk of letting pessimism take over, and they took shifts keeping each other in

good spirits. The men also used the available tunnels to get some light exercise and to find a few moments of privacy, when needed.

To keep everyone moving forward, the group decided to run things via a one-man, one-vote democracy. Aside from working on each other's morale, they took turns looking for escape routes and maintaining their area of the mine.

The men also took a vested interest in helping each other deal with moments of mental instability by making a solemn pledge: They would never tell anyone on the surface how each man had reacted in their most desperate moments, especially during the first few days. They've kept their word to this day, and that has enabled all of them to recover physically and mentally.

EMBRACING THEIR FAITH



Even those who describe themselves as “not particularly religious” decided to connect with their faith during the 69-day ordeal. This is credited with helping them move through the darkest moments of fear and uncertainty.

DEALING WITH HUMID CONDITIONS

In a cave scenario, it's imperative to stay warm. But in the mine, each man battled humid conditions. To stay as cool as possible, many of them spent their

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WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS STORY?

The miners who got stuck in this accident did everything right. They exercised their bodies and minds. They gathered their supplies at the beginning and rationed them accordingly. They never split up entirely, although they gave each other privacy for the body's most basic functions. And most importantly, they banded together to ensure that none of them ever lost hope.

This is a lesson we all need to pay particularly close attention to. After all, if you ever get stuck in a cave or mine and you lose hope, your odds of dying will instantly become much higher. Instead, you need to remain hopeful while helping yourself by following all of the basic survival rules listed above.

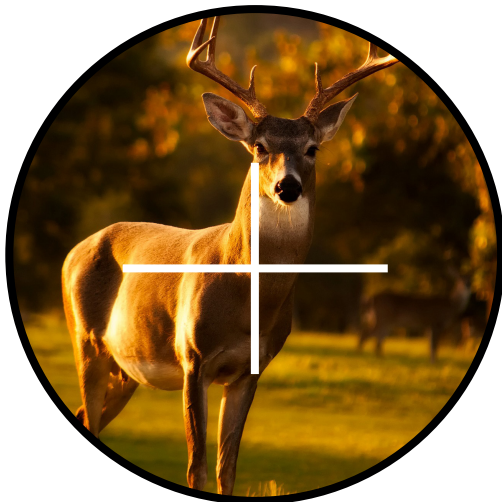




BEST DEER RIFLES UNDER \$500

With hunting season now rapidly approaching, an extremely contagious disease is spreading across the American landscape. Many family events will be missed and workplace productivity impacted in various ways throughout the nation, primarily in the months of November and December. It could be labeled both an addiction and a mental health concern, but the fascinating thing is that most sufferers will insist they hope researchers never discover a cure for the affliction known as “buck fever.”

In any case, the telltale early onset symptom of this condition is shopping for new deer rifles. Maybe you have never owned one before. Or perhaps your old trusty rifle malfunctioned in a major way. And you're looking for a quick replacement that will be extremely dependable, accurate, and won't break the bank.



Our mission is simple, we want to make sure you get the absolute most rifle for your hard-earned dollars. If possible, we want you to get more than you paid for. Think that sounds like a stretch? Just consider all of the classic firearms throughout history, the Colt 1911, Ruger Mini-14, Winchester 94, Glock, and we could go on for days. Almost every single one of these was designed and marketed to be a simple, budget-friendly firearm for the masses. Firearm history had greater plans for them, however.

Now, we can't be sure how these humble rifles will look in the rearview mirror of history, maybe they won't be as iconic as say the Colt Single Action Army. But we can say one thing: The precision rifles we've handpicked for this list deliver a level of accuracy and dependability that only military sharpshooters could hope for 50 years ago. Not to mention, these rifles are a mere fraction of the price when you adjust for inflation.

Why all the fanfare for a simple deer rifle purchase, one that may never be set on a target greater than 100 yards? First off, we just love firearms. Second, with a little extra research, you can end up with a rifle that's got a much greater capability than simply deer season, for the same price.

The guns we've selected are noteworthy for their precision shooting capabilities. Plus, they're popular platforms for building custom long-range rifles, should you ever get bit by the extreme distance shooting bug. These are your do-it-all, deer hunting, target range, post-apocalyptic sniper setups.

What's Makes a Great Deer Rifle?



As usual with reviews of this sort, we like to explain a bit about why we chose the candidates and the criteria we used to narrow down the field. First and

foremost, we settled on a hard ceiling of \$500 for a complete do-it-all deer rifle, optics not included.

