

NOVEMBER – WINTER CAMPING

Music Full then Under

OWEN: Thanks for tuning in to *Scouting Magazine's* November ScoutCast. I'm Owen McCullough, and joining me is my friend and hosting partner, Anissa Hicks.

ANISSA: Hello, listeners! OK, this is pretty cool ... literally. This month we'll be talking all about Winter Camping.

OWEN: Uh-hmm, that is pretty cool. And I'm really glad we're going to be talking about it.

Music Fades

OWEN: Our guest for this month has been winter camping for over 20 years and he's only in his early thirties. Zach Chopp-Adams is district member at large for the Three Fires District in the Southern Shores Field Service Council located in Southern Michigan. You may remember Zach from a previous ScoutCast on motivating Scouts down the merit badge trail. Welcome back to ScoutCast, Zach.

ZACH: Thank you.

OWEN: Other than the temperature, what make winter camping different from summer camping?

ZACH: Temperature is a big of it, and that's what most people think of, but winter camping is more than that. Winter camping can actually help enhance camping and provide a unique experience that most youth outside of Scouting don't experience. The change in the season also provides a great opportunity for Scouts to see their area from a new perspective, to

really see the change from the summer months, and truly challenge them to think differently. Winter camping also seems to bring youth closer together. After setting up camp and getting a fire going, there seems to be a lot more camaraderie with the youth, with the adults, and everyone seems a little more closer together.

ANISSA: Zach, why would anyone want to go camping in the winter? In other words, what are the benefits of winter camping?

ZACH: Well, my personal number one reason is lack of bugs. Realistically, it depends on where your unit is located. Winter camping can consist of more than half of your Scouting year, so why waste the opportunity to get outdoors?

Camping in the winter can provide some of the most unique experiences available: skiing, ice fishing, building snow shelters, or just generally getting outside when most people are plopped inside, binge watching something they've seen eight times already. Even common Scout activities such as hiking are changed significantly with the change of weather. It can provide some very beautiful landscape and a lot of areas provide an opportunity to see more wildlife since they're not being disturbed as much as they would be in the winter. Plus, while it may be cold or snowy, there is a lower risk of severe weather.

OWEN: So, Zach, my own troop experience, I grew up in the Pacific Northwest and, gosh, Mount Hood was in our backyard, so finding winter camping for us was pretty easy. If you're a troop from more the southern areas of the U.S., what are the opportunities to go winter camping? How do they find a spot? Do you have any recommendations on where they could go?

ZACH: If cold and snow temperatures are an absolute must a viable option would be to take an extended trip during time off school and go north or west. However, if a unit wants to use the change of the season and not necessarily with the cold and snow, they can camp locally and use that to their advantage. Many of the characteristics of winter camping that Scouts in Michigan or Montana face can still be found in Texas or Florida. The change in the weather requires packing different gear and understanding first aid. The change in the season also changes the landscape, offering a different aspect to nature. In Texas or Florida or somewhere where the summer months become incredibly hot may have the advantage to work on camping skills and merit badges which may be more difficult in extreme hot temperatures.

ANISSA: With winter camping, is there any special training that would be required?

ZACH: Beyond the standard training, no. But it is a good opportunity to brush up on skills, particularly first aid, since winter camping has unique hazards such as frostbite and hypothermia that summer camping doesn't have. And with all Scout events, reviewing the Guide to Safe Scouting, which does have a section for cold-weather camping.

OWEN: I know that certainly a troop can use a winter camping opportunity to plan some troop program around it. If they're going to a snowy area there might be skis or snowshoes, there might be driving considerations. If a troop is really serious about planning a winter trip, how far in advance do you think they really need to plan?

ZACH: Well, that really depends on your unit's experience with winter camping. If your unit's fairly new or you have a lot of new Scouts, take about a month and a half of meetings to discuss winter camping; cover first aid, camping

skills and gear, cooking, and the difference between summer and winter camping. And right now is about the prime time to start this topic.

ANISSA: Winter is such a huge word. With it being in different areas geographically, would there ever be a weather reason to call it off?

ZACH: Most of the time, no. With the Scout Motto being Be Prepared, a decent snowfall or chilly weather may add some challenge but it's not necessarily a reason to call off an event. However, with winter weather you do have to keep an eye on it. If there is expected severe weather such as a nor'easter or a blizzard, keep an eye out and make that call. If there is weather that could potentially impact the safety of the Scouts, especially with traveling being an ice storm, that could also be a reason. In situations such as severe weather, ice, or severe snow, it's always best use your judgment for the safety of the youth.

OWEN: Certainly, the BSA's weather hazard training provides some good guidelines for all kinds of weather, winter weather included. Looking at other resources, and you mentioned spending a month or a month and a half in training and learning about different kind of camping, are there any other resources that you can think of that they might draw upon? The Northern Tier offers their OKPIK program they are a winter training facility. Philmont's got winter camping opportunities. Summit does have winter programs as well. But what are some local resources that a Scout leader might reach out to learn more.

