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34

78

94

CONTENTS

Volume 18 • Issue 3 • March 2018



102

Departments

Fish Alaska Traveler
Fish Alaska Online
Fishing for a Compliment
Salmon Sense
Fish Alaska Fly
Fish Alaska Boats
Fish Alaska Saltwater
Fish Alaska Stillwater
Fish Alaska Recipe
Advertiser Index
Fish Alaska Final Drift

Features

Editors' Choice Awards 34
Fish Alaska's editors have been hard at it again this year, fishing the length and breadth of Alaska, whether tossing hardware, flies or bait, trolling, mooching and back-bouncing our way around the Great Land. Here are our reviews on the best gear we handled in 2017, neatly categorized for you to make your shopping and packing lists for the trips on tap in the new year.

New Gear 2018 78

Everyone loves new gear, and 2018 has a lot to offer on the equipment front, with dozens of new products simply too awesome to pass up. We've compiled the best of the best here.

Retailers' Choice Awards 94

No one is in a better position to understand Alaskan anglers—what works for them, what they want and what they buy—than those who do it for a living. Here's what our state's retailers are saying about their favorite pieces of gear from the past year.

Yakutat Done Right by Troy Buzalsky 102

Looking for a once-in-a-lifetime destination, Troy Buzalsky headed for Yakutat, a majestic land of pristine beauty, like no other place in the world. Staying at and fishing from the wonderful Yakutat Lodge, he and his fishing partner created a lifetime of angling memories, and a freezer full of fish, as they mixed time in the area's boundless fresh- and saltwater fisheries.



COVER / Design by Bailey Anderson

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Alaska Traveler

Bristol Bay: Through the Looking Glass
Past, Present and Future
 Guest Editorial by Matt Luck

The Past

I first set foot in Bristol Bay in 1979, stepping off an airplane in King Salmon as part of the annual summer migration of commercial fishermen who flocked to southwest Alaska.

The wild sockeye salmon run had begun to rebound from the meager returns of the early- to mid-1970s. In 1973, the entire sockeye return to Bristol Bay totaled only 2.3 million fish. Acutely aware of the resource crisis, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game management biologists invoked strict harvest restrictions and the majority of those 2.3 million fish were allowed to return to spawning grounds. Favorable rearing and ocean conditions combined with ADF&G's swift, decisive response to the predicament was extremely effective. In 1979, six years later, 38 million sockeye returned to Bristol Bay. Of those, 18 million were allowed to escape into the major river systems, a testament to Alaska's commitment to resource stewardship and responsible fisheries management.

That same summer I also experienced the wild trout fishery on the Naknek River in June, boiling smolt being chased by 10-pound, dime-bright rainbows. Combine those days with the memory of watching 2 million sockeye push into the mouth of the Kvichak River on one flood tide in mid-July, and that summer can be described as nothing short of magnificent.

There were other major changes brewing for Bristol Bay in 1979 that would alter the landscape forever. Recreational activity and guided tourism was growing in leaps and bounds. In 1980, Katmai National Park and Preserve was created with the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. The following years would continue to see unprecedented growth. Between 1982 and 1990 visits to the Brooks River/Katmai Camp associated with an outfitter/operator would grow from 243 visits to over 7,000. In 1982 there were three active outfitter/operators in the Alagnak drainage, a tributary to the mighty Kvichak River that accounted for 88 client trips. By 1990 there were 32 outfitter/operators and a total of 3,769 client trips. Bristol Bay had officially been discovered.

The Present

Fast-forward 40 years. Over 37,000 individual recreational fishing trips take

place annually in the Bristol Bay region. Over 1,800 drift gillnet permits and better than 1,000 set gillnet permits fish commercially for sockeye salmon every summer. In the summer of 2017 the commercial fishery harvested 37 million fish in Bristol Bay waters, and 1- to 2 million sockeye bound for Bristol Bay were harvested in intercept fisheries on the Alaska Peninsula. Yet the Bristol Bay watershed, its estuaries and nearshore waters, are home to arguably the most pristine, productive and healthy cold-water fishery habitat in the world. How can this be? The numbers are huge both in terms of commercial harvest and recreational use. The answer is quite simple: Strict, science-based fisheries-management policy.

That and the ability to react and modify those policies and associated regulations as human impact and biological conditions change is the cornerstone of an effective management regime. Sure, the harvest of 37 million sockeye is staggering, but at the same time 21 million sockeye made their way past the commercial fishery to the spawning grounds. Yes, close to 40,000 anglers in Bristol Bay in one summer is astounding. But, trophy-only designations, catch-and-release requirements, equipment regulations and bag limits by species and area have combined to ensure a world-class Bristol Bay angling experience.

Don't get me wrong, management decisions, regulations and policies have at times been extremely contentious and sometimes hard to swallow. We should be thankful to our predecessors for investing the energy, time and expertise—those choices have had clear benefits on the longevity and resiliency of the wild salmon all types of Bristol Bay fishermen and women now depend on.

Simply put, it's all part of the plan, so don't forget to give thanks to the stakeholders who worked together to create these policies and to the State of Alaska for the decades of dedication and investment in the sustainable resources and associated management systems that support the recreational, commercial and subsistence fisheries in Bristol Bay. These two essential items, intact habitat and management with an eye toward the future, work together to ensure Bristol Bay remains as it is today.

The Future

This is where things get a little fuzzy. We know what Bristol Bay looked like 40 years ago and we know what happened over the past four decades to create the physical, biological and political landscape

DREAM DAYS:

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Staff Writer



Imagine coming in from a long day spent posted atop a lonely ridgeline, having been pelted with steady rain and battered by the wind while glassing valleys near and distant for that trophy caribou, and opening the cabin door to a blast of cozy warm air.

Imagine motoring into Kachemak Bay on a brisk March morning from Homer, trolling for winter kings, or prowling the waters surrounding Old Harbor, Kodiak, targeting silvers, halibut and lingcod on chilly day deep into the Alaska autumn, and stepping into a boat cabin as balmy and comfortable as Christmas morning in front of the fire at home.

Imagine returning to camp after wading 38-degree water for steelhead and brewing a quick cup of coffee, cooking a hot meal and settling in for a night of telling tall tales around the tent.

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we have today. What transpires from this day forward is much less clear.

Collectively, we are the “user groups,” the fly fishermen, the rafters, the commercial guys, the subsistence fishermen. In our minds, the wild salmon, the rivers brimming with cold, clean, clear water, it belongs to us. Public land and resources are a benefit of being a U.S. citizen; it’s an entitlement if you will.

I would contend that we can no longer take these things for granted. As I pointed out earlier, we have nurtured these resources for decades with sound management and by working together. Simply put, that’s not enough anymore. The onus of making sure these places, these wild salmon and trout, the Bristol Bay watershed, stay vibrant for generations to come—that responsibility now falls squarely on our shoulders.

There are issues in the wind: Pebble Mine, the proposed EPA repeal of the “Waters of the United States” provision of the Clean Water Act that currently protects headwater streams and wetlands in watersheds, the current administration’s repeal of the requirement for mining companies to show financial capacity to clean up pollution caused by operations, and for Alaska residents, the upcoming “Yes for Salmon” ballot initiative that would protect critical habitat adjacent to development projects.

Ultimately, the message is *Don’t take anything for granted* anymore. We need to educate each other and be unrelenting advocates for what we believe is right for ourselves, our families and the places we love. Rely on the professionals, search for scientific review of these issues, learn more by following publications from Alaska Region Trout Unlimited, the Save Bristol Bay campaign, Alaska Marine Conservation Council, Trustees for Alaska, Nature Conservancy for Alaska and many more—and keep tight lines and explore new rivers, of course. But from this day forward, always watch your back and assume the responsibility of advocating for the privilege to call yourself a fisherman.

Matt Luck is a Bristol Bay commercial fisherman, a lifelong fly fisherman and a lover of Alaska rivers. His company, Pride of Bristol Bay, distributes premium-quality wild sockeye salmon direct to consumers nationwide. Pride of Bristol Bay donates 10% of their pre-tax profit to the resource advocacy programs of Alaska Region Trout Unlimited.

Fish Alaska Online

At *Fish Alaska*, we test gear across the width and breadth of the Alaska outdoors, in every condition imaginable, so you can read this issue every year and immediately know which products can tough it out in the Last Frontier.

Once you’re done finding the best of the best for your 2018 fishing season, check out these highlights on our website.

March 2018 Highlights:

➤ Can’t get enough gear? We’ve posted all of the Editors’ Choice Awards online, as well as New Gear for 2018, with photos and links to each, with more details to help you navigate while considering your purchases for your fishing adventures.

➤ We’ve been posting lots of videos! We’ve just posted a string of videos from some of our favorite fishing destinations in Alaska, including Yakutat Lodge, Corsetti’s Guide Service, Togiak River Lodge, Alaska Strike Zone Sportfishing and Whittier Marine Charters. Find these videos online. Check out their videos and then book your trips!

➤ Birch Ridge Golf Course in Kenai is bringing *Fish Alaska* readers a great Angler’s Special this month! Buy one, get one 50% off on golf and cart between June 1-30, 2018, or buy two buckets, get one bucket free on range balls. Free bucket must be equal or lesser value of two purchased. Must have this offer, email, or printed email when redeeming offer. Not combinable with any other offers.

➤ Get prepared for the 2018 Great Alaska Sportsman Show on April 5-8 with our special GASS section online! You can view tons of information on events and exhibitors to help you plan your GASS trip, as thousands of Alaska’s avid anglers and hunters descend upon the Sullivan and Ben Boeke arenas for a weekend of outdoors-related fun.

➤ Want more content? We’re gearing up with a bunch of new subscriber-only blogs and articles this spring and summer. Stay tuned for more!

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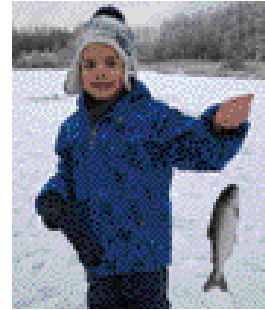
Fishing for a Compliment



Ronica Davila Holeman caught this monster silver salmon on the Kenai River.



Django Boyda, 6, and Landon Boyda, 5, enjoy a day of ice fishing.



Landon Boyda, 5, presenting another icy catch.



Chris Foster pulled this nearly 20-pound char-hungry pike out of Prator Lake in the Mat-Su Valley.

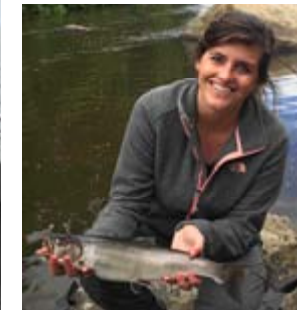
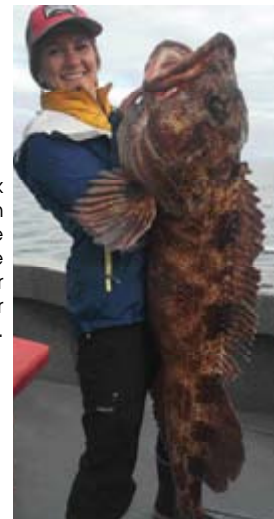


Trevyn Days of Homer, AK, with a nice 50-pound halibut off Elizabeth Island in 2017.



Susan Towle of Anchorage, fishing the upper Kenai River in August 2017.

Brenna Jurczak of Sitka, AK, with a big ol' ling she caught while fishing with her husband and her dog, Snipe.



Sara Days of Homer, AK, with a nice Anchor River Dolly Varden in 2017.

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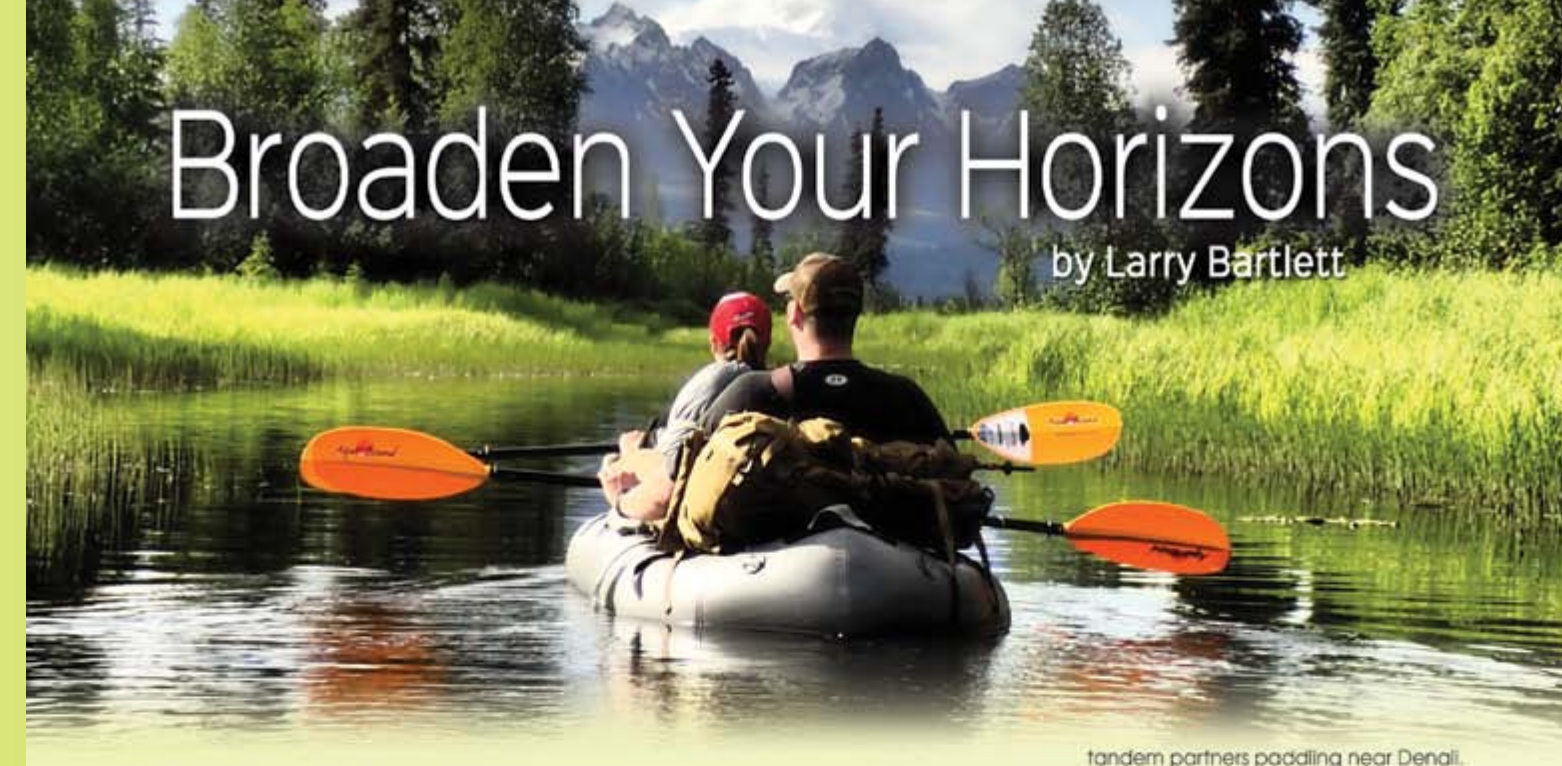


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The PackRaft Alaskana (PR-49)

The PR-49 is a 15-pound packraft I designed to provide an extreme-access option for serious Alaskan hunters and anglers. This boat is ideal for wilderness streams with character ratings of Class I to III. Customers can expect extremely shallow draft with moderate loads. This 9-ft packraft has an impressive 850-pound load capacity and is constructed of tough PVC material using 420-denier side tubes and 840 denier floor thickness, with plenty of lashing points and strong handles for ergonomic dragging and lining around hazards. Special design features include a revolutionary seat and cargo sling that provides high performance control and effective load displacement.

The PR-49 comes equipped with a mesh seat and cargo sling, double-action air pump, a robust repair kit with extra material for extensive repairs, a 240-cm four-piece Aqua-Bound kayak paddle, and a PVC carry bag for easy transport to the field. The PR-49 comes in standard or heavy-duty packages. Fishing with a packraft is easy, affordable and broadens your horizons.

At right-top photo: PR-49 designer Larry Bartlett fishing a remote stream. Below: Fish like these are why anglers use packrafts.



The PR-49 deflates to a workable size and can attach to your pack.



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Salmon Sense

Gizmos & Gadgets to Make Life on the Water Better

Story & photos by JD Richey

On cold, dark winter days I'll admit that I often get sucked down the rabbit hole that is the internet. Of course, that often ends in me ordering something that I, until that day, didn't know existed but suddenly absolutely had to have.

Over the years, I've ordered my share of gizmos and gadgets that ended up getting used once and forgotten. There are, however, others that have proven to be very useful. Here are some of my recent favorites to make your fishing day better and easier.

Keep the Tangles Down

If there's one thing that drives me crazy, it is having a bunch of rigged rods in a boat (or in the truck on the way home) that get all tangled up with one another. It boggles my mind how quickly a few rods stowed together can turn into a 10-minute de-tangling session.

Well, I have found the answer to that—and it's to keep all your rods sleeved in a rod sock. Not the old-school soft kind, either. I'm talking about the modern mesh ones that are made out of the same material



At left, a USB rechargeable lighter is a good safety item to have on outdoor trips. Right: New-style lightweight camp chairs fit easily even into small backpacks.



used to make the old kid's toys called Chinese fingercuffs.

These rod covers—again, made by a whole host of manufacturers—are actually made of expandable braided sleeving. The material expands to about three times its normal size, so you can stuff 3 or 4 rods into one (depending on the sleeve

diameter). It also adjusts and expands to irregular shapes, so it will fit over rod eyes.

In my boat in Alaska, which doesn't have very large rod trays, I'll keep my technique-specific rods together in sleeves when not using them. For example, when we are bobber fishing, all my plug rods will be in their sleeves waiting for action. It only

takes a couple seconds to unsheathe one set and cover the other and that small effort will keep things from getting ugly.

Get the Gunk Off

One of my great discoveries this past season was orange hand soap. You know the kind that you'll often see at construction job sites or auto parts stores? I know...it doesn't sound exciting, but that stuff is amazing! It is about the only thing I have found that will actually get the stink off your hands—stuff like roe, herring, fish guts, etc.

In addition, it's great for getting dried-up egg goo off your rods. Simply put some on a damp sponge and scrub away. I also keep a bottle of orange soap in my boat—it works amazingly well on dried fish blood, slime and roe splatters.

There are several different brands and they all seem to work fine—Zep, GoJo and Permatex to name a few. I like the ones with pumice in them for washing my hands but go with the non-gritty kind for rods.

Let There be Light!

Okay, I'll admit that I'm a bit of a light junky now that everything has gone LED. There are just so many cool options out there for mounting in your shop and on your boat or truck. Well, the one that I use all the time is the HDX Rechargeable Thin Light from Home Depot (about \$17).

It's a 250-lumen LED light stick that has a foldable hanger hook and integrated magnet, which means you can stick it anywhere. When backing my boat into the side yard at night, I'll attach it to the back of my trailer, so I can see where I'm going. I also use it at home for tying leaders—as I get older, I need all the light I can get! The light is also great in the boat in the early morning, and of course, I use it all around the house, too.

Fire Without Fuel

Another gizmo that I really like having with me on fishing trips is a USB no-fuel lighter. I first stumbled onto them on Amazon last year and was very surprised to learn that there are rechargeable lighters now!

Rather than a flame, these cool little contraptions use a plasma electric arc. That makes them windproof and you also have the benefit of not having to worry about refilling it all the time. The one I bought has dual arcs, which makes it more powerful; it will light at least 100 times before I have to recharge for a couple hours on the USB cable.

A lighter is always nice to have when you are out fishing in the sticks so you can light an emergency fire (or signal flame), cook food, etc. If you look online, you can find

all sorts of USB lighters under \$20.

A Chair...Anywhere!

When camping or heading out on long fishing hikes, I'll often add one convenience item to my gear and that's a packable chair. Most weigh only 1.5- to 2 pounds and fold into a carry sack that will easily fit into a day pack. Pop out the aluminum legs and stick them together like tent poles, stretch the seat material across the ends and you have an amazingly comfortable chair wherever you happen to be.

You should see the looks I have gotten from buddies when I pulled my pack chair out on some remote gravel bar where we

were stopping for lunch. After hiking around in waders all day, having a nicer place to sit is awesome!

You can spend anywhere from under \$20 to over \$100 depending on where you buy your chair—and where it is made. This is a case where spending a little more on a good one is usually worth it in the long run.

JD Richey is a contributing editor for Fish Alaska magazine and can be reached through his website at www.fishwithjd.com.

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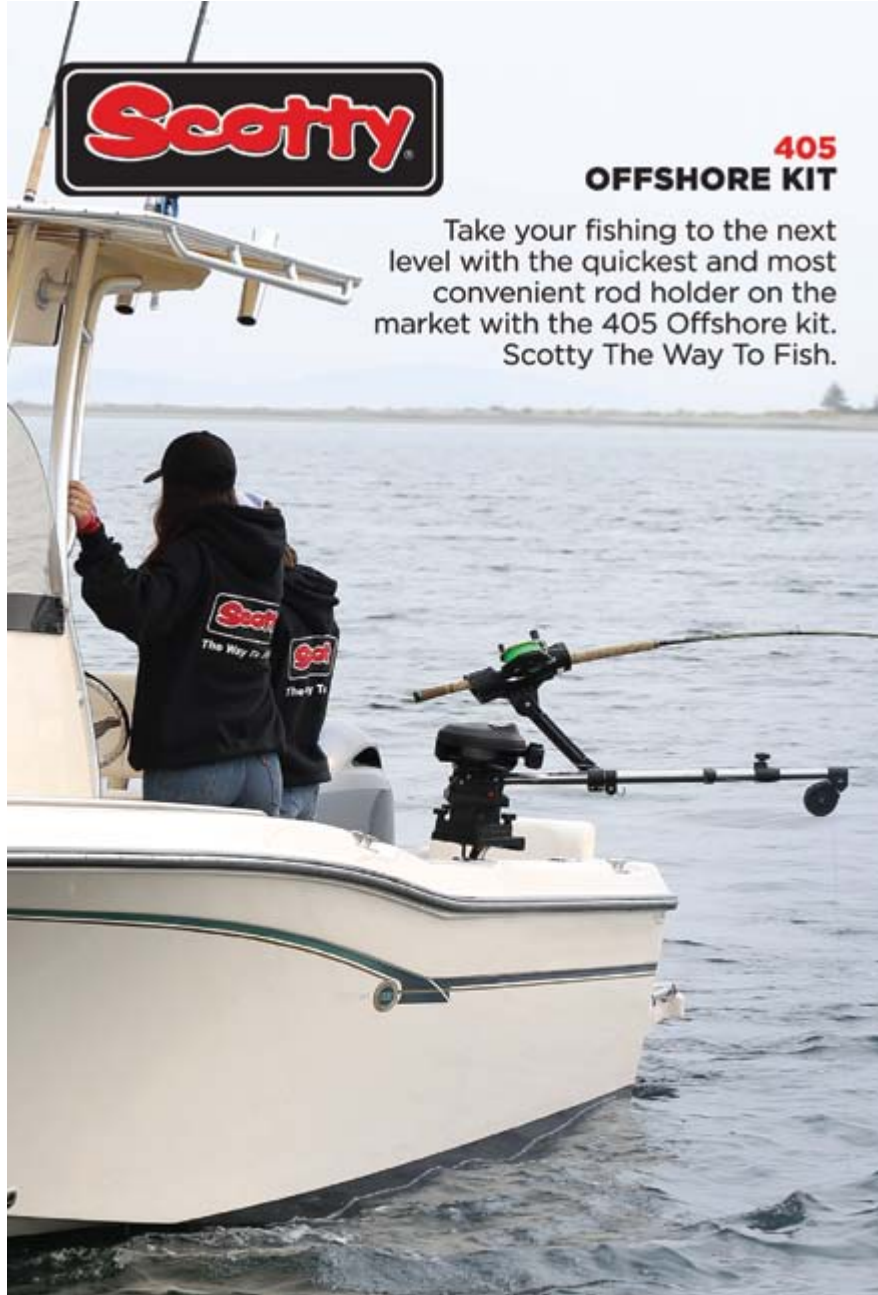
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Fish Alaska Fly

What's on our Desk

Story & photos by Mike Brown

Our typical approach to this column is to tie a fly that goes along with the general theme of each issue. With this month's issue being the annual gear review, I figured we would talk about some of the tools we use each day and why we use them, hopefully giving you a little insight into the everyday tying habits of the shop.

In today's fly-tying world, materials and equipment are changing and advancing constantly. You see all kinds of ads telling you about how great this is and how great that is, but you must sit back and wonder, is it? To answer that, yes and no; like all things, there are cool new items that are great and some that just are not as cool as they sound. In this article, we are going to show you what we like and what makes tying flies easier and more enjoyable.

A lifelong Alaskan with a passion for family, fly-fishing and fly-tying, Mike Brown is the owner of Mossy's Fly Shop in Anchorage, AK.

1. Bobbins: There are a ton of bobbins on the market today, and choosing a bobbin can be budget-oriented or just personal preference (easy to thread, spool tension adjustment, ceramic or not, and the list goes on). For us it's mainly about having multiple bobbins to speed up time. We like to have one set with thread, and one set with flat braid (this helps not waste an expensive material). Having the ability to just switch material being used quickly and efficiently makes things move smoother.

2. Bodkin: Since we do a lot of composite loops and just dubbing loops in general, a bodkin is a big piece of picking out the material and is a must on the bench.

3. Brushes: We keep a variety of brushes on the bench. While stiff brushes can be hard to come by, we use them to brush out materials in dubbing loops and to brush out heads or bodies after we wrap them.

4. Combs: We use a lot of rabbit and fox, and combs make for getting the under-fur out easy, allowing us to get a smaller and more manageable diameter for wrapping, reducing bulk and wet-fly weight. Combs are great with deer hair as well as craft fur (you'd be surprised how much under-fur is in craft fur).

5. Composite Loop Ruler: This ruler, designed by Jerry French, is a must for the composite loop tyer. Measuring out your material and



9. Material Clip: These potato chip-looking bag clips have saved the day more than once. These clips are fantastic with rabbit cut from the hide, fox, ostrich and the list goes on. These clips allow you to prep for your fly, freeing up your hands, and they make for placing material in a loop a breeze. It's like having a third hand.

10. Material Holder: What we are showing here are the small gear holders from Nite Ize; these little bendable ties are great for holding down anything you need to hold back and out of the way until you are in need of it. Small hair clips are a great option for this as well.

11. Rubber Band: I keep rubber bands on my vise to hold a rear hook back and out of the way on articulated-style flies. Keeping that hook held back tight helps keep a hook-point out of your finger.

12. Scissors: We use up to four scissors during the process of tying a fly: a good, sharp pair for thread and materials only, a braid scissor for cutting articulation/stinger braid, a junk pair for wire and lead, and occasionally a thinning scissor to make tapered tails on sculpin-type patterns.

13. Shank Adapter: We tie-on a lot of shanks or cut hooks for articulated-style

patterns, and most vises don't hold a hook-shank very well at all. The HMH Tube Fly Adapter was the first tool we used to hold a shank and it worked great, then OPST came out with their shank adapter, which allowed for better maneuverability around the back end of the pattern. Since we tie on Regals, we approached Regal about adding a groove to the jaw to hold shanks. This has proven to be a great option, not requiring extra parts to float around on the desk and get lost.

14. UV: UV resins have replaced head cement for us. The ability to apply a small amount and hit it with the light and you are done in seconds has proven its worth time and time again. One thing we have learned in the UV resin craze is that you need to buy a good light the first time. There are a lot of light options on the market, but what we have found is that the cheaper lights burn up batteries and wear out fast.

15. Wax: Wax is an important item when using dubbing loops, as keeping material in place and not letting it get dumped on the table makes for a lot less frustration. We really like the Overton's wax because it's less static.

knowing exactly how many wraps you will get is essential to a good composite loop fly.

6. Cutters: We tie a lot of articulated and stinger-style flies, so we cut a lot of steel. A good pair of wire cutters is a must to get a good, clean finish to your fly. Just like mono tags are a no-go, so are metal shank tags.

7. Dubbing Twister: Since we use dubbing loops in just about every fly we tie, a good dubbing twister is a valuable tool on the desk.

8. Hackle Plier: Hackle pliers are a versatile tool for us. We have all popped a dubbing loop off before and groaned. Well, grab your hackle pliers and save that loop. It's also a handy tool to grab a strip of rabbit as well, or anything you are wrapping for that matter.

