



DID YOU KNOW?

GORE-TEX® waders keep you dry because you are in them! The heat from your body turns perspiration into water vapor, which is drawn through the microscopic pores in the GORE-TEX membrane into the colder river. Each pore is 700 times larger than a water vapor molecule but 20,000 times smaller than a water droplet, letting the water vapor out but preventing the river water from coming in.

IT'S A FACT

Wading is good for your waistline. Because water is about 800 times denser than air, a 180-pound angler burns about 500 calories per hour wading in water (more if the water is cold) versus about 200 calories per hour walking slowly on dry ground.

WADING WISELY

Get better traction while fishing

If you're an angler who wades for your fish, the decision to switch to rubber-soled wading shoes looms large, and in some places, it's the law. From a conservation point of view, rubber is less likely to transport invasive species from one body of water to another, yet felt-soled waders – which can harbor spores and larvae of non-native plants and animals – are well known for helping people stay upright on slippery rocks. In April 2011, Maryland became the first state in the nation to ban felt-soled wading shoes. Since then, Missouri, Alaska, and Vermont have followed suit.

"Rubber is not as good as felt, period," says Tom Rosenbauer, marketing director for Orvis Rod and Tackle. An avid fly caster for 35 years, Rosenbauer has been intimately involved with the development of Orvis' rubber-soled wading shoes. "We tried to make a rubber sole that works well, but the rubber was too soft and didn't hold up," explains Rosenbauer. "What's out there now must be studded if you're fishing on slippery rocks. Rubber is fine on gravel and clay bottoms and can be better on ice and snow and walking to and from a stream, but not on rocks."

If your wading shoes have rubber soles, Rosenbauer offers these tips to help you stay upright:

1. **Use studs** and make sure the studs are not worn down.
2. **Use a wading staff**, hiking pole, ski pole, or nearby stick, no matter how young and active you are.
3. **Link arms with a buddy**, preferably someone bigger and stronger than you are, in lieu of a wading staff.
4. **Keep your weight over your feet** all times.
5. **Take smaller steps** or shuffle rather than big steps.
6. **Look for patches of gravel**, which always provide better, firmer footing than rocks.
7. **Cross at the tail of a pool**, the wide spot in a stream, or at a riffle, which tend to be shallower than the middle or head of a pool.
8. **Angle upstream**, not downstream, if you need to cross heavy current, to better counter the forces of the current.

Rosenbauer warns that if the water is too dirty to see into, you probably shouldn't wade out far, especially if you can't see how deep it is or what you're going to step on. And if you do fall in, wearing a tightly cinched wading belt could save your life.

"Pragmatically, if you're wearing a wading belt, you might escape getting wet if it's a quick dip," says Rosenbauer. "At least you'll have some buoyancy. Waders hold air down your legs. It's an old wives' tail that you'll flip upside down, but if the current catches open waders, they act like an anchor, pulling you under."

If the current carries you, Rosenbauer advises putting your feet in front of you to avoid banging your head on a rock. "Don't struggle," he adds. "Try to get your feet under you or get to shore if you can. As a rule, the faster the current, the shallower you should wade to lessen the chance of falling in."

And even if you wear wading shoes with rubber soles, Rosenbauer reminds anglers to clean, inspect, and dry their shoes before wading another stream. Rubber-soled waders can trap invasive species too.

An award-winning outdoor photographer and writer based in Red Lodge, Montana, Lisa Densmore Ballard spends much of the year in hiking boots and waders. She is the author of five hiking guidebooks and travels regularly throughout North America seeking out fish for her many articles on angling. (www.LisaDensmore.com)