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Serious cold weather forest boots

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- Gear reviews and tests - Clothing -



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Description :

A test of forest caulked boots

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Serious cold weather forest boots

Strangely although I do a lot of walking in the forest, I've never bothered much with caulked boots. This is strange because I always have a pair in the truck, since I use them with stocking foot waders for fly-fishing. I do wear them when I'm out doing serious work with sharp tools, or climbing along cliff trails.

the first question will surely be, "Just what are we talking about here and why are they serious?" Caulked boots are simply rubber or leather boots with spikes that are screwed into the bottom. They're serious in the amount of traction they offer - and because they've saved me from falls when wading.

As you will see mine are rubber and are without steel toe since I use them for wading rivers. I normally take a size 9 1/2 but I get these boots in size 12 so that I can wear either neoprene stocking foot waders or nylon waders with neoprene bootie socks. For normal walking I just put felt liners in them.



As you see there are 18 spikes screwed into each sole. As they wear out, you use the tool shown to replace the worn down caulks with new ones. You can choose various lengths and the one you see is the regular 3/8". You can get 1/2" caulks which get a better grip - but the longer the caulks the more difficult it is to walk unless you lift your feet as you walk. The regular steel work OK for me, but I'm going to get some tungsten for the next caulk change. The sharp points wear down fast, but you still get lots of grip. If you buy your caulks in bags of three dozen or 50's then you get a free sheet metal tool for tightening caulks. It's a little harder to use than the big tool shown but fits easily into your wallet. What isn't shown is a can of "never seize" grease which makes sure the threads on the caulks don't rust and seize. A little goes a long way but it's great heat sink compound for computers and has other uses. You might talk your local mechanic out of a teaspoonful..



It's hard to believe how those little bits of metal give incredible grip on slimy rocks, wet wood or even ice. I read on one tree-planting page how lots of people just use normal boots, but my boy who did planting for a few years just laughed. Apparently you'd be too slow to make money on wet days.

You do have to remember that you can't wear these boots to drive - it's against the law here. You also can't wear them in town as they mark up floors badly. I do fine in the bush over rocks and all sorts of terrains - but walking along a logging road is hard on the feet. The boot soles are stiff to hold the caulks. Forget "removing" the caulks for going to town - grit gets into the threaded tubes in the sole and wrecks them. It's also important to check your caulks when you take off the boot and replace any caulks that have fallen out (normally this is rare).

Leather caulked boots offer more support and are more comfortable - but they're really expensive and usually custom made. Too expensive for me!

Post-scriptum :Original article at [OldJimbo's site](#).