Our reasons are simple. First, there are just so many excellent rifles at this price point that there's little to no reason for most non-competition shooters to spend more. The other reason is that we rarely see a hunter's setup where the rifle's capabilities don't greatly exceed the optic mounted on top. That said, it's critical you invest adequately in a good scope to unlock your rifle's potential.

Fittingly, the other big plank of our big deer rifle shootout is that the rifles we select must be "keeper-worthy." The main reasons people get rid of firearms is that they are either a.) unreliable/malfunctioning or b.) the gun just doesn't fit any critical needs in their arsenal. This is why we generally shy away from recommending certain "narrow-use" types of guns.



For example, if your deer rifle was only useful for hunting deer, then what good is it if your buck fever breaks and you're back to a normal 98.6°F? What if you decide target shooting is more your speed? Varmint hunting? Maybe you want to build out the ultimate

survival rifle?

To achieve this type of versatility, you're going to need a solid platform to build upon, one with excellent durability, tack driving consistency, and chambered in a caliber that's plenty versatile as well. The rifles we've selected will serve their owners well throughout a lifetime of deer hunting, but just as importantly they won't stop there. With practice time and the right ammo, each of these rifles can turn in tack-driving 1MOA groups, putting many rifles several times the price to shame.

Savage 12 FV



Savage is well-known for making excellent, precision rifles for shooters who want performance without breaking the bank. That's exactly what the 12 FV delivers. If you want a sharpshooter rifle that can group as tightly as your shooting buddy's \$2,000 rig, for less than a quarter of the price, this is the rifle for you.

For those familiar with Savage, it's no surprise that this rifle is chambered in some of the lighter calibers not ideal for deer hunting, such as .204 Ruger and .22-250 Remington. After all, the Savage name has been somewhat synonymous with varmint hunting. And believe us, we love those rounds, but wouldn't feel especially comfortable launching those at the buck of a lifetime.

Available in both .308 Winchester with a 1:10 barrel twist and 6.5mm Creedmoor with a 1:8 twist, this 12 FV is designed for hitting small targets at long distances with plenty of energy (AKA "knockdown" power).

With a stout 26" barrel, the 12 FV is a sub MOA rifle at 100 yards and is more than capable of shooting 10" groups at 600 yards. Of course, there is a trade-off and that's weight. At 8 pounds and 12 ounces, it's no featherweight.



Another bright spot for the Savage namesake is the AccuTrigger, which is popular both because it's a great 2-stage trigger, but it's also easily adjustable (read: you don't need to be a gunsmith to adjust it). The 12 FV also comes with an upgraded bolt knob which is a nice touch.

As you'd expect at this price, there are a couple features 12 FV owners will have to do without. The most noticeable is that this rifle isn't equipped with a drop-free magazine or plate, as in all the shells must be ejected from the top with the bolt action. Maybe this is a big issue for you, maybe you don't care at all.

Another feature some 12 FV fans tend to fixate on is the plain-old, not super well-fitting black synthetic stock. If you use this rifle for deer hunting only, this probably won't bother you. Most shooters who focus on long-range target shooting upgrade the stock.

Retail: \$420

The Ruger American Predator



This is a really exciting rifle in several aspects. Met with some skepticism upon its launch in 2012, the Ruger American line has really proven itself to be just as advertised: An extremely accurate, high-value, do-it-all platform.

Thus, the Ruger American Rifle lineage is extremely popular across a wide swath of shooters, especially deer hunters, target shooters, varminters, and even rimfire enthusiasts. Needless to say, the base model American is a great rifle for the price. Well, the upgraded Predator model is even better.

The Predator has a heavier contoured barrel, a threaded muzzle (with a thread protector), and a full-length Weaver style scope rail. It's also got a very nice moss green composite stock with Ruger's Power Bedding® system that locks the receiver down, yet allows the barrel to be free-floating for greater accuracy.



The Predator has a 70-degree bolt, standard across the America Rifle platform, so it can accommodate some big honkin' optics. Also part of the platform is a very nice two-stage, adjustable trigger (pull weights between 3 and 5lbs), so you can customize your trigger feel without voiding your warranty.

Another cool feature with the American series is the rotary magazine. In sharp contrast to the 12-FV and Remington 700 ADL, which have no magazine release (or even a plate), Ruger seized on the idea of developing a fully detachable magazine, like you'd see in a semi-auto carbine. The magazine capacity is 4 for most deer hunting calibers. If you go with the .223 or .204 Ruger, capacity goes up to 5.