ZACH: For resources provided by the Boy Scouts, the Field Book has a wonderful chapter dedicated to cold weather camping. Troop Leader Resource Website also has a really good section on winter camping also include sections for what to do for a unit meeting and for activities on camping trips. A lot of retailers and a lot of organizations actually have written intro

guides to winter camping. Some retailers will offer the opportunity to have a unit meeting with them so they can discuss winter camping. And, if at all possible, try to find a Scout, it doesn't necessarily have to be within your unit, who really enjoys winter camping and who really has the experience and share that experience with your youth.

OWEN: Zach, I agree with that. I know from my own camping experiences sometimes if the first time you put on that pair of snowshoes is when you're getting ready to put on your pack and head into the woods - maybe you should have practiced that earlier, even if it was in the store or at a troop meeting. Having those resources ahead of time will make sure that you have a better experience once you get there.

ZACH: Yes.

OWEN: OK, we'll be right back with more on Winter Camping, right after this.

COMMERICAL: (Campsgiving)

ANISSA: Zach, this has been a wealth of great information, especially for me because I don't camp, and learning more about winter camping is awesome. So, is anything else that we haven't already talked about, that we should know?

ZACH: Winter camping may sound a little crazy, initially new Scouts and some new parents may be a little turned off about the idea of camping in the middle of January, but you don't have to go out in five-degree weather in tents to experience winter camping. Even cabin camping can provide a very good winter camping experience and opportunities while getting a little bit of comfort.

OWEN: Very true. The comfort is a big part of that winter camping, and I think you're right. People can get scared off. I've often heard though for winter camping, "There's no such thing as bad weather. It's just bad gear." So, taking that time and being prepared and getting your resources can make a big difference.

ANISSA: So, Zach, you sound like you know a lot about winter camping, so help me out. Tell me about your best experience so I have something to look forward to.

ZACH: My best experience - I was Scoutmaster of a troop a few years back. We had a local campout where we invited some Webelos to come out and join us for the day. Being Michigan weather, we knew that some snow was on its way. We did not expect to wake up to 14 inches the next morning. So, we had the Webelos Scouts come out. to do some geocaching in a local park. and the parents thought, "Wow, that's kind of crazy. You just got over a foot of snow." We took the boys and the Webelos out, and for six and a half hours went geocaching, and those boys had the most fun they've ever had for a campout and decided to come back later that week for a troop meeting.

ANISSA: That's very interesting.

OWEN: One of my most memorable is as a youth with my Troop 377 out of Portland, Oregon, we went up to Mount Hood in January and it's piles of snow out there. We had all of our winter gear on, we had our backpacks, had snowshoes and shovels, and basically found the biggest snowbank we could, made caves out of it. You can build your accommodations. I want a shelf here. I'm going to put my light here. And with a single flashlight, everything's bright white in there. Everything around you is just

glistening white snow, and one light will illuminate the entire area. It's so quiet; it's so comfortable; it's like living inside of a snow globe.

ANISSA: Well, I'm a little more engaged with winter camping. I will definitely get the right equipment and I will be prepared.

OWEN: It's the best hot chocolate you've ever had. And I bet we've got a lot of listeners ready to brave the cold, so Zach, thank you so much for coming onto the show and sharing the fun of winter camping and how to get ready for it.

ZACH: All right. Thank you.

ANISSA: Now let's take a brief Safety Moment, then we'll be back with Reminders and Tips.

Safety Moment - Campfires

ANISSA: OK, let's jump into Reminders and Tips for November. First let's talk membership inventory. By now, all your new youth and adult applications from your recruiting campaign should be submitted to the Council Service Center.

OWEN: It's a good idea to compare the My.Scouting Tools records to your own to make sure there are no discrepancies and that all those new folks are properly registered.

ANISSA: In the November issue of *Boys' Life Magazine*, read about a California troop that takes its annual three-day hike along the Mad River, following a trail that crosses the river more than 50 times, so expect some water-crossing safety info in this article, too. This month's issue also includes a

roundup of the latest and greatest toys to help readers make their holiday wish lists.

OWEN: And the November/December issue of *Scouting Magazine*, join Colorado Scouts as they gather for their annual wilderness survival campout, along with TV star Survivor-man Les Stroud.

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OWEN: And that, sadly, brings us to the end of the November ScoutCast. Thanks to our guest, Zach Chopp-Adams, for joining us.

ANISSA: And thank you for listening. Is there a topic you want to know more about? If so, I bet lots of others want to know the same thing, so just send us an email to Scoutcast@scouting.org, or tweet @BSAScoutcast. Be sure to come back next month for an interesting discussion on an episode we call: "Don't Cut Corners." Until next month, I'm Anissa Hicks.

OWEN: And I'm Owen McCullough asking the question: is your unit ready to take on Winter Camping?

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