



HYPERLITE
MOUNTAIN GEAR





Hyperlite Mountain Gear makes equipment for backcountry explorers who share a passion for the quiet sports and the transcendence of remote wilderness.

We subscribe to the belief that having the right gear, nothing more than one needs to achieve success, and nothing less than is necessary to do so comfortably, safely, and precisely, results in a transformative experience.

**WE CALL THIS
PHILOSOPHY
ESSENTIALISM.**





THE PENOBSCOT PEOPLE CALLED MT. KATAHDIN HERE IN OUR HOME STATE OF MAINE, "THE GREATEST MOUNTAIN." WE DON'T DISAGREE.

PHOTO BY KRYSYAN REPOLONA

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OUR CASE FOR ULTRALIGHT BACKPACKING

Thoughts from Hyperlite Mountain Gear CEO, **Mike St. Pierre**

Making an effort to put together an ultralight backpacking kit will reap you immeasurable rewards. You'll be able to travel more efficiently in greater comfort with less fatigue. With every extra pound of weight you carry, the effort required to move it increases.



IT'S SIMPLE PHYSICS. The first step in putting together an ultralight kit is to start documenting the equipment and the weights of what you currently own.

I recommend purchasing a small digital scale. Once you have the scale, make a list of all your equipment in Excel and add the weights in the next column. If you own multiple tents or packs, break the list into categories like shelters or sleep system, cooking, hydration, clothing, etc.

Once you have a running list of products and their weights, pretend you're going on a trip and highlight the pieces you think you'd need or like to take. Look at the total weight of the kit, and you'll be surprised by how quickly it adds up.

If you're unsatisfied with the result and want to start shedding mass, pay attention to the heaviest items on the list and either swap them out for lighter products you already own or look to replace them.

This process should be ongoing, and you certainly don't need to upgrade or purchase new items all at once. It should also be fun! Reflecting on the successes and failures of your endeavors and continual experimentation is what will eventually lead to the creation of a kit that works perfectly for you.

Heads up though, once you get into exploring new solutions to shaving weight, you'll see you might never really be "done."

It's taken years for me to dial in my current 9 - 10 lb base weight kit [base weight = all carried equipment minus consumables - food, fuel, water] for the trips I do now. I'm finding though that with that refined core, it's totally functional regardless of the environment I'll be traveling through.

No matter if I'll be in the desert or in alpine terrain, this "Essential Kit" always includes my pack, shelter, sleeping pad, hydration system, cooking system, rain gear, headlamp, and a few other tried and true items. The only thing that really changes for me is the temperature rating of my sleeping bag, my insulating clothing, and if I'll need any terrain-specific items like ice axes, crampons, length of rope, harness, or extra water capacity.

When it comes to the sleeping bag and clothing, I'm usually watching the weather until the last minute before I leave to ensure I'm not carrying too much or too little insulation. It helps when you have multiple sleeping bags in your arsenal to choose from.

CONSUMABLES. Even with a really light 10 lb base weight, your pack weight for a multi-day trip could still top out at 20-35 lb after you add in the consumables. For example, on a five-day backpacking trip in the summertime, I'll usually carry roughly 1.25-1.5 lb of food for each day. A small fuel canister is roughly 8 oz, and if water is harder to come by throughout the day, I may need to carry 2L to start which would weigh 4.3 lb. Your total pack weight would be 22 lb and that's before any kind of electronics like your phone or a camera. That's where this dialed ultralight base weight really starts to pay off.

Now that you have your ideal kit at a weight you're comfortable with, it's time to get out there. You'll find all the pre-planning gives you more freedom, makes for a much more enjoyable trip, and you'll be able to move faster in the backcountry, so trips don't need to take as long.

DOCUMENT AND COMPARE. Now depending on where you are in this ultralight investigation, you might be feeling skittish about getting right into the weeds chasing ounces and grams.

ULTRALIGHT DOESN'T EQUAL SACRIFICE AND SUFFERING. While accomplishing a trip more quickly may at times be advantageous, also consider what you may be able to add to the experience if you do decide to stay out longer than you initially planned. With a lighter core kit, I may choose to throw in a liter of wine, some Scotch, or a few tastier/more substantial meals. I'm learning that the older I get, it's not all about speed in the backcountry. I take my time and enjoy the terrain and beautiful places I've walked into.