Despite it having some varmint specific characteristics, Ruger threw the kitchen sink into the Predator series in terms of caliber selection. Starting at the .204 Ruger, the guys at Ruger were wise enough not to pigeonhole this Predator, available in .223 Rem, .22-205 Rem, .243 Win, 6mm Creedmoor, 6.5mm Creedmoor, and .308 Win. Thus, your options with this rifle are wide open in both precision and ammunition.

Retail: \$489

Mossberg Patriot Laminate Marinecote



We've felt for a long time that Mossberg doesn't get enough attention for the great value they provide in terms of rifles. They're a bit better known for their shotguns. The Patriot line of rifles tackles that issue head-on, with a high-quality rifle platform that cuts no corners and yet still comes in well under \$500.

Each Patriot is equipped with a 22" fluted, free-floated barrel (for greater accuracy), topped off with a crown on the end of the muzzle to protect the rifling. These are just a few of the nice touches which underscore the level of detail that Mossberg put into this entry level rifle. And as we mentioned above, we really like to give kudos to manufacturers that go the extra mile with their value lines.

For starters, the Patriot lineup is very accurate, more than capable of shooting sub 1" (sub 1 MOA) groups at 100 yards. While that's true with the synthetic stock versions, we went with the Laminate Marinecote because, well, it's just a better overall package that still comes in under budget.

The protective Marinecote finish looks really cool with the laminated stock and it's especially handy for deer hunters, who may be out stalking the big one in the drizzling rain. That way, your matte stainless-steel look remains stainless after some rugged field use.



Mossberg has also jumped aboard the detachable box magazine bandwagon, with a nice magazine design that seems to be a tad more popular with shooters than Ruger's. Truth be told, the advantage of a box magazine is negligible compared to the old drop-free plates, but we do think box mags are a nice and convenient way to store ammo.

Now, let's get to the most important part: Accuracy. Mossberg really hit the nail on the head with this rifle's level of precision. The 22-inch free-floated, fluted barrel isn't just for looks, it's highly capable of delivering sub 1" groups at 100 yards, straight out of the box. Largely responsible for this is the very smooth Lightning Bolt Action Adjustable trigger system. The LBA, for short, is a 2-stage setup, easily adjustable between 2 and 7 pounds.

With ample Weaver style scope bases and an empty weight of about 7.25 pounds, the Patriot Laminated Marinecote is the do-it-all deer rifle that keeps your sporting horizons wide open, available in .270 Win, .308 Win, .30-06 Sprg and .300 Win Mag.

Retail: \$450

Thompson/Center Compass



10 Here's a name you probably didn't expect to see on this list. Thompson/Center, or "T/C," has jumped

into the fray of affordable bolt-action rifles in 2016 with the Compass line. As the least expensive rifle on our list, the features and accuracy you get with the Compass is a major achievement. Promising 1 MOA grouping with premium ammo, T/C threw down the gauntlet for reviewers and testers, the majority of which have heaped praise on this rifle's precision capabilities.

There's an awful lot to like about this rifle, including the fact that it leaves a little money in your pocket to throw at an optic, which you can easily mount on the Weaver style bases. Unlike several others on this list, the Compass lineup offers no sub-model variations.

The only option you're offered is what caliber your Compass is chambered in. Those are, by the way, everything and the kitchen sink: .204 Rug, .22-250 Rem, .223 Rem, .243 Win, .270 Win, .300 Win Mag, .308 Win, .30-06 Sprg, 6.5 CM, 7mm Rem Mag, and 7mm-08 Rem.



Let's talk specifics; the Compass is offered with a no-frills black synthetic stock with the trigger guard integrated into the design. As for magazines, the Compass makes use of a detachable rotary magazine (are you noticing a trend here?) that fits flush and holds 5 standard cartridges. T/C endowed this creation with a free-floated barrel, yet another feature becoming industry standard in this category.

One major standout with the Compass is, however, the threaded muzzle, ready for a muzzle-break, suppressor, etc. That's a very cool feature, straight out of the box. The barrel is also equipped with T/C's famed 5R rifling which the manufacturer claims lowers friction and is easier to clean.

With one of the few single-stage triggers in the group, the Compass still manages to impress in both

the smoothness of the pull and the adjustability between 4.5 and 5.5lbs. Bottom line, if you want a highly accurate rifle that's a bit off the beaten path, the Compass is for you.

Retail: \$350

Savage Axis II XP



We know you may be thinking: another Savage bolt-action, really? Our answer is a resounding yes. The Savage Axis series is widely considered to be the inspiration for the current generation of bargain basement tack drivers, including the Ruger American, Mossberg Patriot, and Remington 783.

