

## SURVIVAL TRENDS REPORT-FINAL

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This report highlights some of the major changes in product development, buyer's preferences for camping and survival gear products, and other survival trends. The article also presents several valuable links in the last section.

We noted that several trends had converged during the past year, namely bargain shopping, product differentiation, advances in technology and design, which made high tech gear more affordable to everyone.

Some of the other trends noted were<sup>1</sup>:

- 1) While there had been a slight increase last year in camping (5.34%) and hiking (8.5%), the number of people actively hunting had decreased by 1.1 %.
- 2) Trail running, backpacking, and wildlife viewing increased by 15.2%, 18.5%, and 5.0% respectively.
- 3) While there was a slight decline in the number of Americans participating in martial arts (-1.1 %), there was a substantial increase (5.8%) in Americans who boxed and a slight increase in kickboxing (3.8%).
- 4) While there had been an upswing in outdoor camping, particularly RV camping, most campers prefer to camp relatively close to home. The average camping trip lasted 14 days.
- 5) The Pacific Northwest (18.9%) and the Upper Midwest (16.9%) have the most campers when compared to the rest of the United States<sup>2</sup>.
- 6) Advanced Technology and Design capabilities have produced more products suitable for extreme conditions.
- 7) Advances in Optics have yielded several high tech binoculars, monoculars, cameras, and night optics devices.

### Demographics-

Approximately 59% of men over the age of 35 years participate in core survival activities compared to 49% of women, over 35 years engaging in the four survival activities of backpacking, camping, hunting, and wilderness trekking.

While women are making some modest gains in backpacking and hiking, the most growth of outdoor women's activities has been in bow hunting. The **NSGA** found that women make up 12% of all bowhunters in the United States. Nearly **786,000 females** went bowhunting more than once in the past year. The average age of female bowhunters is 37.9<sup>3</sup>. More and more women are buying survival gear products as they "take to the woods" in large numbers. The growth of the B.O.W. (Becoming An Outdoors Woman) program throughout the United States may be one of the factors contributing to the increase in the number of outdoors women.

The average age for a female hunter was 30.4 years and the average age for a male hunter was 45.7 years of age. However, young people (ages 6-17 years) for the most part, continue to show a decreased appetite for outdoor activities such as camping, backpacking, and hiking<sup>4</sup>.

### Attention to Hunting & Bow-Hunting-

Keeping in mind that there has been a decrease in the numbers of hunters and a reported increase the numbers of firearms purchased this year, particularly handguns, it is speculated that most of the handguns purchased are for self-defense. When considered in conjunction with reports that ammunition manufacturers are working around the clock to keep up with sales orders, we have concluded that people are stockpiling these goods for future use.

This has caused some concern among law enforcement, outdoor groups, and hunting organizations.

According to the **National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA)**, hunting and firearms showed the greatest percentage increase among equipment purchases in 2007. Sales of hunting & firearms equipment rose 16% to \$4.6 billion from \$3.9 billion in 2007<sup>5</sup>.

Bowhunting and the purchase of cross bows have seen a dramatic rise in the past three years. One of the reasons for this has been the **National Archery in the Schools Program**. Young and old alike seem drawn to this sport primarily due to the unique skills involved, advances in bow design technology, the relative ease of getting a bowhunting license, and the particular camaraderie of hunting game in the forest.

### Recent Sales Trends-

#### (Military Surplus Goods Up)

Preliminary evidence indicates that the military surplus business has grown over the past 5 years<sup>6</sup>. We feel the reasons for this has been the result of 9/11, our military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US Defense Department replacing a huge out-dated inventory, and increased interest by law enforcement and survival groups in military or quasi-military items. Recently, mainstream sporting goods outlets and hunting supply stores have increased their inventory of camouflage, olive drab BDU style clothing, compasses, and optics. E-bay® has also emerged as a major source for military surplus items.

#### (Retailers Cut Prices)

In view of the recession, shoppers have become bargain shoppers. This means that instead of buying a premium brand name backpack, sleeping bag, or tent, outdoor enthusiasts are going to the Big Box Stores retail outlet or website to purchase their gear. The average price for a backpack is \$30.00, a sleeping bag is \$39.00, and a 3- person tent on average is purchased for about \$101.00<sup>7</sup>. Further, the big name retailers can out-advertise, stock larger quantities, display more products, and keep good customer relations due to their highly developed business processes. A report from **Internet Retailer®** indicated that the more sophisticated websites, with fast order processing and page load times garnered more sales than slower and less sophisticated websites. Hence, Walmart, Amazon, Sears, Target, and Kmart outperform the smaller specialty sites when it comes to camping product sales<sup>8</sup>.