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Fish Alaska Boats

Outboards

Story by Troy Buzalsky

It's my hypothesis that the evolution of the outboard motor has changed so dramatically over recent years that the newest generation outboards offer more performance and efficiency than ever before, and now provide power options that were once only available with conventional power and drive systems. Today's outboard configurations include single, twin, triple and even quad power, delivering up to 1,600 galloping ponies at the boat's transom.

There are a number of manufacturers building excellent motors, and there's little doubt they have all pushed the envelope to create the outboards we enjoy today. Here are the industry's leading lights.

Evinrude

Certainly the oldest and most historical name of all the outboard manufacturers, Evinrude's initial outboard efforts evolved over romance and ice cream. As the story goes, Ole Evinrude and his lady of interest, Bessie (his future wife), were picnicking off Okauchee Lake when she thought ice cream sounded good. In the time it took for Ole to row feverishly to the shore he had decided

there must be a more efficient way to propel a small craft, thus inspiring the portable outboard.

Evinrude's first outboards were one-cylinder and 1.5HP, and an instant success. Through a series of mergers and acquisitions, Evinrude eventually joined with the Lockwood Motor Company, then with Johnson Motor Company, becoming Outboard Marine Corporation (OMC). After many years pioneering the outboard industry, OMC declared bankruptcy and its assets were acquired by Bombardier Recreational Products (BRP), which continues to build Evinrude-brand outboard motors.

Technology and engineering is where Evinrude has made its biggest impacts, and the company is still carving the water with its two-stroke platform.

E-TEC is Evinrude's state-of-the-art technology that provides improved fuel efficiency, reduced emissions and oil usage, lower noise levels and decreased maintenance needs. This is due in part to a pinpoint oiling system that only applies oil to the necessary components, unlike the original two-stroke motors. Evinrude E-TEC was the first outboard engine technology to win the American Environmental Protection Agency 2004 Clean Air Excellence Award, which recognizes low emission levels.

The E-TEC G-2 is Evinrude's flagship

outboard and it provides more torque than its four-stroke counterparts because every stroke is a power stroke. When pitted against comparable outboards, Evinrude's G2 technology offers 20% more torque, 15% better fuel efficiency and 75% fewer emissions, according to Evinrude's comparison tests.

The Evinrude ETEC is available from 15HP to 150HP and the ETEC G-2 is available from 150- to 300HP. Evinrude also has outboards for pontoons, jet units and a portable line to cover all boating applications. To give owners added security, BRP Evinrude offers an industry-leading, ten-year, factory-backed extended service coverage on all Evinrude E-TEC and Evinrude E-TEC G2 engines, the longest in the industry.

Mercury

Mercury Marine entered the outboard market in 1939 and quickly found success with their Lightning 10HP, which offered the best power-to-weight-to-dollar value available. The two-stroke in-line six Tower of Power and the industry's first V-6 175HP Black Max solidified its position as a performance propulsion system, both within the racing communities as well as with diehard anglers.

Electronic Fuel Injection became game-changing technology for Mercury in



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1987, improving two-stroke performance up to 220HP. Keeping up with emission requirements pushed for even more efficiency, which brought about the debut of the OptiMax, utilizing Direct-Fuel-Injection (DFI), an air-assist injection system. Mercury also entered the four-stroke outboard world with a splash, introducing the supercharged Verado in 2004, which has earned ratings up to 400HP under the Mercury Racing Division. The Verado offers power and torque comparable to its two-stroke brethren.

Today the Mercury lineup includes their Optimax and Pro XS, the FourStroke, the Verado, the Jet and their commercial-grade SeaPro FourStroke.

The Optimax and Pro XS are similar creatures, other than the XS is super-tuned for performance, offering a more throaty response and a quicker hole shot. Available from 115HP to 250 HP, the two-stroke Optimax family features two-stage direct injection that translates into great performance and fuel efficiency while meeting the most stringent emission standards.

The Mercury FourStroke is filled with boater-driven innovations and is available from 2.5HP up to 150HP. Electronic fuel injection, on-board digital monitoring and super corrosion-protection gives the FourStroke no-worry reliability with

outstanding performance. Still, nothing compares to the quiet, effortless operation of Verado, which is available from 175HP to 350HP. The SmartCraft Digital Throttle and Shift (DTS) provides ultra-smooth shifting and instantaneous throttle response all while the electro-hydraulic, automotive-style power steering provides precision handling. The supercharged Verado creates superior torque and acceleration across the entire performance range, while running smooth and quiet, with great fuel efficiency.

Honda

When Honda released its first outboard in 1964 they were already a leader in the motorcycle industry, and the company began by building smaller outboards, including the GB25, GB30 and GB 40. It wasn't until 1998 before Honda tipped the 100HP mark with their 130HP-rated EFI outboard. By 2001 Honda rolled out the industry's first Variable Valve Timing and Electrical Lift Control (VTEC) in the BF225.

Honda keeps pushing the technological curve, releasing Boosted Low Speed Torque (BLAST) technologies for low-end performance, Lean Burn Control for more efficient operations and Three-Way Cooling designed to best manage heat and heat flow for maximum performance.

Building an entirely four-stroke lineup,

Honda motors can be categorized as portable outboards from 2.3HP to 20HP, mid-range outboards from 25HP to 100HP and high-power outboards from 115HP to 250HP. Honda even has a jet drive outboard category from 40HP to 105HP.

The Portable Outboard series is exactly that, a lightweight outboard that is easily removed and transported and ideal for many boating opportunities. From tenders to canoes, the smaller portables bring the benefits of extreme lightweight engineering with optimal performance. When you crawl up to the 8HP to 9HP range, you are looking at the ideal trolling motor. And the largest portables are perfect for lake boats and skiffs up to 16 feet.

Mid-Range is an in-between motor that features all the great technologies but is just made for midsized watercraft, up to 20 feet. Starting with Honda's True 5 Warranty that is the best available, add to the mix VTEC systems, which provide smooth acceleration, Programed Fuel Injection for power and performance, Lean Burn Control for superior fuel economy, and BLAST technologies for low-speed performance (translation, hole shot) and you have all the making of a great outboard.

Serious boating requires serious performance and the High Power lineup is Honda's answer, whether operating as a single-, dual- or even triple-outboard



The Predator Hybrid 220 features an Inboard 200 HP Mercury SportJet engine that will allow you to access the most extreme shallow water. Other features include heavy gauge aluminum construction, dual flat top consoles with walk-thru windshield, 40 gallon aerated livewell, 26 gallon fuel tank, and a rear deck with storage.

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configuration. This series includes all of Honda's trademark technologies, including VTEC and BLAST, and it also introduces Intelligent Shift and Throttle (iST). The iST allows for up to 4 engines and 2 control stations and provides for effortless control and fine-tuning of throttle settings at any speed. Added benefits include enhanced docking, slow speed control and a simple and easy to understand user interface.

Suzuki

Manufacturing both motorcycles and automobiles, Suzuki developed both two- and four-stroke engines, earning high marks in both markets, and then in 1965, the Suzuki 5.5HP D55 two-stroke outboard entered the marine marketplace. By 1980 Suzuki was already developing industry firsts, including the first automatic oil injection system in their popular DT85. By 1985 the company introduced their V6 DT150 and DT200, earning the "Most Innovative Products" award from NMMA. In 1997 and 1998 Suzuki was doubly recognized, receiving the coveted Innovation Award at the International Marine Trade Exhibit and Conference for their DF60 and DF70 four-strokes.

Meeting the demand for more power and better emissions, in 2005 Suzuki released its 250HP V-6 four-stroke, which was touted as the lightest four-stroke outboard with the highest displacement in its class. Today, the 350HP DF350A tops the charts, featuring Contra Rotating Propellers and Multi Point Sequential Electronic Fuel Dual Injection with Lean Burn and Oxygen Sensor.

The Suzuki DF2.5 portable outboard is the smallest Suzuki four-stroke to date. Weighing just 30 pounds, the DF2.5 is the lightest Suzuki four-stroke motor ever built. The High-Thrust 9.9 horsepower four-stroke has been specially designed for anglers and is considered the ultimate trolling motor. The new battery-less EFI powerhead puts fuel injection in a small outboard and the integrated power tilt makes raising and lowering Suzuki's DF9.9TH High Thrust a breeze, which hits paydirt when back-trolling into those fishy tailouts.

The Suzuki midsize series spans the 40- to 60HP range in a three-cylinder configuration. The DF40A is the only engine in its class to offer Dual Overhead Cam (DOHC) performance and also incorporate a maintenance-free, oil-bathed timing chain, which provides the outboard with increased durability and maintenance-free operation. Jumping up to the DF60AV, technologies include the "High Energy Rotation" lower unit sporting a 2.42:1 gear ratio, which enables the use of a bigger 14-inch prop. It also incorporates the Lean Burn Fuel Control System, which adjusts the air/fuel mixture according to

operating conditions.

The In-Line 4 series is Suzuki's tried-and-true four-cylinder outboard for 70HP to 200HP. The DF175AP and DF150AP are designed on an in-line four-cylinder DOHC powerhead with 175-cubic-inch displacement, the largest to date in the four-stroke, four-cylinder DOHC category. While the large displacement delivers both exceptional acceleration and speed, Suzuki engineers have made sure that the outboard's final dimensions are as compact and lightweight as possible.

Double Overhead Camshaft 24-valve powerheads and electronic fuel injection are featured across the Suzuki V6 lineup. While the DF300AP, DF250AP and DF250 feature Variable Valve Timing for increased low- to mid-range torque, the DF250 and DF225 take advantage of a multi-stage induction system to gain maximum top-end performance. Using a 55-degree V-block design, Suzuki engineers have managed to pack the power and performance into an incredibly compact design.

Yamaha

Yamaha launched their first U.S. outboard line in 1983, featuring two-stroke models from 40HP to 220HP that showcased Precision Blend Oil Injection. Seeing the writing on the wall, Yamaha was quick to transition into the four-stroke arena,

launching its 100HP outboard featuring High Pressure Direct Injection (HPDI). In 2002 Yamaha introduced the F225A, the highest horsepower rating of any four-stroke outboard. Two years later the V6 F250 with Variable Camshaft Timing emerged, and in 2007 Yamaha surpassed the 300HP mark with the behemoth V8 F350. Yamaha continues to design and develop some of the most reliable outboards on the market and has a full platform of power options for today's boater and angler.

Yamaha's portable line of outboards provide power options from 2.5HP to 25HP, with all the reliability and engineering Yamaha is known for. The newly redesigned F25 has gone through a transformation, making it the lightest 25HP outboard on the water—two-stroke or four-stroke.

For family and watersports, fishing and recreating, Yamaha has developed its mid-range lineup, with outboards from 30HP to 115HP. The Yamaha 115HP and the all-new 90HP and 75HP four-strokes are reliable inshore performers. Fast and powerful, they sport 1.8-liter displacement and DOHC or SOHC designs with four valves per cylinder. This gives them exceptional efficiency and lighter weights; again, with unmatched reliability.

With all the success in the four-stroke world, Yamaha developed the VMAX Super High Output (SHO) in 90HP,

115HP, 150HP and 175HP in-line four-cylinder, as well as V6 200HP, 225HP and 250HP models proclaiming a 13% faster hole shot. The new VF90 In-Line Four V MAX SHO is a single-overhead-camshaft design with four valves per cylinder and 1.8-liter displacement that is super-tuned for great low-end torque and exceptional high-speed performance. It is also the quietest motor in its class, making for some pretty stealthy fishing.

Big power and big performance comes from Yamaha's large displacement family of outboards, manufactured in in-line four-cylinder, V6 and V8 configurations that provide 150HP- to 350HP. The 5.3-liter V8 is designed to easily produce 350 propshaft horsepower, with less stress and strain on internal engine components than small-displacement, high-output outboards. Four oversized valves per cylinder increase breathing efficiency and contribute significantly to the F350C's power and torque. Weighing in at 763 pounds and running on pump-grade 89 octane fuel, the F350 is that perfect offshore power-plant.

Troy A. Buzalsky is a contributing editor for Fish Alaska magazine and writes the Boats Column in each issue.

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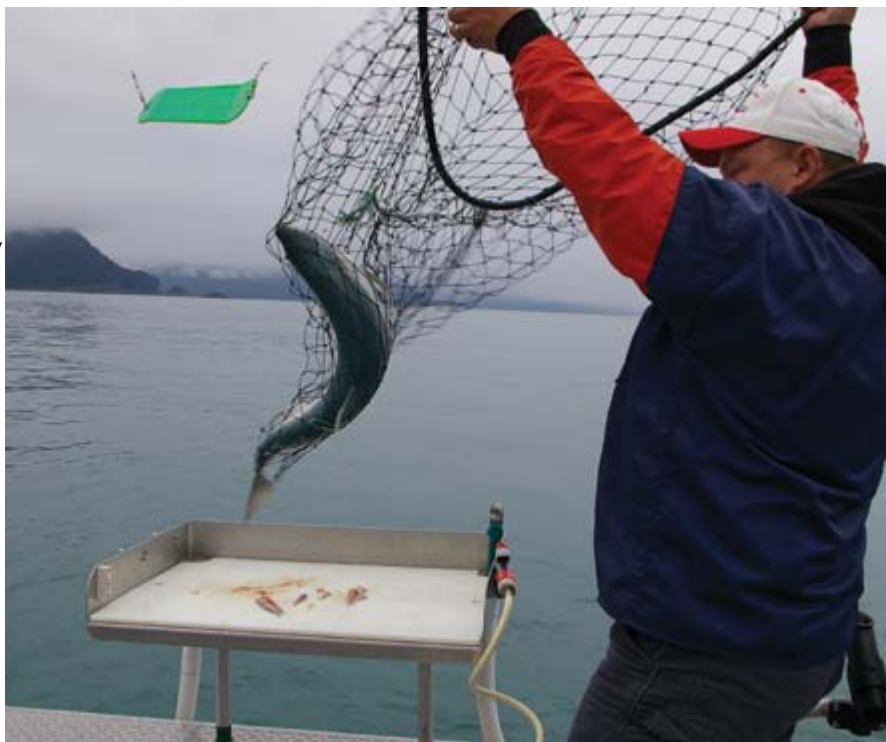
Story and photos by Terry W. Sheely

There's a lot more to consider when picking out a landing net than landing another salmon to bonk for the table.

Some considerations are pretty basic, such as selecting a net with an extra-long handle if you typically troll multiple downriggers and net fish on the fly without popping and retrieving the other working rods. Downrigger trollers need a net with a handle long enough to extend beyond downrigger arms, streaming wire cables, over the outboard housing, past the prop to bag a salmon that's tethered eight feet beyond the barrel swivel that you knotted in to reduce line twist.

When you dig in with your toes and stretch across the gunwale extending 10 feet of handle, rim and bag as far as you can reach to derrick 20 pounds of salmon over the boat gear—that's the moment you'll wish you'd sprung for the more expensive net, the one with the really stout handle. The farther out you reach, the stouter the handle needs to be. One of the quickest experiences that I know of that will transform grinning fun into oh fud is to have a lightweight net handle fold up when it's asked to derrick a solid chunk of salmon.

Another consideration is storing 8 feet or so of net handle, another couple of feet of



rim and snaggy bag on a 16- to 25-foot boat, which is why you're looking at a telescoping handle. I went a step further on my 17-foot center-console by attaching a small, round, slide-in net-holder on the outside of the railing. Outside of the boat, the net is ready and waiting out of harm and tanglefoot's way, but accessible and quick to grab. There are several net-holder brands around. Mine is made by TEMPRESS. New models have rotating bases that adjust to fit specific railing shapes and handle lengths. Cost is about \$10. It's one of the best investments I've ever made in de-cluttering my cluttered boat.

I also make sure the new net comes

Having a net that's tailor-made for the fish you're pursuing, and the style of fishing employed on a given day, will go a long way towards making your experience that much more efficient and successful.

with a shallow bag—not one of those deep sweepers cavernous enough to retrieve passing deer.

Deep bags have their uses, but they also tend to tangle anything that's not smooth and recessed, including salmon fins, lures, terminal tackle, boat cleats, misplaced pliers, boat boots, rod holders and downriggers. When extended and reaching for a finished salmon while on the troll, the big bags tend to drift out below the rim toward and under the targeted fish. When this happens more things can go wrong than right. The problem is exacerbated with longer handles.

With standard shorter-handled nets it's easy to grab the bottom of the big bag and pinch it against the handle out of the way until it's time to release around the fish and that's AFTER the fish slides over the rim. Not so easy 10 feet away from the boat.

Here's something else to consider.

Everything that's netted doesn't, or shouldn't, die.

Netting a bonker for the table is one thing, but netting a semi-tough fish

When you've accomplished all the hard work and brought your prize salmon to the boat, you want to make sure the last task goes smoothly; having a net not up to the job can often send your fish right back into the drink.



that's going to be released is entirely another. It's something we need to face as ADF&G regulations move ever forward on restricting what's legal to keep and what means a ticket, as well as the growing catch-and-release ethic.

A multi-year study at Carleton University in Ontario found—flat out—that anadromous salmonids had the highest survival rates when landed with rubber-mesh bags with large-diameter mesh.

The study concluded that rubber bags were the best option after comparing fin fraying, scale loss and mucous loss of trout landed with four different bag types, plus bare, wet hands.

Test anglers fished with spinning rods and barbed treble- and single hooks from boats, conditions that replicate a lot of our salmon fishing.

When salmonids were held in the water while hooks were removed, the rubber nets with large mesh significantly improved the condition of releases in catch-and-release fisheries.

Small mesh, not made of rubber, consistently inflicted wounds, mucous loss or fin damage during handling and release, according to the study authors. The study compared rubber mesh bags with bags made of nylon, polypropylene or rubber-coated along with bare-hand landings.

Nets tested included 1-inch knotless rubber mesh, micro-mesh about 0.1 of an inch, knotless nylon micromesh, polypropylene with 1.57-inch knotted mesh and a small knotless coated nylon mesh with 0.23-inch mesh.

Study results found that the polypropylene mesh resulted in the greatest fin fraying, and the most scale loss was from bare, wet hands, nylon mesh and coated nylon mesh.

Knotless nylon mesh had the highest frequency of scale loss and frequently caused mucous loss.

A side finding was that test salmonids caught with treble hooks did not have significantly higher mortality rates compared with salmonids caught on single hooks, but the increase in handling time and air exposure to untangle trebles and fish from net mesh produced increases in mortality.

Long stout handles, shallow bags, large rubber mesh and a rail-mounted net holder—that's what you're looking for at the boat and outdoor shows when gearing up for next salmon season.

Terry W. Sheely is a contributing editor for Fish Alaska magazine and can be reached through his website at www.tnscommunications.net.

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Fish Alaska Stillwater

Fishing the Balanced Leech

Story & photos by George Krumm

Though I have always liked the sight of a bobber going down, somehow it seems slightly distasteful from a fly-fishing perspective. "Using a bobber is for kids," my dad would say. "We fly fish, with dry flies."

That was in Montana many years ago, but times have certainly changed for me. I actually prefer fishing lakes to fishing streams most of the time. If using a bobber is distasteful, what about all that time I've spent not only using a bobber, but also using something that is arguably not a fly—but a bead? I guess it's great we have lots of room for interpretation on what is fly fishing. One inarguable truth is that a fly pattern suspended below a bobber (Strike indicator? Take signaler? Trout detector? Bite beacon?) is very effective if there is enough wave action to animate the fly.

The balanced leech can be fished under a bobber or by itself. However, I only fish it under a bobber. If I want to strip it, I'll use a less heavily-weighted Bugger-type pattern. Balanced leeches have worked every place I've tried them. I tend to use them most on very windy days—days in which other presentations are difficult to execute. For all intents and purposes, what follows is based on my experience of using balanced leeches under a bobber, or indicator.

Advantages

- Once you cast it out, it's always fishing.
- It is balanced, so when suspended below a bobber it is horizontally oriented, like an actual leech.
- On days when it's too windy for typical cast-and-retrieve presentations, the balanced leech under a bobber works great and might be the only feasible solution.
- Great method for beginning fly fishers and kids as it doesn't require frequent casting.



A typical size 8 balanced leech.



- If fished without an indicator, the balanced leech rides hook-point up, making it less likely to snag wood or rocks.
- Hooked fish are rarely hooked deep and are almost always hooked in the upper jaw rather than the tongue or lower jaw.

Disadvantages

- Balanced leeches are not readily available

in fly shops—yet. However, for anglers in Anchorage, Mossy's Fly Shop does carry a good selection.

- When fished under an indicator, they do not work well on flat, calm days as there is no chop to make them pulsate and breathe.

Most of the time, I use a 6-weight outfit for fishing balanced leeches under an indicator.

My North Fork Composites F 906-4M (Classic) is the rod I usually use when fishing bobber/balanced leech setups. I use a Rio Gold WF-6-F floating fly line most of the time if I'm fishing from a boat or tube. If I'm shore fishing, I like the appropriate size Rio Switch Chucker line. For a leader, you can use a tapered mono leader with a fluorocarbon tippet, but to be honest, you don't need a commercially-sold, tapered leader for fishing a balanced leech under a bobber. I sometimes use a straight piece of 8- or 10-pound-test fluorocarbon such as Seaguar's STS Fluorocarbon, to which I add a couple feet of 3x MAX Fluorocarbon tippet or Rio Fluoroflex Plus Tippet. I use a non-slip mono loop knot to tie on the fly.

On the kind of days on which this technique works best, I generally try to find some structure (weed line, drop off, shoreline, etc.) at which the wind is blowing. I then position myself upwind of that structure and either hold myself with my fins, or anchor. I then cast the rig to the structure and wait. I think you know what to do when the bobber goes down.

Fishing with indicators on windy days, whether with a chironomid pupa imitation or a balanced leech, is deadly in all lakes where trout swim. At times when the wind is making any normal presentation really difficult, the balanced leech and indicator can save the day. I've used balanced leeches from southcentral Alaska down to the Lower 48 to southern Argentina. I've landed little stocked rainbows, big stocked rainbows and naturally produced rainbows up to 19 pounds on them. No doubt, they are effective.

Be sure to see next month's Stillwater Column to see how to tie a balanced leech.



George Krumm is a Regional Sales Manager for Fish Alaska and Hunt Alaska magazines, and he can be reached at george@fishalaskamagazine.com.



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Bigger and better than ever before, *Fish Alaska's* Editors' Choice Awards are back with a bang, highlighting every piece of equipment, apparel and related angling accoutrement that our fishing staff found indispensable during a range of adventures in the field in 2017. From trolling for saltwater coho to slinging feathers and fur for trophy rainbows in the tundra rivers of Southwest, and even drilling through the ice to drop hardware and bait for a winter fix of fish, our field-testers have pushed every angling boundary in the Last Frontier in the past year, putting products through the paces in just about every scenario imaginable. We've been on backpacking excursions, float trips and lodge stays; we have motored into the salt, rowed roadside rivers, set up both elaborate and basic base camps, dropped float tubes into the lakes and snowmachined to winter ice-fishing locales around the state. Amongst it all, a number of products stood out as better bets to help get the job done in comfort and style, and it's all listed here. Whether young or old, experienced or just beginning, we've got the gear you need. Check it out and then get going on your 2018 fishing dreams.

Rods



Cousins Tackle Columbia Composite Series CC 955TG

www.cousinstacklestore.com
This is an extremely versatile rod for heavy-lead trolling, king salmon back-trolling and downrigger fishing. Though rated for up to 12 ounces of lead, our tester used it with up to 16 ounces when trolling with a flasher and herring rig, as well as with flasher and Super Bait combos. The rod also has plenty of backbone for back-trolling magnum divers with bait or plugs in the Kenai or other Chinook rivers. Carbon-fiber grips stand up well for a rod that spends much of its time in a rod holder. Since the construction is a fiberglass/graphite composite, it's very durable. Our tester commented that if he had to pick just one rod for Chinook trolling or back-trolling, this would be it. It is handmade in the USA, too.

Quantum Nova Coldwater Series Rods

www.quantumfishing.com
Salmon and steelhead fans—of which we have more than a few here at *Fish Alaska*—are going to take special interest in the Nova series. There's a length and action for virtually any cold-water technique, and we found the rods to perform great across a range of species and angling conditions this past year using the 9-foot, 2-piece, medium-light power spinning rod. The rod's features include IM8 graphite construction, cork rod handles and aluminum-oxide guides.



Okuma Nomad Inshore Travel Rod

www.okumafishingusa.com
We fished the NTi-S-703ML-M and are impressed with the versatility and performance of this rod. The three-piece rod comes with two tips to increase the scope of angling you can do without bringing another rod. Using the lighter tip, it's rated for 6- to 15-pound-test, and we threw spinners, spoons and beads to trout and char. Switching to the heavier tip, the rod's rating increases to 10- to 17-pound-test, which allowed us to mooch for coho in the saltwater as well as sling hardware to silvers in the river. We've also taken it on a moose hunt and used it to throw topwater baits to northerns. Pike to 10 pounds were landed. The rod features premium components, has proven to be rugged and dependable, and comes in a handy padded travel case small enough to fit in your luggage. There are three models in this series.



Fenwick Aetos Rod 968-4

www.fenwickfishing.com
The Fenwick Aetos family of rods includes spinning, casting, fly and ice spinning rods. Our tester went to work with the 968-4 fly rod this season and found it a light, easy-to-cast and sensitive angling tool. Featuring a fast-action blank, large-diameter gunsmoke stripper guides and double-foot gunsmoke snake guides, this fast-recovering, high-performance rod makes an excellent choice for pursuing big trout, sockeye and silvers in freshwater, or silvers in the salt.



Abu Garcia Venerate Spinning Rod

www.abugarcia.com
This rod is light, fast and responsive and we found it well suited to catching pinks and silvers in 2017. It's 7 feet, 6 inches long with medium-power and a fast-action, and the two-piece rod is rated for 6- to 12-pound-test. There are 12 total rods in the Venerate Spinning series and we tested model VNRTS762-5.

Ugly Stik Bigwater Casting Rod

www.uglystik.com
We punished this rod in the saltwater in 2017 and it took all we could dish out. The medium-heavy, one-piece rod is 6 feet long and rated for 20- to 50-pound-test. The EVA grip is comfortable in the hand and the Ugly Tuff guides are reported to be extremely corrosion-resistant. There are a plethora of models in this series.

Rods



Penn Rampage Jigging Rod

www.pennfishing.com
We tested the 5-foot, 8-inch, one-piece, heavy-duty, graphite composite casting rod. It's rated for 80- to 130-pound-test line, baits from 6- to 10 ounces, and sports eight Fuji aluminum oxide guides. It's comfortable, light, strong and really nice to fish with. We vertically jigged 6-, 8- and 10-ounce lures from Ahi USA and Kalin's and landed some great halibut and lingcod on the rod.

Redington Predator 890-4

www.redington.com
"It has a nice balance to it and sufficient backbone for fighting sockeye salmon and large rainbows," our tester wrote, "I enjoyed this rod." Anglers can roll-cast a big fly with ease and it has a nice touch for feeling a subtle bite.

TFO TPS rods

www.tforods.com
We tested the 561-1 and 601-2 this year and loved the sensitivity and quality components of these rods. They are easy for young kids to cast and handle. We cast bobbers and worms, as well as micro jigs and small spinners to stocker trout and had a blast. These rods are far more refined and responsive than the rods we fished with as kids for small trout and it is making it easier to get our young ones hooked on the sport.



Fenwick Fenglass Fly Rod

www.fenwickfishing.com
We tested the 7-foot, 9-inch, 6-weight rod. We liked the feel of this fiberglass rod; it's smooth, soft, has medium-power and is forgiving. We found it well-suited to casting and retrieving Buggers, where the softness of the rod made it easier to stick aggressive trout on the strike. We also used it to subdue average-sized pink salmon still bearing sea lice. Those we caught while swinging streamers and nymphing smaller leech patterns. The rod has some power in the butt end and is also tough enough to handle landing hundreds of salmon, as we did with it on Prince of Wales Island in 2017.



Cousins EVO 99M-SG Spinning Rod

www.cousinstacklestore.com
This is one sweet rod! The lightweight graphite blank is sensitive and responsive, and the guides, reel seat and handle are all first-rate. We used it this summer as a float rod and landed many hot coho on it. This two-piece model is rated for 6- to 15-pound-test and lures from 1/4- to 1/2 ounces.



Columbia Composite Series

9 American-made rods engineered for "rod holder" salmon/steelhead techniques. Perfectly designed actions for trolling baits and spinners, wobbler fishing, or backtrolling with plugs. Great for downrigger fishing!