Well, the Axis II XP is an upgraded version of Savage's extremely influential bolt-action platform. Like the American, Patriot, and Compass (is this starting to sound like a Jeep commercial?), the Axis has a free-floating barrel attached to the receiver with a barrel nut that Savage has made an industry standard. The Axis also has a detachable 4-round magazine that seems to be the flavor of the day.

This is the only scoped rifle combo on the list for good reason; we don't like scoped rifle combos. The optic in the case of the Axis II XP combo, a very decent Weaver Kaspas 3-9 X 40mm, will get the job done. Still, it's probably not the optic you've been dreaming about drilling bullseyes with.



11 The reason we chose the Axis II XP package is

actually two-fold. First, the Axis II is equipped with Savage's legendary AccuTrigger, just like the 12 FV. The original Axis platform has a simpler, single-stage trigger. It's not a particularly bad trigger, but it requires some actual warranty-voiding gun-smithing to adjust the pull weight.

The other reason we favor the Axis II over the original formula is the optional hardwood stock. Look, there are a lot of nice things about a composite stock; they can take abuse in the field and they don't get dinged up. The issue is that composite stocks, at this price point at least, aren't solid enough for taking long shots.

The Axis II XP package gets you a substantial trigger upgrade, hardwood stock, and an optic for under our price ceiling of \$500, well under in fact. If you don't mind the composite stock, you can find Axis II XP combos at an even less expensive sub \$400 price.

That's a lot of value for your money, decked out in a wide range of calibers, including .22-250 Rem, .223 Rem, .243 Win, .25-06 Rem, .270 Win, 6.5 CM, .308 Win, .30-06 Sprg, and 7mm-08 Rem.

RETAIL: \$430

Remington 700 ADL Varmint



Last but certainly not least is the name you probably expected to see first. The Remington 700 platform, unlike most models on this list, is very much a time-tested design, having been mass produced since 1962. In fact, the ADL is a no-frills budget version of the same platform used by US military and police sharpshooters since 1988.

Not to pump the 700 ADL's tires too full of air, but the military's M24 Sniper Weapon System is, in fact, the Remington 700 combined with a Leupold 10x40mm scope, together referred to as a "system."

Now that we've got that out of the way, let's look at what this rifle has to offer. The 700 ADL Varmint

comes standard with a couple goodies that aren't included in the standard ADL package, such as the SPS Varminter's vented, beaver-tailed stock for an enhanced grip and a 26-inch heavier contoured barrel.

All ADL models are top-loading only, with no magazine plate. All models also come with Remington's X-Mark Pro trigger, a very smooth pulling precision trigger. While it is a single-stage trigger, Remington worked hard to eliminate any creep with the X-Mark Pro. Plus, this trigger is externally adjustable between 3 to 5 pounds.

The Varmint model is a bit heavier than the standard hunter (by a full 12 ounces), but the upgraded barrel and stock are more than worth it should you ever decide to test this rifle's limits. And while Remington doesn't make any promises regarding 1 MOA groups or anything, these rifles are very capable, and they shoot well with pretty much any store-bought ammo you run through 'em.

In terms of pedigree and aftermarket options, the 700 has no close second on this list. Most of our nominees are young whippersnappers in the world of precision rifles, while the Remington 700 is really the consummate heavy hitter. Even with its upgrades, the 700 ADL Varmint is a budget friendly rifle with the limitations that come along with the territory. One of those limitations is caliber options: .223 Rem, .22-250 Rem, and the very deer-capable .308 Win.

RETAIL: \$450

Wrap Up

When it comes to ownership philosophy at the NSRA, we favor what you might call a utilitarian viewpoint. Whether it's knives, backpacks, or guns, the equipment you purchase should be equipment you fully expect to use frequently. Often that means it should be multipurpose.

If you have a bolt-action rifle you really love, one that's highly versatile, chances are you'll find far more uses for the "deer rifle" than simply carrying it in the Fall. A rifle that can shoot 1 MOA groups can check lots of boxes for you, such as being your long-range target rifle, varmint rifle, survival rifle, or even a big

game spot-and-stalk rifle.

The nominees on this list are all rifles that deliver far more value than their price tag would indicate. As we stated in the introduction, the main criterion we were looking for is "keeper-worthiness." Is this a rifle that's accurate enough, versatile enough, and durable enough to hold onto indefinitely? If the answer is yes, it's far more than a deer rifle; and for under \$500 that's a steal.





