

Paul Kirtley's Blog

Wilderness Bushcraft • Survival Skills • Outdoor Life

Should Your Kit Be Orange?

Hi there, Paul Kirtley here. And today I want to talk about something that's been on my mind, on and off and probably increasingly over recent times, and that is the colour of your gear, or the colour of my gear, and specifically the colour of certain pieces of equipment. And I guess all of these are critical pieces of equipment. Now it seems to me in the bushcraft world, if that is such a thing, and I've been around that world for quite a long time now, we tend to like natural colours, we tend to like muted colours, we like green shirts, we like brown pants, trousers, we like green tarps, we like all of these things. And I've got drawers full of things like Frost knives. I think this was one of the first Moras I got this one back when it was Frost back in the day, this one, onto this clipper type again Frost and then we have the Mora Companion - same basic shape, different handle, different sheath and the heavy duty version as well. And I've got multiple editions of these if you like, around the place, I've got them in toolkits, I've got them in equipment boxes, I've got them in course equipment boxes and we hand them out to our students, know students in our two day courses, get one of these students on our week long courses, our Elementary courses, get one of these to keep. It doesn't happen very often, but occasionally they get lost. And I was just in the habit of always giving out the green ones because that's what I had been given. And then, you know, I've also got custom knives, you know, or at least handmade knives. Again, natural muted colours, brown leather sheaths, brown wooden handles. And if you drop them in the woods where it's all natural colours, there's a chance that they're quite difficult to find. And this is one of the things that's been sort of weighing on my mind. If you compare this to this, you can see what I'm talking about and actually that on the on the camera, the little screen I'm looking at here just next to my camera, that doesn't even look as bright it might do on your screen. I don't know. But it doesn't even look as bright as it actually is. This is pretty much a fluoro orange sheath. And, you know, the plastic parts on the handle, the rubberised black material there again, are orange. That's a lot easier to see. And yes, okay. I've purposely chosen today to film and we're starting to turn a little bit. It's September. We're starting to get some browns as well as all the greens. Certainly again, this green that is easy to see. We've got some natural browns around. The bracken around me starting to turn. Some of the the beech trees are starting to drop, some of their leaves. Some of the birch trees are starting to turn. Yes, okay, oranges start to blend in a little bit more with those colours but that fluoro, yeah, it really does stand out and that's one of the things that I've been thinking about and I've started to give students a choice. Do they want an orange one or do they want a green one on a course? And you know, various people have got different motivations for being outside. But you know, tactical situations aside, I think there's a strong argument for important pieces of equipment being brightly coloured. And now I know some people will stick bright bits of tape and I've seen people use sort of hazard tape, yellow and black has a tape. I've seen people use bits of orange sticky tape on, you know, take a green knife and put a bit of sticky tape on there. And I've seen it on tools such as saws and things as well and even axe handles. But I don't like it because ultimately you get some of the gum, some of the glue coming off and I get that stickiness on your hand. And you know, it's already dirty enough outside trying to stay clean and dust and dirt, etc. and then that again gets stuff