Hyperlite Mountain Gear CEO Mike St. Pierre realized early on that he couldn't find good, durable, lightweight, design-driven gear for his outdoor pursuits because it didn't exist. So he schooled himself in fabrics, technologies and production, adopted ultralight philosophies, and never looked back.



LARGE POD (page 22)



JUMBO DRAWSTRING STUFF SACK (page 22)



3400 JUNCTION (page 06)



SMALL ROLL-TOP STUFF SACK (page 22)



MEDIUM DRAWSTRING STUFF SACK (page 14)





CHOOSING YOUR PACK

Every Hyperlite Mountain Gear backpack is a balance of features and performance that can be fine-tuned to your pursuits, destinations, and personal approach to the backcountry.

STEP 1: CHOOSE YOUR VOLUME

IDEAL USES

2400 SERIES (40L)	Backpacking and thru-hikes with access to resupplies
3400 SERIES (55L)	Best all around thru-hike size
4400 SERIES (70L)	Backcountry exploration and thru-hikes in variable conditions and environments

STEP 2: PICK YOUR POCKETS

IDEAL USES

MESH	Wooded Terrain + Wet Environments
HARDLINE WITH DYNEEMA®	Rocky Terrain + Dry Environments
MESH + HARDLINE WITH DYNEEMA®	Varied Terrain + Environments

STEP 3: FIND YOUR FAMILY

IDEAL USES

JUNCTION	Pacific Crest Trail
SOUTHWEST	Continental Divide Trail
WINDRIDER	Appalachian Trail

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THE JUNCTION

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OUR MOST VERSATILE LONG TRAIL PACK, BUILT FOR VARIED ENVIRONMENTS.

For backpacking trips measured by changes in climate zones and geographical features more than distance, the Junction offers the ultimate versatility required to meet those demands.

IDEAL USES



ACTIVITY
BACKPACKING + THRU HIKES WITH
ACCESS TO RESUPPLIES



SWEET SPOT
PACIFIC CREST TRAIL



TERRAIN
ANY ENVIRONMENT



AVAILABLE VOLUMES

2400 JUNCTION

Weight: 30.1 – 31.8 oz.
Volume: 40 Liters

3400 JUNCTION

Weight: 32.0 – 34.4 oz.
Volume: 55 Liters

[LEFT] THE JUNCTION PLAYING RANGEFINDER
IN THE WIND RIVER RANGE, WYOMING.

PHOTO BY SAMUEL MARTIN



THE SOUTHWEST



OUR “CLOSE QUARTERS” TRAIL PACK

When the route is thick with vegetation, covered with immovable objects, and calls for “suck in your gut and shimmy through” type moves, the Southwest is the backpack you want up-close and personal. This pack family is made specifically for tough trails that would rip most other ultralight-style packs to shreds.



IDEAL USES



ACTIVITY
THRU HIKES IN MORE
REMOTE LOCATIONS



SWEET SPOT
CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL



TERRAIN
DRY, ROCKY ENVIRONMENTS

AVAILABLE VOLUMES

2400 SOUTHWEST

Weight: 30.1 – 32.3 oz.
Volume: 40 Liters

3400 SOUTHWEST

Weight: 31.7 – 34.9 oz.
Volume: 55 Liters

4400 SOUTHWEST

Weight: 39.2 oz.
Volume: 70 Liters

[LEFT] CEO AND FOUNDER MIKE ST. PIERRE HOLDING THE LINE IN THE GRAND CANYON.

PHOTO BY CLAY WADMAN

FREE SHIPPING ON ORDERS OVER \$200 | 10



THE WINDRIDER

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OUR ORIGINAL BACKPACKING PACK

There's a classic image that comes to mind when you hear the word "backpacking." Dense green and brown forests with meandering rugged root-strewn trails, busy rivers, ancient lakes, and awe-inspiring hills and mountain panoramas are where the Windrider takes flight.



