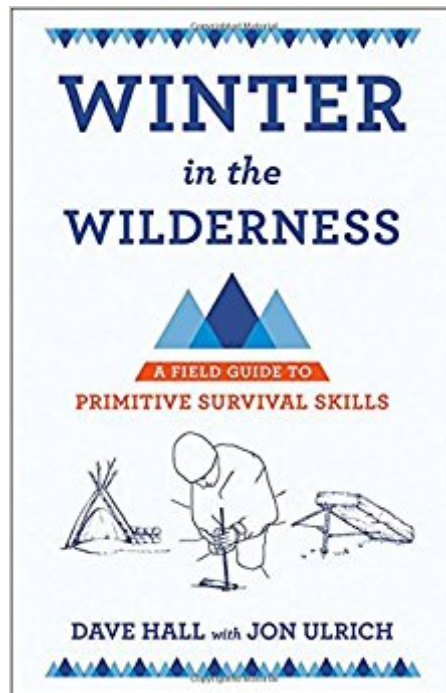




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# Winter In The Wilderness: A Field Guide To Primitive Survival Skills



## Synopsis

Camping or backpacking in winter is appealing for many who enjoy the serenity of wilderness settings without the crowds and bustle of the summer season. But as rewarding as they can be, these outings require special preparation and a different set of skills than are necessary at other times of the year. Snowfall can quickly cover one's tracks and make orientation difficult. Hypothermia is insidious, and rapidly changing weather conditions can become treacherous, even life-threatening. In addition to those who are exploring the outdoors recreationally, there are also those who find themselves in unexpected winter survival situations. Each year, people become stranded in wilderness areas, and in most cases they are not equipped to face the challenge of spending an indefinite amount of time outside. Without sufficient gear or knowledge of how to improvise without it, injury or death is often the result. The development of some basic skills, however, can help avert such unfortunate outcomes. As the founder of the renowned nature awareness program Primitive Pursuits, Dave Hall has been practicing survival skills for more than twenty years and has amassed a comprehensive understanding of winter survival. By refining these skills, Dave has reached a point of understanding that is without peer. Through detailed explanations, illustrations, and personal anecdotes, *Winter in the Wilderness* imparts Dave's knowledge to readers, who will learn to meet their most basic needs: making fire, creating shelter, obtaining safe drinking water, navigating terrain, and procuring sustenance. *Winter in the Wilderness* is a handbook for those who want to explore cold-weather camping and those who might find themselves in need of this critical information during an unexpected winter's night out. Whether used for pleasure or for survival, *Winter in the Wilderness* emphasizes the benefits of enriching and deepening our connection with the outdoors.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Dave Hall is the founder of Primitive Pursuits, a youth nature awareness program offered in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. Jon Ulrich's writing has appeared in Life in the Finger Lakes magazine. Dave Hall is the founder of Primitive Pursuits, a youth nature awareness program offered in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County.

Incredible book on winter survival skills. This is a book that I would keep with me on every winter trek. It is worth weighing more than its weight in gold, even in a backpack...simple, informative and fun!

I have spent much time in the Adirondacks in upstate New York and did not know how little I actually knew about wilderness survival until I read this detailed book! It has now become my "go to" gift for my daughter, off exploring the Green Mountains of Vermont. Thanks for a fantastic guide!

I got exactly what I was looking for with this book -- a basic primer and how-to winter camp for the complete novice. It is exactly what it purports to be.

Before sharing my thoughts of this book, I'll share my background and experience to illustrate my expertise, ignorance, and bias. I've spent many weeks backpacking in the winter or in winter-like conditions. For example, when I did a round-trip on the Continental Divide Trail, I walked across Colorado in May. When you're in the Rocky Mountains in May, it sure looks and feels like winter, even though officially it's spring. The mountains are buried in snow and freezing temperatures are the norm. My most memorable winter trip was a 4-day backpacking trip in Yosemite during Thanksgiving (late November). I've also climbed many snowy peaks, such as nearly all the peaks in Cascade Mountain Range (e.g., Mt. Rainier, Mt. Hood, Mt. Baker, Mt. Adams, etc...), as well as snowy mountains outside the USA, such as Mont Blanc. Despite all these situations, I have only once been in a true winter survival situation. That was in late March 2006 when Maiu and I got lost in the Olympic National Park. We almost died. We spent two nights (one of which snowed on us) in a diabolical ravine. We both ended up with frostbite, but we got out on our own. Another close call was when I was snowshoeing in Idaho for the day with Julia, my Ukrainian girlfriend at the time. We

got lost as the sunset and kept walking until we ran into a man running a snowplow at 3:00 a.m. We were walking the wrong way and he took us back to safety. Therefore, it was with great interest that I read *Winter in the Wilderness*. Here are the pros, cons, and verdict of the book.