Even the niche sites are cutting prices on survival gear items in the face of frugal shoppers. For example, Sierra Trading Post has cut the prices on some of its products by 50%, Cabelas has cut prices on some items by 20% to 70%, Eastern Mountain Sports from 20-40%, Mountain Gear has cut from 20-70%, Afton has reduced prices by 15%. and Gander Mountain offers 40 % off on some items. It should be noted that Gander Mountain is promoting over 3,000 firearms for sale on its website<sup>9</sup>.

#### (Eco-Friendly Products Increase)

Another trend we noted was that camping and survival good manufacturers have started making environmental friendly products by using recycled material or "green" material such as

vegan or organic resources such as bamboo. The North Face®, Timberland Boots®, Patagonia®, Merrell®, Burton®, Keen®, and Mountain Hardwear® are some of the leaders in eco-friendly camping products.

**Primaloft® ECO**, an earth-friendly mix of recycled and virgin insulation for coats and sleeping bags are relatively new innovations in “green” products. A new Eco-Friendly **DRYRIDE®** Recycled Polyester Fabrication, and Eco-Friendly Waterproof/Breathable Lamination with **DWR Coating™**, are several new inventions included into Burton Coats and jackets<sup>10</sup>. These eco-friendly products can be purchased at: Altrec.Com, Cabelas.Com, Eastern Mountain Sports.Com, Mountain Gear.Com, and Moosejaw.Com.

### **Growth of Survival Groups-**

There is some anecdotal evidence that memberships in survival groups are increasing. Posts to survival blogs have increased and there has been some media attention on the 2012 Doomsday Survival movement. This movement finds its foundation in early Aztec manuscripts displaying astronomic calendars that end in the year 2012. Extreme survivalists, people convinced that some global event would uproot traditional social and political institutions, are prepared to “bug-out” into the countryside at a moment’s notice.

Some reasons that survival groups appear to be growing are the perceived increase in natural and man-made disasters, global warming, increased government surveillance in light of 9/11, and the perceived fear that the United States has become weaker with the super-power status of China and wars in Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The current recession also figures into a “survivalist” mentality for many Americans.

### **(Other Survival Trends) -**

#### **Survival Shelters & Food Storage-**

This year reports indicate that most survivalists are planning to wait out the impending calamity by staying close to home; they have stored up food & medical supplies in underground shelters to keep them alive for at least a year.

In this regard, the small one or two person “safe closet” and home-based food processing have become more popular.

#### **Home-Made & Do It Yourself Survival Gear-**

Do-it yourself kits have really taken off recently particularly for personal survival kits, firestarters, water purifiers, and food processors. A Google Search came up with over 520,000 websites that teach you how to make survival kits and survival gear. Then there are the popular trademarked personal kits such as the Doug Ritter Personal Survival Kit™, the Greg Davenport Personal Survival Kit™, and Coghlan’s Survival-Kit-in a Tin-Can™.

Other types of survival products for the home are: water purifiers, bread makers, meat preservers, small repair kits, and D-I-Y energy kits.

According to the Nationally-known Survival Blogger, **James Wesley Rawles**, a few of the reputable food products & systems are: Mountain House Dried Food Products, Thrive Food Storage System, and Five Star Preparedness vacuum packed food bags.

[JWR Food Processor link is: [http://www.survivalblog.com/food\\_storage\\_cooking/](http://www.survivalblog.com/food_storage_cooking/)]

## Home-Made Survival Kits-

Here are 5 sources regarding Home-Made Survival Kits:

1) ***"M40 Basement Project"***-

"My Home-Made Survival Kit" based on the Ghurka Khukri Modification Project, this survival kit contains some of the toughest survival gear all in one handy little pouch. [Article Source:<http://www.m4040.com/Survival/Survival%20Kit.htm>]

2) ***"Home-Made Survival Kit/ Tin Can"***-

"Included in this survival tin which looks like an empty sardine can are the following: Waterproof Matches, Pencil and Paper, Water Purification Tablets, Snare Wire, Spark-Lite Fire Starter, Tinder, Hacksaw Blade, Razor Knife or Camping Saw, Fishing Kit, Whistle, Small Sewing Kit, Safety Pins, Signal Mirror". [Article Source: <http://www.survival-gear.com/survival-tin.htm>]

3) ***"Your Online Survival Kit"***-

"Nothing can replace real life experience, and the creation of survival kits for the individual is no exception. Our custom made survival kits for expert survivalists are assembled according to personal preferences, experience, and environments." [Article Source: <http://www.survivaltopics.com/survival/how-to-make-a-survival-kit-to-save-your-life/>]

4) ***"How to Make Homemade Survival Gear"***- by Lisa Parris.

