

Find Bob!

Second in our series of articles about getting lost and what to do; the authors outline the steps both group leader and organization should take if they discover that a participant is missing.

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Best medicine is prevention: do not get separated from your group.

The day of the Foray has dawned bright, warm and clear. Enthusiastic participants are eagerly combing a chosen area for its mycological treasures, losing themselves among the fungi as they follow their eyes from one patch to the next, just a short distance away. As group leader, your main concern is to collect and document representative and unique species for the area. At that given moment, your thought might lie with the spore pattern of a particularly intriguing species, or perhaps whether you should eat your chocolate bar now or during lunch. Then, as you gather to travel to the next location, someone says “Where’s Bob?”

While you register some irritation at the inevitability of a delay, you may not recognize the urgency of the situation unfolding before you. As group leader, it is your responsibility to respond appropriately and set a chain of events into motion. A lost person must be considered an emergency. Now, you don’t need to belong to Mensa to understand that weather and landscape, the age and health of the victim, and the amount of time that has elapsed all have a profound bearing on the urgency of the situation—but urgent it is, nonetheless. Please consider this little misadventure as a guide should you ever find yourself in this most unfortunate of circumstances.

First, let’s take a step backward. This sudden turn of events should have been addressed long before today’s walk. The best way to ensure that Bob’s absence remains an annoyance rather than a crisis is to prepare for this eventuality in advance. “What do you want me to do?” you may think exasperatedly, “Outfit each participant with an emergency locator beacon?” You will be relieved to learn that the solution is far cheaper. Your Scottish ancestors would be proud—preparation is as simple as a whistle, along with a few simple procedures, which we have summarized in the BOOCK OF PREVENTION, a table you can copy for future reference. Here’s the good BOOCK:

Buddy system: No doubt you will already be among friends and colleagues, but asking each member of your group to buddy up with one or two other individuals at the outset will greatly minimize the probability that a particularly absent-minded mycophile will wander off undetected. In addition, if a pair of buddies becomes lost, they are less likely to panic, and can assist one another

(e.g., one person can rest or build a shelter while the second blows on the whistle and listens for a response).

Orientation: Before you set out, distribute a map or give your group a clear understanding of bounds of the area in which the collecting is being undertaken.

Others: Arrange a meeting place where the group will reconvene at a given time. When an individual or a buddied pair is lost, everybody should travel to this pre-arranged location and remain there until given further instructions by you. *Under no circumstances should anyone take it upon herself to search on her own*—otherwise the local Search and Rescue (SAR) group will be searching for several lost persons, not just Bob.

Communications: Ideally each buddy group should carry a cell phone and have noted your phone number, since the first call they should make is to you, the group leader. In the event that there is no cell phone coverage in your area, small two-way radios can be used in the same way.

The whistle: this remains your cheapest, most ubiquitous and effective communication tool. You may have the pipes of Pavarotti, but they will be ineffective in an amphitheatre of wind, surf, or rain. The shrill sound of a whistle will carry much further. A short note on whistle codes: three short blasts on a whistle is a universal sign of distress, and all Foray participants should be aware of this. If you hear three short blasts, you should acknowledge with a single blast on your own whistle. In a search this auditory code can be used to locate and approach the victim. As group leader, you may want to use an additional signal (e.g., four long whistles) to convey an additional message, such as “return to the trailhead.” Don’t forget to communicate this code to your group prior to the day’s events! And remember to keep it simple—no need to whistle Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony or use so many codes you’d make an anthropologist proud.

Know before setting out: Name and cell phone number of everybody in your group. Cell phone number of Foray leader(s) and phone number for main camp. Phone number of local au-

FIND BOB

A lost person is an emergency.
Establishing contact is the key to action.
If there is no contact you must assume illness or injury.
Time is of the essence—the majority of deaths happen in the first 12–24 hours.

BLOW YOUR WHISTLE AND LISTEN FOR BOB'S RESPONSE

A YOU HEAR BOB'S WHISTLE

1. Acknowledge that you have heard him: one long blast.
2. Select at least two or three individuals to accompany you to look for Bob.
3. Delegate somebody to be the main contact person (MCP) with the rest of the group at the prearranged meeting place.
4. MCP should report that Bob is missing to the Foray organizers and remain the contact person between you and the Foray organizers.
5. Ask one of your search party to keep the MCP apprised of your progress, and location.
6. Proceed with your search party in the direction of Bob's whistle blasts.
7. Continue to acknowledge each of Bob's three short blasts with one long of your own.
8. Approach Bob quickly, but be safe.