Model	Length	Pcs	Line Size	Troll Wgt	Handle	MSRP
CC 802-1TG	8'0"	1	10 - 20	3/4 - 4	Graphite	\$215.00
CC 803-1TG	8'0"	1	12 - 30	1 - 6	Graphite	\$225.00
CC 903TG	9'0"	2	10 - 25	1 - 5	Graphite	\$250.00
CC 944TG	9'4"	2	15 - 30	1 - 8	Graphite	\$255.00
CC 944T	9'4"	2	15 - 30	1 - 8	Cork	\$255.00
CC 955TG	9'6"	2	15 - 40	4 - 12	Graphite	\$260.00
CC 1054TG	10'6"	2	15 - 30	1 - 8	Graphite	\$265.00
CC 1054T	10'6"	2	15 - 30	1 - 8	Cork	\$265.00
CC 1056TG	10'6"	2	15 - 40	4 - 12	Graphite	\$270.00



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Rods



Cousins SE Series CJB 65L

www.cousinstacklestore.com

We tested this rod in the halibut fishery in southcentral Alaska and it was a winner. We fished both bait and jigs with the rod, paired with a Penn Squall 16VS. The fast action of the rod allowed anglers to effectively work big jigs and we thought the rod was the right length to impart action and provide leverage with large jigs. The graphite/glass composite rod is paired with quality ALPS guides, a machined-aluminum reel seat, comfortable hypalon sponge rubber grip and it is handsomely finished. There are many rods in this family to fit a wide range of anglers' needs.

Orvis Recon 9-foot 6-weight Fly Rod

www.orvis.com

This rod is equally at home slinging big streamers to oversized Kenai trout or dropping size 14 Adams onto a Mat-Su Valley lake. We also used it to subdue prowling rainbows that slammed our suspended chironomid pattern as well as pink salmon fresh from the salt. The rod is fast but with enough mid-flex to create some forgiveness during aggressive strikes and gravity-defying leaps. The shadow green blank nicely compliments the black nickel reel seat and dark burlwood inset.



Penn Carnage II Jigging Rod

www.pennfishing.com

We tested the CARJGII3080C66 and were impressed. It's light but very powerful, which makes it easier to fish heavy jigs to halibut and lingcod and not tire as quickly. These jigging rods are designed to be fished with braid, which is the line of choice when fishing several hundred feet below the surface. Rods feature Fuji K guides with Alconite inserts, Fuji reel seat, and SLS3 blank construction. This rod is 6 feet, 6 inches in length and rated for 30- to 80-pound-test line; there are several options in this family of rods.

Rods



TFO BVK Spey Rod TF 07 130 4 B

www.tforods.com

If you're familiar with the TFO Deer Creek series of two-handed rods, you're already aware of the remarkable quality and bang for the buck you get with the lineup. The BVK Spey rods are similar, but a little bit faster and a little bit stiffer. The idea was to produce rods that would handle long-line methods and touch-and-go casting better than the slower Deer Creek series. That said, our tester used the 13-foot, 7-weight to target large rainbows on the Naknek with a Skagit line, T-11 and T-14 tips, and big bunny leeches and Intruders. It performed admirably with both an OPST Commando 425-grain head and an Airflo Skagit Switch 510-grain head. Fish up to 31 1/2 inches were landed with this rod. Fit and finish is superb; better than one might expect from a Spey rod in the midrange of prices.

Reels

Penn Slammer III 5500

www.pennfishing.com

Our testers reported that this reel is tough and sturdy, made to handle the stress of fighting 20-plus-pound salmon. The reel casts smoothly and the drag is fluid and strong, featuring a sealed system with Penn's Slammer drag and Dura Drag material. Line lays smoothly on the reel during pickup and the reel is well-balanced. The 5500 has a capacity of 380 yards of 20-pound braid, a whopping 40 pounds of max drag and a gear ratio of 5.6:1. There are ten models in the series.



Islander TR3 Trolling Reel

www.islander.com

It's hard to beat the excitement of fighting large fish on a single-action reel. The fun factor is off the charts! Islander's TR3 was designed for Canadian-style mooching rods used in trolling applications. Since this reel is made for trolling, there is no free-spool on this reel. The reel spool and frame are machined out of 6061-T6 aluminum and the spindle is 316



stainless steel. The drag material is an ultra-high performance fluoropolymer material with a very low coefficient of friction, extreme durability and consistent performance in a variety of conditions. These drag washers are stacked between layers of stainless steel. The entire drag system is fully sealed, preventing corrosion or debris from damaging it, and it is virtually maintenance-free. Bearings are ceramic, so they don't corrode either. The large drag knob is easily adjustable over a wide range. The 4.6-inch spool provides really fast line pickup to catch up to

fast-running fish. The TR3 will hold 350 yards of 30-pound-test monofilament. As with all Islander reels, the machined, anodized construction and corrosion-resistant components result in a beautiful, tough reel that will last a lifetime, and then some.

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Reels

Okuma Helios SX Spinning Reels

www.okumafishingusa.com

We tested the HSX-30 in 2017 with use in the fresh water while tossing hardware to ornery coho and on the salt side to retrieve iron vertically jigged to black rockfish. It's light, but strong, due to carbon fiber construction and incorporates a silky smooth drag that slows hard-charging fish. Its got adequate line pick up for mid-sized Alaskan fish at about 27 inches per handle turn. There are a range of advanced technologies at play in this reel to make it light, strong, durable and corrosion resistant.



Abu Garcia Ambassador CS Pro Rocket CS7000

www.abugarcia.com

This workhorse reel features a stout carbon-fiber drag, big handle, large capacity and dependable level-wind. We are impressed with how smoothly one can cast big baits with this reel, as well as the stopping power exhibited when battling large bottomfish. This is one of those reels that will allow you to fish a variety of techniques from trolling for Chinook to mooching for coho, boon-dogging for kings to fishing bait and jigs to saltwater bottomfish.



Quantum Boca 60

www.quantumfishing.com

With a sturdy aluminum body, foolproof titanium/magnetic bail system and SaltGuard corrosion protection, the Boca is built to withstand the salt assault, and our field-tester put the reel through its paces in waters ranging from Prince William Sound to the various nooks and crannies of Southeast.



Abu Garcia Revo Rocket Spinning Reel

www.abugarcia.com

We tested the 35 size and liked it. The drag is smooth and adequate for most salmon; the reel piles line back on very quickly and it casts effortlessly. It's lightweight, which allowed us to balance it on a lighter rod. The spool is braid-ready, allowing us to tie 20-pound Ande braid directly on it.

Penn Squall 16VS

www.pennfishing.com

This is one serious reel for fighting the biggest fish in the ocean. Think 400-pound salmon shark or 200-pound halibut. Made from graphite, the reel is lightweight for its size and power. Capable of stopping all but the largest gamefish from spooling your reel, this model features 26 pounds of max drag with a braid capacity of over 1,000 yards of 50-pound-test. It boasts two speeds, as well as a lever drag. There are two bigger sizes in this reel family as well.



Redington ID 5/6 Fly Reel

www.redington.com

We used this reel to tame 18- to 24-inch trout and 3- to 5-pound pink salmon and it held up well. The large-arbor design allows the angler to pick line back up quickly; the disc drag is smooth, and the reel is light, which allows it to balance nicely on today's light rods. One of the features that Redington boasts is the flat back surface of the reel that allows anglers to add their own decals to customize the look of the reel. It's available in three sizes.



Fin-Nor Offshore Spinning Reels

www.finnorffishing.com

Fin-Nor's Offshore Spinning series offers powerful 4.4:1 gears made of solid stainless steel for subduing big, strong fish in deep water and heavy-duty, bulletproof construction capable of handling seasons of work in Alaska saltwater. Our testers have enjoyed using Fin-Nor reels for years now, and the Offshore only adds to their reputation.



Pflueger Patriarch Spinning Reel

www.pfluegerfishing.com

This reel is light as a feather but strong enough to battle trout and salmon. Combining a magnesium body, rotor and side-plate with a titanium main shaft and carbon handle creates this light, strong unit. We tested the 35 size reel, and it provides a respectable 14 pounds of drag, 150-yard braid capacity and retrieves 28.8 inches of line per turn. Pair this with a light rod of your choosing and you are set to cast all day long.



Pflueger PRES56X

www.pfluegerfishing.com

Our tester found this to be a good fly reel for lake or river fishing for species such as rainbows and Dollys. The drag system shows a real improvement compared to ones used in the past. This reel held up well to fall rainbow fishing.

Redington Behemoth 7/8 Fly Reel

www.redington.com

Looking for an affordable reel to handle large rainbows, steelhead, and coho? The Behemoth 7/8 is a fantastic choice, holding 200 yards of 20-pound-test Dacron backing in addition to a weight-forward, 7-weight line. It has perhaps the most capable carbon-fiber drag in its class. Drag performance was smooth and predictable. Other key features include a large-arbor design



for fast line pickup, an oversized drag knob for easy adjustment, and it's easily convertible from left- to right-hand retrieve. Our tester used this reel to target Naknek rainbows to 31 inches, and also used it at Jurassic Lake for rainbows up to 19 pounds. To say this reel is a bargain is a huge understatement.



Quantum Cabo PT 60 Spinning Reel

www.quantumfishing.com

This saltwater reel is a tank. Pair this with a 30- to 80-pound-class spinning rod and you are ready to battle just about anything that swims in the Alaska salt. We landed lingcod, halibut and multiple species of rockfish on this reel. It features many advanced technologies, including a ceramic carbon drag system for stopping power and drag consistency, Saltguard protection that slows the damage from saltwater, Hot Sauce lubrication to lower friction, and is made with SCR aluminum alloy that's corrosion resistant. It's got a titanium bail, a comfortable large handle and casts nicely. It can hold 320 yards of 50-pound braid and picks up line at 35 inches per turn; there are six sizes in the series.



Abu Garcia Revo SX Low-Profile Reels

www.abugarcia.com

The fourth generation of Revo SX reels delivers the most powerful, durable and high-performance reel yet—a statement confirmed by our testers this year after putting the reel to work this season in a variety of environments. An improved DuraClutch design along with an upgraded Infini brake system results in a smooth engagement and effortless casting performance.



Fin-Nor Lethal Spinning Reel

www.finnorffishing.com

The LT40 performed well in 2017 for us and was used to land many wild coho in both the river and sea. We also used it when vertically jigging for assorted rockfish. Made for saltwater anglers, the reel is constructed from aluminum and features a sealed carbon-fiber drag system, a braid-ready spool and oversized handle. Twenty-three pounds of max drag provide plenty of stopping power and with 31 inches-per-turn, the reel is efficient at picking up line.



Hardy Ultralite CADD Fly Reel

www.hardyfishing.com

Full barstock 6061 construction and a stunning industrial design combine with an all-new 360-degree color-coded drag system to produce an outstanding large-arbor fly reel, which our tester loved in the HRECADT040 model for

6/7/8-weight lines. Whether hauling in acrobatic coho or hard-pulling rainbows, this reel performed flawlessly.



Orvis Hydros SL IV

www.orvis.com

Our tester really enjoyed using this fly reel. It has a strong drag system that is fully sealed. It is easy to adjust and works well for a variety of salmon and trout fishing styles. It has a large arbor that holds a lot of line and retrieves quickly. This reel is an excellent choice for controlling hard-fighting Alaska fish.

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**BnR Twitching Jigs**

www.bnrtackle.com

Coho inhaled these jigs when we twitched them in 2017. We used both the ½- and ¾-ounce sizes and had great results on the darker colors such as black/purple and blue/black. The jig bodies are made from silicone and they create a big, lively-looking, pulsating profile in the water. Jigs are poured on 3/0 Owner 2x hooks.

**Mepps Magnum Aglia**

www.mepps.com

This lure helped us land some quality king salmon in 2017. The spinner sports a #7 blade, 3/0 treble hook and weighs 1½ ounces, making it well-suited for heavy flows and big salmon. We also cast and retrieved it in the Innoko River for trophy northern pike and it worked well. It's available in a range of blade colors.

Eagle Claw Lazer Sharp Colored Octopus Hooks

www.eagleclaw.com

These super-sharp needlepoint octopus hooks are great options for bait anglers, and we put the 1/0 white-and-red version to work when floating roe to hungry coho. We also used the size 4 and size 6 options to target stocked rainbow trout with the lads. We prefer to snell the hook when fishing for trout and tied an egg loop on the larger size for salmon. The thin wire penetrated very efficiently without much pressure and the hooks held up to thrashing coho without bending. A bunch of colors and sizes are available.

**P-Line 3.5 inch Sunrise Squids**

www.p-line.com

We trolled these colorful squids for silver salmon in 2017 with good success. We also threaded them upside-down on our lines when jigging for halibut, rockfish and lingcod and the extra attraction and pulsating tentacles enticed more strikes. Squids are available in six sizes and many colors.

Eppinger Cop-E-Cat Spoon

www.eppinger.net

The Cop-E-Cat spoon in blue and pink performed great for our tester in the Iliamna area last summer. The spoon comes in a wide variety of sizes and finishes. Eppinger uses a proprietary painting and finishing process that allows them to guarantee the paint for the life of the spoon which still looked brand new after plenty of use. The shape of the Cop-E-Cat is elongated making it sink quickly and imitate baitfish very effectively. It works well for deeper runs in rivers as well as under the ice.

**Acme Kastmaster Rattle Master**

www.acmetackle.com

This spoon was very effective on a range of salmon, trout and char in 2017 for *Fish Alaska* field testers. The model takes the erratic action of the Kastmaster and includes a rattle chamber to create extra noise. We tossed the two larger sizes, but the lure is available in a wide range of sizes and colors to accommodate most anglers' preferences.

**Thomas Lures Special Spinn**

www.thomaslures.com

Many nice trout, char and pink salmon came to hand in 2017 thanks to the ¼-ounce version of this lure. Like other Thomas Lures, the components and finishes are high-quality. Blades and beads are brass-mounted on a stainless-steel shaft. The lure's Indiana-type blade is jewelry-quality plated, in either nickel or gold, and when rotating, produces a highly-reflective, flashy finish that drives predatory fish to strike.

**Panther Martin Holographic Holy Hammered Spinners**

www.panthermartin.com

Panther Martin added holographic patterns to their Holy Hammered spinners and the coho and pink salmon responded favorably. The hammered brass blades change color and reflect light when retrieved. This lure is available in five colors and six sizes.

**Pro-Troll ProFlash Lighted Flashers**

www.protroll.com

Want to produce an even larger attraction radius than ordinary flashers can provide, especially in low-light conditions? The ProFlash Lighted Flashers do just that. They feature a water-activated, red, white and green blinking light that enhances flash and visibility. The sealed battery lasts for 80 hours or more and the light can easily be replaced when the battery dies. ProFlash flashers are available in the ProChip 11 series, the ProChip 8 series, and the ProFin 6 series. Our tester used the ProChip 11 Lighted version and it definitely out-produced standard ProChip 11 flashers in low-light conditions.

**Point Wilson Dart Herring**

www.dartjigs.com

This jig was effective in helping our anglers land salmon and bottomfish in the saltwater. It comes in six sizes and eight colors so fishermen can match the jig to the size of bait present. Our testers used the smaller sizes to land coho and the larger ones to land halibut in the 20- to 50-pound range.

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Tackle

Fish Alaska EDITORS' CHOICE AWARDS 2018

Blue Fox Candyback Vibrax Spinners
www.bluefox.com
 These iconic spinners are staples of the Alaska angling scene, and this year's newest addition are their Candyback models. The bell is accented with metallic flakes while the back of the blade is finished in a contrasting color. These lures really put off a flash in the water, in addition to the vibration emitted from the bell. Candyback models are available in six color options and in sizes 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Eppinger Red Eye Spoons
www.eppinger.net
 A distinctive wiggle action sets these spoons apart from others, and it puts predator fish in a striking, slashing mood. A premium finish also ensures these spoons will last you many seasons, a definite plus in Alaska's harsh angling environments.

Silver Horde Two Face Coho Killer
www.silverhorde.com
 As predicted, the coho inhaled these lures when we trolled them in the saltwater of southeast Alaska in 2017. This upgraded version of the Coho Killer has paint, eyes and scales on both sides of the lure, making it look more realistic on the underside. We caught salmon on all three UV versions we tested: black, purple and green. This is one of our favorite lures to troll for coho.

Hot Spot Anchovy Series 11-inch Flashers
www.hotspotlures.com
 We hauled in coho in the saltwater using the Green Moon Jelly Front with full Glow back Anchovy Series flasher in 2017. It was effective with spoons, hootchies and herring. Our tester is impressed with the durability of the finish as well as the quality swivels and snaps.

Fish-Field Lead Jigs
www.fishfield.com
 We caught rockfish, lingcod and halibut on several sizes and colors of this lead jig while field testing in 2017. There are a ton of fishy colors and patterns available; an angler can be sure to find a color that fits their situation. It is available in sizes from 2- to 8-ounces and is rigged with an assist hook.

BnR Worm Keeper Jigs
www.bnrtackle.com
 These jigs are effective at keeping your worm in place once you've rigged it due to a keeper that's located below the jig head. Jigs are available in two sizes and a range of colors. BnR also sells a selection of worms to accompany the jigs.



Silver Horde Two Face Coho Killer
www.silverhorde.com
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Sampo Steelheart Leader
www.samposwivels.com
 We tried the 309SP, which is 9 inches long and is rated at 30-pound-test. These leaders are stainless-steel wire with a nylon coating, with a Sampo ball-bearing swivel on one end and a stainless-steel lock snap at the other. It allowed us to throw both topwater and sub-surface lures and catch pike like the one shown.



Mepps Trophy Series
www.mepps.com
 These spinners were designed with Alaska in mind! Available in sizes #4 and #5, these brass spinners are available in most salmon and steelhead anglers' favorite colors. Painted blades and bodies boast epoxy finishes that are chip- and fade-resistant, good qualities when angry coho and Chinook salmon munch down with a vengeance. We like that these spinners are available with either a single- or treble-hook option.

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Luhr Jensen Kwikfish Dual Dot Finishes

www.luhrjensen.com

Luhr Jensen added some new Dual Dot finishes to the extensive lineup of Kwikfish and we caught salmon on the 14X Black/Chartreuse model while testing in 2017. We think these high-contrast finishes help salmon locate the lure when visibility is low. And of course, the irresistible action of the iconic Kwikfish drives salmon to strike. If we plan on back-trolling for salmon, we never leave home without a box of Kwikfish.



Umpqua Insta Set Indicators

www.umpqua.com

We used these effectively in stillwater when fishing a suspended chironomid. The indicator rides high in the water, and the red and yellow colors are easy to see. The fluorescent tags below the indicator give even more visual cues when a light strike occurs. We've yet to use them in moving water, but we imagine they will work well. They are light, easy to rig and come in a variety of sizes.



Macks Lure Cripplure

www.mackslure.com

We caught some dandy trout and a bunch of pink salmon on this lure in 2017. We strictly cast and retrieved the lure and will try it soon on the troll. It comes in original, glow and UV models. The action of the lure imitates a wounded baitfish and the ring chamber within the lure emits a fish-attracting low-frequency vibration.



Salamander Sinkers Single Loop Sinker

www.salamandersinkers.com

We really enjoyed drift-fishing with these sinkers in 2017. They slide over rocks and limbs in the water better than lead or slinky sinkers, and we experienced less snags because of it. They are available in 1/4-, 3/8- and 1/2-ounce sizes.



Rio InTouch Scandi 3D Spey Line, #7/8 H/I/S3

www.rioproducts.com

Scandi heads are most often thought of for near-surface, small fly presentations. However, don't let the word "Scandi" in this head's name fool you. This line takes Scandinavian-style fishing to fishing depths that were previously difficult to achieve. The #7/8 H/I/S3 indicates that the rear part of the head sinks very slowly, the middle section sinks a little faster, and the portion nearest the fly sinks like a type 3 sink-tip. This means the line sinks a little below surface currents, slowing your swing speed, and the type 3 portion will get you down two- to five feet depending on the current speed. Our tester commented that this line cuts through the wind very well, and he effectively utilized both touch-and-go as well as Skagit casts with this head.



Ande Braid

www.andemonofilament.com

We tried both 20- and 50-pound-test Ande Braid this year and could easily see that this generation of braid from Ande is better than past offerings. Tough, quiet, non-stretching and easy to cast, we were impressed when throwing spinners to coho and jigging metal to toothy denizens of the deep.

Izorline Brutally Strong Spectra

www.izorline.com

We tested 50-pound-test in natural color and hauled up a range of bottomfish in 2017. We like that it didn't bind when piled on the reel and that it is strong, doesn't stretch and is supple. We were able to feel bites at 300 feet and bury the hook. This line is available in 12- to 300-pound-test and in many spool sizes.



Dutch Fork Custom Lures Turtle Shell Blades, size 4 and 5

www.dutchforkcustomlures.com

Dutch Fork spinner blades are made of a high-impact polymer. As such, they are extremely tough, light and perhaps more versatile than metal spinner blades. They spin easily at speeds as low as .4 miles per hour. Our tester used them to build in-line spinners for use behind 360 flashers. He rigged them both on spinner wire and directly on monofilament leader material. The light blade material allowed use of bigger spinner blades—with 360 flashers a metal blade larger than size 3.5 is too heavy and doesn't produce the desired action.

With the Dutch Fork blades, our tester used sizes 4 and 5 blades behind Pro-Troll ProChip 11-inch flashers and caught many Chinook.



Undoubtedly, the lighter blade might be a better choice when fishing spinners on anchor, and also for back-trolling applications. These lighter blades produce different sound and vibration than metal blades, and that could result in more attention from the fish in heavily pressured fisheries. The finish on Dutch Fork blades does not chip or flake off, even after much use and many fish.



Dutch Fork Custom Lures Metal "No Loss" Quick Change Clevis

www.dutchforkcustomlures.com

There have been several spinner clevises designed over the years to allow you to change the blade of a spinner. The Dutch Fork "No Loss" clevis is easy to use, and our tester experienced zero blade loss while landing several kings using this clevis. The "No Loss" clevis comes in a metal version for rigging on spinner wire and a plastic version for rigging on monofilament. Single versions allow for the use of one blade, while the tandem clevis allows for the use of two blades.



Eppinger Dardevle Salmon Kit

www.eppinger.net

This kit is a great place to start if you are a conventional tackle angler looking to target chum, pink, coho and Chinook salmon in Alaska. The colors, models and sizes chosen offer the angler a wide range of presentations in a variety of water and light conditions. Anglers can customize the color selection as long as they stay with the same model of spoon in the kit. We used this kit to catch pinks and silvers in 2017 in several different rivers. They also worked to attract rainbow trout and Dolly Varden in the Iliamna area.



Luhr Jensen Hydro Vibe Extreme Spinner

www.luhrjensen.com

We downtrolled the 045 size spinner in 2017 and chromer Chinook slammed it with a vengeance. The blade has a pass-through hole for water, which allows the blade to spin at slower speeds and creates more vibration. We like the Nickel Chartreuse Green Dot model, but there are many colors available. There is also a longer, heavier 006 size lure if you are fishing heavier flows.

Candy Bar Lures

www.anglersdistributing.com

The Candy Bar lure is a truly effective weapon for catching halibut. Our tester reported that the 7-ounce chrome model with treble hook, used with bait or without, produced great fish on all of their trips. On one trip in particular they put five halibut in the boat with the lure, the largest being 118 pounds, the others in the 40- to 80-pound range. On another trip to the same area, the Candy Bar out-fished the other halibut lures being used and produced all the halibut caught that day.



Line

Izorline Platinum Leader 40-pound-test Leader

www.izorline.com

Izorline Platinum Leader is a very uniform, smooth, easy-to-tie and strong leader material. Our tester used 40-pound-test clear Platinum for tying mooching leaders, and also for Super Bait and spinner leaders tied to ProChip 11-inch flashers. This co-polymer leader is

durable and abrasion-resistant; no break-offs occurred during this summer's fishing.



New Candybacks Are Oh So Sweet.

Put bold, beautiful color to work for you with Candyback Vibrax® finishes. While the blade exteriors flash the power of their genuine silver finish, the blade interiors feature a full coat of translucent candy finish to create a presentation that salmon and steelhead cannot refuse.

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Line

Seaguar ABRAZX 100% Fluorocarbon Musky & Pike Leader 80-Pound-Test
www.seaguar.com
Stealthy. Strong. Superb abrasion-resistance for toothy critters such as pike. Seaguar ABRAZX 100% Fluorocarbon Musky & Pike Leader comes in 25-yard coils and is a great alternative to steel leaders. Thick fluorocarbon is easier on fish that you plan to release. It is available in tests from 80- to 130 pounds, and although not marketed for saltwater species, the 130-pound-test version can be used for lingcod and halibut rigs. We used the 80-pound on northern pike on the Innoko River and it worked very well.

Fish Alaska Magazine EDITORS' CHOICE AWARDS 2018

Rio InTouch Switch Chucker #6 (420 grains)
www.rioproducts.com
The Switch Chucker is an interesting line design that is capable of several different fishing styles. This integrated line is aimed at switch rods, and versatility is the name of the game with the Switch Chucker. With it, one can easily fish indicators and beads in the morning, then switch to a poly leader or light T-tip for Skagit-casting sculpins later in the day. It is a short, powerful taper with an integrated running line, so an angler can also strip flies back to the rod tip when targeting silvers in the soft water in which they sometimes hold. It's an easy-casting line, and performs very well in the wind.

Seaguar MAX 100% Fluorocarbon Tippet Material
www.seaguar.com
There are lots of good tippet materials on the market today. Seaguar MAX fluorocarbon is a great one. Our tester used 3x and 4x versions in Alaska stillwaters this summer and landed hundreds of fish, with many in the 18- to 24-inch range. He also landed one he estimates at over 30 inches—a fish which tore through a couple different weed beds and seemed sure to break off. The 3x MAX held despite the abrasive nature of the weeds and the unusually large rainbow. MAX ties knots easily and is suppler than many other fluorocarbon tippet materials. It is available in 30-yard spools, in sizes from 1x to 7x.

Olympic Peninsula Skagit Tactics Commando Tips
www.opskagit.com
Not that long ago, level sections of T-material were the only sink-tip material available. OPST refined what was available by making theirs in three different weights (96-, 132- or 168 grains) but with several sink rates in each weight. For instance, in their 132-grain range (which is equivalent in weight to T-11) there is a dual-density S2/3 tip that sinks at roughly 3 inches-per-second; a S5/6 tip that sinks at about six inches-per-second, and a S8/9 that sinks at roughly 9 inches-per-second. All three of these tips are the same length and weight, which enables the caster to use the same casting stroke regardless of which tip is on the end of their head. OPST designed these tips to be used with their Commando Heads; however, they work well on any Skagit head. Note that they are 12 feet long; this helps eliminate blown anchors for anglers using very short heads.

Izorline Fluorocarbon Leader
www.izorline.com
We tested 10- and 20-pound-test leader material in 2017 and were impressed. It's tough, holds knots well, sinks and helped us catch fish. We used it in both still- and moving water, fishing chironomid patterns and streamers on fly rods. It comes in a wide range of tests and in three different-sized spools.

Field Accessories

Penn Parallel Pliers
www.pennfishing.com
Penn Parallel Pliers provide toughness in an ergonomic and corrosion-resistant package, and after taking them out once, our tester never headed for the water without them again. A stainless-steel body and jaws coated in black nickel titanium create the foundation for a design that keeps the jaws parallel along the entire length throughout their range of movement, creating greater and more even pressure throughout the jaws. In other words: these pliers hold.

Nikon 7x50 OceanPro CF WP Global Compass Binoculars
www.nikonsportoptics.com
These Nikon OceanPro binoculars were extremely impressive in their lightweight durability, crystal-clear optics and ease of use. These binoculars are ideal for kayakers, featuring waterproof construction and a floatable neck strap, and the optics are truly outstanding! The view was bright and clear, and the binoculars were so easy to focus, it's easy to name them among the best we've tried this year.

Frontiersman Bear Spray with Practice Canister
www.sabrered.com
We appreciate how this product allows us to practice using inert spray with the same canister, deployment style and firing mechanism as pepper spray, so that users understand how to deploy the spray when needed. It behooves every outdoorsman that carries bear spray to understand and practice how to use it so that you are ready to defend yourself if the need ever arises.

Garmin inReach Explorer+
www.explore.garmin.com
This was a very useful tool for us in the field in 2017. We used it to send text messages from several places throughout Alaska and the texts were always received. We were also able to receive texts, even in spots where others had spotty sat-phone reception. The unit sends a location to the person you text so they can get an idea of where you are located. In an emergency situation offshore, you can trigger an interactive SOS to GEOS, which is a 24/7 global monitoring center, and maintain communication to know that help is on the way.

