

An Angler's Spring Cleaning Project

Scott Earl Smith



Just today a friend of mine commented that he was going to spread his entire collection of fly fishing equipment all over the living room floor and conduct his annual inventory.

Yes, it's that time of the year again, and with May just around the corner you'll want to have all your gear in shape for that upcoming trip. There is nothing worse than having a fish of a life-time get away because of a gear failure – like a frayed leader, or a loose rod guide. Alas I've even encountered mould damage on rod handles simply because they were put away damp last fall.

It's also the time to replace old and tired equipment so you are ready for the season. In fact I just placed an order for a new pair of waders after my little mishap with Gord Ellis at Miminiska Falls rendered the waders – and me – in disrepair. That is a story that I'm sure has made its way around this website already, but if you hadn't heard, I fell off a small cliff and opened my leg up for eight stitches. I realized my waders were ripped after I waded into the river (yes I continued fishing) and felt the cool water on my open wound. As I like to point out to many of my fishing colleagues, "A lesser man would have needed an air-ambulance!"

Back to the topic at hand, I like to start my equipment checks with terminal gear. Items like leaders, tippets, fly lines and flies are generally the things that take the most abuse, which in turn can lead to that lost fish we talked about. Leaders can become frayed so give them a simple pull test. Replace any leader that is visibly chaffed or even if it seems to have too many knots. Tippet material is usually good from one season to the next if it has been stored out of the sun, but more often than not your spool may be close to empty so be sure to order the sizes you use the most. Fly lines, although quite expensive, may need to be replaced – particularly if they have come into contact with Deet (insect repellent) or if you've been doing a lot of boat fishing. Retrieving your line into the boat results in nicks, abrasions and contact with motor oil, gasoline and other things that fly line doesn't like. In cases of double-taper or level-shooting lines you can simply reverse them on the reel if they are frayed at the terminal end and get a second season out of the same line.

Flies should be checked for sharpness and abundance. I've come to learn that there are a number of standard patterns that I will always need and keep them in good supply. If I don't have the time to tie them myself, I'll have them tied for me.

An Angler's Spring Cleaning Project

Scott Earl Smith

Reels should be disassembled, cleaned and the moving parts lightly oiled, paying attention to manufacturer's specifications of course. Rods should be visually checked for loose guides, cracks or serious marks or divots in the graphite. Sometimes a rod will come in contact with a boat gunnel or similar object and the next time strain is placed on the rod the blank will break at that point.

I also like to take a good look at what exactly I'm carrying around in my vest. Remove last year's snack bars, peanuts and sundry artifacts from years gone by and replenish with fresh stuff. When it comes to emergency food caches, I'm gravitating more towards Power Gels that contain the required nutrients and protein rather than candy. A simple first aid kit (which includes Crazy Glue for emergency laceration and wader repairs), a GPS or compass, a whistle, needle and thread, matches and/or lighter should be stored in your vest. I now carry a small windproof lighter that actually gives off enough heat to solder with. This gem is great for fire starting. Alcohol-based hand gel is a must for your vest. The primary use is for removing bacteria from your hands, but it can also be used as an awesome fire-starter.

Finally check those waders for leaks. Most of the smaller holes can be repaired with wader repair kits, but if they're really nasty you may have to send them away or do like me and shell out the cash for a new pair. Sometimes these purchases can cost substantial dollars but when you consider how many years you can get out of a good piece of equipment, it's not that bad.



When it comes to being prepared for what could be the trip – and the trophy – of a lifetime, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

See you on the water...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Earl Smith', written on a light-colored background.



This document has been brought to you by the fly-in fishing experts
at Wilderness North – Canada's premiere destination for
walleye and pike trophy fishing.

Wilderness North

Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada

Phone toll free: 888-465-3474

www.wildernessnorth.com