IDEAL USES



ACTIVITY
BACKCOUNTRY EXPLORATION AND THRU HIKES
IN VARIABLE CONDITIONS AND ENVIRONMENTS



SWEET SPOT
APPALACHIAN TRAIL



TERRAIN
WET, WOODED, ROCKY ENVIRONMENTS

AVAILABLE VOLUMES

2400 WINDRIDER

Weight: 29.9 – 32.3 oz.
Volume: 40 Liters

3400 WINDRIDER

Weight: 31.7 – 34.7 oz.
Volume: 55 Liters

4400 WINDRIDER

Weight: 38.9 oz.
Volume: 70 Liters

[LEFT] THE OFT-VISITED HIGH MILEAGE TEST CENTER IN OUR BACKYARD.
THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL THROUGH NEW HAMPSHIRE'S WHITE MOUNTAINS

PHOTO BY KRYSTIAN REPOLONA

CHASING TEN: THE QUEST TO LOWER YOUR BASE WEIGHT WITH TINA CURRIN

How long have you been going light?

I think I was born ultralight. My parents split when I was young and ended up in different states. I commuted between North Carolina and Florida several times each year and I hated hauling a large bag. I was kind of small and spindly, so I got really efficient at packing. I'm a 12-year-old girl, and I'm like, "Forget Teen Beat. I'm learning about packing cubes and stuff sacks!" As airlines tightened their carry-on restrictions, I got smarter. Eventually, I'd show up with two weeks' worth of stuff origami-ed into an overnight bag. It was like trying to beat the boss of a video game, but the boss was increasingly crappy airline constraints. I've never paid to check luggage on a short trip. I just can't do it. It feels like losing.

I developed this luggage obsession at an early age, which morphed into a gear obsession as soon as I started becoming active. I've been hiking since age 17, and I've been slowly upgrading my gear and downsizing my pack weight ever since. Moving into a bite-sized Sprinter with my husband, two cats, and a dog cemented the fixation. Everything has to be small or light—preferably both.

I bought my first Hyperlite Mountain Gear pack and the Echo 2 shelter in 2016. With them, I've visited 49 states and 47 national parks. I've bushwhacked my way into our country's least-visited national park, Alaska's phenomenal Gates of the Arctic, which has no roads or trails at all. You're scrambling through 20 miles of Arctic backcountry before you even step foot into the park. I've climbed in the Canadian Rockies and the Tetons, in Montana's Greater Yellowstone and Nevada's Great Basin. I've hiked rim-to-rim-to-rim in the Grand Canyon. In 2019, I completed a thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail with my husband, Grayson.

What's the base weight of your pack before adding consumables like food and fuel?

10.2 pounds in the Summer, 12.4 pounds in the Winter.

Beyond the "The Ten" items, what other kinds of gear do you make room for, and why?

I always carry something to read. I look for magazines with really small type and minimal ads, like *The Sun* or *Alpinist*. Yes, I tear out the pages as I go. If it's a longer trip, I'm going to carry camp shoes and a small sit pad. If I'm feeling really spicy, I might pack out a beer with a favorable ABV to weight ratio. Going lightweight affords me the option to add comfort pieces without becoming uncomfortable.

Are you currently forgoing any of the ten pieces? Why?

I ditched my stove and cookset as soon as summer hit on the AT. I was traveling with a group of four guys and I was the last one to do it. Something about eating cold-soaked couscous from an old Jiffy container felt even grubbier than usual. But, once I said goodbye to the self-respect of a hot meal from dedicated tableware, I never looked back. Unless the weather is frightful, I doubt I'll carry a full cook setup again.

What has achieving this low base weight done for your trips outdoors? How has it impacted the way you travel?

I am comfortably lightweight and not maniacal about it. For me, it's an investment in risk mitigation—almost like a savings account, but in reverse. I've got padding for additions and adjustments (and injuries, too). If I need to add something for safety, comfort, or weather, I don't stress about it. I spend a lot of time training. I'm in the gym seven days a week. I eat my veggies. Good health is a gift. If I have the means to protect it—from the elements and from unnecessary strain—I'm going to. If there's pressure, I want it to be of my own making. Big miles, technical terrain, and unfamiliar territory are all acceptable sources. Leaky tents, bulky packs, and unorganized kits are not. A low base weight breeds versatility, safety, and the confidence to lean harder into the unknown.