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Seaguar Pro-Staffers Chris Vertopoulos & Robert Campbell

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WWW.JEFFWOODWARDSPORTFISHING.COM

Field Accessories



Alaska Survival Bracelet

www.alaskaparcord.com

The Alaska Survival Bracelet has everything you need to start a fire and signal—and all of it contained in a bracelet! The Alaska Survival Bracelet is made with a durable, military-spec 550 paracord and embedded with a high-quality, military-grade fire-steel, ceramic knife/scraper, Mylar signal mirror, and a waxed jute tinder that is waterproof. Our staff keeps these on their wrists during our snowmachining, 4-wheeling, flying, camping and fishing expeditions.



Pro-Cure Crab and Shrimp Attractant Oil

www.pro-cure.com

On an August trip to Prince of Wales Island, testers brought this blend of fish oils, salmon egg oils, amino acids and anise to help attract Dungeness crab. Without using the oil, testers found crab catches to be low. Once adding this to the bait, limits of big crabs were taken.



Spyderco SpydieChef

www.spyderco.com

This knife combines the balance of a chef knife with the all-purpose design of a folding knife. We think it's great. From gutting, bleeding and gilling salmon to chopping up vegetables at camp for an omelet, this knife delivered. It's made from a

nitrogen-based alloy that is extremely corrosion-resistant, which lands this knife in the Spyderco Salt Series of ultra-corrosion-resistant knives, and it is the same metal that NASA uses for ball bearings in aerospace applications. To add to this space-age carry, and reduce weight, the handle is made from two solid titanium scales. It's got a secure locking mechanism and wire clip, as well as a lanyard hole.



Wilderness Pack Specialties Salmon Bag

www.wildernesspacks.com

Our tester rarely uses coolers any more to store fish while salmon fishing. Instead, he uses kill bags like the WPS Salmon Bag. This is a true heavy-duty bag designed to keep your fish fresh and cold



in a compact area. The WPS Salmon Bag system is made from 14-ounce PVC nylon trapping and lined with 1/2-inch of closed-cell foam for year-round use. Each bag comes equipped with drain plugs, carry handles and sewn-in web loops to help keep it securely attached inside your boat. Use with bagged ice or better yet, Arctic Ice Tundra Series ice packs, and your catch will stay in prime condition all day. This kill bag is particularly well-made and tough. It's flat on the bottom, so it tends to stay where you put it. Clean-up is simple with some Lemon Joy, a soft scrub brush and water. This may be the most well-made kill bag on the market. WPS kill bags are available in several sizes, and custom sizes to fit in your boat's fish box can be ordered.



Arctic Ice Tundra Series

www.arctic-ice.com

Arctic Ice Tundra Series has a very unique freezing point of 5°F and is designed to help maintain a consistent freezer temperature in coolers. While not as cold as dry ice, Tundra Series can be used as a suitable replacement—it has been shown to maintain frozen temperatures for days in controlled testing. Due to its low freezing point, Tundra Series can take from 18- to 36 hours to freeze, depending on the temperature of the freezer and number of panels being frozen. To ensure Tundra Series panels are frozen, the freezer should be turned to its lowest setting or at least 0°F. Our tester used these most often in conjunction with ice to keep his herring baits as cold as possible. He said that with an XL Tundra on the bottom of a Fish Fighter Products 20-quart Sportsman cooler, and crushed ice and bait above, the ice and bait would stay in a near frozen state for at least three days. He also used Tundra ice packs in his kill bags with ice to help the ice last much longer, and thus ensure his fish stayed in perfect condition. In a small cooler, it is very possible the Tundra series could make your beer slushy. They are that cold!



Scotty Sea Light with Suction Cup Mount

www.scotty.com

This is a useful tool that's portable so it can be used in a variety of settings. It combines a suction cup with an ACR C-Light, which is a 20-lumen waterproof LED. Use it while boating at dawn and dusk, when camping, as a portable light for odd jobs or work in low-light situations. You get 30 hours of light on two AA batteries.



Umpqua UPG LT High Buggy Box

www.umpqua.com

This box is low-profile but has plenty of head room for big streamers. It's got a magnetic closure, which we like, and it is sturdy. We also like that the lid is see-through, which makes it more convenient to identify the contents.

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Field Accessories

RokLees Fish Release by EcoLeeser

www.ecoleeser.com
One of the ugly truths of sport-fishing for bottomfish is that we sometimes catch species we can't keep, but that are suffering the effects of barotrauma (stomach protruding from the mouth, bulging eyeballs). These fish become eagle food if released. Not anymore. EcoLeeser's RokLees Fish Release allows you to lower the fish back into the depths, essentially recompressing it. It's simple to use, and effective. Our tester used a short rod and reel to which he attached the RokLees. When a rockfish needed to be released, he simply attached the fish to the device and lowered it back down to near the bottom to release the fish. Charter boats are required to have a release device, sometimes called a

descender, on board. Responsible private boat anglers, though not required, should have one too.

BugBand Insect Repellent

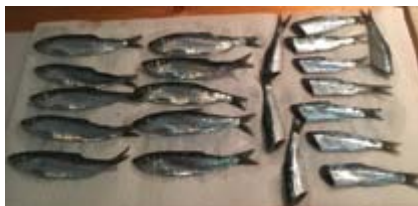
www.bugband.net
According to our tester: "The most amazing bug spray ever!" This repellent works on so many kinds of bugs and it smells great. Our tester couldn't believe it is a clean and non-toxic product to put on your skin, too.



Rainy's Boobie Round Eyes

www.rainysflies.com

The Booby fly pattern has become a permanent pattern in our tester's fly box. They are hard to find in fly shops, though. For those of you who tie your own, you know how hard it is to trim cylindrical foam to a nice, round shape for your Boobies. Rainy's Boobie Round Eyes makes that frustration a thing of the past. Your Boobies will be perfect if you use them. They are available in several sizes and colors. Our tester ties his Boobies on Mustad C49S size 8 hooks. He uses the medium-size Boobie Round Eyes. Note that Rainy's also makes Boobie Barbell Eyes. They work just as well, and as an added bonus you can glue eyes on the ends of the Barbell Eyes.



Scotty Bait Board & Accessory Tray

www.scotty.com

This is a game-changing product for many fishing bait in the Great Land. Use it to keep pliers, knives and hook sharpener within easy reach and cut bait like plug-cut herring at an easy-to-use and easy-to-clean station. It also makes for a good location to prep lures—such as sardine-wrapped Kwikfish—where you can cut the sardine, wrap the fillet on the underside of the plug and then hang the lure off the tray. The board mounts to any Scotty post mount.



Pro-Cure Brine 'N Bite Complete

www.pro-cure.com

We brined a couple trays of herring in preparation for trolling and mooching for coho and were impressed with the results. Baits were firm and fished longer than unbrined baits, and there was no doubt that we got more strikes on these baits over the ones that were simply salted. Brine 'N Bite Complete comes in a range of options—Natural Shine, Chartreuse Glow, Brilliant Blue and Magenta Red. Each contains UV and Pro Cure's blend of amino acids proven to provoke fish to strike.



RAM Mounts RAP-B-399U UNPKD RAM Float Tube Adapter with 1-inch base

www.rammount.com

For anglers using their smartphones as displays for wireless fish-finders from pontoon boats or float tubes, the RAM Mounts Float Tube Adapter with 1-inch base, combined with their X-Grip Universal Holder with 1-inch ball and their RAM Double Socket Arm for 1-inch ball, makes a bombproof way to secure your phone. This system is quite adjustable and the view angle can be adjusted perfectly. Our tester used this system on a float tube in conjunction with a Deeper Pro fish-finder. This is the very best solution our tester has found to securely hold a smartphone on a float tube or pontoon boat. What's more, the RAM 3.3-inch diameter suction cup with 1-inch ball is a great way to secure your smartphone in a vehicle. Simply take the X-Grip and Double Socket arm off of your tube and attach it to the RAM suction cup in your vehicle.

Associated parts:
RAM Mounts RAM-B-224-1U RAM 3.3-inch diameter suction cup with 1-inch ball

RAM Mounts RAM-HOL-UN7BU UNPKD X-Grip Universal Holder with 1-inch ball

RAM Mounts RAP-B-201U UNPKD RAM Double Socket Arm for 1-inch ball

Texas Tackle SS Pliers

www.texastackle.com

Ever had a pair of split-ring pliers that don't work very well? Texas Tackle split-ring pliers work great and are made to last many, many years. There are two sizes, small and large, to handle most any split-ring that anglers use. They are made of stainless steel and have thick, comfortable rubber grips. Our tester commented that they are the best split-ring pliers he's ever used. Got a pile of Kwikfish you need to convert to single hook? Get these.



Thermacell Backpacker Repeller

www.thermacell.com

Utilizing the same camping gas canisters that backpackers and campers have in their bag already, our testers report that the compact and lightweight Backpacker Repeller is an essential piece of gear, helping to keep the bugs at bay while out enjoying Alaska's wilderness.



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Field Accessories



Kicker Bullfrog BF400 Speaker

www.kicker.com

The BF400 Bluetooth speaker is packed with power, a built-in FM tuner, AUX jack and charging USB connection, while also featuring a Bluetooth range of up to 100 feet. Having one of these along can turn a day on the boat or evening at the campfire into a party that's fun for everyone. It's very durable and has great sound.

Black Diamond Alpine Carbon Cork Trekking Pole

www.blackdiamondequipment.com

These trekking poles are light, sturdy and provide much-needed stability when hiking up and down steep terrain and when traversing uneven trails. The poles' construction features three carbon-fiber sections that contributed to the overall feel we enjoyed. We liked the ease of adjustment using the lever locks, the confidence-inspiring support provided on uneven ground, and the comfort and ergonomics of the cork handles, which keep your hands sweat-free.

Weego Jump Starter 22

www.myweego.com

An outstanding piece of equipment to carry along on all our backcountry outings, the Weego 22 is incredibly compact but loaded with power—able to jump-start boats, RVs, ATVs, snowmachines and 95% of cars and trucks on the road today. Our testers report foolproof operation and extreme reliability—which is exactly what you want in a backup power source.



Chef'sChoice Diamond Hone Marine Sharpening Station Model 710

www.chefschoice.com

Engineered for fishing and marine enthusiasts, like those who fish in Alaska every year, this revolutionary sharpener is versatile and easy to use, and it includes three professional sharpeners in one compact unit: a knife sharpener for all your fillet and bait knives, a

scissor sharpener for line-cutters and a hook sharpener. Our testers keep it on board their beautiful, custom Raider boat in Valdez making sharpening easy and accessible.



Sea-Band Acupressure Wrist Bands

www.sea-band.com

Don't let your Alaska saltwater adventure be spoiled by the onset of nausea; alleviate motion sickness by using a Sea-Band, a knitted, elasticated wrist band that operates by applying pressure on acupressure points on each wrist by means of a plastic stud. Because the bands do not use drugs, they do not cause any of the side effects associated with anti-nausea medication and can be worn on each wrist whenever you feel nauseous. They are suitable for adults and children.



Victorinox SwissTool Spirit XC

www.victorinox.com

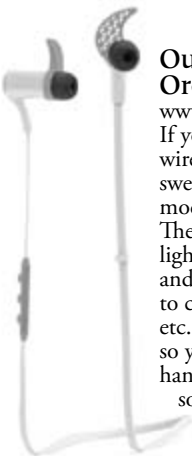
This is a quality-made multi-tool. It is lightweight, versatile and made of stainless steel. The tools are well-designed and easily accessed. It comes with a nice belt sheath. Our tester especially appreciated the locking mechanism that provides safety while in use.



Outdoor Tech Orcas 2.0

www.outdoortechology.com

If you're in the market for wireless earbuds, this upgraded sweat-proof and water-resistant model might be right for you. These earbuds are surprisingly lightweight and comfortable, and they feature inline buttons to control your phone, tablet, etc., and a built-in microphone so you can take your calls hands-free. We enjoyed the sound quality and the rechargeable batteries' 5-hour play time.



Power Practical Sparkr Flashlight & Lighter

www.powerpractical.com

Utility is important in the field, and this flashlight/lighter combo is one item our tester found he was able to utilize on many occasions. On one end is a 400 lumen LED projector beam flashlight with 3 brightness settings, and on the other is an electric plasma lighter that creates a windproof electric arc for all of your fire-starting needs. Also, remove the safety cap from the lighter and it doubles as a diffuser to turn your flashlight into a lantern for even more utility. Each Sparkr is rechargeable with the included USB cable and comes with a nifty utility tie for hanging it around camp or wherever needed.



Victorinox Knife Sharpener

www.victorinox.com

When sharpening your non-serrated knives needs to be quick and easy, this knife sharpener by Victorinox can't be beat. Its ergonomic design is easy to handle and its operation feels both safe and confidence-inspiring. The mechanism is made up of V-shaped carbide metal blades set at an optimal angle that takes the guesswork out of sharpening your knives, and in our experience, provides great results each time we've used it.



Coola Sunscreen

www.coolasuncare.com

Our tester reported that this sunscreen smells amazing and unlike other brands, it's not too greasy. She preferred the spray for ease of application and appreciated the long-lasting coverage. The Coola line is made from the most pure, eco-conscious products possible, developing their sunscreen with as many ingredients as possible that are natural, organic, sustainable and locally sourced.



Coola Liplux SPF 30 Original Formula

www.coolasuncare.com

This all-in-one lip treatment moisturizes and protects with Farm-to-Face sourced, antioxidant-infused, broad-spectrum SPF 30 protection. The vitamin- and antioxidant-enriched formula soothes and nourishes your lips, which is important when spending long days afield in the Alaska summer sun.



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Watercraft and Accessories



Fish Fighter Products Kwik-Pull Anchor Retriever

www.fishfighterproducts.com

New on the Northwest fishing scene, Fish Fighter products is making a big splash and is fast developing a reputation for building better mousetraps. The Kwik-Pull Anchor Retriever is a prime example. It's essentially a removable anchor puller. You can attach it to or remove it from your anchor line quickly and easily. The device is made of marine-grade aluminum and is anodized for use in fresh- or saltwater. It is a compact, tough unit that screams quality, simplicity and durability. You can use anchor line from 1/4-inch up to 1/2-inch with the



Promar Aluminum Fish Billy Club

www.promarnets.com

This fish bonker is light, portable and effective. Plus every time you bonk a salmon, it sounds like you hit a home run. We subscribe to the whack, bleed and ice theory when it comes to the fish we intend to harvest and this tool was a good addition to the processing kit.

ProMar ProFloat Nets

www.promarnets.com

We love that these nets are light, have big hoops, are easy on fish and they float. This is now the go-to net for some of our float-tube enthusiasts.



Fish Fighter Products Floating Anchor Rope Bag

www.fishfighterproducts.com

There are many anchor line bags on the market these days. The Fish Fighter bag's claim to fame is that it floats due to the closed-cell foam insert in the bottom of the bag, so no buoy is needed; it has a unique tie-off cleat that is faster and easier to use than any our tester has tried to date, and it tends to stay upright and open, making it easier to stuff your anchor line into it. It will hold up to 330 feet of 1/2-inch diameter rope, or 500 feet of 3/8-inch rope. An external D-ring allows you to attach an extra buoy if desired.



Onyx Impulse A-24 In-Sight Automatic Inflatable Life Jacket

www.onyxoutdoor.com

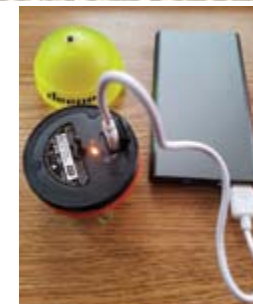
The Impulse A-24 is a functional, comfortable USCG type III automatic inflatable life jacket. It uses a CO₂ cartridge to automatically inflate when immersed in water. It can also be inflated manually by blowing into the inflation tube, which is housed in the left side panel. It is adjustable to chest sizes as big as 65 inches. It fits well, and like a seatbelt, once you develop the good habit of wearing it you forget it's even on. We think that every person who is on the water in Alaska should wear a PFD; this one is a good choice.



Deeper Smart Sonar Pro+

www.deeperpersonar.com

The Deeper Pro+ is no toy. It's a serious, wireless sonar that shows depth, structure, fish and temperature as well as traditional sonars costing much more than the Deeper Pro+. It's a Wi-Fi fish-finder that is slightly larger than a golf ball but much smaller than a baseball, and it can be used in a variety of fishing situations. It can be cast from the bank, mounted to virtually any kind of floating craft with Deeper accessories and can be used for ice fishing. It is capable of GPS mapping contours, as well as adjustments for color and the ability to view fish symbols or raw data. Run time for the Deeper Pro+ is about six hours. It uses a smartphone app and your smartphone as the display, so you need to have a secure mounting system for your phone. Our tester recommends the RAM Mounts X-Grip Universal Holder for securing your smartphone. The limiting factor with the Deeper Pro+ is the battery life of your smartphone. Our tester typically runs out of battery power in his Samsung Galaxy 7 in 4- to 4½ hours of continuous use. It is wise to connect your phone to a portable power pack for fishing longer days. It is also helpful to take it out of the water when not in use as this will turn it off, saving battery power.



ACR ResQLink+

www.acrartex.com

This device is a 406 MHz personal-locator beacon. It's lightweight, buoyant and easy to use. Register the beacon with NOAA before heading into the field.



Danielson Crab Trap Float Kit with Lead Core Rope

www.danielsonoutdoors.com

This kit contains 50 feet of 5/16-inch lead core rope, a red and white ABS float and premium crab trap harness—basically everything you need to deploy your crab traps except the trap itself. Our tester commented that this kit was easy to rig and worked well—a great buy for the price.



Fish Fighter Products Relentless Series Sinker Tray 4- x 16 inches

www.fishfighterproducts.com

Relentless Series Sinker Trays are made of marine-grade 1/2-inch-thick plastic with stainless-steel bottoms and stainless-steel dividers. They come with 16 dividers with built-in sinker gauges from 1/2-ounce all the way up to 24 ounces. The tray can use up to five of the dividers and you can use whichever dividers you choose to use. These make it easy to keep your cannonballs sorted, and the gauges in the dividers help determine what size weight you're looking at—even if the numbers have been worn off of the weight. Our tester uses two of them—one for weights up to eight ounces, and one for weights from 10- to 20 ounces. These things are tough and functional. The Relentless Series Sinker Trays also come in a 6- x 16-inch size.



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Clackacraft 18-foot ClackaMax

www.clackacraft.com

We love this boat. It's large, stable, is versatile, has removable modular seating and is sweet to row. It will seat six people and there's room for three or four anglers (including the rower) to side-drift, back-troll, back-bounce, boon-dog, bobber-dog, etc. The boat measures 18 feet, 3 inches, at the center line with an 85-inch beam and 60-inch bottom, which produces a stable platform. The recent redesign of this model included making it wider and raising the transom, both of which increase performance in rough water. There's ample rod storage and significant storage under the seats. We chose to add a 9.8 hp 4-stroke outboard to the boat and use it both on rivers and lakes. We've been rowing Clacks for about 14 years with four boats and this is our favorite model so far.



Force Fin Float Tube Fins

www.forcefin.com

There are many fin choices for anglers fishing from a kick boat or float tube. Stillwater guru George Krumm says if he had to pick his favorite, it would be Force Fin Float Tube Fins. Force Fins aren't cheap; for the casual float tuber they may not be the best choice. But for the hardcore stillwater float tuber, Force Fins offer the highest quality, the best material (polyurethane is tough, abrasion-, chemical- and UV-resistant), and the best features available in a float tube fin. The adjustability of Force Fin Float Tube fins allows you to wear your wading boots or not. Since the blades are slightly upturned, it's possible to walk on land with them (with care).



Super Fat Cat LCS Float Tube

www.outcastboats.com

This tube is very comfortable and offers excellent storage capacity for stillwater anglers. The 13-inch tubes get an angler sitting high-up in the water, which makes it easier to cast a fly rod. The mesh table provides a good spot to rig rods, measure fish and pile line when stripping back Buggers.



Sea Eagle FishSUP 126

www.seaeagle.com

We found this stand-up paddleboard to be stable and versatile. It can be paddled while sitting or standing and has a motor-mount that accepts up to a 55-pound-thrust electric trolling motor. It's quick and easy to set-up, has three removable rear skegs and many D-rings and shock cords to secure gear. It weighs 48 pounds including the motor mount, with a max load capacity of 350 pounds, and measures 12 feet, 6 inches, by 3 feet, 4 inches. When deflated, it rolls up into a compact 45- x 15- x 10 inches, so it can fit in the trunk of many vehicles. We paddled it with the stand-up paddle, as well as with the sit-down kayak paddle and found that the boat tracks well and is stable in small chop.



Mercury ELHPT 9.9 Pro Kicker

www.mercurymarine.com

This four-stroke kicker motor is designed for trolling and back-trolling applications. It has both electric and manual start, power tilt and trim, and a large, high-thrust, four-bladed prop. The lower unit has been beefed up with a low gear ratio, an oversized anti-cavitation plate and heavy-duty skeg. The power tilt can raise or lower the motor in five seconds, and the kicker-centering straps pull the motor straight when fully raised. Our tester used the exclusive Mercury multifunction tiller that has controls for not only throttle, steering, tilting and stopping the motor, but also shifting by simply twisting the throttle. This throttle/shifter allows for the absolute most control for hover-fishing applications, where shifting in and out of gear to adjust the drift is an all-day, never-ending operation. The Pro Kicker is a reliable, easy-to-use and feature-rich kicker motor.



Promar ProMesh Series Net

www.promarnets.com

We tested Model LM-652, which has a 22-inch x 24-inch frame and a 48-inch telescoping handle. It is sturdy, with a deep, rubber-mesh basket that is hook-resistant and friendly on fish. We'd recommend it for coho, sockeye and big trout.

TEMPRESS Products ProBax Limited Edition Boat Seat

www.tempress.com

TEMPRESS Products ProBax Limited edition is a fantastic seat for new boat builds or as a replacement seat for an existing boat. TEMPRESS teamed up with leading U.S. spinal surgeons and ergonomics experts to design a seat that has been proven to provide optimal long-term back- and upper-body support. The seat is made with UV- and abrasion-resistant materials to stand up to long-term exposure to the elements. It mounts to any 5/8-inch mounting system, swivel or pedestal. This seat has just the right amount of recline and is comfortable for even the longest day of back-trolling on the Kenai. The ProBax series is available in many colors to match a wide variety of boats. Our tester used the Limited Edition seats with TEMPRESS's new Deluxe Powder Coated Black Armrest Bracket with Black Pads. This is a very comfortable, durable combination.



TEMPRESS Products Deluxe Powder Coated Black Armrest Bracket

www.tempress.com

These are easy-to-install, functional armrests that are compatible with TEMPRESS ProBax, NaviStyle, All-Weather and Profile Guide Series seats. Our tester used them in conjunction with the TEMPRESS ProBax Limited Edition Boat seats. Since they're compatible with most TEMPRESS seats, you can easily add them to your existing boat. They're well-made and worth every penny!

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Watercraft and Accessories



Minn Kota Riptide Ultrerra with iPilot

www.minnkotamotors.com

Imagine back-trolling on the Kenai at *The Pastures* on an incoming tide without having to touch your kicker motor tiller handle. Or to troll along a contour at Deep Creek for miles without having to touch your tiller. The Minn Kota Riptide Ultrerra with iPilot is the most advanced, feature-rich saltwater trolling motor on the market. The newly-designed remote control uses AA batteries instead of the coin-style batteries in the older remotes. Our tester used the 80-pound-thrust version (24 volts) with a 60-inch shaft on an 18-foot Fish-Rite sled. Testing included forward trolling in saltwater and freshwater, using the Spot-Lock feature (think of it as a virtual anchor) to 'hover' over rockfish structure, and in river back-trolling situations. The Riptide Ultrerra features automatic stow and deploy by simply pressing a button on the remote control. The motor has a built-in GPS and two auto-pilot modes are available. The motor also has power trim. Our tester commented that for almost every trolling and back-trolling situation, the bow-mounted Riptide Ultrerra makes his life much easier. When the Riptide Ultrerra is used in auto-pilot with a standard kicker motor, precision trolling and back-trolling direction and speeds are easily attainable and are pretty much a hands-free experience.

IMMI Boat Buckle

www.immioutdoors.com

The Boat Buckle is a transom or bow tie-down system that eliminates the inconvenience of ratcheting straps. Our tester claims these are one of the best devices for speeding up your launch in the morning and tying down your boat after you put it on the trailer. Boat buckles are bolted to the trailer. Simply pull the vinyl-coated hook up to your transom eyes, lift the ratchet a couple times and you're tied down. To untie, simply press the release button on the Boat Buckle and lift the hook out of the transom eye, then let it retract down into the Boat Buckle. It's simple, clean and efficient.



Fish Fighter Products Sportsman 20 Cooler

www.fishfighterproducts.com

The Fish Fighter Products Sportsman 20 Cooler is a 20-quart, roto-molded cooler with a three-point stainless-steel handle, anti-skid feet to keep it from sliding around boat decks and a large, tethered drain plug. This cooler is IGBC-certified bear-resistant. As with most roto-molded coolers, this one keeps its contents very cold for long periods of time. Our tester used this cooler to keep herring and anchovies cold on a Columbia River salmon trip during which the mercury climbed into the mid-80s. He used a single, Extra Large Arctic Ice Tundra cooler pack, plus crushed ice, and the bait remained in pristine condition until he quit fishing in the late afternoon.

Danielson FTCAK Alaska Crab Trap

www.danielsonoutdoors.com

The Alaska FTC crab trap is a collapsible, affordable, light-in-weight crab trap that works great for red rock and Dungeness crabs. It is larger than Danielson's standard crab trap, measuring 24 inches by 24 inches by 13 inches high. It meets Alaska's crab-trap requirements. Our tester used it for Dungeness crabs and claims the light weight of this trap makes it much easier to pull than more expensive, commercial-style traps. He added that since this trap is light in weight, it is wise to add additional weight to it if fishing in areas with lots of current. He used two pieces of rebar zip-tied to the bottom of the trap and suggests weighting the doors by wrapping six inches of 3/16-inch pencil lead around the lower part of the doors to help keep the doors shut in current.



Lowrance Elite-5 Ti Med/High/Downscan Fishfinder

www.lowrance.com

The Lowrance Elite-5 Ti combines CHIRP sonar, DownScan Imaging and a built-in GPS, so locating fish and fish-holding structure is a breeze. The SolarMAX 5-inch touchscreen display is easy to view in sunlight and TrackBack allows you to scroll through your sonar, SideScan or DownScan history to review structure or fish targets and to mark the location with a waypoint. Our testers love the touchscreen feature.



Fish Fighter Products Downrigger Weight Variable (1- to 10 pounds)

www.fishfighterproducts.com

In keeping with the theme of building a better mouse trap, Fish Fighter Products Downrigger Weight Variable gives you choices. It is adjustable from 1- to 10 pounds. It has a shiny side-plate for flash that you can remove if you don't want to use it. You can attach your downrigger release to one of three locations on the rudder. Plus, it comes with two rudders: one is straight, which results in the downrigger weight traveling in line with the downrigger cable; the other is angled 10 degrees to cause your downrigger weight to track out to the side of the boat's path a little bit, which can be important for fish that tend to move away from the boat, such as kokanee. It contains no lead; it's made of steel. An adjustable downrigger weight—who'd a think it?

Polarized Sunglasses



Guideline Eyegear Wake Bifocal

www.fishermaneyewear.com

Wake Bifocals feature wide temples and large, polarized lenses to prevent light from sneaking in around the glasses. This enables you to see into water better. The lenses are polycarbonate and provide 100% protection from both UVA and UVB rays. Though they come in both brown and gray lenses, our tester used the brown ones, which are the better choice for fishing during lower light levels. The reading lenses are unnoticeable from the front and are positioned to easily aid in tying knots or reading. Our tester claimed these glasses performed as well as much more expensive brands. Wake frames are made for medium- to large faces, and our tester added that they fit large faces better than medium faces.

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Wading Gear



Hodgman Women's H-4 Stocking Foot Waders and Hodgman Women's Aesis Shell Jacket

www.hodgman.com
We loved these quality waders that were not big and bulky and are fitted for a woman. They have high-quality reinforced waterproof seams. The pockets and straps are well-designed and easy to use. These waders proved to be very comfortable in the elements, keeping our tester warm and dry. Our tester also loved the look and feel of this fitted-for-a-woman jacket. It sports adjustable sleeves to keep the water out, multiple pockets for ease-of-use and is comfortable to wear all day long. This is a high-quality breathable jacket for staying dry and comfortable on the water.