Ms Parris discusses several tips on how to make 7 survival gear products using common household items. [Article Source: [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_4867227\\_make-homemade-survival-gear.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_4867227_make-homemade-survival-gear.html)]

8) ***"Homemade Survival Kit,"*** by Joseph B. Adams.

"This homemade survival kit is intended purposely to be handy for any emergency situations. These kits usually contain supplies, like food, water, medical supplies, clothing, communication devices, and other tools used for emergency purposes." [Article Source: <http://ezinearticles.com/?Homemade-Survival-Kit&id=1444702>]

## Recent Innovations in Survival Gear-

Here are four sources regarding Innovations in Survival Gear:

1) ***Survival Seed Bank – from "The Latest In Survival Products"***-

"The survival seed bank is one of the latest innovations in survival gear. The survival seed bank allows a person to plant a "crisis" garden in the event of a food shortage or emergency." [Source:(<http://www.mefedia.com/watch/26427964>)]

2) ***The Ark III™ a Personal-sized Survival Package-***

"This package supports one person for up to three days. Each ARK III includes a "space blanket," plus a three-day supply of food and water. Easily stored in a classroom, locker, desk, or car, the compact ARK III can be used anywhere." [Source:(<http://www.tctactical.com/>)]

3) ***The Power-free Energy Source, from "Tools for the Ultimate High Tech Survival Kit"***-

"One of the most significant tech innovations for survival kits in recent years is improved battery life. Most brands of batteries used to have a shelf life of a year or two, but now they are marked with expiration dates of five to seven years." [Source: [http://news.zdnet.com/2100-9584\\_22-144877.html](http://news.zdnet.com/2100-9584_22-144877.html)]

#### **4) Survival Gear that is Just Crazy Enough to Work, from “Wired –Survival Gadgets and Gear Reviews”-**

“We have compiled the most promising and innovative solutions we could find for common survival problems. This article includes descriptions and photos of 12 new developments in survival technology.”

[Source:[http://www.wired.com/gadgets/gadgetreviews/multimedia/2008/05/gallery\\_survival\\_gadgets](http://www.wired.com/gadgets/gadgetreviews/multimedia/2008/05/gallery_survival_gadgets)]

#### **Summary & Conclusions-**

Our research revealed two disturbing trends, namely the continued decline of youngsters in strenuous outdoor activity and the rapid increase in firearm and ammunition sales. We are heartened by the fact that camping and survival product sales continue to show increases. We are equally encouraged by the increase of women participating in core survival activities.

The rise in popularity of home-made survival kits and home-made food processing kits bodes well for a nation built on self-sufficiency. An incidental benefit to the “Do-It-Yourself” attitude is increased frugality and respect for natural resources.

We are neutral on two trends- 1) the shift away from small specialty stores to the major retailers, and 2) the manufacture of eco-friendly camping and products. No doubt, penny-pinching shoppers will find big savings on outdoor gear at the big stores, but customer service, attention to detail, and product innovation will suffer. With regard to organic and “green” manufacturing, only time will tell if these products have the product assortment, quality, and toughness of conventionally produced products.

Near-term trends indicate that camping, backpacking, and wilderness trekking or hiking, will continue to grow modestly. The future of survival and wilderness gear is dependent on both the inventiveness and determination of individuals who seek “ a different road.” Unless parents “pull the plug” on their children and persuade them to engage in outdoor activities, basic survival skills will be forgotten. We place blame squarely on the entertainment media for enticing young people to “stay connected” to their electronic devices. Finally, retailers and firearms organizations must shoulder the responsibility of promoting firearm safety and respect for the law.

#### **Endnotes-**

<sup>1</sup> “US Outdoor Recreation Report 2009”, by the US Outdoor Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> “A Special Report on U.S. Camping 2009”, by the US Outdoor Foundation, in conjunction with the Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association.

<sup>3</sup> “2009 National Shooting Sports Foundation, Inc”. All Rights Reserved.  
<http://www.nssf.org/IndustryResearch/FAQ-ans.cfm?Qno=05&Aol=generic>

<sup>4</sup> “A Special Report on U.S. Camping 2009”.

<sup>5</sup> “Consumer Equipment Purchases by Sport,” NSGA Research Report, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> On-Line Military Surplus Auctions, by Mark Moyo, published by e-zinearticles.com,  
<http://ezinearticles.com/?Online-Military-Surplus-Auctions&id=842402>

<sup>7</sup> “2003-2007 Sports Equipment by Average Price,” NSGA Research Report, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Internet Retailer, “ Large Retailers had Larger Share of Holiday Traffic,” On-Line News Story, December 2, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Web-sites review by author, December 9, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Web-sites review by author, December 9, 2009.