**What the *Winter in the Wilderness* covers**  
*Winter in the Wilderness* is a 216-page book that is broken up into seven sections and four useful appendices. The seven sections are: 1. Priorities 2. Fire 3. Shelter 4. Water 5. Sustenance 6. Helpful Crafts and Skills 7. Navigation and Orienteering. The four appendices are: 1. Motor Vehicle Considerations (where you're told what to do if you're stuck in your car in a remote place in the winter) 2. Survival Kits 3. Winter Gear Checklist 4. Suggested Reading.

**Strengths of *Winter in the Wilderness***  
The appendix, especially the survival kits and winter gear checklist are extremely useful. Many illustrations, which are useful to visualize how to make a snow cave or how to set a snare. It gives you all the basic and intermediate things you need to know to survive in the wilderness.

**Weaknesses of *Winter in the Wilderness***  
- The cover stinks. Yes, I'm being superficial, but the cover looks like a self-published nightmare, not something done by Cornell University.  
- Although the illustrations are useful, they are the same quality as Tom Brown's classic book, *Field Guide to Wilderness Survival*. Brown's book was written before the era of desktop computing and computer graphic illustration. I would have preferred superior graphics and/or photos. Usually, I could see what they're trying to show me, but sometimes a better graphic would have helped.  
- His experience is mostly in New York state. Although it talks about situations where you might not find abundant trees or animals, the information is minimal.  
- It's not super comprehensive. At 216 pages, you can't expect it to cover all the possible edible plants in the world, for example.

**Who should buy *Winter in the Wilderness*?**  
- Novices and intermediate backpackers.  
- Anyone who fears freezing to death in the woods.  
- Most mountaineers - because you never know when you'll blow off the mountain.  
- Preppers who want to survive the nuclear winter.

**Who should NOT buy *Winter in the Wilderness*?**  
- Advanced backpackers who have spent significant time in the woods probably won't learn much in this 216-page book.

**VERDICT**  
Most survival guides tell you to stay put when you're in trouble. Conventional wisdom says that the biggest mistake people make is trying to walk out. However, I've always walked out because I sensed that safety wasn't that far away. Indeed, in the USA, it's hard to be more than 50 km (35 miles) from a road. And I always felt strong enough to just keep walking. Had I stayed, I would have to depend on someone saving my ass. Moreover, you tend to weaken with each passing day as the cold and low calories take their toll. Moreover, finding someone in the wilderness is hard, especially if you're off-trail, which is often where you are when you're lost. I'd rather not be stuck there for days or weeks. Staying put and making a shelter isn't always the best solution. Still, this book does an excellent job at teaching how to survive for days,

even in the frigid wilderness. FOR MORE INFO: I interview the author on my website

Hall's primer on finding/making fire, shelter, water, food, and the rudiments of orienteering/navigation and other Neat Tricks (e.g., making moccasins or a digging stick, etc.) is pretty frigging awesome. It takes readers through the very basics of whatever skill is at hand. To make fire, for example, you have three choices—the bow drill, the two-person cord drill, and the hand drill. Variations generally go on to demonstrate more sophisticated ways of accomplishing the task. Note that "sophisticated" doesn't always mean easy, or pretty. The chapter on "Sustenance," for example, notes that "[f]oraging in winter is a difficult task, but with practice you can identify wild edible plants and trap animals. The food itself isn't the Four Seasons (plants like hackberry and acorns will basically help you not to starve) and trapping game, even with a simple deadfall, will most likely take a whole long time to perfect. And it won't cook itself! With skills like this guide can teach you, forget about your audition for Naked and Afraid. They know you'll come back too well rested and having gained some muscle. VERDICT Awesome stuff, like Boy Scouts 2.0, that will backdate your "primitive" skill set about 50 years and prepare you very well for survival in the cold and/or disasters of all sorts. If you can master this stuff—and what the hell, it's actually fun to try—you'll be the dude sleeping in the backyard snow cave every winter there's enough snow to do it. Copyright Library Journal.

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