B YOU DO NOT HEAR BOB'S WHISTLE

1. Gather as much information as you can about Bob's health, his experience in the out-of-doors, his appearance, the degree to which he is dressed or prepared for his present situation and when and where Bob was last seen.
2. Advise MCP and ask that foray organizers be apprised.
3. You, MCP or Foray organizers, whichever is most reasonable, should call the local authorities, advise them of the situation, and ask that a Search and Rescue exercise (SAR) be initiated.
4. While you wait for further instruction, select three or four volunteers and do a *Hasty Search* along the trail you were using.
5. Walk the path, blow your whistle, call his name, and listen for a response.

BOB IS FOUND UNINJURED AND WELL

1. Advise MCP that Bob has been found, is well and you are returning.
2. Ask MCP to apprise Foray organizers of same.
3. Continue your foray.

BOB IS FOUND INJURED OR ILL

1. Communicate this (including the nature of the injury and Bob's condition) to the MCP
2. Ask MCP to advise foray organizers
3. You, MCP or Foray organizers, whichever is most reasonable, should seek appropriate help (medical, police, ambulance, etc).
4. You and your search party will stay with Bob until help arrives.
5. Do your best to put his mind at ease and to make him comfortable.

THERE IS AN ANSWER

1. Ask MCP to notify foray organizers and authorities to call off formal SAR.
2. Go to A.

THERE IS NO ANSWER

Join rest of your group at trail-head until further directions from authorities or SAR team.

This flow chart assumes there is no cell phone or radio contact. Cell phone or radio contact may shorten or eliminate several steps, but unless you can get to Bob based on his description alone, being guided by your whistles will remain part of the locating procedure.

thorities. Give everybody in your group your name and cell phone number before setting out. Agree on a band to use for radios, if you have them. Make sure everybody knows the simple whistle code to use.

Now, let us return to Bob and his whereabouts. Several more minutes have passed, and he still hasn't turned up. You now have two main priorities.

1) You must determine the type of emergency: Is Bob injured or ill? Or has he simply gotten turned around somewhere?

2) You must attempt to establish communication with Bob. Try to call his cell phone. Make sure yours is turned on, as he may already have tried to call YOU. You can attempt to call him on the hand-held radio. Finally, you can blow your whistle.

How you choose to proceed will be determined by whether or not you have been able to establish contact with Bob. Since not many people have radios, and there are many places that are good for mushrooms but poor for cell-phone coverage, we shall outline the two most likely situations in the absence of contact via radio or cell phone. The steps to take in this process are also outlined in the flow chart on page 62, which you can copy and keep with your Foray materials as a reference, should you ever be unfortunate enough to find yourself having to handle this situation.

Scenario A

You can hear Bob dutifully giving three short blasts on his whistle.

The first thing to do is acknowledge that you have heard him. This will put Bob's mind at ease—and yours too, as it increases the probability that Bob will be reunited with his fellow mycophiles in short order. You may now quickly select two or three (but no fewer) individuals to accompany you to look for Bob. You should also delegate somebody to be the main contact person with the rest of the group at the trailhead in your absence. You and your fellow searchers will now proceed in the direction of the whistle blasts, continuing to acknowledge each of Bob's three blasts with one of your own. In terms of your travel, the objective is to reach Bob quickly and in a safe manner. If the most direct route to Bob involves swimming across a lake or navigating a treacherous cliff, but a nearby trail skirts those obstacles though via a more circuitous path, please choose a different day to impersonate Indiana Jones, and please, oh please, take the path. As you travel, ask one of your fellow searchers to keep the individual you have delegated as a contact at the trailhead apprised of your progress and, if possible, your location, in case you too become lost. Also, ask that the Foray organizers and/or main camp be notified. If all goes well, you should find Bob soon. If on your arrival at Bob's location he is nothing more than sheepish, you can all proceed back to the base at trailhead—after advising your contact and the Foray organizers that you have found Bob and are returning.

On the other hand, if Bob is ill or injured, communicate this (including the nature of the injury and Bob's condition) and ask your contact, the foray organizers, or the main camp to call for the required help. You should have the number of the local authorities on your list of contact numbers. You and your colleagues will then stay with Bob until help arrives, or until you receive further instructions. Do your best to put his mind at ease and to make him comfortable. Do not complain about the time it has taken you to find him.

Scenario B

You have had no communication from Bob and can't hear his whistle.