HOW TO READ THE FOREST TO DETECT PREY AND DANGER

You may be skilled at many things related to the great outdoors, including how to start a quick survival fire and build an improvised shelter. But do you know how to read your surroundings to determine whether or not there's any danger coming? Or how to know if your desired prey is moments from walking into the clearing in front of you?

Even if you don't have a firm grasp on these things right now, you can improve your odds of survival in the wild by learning how to tune into your environment. This includes paying close attention to the actions of nearby birds and critters. In many cases,

13 they will provide an early warning sign of everything

from a rapidly approaching storm to the presence of a bear.

WHEN OTHER ANIMALS ARE NEAR

All woodland creatures have to be finely attuned to their environment if they want to make it through another day instead of becoming someone's dinner. These creatures use many clues to determine when danger is headed for them, including detecting chemical signals, feeling vibrations, hearing the predator coming, and seeing signs that a larger animal or bird has entered the same general area.

As each creature detects one or more of these signs, they go into defensive mode. But many animals that are intended as prey don't fight back; instead, they hide.

Some animals will give you easier to follow indicators than others. For example, if a grizzly bear enters the area, a deer is likely to bolt for its life. That's because deer are one of the things on the grizzly bear's menu. Of course, deer are skittish to begin with. But if they've been near you for a while without getting spooked, you can safely assume something else has changed in the environment if they dash off.

Let's look more closely at some of the animals that are most likely to let you know that either danger or prey is near:

1. BIRDS FLEEING



If everything is peaceful for a while but then all the birds break cover and take to the sky, you've probably got a notable creature in range. Birds tend to get scared off by loud noises, so this doesn't mean that they're reacting to their natural predators. Take this as a sign that either another human or a large, noisy (to them) animal is headed in your direction.

2. SQUIRRELS CHATTERING

14 Squirrels aren't dumb; they will run up a tree faster than you can blink if a dangerous animal is

near. This includes humans in many instances, by the way. But squirrels also enjoy making a lot of noise if another creature is hiding nearby. Since smaller animals tend to hide because they've detected a predator, you can consider the chattering of squirrels and chipmunks to be an indicator of a larger animal in the general vicinity.

3. BLUE JAYS, CROWS, AND RAVENS CAN BE YOUR BEST FRIEND



If you're trying to be stealthy in your movements, you'll eventually attract the attention of a noisy raven, crow, or blue jay. These birds apparently take great joy in alerting other birds and animals that a predator is near. In that instance, you'll be annoyed by these noisy birds. But you can also use them to your advantage.

Imagine you're hunting deer and one is cautiously moving your way. If one of these birds catches on to the fact that the deer is being cautious, they're very likely to fly above the deer's head and send out an announcement to the world. Therefore, if one of these birds starts squawking, be sure to pay attention.

4. RABBITS AND OTHER SMALL MAMMALS

Any unusual movement from smaller animals should always be noted. For example, rabbits that are playfully interacting will freeze in terror if they sense any type of predator (crazy fact – rabbits have an extraordinarily high risk of actually dying from fear). Rabbits are hunted by a wide variety of animals, so

their fearful response could indicate everything from a raccoon to a wolf. The only way to know for sure what's got them so anxious is to start paying close attention to the area they're looking at.

5. BATS MAY FLY DURING THE DAY TO AVOID SNAKES

Bats are famously nocturnal, which has made them forever linked to the vampire legend. Unfortunately, these winged creatures become an easy meal for enterprising predators. Many of their natural predators aren't much of an issue for humans, including raccoons and hawks.

One thing you will want to watch out for if bats are disturbed during the daytime, though, is the appearance of snakes. It's also smart to be aware of the presence of weasels. They're not usually a threat, but some will attack people.

Keep in mind that there are a few venomous snakes in the U.S. that could cause great damage to a human. These creatures slither up the side of a tree and pick off a bat from their roost while the bat is sleeping. Once the other bats become aware of the threat, they may temporarily leave their roost. Bats are also very sensitive to weather changes, as we'll explore in the next section.

WEATHER RELATED THREATS



We've all heard stories about creatures as small as ants and as large as elephants trying to hightail it out of the area up to 10 days before a tsunami. The general rule of thumb here is if all of the wildlife is fleeing one specific area, you definitely shouldn't keep heading toward it. Even if they're giving you a super early warning, there is a reason that these creatures are acting in an unusual way.

Animals and birds have also been credited with knowing when an earthquake will happen. Tsunamis and earthquakes can be devastating, of course, but they're not the typical weather issues that you're going to face. With that in mind, let's examine the subtle clues wildlife provides about a rapidly approaching thunderstorm or tornado.

