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1. Barometer

Weather plays a huge roll in an angler's success or failure. Anglers who watch the weather and pay close attention to the barometer can usually predict the level of their success. Generally, when the barometer rises you can expect the best fishing. When the barometer falls rapidly, fishing success diminishes as it falls. A rapidly fluctuating barometer is usually good fishing, regardless of the direction of fluctuation. A static barometer indicates poor fishing. If the barometer is unusually low, the fishing will usually be terrible, as if the fish have lockjaw.

Every angler should own at least one barometer, preferably two – one for home or office and one for their boat. In addition to knowing how the fishing will be, a barometer can identify rapid, dangerous changes in weather. Knowing how to interpret these changes could save your life – especially when fishing offshore – but that is a topic for another article.

Barometers fall into several price points ranging from just \$16.99 for a portable model to \$199.95 for a fancy instrument that mounts on the wall. While researching for this article I found a terrific portable barometer at Bass Pro Shops for just \$16.95. The unit, item # 38-423-354-00 can be worn around your neck and easily shows an untrained eye when the fishing is great, good or poor. I liked it so much I ordered one.

For more info visit:

www.basspro.com

2. Hook file

Every angler should own several hook files. It always shocks me whenever I witness anglers who do not care about keeping their hooks tack sharp. Hook files come in different shapes and sizes and should be selected for convenience and the types of hooks used. For instance, you would not want to use a large file on a #16 fly hook or a small file on a 12/0 hook. That is why most anglers should own several files – one for small hooks, medium hooks and large hooks.

Hook files come in many different shapes, sizes and price ranges. You can spend anywhere from \$5.99 to \$10.99 for an inexpensive hook file, or spend up to \$39.99 for a fancy file. The difference in price is in the materials. The less expensive files, like the super popular Luhr Jensen yellow handled file will do the job without breaking the bank. Luhr Jensen also offers a smaller, flat file with a lanyard for smaller sized hooks. If you spend more money, you can purchase diamond grit files, round or flat models. I prefer flat files in this category because most of them offer two grit sizes – one side for rough work and one side for fine work. Well-made diamond grit files, like Braid's industrial grade diamond file will not rust, which will save you money in the end. Braid's file offers 100 and 200 grit size to tackle most hook sharpening or knife sharpening jobs.

Tip: If your file does show signs of rust, submerge it overnight in white vinegar. The vinegar will eat away the rust. Use a small wire brush to clean the file and then coat it in mineral oil, cooking oil or spray it with non-stick cooking spray. I do not like using WD 40 or other petroleum based sprays because it can transfer to my hands, baits or lures and effect my fishing success.

More info visit

www.luhrjensen.com

www.braidproducts.com

3. First aid kit

If you do not have at least a basic first aid kit in your tackle box, you should stop what you are doing right now and go buy one. First aid kits need to have all of the basics, including band-aids, tape, painkillers, sunscreen, iodine, anti-bacterial ointment, surgical gloves and basic first aid instructions.

Wilderness Medical Associates says to “*Remember the Three Mechanisms of Injury: Trauma, Medical and Environmental.*”

WMA also notes that wound care is the most commonly used item in a first aid kit. They also recommend that a fully stocked first aid kit contain the following items: Tweezers,

Safety pins, plastic bags, thermometer, trauma shears, heat/cold Packs, mirror/signal device, whistle, lighter/waterproof matches, flagging tape (can be used to give wind direction to helicopters, leaving a marked trail or signaling for help. Blaze orange and neon blue seem to show up best on land.) Parachute cord, survival blanket (small pocket-sized foil blanket). Medications should include: Topical antibiotic cream, analgesic, antipyretic and anti-inflammatory such as Tylenol, Ibuprofen, and aspirin. Antihistamines (Benadryl and Sudafed). Antacid (Mylanta, Gelusil, Pepto Bismol, Maalox). Anti diarrhea medication (Pepto, Kaopectate, Immodium, Lomotil). Anticonstipation (Metmucil, glycerine suppositories). Antifungal/yeast (Tinactin, Mystatin). Dental Problems can be relieved with clove oil or Orabase. Cavit to make temporary dental fillings. Glucose liquid in a single use tube. Gatorade to replace electrolytes.

While this list is long, and filled with items that could save your life or help you find relief, most anglers will not carry such a large kit. Outdoor Safety (www.outdoorsafety.net) offers several great first aid kits for anglers and outdoorsmen ranging in price from \$13.95 to \$39.95.

4. Polarized sunglasses

A quality pair of polarized sunglasses can help you spot more fish in the river, ocean or lake. They can also provide protection from wildly cast lures, or that spring back lure from a missed bite. Polarized sunglasses reduce glare on water, sand, snow or anything that will reflect the sun's powerful rays. Polarized sunglasses come in every conceivable style and price point, from \$10 to \$250. They also come in different lens colors, designed to work best for different conditions. My favorite pair of sunglasses are made by a new company, Shades A Risin. They weigh just .6 of an ounce, cost \$50, will not break when I sit on them and they float too.

Offshore anglers should choose dark grey lens, as they cut glare best in an ocean condition and provide truer color perception than other lens colors. River and lake anglers should select amber lenses because they provide a high contrast view enabling anglers to see to the bottom of the river. Amber lenses also work great when the sky is overcast. If the fresh water is murky switch to grey lenses. As you can see, every angler should have two pairs of sunglasses. In addition, remember, if you have blue eyes you are more prone to eye damage from UV rays. For more information visit: www.costadelmar.com

www.shadesarisin.com

5. Logbook

In a recent Northwest Angler column, I explained the importance of maintaining a logbook. A logbook can provide you with valuable information that you might otherwise forget or not recognize as important if you did not write it down. You can purchase logbooks at bookstores marine stores or use an ordinary spiral bound note pad.

