



Tips
from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

There is an old saying that says, “Everyone complains about the weather, but nobody does anything about it.”

In this day and age, I cannot believe we still have weather. We put man on the moon, landed a vehicle on Mars, and yet, we still have to worry about the weather.

Many years of being an outdoors person has taught me many things. One of the most important lessons I have learned is that the weather gods are not your friends.

I have had more days outdoors, fishing trips, hunting trips, hikes, camp outs, ball games and ATV rides ruined by weather, than I care to remember.

I have survived a dozen hurricanes, several tornadoes, half dozen floods and countless blizzards. After all of this, my worst outdoor weather enemy is wind. I truly despise wind and find absolutely no useful purpose for it.

In a past life, I was a backcountry guide in the Florida Keys. I chased bonefish, Tarpon, permit, snook and reds with a passion. Windy days were absolutely the worst. Traveling from spot to spot in a flats boat, getting the snot beat out of you from the wind swelled waves was truly agonizing.

Later, I got into fast off-shore boats. These boats require a certain amount of wave height to get out of the water and build their speed. A 3-foot chop is fine but 6 to 8 feet is a sentence for pain. I have the bulging disks as a souvenir from my years of race boats, serving as an unpleasant reminder of how much I despise wind.

Native Americans believed that wind was a spirit, moving across the earth and showing his presence. In Greek mythology, the anemoi were actually four wind Gods, causing wind from the four compass points.

Wind can turn a pleasant day into a cold day. When wind blows across the surface of exposed skin, it draws heat away from your body. The higher the wind speed, the more heat it draws away from you.



Exposed skin will cool more quickly in the wind than it will on a calm day.

Consider that your body's core temperature is 98.6 degrees in a normal person.

When that temperature drops below 97 degrees, you become hypothermic, a potentially deadly affliction. It does not take much of a drop to cause you problems. Wind is caused by air flowing from high pressure to low pressure. The closer the high and low systems are together, the stronger the pressure gradient becomes, and the stronger the winds.

Near the surface of the earth, friction from the ground slows the wind down. During the day, convective mixing stirs the lower atmosphere, and this effect is minimized.

During the nighttime, convective mixing stops and the surface winds become greatly reduced.

Convection generally means rising air. As air is heated on the earth's surface, it rises.

The rising causes an influx of colder air to enter the rising stream of air. Moist convection is where excess water vapor in rising air particles condenses to form a cloud.

Convection can also be dry, as it occurs over the desert, or in the early morning hours of humid areas before convection has become strong enough to form clouds.

The sun warms the ground, and convection air currents help remove



excess heat from the surface. Without this convection, we would have unbearable heat on the earth during the summer. It has been calculated that the average temperature of the Earth's surface would be 125 degrees without convection, compared to the average of 59 degrees with it.

The highest wind speed ever recorded on the surface of the earth was 231 mph atop Mt. Washington, New Hampshire. The high-elevation weather station experienced the winds of an extremely strong jet stream that had descended unusually low in the atmosphere.

The strongest winds in the solar system are on Saturn, where speeds of 1,100 mph have been reached. Imagine trying to pitch a tent in that. In contrast, the doldrums is a wind-free area around the equator where sailing ships would get stranded for weeks at a time.

For our purposes outdoors, we need to be prepared for wind anytime

we venture out. Wind can come up at anytime, turning a pleasant day into a dangerous situation, especially during the colder months.

Carry some extra clothes along on your trip that have the ability to block the wind. Be cautious of wind-proof versus wind-resistant. Most wind-resistant fabrics can block a 10 to 15 mph breeze. As a kid, we called these lightweight summer jackets “windbreakers.”

I prefer a more effective wind blocker, like the clothes made with Gore Windstopper, and similar products. A 10 mph breeze is not going to concern me unless it is cold outside to start with. Prepare for more extreme conditions for your outing, and remember, conditions change rapidly.

The drawback to wind-proof clothing is the lack of breathability. The more wind blocking power, the potential for perspiration increases, because airflow decreases.

Some of the higher-end Windstopper jackets have

You can't photograph or see wind, but it is always there. Of all the weather events, wind has ruined more days afield than any other. If your outdoor adventure has anything to do with water and boats, you had best pay attention to the wind. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/ Mark Rackay)

zippered vents to help combat over heating, allowing you to open areas in the armpits, promoting airflow.

When looking for a wind proof garment, there is a simple test you can conduct to determine the effective wind stopping ability of a particular item. Simply hold the clothing against your mouth and blow against it as hard as you can.

The average adult can generate an equivalent of a 20 mph wind using this method. If you feel your breath coming through the fabric, or not, you have a good idea how effective this jacket will be in the wind.

Once the wind exceeds a sustained rate above 20 mph, there is nothing that will stop it from passing through the fabric. During cold temperatures, winds of that speed are extremely dangerous. Exposed skin can freeze in a matter of minutes if there is that kind of wind and sub freezing temperatures, so it is best to seek shelter instead.

There is some use for winds, especially as a source of alternative energy, but this is not new. The first wind-powered house was invented in 1887 in Scotland. Now we have portable wind turbines that you can use to charge your cell phone and other electronic devices. They are

lightweight and work well. I see their use for extended trips in remote areas.

Without wind, the earth would just smolder away and all the waters would stagnate.

Knowing this does not make it any easier for the boater who has to take a beating in the waves, or the hunter who is always fighting a shifting wind when sneaking up on game.

If there is a spirit in the wind, it must be an evil spirit. I will continue to complain about the wind and blame it for some ruined days afield. At least now we have some better clothing to ward off the effects of the wind than we had some years ago. Still, I would rather have calm days and leave the wind to those who own sailboats. My sailboat came with twin 250 HP outboards.

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