stuck on you. Anyway, that might sound a little bit fussy, but fundamentally, I don't like that tackiness and that stickiness. I'd prefer something just to be the colour I want if I can. And now in some ways this seems completely obvious because important pieces of equipment, you know, like survival equipment for decades and decades and decades have been brightly coloured, like perry whistle, like this lifeboat whistle. Yeah. Orange. Okay. Survival bag. Yeah. And those of you that understand what that is, Survival Aids, will understand the vintage of that. That's bright orange. Okay. Survival shelters like this two person survival shelter, a group shelter. That's bright orange so it can be seen. And even other things that are important, like, you know, in the hunting world. So this hat is, you know, it's quite nice and drab. But if I bring this forwards, it reveals a nice orange blaze on the top. So other hunters, other shooters can see me. Okay. On that Sealand "Beater Hat". Even stuff like here in this IFAK here, the tourniquet that I've got in there, the CAT in there, is bright orange so it can be seen, you know, against dark coloured clothing. So orange is a really good visibility colour. Yeah. Orange is a really good visibility colour. And this is one of the things that I've been thinking about. So an obvious critical piece of equipment is a knife and you maybe should be asking yourself the question, should that be orange rather than some really drab colour that if I put it down on the ground, if I lose it, if it falls out of the sheath, I can't find it so easily, it's not so easy to spot. Now, this is one I've been using for quite some time and it has dulled down a little bit. You can possibly see that. It's just a bit dirty. I've been using that for quite some time, that knife. This is a sheath that Mora made for some time. I don't think they make it anymore. It's kind of like a Cordua over-sheath with a clip. I think it was tested maybe for the military. I actually don't know. Somebody gave it to me, but I quite like it because it has a closed belt loop on there. But I've been using that knife for teaching, for travel. They're really good travel knives because you don't have to worry about whether or not the wood is allowed in the country. You don't have to worry really about them being stolen out of your luggage. They're not irreplaceable, maybe like some custom knife or something that someone's gifted you that's really special or that's a limited edition. Yeah, so I've used this recently. I've used this on trips in Canada. I've used this on a trip when I was teaching in Australia. I've used this when I was on a course in Arizona recently. They are great knives, the heavy duty Mora companion knives. And that's not what this video is about. But what I'm saying is this is not something that I'm saying that you should do, that I don't do. It's actually I've started doing this particularly on trips where having my knife and not losing it is really critical. And also my students use these knives and I like using them as well. They're good knives, so we can do exactly the same things with them. And students don't think that I'm using some special knife that gives me some sort of special powers. I'm using exactly the same knives as they are. So that is something I've been using and it's stayed pretty bright orange, even though I've had it all over the world in recent years. And you can see that there. So that to me is a good option. I think you have to have a strong argument why you maybe want a green one, even if you're hunting. You know, some hunting gear has orange blaze on it. Right. A lot of prey animals don't see very well in that part of the spectrum. They pick up movement very well. They see more blue. They see less things like orange. Birds, however, have very good colour vision. So maybe if you're a birder, if you want to go out birdwatching, if you want to be unseen to birds, maybe that's an issue having brightly coloured things and obviously people have got good colour vision as well. And if you want to be stealthy and tactical and all those sorts of things, then clearly bright orange is not the colour for you, but as a general leisure user of the outdoors, where your critical equipment is very important, you've got to have a strong argument why perhaps it isn't as visible as it could be. And this is something that I've been thinking about and this might be completely obvious to you, or this might be a really radical thought process to you, But it's just, again, I'm sharing something that I've been thinking about for a while. So on that on that, you know, we can think about things like saws, okay, Again, for years and years and years, I've