Tina is a writer and outdoors enthusiast based in North Carolina. From 2016 - 2018, she lived in an RV with her husband, two cats, and a dog, climbing as many mountains, running as many trails, and seeing as many National Parks as humanely possible. In the summer of 2019, she thru-hiked the 2,192-mile Appalachian Trail, returning home with only two broken fingers and one broken toe. Follow her on Instagram [[@tinacurrin](#)] or [www.TinaCurrin.com](#)



**“I BOUGHT MY FIRST HYPERLITE
MOUNTAIN GEAR PACK AND SHELTER
IN 2016. WITH THEM, I’VE VISITED 49
STATES AND 47 NATIONAL PARKS.”**





[A] **Hyperlite Mountain Gear** 3400 Junction Backpack (page 06) + Shoulder Pocket (page 22)

[B] **Hyperlite Mountain Gear** UltraMid 2 Pyramid Tent System (page 19-20)

[C] **Therm-a-Rest** Neoair XLite Sleeping Pad

[D] **Hyperlite Mountain Gear** Drawstring + Roll-Top Stuff Sacks, Stuff Sack Pillow + Pods (page 22)

[E] **Black Diamond** Alpine Carbon Cork Trekking Poles

[F] **MSR PocketRocket® Deluxe** Stove



ESSENTIAL BACKCOUNTRY CHECKLIST

THE GEAR WE USE AND TRUST

- [G] **Vargo** Ti Lite 900 ml Mug + Titanium Long-Handle Spoon
- [H] **Platypus** Hoser 2L Reservoir
- [I] **Sawyer** Squeeze Water Filtration System
- [J] **Nitecore** NU25 Headlamp
- [K] **Swiss Army** Classic SD Multi-Tool
- [L] **Garmin** inReach Mini Satellite Messenger





NEW SUMMER ARRIVALS

RICH RUDOW IS STOKED ON HIS HAT.
PHOTO BY DAN RANSOM



**MIKE GIVING AN EARLY CAMERA POD PROTOTYPE
THE GRAND CANYON EXPERIENCE IN 2015**
PHOTO BY RICH RUDOW

COMING JUNE 2021

2021 APPAREL

You've got a crazy adventure? We'll help you get it done in some kind of fashion. Especially when the adventure calls for looking AMAZING. Turn every trail into a runway with our new lineup of hats and T-shirts, and let the world know who you get wild with in the process.



COMING JUNE 2021

CAMERA POD

Designed with the a mirrorless camera form factor in mind, our new Camera Pod will help ensure your gear stays protected in the backcountry no matter how you choose to carry it.

Available in two sizes – one for Sony's A6000 Series [shown above] and one for the A7 Series.

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THE PERFECT END TO ADVENTUROUS DAYS

Our ultra-tough UltraMid Pyramid Tent System is a home away from home on minimalist alpine climbing missions, long distance backpacking trips, and remote backcountry adventures. Made with 100% waterproof Dyneema® Composite fabrics, this pyramid tent withstands even the worst weather conditions.

Visit [HYPERLITEMOUNTAINGEAR.COM/ULTAMID](https://www.hyperlitemountaingear.com/ultamid) to build your system.

WHEN MOUNTAINS REFLECT ON THEIR LAKE NEIGHBORS.
PHOTO BY BRUCE TREMPER

ULTAMID

ULTRALIGHT PYRAMID TENT SYSTEM





[A]



[B]



[C]



[D]



PACK DISCIPLINE STARTS HERE.



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[A] ROLL-TOP STUFF SACKS

MSRP: \$40 - \$75

If you travel through wet climates regularly (or even occasionally) and want to keep your critical pieces of gear dry, look no further. These Roll-Top Stuff Sacks can quickly become an essential part of any pack system. With four sizes to choose – from a small food bag to a pack liner – there’s no shortage of uses.