Orvis Encounter Women's Waders and Wading Boots

www.orvis.com
Being petite, our tester has always hated putting on waders. She reports that it's always been such a fight, with the extra fabric in the legs and feet. "I would end up in pain, in the ankles especially, having to hike all that fabric up out of the boots to get them to fit. The Orvis waders are amazing, and I can credit these waders and boots with the most enjoyable year of fishing I've had since moving to Alaska. I thought I was just doomed to always be uncomfortable, but these waders are strong, flexible and extra breathable, even when I wear my FischeWear tights underneath."

Caddis Game Changer Wader

www.caddiswaders.com

Testers really liked this new wader from Caddis Wading Systems. The built-in fly and tackle box is very handy, as well as the two pockets bookending the box. It allowed our testers to be mobile with enough gear to keep them in the game. The breathable waders are comfortable, light and waterproof, and feature reinforced knees and seat, built-in gravel guards, wading belt and rings on the suspender straps to attach additional gear.



Patagonia Men's Minimalist Wading Jacket

www.patagonia.com

Weighing-in at a mere 10.7 ounces, this wading jacket is functional, waterproof and provides enough storage to stay mobile. The hood and cuffs are adjustable to ensure water stays out, and a bungee drawcord at the waist helps cinch it down tight. We liked the two lower hand-warmer pockets, which come in handy a lot in the fall in Alaska when it rains and temps head towards the freezing mark. We also noted that the jacket works well to protect anglers from the wind, which is another important factor in Alaska.



Frogg Toggs Pilot II SF Guide Pant

www.froggtoggs.com

Our tester wanted wading pants because he tends to overheat in a full set of waders. These pants are

well-made with extra reinforcement in the high-wear areas. The pants are comfortable and reject water.



Hodgman Aesis H-Lock Wade Boot with BOA

www.hodgman.com

Our tester really liked the ease of adjusting these boots without needing to tie laces; they have a dial that twists for tightening. They are comfortable and very secure. The lock release system allows for quick and easy tightening and also allows for a quick-release when removing boots. Our tester really appreciated the removable sole system for quick changing of studded or regular soles.



Patagonia Women's Spring River Waders

www.patagonia.com

Designed specifically for the female angler, these highly versatile, lightweight waders feature Patagonia's H2No Performance Standard to be worn in a wide range of fishing scenarios, and in Alaska this past year, the waders performed. The fit of the Women's Spring River waders by Patagonia works well for several women anglers we know of different sizes and heights. We find this wader quality and design to be among the very top of women's waders.



Aquaz Wadertek Convertible Waders

www.aquazfishing.com

These waders convert from a full chest wader to a pair of wading pants with suspenders and offer a range of features handy to the wading angler. The lower body of the waders are made from four layers of heavy-duty Oxford nylon fabric and that translates to a tough and durable wader. Our tester likes the watertight front chest pocket, which was tested on several occasions when our aggressive wader went in too far. He also likes the detachable waterproof pocket.



Hodgman Aesis Men's Sonic WadeLite Jacket

www.hodgman.com

This jacket is light and waterproof, boasting Hodgman's Sonic seam technology that produces a double sonic weld at the seams to eliminate water penetration. The jacket is made from three-layer V-Tech WadeLite ripstop fabric, which is both waterproof and protects the wearer from wind. Features include two lower zip hand-pockets, a chest pocket and watertight cinch cuffs. Testers reported that the jacket kept them dry in heavy rains.



Redington Sonic Pro Wader

www.redington.com

These waders are comfortable to wear and performed admirably during several months of hard fishing in 2017. The booties are beefed up with 3.5 mm neoprene throughout and 4 mm neoprene on the bottom, which makes them more comfortable and keeps feet warm. We always like a hand-warmer pocket and this fleece-lined one is good. The Redington Sonic Pro wader also includes a flip-out pocket that has a zipper and a tippet pocket.



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caddiswaders.com

Apparel: Jacket and Pants



Grundéns Nightwatch 2.0 Insulated Puffy Jacket

www.shop.grundens.com
We like that this jacket is lightweight, warm and comfortable. The jacket sports a DWR coating on the inside and outside to increase water repellency. A cool feature is the internal pocket that doubles as self-storage for the jacket when you need to pack it on a trip.

Drift Creek Men's Drift Tech Hooded Jacket

www.driftcreekoutdoors.com
This soft-shell jacket is comfortable and offers good wind- and water protection. We used it as a top layer during milder weather and as a mid-layer when it got cooler and started raining in earnest. Includes zippered hand-warmer pockets and drawcords at the hood and waistband. There's also a small pocket on the sleeve that we used to store keys and a phone.



Carhartt Women's Shoreline Jacket

www.carhartt.com
This waterproof, breathable rain jacket came in handy across a variety of scenarios this past year. The Storm Defender waterproof, breathable membrane kept water out but also let our tester's bodyheat escape. It is made roomy for layering up and makes a good rain jacket when aboard a river boat.



Columbia Men's PFG Force Insulated Jacket

www.columbia.com
We stayed warm and dry in a steady Prince of Wales Island rain in 2017 while wearing this insulated jacket. It's lightweight, reflects light, is waterproof, breathable and includes an adjustable storm hood.



Montbell Superior Down Pants

www.montbell.us
Light in weight and highly compressible, these Montbell pants pack down small for travel but also offer surprising warmth in the field. In Alaska when a versatile warm layer is critical, minimal weight is paramount and space in your pack is at a premium, these are a great bet.



Drift Creek Outdoors Women's Granite Newport Rain Jacket and Pants

www.driftcreekoutdoors.com
Waterproof, comfortable and durable, this attractive rain gear is designed for the active outdoorswoman and is constructed of 100% polyester, with Semi-PU-coated fabric that is both waterproof and comfortable. The shell fabric is waterproof, abrasion-resistant, stretchable and is virtually noiseless, making it the perfect rain gear for hunting, fishing, hiking or any other outdoor activity. It is softer and more comfortable than other traditional heavy-duty rainwear.



Black Diamond First Light Hoody

www.blackdiamondequipment.com
Ideal for outdoor excursions in wilderness Alaska, the First Light Hoody is the quintessential start-stop piece, a layer that breathes and moves. Fully-insulated with PrimaLoft Silver Insulation Active and constructed from lightweight Schoeller fabric, it is the company's most breathable insulation piece and that makes it extremely versatile for the Alaskan outdoors-enthusiast.



Mountain Hardwear Men's AP Pant

www.mountainhardwear.com
These pants are comfortable and are built for performance in the field. Among the notable features are a compression back pocket and articulated knees, as well as two zippered back pockets. The pants have belt loops, a button closure and zipper. Our tester wore these pants often in 2017 and likes them greatly.



Patagonia Women's Tough Puff Hoody

www.patagonia.com
Built for swinging flies all day in cold water, the warm Tough Puff Hoody has a stretchy and durable face fabric combined with highly breathable FullRange stretch insulation for performance, comfort and freedom of motion. Our tester used this hoody on a range of spring and fall adventures in Alaska and reported nothing but positive reviews including "It feels like wearing a warm cloud".



Apparel: Layering

FisheWear Hoodie Dress

www.fishewear.com
Our female tester loved the warmth and length of the hoodie. She appreciated the thumbhole sleeves. The attractive fish design and double-string hoodie are unique features. Alaskan owned FisheWear has been a favorite to wear while fishing and for multiple other activities.



Filson Twin Lakes Sports Shirt

www.filson.com
This ultra-lightweight, quick-drying shirt features a vented mesh back yoke for breathable comfort and is an ideal top for the hottest days of the year in Alaska. It offers UPF50+ protection from the sun, with embroidered underarm eyelets for additional breathability.



White Sierra Women's Bug Free Trail Hoody

www.whitesierra.com
There were nothing but glowing reports on the Bug Free Trail Hoody, which features built-in Insect Shield protection, while also wicking moisture and being packable—making it travel-friendly.



FisheWear Merino Wool Top and Skirted Wool Leggings

www.fishewear.com
Our tester loves the wool top and bottoms that FisheWear makes. They are beautiful and well-made, cute and look great. They are a joy to wear around town, fishing, adventuring, etc. This clothing line is fantastic year-round, for layering or on its own.



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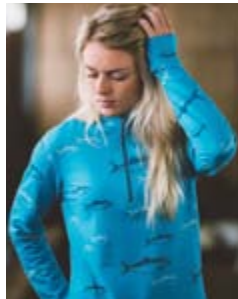
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Apparel: Layering

Salmon Sisters Small Fins Half-Zip

www.aksalmonsisters.com
Utilizing brushed bamboo fleece that is so soft and cozy, this has become one of our essential tops for crisp weather outings in Alaska. A perfect fishing layer under your rain gear, its superior breathability and moisture-wicking qualities help regulate body temperature and provide warm insulation in the face of the elements. An Alaskan brand by two fisherwomen from Homer, Alaska, the Salmon Sisters offer stylish performance active wear for the outdoors, sea-themed home decor and gifts and Wild Alaska Seafood.



Salmon Sisters Make Waves Leggings

www.aksalmonsisters.com
Featuring a smooth next-to-skin fit, these leggings were designed to be a fabulous fishing layer, perfect for under rain gear and look great with your Salmon Sisters XTRATUF boots. Made of bamboo technical 4-way stretch fabric that supports without the squeeze, some other highlights are moisture-wicking and anti-odor properties, superior breathability and natural UPF 50+ protection. The hidden waistband inner key pocket is a nice addition.



Grundéns Maris Hoodie & Leggings

www.grundens.com
The women's Maris is an insulating layer designed to be worn under bibs and rain gear and also works great under waders. Constructed with breathable poly fleece, the four-way stretch fabric provides comfort and warmth all day long, both in the hoodie and the leggings. This is one of her all-time favorite layering sets for female anglers according to Publisher Melissa Norris.



Grundéns Hooksetter Longsleeve Shirt

www.grundens.com
This stylish shirt is water-resistant, provides UPF50 protection from the sun, has several pockets, as well as convertible sleeve tabs, shoulder blade vents and snap cuffs. We like the fit and function of the shirt and the lightweight feel.



Duckworth Women's Comet Tunnel Hood

www.duckworthco.com
Zipper less and offering cozy high-neck comfort with a semi-fitted hood, our tester loved the dual-layer Hydro-ply fabric, remarking that it was soft to the touch. Moisture-wicking and warm, this piece of apparel was a hit all season long as an ideal layering piece.



Duluth Trading Company Men's Short Sleeve Armachillo Crew Shirt

www.duluthtrading.com
This shirt is definitely more than meets the eye. Microscopic jade in the fabric works to actually lower skin temperature, which results in a refreshing and definitely welcomed chilling effect. This shirt was a great addition to our summer outdoor attire.



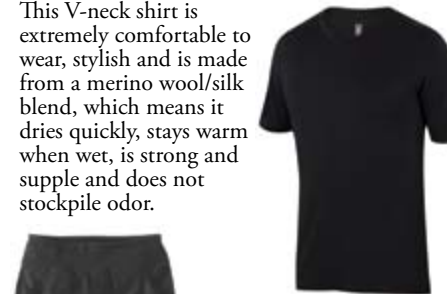
Smartwool Women's Horizon Line Skirt

www.smartwool.com
The Horizon Line Skirt is for all those outdoorswomen who prefer coverage over leggings before and after wearing waders for a day on the water. Its textured exterior creates subtle striping while the smooth interior rests comfortably against your skin.



Ibex Essential V-Neck Tee

www.ibex.com
This V-neck shirt is extremely comfortable to wear, stylish and is made from a merino wool/silk blend, which means it dries quickly, stays warm when wet, is strong and supple and does not stockpile odor.



Carhartt Force Utility Knit Legging

www.carhartt.com
These fast-drying, odor-fighting pants were super popular with our female testers this year, doubling as a comfortable utility pant and stylish work pant.



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Arcade Belts Guide Belt

www.arcadebelts.com

Adventure-ready, the Guide Belt is tough and rugged, but it's also the only tech web belt constructed with stretch, making it comfortable all day long. Our tester appreciated that fact and recommended this for all your multi-day Alaska hunting and fishing adventures.



BUFF Polar Thermal Hoodie

www.buffusa.com

Often our testers are out in colder temperatures, and when that's the case, they're wrapped in a Polar Thermal Hoodie, which provides a high level of thermal performance, as well as a soft 100% Merino wool collar to protect the mouth and chin. A double layer of wool at the neck adds insulation.



Baffin Glove Liner

www.baffin.com

Specifically designed for use with the Baffin Apparel system yet also appropriate for independent use, this glove liner features touchscreen-friendly index finger and thumb pads that work and a snug form-fit for improved dexterity.



Sunday Afternoons Lookout Hat

www.sundayafternoons.com

Looking great—with antique brass and genuine leather accents—the Lookout Hat also performs: wicking sweatband, adjustable sizing, hidden internal stash pocket and packability for travel. This is an outstanding hat for all Pacific Northwest adventurers.



Seirus Sunthing Salmon

www.seirus.com

We enjoyed that this product was both lightweight and breathable. It provides good protection from the wind and sun. It can be adapted with changing weather for a variety of applications: as a beanie, headband, neck cover, facemask, hood, etc. It is useful to have for a variety of outdoor activities and water sports.

Apparel: Footwear

Iowa Tibet GTX

www.iowaboats.com

We tested these boots on a moose hunt in 2017 and they are fantastic. They are completely waterproof and comfortable, offer extreme ankle support and allowed our tester to carry heavy loads of moose. He wore them 10 straight days and packed out two moose. If you are a backpacker or a fly-out fisherman looking for your next set of boots, give these a try.



Kenetrek Mountain Extreme 400

www.kenetrek.com

Our tester raved that these boots kept his feet dry and warm, while providing outstanding traction in wet and slippery conditions. The stiff nylon insoles and K-Talon outsoles provide unparalleled stability for hikers carrying heavy loads. Four hundred grams of GORE-TEX helped keep our tester's feet warm while sitting and spotting game. These are really superb boots and useful for fishermen and hunters alike.



Le Chameau Condor LCX

www.lechameau.com

These boots are built well, tough and comfortable. They provide exceptional ankle support and traction, which was particularly important in 2017 when hunting and hauling meat in steep, rugged terrain. The boots remained waterproof after many miles of trudging through wet country, performed exceptionally well and are universally suited for hunters and fishers.

Muck Boots Muckster II Low

www.muckbootcompany.com

The Muckster II Low is the perfect shoe when it's wet and muddy, meaning you need a set of these for Alaska—where those conditions prevail a good part of the year. Whether working around the camp or battling halibut from the deck, these shoes have been redesigned with a new sole that provides more stability on wet surfaces, making them ideal when you don't want a high boot.



Le Chameau Women's Giverny Jersey-Lined Boot

www.lechameau.com

Designed like a mid-high country-walking rubber boot, these everyday-use boots feature a natural-rubber upper and hard-wearing poly-cotton Jersey lining. Shock-absorbing dual-density Cross soles and all-terrain grips add to their versatility in Alaska.



Vasque Breeze III Low GTX

www.vasque.com

A lighter, nimbler version of the Breeze III GTX Boot, which we've loved here at *Fish Alaska* in years past, this new Low model packs in all the same technology but caters to those who prefer more mobility.



XTRATUF Salmon Sisters 15-inch Legacy Boots

www.aksalmonsisters.com

Sturdy, lightweight and comfortable, our tester wore these boots on every trip of the year, since in Alaska it tends to rain at least once during most trips. Designed specifically for women, the boots feature XTRATUF's iconic Legacy silhouette with an interior lining designed by Salmon Sisters.



Mishmi Takin Kameng – Mid eVent Waterproof Hiking Boot

www.mishmitakin.com

The two things about these boots that stood out to our tester was the remarkable breathability of the 100% waterproof eVent membrane that manages to keep your feet warm and dry without making them sweat, and the noticeable comfort and stability provided by not only the stretch heel section that provides comfort when descending slopes (or sitting



with your legs extended), but also the Vibram Megagrip sole and large contact area.

Reed Footwear Kent Romeo

www.reedfootwear.com

This slip-on style neoprene boot is 100% waterproof, but what we really appreciated about this boot was the noticeable level of comfort it provided that we didn't even realize we were missing. The 3.5mm neoprene with 2mm of air mesh lining combined with the functional 6.5-inch height, foam midsole and non-slip rubber outsole made these boots great for use when offshore fishing. We were pleasantly surprised by this boot and highly recommend it to anyone interested in an easy slip-on style boot.



Grundéns Deck-Boss Boot

www.shop.grundens.com

The one-piece boot is impervious to the elements. The Herkules Grip synthetic soles provide excellent traction. There's a band that keeps your pant legs from slipping lower and getting wet, and we think that's a smart feature. When you don't need the full height of the boot, they fold down. These boots are comfortable and perform great.



Baffin Men's Meltwater Boot

www.baffin.com

Our tester reports that the Baffin Meltwater boot performed like the ultimate in waterproof footwear, keeping him warm, dry and super comfortable. Durable while still looking great, the boots are comfort-rated to 0°. Tried against several other boots in its class, this one won out for comfort.



Baffin Cush Booty

www.baffin.com

Whether on a major expedition or just lounging around camp, the Baffin Cush Booty slipper provided our tester all the warmth necessary for keeping feet and toes toasty warm.



Bogs Footwear Urban Farmer Shoe

www.bogsfootwear.com

This low-profile slip-on boot offers Max-Wick moisture-wicking lining to keep you dry and comfortable, along with a contoured comfort fit, a wider toe box and narrower feel. Its versatility ensured it got a lot of use this season. We love it for running in and out of the motorhome, lodges and tents for a fast, waterproof slip on.



KEEN Elsa Chelsea

www.keenfootwear.com

This ankle boot is part cold-weather protection and part style statement, performing admirably in all conditions while looking great, too. A super-soft lining ups the comfort level, while the fresh mix of textures makes it inside-appropriate as well. Rave reviews from our testers came in for this boot.



Vasque Inhaler II Low

www.vasque.com

Lightweight and comfortable, our tester wore these every day for 16 straight days of touring, walking more than 20,000 steps each of those days. They are still in great shape, and that's about the best review we can imagine.



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Kids' Gear



Onyx All Adventure Child Vest

www.onyxoutdoor.com
Lightweight and constructed of durable foam, this children's PFD features brightly-colored shoulders with reflective piping for increased visibility, seven segmented hinge points to offer more mobility and greater comfort and a zippered front with waist belts plus a covered leg strap to prevent the vest from riding up. A Type III U.S. Coast Guard-approved Type III Life Jacket/PFD, the All Adventure Child Vest fits children 30- to 50 pounds. For older anglers, there is an All Adventure Youth Vest available as well.

Oomingmak Child's Igloo Hat

www.qiviut.com
Super-soft and incredibly warm, our darling field tester loves this hat. It's made from 80% qiviut and 20% silk and in a pattern designed by members of the cooperative.



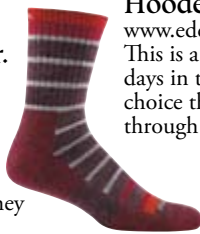
The Muck Boot Company Kids Muckster II Ankle

www.muckbootcompany.com
Our tester likes how easy it is to put on these Muck Boots, and that they keep his feet completely dry and warm, because this young angler loves to walk in the water. He also said they are comfortable to wear and he gets good traction in a range of conditions, and he needs that to run away from his other brothers.



Darn Tough Via Ferrata Jr. Micro Crew Socks

www.darntough.com
Wool socks for Alaskan kids are necessary practically year-round, and these performance socks by Darn Tough are exactly perfect. They are tough and warm and will help extend your kids' time in the outdoors.



Western Chief Kids' Youth Chloe Dot Neoprene

www.westernchief.com
Available in a host of patterns and colors, these kids' winter boots are insulated with a memory-foam footbed and offer a treaded rubber outsole for traction, while being cold-rated to -30°. Easy-on and easy-off, these are great winter boots for active Alaskan children, some of the best we've tried.



All Good SPF 50+ Kid's Sunscreen Butter Stick

www.allgoodproducts.com
Water-resistant, easy to apply and easy to transport, you'll want one of these with you on all your summer outings.



Seirus Junior Fleece Knit Hat

www.seirus.com
With a fleece outer and fine-gauge, acrylic liner, this is a great winter hat for the little ones. It's warm and comfortable enough that our youngest field-testers were happy to keep it on all day long, which means more hours outside for mom and dad to fish.



Oakiwear Trail Fleece Lined Jacket

www.oakiwear.com
Our 7-year-old tester likes to stay outside no matter the weather and puts his clothing through the ringer. After using and abusing this coat in 2017, he proclaimed that he stayed warm and dry and thinks this coat should get an award.



Eddie Bauer Girls' Downlight Hooded Jacket

www.eddiebauer.com
This is a cozy, warm jacket for mild winter days in the 25- to 30° range. It's a solid choice that's sure to last through the year.



Activ8 Toddler Girls' Snow Bib

www.bigrays.com
These are top-quality winter snow bibs for kids, and they won't break the bank, as they're priced at less than \$55. Even better, they are made by the Alaskans at Big Ray's, inspired by one of Big Ray's owners, Monty Rostad, in Fairbanks. Monty had a problem to solve when his own kids needed to play outside in -20° weather. The knees and seats are reinforced, plus reflective piping helps them be seen in the dark for safety. They are built like the best brands but at an affordable price. They are available at Big Ray's in Anchorage, Kodiak, Fairbanks and online.



Helly Hansen Jr Block It Jacket

www.hellyhansen.com
Wind- and waterproof, this jacket is a good top layer for your young anglers. It's got a removable hood that easily snaps on and off and a pair of zippered hand-warmer pockets.



KidORCA Rain Boots

www.kidorca.com
The bright yellow color of the boots and black orca logo are appealing to our little tester. They are fleece-lined so the little's feet stay warm. The drawstring interior extends boot height almost to the knee.



Carhartt Toddler Girls' Stripe Mitten

www.carhartt.com
These mittens are warm and waterproof, and now our mini-tester can hold her ice-fishing rod and her snowmachine hand grips for hours outside in the Alaska cold.



KEEN Oakridge Low WP

www.keenfootwear.com
These functional KEEN low-top shoes for kids are perfect for the trail or for running around the campsite. Sturdy and well-built, these hikers also feature waterproof properties as well as the fact that they're easy to put on.



Klymit Static V Junior

www.klymit.com
This junior version of Klymit's most popular sleeping pad has been trimmed to a three-quarters length that's perfect for ounce-counting backcountry hunters and kids. The Static V Junior packs to the size of a soda can and weighs a scant 13 ounces. The body-mapped V-chamber design limits air movement to help maintain insulating performance and ergonomic comfort, while dynamic side rails keep you centered on the pad.



Molehill Mountain Long Underwear Top/Bottom

www.molehillmtn.com
These unisex kid's long underwear base layers are ideal for keeping the little ones warm and comfortable while on family excursions. Made from Cocona fabric, which uses natural technology to help provide moisture-control, odor-resistance and UV-protection, a set of these will help extend your days afield when fishing, hunting or camping with your kids.



Oakiwear Kids Neoprene Waders

www.oaki.com
Our youngest field-testers absolutely love their camo neoprene waders, which are easy to put on, even by themselves, and keep them dry and warm all day long. Featuring a full rubber boot, this is the ultimate suit for your little one and comes in sizes that fit toddlers through children who are already able to make casts on their own.

Smartwool Kids' Hike Crew Socks

www.smartwool.com
A smaller version of the classic hiking socks for adults, the Kids' Hike Crew line offers an elastic arch brace and flat-knit toe seam, keeping the sock in place without bunching. These socks are available in both light- and medium versions, ensuring there's something for your any-time-of-year adventure.



White Sierra Girls Bug Free Capri Legging

www.whitesierra.com
With built-in Insect Shield protection, these leggings are ideal for getting your young one out into the field in comfort and style. Moisture-wicking, quick-drying and travel-friendly, this is a great lightweight bottom to pickup for your kid before heading out on the water in 2018.



Luggage, Packs and Cases

LowePro DryZone 200

www.lowepro.com
This waterproof pack is an awesome solution for the traveling photographer. It is tough, completely waterproof and will hold several SLR bodies and lenses. The pack is sturdy and comfortable to wear and features several outside pockets for additional storage.



Sealline Discovery Deck Dry Bag

www.seallinegear.com
We tested the 50 Liter model and liked it. It sports a comfortable carry strap and multiple lash-down points. One of the features we especially like is the PurgeAir valve, which allows you to get the air out when sealing the bag. It is sturdily built and withstood our less-than-gentle testing approach. It comes in multiple colors and four sizes.



Filson Medium Field Duffel

www.filson.com
When it came to this duffel, less was definitely more, and our tester enjoyed its simple design and heavy-duty materials. With two stow pockets and fully nylon-lined water-repellant fabric, this duffel was comfortable to carry during weekend trips to Fairbanks and Kenai.



Sealline 75 Liter Zip Duffel

www.seallinegear.com
Heavy-duty, waterproof vinyl duffel with a beefy, air- and watertight zipper. The 75 Liter size is spacious and provides enough room for a multi-day excursion. The handles are strong and comfortable in the hand and the duffel is long (29 inches) and shallow (10 inches) making it easy to pinpoint items, which can often be difficult in larger, roll-top bags.



Simms Bounty Hunter 6 Spey Rod Cannon

www.simmsfishing.com
This is a big rod tube designed to carry a full quiver of Spey or switch rods. The product info says it can carry up to six four-piece, 15-foot rods. That's enough for yours and your buddy's in most cases. It's sturdy so you don't need to worry about your rods getting broken. It also has a removable, round reel case that fits neatly in the top. The case is covered with heavy fabric and it has an adjustable shoulder strap for ease of carry. A built-in luggage tag and locking zippers add security to the case. Our tester took this case on his recent Naknek River rainbow trip and says he put a total of seven rods in it—five Spey rods up to 13 feet, four inches, and two switch rods.



LowePro Pro-Roller X200 AW

www.lowepro.com
This is one sweet travel case for the avid photographer. The airline carry-on rolling bag will fit one or two Pro DSLR's, 6- to 8 lenses and a 17-inch laptop. Contributing Photographer Brian Woobank raved about the design and function of this professional camera bag as he used it in Alaska repeatedly in 2017. In combination with the DryZone 200, Brian was able to effectively transport expensive photography gear starting with a commercial airline and ending up in the remote Alaska wilderness—and then back again.



Carhartt Legacy Women's East West Tote

www.carhartt.com
This water-repellent women's tote was a big hit with our female field-testers this season, as it's large interior allowed for plenty of storage, while interior panels with a zippered pocket offered excellent organization. Two exterior pockets allow quick access to essential items, and the Rain Defender durable water-repellency kept things dry.



Camping



Hilleberg Kaitum 4 GT

www.us.hilleberg.com

We love this tent. It's very spacious with lots of head room and will sleep four. We fit two adults and four kids under 11 in it. It's got two vestibules for lots of gear storage, which we need, and also two doors adding convenience. We like that it is lightweight—about 10 pounds—for the size of the tent and that it is rugged and will handle most weather conditions in which we find ourselves fishing and hunting.

Power Practical Luminoodle Light Rope

www.powerpractical.com

If you spend a lot of time outdoors like we do, the Luminoodle is the perfect addition to your gear kit. The light rope is lightweight, completely flexible and plugs into any USB power source—then just hang, drape or stick it nearly anywhere for a beautiful, bright light. We recommend keeping one in your emergency kit as well, so you're never without light.



Helinox Table One with Hard Top

www.helinox.com

The Table One with Hard Top brings comfort to the backcountry with the convenience and versatility of a lightweight, packable mealtime companion. It is small and low to the ground and can seat two for dinner in a low camp chair.



Eureka Super Cush Pad

www.eurekacamping.com

This is a super thick sleeping pad that inflates fast while the user pumps up and down on the headrest portion of the pad. It has a quick valve release to deflate fast as well. Our tester found this pad comfortable and user-friendly for basecamp.

Eureka MarshMellow Cover

www.eurekacamping.com

Adding the MarshMellow Cover to use with the Eureka Cush Pad is totally worth the extra \$50, according to our camps-a-lot field-tester. The fabric is soft and cozy and lives up to its name, making sure you'll sleep like a baby even when you're on the ground.



Coghlan's Fire Poker

www.coghlan.com

Our tester reports this as the best fire-poker they've ever used, noting that it's very sturdy and especially love the extendable feature.



Big Agnes Flying Diamond 6

www.bigagnes.com

Think base camp for your whole family, a couple of guys hunting or a group camping trip dining tent. We are really impressed with the design and features of this enormous tent. This 3-season, two-room tent is a great choice for your next base camp. It has a vestibule that can be staked out for shade if you have trekking poles or to store your gear if we have more typical Alaska weather. The two rooms are great for parents with kids, buddies or lots of gear. We found it durable and waterproof with plenty of ventilation.