1. BIRDS SUDDENLY DISAPPEAR

Did all the songbirds just stop singing? Do you no longer see them flying from tree to tree or hopping on the ground? This is a prime indicator that either a storm or a predator is on the way. Because birds tend to take off in a flock when the danger comes from a predator, you should be more cautious about potential bad weather if they all head into the trees.

One important thing to note: Although birds will take to the trees before and during a storm, their placement within these trees can be an even bigger clue about what's coming. When they detect a thunderstorm, they typically head to the lower branches and may even cluster on the ground beneath the tree. If you see this type of behavior, it's best to return to your camp and prepare to ride out the storm.

2. PREY SPECIES GET UPSET

If you're near any prey animals, including wild goats, rabbits, squirrels, etc., sudden changes to their behavior may indicate a big storm is coming. Oddly, these behavioral changes are less prevalent in predator animals. Prey animals tend to become agitated and nervous before a storm, and you may see them grouping together in an area that provides shelter such as under a large tree or inside a small cave.

3. FROGS ARE NATURE'S WEATHERMEN



When you're near a marshland or lake, you'll almost certainly hear the distinctive sound of frogs. That high-pitched, loud noise is normal, but did you know that it changes when a storm is brewing? Frogs will alert everyone in the general area by emitting even louder noises that last longer than usual. If you hear this, it's time to find shelter.

4. BUTTERFLIES AND BEES FEEL STORMS COMING

Much like birds, these flying creatures can sense it when the atmospheric pressure changes. Therefore, if you've spotted several of them throughout the day and then they suddenly disappear, they may be reacting to a storm that's about to roll in.

5. ANTS FORTIFY THEIR HOME

Ants are yet another species that senses rainstorms. To prepare for a possible deluge, they quickly start fortifying their home by adding to the size of their anthill. It's even believed that they purposefully block the entrances so that rain doesn't flood their tunnels. If you see a flurry of building activity at a nearby anthill, this is yet another indicator that a storm is on its way.

6. ONE SPECIES CAN PREDICT TORNADOS

If you're in the Midwest, you're going to want to pay very close attention to golden-winged warblers. This is especially true during tornado season. The vast majority of these helpful birds are found in Minnesota and Wisconsin (along with Manitoba, Canada), but they can also be spotted throughout the Northeastern to North-Central United States.

As you can see from the image nearby, this bird is tiny. Adults are typically about 4.6 inches long, and they usually don't exceed a weight of 0.35 ounces. They love to live in a mature forest, but you can also find them in wetlands and open scrubby areas. Even if you don't see them, you might hear their variable song. Many say it sounds like a trilled 'bzzzzzzz buzz buzz buzz.'

Why have we included so many identifying facts about just one bird species? Because knowing these details could save your life. Scientists have proven that golden-winged warblers can hear, and will react to, infrasound-acoustic waves. Put simply, they knew when a tornado is forming, even if it's hundreds of miles away and won't hit their area for another 24 hours.

What to Watch For: These songbirds love to claim an area and spend their lives singing, flying around the general vicinity, and breeding. However, when a tornado threat arises, they toss all of this out the window in favor of group safety.



Photo by E/Flickr

It's not uncommon for them to take off in a flock and fly up to 1,000 miles away to get completely clear of the storm system. If you see an established group of these birds take off in a flock and none of them return within a few hours, they're trying to tell you that a tornado is likely to hit soon.

7. FISH REACT TO IMPENDING EARTHQUAKES AND STORMS

Picture it: You're in the woods enjoying a week of camping. Part of your daily routine has involved heading to the river to catch your dinner. But suddenly, fish start jumping much more than usual. Even odder, catfish and other species that don't usually jump start jumping too. Or perhaps the fish stop biting and then seem to disappear altogether.

Yup, you guessed it; a big storm or other natural disaster is on its way. Pay particularly close attention to unusual fish jumping. This has been observed many times within a few hours (or up to one day) before an earthquake.

8. BATS ABANDON THEIR NOCTURNAL WAYS



Bats are nocturnal, so you should always pay close attention if you see them flying during the day. A single flyer might have rabies (so stay far, far away) or a small grouping may have been disrupted by a predator. But a large group of flying bats taking off during the day is a very disturbing occurrence. This typically means

they've sensed a strong weather pattern on the way and are headed for a safe place to ride out the storm.

STAYING SAFE IN THE FOREST

All of the above information can give you an advantage when it comes to avoiding dangerous animals, tracking prey, and taking cover before a storm. But none of this will mean much if you don't make a conscious decision to pay close attention to your environment.