[B] DRAWSTRING STUFF SACKS

MSRP: \$20 - \$45

Our insanely light but tough Drawstring Stuff Sacks are supremely useful with organization and efficiency. With a simple job to do, these pack accessories are perfect for keeping “like” items together and organized.



[C] STUFF SACK PILLOWS

MSRP: \$40 - \$50

Our Stuff Sack Pillows are the first step towards sleeping well in the backcountry. By day: a reliable way to protect and store any unworn clothing. By night: a comfortable spot to rest your head. Sounds like a win-win.



[D] PODS

MSRP: \$50 - \$60

Pack discipline starts here because when it comes to increasing mileage on extended adventures, every cubic inch counts. Pods fit perfectly into our packs, leaving no inch unused.



HOME, AND SIMPLICITY, IS WHERE THE HEART IS.

PHOTO BY JOSH TIPPETT



PASSING TESTS WITH FLYING COLORS.

Submitted by Jeremy Cronon

Fifteen minutes after leaving Mt. Rintoul Hut in New Zealand, I stepped above tree line. As I peeked upward, tilting my head slightly to shelter as much of my face as I could from the onslaught of wind and rain, I saw a bleak landscape. The barren rock, coated in slick lichen, stretched upwards as far as my eyes could see, which at the time was only about thirty feet. Beyond the stony foreground, a pale cloudscape swirled menacingly in every direction. This was not an ideal day to be in the mountains alone.

Stepping back into the mild protection of the trees, I weighed my options. I had already donned all my waterproof gear, and my pack was sealed tight against the elements. I'd brought enough food and water for the section, and I'd studied my route extensively. I felt ready. The weather, on the other hand, was not cooperating. Clouds whipped across the ridge ahead of me, changing the visibility drastically from thirty to sixty feet and peppering my face and body with a barrage of tiny water droplets that felt akin to sandblasting. Each sixty to seventy mph gust threatened to rip my 4400 Porter from my back, while the sustained forty mph winds forced me to adjust my balance regularly. In short, the weather was far from ideal.





PHOTO BY WILL STRATHMANN

I accepted both the risks that I understood and those that I hadn't yet considered stepping beyond the protection of the trees and into the maelstrom of the Richmond Alpine Track. I moved methodically, endlessly scanning my harsh surroundings and taking extra care on the increasingly slick rock beneath my feet. I linked together orange poles and cairns, following the knife-edge route connecting the peaks. When I couldn't see the next pole or cairn, I walked ten to fifteen paces away from the one I had just passed before walking in a circle around that pole, scanning the horizon for the next pole on the route. Although time-consuming, this method never led me astray and always offered me the option of a safe return. After reaching the summit of Mt. Rintoul (1,741m), I felt a growing sense of confidence in my ability to navigate the conditions.

Almost three hours after I left the hut, I stepped onto soil once more. In the protection of the trees, the wind faded to a distant murmur, and the blasting mist disappeared. I breathed a sigh of relief. From a bird's eye view, I imagined watching a lone figure walking along a precipitous ridge as gale-force winds buffeted them from side to side. The fragility and isolation of the challenge had left me invigorated and empowered. My body, however, cried out for warmth, sustenance, and relaxation. Three hours in an icy, damp gale had soaked me to the core. I quickened my pace, hoping that Old Man Hut had a decent supply of readily available dry firewood.

NO MATTER HOW DRAINED I FELT AS I STRODE DOWN THE TRAIL, I COULDN'T HELP THE OUTRAGEOUS GRIN THAT SPREAD ACROSS MY FACE. I HAD PASSED A TEST. I HAD EFFECTIVELY UTILIZED OVER A DECADE OF OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE TO SAFELY NAVIGATE A FOREIGN ENVIRONMENT IN INCLEMENT CONDITIONS.

After kindling a small fire in the hut's stove, I stripped down and arranged all of my layers around in the drying heat. Everything I was wearing was drenched, but thankfully, my sleeping bag was not, and it welcomed me into its warm embrace. The adventure was far from over and tomorrow would be markedly similar with even stronger winds, but I didn't know that, nor did I care. At that moment, it was time to celebrate life and accomplishment with the happiness and warmth that only fire can bring.

