

Module # 1 – Component # 1



Introduction to Land Survival

Objectives

To familiarize the learner with the discipline of land survival, its value and its importance.

Expected Outcomes:

The learner will be able to:

- Indicate the causes of a survival emergency
- Select correctly between static and roaming survival in given circumstances
- Indicate the dangers of the survival situation
- Describe the value and importance of land survival

Pre-test: Test your current knowledge of land survival.

1) Which of the following can cause a survival emergency?

- a. Being lost in woodland
- b. Spraining your ankle on a hike
- c. Natural disasters (like floods and fires)
- d. All of the above
- e. Only (a) and (c)

2) “In order to survive in the bush it is important to...”

- a. Know people that are familiar with the territory
- b. Have knowledge of local plants and how to make use of them
- c. Know where north is
- d. Always carry extra supplies with you
- e. Be able to hunt

Introduction

This module is intended as an **entry-level** source of knowledge for wilderness explorers or civilians that may have to deal with a **survival emergency** in the **Southern African Bushveld** (Bushveld is a term used to describe African savanna or African woodland with its associated geomorphologic structures). The information contained herein is aimed at familiarizing the learner with some of the most important aspects of survival in an emergency situation.

An emergency or survival situation can arise when least expected and can be the result of:

- Being lost or abandoned in the Bushveld
- Disabling **injury** in remote areas (like on a hike)
- A motor vehicle or airplane **accident/breakdown** in remote areas
- Abduction and/or hi-jacking (being dumped in unfriendly territory)
- Warfare or insurgence (like refugees fleeing from persecutors)
- **Natural disasters** (like floods and fires)
- Famine and disease
- Others...

Land Survival as a Discipline

Once you find yourself in a survival situation (maybe as a result of some of the above), you would require certain bodies of knowledge in order to sustain yourself (and your group) or negotiate yourself back to help or civilization. This may require you to have knowledge of:

- Module # 2 – **The Ecology of Survival** (Knowledge of the terrain and the interactions between yourself and all the elements, living or non-living).
- Module # 3 – **The Psychology of Survival** (Knowledge of the mental processes associated with survival that can make the difference between life and death).
- Module # 4 - **Edible and Useful Plants of Southern Africa** (Knowledge of the plants that you will encounter in Southern Africa and how to make use of them).
- Module # 5 - **Animals: Their Survival Uses and Dangers** (Knowledge of the animals of Southern Africa, how to avoid being eaten and how to make use of them).
- Module # 6 - **Improvisations and Survival Skills** (All the stuff you can make and things you can do to ensure your survival effort is more comfortable).
- Module # 7 - **Bush medicine** (Basic emergency care associated with bush conditions).
- Module # 8 – **Nutrition** (What to drink and to eat and where to get it from).
- Module # 9 - **Sea and Coastal survival** (Survival on the coastline of Southern Africa, finding food, water and shelter and how to deal with the dangers of the oceans).
- Module # 10 - **Natural navigation** (Finding your way in unfamiliar territory with rudimentary or no instruments).
- Module # 11 - **Tracking and anti-tracking** (How to track people or how to avoid being tracked by people).

Since there are **various levels of extremity** in terms of potential danger and hazards we are going to learn survival from the **most extreme point of departure**. This means we will apply our knowledge of survival to a severe scenario in which you may find yourself. The scenario may change as we go along but for the moment... here's the juice:

Your predicament - *You and your group are lost in big 5 African Bushveld after your four-seater airplane went down. But that's not all! One member of your group has an **injury** making him/her virtually immovable... Fine? No, there is more! Your airplane went down in unfriendly territory. As we speak, known **terrorists** are looking for survivors to hold as hostages to barter with. As you contemplate your sudden predicament you hear the mighty roar of a lion that was disturbed by your crash-landing. You realize that you are in **big 5** territory containing herds of buffalo, aggressive rhino and leopard. Then in the distance you hear a tree being snapped like a toothpick by a stealthy but extremely dangerous elephant. Are you in trouble or what?*

Never thought this could happen to you... ever?

Have no fear, land survival, as a discipline is there to help you through all of this. Many people have found themselves in predicaments just like these and survived to tell their tales. It is their **knowledge** and **experience** as well as many years of research that is combined into this course to help prevent loss of life or serious injury through the art of survival.

The Basics of Survival

Once your ordeal starts there are **two** decisions you can make relatively early. These decisions are totally **dependent** on your **circumstances** and it is merely a choice between whether you are going to **move** or **stay**.

(Stay) Static Survival:

Surviving in one place and sustaining yourself by obtaining **nutrition** and **shelter** from your immediate environment. In this instance your circumstances rendered you **immovable** (not fit to walk due to injury or other reasons) or you are confident you can remain and **will be found** by rescuers or a search party. It may also be that there is a good source of **potable water**, which could prolong your survival effort.