The reality is that most of us miss hundreds – perhaps even thousands – of tiny environmental clues on a daily basis. Staying still and quiet long enough to let animals and birds react to other factors in their natural way may take practice, but it's a skill that's definitely worth learning.

You also can never fully rely on the instincts and behavior of the forest's residents. What you might interpret as a large animal headed your way could be nothing more than a bird, squirrel, or rabbit picking up your scent and getting spooked. It's also tricky to forecast the weather with animals because they might give you a sign a few minutes, or more than 24 hours, in advance of the event.

To minimize your risk of getting caught in the forest during a horrific storm, be sure to keep a close eye on the weather forecast. Of course, this isn't foolproof, either, but the combination of a meteorological forecast, the actions of animals and birds, and everything you can see and feel should be enough to protect you from most sudden storms.

As always, we encourage you to have a cellphone or satellite phone with you at all times so that you can call for help, if necessary. It's also wise to always take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with each new area of the forest you decide to rest or hunt in. Where is the best source of shelter? How far away are you from camp and what's the fastest/easiest way to get back there?

If you answer the preceding questions before a storm hits or a massive, angry grizzly bear enters the area, you'll have a much better chance of survival.

Wildfire Nation: Escaping the Inferno

In an average year, at least 100,000 wildfires destroy up to 5 million acres of land in the United States. In recent years, though, this devastation has increased to a shocking 9 million acres annually. It's clear that this problem is getting worse, but do you know how to prevent or survive a wildfire? This is something you absolutely must learn if you live in California, but don't get overly confident if you're in a completely different area of the country. After all, wildfires can – and do – happen anywhere.

How to Prevent a Wildfire

The massive California wildfires that took place in 2017 killed at least 40 people. Some estimates state that as many as 339,000 people are killed per year in worldwide wildfires. Animal casualties often happen in extremely high numbers too, as has been seen with all the horse deaths in California.

The best way to save lives and property is by preventing wildfires. But do you know how to avoid these deadly incidents?

1

Stop Thinking of Wildfires as Only a Forest Issue

Many people erroneously connect wildfires solely with the woods. Although this is the most common place for a wildfire to happen, you could actually start one in your yard, on the side of the road, or anywhere else that features dry vegetation. As long as the fire spreads out of control via nearby brush or woods, it's a wildfire, regardless of its initial origin.

2

Don't Drop Lit Cigarettes (or Matches, Smoking Materials, etc.)

If you smoke (quitting now is a good way to help your long-term health, by the way), you need to always be responsible with your cigarette butts. Tossing a butt out of your vehicle that hasn't been fully extinguished

is one of the biggest risks. In fact, several recent wildfires in Colorado were caused by careless litterbugs who threw out cigarette butts. Don't forget: if the authorities trace this type of action to you, the odds are high you'll face civil and possibly even criminal legal action.



3

Fully Extinguish Campfires

This should be a no-brainer, but people frequently leave smoldering fires behind. In some cases, these few lingering embers are stoked by wind and turn into a roaring wildfire.

4

Be Careful While Burning Trash

Do you burn waste in your backyard? Never do this on a windy day or during drought conditions. Also, always keep water, a shovel, and a fire retardant on-hand at all times, along with your cellphone.

5

Report Unattended or Out of Control Fires

Don't assume someone is coming back or that you can get the fire under control on your own. Always report fires, especially if your area is suffering from a drought or experiencing high winds.

Wildfire Survival: Case Studies from Within a Wildfire

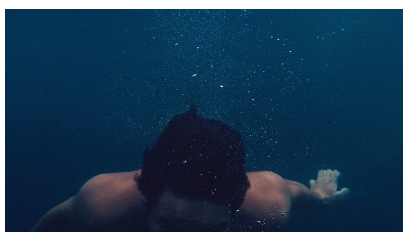


Surviving a wildfire takes a combination of knowledge (which we'll share in Part II of the article) and luck, along with a strong will to live. Here are a few actual survival stories from within the flames that we can all learn from.

1

Pool Survival

Jan and John Pascoe were surrounded by fire during a 2017 wildfire in Santa Rosa. The flames ripped through their neighborhood with such speed and ferocity that they had no way to escape. That's when inspiration struck: they could take refuge in their neighbor's swimming pool.



After contacting 911 about their plan, they headed into the neighbor's backyard. Debating between the flames and the freezing cold water, they held out as long as possible before jumping into the pool. The Pascoes had wisely taken t-shirts with them to hold over their mouths, and they used them off and on throughout their nightlong long ordeal.