GSi Outdoors Soft Sided Wine Carafe

www.gsioutdoors.com

Our tester enjoyed this soft-sided wine carafe. It is easy to pack, not bulky and is efficient to use. It is designed to hold 25 ounces. This carafe has a two-stage cap that allows for filling and pouring ease. Beverages taste great, with no odd taste from the container.

Light My Fire TinderSticks

www.lightmyfire.com

Made of stumps from cultivated pine and featuring an 80% resin content, TinderSticks are extremely easy to light and work even when wet. Burning long and hot, they're also the perfect companion to Light My Fire's Swedish FireSteel.



Sea To Summit Thermolite Reactor Sleeping Bag Liner

www.seatosummit.com

This sleeping bag liner is soft, warm and retains a comfortable amount of heat without making our tester sweaty. Our tester appreciated the texture of the fabric. It is lightweight and stretchy and feels comfortable against the skin. This product is compact and easily packable for wilderness trips or traveling to visit friends.

Aurora Fire Starter 2SA

www.soloscientific.com

This is a great product to carry in the field. Our tester loved that this product made it possible to start a good blaze in about five minutes. He suggests adding a length of cord to the lanyard hole in this product. The tester appreciated the small closed-in case, keeping it dry and ready for use. It provides hot sparks easily; no need to carry matches that get wet. Just pack some fire-starting material or find good dry tinder.



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Camping



Rightline Gear Truck Tent Full Size Long Bed 8-foot

www.rightlinegear.com

This tent was quick and easy to set up in the bed of the truck and doesn't require pounding stakes. Our tester appreciated being off the ground, as it's warmer than sleeping on the ground. It easily straps securely to the truck. This tent is especially useful, without the hassle of trying to find an appropriate clearing.



Eureka Gonzo Grill Cook System

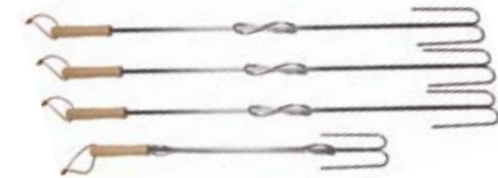
www.eurekacamping.com

A flexible and compact cook system, the Gonzo contains a griddle top for pancakes or panini sandwiches and then reverses to a grill surface for burgers or portobellos—or functions as a stove for boiling water and sautéing. After testing this, our camp gourmets are big fans.

GCI Outdoor 3-Position Director's Chair w/ Ottoman

www.gcioutdoor.com

When it comes to RV trips to Valdez or riverside camping in Fairbanks, this chair provides just the right amount of comfort to kick back (literally) and take in the great Alaska outdoors in one of three reclining positions with a convenient side table and ottoman. While heavier than many conventional camp chairs, this chair collapses to a surprisingly small and flat form for storage and features easy-to-carry size with a built-in handle.



Camp Chef Extendable Safety Roasting Sticks

www.campchef.com

Our tester loved having a set of these along for their camping adventures, as the whole family enjoyed roasting hot dogs and marshmallows over an open fire. Each fork features reverse wire holders and comfortable wooden handles for added convenience.

Jetboil HalfGen

www.jetboil.com

Last year we awarded the Genesis Base Camp System for its great utility, and this year we're awarding the new HalfGen for its well-thought-out design, simplicity of use, and performance. Depending on the amount you're cooking for, this modular system can be expanded. The single 10,000 BTU burner with full simmer control and included pan worked well for us on a couple of camping trips with 3- to 4 people. We appreciate that the HalfGen is designed to nest together and comes with everything needed, aside from a standard 16.4-ounce propane bottle, in a convenient carry case.



Kammok Firebelly Down Trail Quilt

www.kammok.com

As we're sure you know, Alaska is well-known for its chillier temperatures, and although we enjoy sunshine and higher temperatures in the summer, it's not uncommon to experience overnight temperatures in the 40- to 50° range while camping. This quilt was an instant success during a camping trip in interior Alaska where its performance made it a favorite for all campers. We love the snaps that allow it to be made into a burrito-style sleeping bag for lounging around the fire, and even used it as an extra warm layer over our sleeping bags at night.



Grayl Ultralight Purifier Bottle

www.thegrayl.com

When it comes to spending time in the Alaska wilderness, clean water is a must, and this functional and lightweight (10.9-ounce) water purifier from Grayl took away any doubt we'd have refreshingly clean (and safe) water on our excursions. This product does not use any bulbs, batteries, chemicals or pumps to purify; just fill and press, and in 15 seconds you have drinkable water. Each cartridge filter can process 40 gallons before replacement and removes 99.9999% of viruses, disease-causing bacteria and protozoan cysts, all while filtering out particulates such as the glacial silt found in much of Alaska's rivers.



Hydro Flask 64-ounce Insulated Water Bottle with Flex Cap

www.hydroflask.com

The largest Hydro Flask available, this 64-ounce bottle is made with professional-grade stainless steel and TempShield double-wall insulation to keep your water ice-cold or piping-hot down to the very last sip. And the Wide Mouth Flex Cap makes it easy to stay hydrated on the go, as the stainless-steel pivots and a flexible, twistable strap allows the cap to move when you do.



YETI Tundra 45

www.yeti.com

YETI coolers are well-known among outdoorsmen for superior performance, so it's no wonder why we were not only wowed by this cooler's ability to keep our ice frozen for days, but also the smaller details such as the heavy-duty rubber latches that make opening and closing your cooler easy and secure, the easy-to-use drain system, and the well-thought out tie-down slots for those times you need to secure your cooler to your boat, trailer, or truck.



Backpacker's Pantry Pesto Salmon with Pasta

www.backpackerspantry.com

Our camp gourmets loved this delicious freeze-dried meal from Backpacker's Pantry. Smoked wild Alaskan salmon filet tossed in a traditional basil pesto, almonds, sun-dried tomatoes and pasta—yum!





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Camping



Coghlan's Bungee Clothesline

www.coghlan.com
Lightweight and convenient, and requiring no hanging pegs, this clothesline makes an excellent addition to any basecamp, ensuring you have a great place available to hang your waders and other outer layers to dry after a long day on the water.

Hydro Flask 40 oz Wide Mouth with Straw Lid

www.hydroflask.com
Our tester carries water everywhere, and despite the Hydro Flask's reputation, he had never used one before. Within one day our tester was in awe of not only the bottle's durable pro-grade stainless-steel construction and the double-wall insulation's ability to keep his water cold all day without condensation, but also the remarkable spill-proof and leak-proof performance of the straw lid that made drinking easier while driving and hiking.



Lodge 12-inch Cast Iron Pan & Cast Iron Cover

www.lodgefg.com
When camping, this pan made it easy to cook breakfast for the whole group in one pan. The two loop-style handles makes it easy to store in the kitchen or in the car when heading out for a trip. We appreciated the utility and durability this provided us when cooking outdoors.



Healthy Human 20-ounce Cruiser Tumbler

www.healthyhumanlife.com
Designed to provide safe, splash-free hydration, the Cruiser's complimentary stainless-steel straw and 100% BPA-free body and cap will help you sip confidently on the go. It keeps ice water delightfully cold and is a favorite of our stainless steel preferring tester.



Stanley Adventure Stacking Steel Tumbler Set

www.stanley-pmi.com
Our tester appreciated the different colored neoprene bands around the stainless-steel cups. They are handy to identify your drink and they slide off for easy cleaning. They keep drinks cold longer than normal glasswear. These cups are durable and easily stack for your next camping adventure.



Healthy Human Stein with Flip N Sip Lid

www.healthyhumanlife.com
Healthy Human Steins are durable, safe and reusable, and they will never leak. Our testers have always loved these products, but now report that the Flip N Sip Lid was an amazing addition. It is easy to use and leak-proof, easily allowing one-handed operation.



Hydro Flask 32 oz Tumbler and Lid

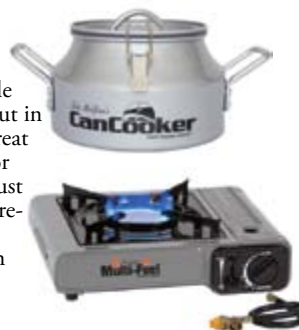
www.hydroflask.com
Our tester was impressed with how this mug kept coffee hot or ice water cold for hours on end. This is a nice-sized container that fits well in the truck cupholder. It works well with a straw to keep from spilling while on the go.



Cooking

Can Cooker and Burner

www.cancooker.com
Bringing the cattle drive tradition back, this product is basically a little pressure cooker, so any meat you put in it will come out tender. It makes great stews, and you can cook potatoes or rice along with your protein. You just need to know what ratio of moisture-to-product to add. The burner is a bit flimsy, but it does pair well with the cooker and has good, varied temperatures.



Summit Spice and Tea Lemon Herb Salmon Dip

www.summitspiceandtea.com
This is one delicious salmon dip mix, and coming from the local experts at this Anchorage-based company, that's no surprise. It includes garlic, dill, onion, and lemon along with some other herbs. The package suggests adding smoked salmon and cream cheese plus sour cream and milk. We like it mixed with greek yogurt and baked salmon with some fresh-squeezed lemon. Serve with crackers and cucumbers.



FoodSaver Fresh Containers

www.foodsaver.com
These BPA-free containers are very handy. They come in four sizes (3-, 5-, 8- and 10-cup containers), are nestable and stackable for efficient storage, are odor-, stain- and crack-resistant, and are microwave-, dishwasher- and freezer-safe. The coolest feature of the system is that these containers pair with any FoodSaver vacuum-sealer to pull air out of the container through the vacuum-seal valve. We've noticed that food lasts a lot longer in the refrigerator since using this system.



Cooking



Bradley Smoker Smart Smoker

www.bradleysmoker.com
We've been impressed with every Bradley Smoker that we've tested and that's the case with the Smart Smoker. We used the smartphone app to control the smoker and that was both cool and useful. The smoker allows you to really dial-in temperature control, resulting in perfectly smoked salmon. Bradley makes multiple flavors of wood discs; we recommend trying the variety pack which includes apple, alder, hickory, maple and mesquite.

Seth McGinn's The Plank

www.cancooker.com
This foldable cutting board was one of the cooler cooking products of the year, according to our tester. Of good-quality construction, the seams are holding up even after a season's use, and The Plank's space-saving qualities come in real handy on extended wilderness trips. It's a little tricky to wash, so our tester recommends using it for cooking chores, rather than as your fish-processing board.



MSR Titan Kettle

www.msrgear.com
This versatile pot is super light and is made from titanium, giving it strength. It's got a lid with an integrated handle; a handle is also built into the kettle, making it easy to handle when hot. Another smart feature is the spout built into the kettle that aids in spill-proof pouring. We used it quite a bit in 2017 and like it a lot.



Bradley Smoker Cherry and Pecan Bisquettes

www.bradleysmoker.com
The key to quality smoking in your Bradley Smoker is in the bisquettes, and luckily they produce 14 irresistible wood flavors. We tried the cherry and pecan bisquettes this year and loved the flavors produced.

Alaska Balsamics Denali Balsamic Vinegar

www.alaskabalsamics.com
From caprese salad to salmon with a balsamic-honey glaze, Alaska Balsamics Denali is a stand-out ingredient. Denali is their traditional flavor that our testers found thick and nicely concentrated, with just the right bit of sweet. They love it plain or used in a recipe. Alaska Balsamics is a new company from Valdez, Alaska, that launched this winter with 7 flavors of balsamic vinegar and their Pineapple Balsamic Hot Sauce. They ship immediately when you order from their website, so plan now for wowing family and friends with the weekend's meals and you'll be ready to cook in just a few days' time.



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For recipes and inspiration, visit www.bradleysmoker.com



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www.SmokehouseProducts.com

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What's on your list today?

Cooking

Green Mountain Grills Davy Crockett pellet grill; Stainless; Wi-Fi version

www.greenmountaingrills.com

The Davy Crockett pellet grill is a versatile grilling machine! Whether at camp or tailgating via the 12-volt adaptor or at home with AC power, this grill is great for cooking for small groups. One can connect to the grill through point-to-point Wi-Fi or through your home Wi-Fi network. A mobile app (iOS or Android) serves as the interface. The hopper holds up to nine pounds of pellets, ensuring long cook times without the need to refill the hopper. A digital meat probe is included, and temperature of both the grill and the food can be monitored either on the unit's control panel or on the app. Temperature can also be controlled from the panel or the app. Our tester used this for Boston Butts as big as 8 pounds, steaks, salmon, tri-tip roasts and pork loin. He claims the results were mouth-wateringly delicious.



Smoke Chief Cold Smoke Generator

www.smokehouseproducts.com

This product opened up options for us on what we can smoke. In addition to making a tasty, cold-smoked salmon, we've been smoking cheese and nuts using alder and apple pellets and the results are scrumptious. We've used it with our Big Chief smoker and piped the smoke into the door that normally is used to access the wood chip pan.



FireDisc Cookers

www.firediscookers.com

Testers enjoyed making fajitas in the FireDisc and found it to be a fun process, turning out a delicious meal in no time. They were able to get a good amount of food made all at once and appreciated the varying temperatures.

The Spice & Tea Exchange Grilled Fish Spice

www.spiceandtea.com

Our staff foodie declares this a wonderful seasoning for all types of fish, especially salmon. Just rinse your fish with cool water and lemon juice; then brush with olive oil and add this blend before grilling, baking or sautéing. Overwhelmingly positive reviews from your dinner guests are the result.



The Spice & Tea Exchange Cajun Spice Blend

www.spiceandtea.com

Made from an old family Bayou recipe, this seasoning is great for blackening any type of meat or seafood. Season according to taste, then grill, sear or bake. Available at The Spice & Tea Exchange in South Anchorage.



Ice Fishing

ION X Electric Ice Auger

www.ioniceaugers.com

This auger is very convenient and easy to use. No more hauling gas, or working up a sweat with a hand-crank auger. The ION X uses a 36-volt lithium battery that does an amazing job punching holes through the ice. Our testers drilled 13 holes in 12-inch-thick ice. The battery was still running strong, requiring about 10 seconds each, using either the 8- or 10-inch wide augers. The desired auger size was easy to switch out, as well as an optional extension bit. This product was a definite favorite and a game-changer for our testers.



Acme Hyper-Glide

www.acmetackle.com

This lure is very life-like with exceptional action, and it drives rainbow trout, char, lake trout, northern pike and burbot crazy in Alaska lakes. It can be cast or vertically jigged, perfect for searching out fish through an ice hole or in open water. The wings on the lure open each time it falls through the water column and that causes it to glide. Or you can prevent the wings from opening so you can quickly drop back onto fish, and open them back up with a sharp snap. When you snap the rod upwards a couple feet, it causes the wings to open and close rapidly and it looks like a disoriented baitfish. The opening and closing of the wings also mimic the gill action of a baitfish, as well as create predator-attracting noise. It comes in three sizes and multiple patterns which incorporate UV and Glow. This is one of the more innovative lures we have seen in quite some time.



Daiwa TRIFORCE "Shorty" Casting Rod

www.daiwa.com/us

Daiwa TRIFORCE "Shorty" rods are available in both spinning and casting configurations. They are great weapons for larger Arctic char, burbot and lake trout-sized fish. Our tester has used them for several years with lures ranging from 1/16-ounce leadheads to big tube jigs to 2/5-ounce spoons. They are very versatile, durable ice rods. If an angler had three or four of these, each rigged with different lures, he or she would be well prepared for lakers, char and burbot on the ice. At 36 inches long and rated for 4-to 12-pound-test, these have enough length to absorb the huge head shakes of giant lakers, yet they have the lifting power needed to turn such fish up into the ice hole.



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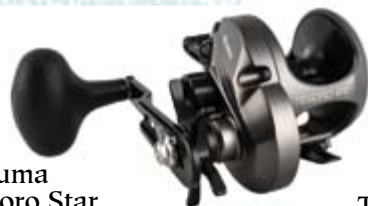
We love fishing!



Rods & Reels

Okuma Tesoro Star Drag Reel

www.okumafishingusa.com
Packing all its strength and updated technology into size 10 and 12 reels, the Tesoro Star Drag features 6061-T6 forged then machine-cut aluminum frames, side-plates and spool, as well as a Mechanical Stabilizing System to keep all key components aligned and running smoothly. A silent and smooth carbonite drag system puts out a fish-stopping 22 pounds of drag, while 46 inches of line-retrieve-per-turn helps anglers gain ground fast.



Okuma Epixor XT Spinning Reel

www.okumafishingusa.com
The new Epixor XT reels feature Okuma's C-40X long-strand graphite fiber process, which reinforces its Torsion Control Armor frame to reduce twisting and keep all internal functions aligned and smooth. The machined-aluminum 2-tone anodized spool and rigid metal handle complement the corrosion-resistant graphite body and Cyclonic Flow Rotor design. With superior line lay from Okuma's new slow oscillation system, the Epixor XT is like no other and makes for a great freshwater as well as light inshore spinning reel.



Okuma Cold Water 450 Low-profile Line Counter

www.okumafishingusa.com
Built to the same industry-leading standards as the popular 350, the 450 is the next logical step in the Cold Water family, featuring a 5.4:1 gear ratio and packing over 30 pounds of drag into its compact aluminum frame. The larger size reel will accommodate 300 yards of 50-pound braided line for some extreme capacity in a low-profile line-counter reel and comes in both left- and right-hand retrieve to fit your needs.



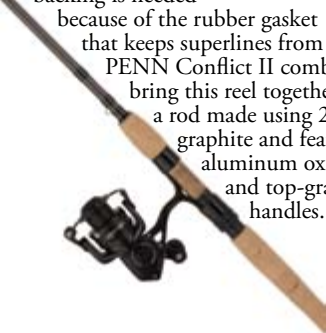
PENN Conflict II Spinning Reels and Conflict II Combos

www.pennfishing.com
The PENN Conflict II spinning reel features stealthy cosmetics, a lightweight design and a silky-smooth HT-100 drag. The RR30 Rigid Resin body and rotor are extremely lightweight and durable, while internally the Conflict II is powered with CNC Gear Technology and high-quality stainless-steel ball bearings. With the Superline Spool no backing is needed



because of the rubber gasket that keeps superlines from slipping.

PENN Conflict II combos bring this reel together with a rod made using 24-ton graphite and featuring Fuji aluminum oxide guides and top-grade cork handles.



TFO Axiom II Rods

www.tforods.com

These rods optimize engineering and materials to satisfy the broadest range of casting styles and strokes without the need to adapt casting stroke to rod action. The A2 design ensures a rod that's easy to load and quick and efficient in unloading, which also ensures accurate and true tracking. No bounce, shock and no wobble on the stop—A2 rods are very smooth and efficient casting tools.



Islander Premier Series Moocking Rods

www.islander.com

Islander's recently-launched Premier Series moocking rods bridge the gap between fully custom rods and mass-produced models. Working with a local rod builder, they selected only premium components, even machining parts in house when available options couldn't meet their standards. Built off a 10-foot, 6-inch fiberglass blank with parabolic medium-heavy action, the rods features cushioned reel seats, carbon-fiber rear grips, non-slip rubber butt caps and titanium carbide guides. Put it all together and you've got a rod sensitive enough to absorb every head-shake while still having enough spine to land the mightiest of kings.



PENN Passion Spinning Reels & Passion Combos

www.pennfishing.com

The PENN Passion reels feature a full metal body for strength combined with an RR30 rotor to reduce weight. A 5+1 stainless-steel bearing system combined with the HT-100 drag system provide smooth operation during the cast, retrieve and while fighting a fish. Also offering the unique Superline Spool, these reels are paired with a top-quality rod offering PENN's exclusive WINN grips designed to fit the female angler's hands, along with a graphite composite blank, graphite reel seat and aluminum oxide guides.



Berkley Lightning Rods (Trolling & Spinning)

www.berkley-fishing.com

Now constructed with 24-ton multi-modulus graphite, the carbon composite blanks used in constructing Berkley Lightning rods are lightweight, sensitive and durable. Offered in spinning, casting and trolling versions, there is a Lightning rod designed specifically for your angling application. For added bonus, trolling models are designed with a rubber shrink-wrapped extended handle to manage heavy loads and withstand abuse from rod-holders.



Islander TR3

www.islander.com

Now available in an eye-catching new blue color and backed by a lifetime warranty, the TR3 is exactly the reel Pacific Northwest trollers need to take their on-the-water performance to the next level. The heart of the Islander TR3 is its fully-sealed drag system made from an ultra-high-performance fluoropolymer material known for its low coefficient of friction, durability and consistent performance across wide temperature ranges. Corrosion-free ceramic bearings mean the reel will last in any locale, including Alaska's harsh saltwater environment, and as single-action fishing is defined by your direct connection to the fish, ported paddle handles help ensure that your grip is much more secure, especially when fishing in wet or frigid conditions.

LET THE BATTLE BEGIN...

PENN WARFARE

Engineered for extreme versatility, PENN's new Warfare reel is a lightweight graphite reel with aluminum frame rings for improved rigidity to prevent frame-flex. HT-100 drag

washers provide smooth drag under heavy loads. Line Capacity Rings eliminate the question of how much line you have left when fighting a fish.



Available without Line Counter and in Left Handed Models

PENN
LET THE BATTLE BEGIN™



Rods & Reels

Daiwa Lexa-WN 300 and 400 Series

www.daiwa.com/us
Built for the most discerning salmon and steelhead fishermen and featuring a new look for two of the most popular baitcasting reels on the market, these beautiful new Lexa-WN 300 and 400 series reels feature comfortable WINN Grip knobs with two ball-bearings, an A7075 aircraft-grade aluminum swept handle with weight-reducing cutout, a 7-bearing system, including two corrosion-resistant CRBB bearings, and extra line capacity for large fish. Magforce Cast Control assures increased distance and trouble-free casting, while Daiwa's Ultimate Tournament Carbon Drag exerts an impressive and smooth 25 pounds of drag.



Cousins Tackle Kokanee Composite Series

www.cousinstackle.com
New for 2018, Cousins Tackle is offering two precisely-built kokanee/trout trolling models. They feature composite (graphite/fiberglass blended) blanks with a smooth, moderate action, graphite handles and zirconia insert guides. The KC801-1TG and KC901-2TG are designed for modern techniques and have more power and a deeper flex than previous rods, making them extremely versatile.



The KC801-1TG and KC901-2TG are designed for modern techniques and have more power and a deeper flex than previous rods, making them extremely versatile.

Pflueger Supreme QRS Fly Reel

www.pfluegerfishing.com
The Supreme QRS, "Quick Release Spool," offers an interchangeable large-arbor cassette spool system. Modern in style and functionality, the polycarbonate cassettes are secured in the spool carrier by an advanced locking system enclosed by a full stainless-steel and 6061-alloy construction.



Daiwa Lexa-LC100

www.daiwa.com/us
Designed for welterweight fish and fisheries, the all-new Lexa-LC100 line-counter reel from Daiwa is tailored for lighter line classes yet still offers all the engineering and design features of a much larger reel, including Daiwa's Ultimate Tournament Drag System and a loud clicker mechanism. Additionally, the clear, accurate line counter will help put your presentation on the fish time after time.

Hardy Demon Fly Rods

www.hardyfishing.com
This new series of fly rods, which offers a full range of sticks to cover every conceivable use from small-stream angling to streamer, salt, switch and two-handed fishing, features an easy-loading, high-recovery blank system. Manufactured in Sintrix 330 for increased strength-to-weight ratio and improved in-hand balance, these rods also offer Fuji guides and arrive in a custom aluminum tube with engraved metal end caps. Whether your fishing requires a single- or double-handed rod, there's something in this lineup for you.



Line & Tackle

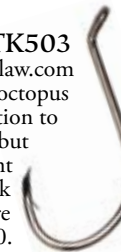


Luhr-Jensen Coyote Spoon – New Everglo Colors!

www.luhrjensen.com
It only took a short period of time for the Coyote spoon to rise to the top of ocean salmon fisheries off of Oregon, Washington and western Canada, and these spoons will only attract fish better than ever with a range of new Everglo colors available. The spoons' thin material creates a very active swimming action that salmon can't resist. Sized from 3- to 4 1/2 inches in length, sizes should be chosen to match the baitfish on which salmon are feeding. Smaller sizes when candlefish and anchovies are most prevalent, larger in late season when herring become the food of choice. The Coyote performs exceptionally well behind dodgers and flashers alike.

Eagle Claw TroKar TK503

www.eagleclaw.com
These new freshwater octopus hooks are a heavy-wire addition to the regular TK400 series but now featuring a down point and either a platinum black or red finish. The hooks are offered in sizes 6 to 9/0.



Pro-Troll ProFlash Lighted Flashers

www.protroll.com
Pro-Troll has introduced a new series of lighted flashers, which will be productive for salmon and trout anglers who are fishing deep, in cloudy water or on overcast days. The flashers include several of the most popular finishes in four Pro-Troll configurations, including the 11-inch HotChips, 11-inch ProChips, 8-inch ProChips and 6-inch ProFins. All the models include the Pro-Troll EChip. The small oval shaped lights turn on automatically when the flasher enters the water and turn off again when it leaves the water. The lights flash in three colors—green, red and white—with an internal battery that lasts up to 80 hours or more.



Storm Wiggle Wart – New Colors!

www.rapala.com
Great for targeting finicky fish of any species, the Wiggle Wart offers legendary side-to-side action at all speeds with a loud rattle and just the right patterns for any condition. Featuring premium VMC super-sharp hooks, this lure is effective fished any way, anywhere, and it's now available in a host of new fish-catching colors, including Phantom Copper Craw, Phantom Green Copper Craw (shown), Brown Mustard Craw and Faded Molting Craw.



Mepps Aglia Flashabou & Double Blade Aglia Flashabou

www.mepps.com
The classic Mepps Aglia now features a highly reflective, hand-tied Flashabou tail for attractive, shimmering action that entices northern pike and other gamefish. Northern pike in particular will be quick to nail a #5 Aglia Flashabou in either double- or single-blade configurations, as it produces exceptional flash over weeds and structure.



Acme Tackle Kastmaster Hammered Series

www.acmetackle.com
Already an icon in the angling world—catching fresh- and saltwater species of nearly all varieties—the Kastmaster offers a new hammered finish in 1/24- to 3/8-ounce sizes in both gold and nickel. The new treatment puts dozens of dimples on the side of each lure that all reflect light. These dimples provide increased reflection in all clarity levels of water and also give added vibration.



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LEXA-LC300PW-P
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LEXA-CC300H-P
Featuring 6 CRBB Bearings



DAIWA'S LINE COUNTER
Measures line out in feet to make setting trolling patterns a snap. And once you've hooked up, you can repeatedly drop right back into the strike zone without guessing.



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With Power Handle

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- » Swept handle design
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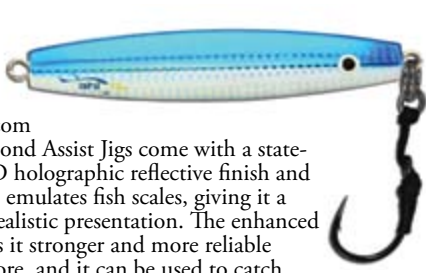
Line & Tackle

Ahi USA Assault Diamond Assist Jigs

www.ahiusa.com
Assault Diamond Assist Jigs come with a state-of-the-art 3-D holographic reflective finish and a pattern that emulates fish scales, giving it a much more realistic presentation. The enhanced rigging makes it stronger and more reliable than ever before, and it can be used to catch just about every species of Alaska saltwater gamefish from lingcod and rockfish to halibut.

Kodiak Custom Fishing Tackle Tube Jigs & Accessories

www.kodiakcustom.com
Kodiak Custom Tube Jigs and accessories are built tough and designed to catch huge lake trout, pike, burbot and sheefish. These jigs will catch hogs through the ice or while jigging, casting and trolling in open water. Tube Jigs are available rigged up and ready to fish or each component can be purchased separately. Jig heads plain or deluxe with trailer hook/bait loop system are available in three sizes, ranging from ½-ounce to 1.5 ounces and multiple colors are offered in 4- to 6-inch-long tubes.



Salamander Sinkers Gram Series

www.salamandersinkers.com
Salamander Sinkers Gram Series is the ultimate ultra-lite fishing sinker. It comes in two models and several sizes. One model has swivels and one doesn't. Use them with fly or spinning rods for drift-fishing or shore-casting. Lead-free and snag-resistant, they are designed for anglers that use split-shot or sinking lines.



