

How an Ice Princess Keeps on Kayaking in the Winter

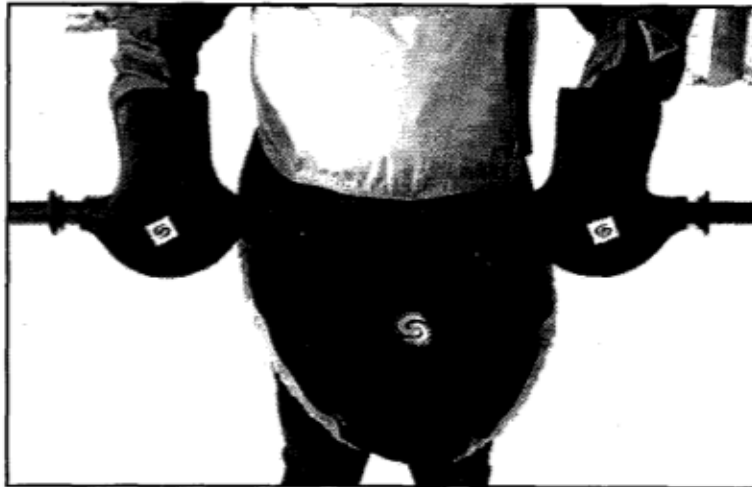
By Susan Martineau

My hands can be cold anytime of the year. So why would I keep kayaking in the winter?

It all comes down to wearing warm clothing. I lived in Gunnison, Colorado, home to -40° nights for 13 years and managed to enjoy the winters. It also helps to enjoy being outdoors. There I would sometimes wear two layers of sweats with a wind resistant top layer and a scarf over my mouth to go jogging. Funny to say, all the townspeople still recognized me in this outfit and would comment when they didn't see me jogging by.

Here in Boulder, the *Banana Republic*, the winters are not nearly so brutal but winter water is still cold. So when I take to the water I wear gloves or pogies. I put on neoprene gloves when I anticipate wind and maybe some interesting paddling. I prefer pogies on those days when it's sunny and still. Even though my bare hands hold the paddle, they warm up quickly in the little house that the pogies provide. They also allow my hands plenty of movement and flexibility and allow my elbows and shoulders to move freely.

I also wear a windproof fleece hat. These new hats really add to overall warmth. Your head can lose lots of heat and the



more you cap it, the better. I also wear a neoprene or fleece lined wetsuit. I wear polar fleece socks and scuba boots on my feet and they keep comfortably warm.

I usually do not get cold until I unearth myself from the snugly warm cockpit. There is often a breeze if not a gale blowing and my body heat quickly dissipates. I anticipate this by bringing other clothing, such as a down parka, in the car which I put on before lugging or tying up the boats.

I have fun days paddling in the winter and stay comfortably warm. I paddle easy and don't take too many chances while out. Getting in the water would not make the ice princess happy. If the wind comes up, which it *occasionally* does in Boulder, I change over to my neoprene gloves and adjust any other clothing that I can.

It also helps to have years of experience cross country skiing using lots of layers. Long drives home in a heaterless Volkswagen and then enjoying a hot shower, makes any suffering very worthwhile.

Have fun on the water in winter. Be safe and keep warm.

Pogies (see photo on left) or gloves and a warm wind proof hat are essential for winter paddling. My pogies are made by Snapdragon from cut-outs of their spray skirts. I bought mine at REI in Denver. Other manufacturers available. Be sure to take time trying on gloves, their fit and comfort varies.