

Hunter with broken leg crawled for miles through Idaho wilderness to find help

USA TODAY NETWORK Bonnie Shelton, KTVB-TV, Boise, Idaho

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An experienced hunter is recovering after breaking his leg while hunting on a remote trail. John Sain had to dig deep to survive for almost four days in the remote wilderness with little food and water.

A hunter who crawled for several days through dense wilderness in search of help, is recovering in a Boise, Idaho hospital.

Alone and miles from the trail, John Sain had to dig deep to survive for almost four days in the remote wilderness near McCall, Idaho, with little food and water.

"I honestly didn't think I was going to make it out," Sain said from his hospital bed.

Last Wednesday, Sain backpacked about six miles down the Jackson Creek Trail in the Salmon-Challis National Forest to set up camp for a few days.

The experienced hunter said he's been camping alone since he was 13-years-old. But after tracking an elk deep into the woods Thursday morning, something happened Sain couldn't have anticipated.

"I stepped up on a log, there were two logs, and my foot slipped in between them," he said. "My momentum went forward and it snapped the two bottom bones in my right leg, the tib and the fib, in half."

In a lot of pain, the 50-year-old started considering his options. "Contemplated on just ending it right there honestly," he said.

Sain had no cell service and was miles from the trail, but after writing emotional goodbye letters to his wife and two children, he made a decision. He used sticks and ripped up cloth to make a splint for his injured right leg. Then, he began to crawl.

"For two and a half days I dug myself out of there," said Sain. He had a survival kit with him, a little food and a water purifier. Each night, he would light a fire for warmth. But by Sunday, his fourth day alone, dehydrated and in severe pain, he started to break down. "I was done," he said.

But Sain's story wasn't. That afternoon, two men on motorcycles happened to come across him injured on the trail. One of those men rode back into cell service range and called for help.

"Thank God. I was praying the whole way that it would happen and it did. My prayers were answered for sure," said Sain.

McCall Fire and Rescue was sent out to find Sain and stabilize him. Over the phone, a McCall firefighter told KTVB-TV that people used chainsaws to clear the way for Life Flight to land in the dense wilderness.

Sain was flown to Saint Alphonsus in Boise for treatment. He's recovering from surgery on his right leg and is expected to be in the hospital for the next few days as he continues to heal. The 50-year-old's wife and two kids have flown to the Treasure Valley from California to be with him.

"It was hard just knowing that he's out in the hills just trying to stay alive," Jennifer Sain, John's wife, said. "It still doesn't seem real to me."

John says it's hard to explain all that he went through, but he knows where his strength comes from.

"God. I'm a faithful man. I prayed the whole time and it was definitely my fuel," he said.

Despite everything that happened, **Sain says he will go out hunting alone again, but next time with a satellite phone, a two-way radio, or a GPS locator.**

Contact Info:

Cybergear™ & RF Gear 2 Go™

6640 East Baseline Road, Suite 102
Mesa, AZ 85206

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Thankfully, this hunter was rescued in time, but he didn't have to have suffered for 4 days and 3 nights if he had completed a few hours of study, nor suffer again when he sees his medical bills from his rescue. There are several ham radio repeaters within range of his previous location near McCall, ID, so if he had taken an 80z., \$59.95 handheld radio with him (and taken his FCC license exam before leaving), he would have easily been able to communicate his situation days earlier.

A Spot GPS tracker/locator would also have pin-pointed his location easily and notified his family or rescue workers of his situation. Another solution would have been to have had a Globalstar Satellite phone with him (all of these communication items are available from **Cybergear and RF Gear 2 Go**).

As this man discovered, when you can't communicate, you're alone. Learn from this man's mistakes and **gear up before venturing out** into the wilderness - woefully under-prepared.