Kodiak Custom Fishing Tackle Socko Loco Fly Rigs

www.kodiakcustom.com
Kenai River sockeye salmon go crazy for Kodiak Custom Socko Loco Fly Rigs! This setup is rigged on approximately 5.5 feet of leader and equipped with everything needed to fish for sockeye salmon in permitted waters, except for a sinker. Tie your mainline to the 3-way swivel, then attach your preferred weight onto the duo-lock snap and it's ready to flip! Socko Loco Fly Rigs are available in four colors that drive sockeye salmon crazy!



Rapala X-Rap Magnum 40

www.rapala.com
The No. 1 offshore trolling lure just got bigger and better. Now offshore fish can run deep, but they can't hide, as the new size 40 X-Rap Mag dives to 40 feet—deeper than any other Rapala, giving diehard anglers a better chance of finding prized saltwater species wherever they lurk. A massive lip helps the X-Rap Magnum 40 dive to 40 feet unassisted, with nothing to hinder its action. Anglers can troll the lure as fast as 13 knots to attract mammoth gamefish. Boasting the tried-and-true X-Rap design, the bait features a textured, translucent, X-style plastic body, an internal scale pattern, internal holographic foil and attention-grabbing 3-D holographic eyes.



Hot Spot Black Mamba Flashers

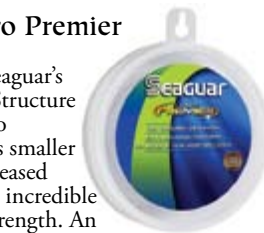
www.hotspotlures.com
Featuring a black blade with crushed glow tape attached front and back, these new flashers from Hot Spot were first used extensively—and with excellent results—in the Alaska commercial troll fishery in 2017. Now ready for sport anglers across the state, they promise to add that extra attraction necessary to pull in the fish. As always with Hot Spot flashers, the front swivel is a genuine Sampo ball bearing with a snap at the tail.

Seaguar Fluoro Premier

www.seaguar.com
Developed with Seaguar's exclusive Double Structure Technology, Fluoro Premier Leader has smaller diameters and increased strength and offers incredible knot and tensile strength. An extremely soft line with low memory, it's an ideal leader for fishing fresh- or saltwater. Fluoro Premier is also UV-resistant, chemical-resistant, non-absorbent, high-density and impervious to cold conditions. New 50-yard spools are now available in 20- to 80-pound-test.

Seaguar Smackdown Braid

www.seaguar.com
This next-generation Seaguar braid is so thin that 20-pound-test has the diameter of 6-pound monofilament! Smackdown Braid is made with 8 ultra-thin, micro-weave strands in a round, smooth-casting profile with extra sensitivity. It provides exceptional knot and tensile strength with unparalleled abrasion-resistance.



Fish-Field Magnum Grub

www.fishfield.com
Designed for trophy halibut and lingcod, this new 11-inch-long Magnum Grub offers a double-strong tail that's great for durability and a super-attractive swim action to help entice more bites. Works great with any type of gel scent.



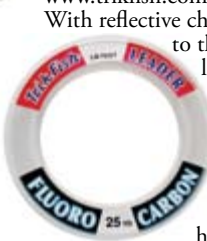
P-Line SS Fluorocarbon Leader

www.p-line.com
Designed specifically for the salmon and steelhead angler, SS Fluorocarbon Leader has extreme invisibility once it hits the water, making it the perfect choice when fishing clear-water conditions. Through rigorous testing, the material was developed to have the toughness and abrasion resistance needed to be an exceptional leader, while maintaining enough flexibility to tie great knots.



Trik Fish Fluorocarbon Leader Wheels

www.trikfish.com
With reflective characteristics that are matched to that of water, this fluorocarbon leader material disappears under the surface, while also featuring twice the density of standard monofilament, adding toughness for hard-pulling Alaska fish. It also has 20% less stretch and a higher resistance to abrasion. Featuring an open, user-friendly wrist spool, the Trik Fish Fluorocarbon Leader is available in 25-, 50- and 100-yard spools in everything from 10-pound-test through 125-pound-test.



Silver Horde Silver Knight Herring Aide Spoons

www.silverhorde.com
A new addition to the Silver Horde Silver Knight Series of spoons, these lures are painted on genuine silver plate, which offers a reflection factor that is about 90%, compared to nickel at 50- to 60% and chrome at 60- to 70%. The addition of a UV reactive coating will add another dimension to increase visibility, making the spoons highly effective in clear water or when fishing shallower depths. This also makes a great lure for targeting big fish on lakes.



Trik Fish
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Camping

Smokehouse Products Mimi Moto

www.smokehouseproducts.com

An affordable cookstove specifically designed to burn cheap, locally-produced biomass fuel—such as wood pellets—in a very clean and efficient way, the new Mimi Moto is user-friendly, durable and affordable. Thanks to two exchangeable burners, the stove can manage all cooking practices—the big burner produces a high-power flame for cooking with large pots while the small burner is designed for low-power simmering. It runs on nearly any wood-fuel product, including pellets, chips, bark and other wood byproducts.



Watercraft & Accessories

Leelock Swim Step

www.leelock.com

The Leelock Swim Step is a bolt-on product that is stout enough to sit on. Since it is a bolt-on product, it is easily removed, if desired. This accessory frees up a lot of space on your boat's dancefloor by providing a space outside of the boat to store your bait cooler. Constructed of 1/8-inch diamond plate and aluminum, this swim step will likely outlive your boat. This item will fit on the transom of most aluminum sled-type boats.



NOMAR Troll Droque
www.nomaralaska.com
Constructed from heavy-duty Seatarp and top-grade industrial webbing for strength and durability, the NOMAR Troll Droque is made for anglers who need to slow down their troll speed to catch fish—it will be of particular interest to those fishing for Alaska's saltwater kings. Available in 4 sizes, there's a Troll

Droque that's right for you, depending on the length of your boat, the horsepower, hull design and how many knots you are trying to trim off to attain just the right troll speed. All four sizes are available with a pre-rigged, sewn-in bridle with a 3-inch galvanized ring.

Mantus Stainless Steel Rail Clamp

www.mantusmarine.com

If you're looking for a handy accessory to upgrade the functionality of your fishing boat, take a look at these new Stainless Steel Rail Clamps from Mantus Marine. Simply snap clamps to the rail and you'll be able to easily and quickly mount and dismount items to/from the rail. Ideal for mounting solar panels, lights, speakers, cup holders, electronics and much more. Clamps are available for three sizes of stainless steel tubing: 7/8-inch, 1-inch and 1 1/4-inch.



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Watercraft & Accessories



Clackacraft 16-foot Switch

www.clacka.com

The new Clackacraft 16-foot Switch has taken the drift-boating world by storm and, offering the best of all design capabilities, it is even more popular than the company's tried-and-true Salmon Steelhead Guide Model. The Switch comes with two individual front boxes to allow easy walk-through for the front fishermen, while the front box can be removed quickly and the other box can be fixed in the center. This allows for two fishermen in front of the rower or a single, centered front fishermen with all kinds of extra room. Besides the mobile front boxes, the Switch also comes with a removable rear box, allowing more space for extra gear on multi-day trips, more room for the kids or a place for the dog. The Switch also comes stock with a 360-degree full walk-around rower's box, making this boat 100% walk-through without ever having to step over a bench or box.

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Kingfisher Boats 3425 Offshore

www.kingfisherboats.com

Proportionally balanced with a 10-foot beam and featuring a shearwater bow design with an internally reinforced structural impact grid, the new 3425 Offshore also offers a spacious cockpit for maximum fishability as well as plenty of comfortable cabin seating with 10-foot, 6-inch headroom. The available center mount kicker or triple engine setup will accommodate your own unique requirements, as well.



Rogue Jet Boatworks Yukon Series

www.roguejetboats.com

Another new fishing boat from Rogue Jet, the Yukon series promises the largest small boat in the

all-welded aluminum boat industry, with a 78-inch bottom, 102-inch beam and 36-inch-tall sides. The complete Yukon package includes full canvas, dual wipers, 4-stroke outboard and a trailer with disc brakes.

Garmin ECHOMAP Plus Series

www.garmin.com

The Garmin ECHOMAP Plus combo series features bright, sunlight-readable 4- and 6-inch keyed displays and 7- and 9-inch keyed-assist touchscreen displays. The series supports crisp, clear CHIRP traditional sonar and CHIRP ClearVü and CHIRP SideVü scanning sonars. They come preloaded with LakeVü HD maps that cover 17,000 total lakes, 13,000 with 1-foot contours. Plus, Quickdraw Contours mapping software helps users create custom maps with 1-foot contours as they fish. Use built-in Wi-Fi to pair with the free ActiveCaptain app for access to OneChart, smart notifications, Quickdraw Community data and more.



Sea Eagle FishSkiff 16

www.seaeagle.com

Holding two people or 1,765 pounds of people and gear, the new inflatable 16-foot FishSkiff offers low-profile gunwales for easy access to the water for fishing and a removable motor mount for easy folding and storage. There is also a trolling motor-mount system at the bow for those who want to add a trolling motor, as well as Scotty pads at the front and back for anchors, rod holders and other Scotty fishing accessories. There are even two built-in 40-inch rulers to measure fish.



Sea Eagle 350fx Fishing Explorer

www.seaeagle.com

This all-new fishing kayak from Sea Eagle offers two built-in, removable and adjustable foot braces with 12 different positions, meaning it will fit tall and short paddlers—and everyone in between. Built for anglers, there are openings on the spray skirts to hang hooks and fishing gear, as well as three rod holders at the front and back and a built-in 40-inch fish ruler. This angling-specific kayak also offers an Anchor Trolley System and allows the use of up to a 24-pound-thrust electric motor.



Fish Fighter Products Extreme Duty XD Bow Mount Anchor Nest

www.fishfighterproducts.com

Designed to hold most brands of Columbia River-style anchors, the all-new XD Bow Mount Anchor Nest mounts securely to the bow of your boat using the supplied hardware and is made out of heavy-duty aluminum alloy, ensuring it will last for generations. Anchor retrieval is made easy from almost any angle with the self-centering 4-inch roller design and side-load rope guides. A locking system holds your anchor in place while running rapids or during that long boat ride home when you're pounding wave after wave, while a computer-designed V roller system helps get your anchor and anchor ball out and over the bow when you retrieve it.

SeaArk Boats 2672 Workhorse

www.seaarkboats.com

The new 2672 Workhorse model is designed to be the perfect light-duty workboat. Usable for government agencies, fire and rescue departments, barge and river operators, or for anglers looking for a beefed-up jon boat, the Workhorse offers a large, durable design, customizable layout and a variety of options that make it the perfect multi-use boat.



Scotty No. 405 Offshore ORCA Kit

www.scotty.com

The new 405 is an optional boom mount designed for Scotty downriggers. When adjusted properly, the Offshore ORCA Kit allows for a closer inboard positioning of the rod holder, creating faster and easier rod removal. A built-in front locking tab prevents rod loss while traveling. Fiber-reinforced engineering-grade nylon offers strength, resilience and reliability. Includes ORCA Rod Holder body, adjustable rod holder height Extender and stainless-steel Scotty Star Knobs. All post-mount Scotty rod holders are fully adjustable both up and down. Designed for big-game fish such as halibut, salmon, lingcod and other large/medium fish species.



Scotty No. 1106B Depthpower Downrigger with Braided Line

www.scotty.com

One of the most popular Scotty Electric Downriggers, the Depthpower features marine-grade stainless-steel 36- to 60-inch telescopic boom, fully-adjustable descent speed, the ability to lift weights up to 15 pounds at 203 feet/minute, spray protected positive-drive depth counter, kevlar drive belt, 300 feet of 200-pound-test, low-drag premium-power braid line, boom-mounted adjustable rod holder, Scotty/Marinco Plug and receptacle, multi-position auto-stop, Scotty sure-stop, weight storage hook, and much, much more.



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EGO Kryptek S2 Slider Landing Nets

www.egofishing.com
For 2018 there will be several models of the extremely popular EGO S2 Slider landing nets available with Kryptek camo technology. The product offers key features such as interchangeable heads and handles, rubber mesh that prevents hook snags and real-time handle extension control. In addition, models with the rubber mesh are very soft on fish scales and are the ultimate solution for catch-and-release.



Pro-Cure Fuze Egg Cure

www.pro-cure.com
Pro-Cure has made top-quality egg cures for over 30 years and their new Fuze Egg Cure in both salmon and steelhead blends might be the company's crowning achievement! Salmon and steelhead guides across the Pacific Northwest, including in Alaska, have tested the cure extensively and have returned rave reviews. It really lights up a tough bite, and if it doesn't work, you get your money back!

Promar Elite Series Gaffs

www.promarnets.com

The ultimate solution to landing your next trophy catch, these heavy-duty, yet extremely lightweight gaffs are constructed from the latest high tensile-strength carbon-fiber technology. The tapered carbon-fiber shaft offers anglers a featherweight, flexible and extremely durable gaff that is easy to maneuver through water when landing big gamefish. Each gaff comes outfitted with a beefy corrosion-resistant stainless-steel hook and custom-wrapped grips that will ensure solid control.

Promar Folding Crab Trap

www.promarnets.com
Featuring four entrance doors, a tending door, and two escape rings, the Promar Folding Crab Trap makes a great choice for recreational and professional crab enthusiasts. Constructed of vinyl-coated steel wire, this durable trap folds flat for easy transport and storage.

Hi-Point Firearms 1095TS 10mm Carbine

www.hi-pointfirearms.com
The most affordable 10mm carbine on the market today, the 1095TS features a 17.5-inch barrel length, fully-adjustable sights and an all-weather, black-molded polymer stock. All Hi-Point carbines are +P rated to accept all factory ammunition and feature 100% American-made parts and assembly and a free trigger lock.

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Spyderco WaterWay Fixed Blade

www.spyderco.com

The WaterWay is a highly capable fixed-blade knife and a notable addition to Spyderco's burgeoning Salt Series line. Crafted from rustproof LC200N steel, the WaterWay's blade has a full-flat grind, a distal taper and an integral lower guard. Surrounding the full-tang blade are contoured, black G-10 scales, held in place with non-visible internal pins. A milled CNC-machined texture pattern on both scales provides a positive grip both in and out of water. Ideal for cleaning fish and a myriad of other chores, the WaterWay comes with a custom-molded foldover-style Boltaron sheath with a multi-positional G-clip mount.



Spyderco Native 5 Salt

www.spyderco.com



The latest addition to Spyderco's industry-leading Salt Series is the Native 5 Salt, a dynamic fusion of the best-selling Native 5 Lightweight and the extraordinary rustproof qualities of a nitrogen-based blade steel. The differentiating feature of this knife is its full-flat-ground blade, which is crafted from LC200N, a martensitic steel that is completely immune to corrosion. Available with either a PlainEdge or SpyderEdge cutting edge, the blade is complemented with a lightweight, injection-molded fiberglass-reinforced-nylon handle and a precision-machined high-strength back-lock mechanism. A broad-based four-position pocket clip can be affixed for left- or right-hand carry in a tip-up or tip-down position.

Skinner Sights BUSH PILOT

www.skimmersights.com

Originally introduced in .44 Magnum, Skinner Sights BUSH PILOT takedown hunting and survival carbine was an instant success. In response to popular demand, the Skinner BUSH PILOT is now available in the time-proven .45-70 Govt. The BUSH PILOT kit consists of a premium takedown lever-action carbine built to Skinner's specs by Chiappa USA. Featuring Skinner's rugged, reliable and accurate peep sights, this carbine breaks down and fits into a 20-inch OAL Skinner-designed case. Intended for use in a bush plane, boat, four wheeler, snowmachine or simply tucked behind the seat in your vehicle, the BUSH PILOT can join you on any excursion. Included in the kit are essential premium survival items (Brunton compass, Doan fire-starter, Flare matches, Ontario Knife Company RAT 7 survival knife sporting the BUSH PILOT logo serial numbered to the carbine, 850 paracord, space blanket/shelter, Hexamine stove) and it all fits into the Skinner folding takedown case.



Coast FL60R Rechargeable Headlamp

www.coastportland.com

The FL60R LED Headlamp is the first rechargeable wide-angle flood-beam headlamp. This light features Coast's Flex Charge Dual Power system with a reflective safety strap, making it perfect for any rugged environment.



Footwear

XTRATUF Spindrift

www.xtratufboots.com

The Spindrift brings XTRATUF's comfort and signature non-marking, slip-resistant chevron outsole to an amphibious shoe with an athletic silhouette, the slip-on-style Spindrift features a 100% drainable outsole, perforated molded EVA insole, and breathable quick-dry airmesh. It's an angler's dream-come-true shoe offered in both men's and women's versions.



XTRATUF Women's Insulated Legacy 15-inch

www.xtratufboots.com

The classic Legacy Boot for women has been given a toasty upgrade. With the same non-marking, slip-resistant chevron outsole, this new style has insulation all the way through.



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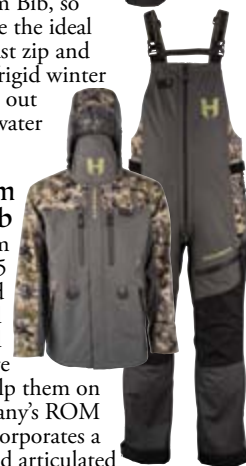
Hodgman Core INS Bib Liner Pant

www.hodgman.com
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Hodgman H5 Storm Shell Jacket & Bib

www.hodgman.com
Every feature of the H5 Storm Shell Jacket and Bib has been designed with the grit required from anglers who require dependable gear to help them on the water. The company's ROM (range-of-motion) fit incorporates a gusset under the arm and articulated sleeves to eliminate binding along your shoulders when casting, while 3-layer waterproof/windproof V-TechH breathable fabric and fully-taped seams ensure you'll stay dry yet comfortable.



ArcticShield Heat Echo Loft Jacket & Vest

www.arcticshieldoutdoor.com
The ArcticShield Heat Echo Loft Jacket and Vest are extremely weather-resistant outerwear pieces, offering a stitchless quilted design that features Retain Active—this technology retains your body heat, providing warmth in an extremely thin, breathable, lightweight material that allows you to move freely. The Heat Echo Loft jacket features an insulated collar; deep zippered chest pockets, a front zipper with inner storm flap, elastic wrist cuffs, large zippered hand-warmer pockets, and an adjustable drawcord waist that cinches tight to keep the cold out. The Heat Echo Loft is also available in a Vest style that can be worn alone, or as a layering piece on your next adventure.



Bags

Wilderness Pack Specialties Fishing Lure Plug Bag

www.wildernesspacks.com
Exactly what you need to get your terminal gear to the water in an organized, efficient manner, this fishing lure plug bag is made from high-quality, 18-ounce vinyl and has enough room for 28 large plugs and 24 medium plugs. The front pocket will also hold two 3600 series trays, plus extra gear.



ArcticShield Women's Classic Elite Parka & Bib

www.arcticshieldoutdoor.com
Developed with ArcticShield Retain Active heat-retention technology and constructed with a quiet, polyester tricot exterior that easily sheds rain and wind, this jacket will keep you warm and comfortable and allow for long ice-fishing forays, tree-stand sitting or blind-hunting in colder weather. The women's-specific cut features zippered chest and side pockets, top-loading gusseted cargo pockets with pass-behind hand-warmer pockets and a zippered interior patch pocket. The women's bib features side flex points, side and expandable rear cargo pockets, knee-high two-way zippered gussets, with a low-cut bib front.



FisheWear Allagash Softshell Skirt

www.fishewear.com
FisheWear's newest product, the Allagash Softshell Skirt was designed with the outdoors-woman in mind, featuring soft, fleece-lined pockets and a classic look. As fun as it is functional, the skirt can be worn with FisheWear leggings or paired with whatever is in your wardrobe, making it an easy choice from river fun to getting things done.

Bags

Orvis Safe Passage Sling Pack in FisheWear

www.orvis.com
Orvis' most popular style of pack has undergone an upgrade and is now available in a stylish, eye-catching FisheWear print. A slightly larger size accommodates more fly boxes, while the shoulder strap has also been upgraded, coming now with a cushy, foam-padded, streamlined design for all-day comfort. The pack is also filled with other angler-friendly design staples, including a forceps sheath on the shoulder strap that offers a magnetic anchor for easy access and securing, a unique zinger and tool attachment system that allows easy integration of your favorite tool into the pack, providing quick and easy access while minimizing the chance of catching, and cord loops to allow the addition of a tippet bar.



FisheWear Dry Bag Backpack

www.fishewear.com
Boasting more carrying capacity than the original dry bag (a roomy 28 liters), as well as comfortable, padded backpack straps, this new bag has plastic quick-release buckles to secure your roll-top and make it easy to get to your extra layers, fly box, camera and lunch. A splash-proof exterior pocket allows quick access to smaller items, while PU-coated 600D polyester construction and RF-welded seams ensure it's built to last.



Fish-Field Surf & Jetty Fishing Bag

www.fishfield.com
Lightweight, durable and saltwater-resistant, these bags solve the problems of how to carry your fish and keep them fresh. The outside is made of super-strong PVC-coated mesh, allowing for water flow, drainage and easy cleaning. This system allows your fish to remain alive and fresh while fishing and will hold several inches of water to keep your catch alive longer. Equipped with a strong, nylon adjustable shoulder strap designed to fit all anglers and fishing conditions.

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There is no more authoritative source for everything you ever wanted to know about angling gear for Alaska than those who spend every day onsite, immersed in the details of fishing the Last Frontier, where the weather, water conditions and timing of the fish runs are so variable. In the following pages we have compiled our Retailers' Choice Awards, a catalog of favored items and bestsellers from a network of the state's fly- and tackle-shop owners and personnel. Check out the websites, look over their choices and then stop in to get outfitted for the season ahead.

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The ultra-durable LoadOut bucket is designed for lugging, loading, hauling, bailing and stepping. Whether you're at the cabin, on the boat or in the garage, this 5-gallon bucket with a no-slip bottom is nearly indestructible and ready to work. Optional accessories like the watertight lid, caddy and gear belt make this a super versatile bucket.

Vedavoo Mammoth Sling

www.vedavoo.com
This lightweight sling is built with a giant fly wallet to carry a trip's worth of streamers, dries and other flies. A pocket behind the fleece gives space for two thin fly boxes for smaller flies. Perfect for swingers and meat-chuckers.

G•Loomis IMX-Pro Series

www.loomis.com
This new series of rods from G•Loomis were designed with guides and clients in mind. This new series consists of 15 models of single- and two-handed rods. These rods have a great balance of cosmetic appeal, moderate pricing and the durability and sensitivity to fit into anyone's quiver of rods.

- Soldotna Trustworthy Hardware & Fishing
- 44648 Sterling Highway
- Soldotna, AK 99669
- 907-262-4655
- www.soldotnahardware.com



Okuma "Kenai Red" Fly Rod

www.okumafishing.com

A Soldotna Trustworthy-exclusive rod, it's built for us just for Kenai sockeye salmon. This 8-weight, 9-foot 2-piece graphite fly rod is built to have strength and sensitivity for those feisty Kenai reds, and it's available at a very reasonable price, just \$44.



Boomerang Tool Co. Original SNIP Fishing Line Cutter

www.boomerangtool.com

Finally a fishing line cutting tool that consistently and cleanly cuts any fishing line, including braid!



Nate's Bait Fishing Line Cures

www.natesbaitfishingproducts.com

One of the most popular egg and sardine cures on the Kenai River, it's become a guide favorite. This cure catches fish!

- Big Ray's - Kodiak
- 212 Lower Mill Bay Road
- Kodiak, AK 99615
- 877-916-4276
- www.bigrays.com

Daiwa Presso Ultralight Pack Rod

www.daiwa.com/us

These little pack rods are great for backpacking in for trout and grayling. Their fast action allows the launching of very small tackle, making this the ideal setup for grayling and trout.



Daiwa Lexa 400HD Reel

www.daiwa.com/us

Excellent for lightening up your bottomfishing gear, this a great replacement reel for bigger, more cumbersome reels!

Garmin inReach Explorer+

www.garmin.com

No more need for a satellite phone with the Garmin inReach Explorer+. Features include two-way texting, the ability to sync with your smartphone to text, and trigger an interactive SOS function to call in the calvary when "it" hits the fan. The Explorer+ also offers pre-loaded DeLorme TOPO maps so you have communication and navigation in one device.



- B&J's Sporting Goods
- 2749 C Street
- Anchorage, AK 99503
- 907-274-6113
- www.bnjsg.com

Daiwa North Coast SS Series Rods

www.daiwa.com/us

According to Eric Jameson from B&J's, this the best sub-\$100 rod he's ever held in his hands. It's a great salmon and steelhead rod for the price. B&J's offers a variety of spinning and casting models in various actions.



Shimano Trevala Casting Rod

www.fish.shimano.com

The folks at B&J's say this is hands-down the best jigging rod for halibut on the market. They specifically recommend the TVC58XXH model, rated for 80- to 200- pound-test line. The rod is powerful and lightweight.



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Waterworks-Lamson Liquid Reel

www.waterworks-lamson.com

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Lamiglas Blue Water Halibut Rod

www.lamiglas.com

Lamiglas has developed the Blue Water series of rods to be as tough as the fish they hook into, featuring a composite blank of graphite and fiberglass, as well as bulletproof guides. Whether you are new to blue-water fishing or a seasoned veteran, the Blue Water series will meet all your demands.



Bubba Blade 9-inch Tapered Flex Fillet Knife

www.bubbablade.com

The 9-inch Tapered Flex blade uses the same patented, textured no-slip grip handle and stainless steel as the other Bubba Blade knives. The non-stick, coated 9-inch blade makes filleting fish and meat-cutting even easier.



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www.westernautojuneau.com

Les Jensen's Sitka Blacktail Deer Call

This locally-made product was a hit for us during deer season, and they are being purchased by spring bear hunters as well. The call is tune-able for a variety of pitches and tones, so it can serve as a predator call as well as an excellent deer call.



RokLees EcoLeeser

www.ecoleeser.com

The best rockfish/bottomfish release mechanism we've tested, and we keep one rigged on a spare rod to safely release unwanted or over-limit incidental rockfish. Helps reduce barotrauma to rockfish by lowering them to the depth they were caught at. A sharp jerk on the rod opens the jaw clamp and releases the fish with minimal trauma.



Fillet Away Fish Cleaning Mat

www.filletaway.com

We like this mat for filleting fish such as sockeye, pinks, coho, Dollies, rockfish, etc. It's easy to clean, yet offers good gripping power to keep your fish steady while peeling the fillets off.

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Daiwa North Coast Salmon & Steelhead Rods

www.daiwa.com/us

After only having these in my shop for a couple months, I already have lodges that are looking at putting these rods on their boats due to their great performance and fit for Alaska.



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www.threebearsalaska.com



Kershaw 9-in Fillet Knife

www.kershaw.kaiusaltd.com

Three Bears has the perfect fillet knife for the ones that didn't get away. The Kershaw 9-in. Fillet is perfect for filleting larger fish with ease. This fillet knife features Japanese 420j2 stainless steel, which is highly corrosion resistant, and the handle is contoured for filleting comfort with neon highlights to make it easy to spot in marine environments. The Kershaw 9-in. Fillet locks into its own ABS sheath for secure storage or easy belt-carry.

AMSOIL HP Marine Synthetic 2-Stroke Oil

www.amsoil.com

As the technology used in today's marine applications has evolved, AMSOIL has remained ahead of the curve in performance and protection with products formulated to deliver clean engine performance and control harmful deposits, wear and rust. AMSOIL synthetic lubricants are engineered to protect your watercraft in all conditions so you can remain carefree and on the water longer.



Bradley Original Smoker

www.bradleysmoker.com

We appreciate the Bradley Original Smoker because it is easy to use and creates a quality smoked product out of your fish and game. The automatic feed system makes it possible to load up your smoker with nine hours of Bradley Flavor Bisquettes. Two separately controlled heat elements (one for the oven, one to create smoke) makes it so the smoker can function as a hot smoker, cold smoker, oven, or dehydrator for an all-in-one product ideal for Alaskans.

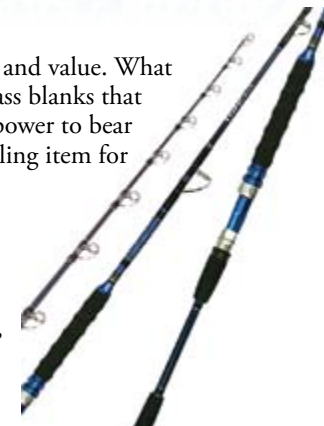


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907-766-2441
www.oleruds.com

Okuma Cedros Jigging Rod

www.okumafishingusa.com

These are excellent halibut fishing rods at a great price and value. What we like about them is their great action and their E-glass blanks that work well for absorbing impact while still having the power to bear down on big fish. These Okuma rods are a popular-selling item for the saltwater around Haines.