Oh oh. The day may have dawned bright and clear but, at least in a figurative sense, dark clouds have appeared overhead. This circumstance is indeed an urgent one. Bob's silence could be attributed to something as mundane as the fact environmental conditions prevent you from hearing his whistle. *However, until you have established a reason for the fact that he is non-responsive, you must assume the possibility of a medical emergency.*

Time is of the essence—of all fatalities related to lost persons, 50% occur within the first day, and an additional 24% on the second day. Because it is difficult to search at night, you need to act quickly.

First, survey the group to establish when and where Bob was last seen. The more information you are able to impart regarding Bob's health, his experience in the out-of-doors, his appearance, and the degree to which he is dressed or prepared for his present situation, the better. Agree among yourselves whether you, your contact person, or the Foray organizers will call the local authorities to advise them of the situation and request help.

Then, while you wait for further instruction, select three or four volunteers from the group and initiate what is known as a *Hasty Search* along the trail you were using. As you walk the path, blow your whistle, call his name, and listen for a response. Should you hear him blow his whistle, proceed as in Scenario A above and advise your contact person to tell others that contact with Bob has been made.

If you do not hear Bob's response, join the rest of your group at the trailhead and await the SAR operation or wait until told otherwise by the authorities or SAR team. Although it takes considerable time to set an SAR effort in motion, **DO NOT** be tempted to initiate a search on your own beyond the *Hasty Search* of walking along the trail—we do not want to mount several SAR efforts. One for Bob is enough.

BOOK OF PREVENTION

B UDDY SYSTEM:
Divide into subgroups of 2 to 4.

O RIENTATION:
Give out map and/or clear understanding of the natural bounds of the collecting area before setting out.

O THERS:
Agree on meeting place at given time before setting out.

Everybody to move to this pre-arranged location and remain there until given further instructions by you.

Under no circumstances should any person or persons take it upon themselves to search on their own.

C OMMUNICATIONS:
Cell phone, if in area of service.

Radios, if you have them.

Whistle. Your simplest, cheapest and most dependable communication device. Everybody should have one and everybody should know the simple code for seeking help and responding.

K NOW BEFORE SETTING OUT:
Name and cell phone number of everybody in your group.

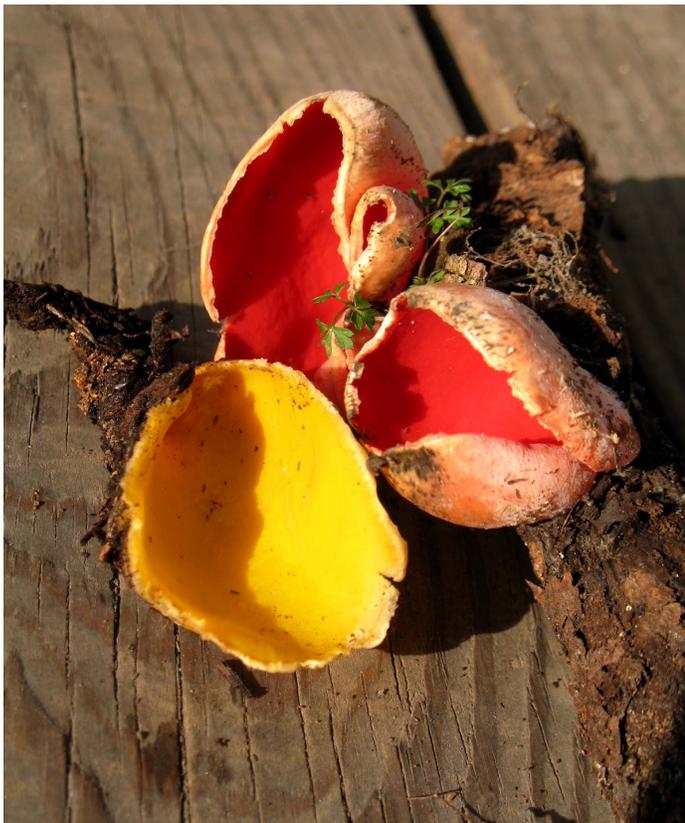
Cell number of Foray leader(s) and phone number for main camp.

Phone number of local authorities.

Give everybody your name and cell number before setting out

Agreed-on band to use for radio, if have them.

Simple whistle code.



Unusual Sightings:

This curious yellow form of *Sarcoscypha dudleyi* (the North American name for *S. coccinea*) was spotted this spring amid a patch of hundreds of the typical red form. Curious as to whether they had a totally different species or simply a bizarre yellow form, Skip and Sherry Kay were able to confirm its identity under the microscope. What a lucky find! If YOU spot something unusual—whether you can identify it or not—send a high-resolution image to us, and we'll share your find with the rest of the community.