

## LOCAL

# TV host goes into the wild, in St. Lucie County



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During a week cut off from civilization, Dennis Storm dreamed of succulent steaks. He fantasized about eating frozen pineapple dipped in chocolate. He started to hear voices and waged a constant battle to keep his campfire going.

Yet the biggest problem Storm battled during a week in the woods was loneliness and boredom.

Storm is a host of a Dutch public television show called "How to Stay Alive." He spent the past week literally living off the land at a remote spot on the Adams Ranch in western St. Lucie County and recording his adventures on camera.

The hours of footage will be edited down into seven four-minute segments to be broadcast in the Netherlands in about six weeks, his director Stephan Miras said.

Miras, who did not join in the woody adventure, communicated with Storm via notes left with a daily cache of videotapes and fresh camera batteries at a drop-off spot that recalled the days of Cold War spies.

Storm went into the woods with only the barest of essentials: a meager kit that included snares

to catch rabbits and other small game (they didn't work), water purification tablets, a machete, a water bottle and a steel to start fires.

Survival expert Hank Fannin of Port St. Lucie was called in to advise Storm on edible plants in the area and for pointers on how to catch his food.

"For someone who'd had no survival training," Fannin said, "he did pretty well."

And the fact that Storm, a well-known TV personality in the Netherlands, had no experience doing this sort of thing is part of a running joke on the show, Miras explained.

Storm's diet consisted largely of acorns — either eaten raw or boiled in a small tin cup. He also managed to spear a few fish, including a gar which he cooked over an open fire on the blade of his machete. He pronounced it "pretty good. Sweet, white

meat."

Also tasty, once he'd endured the unpleasant preparation and butchering process, was a raccoon he found in a trap. The animal "tasted good, like steak, it was good meat," he said.

Storm spent his first day building a shelter out of four sticks covered with palm fronds. He used Spanish moss for a mattress. His second major task was to start a fire, something that proved easy because of the dry conditions, he said.

He found though by the second day, after eating very little, that his strength had ebbed alarmingly. He was glad he'd gotten the big tasks done while he was still fresh.

On one hand, Storm relished the silence and the luxury of being completely alone. Yet, as the days wore on, he said his

biggest problem became sheer boredom. He spent most of his waking hours foraging for food and purifying water. At night, he struggled to keep his fire alight.

That left his mind time to wander. Once or twice he started to hallucinate, hearing the voices of loved ones calling out to him.

His scariest moment came during a very cold night when a bobcat attacked a wild hog close to his camp. The wounded hog screamed in agony and fear for hours; it sounded as if it was only an arm's length away from him. Storm was frozen to the spot — partly by the cold, mostly through fear.

He recorded his adventures on two video cameras, one of which was strapped to his chest. As his energy began to flag from lack of food, Storm said the 30-pound cam-

era felt as if it weighed 80 pounds by the time he was "rescued" Tuesday morning by a helicopter.

Mariska Dekker of the Dutch TV network BNN said the network chose Adams Ranch because it needed "a remote location with beautiful scenery, enough food for survival for one person and trees and brush to provide shelter."

Peter Harrison of Adams Ranch can see the spread as a location for tourist survival adventures, but said zoning and other county requirements would be formidable obstacles.

It's interesting, less than one week after a Fort Pierce official argued for more ecotourism efforts in the area, that this Dutch

venture should pop up. I hope ranch and county officials can work toward making a low-key survival school land use here a reality in the future. Such a venture could introduce more people to the hidden delights of St. Lucie County and also offer an alternative revenue stream for the Adams family and local businesses.

As Harrison pointed out, "In the future, we won't necessarily be able to survive on agriculture alone."

Anthony Westbury is a columnist for Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers. This column reflects his opinion. For more on St. Lucie County topics, follow his blog at [tcpalm.com/westbury](http://tcpalm.com/westbury). Contact him at 772-409-1320 or [anthony.westbury@scripps.com](mailto:anthony.westbury@scripps.com).