

Keeping Cozy



Tip Sheet

Photo by Jeff Davis

If you are warm and dry you can stay outdoors forever. Cold and wet? Even if you're having your best day hunting ever, you will still be miserable. Here are some tips to keep you cozy in the great outdoors.

Tip 1 Be Pessimistic.

Pay attention to the weather report, and don't hope for the best—prepare for the worst! If the forecast is for drizzle, dress for downpour. If they say it will be a high of 40 and a low of 20 degrees, plan for it to hit zero (you can always take clothes off). Get a NOAA weather radio for immediate warnings. Bushnell makes a set of Weather Forecast Stations called WeatherFX that display a 3-, 5-, or 7-day forecast.

Tip 2 Be Informed.

I always have a Kestrel hand-held weather meter in my daypack when I'm outside, so I can tell the temperature, wind speed, barometric pressure, humidity, and even altitude. While this nifty device may not help *before* I go outside, it can help confirm how miserable I am if I fail to properly prepare.

Tip 3 Take it With You.

Your daypack may take many different forms, depending on conditions. I have a series of bags and packs of various sizes, and I fill them with gear, clothes, food, and first aid gear depending on how long I

plan to be out, and I always have rain gear. Blackhawk! has a great selection. I pack for at least twice as long as I think I'll be out, which means if I'm going to be out all day I have what I need to keep me alive if I get stuck overnight. That means a SPACE blanket, some food, a bottle of water, flashlight, whistle, extra clothes, hat and gloves, and other gear.

Tip 4 Pack Heat.

Those nifty hand warmers from Heatmax can really make a difference. They are cheap, available everywhere, come in a variety of sizes (including little ones to warm your toes), and some last as long as 18 hours. Every fall I put a bag of them in my car, and it does not have to be January before I use them.

Tip 5 Underwear and Outerwear.

Everyone knows that you should dress in layers, but I've discovered that when I have quality underwear and outerwear, I can save a lot of money on the clothes I put in between. The Under Armour-type garments that wick moisture away are worth the price. I've got old, ugly shirts and pants in cotton, flannel, and wool over the quality underwear, and then I've got it topped off with

good outerwear. I used to replace cheap rain gear every year because it leaked, ripped, and made me sweat like crazy—until I wised up and bought a set of quality rain gear 15 years ago that I still use.

Tip 6 That Bone-Chilling Cold.

When it's cold enough to freeze your eyelashes together, you need to be prepared. I grew up in Minnesota, and below zero and windy never kept us indoors, but a whole series of new products make me weep for the times we snuck blankets out of the house and wrapped ourselves like cocoons in our blinds. Heater Body Suit will keep you warm on the stand in any temperature. I've used a ThermoLogic coat and gloves with batteries and a heating coil to keep you warm for up to four hours, and they *really* worked.

Tip 7 Start Every Day Dry.

When you get in after a cold, wet day in the field take care of your gear so you are ready to go the next day. Trying to wiggle your toes or fingers into already wet boots or gloves ensures a miserable day in the field. I've seen homemade boot dryers, drying racks, and a variety of drying techniques that have various degrees of success. The PEET dryer is a nifty device that takes care of safely drying boots and gloves, and lets me go to sleep knowing that I'll start the day with happy feet and dry fingers.