6. Compass

A compass should be part of everyone's tackle box, fishing vest or pants pocket. This simple piece of equipment can point you in the right direction if you become lost or show you wind, current and wave direction. I never leave home without a compass in my float coat pocket, in my boat, tied to my fishing vest or in my pants pocket. Call it overkill if you will, I own at least 10 handheld compasses and have never been lost, unless you count shopping malls.

Compasses come in many sizes and prices ranging from \$10.95 to \$99.95. For those of you who depend on electronic devices for direction, remember, they can fail because of batteries.

For more information visit:

www.thecompassstore.com

7. GPS

While I love my handheld compasses, I also love my electronic G.P.S. units, all five of them. My boat has a G.P.S. fish finder combination unit, but the G.P.S. unit I use most is my portable, go anywhere unit. My portable has world maps as well as the ability to plug a memory card with detailed maps into it. No matter where I go fishing in the world, my portable G.P.S. goes with me and records my trip, from start to end.

A few years ago I took my handheld on a halibut charter trip from Neah Bay. When the skipper saw me turn the unit on, he immediately told me to turn it off, as he did not want me to record his "secret" spot. I complied, by turning it off and stowing it in my plastic tackle box. At the end of the trip, while putting my gear away in my car for the ride home, I discovered that my G.P.S.

had not turned off and had recorded the entire trip, including every “secret” hotspot. I erased the data, but learned that a handheld will pick up a signal, even when stored in a plastic tackle box.

On a side note, you should routinely back up your important data, just in case you lose your G.P.S. or the internal memory battery fails. For more information about G.P.S. units visit:

www.thegpsstore.com

www.garmin.com

www.lowrance.com

www.magellangps.com

8. Super Glue

A small tube of “Super Glue” or “Krazy Glue” can fix thousands of minor to major problems that plague anglers worldwide. If one of your fishing rod’s eyes comes off you can use this miracle adhesive and be back in action in minutes. If you cut yourself, and do not have access to a doctor or hospital, super glue can be used to close the wound and keep it glued tight until reaching proper medical attention. You can also purchase “medical grade” super glue for the first aid kit which is formulated to reduce skin irritations and heat when applying the glue to wounds.

Super glue (Cyanoacrylates) was first invented in 1942 by Dr. Harry Coover of Kodak

Laboratories. Six years later Kodak created Eastman #910, the first adhesive that could hold extreme weights. Just a drop or two of this strong adhesive will bond almost anything together, a fact that could save your fishing trip. For more information visit:

www.krazy_glue.com

www.supergluecorp.com

9. Tear-Aid

I hate holes in raingear, waders, float tubes or anything else that causes water or air leaks. Two years ago while halibut fishing, a deckhand on the resort boat accidentally punctured the big "Scotsman" buoy used with the boat's anchor retrieve system. The bright buoy did not deflate immediately, but it would not work properly and did not have enough buoyancy to let the anchor system work. The deckhand then had to pull the anchor by hand, 350 feet of anchor line, 50 feet of chain and a 30-pound anchor. Backbreaking unnecessary work, if only I would have had my Tear-Aid in my tackle box instead of my suitcase.

Tear-Aid comes in two types, A & B. Type A repairs rubber, canvas, neoprene, fiberglass, nylon, stainless steel, aluminum, polyethylene, polypropylene, polyurethane, non-oiled leather and any non-vinyl fabrics. I have repaired rubber boots, waders and my suitcase with Type A. Type B repairs anything vinyl. This miracle repair material stretches, repels water and will not turn gummy in heat. Kits cost just \$4.99 and comes with 3" x 12" Tear-Aid patch, 7/8" x 7/8" patch, 1-3/8" x 1-3/8" patch, 36" reinforcement filament and alcohol prep pads

For more information visit:

www.tear-aid.com

10. Multi-Tool

Everyone should carry a tool kit in his or her pocket, just in case something needs fixing or a fishhook needs pulling. Multi-tools come in many shapes and size and cost anywhere from \$5.00 for a cheap China imitation or \$100 for the top of the line Leatherman or Gerber model. Guides from around the world love multi-tools and use them daily with an almost unnatural affection.

I once witnessed a guide tear up when he lost his expensive multi-tool overboard. He spent the rest of the day regaling us with stories about hooks pulled from big fish with his multi-tool. I carry a multi-tool in my tackle box, car, boat and airplane. Like the compass, I do not leave home without a multi-tool to provide the comfort and security of a portable and reliable tool kit.
www.leatherman.com

www.gerbertools.com

11. Duct Tape

No list would be complete without mentioning Duct Tape. Mechanics and MacGyvers have used this fix-all tape for decades. Numerous how-to and humor books about duct tape have been written. As anglers, we can use duct tape for a variety of uses too numerous to mention. Simply put, if you don't have duct tape you are not prepared!

I recommend Duck Tape brand "Flat Packs." These packs stow in tackle boxes or your vest without weighting you down or taking up much space. For more information visit:

www.duckproducts.com

If you already own everything on my list, you are a Boy Scout of an angler. "Be prepared," as the Boy Scout motto says, should be a goal of all anglers. Preparedness will make you a better angler and will make your time spent fishing more enjoyable and successful.