

TRIP TIPS

Staying Warm

Story by Sarah Stallone

It was my turn to go for firewood. I stepped over my huddled hunting buddies and pushed my way through the evergreen boughs closing off our makeshift shelter. It felt good to stretch my legs but the howling wind and sideways rain hurried my saw stroke. I gathered up the armful of logs and stumbled back to our shelter exhausted.

Dropping the logs to one of the other hunters, I paused outside to shake out my rain jacket. Peeling off my Wiggy's liner jacket, I wrung it out watching the stream of water join the incessant rain further saturating the Afognak mountainside. Wriggling back into the liner I immediately felt warmer as the Lamelite continuous-filament fibers worked their magic despite the moisture. I swung my headlamp across the tarp-covered game bags sprawled nearby—the elk quarters had certainly chilled quickly.

I'll be honest. The thought, "What did I do?!" crossed my mind as I approached the enormous heap that was the mature Roosevelt elk I had just shot. This Rocky Mountain elk hunter had never seen an elk that big. Our party of four made quick work of quartering and packing up the elk. We boosted each other to our feet and trudged toward the mountain saddle that had hosted our stalk, quickly realizing the enormity of the task at hand. I was carrying a load equivalent to my body weight, the other three in our party equally weighed down. It had been four days of hard hunting. We finally caught up to the herd, took the shot, dropped an elk, and now we were headed back to base camp, 2.5 steep and brush-choked miles away. Progress was painfully slow. Night was falling and relentless



Sarah is awed by the size of this Roosevelt elk and grateful for the meat that will fill her party's freezers this winter.
© Tony Stallone

rain made it difficult to send a headlamp beam more than a few feet ahead. We decided to inch our way to a stand of spruce halfway up the mountainside and there we would dig in to wait out the storm.

That night we all took turns going for wood. The little fire in our cobbled shelter slowly began to overcome the chill and as the temperature rose so did our spirits. Several hours into the night the rain stopped and the wind died down. With clothing now partially fire dried, we crawled out of our little shelter to sprawl out on the spruce needle covered forest floor for a few hours of delicious sleep. Though the night was still damp and cold, wrapped in Wiggy's gear I slept like a rock until daylight.

The pack out ended up spanning 36 tough, terrain-hampered, water-logged hours. But in the end, we met our air taxi with over 300 pounds of elk meat, grateful for another exciting adventure. It's times like these that solidify our confidence in our gear. This was one of numerous unexpected nights I've spent on the side of a mountain, and another positive experience thanks to the right equipment. I could sing the praises of Wiggy's superior insulation properties until you all fire me, but the one element you cannot dispute is Lamelite's incredible ability to wick moisture and maintain body temperature, even when wet;



The author, Sarah, stays warm while glassing in a Wiggy's liner jacket.
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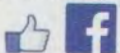
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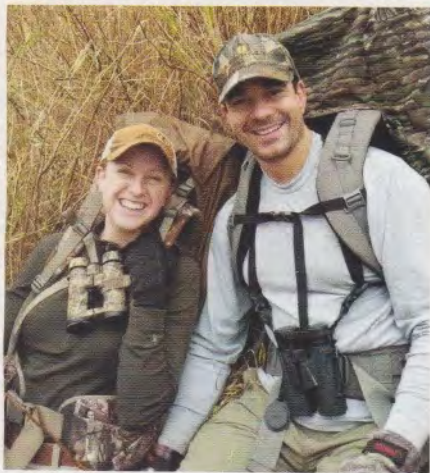
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Midway through the 36-hour pack-out effort, Sarah and Tony are still smiling thanks to good gear and great hunting buddies. © Sterling Cook

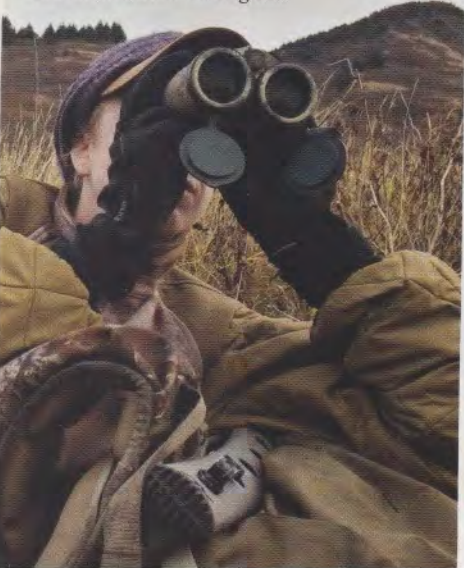
key elements when you're trying to survive in Alaska. Credit goes to my then-boyfriend-now-husband Tony for introducing me to Wiggy's gear and for lending me the jackets that made this story a positive one! That almost makes me want to pardon him for using an entire closet for his Wiggy's collection...

Favorite Wiggy's Gear: Lightweight Jacket Liner, available locally at Wiggy's Alaska in Anchorage. Find out more at wiggys.com. They make sleeping bags, arctic gear, mittens and more. Remember, it's function, not fashion that wins in the end.

Pro Tip: Wiggy's makes liner-weight socks that have kept my feet toasty on many cold camping nights! If you don't have socks, pack an extra vest or liner jacket to wrap your feet in at night. It will surprise you what temperatures you can endure when your feet are warm.



Sarah Stallone is an avid hunter, firearms instructor, and Leupold Optics representative. She's grateful to be living in Anchorage, AK, enjoying the outdoors whenever possible. Learn more at accurateadvantage.us.



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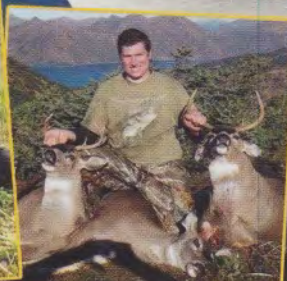
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