Advantages of Static Survival:

- Enough time to become familiar with **territory**
- Can build a strong or lasting **shelter** against predators or elements
- Build up **food** stores
- Time to filter **water** more effectively
- Time to **improvise** items, making yourself progressively comfortable
- Better chance of making a small and hidden **fire**
- Time for **injuries to heal** before you attempt travel
- Can **post a watch** against approaching unfriendly people

Disadvantages of Static Survival:

- Totally dependent on **being found** by rescuers
- Local food or water resources can **deplete** after a while
- May have to **hide** your camp
- Unfriendly visitors can spot your **fire smoke** or activity in the area

(Move) Roaming Survival:

Surviving on the limb, while **moving towards** an end objective (help or civilization). In this case you would obtain nutrition in a **sporadic** fashion, as and when opportunity arises while covering large distances. Shelter will be improvised whenever necessary. This form of survival is **riskier** than static survival but your odds of finding help or a way out may be greater. Normally it is best to move if there is **no accessible source of water**.

Advantages of Roaming Survival:

- **Making up** valuable time towards finding help or civilization
- May find **better nutrition** or survival resources further afield
- May **escape** unfriendly territory faster

Disadvantages of Roaming Survival:

- Not as safe from **predators** as static survival
- Difficult to make and hide a fire while on the move
- May become **more lost**
- Risk running **into enemy or dangerous animals** in unfamiliar territory
- Unsure of **water** or future nutritional resources

What is the Best Way to Survive?

The idea behind survival is **not** to conquer nature as such, but to get a sense of **belonging**. Whether you stay or move it should rather be an effort to **become a part of Mother Nature** and to be accepted by the ecology, so there is no “best” way. Survival in itself is an extraordinary and very personal experience.

To survive, you need to look deep into yourself first, check your mental state - your psychological state of mind - and find out where you fit in with the whole scenario. It's not the place for doing **macho stuff or being stupid**.

There is no swinging through the branches with a knife between your teeth... that's just plain stupid. If you make mistakes in nature, **you're dead**. It is sometimes wise to search for local people when you need help but it is unwise to search for people in an area that is **known to harbour terrorists** or insurgents.

The survival experience is visceral and fairly rough requiring you to make your environment as liveable and comfortable as possible. It's a question of understanding **where you are at** and **how you adapt**. Mother Nature can **change within seconds**. In a short period of time fortune can turn into tragedy.

What are the Dangers of Survival?

- The biggest danger in a survival situation **is fear**. Fear of the unknown, of nature, and of the Bushveld. Fear of the things you may **perceive** as being dangerous (maybe spiders, snakes or other creepy crawlies) or fear of being lost, in the dark or alone.
- Fear can lead to **panic** and panic causes people to make the wrong decisions and inevitably it gets them killed.
- **All animals** are potentially dangerous and should never be underestimated.
- Certain plants are **poisonous** and can lead to severe discomfort, illness or death.
- **Exposure to the elements** can be just as dangerous (i.e. floods, fire, storms, wind, sunlight, etc.).
- **Unfriendly locals** in the territory may be a danger to yourself and your companions.
- **Lack of water** is a serious danger because humans can only go two to three days (at a stretch) without water before they die.
- **Disease** and illness are grave dangers (from infections, tropical disease, dehydration and even hypothermia).
- **Injury** from accidents or attacks can be a serious hazard to your survival effort.

How Long Could You Live off the Land For?

It is possible to live off the land **indefinitely**. It all depends on the available resources and the effort that is put towards finding water, food and making your environment liveable.

What Kind of Personal Traits do You Need to Best Survive?

The best personal traits for survival are **self-knowledge**, **composure** and **confidence**. A person that **knows** his or her **strengths** and **weaknesses** stands a better chance of surviving. You must know what you are capable of and understand your limitations or the areas where you may fall short. This will have a great impact on **how you make decisions**.

The Value and Importance of Survival

Why Learn the Skills of Survival? What is the Value?

It is a form of **life insurance** meaning that if you ever fall victim to a survival situation (even in other countries or different terrain), you will have the basic skills and knowledge to save your **own life** and maybe the **life of others**.

What is the Importance of Survival as a Discipline?

- Learning how to survive **strengthens the bond** between us humans and Mother Nature (The Wilderness).
- Survival teaches us the **value** of nature's assets and **respect** for nature's inhabitants.
- Survival **saves** lives.
- Survival ensures that unique and valuable cultural and natural history **knowledge** are kept and built upon. (With the onset of the modern age and the lure of the cities, African tribes are fast losing their knowledge of their natural heritage and their ability to survive in it).

Important Notice!

Basic survival skills will enable you to partake in a survival expedition but **only** under the guidance of a survival expert.

Do not wander off into the Bushveld alone to see whether you can survive.

Bush survival is a very rare ability and it will take **in-depth study, research, practice and experience** to become self-sufficient in the South African Bushveld. Even then you are in grave danger and can succumb to the forces of Mother Nature in all her facets.

Lastly, the aim of bush survival is ultimately to find oneself, progressively, in a **balanced relationship** with Mother Nature in which case frankly, you are not surviving anymore but finding yourself.