

# OUTDOORS

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## Know when the boots are worn out



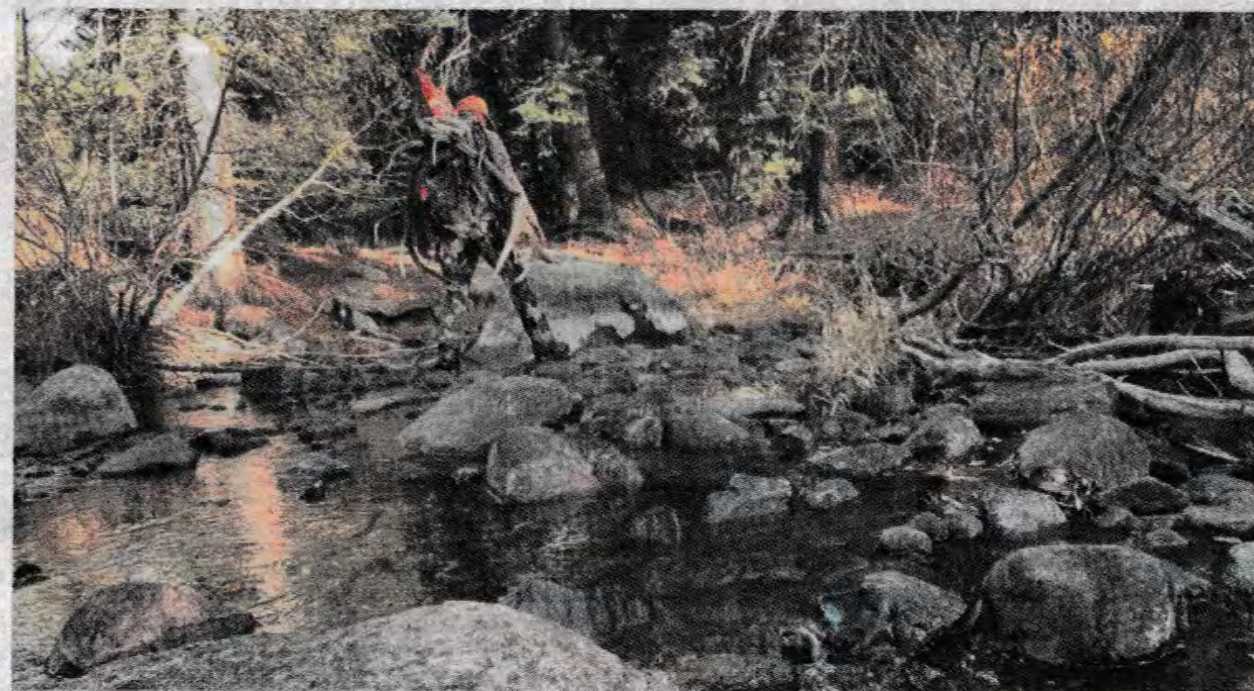
### Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

I keep a fair amount of outdoor footwear. The theory of “one boot does it all” really does not work in our little four-season area of Colorado. Winter boots are too hot in the summer and vice-versa.

I was sorting out my closet, not in the interest of being neat, but because the whole mountain of stuff came piling down on me. The floor of the closet is where I line up my outdoor footwear. As I was putting everything back, I came across my favorite pair of Danner high-top hunting boots.

This particular pair is waterproof and lightly insulated, making them great



Outdoor activity can be very rough on footwear, more so than daily use. Be sure to pay attention to the subtle signs the boots have worn out. (Photo/Mark Rackay)

outdoor footwear, I would bet you have a similar pair, perhaps more than one that has had a number of birthdays. You might be doing your feet more harm than good by keeping that old pair. You see, appearance is not the main concern when it comes to your footwear.

Hiking boots provide the much-needed extra

laces are a sure sign your boots might be wearing out. Most outdoor type laces of recent manufacture are of a higher quality and tougher than the ones of yesteryear, making them outlast the old types. If you replace the laces, take a good look at the boots in other areas for signs of being worn out. If all looks well, replace the

Once again, time to pitch that pair.

When the shape of your boots begins to change, especially in leather boots, it is time to replace. Material that has been subjected to moisture, creeks, snow and mud can shrink and take on a “curled up” kind of shape. Once this happens, the structural integrity is

waterproofing, which indicates that the waterproofing will fail over time.

All of these signs of wear are important, but none as important as the midsoles of your hiking boots. The midsole has the cushioning that absorbs the impact on your joints, ankles, feet and knees. Hiking boots tend to lose this cushioning

The experts like to use a mileage count for the life expectancy of your hiking boots. They range it at 500 miles to 800 miles for a pair of quality hiking boots. My boots don't have an odometer, and I don't keep a driving log of each pair I own, so I rely on comfort and appearance to determine when it is time to buy new.

