

## A big beam

BY KATE BARKER

12

» The neoprene-d, Nalgene-d and nylon-toting fanatics who measure equipment's worth by how little it weighs wouldn't even deign to call it gear, but I don't go anywhere out there without my million-candlepower flashlight. Weighing in at three-and-a-half pounds, this serious hunk of hardware even comes with a safety latch. [Accidentally glance into that 55-watt halogen bulb and you're liable to melt your own corneas.] This ain't no sissy lamp. Sure, the latest head-lamp offerings from Petzl or Brunton can light your way for about 100 feet. But with this sucker, you can burn a beam clear up to a mile. Cool.

One of the first times I tested it, I paddled out on our lake on a moonless night with the beast carefully balanced on a dry lifejacket (it doesn't take too well to moisture). I tripped the safety, pulled the trigger and aimed the light straight down. After recovering from the startling glare, I felt vaguely disappointed that I couldn't see any fish. But the eeriness of seaweed and stumps illuminated in that preternatural glow at least gave some horror-flick satisfaction. Until the charge died, half an hour later. A lesson learned—do not squander serious firepower, especially when it is time-limited.

I have since discovered that my million-candlepower flashlight has a myriad of uses even after its wondrous half-hour of super wattage has expired. Its heft carries enough concussive force to brain a one-pound bass with a single blow. If paddling solo in a light chop, you can throw it in the bow for ballast. The durable plastic shell, when upturned, makes an excellent beer caddy. And for the safety-minded, a rescue plane at 10,000 feet could easily spot the neon-yellow casing.

I can't wait to get my hands on the next generation in kick-ass illumination technology—the 15-million-candlepower flashlight. Weight: 12 pounds. Lighting distance? Six miles. Eat that, Petzl.

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