The next two days on the Richmond Alpine Track brought similar conditions, exposure, and challenge as I moved from Old Man Hut to Slaty Hut and from Slaty Hut to Starveall Hut. The moves were exhausting and short, ending with a celebratory fire and a requisite drying session each night. By the time I reached Starveall Hut though, I knew the worst was behind me.

After closing up Starveall Hut, I looked back at the spine of the Richmond Range snaking back up into the clouds and smiled, knowing that I had learned a thing or two up there. My journey, however, was far from over. The maps I had did not account for the web of forestry roads that seemed to exist solely to confuse my sense of direction, and I quickly lost track of the efficient route I had originally planned. Opting for simplicity, I followed rivers, roads, and ridges, through public and private land alike, slowly descending towards the base of the Aniseed Valley. Multiple river crossings, a handful of bramble bashes, and one too many descents later, I found myself traversing what was likely a private road down towards the town of Hope.

As I tramped along a rural road towards Richmond, I half-heartedly raised my thumb whenever I heard the distant sound of a vehicle. Up to that point, my hitching track record had been stellar. I'd hitched over a hundred times, always arriving at my destination without too many bizarre encounters along the way. That said, I think my secret power was my svelte, white, dare-I-say sexy backpack. I even caught a ride once only because a packrafter had a question about my pack.

On this day, however, it looked like it had been battered by a powerful rain, dragged through dense brambles, and pushed through muddy embankments, and the brilliant white Dyneema proudly displayed every scar and bruise from the day's carnage. My pack and I were a mess, but I was more than thankful that my stuff was safe and sound inside.

Jeremy Cronon is a certified NOLS instructor and freelance writer whose work has appeared in the New York Times among other publications. Learn more about him at ChasingCairns.com.





HYPERLITE
MOUNTAIN GEAR

X



GAIA GPS

FREE 6-MONTH PREMIUM MEMBERSHIP WITH ANY PACK OR SHELTER PURCHASE*

“The way GPS is used in backcountry adventuring continues to evolve, and one platform that is always adapting to keep pace is GAIA. After trying a couple of different programs, GAIA has become the easiest to use and is by far the most robust GPS tracking software available. It’s never let me down while used in the field, especially on trips that are longer in duration.”

MIKE ST. PIERRE // HYPERLITE MOUNTAIN GEAR CEO

FOR DETAILS PLEASE VISIT
HYPERLITEMOUNTAINGEAR.COM/GAIA



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DAY IN. DAY OUT.

THE GEAR WE DRIVE DAILY



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DAYBREAK

MSRP: \$210

For those less-than-24-hour enterprises, the Daybreak is the out and back pack with just the features you'll need to bring it all together. Hydration, snacks and lunch, additional clothing for changes in temps, trekking poles, a headlamp – you know what you need for the best days out, and the Daybreak will take it all in stride.

SUMMIT PACK

MSRP: \$195 - \$295

Put an exclamation point on your high elevation routes by bagging the peaks with your Summit Pack. Stow it away in your bigger pack, and bring it out for the final push, or use it for fast and light day jobs.



STUFF PACK

MSRP: \$110

The perfect addition to another pack for a variety of backpacking or camping activities. Like the kid on the bench that hasn't played the entire game, but comes out in the end with a touchdown, the Stuff Pack can be full of surprises. A very versatile addition to any bigger pack.



SHOULDER POCKET

MSRP: \$40

The Shoulder Pocket puts your chosen tools for communication with the outside world within arm's reach. Or, throw in a small digital camera and document the outside world you're in. Designed to mate perfectly with the shoulder strap systems found on our packs, it's roomy enough to fit most modern cell phones and some GPS devices.



VERSA

MSRP: \$70

Don't let the term "fanny pack" pigeonhole your understanding of how this supremely versatile accessory can be used: whether you wear it around your waist, crossbody, under your shoulder, or attached to your pack at the hip belt, sternum strap, daisy chains, or on top of the pack secured by the compression Y-straps, the highly functional Versa is a storage option that just won't quit.

G.O.A.T. TOTE

MSRP: \$99 - \$119

Waxing poetic about something as simple and straightforward as a tote bag would be a stretch. So, we won't. You'll know what it's perfect for as soon as you use one.