used the Green Laplander saw and yes, I've got a little orange lanyard on there and that's got quite dirty. It's not as visible as it was now and I think that would be quite hard to see on the ground. Probably still easier than, than a green one. But when it was new, that was quite, quite bright. And that's another point we tend to make lanyards for things. You know, again, you know, as bushcraft people, we like all these colours of, you know, browns and blacks and greens, all these muted drab colours for, for our paracord and we tend to make lanyards out of them. But why not orange? Why not orange on something, even if the item, for example, this is a Mauser, is like a Swiss army knife, it's a Mauser officer's knife. It's just a good Swiss army knife. I've had that for years. That goes back. Those of you, the old school guys and girls will remember the Survival Aids catalogue? They had those in them. There were about 13 quid, I think. I've had that for 40 years, I think, that knife. That's got a little orange lanyard on it because you can't get those with orange scales on them. But again that makes it a little bit more visible. But again, that's got quite dirty now. So maybe I should replace it and make it a bit more visible. But you can make things more visible just with their lanyards. A classic, classic, classic thing. And it isn't just Joe Robinet. There are plenty of people who have done this as well, but Joe seems to be singled out for that. And he and I had quite a candid conversation about the loss of his ferro rod on one of my podcasts quite a few years ago. He's one of the people that get singled out for that. But he's not the only person who ever lost a ferro rod. I never have, I have to say. But I know some of my students have. I know and they've told me about that on courses and I know other people on, you know, in quite high profile TV shows and things have as well. But that's a classic thing for people to lose. And the way people lose it is they get excited about getting their fire going. They drop the spark onto the birch bark or what have you, and then they're lifting the twigs on and getting the fire going and that goes down on the ground. So one of the things you should always get into the habit of and if you watch any of my firefighting videos, you'll see me do this. If I use a knife and a ferro rod, for example, they go back where they belong almost immediately, if not immediately, and they don't tend to go down on the ground. And that's a really good discipline to get into when you're practising close to home, in the backyard, etc., etc.. But equally, you know, if you do put it down and you can't find it, you want it to be visible. And again, I'm guilty of this, I tend to buy them, you know, just as they come with their sort of black handles. So that's a StrikeFire and one that I use that I've used for many years. And that model, I've also used Light My Fire ferro rods. And this is about the most orange one that I can find at the moment. This is one of the Light My Fires. But that's, you know, it's quite a natural orange. It's sort of it's more of a sort of plant pot orange. It's not quite terracotta, but it isn't fluoro. Yeah. If you compare it to that, it's not fluoro like that, but it is still relatively bright. But let me know in the comments below if you know of any ferro rods that are really fluorescent and I know you can make your own handles and glue them on and all that sort of thing, but if you know of any one who makes them with floral handles, let me know. But you know, that is clearly more visible potentially than black or green. And of course, we could put an orange lanyard on there as well and make it more visible still. So that's something that you should perhaps. And, you know, I'm thinking should perhaps be quite visible and orange. I started talking about saws, didn't I? I didn't finish. I'm jumping around a bit. I've got all sorts of goodies on the ground here. But why not an orange saw? That is so much more visible than that. Now, I've had an orange one of these in my rescue kit, in my canoe rescue kit, for years and years and years and years because I know that's my rescue saw. I know it isn't one of the many of these that I've got around that I use personally. And also we have in the course equipment. But one thing I noticed and I don't know if you've noticed this as well, the orange one that I had in the past, it didn't seem as aggressive, aggressively sharp as the green ones. And I don't know if that was just my perception. And I don't know if you found that as well. And even this one, this green one feels quite sharp to my to the touch. This one not so much. And I know in my other in my other one, I actually replaced the