Over and over again, the couple had to plunge their heads underwater and stay submerged as long as possible while insane heat and flames danced around them. Meanwhile, the cold water left them shivering, and they had to huddle together to stay warm.

By the time it was safe enough to get out of the water, Jan's phone – which was located on the edge of the pool – had melted from the fire's intense flames.

That's how close the couple came to perishing, but their smart thinking saved their lives. Sadly, their entire neighborhood was destroyed. They lost all their belongings and their cat disappeared. But their pool gamble paid off, so they stayed alive.

2

Animal Survival in Northern California

Two families in Northern California had to make the awful decision to leave home without all of their animals. The first family couldn't rescue their cat and two goats. The second family couldn't convince their herding dog, Odin, to abandon their eight pet goats.



Both of these families faced heartbreak due to the 2017 wildfires. Their homes were completely destroyed, but the survival instincts and loyalty of animals took a horrifying situation and made things a bit better.

The first family recovered their two goats. Although the cat wasn't found, they have every reason to believe their feline friend fled the area. How did the goats survive? That's a story we'll probably never know. But the prevailing theory is that they moved to the lowest section of grass and the fire simply didn't find enough natural fuel to keep it going.

The second family's story has a happy ending as well, but things would have been very different if it wasn't for one incredibly brave, selfless dog. Odin, a Great Pyrenees herding dog, refused to leave behind his eight goat friends. The distraught family left, fearing the worst but hoping for the best.

Two days later, they returned to find their home and land destroyed. And yet somehow, out of the darkness, came their eight goats and Odin. The dog suffered from melted whiskers, singed fur, and a leg injury that caused him to limp. The goats made it through the experience without any injuries.



How did Odin do it? The family believes the dog herded all the goats into the middle of their property. In that area, there were several large rocks to hide between. The theory is that Odin got each of the goats inside of this area and the fire completely skipped over them.

What can we learn from this? Aside from the important lesson that animals have great instincts and amazing loyalty, these dogs and goats have also provided a possible survival plan. If you can't get away from the property and there's no pool to hide in, look for areas with minimal grass or non-flammable sources of protection. Humans could have theoretically survived too if they'd been between the rocks or in the lowest section of grass.

3

Two More Hero Dogs

The animals in the story above rescued each other. But many dogs have used their survival instincts to save their human companions from wildfire too.



Ernie Chapman knows he most likely would have perished along with his Santa Rosa home if his dog, Sabrina, hadn't woken him up. Sabrina insisted that Ernie "check on things," and he realized he needed to get out immediately. Within five minutes, his home was ablaze, but he, Sabrina, and his other dog made it out alive.

Meanwhile, in another part of town, the Curzon family was woken up by their alert dog, Brady. Less than 10 minutes later, the flames hit their home. But thanks to Brady's quick thinking, everyone survived.

In both of these cases, the houses in question were decimated. Let this serve as an important lesson: if your dog (or other animal) starts whining, whimpering, or barking in a manner that's unusual or has any urgent or fearful tones, pay attention immediately. Sure, they might just want a snack or be upset about someone walking down the street, but it's also always a possibility that they're trying to save your life.

4

Fire Shelters Save Firefighters

Firefighters are in the business of saving lives during emergency situations. They selflessly enter burning buildings and use their specialized training to put out fires as quickly as possible. But even for them, battling a wildfire is an intense, sometimes deadly experience. And sometimes, they have no choice but to take shelter and let the flames literally crawl over them.



Photo via Wikipedia/Creative Commons

One such instance occurred in Wyoming in 2006. A group of firefighters was trying to help extinguish the Little Venus Fire inside Shosone National Forest. Unfortunately, a wall of fire approached them so rapidly that it became safer to take shelter than to use their firefighting skills.

For most of us, taking shelter from a wildfire means getting out of the area as quickly as possible. But that wasn't an option in this situation. Each firefighter had to deploy a fire shelter and hope for the best. These shelters are made from thin aluminum, and the person using one must also utilize their arms and legs to help keep the shelter pinned to the ground as they lie beneath it. Doesn't sound too reassuring as a wildfire rains fire down upon you, does it?

The firefighters had to use these shelters multiple times that day. They could hear and feel the flames roaring over the aluminum that stood as their only protective barrier between life and certain death. As terrifying as the entire thing was for all 10 firefighters involved, they also all survived.

You may not have a fire shelter – although this wouldn't be a bad idea if you live in a wildfire prone area – but you can see how proper planning makes a big difference. If those firefighters hadn't brought fire shelters with them (and learned how to use them in advance), it's likely that none of them would have made it.

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