18 June 2024

What clothing should I choose for the floating hide?

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About the tour

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In recent years, STARLING has invested heavily in new concepts. We developed many unique trips such as our floating hide trips under the influence of Yves Adams.

Thanks to mobile huts that float on the water, you can take fantastic images of water and wading birds. The special thing about this type of photography is the exceptionally low point of view, which guarantees you can take beautiful images. The hut is one thing, the clothes another. Because we receive quite a few questions about the best clothing to wear, Yves Adams took to writing to share his experiences with you! Read below what your options are for going into the water.

Swimwear

The cheapest option. It goes without saying that you can only use this when the water is very warm, because you sometimes remain motionless in the water for a very long time. In addition, swimwear does not protect you from leeches or vegetation.

Rubber waders

The rubber wading suit is a fairly cheap suit, but does not ‘breathe’. So you have to take into account that you will sweat a lot when it gets a bit warmer. It is also not flexible, which is sometimes difficult in squatting positions. Finally, it is also quite fragile and the rubber must be well maintained so as not to deteriorate quickly. Most models also don’t reach very high, so you can’t go deep or crouch low in the water.



Yves in full action while photographing in La Brenne! © Martine Decoussemaeker en Jacky Launoy

Neoprene wading suit

Usually the best option for frequent use. Neoprene is quite strong, stretches and insulates well. Some models reach pretty high, the most convenient is one that reaches just to the armpits. A neoprene wading suit is available in different thicknesses. Do not choose the thinnest, even if it is mainly intended for warm water. In thicker models, the seams are stronger, even though they will not last a lifetime with heavy use (especially when it stretches often and strongly in a squatting position).

A general advantage of waders is the open top, which leaves your arms and shoulders free and allows you to take off a sweater as soon as it gets too warm. A model with clip shoulder straps is ideal. Velcro sometimes makes too much noise, even though it is more convenient to adjust quickly depending on having to walk with it or sit on the bottom. Because the suit is open, you cannot go too deep into the water. You can find fairly cheap models in many sports stores. They often come with fixed boots so you can put on an extra pair of warm stockings when it is cold. However, if the shoe size is too large, they often get stuck in deep mud and walking is difficult. In shallow water, men can easily lower the suit for a sanitary stop.

Nylon wading suit

These suits are often used for fly fishing and are more easily available without rubber boots (i.e. just the nylon 'socks'). This allows you to put sturdier shoes on top, which will of course get wet. Typical are the 'fly fishing boots', with a felt-like sole, which ensures that fly fishermen do not slip on slippery stones. You can also combine this suit with sturdy 'Crocs' or sandals that are made for water sports. These suits are often more expensive and do not insulate anything. They are more compact and lighter than a neoprene suit.



Splash! A great image taken from a floating hide. © Yves Adams

Neoprene wetsuit

A neoprene wetsuit is used by surfers or warm water divers. Sometimes they can be found very cheaply and come without shoes or stockings. This suit is combined with loose surf shoes or neoprene socks. You will get completely wet with this suit, but the neoprene retains a layer of water around your body, which warms up gradually. Ideal for warm conditions, but you come out of the water completely wet, and you have to change completely when you're done. The wet neoprene suit is often more difficult to dry (heavy) when you are done. In principle you cannot sink with this type of suit. In combination with swimming fins you can also float in deep water.

Nylon dry suit

This suit is used by divers. It's a fairly pricey solution, unless you buy it second hand (which is very often available). A dry suit is completely waterproof due to the tight rings around the neck and wrists, which can make it feel somewhat claustrophobic. Especially when it starts to get warm, it is completely one with your body and can give an oppressive feeling.

It is better to choose a model that is somewhat larger, so that you can squat enough and put on insulating clothing underneath. There are special full-body suits that have insulating material that is not pressed shut by the water pressure on the drysuit, and thus retains its insulating function. Choose a model with a zipper at the front, otherwise you will often need help to put it on or take it off. It is usually made from trilaminate or other types of nylon. Depending on the position of the zipper, this allows a man to make a sanitary stop in shallow water (although it is no small feat not to make any movement or noise and open the suit's heavy zipper in a floating hut). Especially the stronger models sometimes make some noise around the arms, which are almost always above water.

Neoprene dry suit

This is the same as a nylon drysuit, but with an insulating function. This suit is used by divers in cold water and during long dives. It is quite heavy in weight, but cheaper than nylon. This suit is only suitable for winter situations.

Mr Jan Gear Suit

This is a 'multi-purpose' solution. Made for the floating hide photographer! Waterproof like a diving suit up to the neck, without the annoying pinching neck closure. It is possible to swim with it, and also quite easy to adjust due to the zipper up to the neck. In shallow water it is also possible for men to make a sanitary stop. This can be combined with shoes of your choice, such as surf shoes, which are ideal for combining with swimming fins. It is a fairly light suit and dries immediately after use. Ideal for flying holidays. It can also be used, for example, for sailing (with life jacket).

General summary and extra tips!

You often leave in very different temperature conditions than when you finish. Air conditioning is therefore important to prevent both hypothermia and overheating. There are some things you cannot protect yourself against, such as leeches. They climb up any type of suit until they reach your neck. Checking often is the message in leech-rich waters. Having a knife nearby to cut a hole in the suit in case of emergency is always advisable.

A floating hut is generally strong enough to keep a person above water, even if water runs into your suit. With an open wading suit it is better not to risk yourself in deep water, even though you can in principle swim across a short zone with it. But we strongly advise against that.

Finally, an angle viewfinder is recommended if use via live view is not optimal. An angle viewfinder avoids the awkward crouched position of looking directly into the camera's eyepiece, and bending over deeply, which can allow water to enter waders. With an adapted diving suit you can be in the water up to your shoulders and look straight into the eyepiece. Swimming is done with fins in deep water, but once the wind picks up you can't stay there for long without making a lot of movement and disturbing your subject.Finally! You often rest your knees on the bottom, which quickly damages your suit. Knee pads can help protect your suit.

Black-necked grebe in gorgeous morning light. © Yves Adams