blade with one out of a brand new green one because I've got loads of spares. I don't want to get into a conversation about Silkys versus these. We can have that conversation in another video. It's not about Bahcos, it's about maybe your saw should be brightly coloured because it's easy to find if you leave it on the ground. That's something I see students put down on the ground a lot. It takes a while to get them disciplined to be putting that back in a pocket. Because once you have a sheath like this, this leather sheath, and that was sent to me by Henes Leather, if I'm pronouncing that correctly, that was sent to me for free. He'd seen my old one was falling apart, and he said, I've really enjoyed your videos, can I send you one just as a thank you? Which was very kind. And I've been using that for quite a few years now, but that orange one will fit quite nicely in there. So maybe, maybe I should be carrying an orange saw along with an orange knife because they're more visible. And yes, it's much easier to pop that back where it belongs once you have a sheath on your belt. But as I say, people have a tendency more than knives, I think, to put these down on the ground when they're doing things. And again, they can get lost. Then, what are the critical pieces? So fire is critical. Cutting tools are critical. Sticking with fire - match safe, you know, there's a strong argument that your match safe should be some sort of bright orange colour or similar, like this one, a waterproof match safe. I think you've all seen these before. I'll put links to some of these things below. I'm not trying to sell you gear here, far from it. I don't even have an online store. But if there are any Amazon links below they will likely be affiliate links. Where I get a small commission, you don't pay any more, but it just helps pay for the channel. I don't take sponsorships etc. etc. I earn my living from teaching people skills. But like I say, if you if you wanted to click through to some of these items, if you've never seen them before, I'll put the links below and then that's easier for you to find them. And again, cigarette lighter. Bic lighter. I like these Exotac covers for them. I'll talk about why maybe in another video. But again, orange. Yeah. And I bought these and this is perhaps one of the things that actually got me thinking about this because I bought these items orange thinking they're hard to lose. And then I started reviewing some of my other critical pieces of equipment, thinking about, well, maybe they should be orange, too. And again, it's got an orange lanyard. So two more pieces of firefighting equipment. So you got three pieces there, which is a sensible thing to carry. And they all have pros and cons. And again, maybe I'll talk about that in another video in the future. And all these are not made equal in terms of what you can light and how you can light them and how long they last and what conditions they are susceptible to and not. Okay. So fire stuff is definitely critical in wilderness situations. I think it should be easy to see if you've dropped it or even if you just made the mistake of putting it down on the ground for a minute. Another thing, even though this whistle I carry a carry that on, that's a pocket lanyard. And I've made videos about pocket lanyards before. I'll try and link to one somewhere. An orange lanyard again. Very dirty. Probably it needs replacing. And now that whistle that Fox 40 whistle is quite a bright almost fluoro green but again in spring greenery on the ground that might be hard to see if I drop that fleur orange one perhaps would be even easier to see. So again, that's quite a critical thing for calling for help. It's much easier than shouting it. It'll travel further and etc.. So again, critical pocket items that perhaps should be orange as well. And then other things that you might want to think about being orange. This is produced by a friend of mine in Australia, Gordon Dedman at Bushcraft Survival Australia. And again, no sponsorship. He did give me this when I visited him in Oslo. But the point is, and I've got green ones of these as well, the point is it's a it's a large bandana which is always useful for wiping sweat or putting on your head or a filter, roughly filtering leaflets or out of water or triangular bandage or whatever, you know you can do with a piece of material. There's lots of things you can do, the piece of material, but this one is orange, and so I can use it for attracting attention to myself as well. I can make an orange flag. Add to that, I can I can move it around. I can make myself more visible. So again, maybe this is this is moving beyond thinking about losing pieces of equipment, but

we're also thinking about, okay, well, maybe that should be, or could be, orange as well. And then, of course, you know, survival bags. I've got the old Survival Aids one there, but still produced today. You know, survival bags, bivvy bags, of this type. This is not breathable baby bag. This is just a polythene bag for emergencies. And there's a number of ways that you can use those. But again, orange for attracting attention. So again, reinforcing the fact that orange is easy to spot out in nature. That's why these things are orange. It's why the emergency pieces of equipment are orange. And maybe think about applying that principle to some other parts of your equipment so that if you do mislay them, if you do put them down by accident, if you do drop them on the trail and need to go back and look for them, they're much easier to see. I will talk more about using these in future videos. There's some good ideas that I have that I'd like to share with you and that I've either thought about myself or other people have shown me over the years - ways of using these that I would like to share with you on some future videos as well, but we'll leave that there for today. So let me know what you think. Is that a completely radical idea that some of your critical gear should be brightly coloured so that you don't mislay it? Or if you do, you can find it more easily. Am I being massively controversial there or not? I don't think I am. But also below, let me know if you think if you have anything else that you have brightly coloured that you think is important. And as I say, if you know of any more fluoro versions of these or anything else. Let me know in the comments below. Let me know your thoughts and I look forward to reading those. And you know that you know the drill: if you like this video and you'd like to see more of this type of thing, subscribe, certainly. But you know how the YouTube algorithm works, click that bell thing as well so that you get notifications and like the video as well. That helps. Any comment I think helps with the algorithm as well. But more importantly, I can't always and I don't reply to all comments, there's just too many across all my videos, but I like reading through them, particularly when I've just published a video. If you put comments on there in the next few days, I will certainly read those. If they warrant a reply or demand a reply, I will reply, but rest assured that I will read your comments and I'm always interested to know what you think. And this is a two way conversation at the end of the day. So thanks for watching. I've been Paul Kirtley and I will look forward to seeing you on another video before too long. I'll link a few here and links to some of the stuff below and some of the videos I've mentioned below as well, and I look forward to seeing you on another video before too long. Take care. Cheers.