@theresehobson



@brettrdavis



YOUR STORY DESERVES A PLATFORM.

The Hyperlite Mountain Gear Blog is a showcase of educational and inspirational content culled from our mix of writers, ambassadors, and customers like you. "Our Gear's Got Stories" is a collection of user-submitted essays and photos featuring Hyperlite Mountain Gear in action. With tales of adventure, challenge, inspiration, and emotion, the blog covers the most mind-blowing, humbling, fun, heart-warming, ridiculous, scary, or exhilarating thing that's happened to you [and your gear].

FOR MORE INFO VISIT:
HYPERLITEMOUNTAINGEAR.COM/SUBMIT-YOUR-STORY



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THE FIRST ESSENTIAL: CONSERVATION IS MORE THAN A RADICAL ACT, IT IS A MORAL IMPERATIVE

Submitted by Brad Meiklejohn

HEALTHY WILD PLACES ARE THE FIRST ESSENTIAL FOR HYPERLITE MOUNTAIN GEAR.

Without an intact natural world to use it in, there is no point in a lighter pack or shelter. Hyperlite Mountain Gear is premised on the planet being wild enough that you want to roam around on it.

As we have seen in COVID times, nature provides the ultimate and only reliable retreat when friends, family, and society are not available. With theaters, restaurants, airplanes, libraries, and parties off-limits, there was only and always nature. And we flocked to it gratefully for healing and grounding, to gain some perspective and distance on the crazy-making of the news cycle. In nature, we remember what is real and meaningful in our lives.

But the tide of humanity washing over our wildlands in the pandemic brought a tsunami of impacts. Trailheads overflow with cars, conga-lines stretch to crowded summits, and impromptu latrines hide behind every bush. Wildlife is pushed out of their quiet refuges by people escaping to them. The solace of solitude has become almost impossible to find.

Covid has revealed to us that nature is the First Essential. But we have also learned that nature is in too short in supply. Protecting nature is no longer a nicety but a necessity that calls for all-hands-on-deck.

We all have an obligation to give back in whatever way we can. How you give back might range from picking up trailhead trash to tearing down deadbeat dams, from pulling invasive plants to buying land for access and habitat. Taking care of the First Essential is not about heroism so much as it is about quiet dedication.

RESURFACING FROM THE GRAND CANYON
TO PLUNGE INTO LIGHT.

PHOTO BY RICH RUDOW

Every little thing you do matters, and it all starts with the intention to help. It's an aspirational thing. It's no longer enough to expect that nature will always be there for us. We all must aspire to leave wild nature better than we found it. And then do something about it.

To get you started, here are some tips on caring for the First Essential. As a professional conservationist, I've worked on dam removals, public access projects, 500,000 acres of habitat protection in Alaska, Utah, New Hampshire, and Argentina.

CARING FOR NATURE—THE FIRST ESSENTIAL—CAN SEEM INTIMIDATING AT FIRST. THE PROBLEMS ARE SO VAST THAT IT'S DOUBTFUL WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE. BUT ACTION IS THE ANTIDOTE TO ANXIETY, SO START ON SOMETHING SMALL IN THE PLACE YOU KNOW BEST.

It begins with love for a place or for the things you find there, including experience. Protect it and care for it because you love it, not because you want to save it, not because you want to be recognized or heroic.

An essential shift happens when what has been just the backdrop for our adventures is drawn into sharper focus. We then become this small figure, as in a Japanese painting—the story shifts from being all about us to a much more complex, engaging, and reciprocal relationship. Nature heals us, and we must heal Nature. When we step back and let Nature be the center of attention, we are better able to see what needs to be done.

Caring for the First Essential is never done. It's a relay race from one generation to the next. Just put out your hand to accept the baton, carry it while you can, then hand it off.

That's all that is needed.

Ambassador Brad Meiklejohn is The Conservation Fund's Alaska Director. Motivated by a sense of urgency for the losses occurring in the natural world, he's following the legacy of his grandmother who fought for women's voting rights and a great uncle who stood up against McCarthyism.





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BACK COVER BY JAMES ROH