A pair of comfortable hiking boots is one of the most important pieces of equipment an outdoor person can have. When you are in doubt about whether or not you need a new pair, go try on a new pair at the store. If you notice much more comfort than your pair, it is time to bring out the plastic. Many outdoor injuries can be attributed to footwear that is used past its prime. Don't take a chance.

My hiking boots are my best friend in the woods, especially this old pair of Danners. Unfortunately, it is time to say goodbye to them. We have been



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I was sorting out my closet, not in the interest of being neat, but because the whole mountain of stuff came piling down on me. The floor of the closet is where I line up my outdoor footwear. As I was putting everything back, I came across my favorite pair of Danner high-top hiking boots.

This particular pair is waterproof and lightly insulated, making them great for about six months out of the year. I calculated that these boots are 20 years old this coming autumn. These boots look very well for their age; no tears or rips. The soles are somewhat worn and rounded off, and the laces have been replaced a couple of times.

The Danners have been on a lot of great trips. They kept my feet comfortable in Saskatchewan on a spring bear hunt, and in Ontario on a fishing trip. Recently, I wore them in South America on a red stag hunt. I am sure they are still good for another decade before I have to toss them. Tossing them away would be like parting with an old friend.

If you take a look at your



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outdoor footwear, I would bet you have a similar pair, perhaps more than one that has had a number of birthdays. You might be doing your feet more harm than good by keeping that old pair. You see, appearance is not the main concern when it comes to your footwear.

Hiking boots provide the much-needed extra support for your feet and ankles as you trek along the different types of terrain in the mountains. The tread and soles on the bottom are specifically designed to protect you from slips and falls on the uneven surfaces you will encounter.

Start with an inspection of the general appearance of the inside and outside of your boots. General wear, tear, and scuffs are going to be common. A buildup of excess mud, crud and grime will compromise the flexibility, making them less breathable and thus, less comfortable. Keeping them cleaned up after every outing will help keep them around longer.

Frayed and worn shoe-

laces are a sure sign your boots might be wearing out. Most outdoor type laces of recent manufacture are of a higher quality and tougher than the ones of yesteryear, making them outlast the old types. If you replace the laces, take a good look at the boots in other areas for signs of being worn out. If all looks well, replace the laces and keep going.

Take a close look at the uppers of your boots. Leather, fabric and synthetic uppers may show tears or ripped stitching. Any of these defects can impact the structural integrity of the boot and lead to new problems down the trail. If the stitching between the sole and the upper is torn, the waterproofing of the boot is compromised and it is time for a new pair.

The eyelets where your laces go through are very important on high-top boots. If any are bent, missing, or pulled away from the material of the upper, you won't be able to properly lace up the boots which can lead to an injury.

Once again, time to pitch that pair.

When the shape of your boots begins to change, especially in leather boots, it is time to replace. Material that has been subjected to moisture, creeks, snow and mud can shrink and take on a "curled up" kind of shape. Once this happens, the structural integrity is gone and again, your risk for injury increases.

Give the soles of the boot a good looking over. Wear patterns are something to pay attention to. If the tread or edges of the sole are smooth or rounded, it is a sure sign that the boots need replaced. Poor traction will result and that is problematic on the uneven terrain you will encounter, leading to slips and falls.

Waterproofing on a pair of boots, like those made of Gore-Tex, is something to pay attention. If the boots are no longer as watertight as they once were, it could mean they have lost their structural integrity. Most manufacturers have a time-limited warranty on

waterproofing, which indicates that the waterproofing will fail over time.

All of these signs of wear are important, but none as important as the midsoles of your hiking boots. The midsole has the cushioning that absorbs the impact on your joints, ankles, feet and knees. Hiking boots tend to lose this cushioning after extended use and will eventually break apart due to the compression.

In my midsoles, I always notice a wear pattern from my heel on the inside areas. I must have some improper set to my feet when I walk, causing me to wear out the midsoles prematurely. In this case, replacing the midsole with an aftermarket one will extend the comfortable life of the boots.

It is all about foot comfort in a pair of boots. If you are beginning to notice achy feet, ankles, back or hips, take a good look at your hiking boots. If they no longer feel as comfortable as they once did, it might be time for a new pair.

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My hiking boots are my best friend in the woods, especially this old pair of Danners. Unfortunately, it is time to say goodbye to them. We have been through a lot together. Maybe I will just retire them to the garage and not wear them anymore. I have to find a place where my wife won't find them and throw them away.

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