



Quality tent critical in bad weather

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This year's hunting excursion to Alaska was one where the law of averages caught up to our group and provided weather that would not cooperate. One thing that was very obvious during the trip was the fact that the folks at Cabela's make a darn good tent.

Alaska is the exception to a lot of rules, and the Arctic Circle isn't the type of place that forgives the unprepared. At one point in the trip I woke up during the middle of the night because the tent pole was banging into the side of my cot. My initial thought was that our neighbor the grizzly was after the waterproof food bag in the vestibule of the tent.

Fortunately the commotion was due to bad weather shaking the tent. My buddy Ralph and I woke up in the morning and realized the chances of our pilot showing up were slim to none. The storm ended the hunting part of the trip and we spent the rest of the time in the tent trying to stay warm.

One uncomfortable thought was that if the tent failed and things got soaked, it might be a long, unpleasant wait.

There are a lot of folks in our area who camp when the weather isn't the greatest, and while most of us won't scale Mt. Everest, with the right gear you can be comfortable in just about any weather.

The gear we use in Alaska is loaned to us by the flight service, and the tent stood up to 48 hours of a heavy wind blowing about 20 miles an hour and gusting to 40 or so at times. Turns out the tent is overbuilt, and is designed to take a 75 mph blast from jet engine exhaust and still stay standing. The tent also has a sturdy rain fly designed to go on the outside of the poles, away from the tent fabric.

The downfall to the tent is that it is so heavy it won't work on a backpack trip.

There are many manufacturers, including Cabela's, that make tents which will hold up in heavy wind and rain. Some of these tents can be backpacked and will hold up to the miserable weather of a mountain expedition. If you are camping this fall or winter, one of these tents is a must.

The outfitters in Alaska also had a neat trick. They cut a piece of outdoor carpet the size of the tent floor, much more comfortable in the cold. Another good piece of equipment is a solid cot. With the cot you are up off the floor to stay dry while sleeping, and with an insulated mat, there is plenty of insulation and support underneath you. The mat makes a big difference in staying warm, and the cot is a great place to sit as well.

Good sleeping bags are important in bad weather. Down sleeping bags provide the best warmth, but they are frowned on in Alaska because down loses its ability to insulate in a place where everything gets wet or damp. Synthetic fibers like Qualofil or **Primaloft** will keep you warm, even if they aren't totally dry.

The moral of the story is that if you are heading off for deer camp in a tent and sleeping bag, get a good one. While the Adirondacks are not exactly the Arctic, fall and winter outings can be met with cold, wet weather there. Going on the cheap if it is cold and wet can make for a miserable time.

When the weather gets rough, good gear can make a big difference in how comfortable you are out in the woods.

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