Guy Cotten Arctic Hoodie

www.guycottenusa.com

This warm, wind-cutting hoodie is water resistant, comfortable and breathable making it ideal for days spent on the water.

Gear Aid ARC Rechargeable Light & Power Station

www.gearaid.com

We are really impressed with this cordless light that can go everywhere. The light is storm proof, fully adjustable with color temperatures and 10 brightness settings. It runs from 20- to 320- lumens for 8- to 96 hours of operation. It is built with an adjustable metal kickstand and can also be mounted to tripods and a variety of mounts on the market and includes a diffuser bag and hanging hook.



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www.3riversflyandtackle.com



Sage X Fly Rods

www.sageflyfish.com

For Alaska, the 9 1/2- and 10-foot models from 5- to 8-weight are awesome. And the Sage X Switch rods are also just awesome rods—ideal for switch fishing applications across the state.

Simms Exstream Bootfoot Vibram Waders

www.simmsfishing.com

Spenny, but this is a well thought-out wader. The triple-layer vulcanized rubber on the bootfoot offers maximum durability and wading performance in extreme conditions. The boot is rated to -40° which provides warmth and dryness all season long and well into October in Alaska.

Fishpond Summit Sling

www.fishpondusa.com

A really comfortable sling pack that helps streamline your gear. The easy access vertical pockets are a smart design. 3 Rivers owner Mike Hudson said he learned quickly that with two-handed fishing you don't want to wear anything on the front of you because it gets in the way so he is a fan of this pack!



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www.bigrays.com



Daiwa DXSB Swimbait Rods

www.daiwa.com/us

The DXSB is a great all-around rod for Alaska. From fishing the Yukon for pike and sheefish to chasing king salmon on Deshka, these rods hold up to the punishment that Alaska dishes out.

Redington Behemoth Fly Reels

www.redington.com

I would call this one of the best fly reels for the money. I have personally seen this reel haul in everything from 50-pound kings to 20-pound pike and keep on going. The Behemoth is one of the reels I can recommend to guys that are looking for price, form and function.



Savage Gear 3D Pike Line Thru

www.savage-gear.com

Savage Gear has come up with something great here. We have fished these for two years with some great results on the Yukon River and Minto Flats. This bait is versatile and can be fished slow or fast, twitched, jerked or glided. It is one of our go-to baits for "Mr. Toothy!"

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www.xtratuf.com

XTRATUFs are part of Alaska culture and their popular designs collaborating with the Salmon Sisters in Homer, Alaska, have quickly grown iconic as well.



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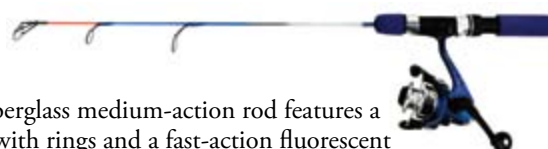


STORMR Typhoon Jacket
www.stormusa.com

Through word of mouth among serious anglers, mariners and hunters, this jacket quickly gained a reputation as the warmest, most comfortable and most functional foul-weather jacket available.

HT Ice Blue Medium-Action Rod Combo
www.icefish.com

This 24-inch-long translucent fiberglass medium-action rod features a premium EVA corkalon handle with rings and a fast-action fluorescent orange tip. The combo includes a IS-502S two-bearing reel.



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WiggleFin Swarm
www.wigglefin.com

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Shakespeare Catch More Fish Combos
www.shakespeare-fishing.com

There are three combos available in this line: Trout, Salmon and Pike. Stocked with pre-loaded Stren line and the right popular lures, baits and flies; these kits will have you ready to fish no matter where you are in Alaska. All of these kits also now come with "bungee" technology—a continuous elastic shock cord that holds the pieces of the rod together, preventing you from ever losing a rod tip again!



Mepps Lure Kits
www.mepps.com

Mepps has some killer lure kits specifically designed for Alaska waters. We sell over 20 different kits, ranging in retail prices from \$25-\$45. The newest addition is Cheryl's Kit, which is specifically packed for lake trout in central Alaska. Other popular choices are Kent's Coho Killer Kit and Dick's Rainbow/Dolly Kit.



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FISHING & LODGING DONE RIGHT:

YAKUTAT

STORY & PHOTOS BY TROY A. BUZALSKY

Last spring my wife's friend asked me a not-so simple question: "If you could fish anywhere in Alaska, where would you go?"

I was almost paralyzed to answer as the choices are virtually endless; Alaska is not only a large state but it also features more miles of offshore saltwater, glacial-fed rivers and tannin-stained and tundra-banked streams than any other state in the nation.

I asked easy questions to narrow the focus: What kind of fishing—salt or stream, gear or fly? What species—salmon, trout, steelhead or halibut? What time of the year?

Her response was open-ended, "I don't know, I asked Jim [her husband] what he wanted for his birthday, and he said fishing with you in Alaska." With an upcoming September birthday, I suggested one of Alaska's premier destinations: Yakutat.

Yakutat is located along the rugged Gulf Coast between Juneau and Cordova. Guarded by the Gulf of Alaska on the south, nearly impenetrable mountains to the north and breathtaking coastal glaciers to the east and west, Yakutat is about as remote as it is beautiful, and there are no roads leading into or out of town. During mid-August and through September and early October, the coho salmon start to flood the waters of the Gulf of Alaska, Yakutat Bay and the surrounding freshwater tributaries. Better known as silver salmon, these eager-eating acrobats often offer an unmatched angling experience. In addition, silvers cooperate equally well for those who cast bait, gear or a fly.

The next challenge was to find lodging and a charter and guide service, and all it took was one call; I was able to book our fully-guided adventure with the

Yakutat Lodge, including an unexpected surprise, lodging in the Big House.

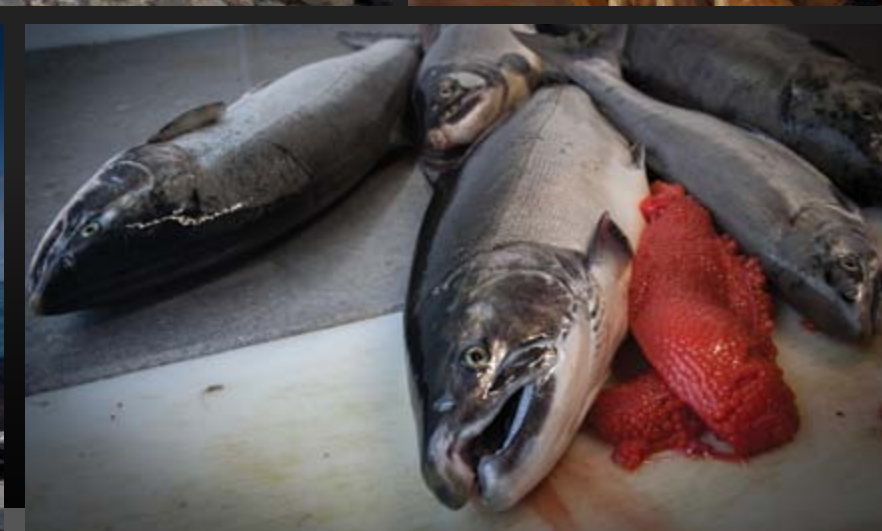
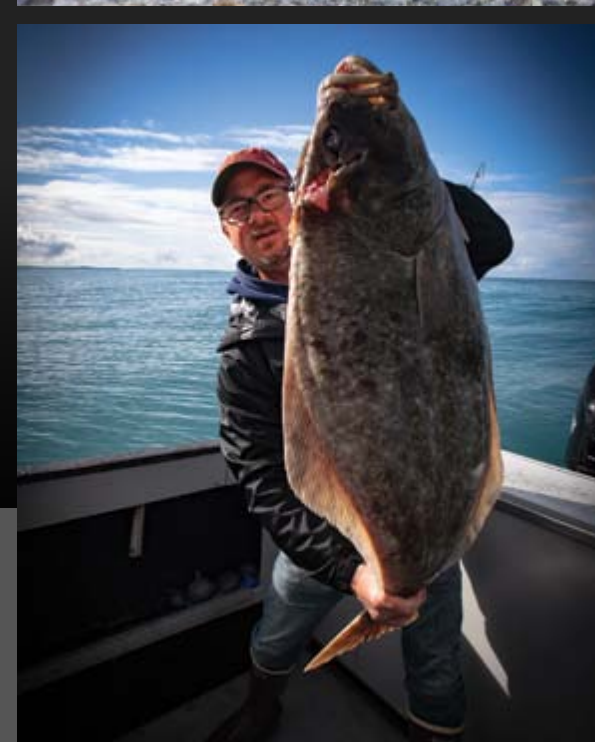
Once Jim and I landed in town, we were greeted at the airport by John Cole, the new Chief Operating Officer for Yakutat Lodge. John explained that the lodge opened its doors in the mid 1960s and was most recently operated by Ken Fanning and his family. In 2016 the operation was purchased by longtime guest Don Stamper, whose family has promised to continue with the heritage of the lodge, while making improvements and changes to even better serve today's traveling angler.

Adjacent to the airport is the Yakutat Lodge restaurant and store, and the Yakutat Lodge motel. The airport lodge is utilitarian, simple and comfy with cozy rooms, comfortable beds and warm showers. It is conveniently located across the street from the restaurant, which also serves as the morning meeting place for all river-guide departures. Each room comes with its own fish freezer, because let's face it, you're in Yakutat to fish.

We next traveled to Yakutat Lodge on the Bay. It's now starting to feel like fish camp, with a series of log cabins right off Monti Bay. The authentically Alaskan fishing cabins are equipped with sleeping quarters, private baths, full kitchens, large dining rooms and a covered porch. Guests also have access to the on-site fire pit and barbecues. The property sits immediately adjacent to the *Happy Hooker* Dock, where all Yakutat Lodge charters depart.

Our next stop was the Big House on the Bay, our point of refuge for the next week.

Yakutat by the Sea cabins sit on Monti Bay, in close proximity to the *Happy Hooker* Dock.
© Brian Woobank.



Inset photos, clockwise from top left: The waterfront "Big House" viewed from the shoreline is as stately as it is comfortable. This hand-carved totem pole is an example of the craftsmanship found in the Big House © Brian Woobank. A limit of silvers ready for processing. The trademark kype jaw is commonplace on fresh Situk bucks and often defines a larger fish. Jim holding up his first Alaska halibut with bluebird skies in the background.



Jim, the author and guide Aaron Shook show off a quick half-day limit of silvers at the lower Situk takeout.



Jim collects some mussels for dinner on the shoreline of the Big House.

Built for and designed by the Fannings, this quintessential log cabin served as the Fanning's primary residence for several years before being turned into guest lodging. Built with true Alaska Native influence, the spruce logs were sourced and peeled locally and the 30-foot-tall fireplace was crafted from ocean rocks picked from the local shoreline. More than 70 craftsmen, women and artisans helped create this true one-of-a-kind rustic masterpiece.

Walking into the Big House is breathtaking. Being greeted with a massive gourmet kitchen, it was easy to get awestruck as we entered the supersized sunken living room and gazed out at the panoramic view of Monti and Yakutat bays and the Mt. Saint-Elias Mountain Range, complete with views of Mt. Logan, Mt. St. Elias, Mt. Malaspina, Mt. Cook and Mt. Vancouver, just to name a few. It's one of those 'pinch yourself'

moments, as this isn't a fishing cabin; it's a fishing palace.

A totem pole filled with hand-carved local wildlife takes center stage in the living room while tree-trunks with their roots literally growing out of the floor serve as the newel posts for the peeled log staircase. Custom cabinetry and woodwork is found throughout the home, with artistic accents and custom-stained glass in strategic locations. Every nook-and-canny of the the Big House has received glorious detail.

Typically serving large groups from 4- to 10 persons, the Big House on the Bay features multiple large and comfortable bedrooms, including an oversized master suite complete with walk-in shower, soaking tub and million-dollar views from every angle. Upstairs is the TV/media room, complete with walk-around balcony, game table and again, that superb Yakutat view!

The Big House on the Bay comes with a private chef, concierge and all the amenities you would expect in a five-star resort. It also serves perfectly for corporate getaways. Because we are a two-person group, we forgo the private chef and use the meal package at the lodge, which includes breakfast, lunch and dinner daily.

Our tour ended, it was time to fish, and we promptly headed out for a half-day charter on the *Madame Hooker*, a Kingfisher Coastal Express built specifically for Yakutat Lodge, and one of three boats in the *Happy Hooker* fleet. We met up with Charter Captain Ralph Piccolo, who has been chartering Yakutat waters for the last 11 years. We headed towards Humpy Creek and trolled spinning herring. Fishing was steady, and in short order our group landed 22 silvers before nightfall.

We returned to the lodge for a steak and seafood dinner and to meet our guide for the



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Jim, the author, Brady, Dave and Molly pose with a nice daily Yakutat limit.



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next morning. Jordan Knigge fits the image of a fishing guide, stocky with a lightly-bearded face and golden, shoulder-length locks pouring from under his ball cap. He was all smiles and emitted positive energy as we discussed tomorrow's fishing plan. The more we chatted, the more excited we became—the storied Situk River is less than 12 hours away.

The sun had yet to fully rise as we arrived at Nine-Mile Bridge, ground zero for boat launching for all Yakutat Lodge drift boats. There was no competition between guides to low-hole one another; in fact, the opposite was true, as they discussed their plans and coordinated the day's fishery. Planning for rain, the weather gods did not disappoint, spitting an almost continual rain through the 14-mile journey. The only change in weather was the type of rain, whether vertical, horizontal or heavy mist.

Jordan explained that we would bypass much of the upper water, getting down into the meat of the run at about the halfway mark. Shortly after launching we rounded a corner and surprised an adolescent black bear that was standing on its hind legs peering over the brush. As we slowed for a better view, we saw mama bear in the background, taking exception to our presence.

The Situk River is not a large river, averaging 75 feet wide and 3 feet deep as it narrowly winds from Situk Lake for 22 miles

before joining the Johnson Slough and Ahrnklin River and entering the Gulf of Alaska. Tannin-stained, the river is littered with logs, log-jams and flowing debris. These obstacles create great fishing opportunities, albeit they're extra challenging when fighting a fish.

In most areas the river's edge is covered in bear grass and thick alders and willows, which create a limb-infested overhang. It's these shadowy waters where silvers love to hang out, and with an effective cast, fishing can be exceptional. Jim proved this hypothesis with his first cast, zipping his #4 Blue Fox spinner under the low-hanging branches into the dark and deep shoreline and being quickly rewarded with an aggressive head-shake, landing his first of at least a dozen chrome silvers brought to the boat. The limit is two fish per angler, so discretion is judiciously applied as we only kept the best of the best. For us this would be any fresh buck north of 12 pounds, with a few in the 14-pound range.



Captain Matt Pearson and Brady check out Brady's first halibut.

As Jordan processed our fish, we again made our way to the lodge for dinner and to meet with senior guide and guide manager Aaron Shook to discuss our next day's plans. Aaron told us that based on weather, the next day might be our last available on the salt. It's nice to have the flexibility in our schedules to choose fishing based on weather and opportunity, rather than a pre-selected and rigid schedule. Aaron introduced us to

Captain Matt Pearson. Matt's a soft-spoken yet deliberate gentleman who has chartered for several years in Alaska. Matt told us that he had boated two halibut over 90 pounds earlier that day, and he was hopeful we would have similar luck tomorrow.

The following morning we met up with Captain Matt and his 28-foot Alumaweld, *Hooker 3*. Matt explained that they were predicting large waves and wind, so with luck we'd catch our halibut and then go after silvers. We were joined in the boat by a family from California, including Grandpa Dave, Mother Molly, and 11-year-old Brady, who told me if *Fish Alaska* magazine ever needed a kid reporter, he would like to apply for the job!

Unlike the day prior, the skies were blue and littered with soft white clouds. We hit our first location, anchored and dropped four rods rigged with bait, assuring a good scent trail. It didn't take long before Brady hooked up with his first fish. It's always exciting exposing our youth to fishing, especially when they are catching. After an enthusiastic battle the fish neared the boat, and disappointingly, it's a *Squalus suckleyi*, also known as the Pacific spiny dog fish. They are quite the nuisance-fish, but still make for a great photo opportunity. Let's face it, how many 11-year-olds catch a shark?

After landing several more dog fish we relocated and almost immediately the boat sees action. A few small halibut are landed. On these waters an angler is allowed one fish over 28 inches and one under 28, and once you have your large fish, you're done fishing halibut for the day. Jim then hooked up, and finally line started to peel and a real fight ensued. Jim won the battle and landed a 44-pound halibut. As I feverishly jigged a white curly-tail grub I finally hooked into something solid... definitely a keeper, weighing in at 38 pounds and punching our oversized halibut tags. Next stop—salmon fishing.

Matt's preferred method for fishing silvers is mooching, and it proved deadly effective. Simply place the cut-plug herring on the dual-hook, lower the bait through the water column and retrieve up through the column. Silver fishing was absolutely red-hot as Brady put on a fishing clinic, out-fishing everybody on the boat. We even managed a few nice-sized kings, which were fun to catch but were not legal for retention.

With such a beautiful day Jim and I decided to opt out of dining at the lodge and cook dinner at the Big House while enjoying the view. Dinner would include fresh-caught halibut and prawns with a sampling of mussels that we harvested on the shoreline. Add to the dining experience a beverage of choice and it was exceptional beyond comparison.

Waking early, the skies were clear and the sunrise was starting to show its brilliance. We

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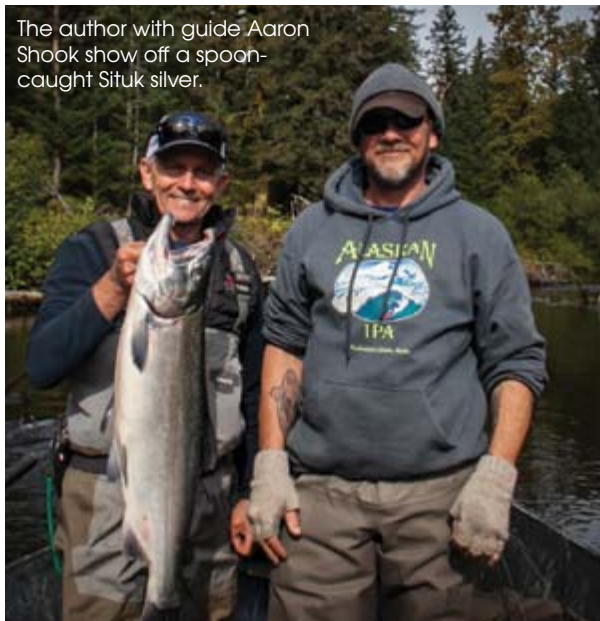
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The author with guide Aaron Shook show off a spoon-caught Situk silver.



The trip provided many double hookups for the author and his fishing partner.

had some brilliance in store for our day, too.

"The senior man" has little to do with age and more to do with experience, wisdom and knowledge. Guide Aaron Shook is without a doubt Yakutat's senior man. Having guided for the lodge for 16 years, Aaron has rowed more than 34,000 miles down the Situk, a feat that few others could claim. As we wound through the Situk, each corner presented new beauty as the sun filtered through the old growth forest at river's edge. The river was running more clearly than our prior day and the fish were notably more aggressive.

We were the second boat to launch because there was a report of a massive tree that came down the night prior and that had blocked passage, a fairly regular occurrence on the river. Guide Kraig Holdren led the fleet, serving as chainsaw-master to clear a safe passage.

Fly-fishing was the first order of business, as I cast my 7-weight with Dolly Llama patterns into likely-looking backwater. After a few easy catches, I changed-out gear, this time trying a Pen-Tac B.C. Steel tipped with a pink worm. The spoon found deep water quickly, managing an almost 16-pound, kype-jawed jewel. After losing a few fish, Aaron looked at my rod and suggested it was too light. Being somewhat bullheaded, I kept fishing it and continued to lose fish as Jim was hooking up consistently. Aaron handed me an Ugly Stik and explained I'd get better hook penetration. My success rate vastly improved, making me a believer in the Shakespeare Ugly Stik on the Situk.

After easy river-limits Jim and I were still ambitious and decided it was time to launch a lodge skiff and troll for silvers around Point Munoz. We rigged with 4-ounce keel weights and a cut-plug herring and "let 'em twirl." Before long we nailed our first silver and immediately started to mooch the area. We used this technique until dinnertime, filling

our daily possession limit and adding another fun-filled chapter to our adventure.

Discussing our next day's plans, Captain Ralph suggested that when in Yakutat, see all there is to see—and that includes the Hubbard Glacier. This became our plan, as the weather predictions include 4 inches of rain, 12-foot swells and 30 mph winds. We battened down the hatches, dressed for success and headed out. With luck, we figured we would fish on the way home.

We embarked on our 31-mile trek to the Russel Fjord via Disenchantment Bay. *Madame Hooker's* twin Mercury 200 Optimax motors effortlessly pushed the boat through the swells and chop as Ralph selected the scenic shoreline's calmer waters. Wildlife was everywhere, as we saw several sea otters, a black bear working the shoreline and dozens and dozens of bald eagles.

The Hubbard Glacier is the longest glacier in North America that terminates in saltwater. The glacier is 300 feet tall, 7 miles wide and 76 miles deep and one of the few glaciers that is actually advancing.

Ralph cruises the Kingfisher in close proximity to the glacier, offering an up-close-and-personal view. Free-drifting in sheer solitude, we witnessed several small-scale calvings, which each create a thunderous crash. Floating icebergs filled the fjord and drifted into the bay, some as big as a VW Bug. Jim even snagged a 20-pound iceberg as a take-home souvenir.

For halibut fishing, we headed to an area known as Africa. It gets its name because the bottom contour looks like the namesake country. Jim was using bait and I was eagerly jigging. Fishing was steady, but the fish were all the smaller variety, and we were looking for something a bit beefier. Finally Jim hooked up with a fatty that made it to Ralph's waiting shotgun. The 46-inch, 50-pounder was dispatched and added to the fish box. As the

tide turned, my jig finally stuck hard. She put up a good fight, proving my Uncle Grumpy right when he said, "Dynamite comes in small packages." Boated, she weighed in just less than 40 pounds...and our halibut tags were full.

Flying out in the afternoon affords the Yakutat angler the unique ability to still fish before departure, so we con guide Aaron into a half-day trip on our last day.

With an early launch, we quickly rowed past most of the other anglers, bumping into our friends Dave, Molly and Brady, "The Kid Reporter" (who makes his debut on page 114 of this issue). Dave had just landed a fly-caught silver and Brady's rod was doubled over. Fishing was excellent in the lower river, Jim casting spinners and me with my spoon, catching the biggest fish of our trip. After 2 ½ days on the Situk it's obvious why it's such a storied river, and why Aaron keeps coming back.

After a productive week of catching, our fish boxes weigh-in at 250 pounds. Having flown Alaska Airlines before, strategy prevails when organizing your luggage. Your first two bags run the standard \$25 rate, but when you add a third bag the price jumps to \$75 and that bag can weigh up to 100 pounds. We purchased a 100-pound fish box from Yakutat Seafoods and checked in one suitcase, three 50-pound fish boxes, and one 100-pound fish box, saving \$75. Suffice to say, our carry-ons were full.

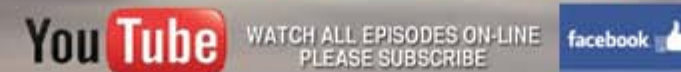
Yakutat is a majestic land of pristine beauty, like no other place in the world. A special thanks to our guides and the entire staff at Yakutat Lodge for creating a lifetime of memories, a fabulous birthday and a freezer full of fish.

Troy A. Buzalsky is a contributing editor for Fish Alaska magazine, where he also writes the Boats Column in each issue.

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Alaska GROWN ALASKA SEAFOOD

Fish Alaska Recipe

Togarashi Black Cod with Kale Kimchi and Black Garlic Aioli

Recipe by Kevin Lane, The Cookery, Seward



Makes 4 servings
Time: 45 minutes (plus fermenting time)

Prepare kimchi at least five days before serving, if possible. Recipe makes more than you will need, but the kimchi will keep stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for at least two weeks. You can substitute sweet rice flour and sugar with one large ripe pear and one tablespoon Alaska honey.

Ingredients

2 tbsp canola oil, divided
1 onion, halved and thinly sliced
4 (6-ounce) portions wild Alaska black cod (sablefish), preferably skinless
2 tsp salt
2 tsp shichimi togarashi (Japanese 7-spice mix)
1 tbsp black sesame seeds
Alaska Kale Kimchi (see recipe)
Black Garlic Aioli (see recipe)

Preheat oven to 400°F. Toss together 1 tablespoon oil with onion slices; spread evenly across the bottom of an oven-proof dish. Place black cod on top of onions. Brush with remaining canola oil and season evenly with salt and togarashi. Bake until cooked through, about 18 minutes. Sprinkle with sesame seeds and serve with Alaska Kale Kimchi and Black Garlic Aioli.

Kale Kimchi

2 bunches Alaska-grown kale
1/2 cup kosher salt
3 cups water
1/2 cup sweet rice flour
1/4 cup sugar
1 Alaska-grown red onion, peeled, julienne cut
2 Alaska-grown carrots, peeled, julienne cut
2 Alaska-grown turnips, peeled, julienne cut
2 ounces fresh ginger (about a 2-inch long piece), peeled, grated

4 garlic cloves, peeled, minced
4 Serrano chilies with seeds, stems removed, chopped
1 cup garlic chili paste
2 bunches green onions, trimmed, cut into 1-inch pieces

Remove kale leaves from stems, discarding stems. Rinse leaves and cut into 2-inch pieces. Place leaves in a large bowl; sprinkle with salt. With clean hands, rub salt into kale to break down the leaves. Let sit at room temperature for 2 hours. While kale is resting, place water, rice flour and sugar in a medium saucepan; bring to a simmer, stirring constantly until thickened, about 4 minutes. Remove from heat; set aside to cool. After 2 hours, rinse and drain kale. Stir rice flour mixture and remaining ingredients together; mix thoroughly with kale. Place mixture in a clean glass or plastic container with a tight-fitting lid, cover and let sit at room temperature for 12- to 24 hours to ferment. Refrigerate for at least 4 days before serving.

Black garlic, used in Asian cooking, is made of whole bulbs of garlic "fermented" over several weeks. The flavor is slightly sweet and pungent.

Black Garlic Aioli

6 black garlic cloves, peeled
2 large Alaska-grown egg yolks
1 tbsp soy sauce
1/2 tsp kosher salt
1 tbsp fresh lime juice
1 cup olive oil

Place garlic, egg yolks, soy sauce, salt and lime juice in a blender and puree until smooth. With motor running, very slowly drizzle in oil until thick and mayonnaise-like. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use.



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Alagnak	85	Winter King Fishing	8
Angler's Alibi	85	Icy Bay	
Anchorage		Icy Bay Lodge	114
Adventures in Eye Care	106	Iliamna	
AK eXpeditions	12	Alaska Sportsman's Lodge	48
AK Trophy Expeditors	97	Angry Eagle Lodge	71
Alaska Camper Van Conversions	9	Bent Prop Lodge	23
Alaska Diesel Electric	19	Talarik Creek Lodge	84
Alaska H2O Sports	16	Juneau	
Alaska Marine	28	Western Auto Marine	97
Alaska Performance RV & Marine	91	Katmai	
Alaska Raft & Kayak	13	Bristol Bay Alaska Tourism	42
Alex Hotel & Suites	91	Naknek River Camp	73
AshBreez Boatworks	13	Kenai	
B&J Sporting Goods	11	Kenai Chamber of Commerce & Visitors	99
Best Western Golden Lion Inn	90	Ketchikan	
Big Ray's	98	Alaska Strike Zone Sportfishing	92
Coast International Inn	91	Pacific Airways	111
Dewey's Cook Inlet	31	King Salmon	
FisheWear	93	Bear Trail Lodge	59
FishHound Expeditions	46	Branch River Air Service	85
Great Alaska Sportsman Show	11	Fox Bay Lodge	24
Joe Bell, Keller Williams Realty	110	Frigate Adventure Travel	85
Midnight Sun Car & Van Rental	90	Naknek River Camp	73
Mossy's Fly Shop	22, 32	Kodiak	
Oomingmak	63	Andrew Airways	77
PenAir	101	Best Western Kodiak Inn	77
Puffin Inn	64	Big Ray's	98
Quality Restorations	17	Discover Kodiak	16, 77
Ramada	111	Kodiak Combos	16
Ravn Alaska	4	Kodiak Russian River Lodge	77
Regal Air	11	Lake Creek	
Rural Energy Enterprises	7, 72	Cottonwood Lodge	47
Shoot for the Cure	17	Lake Creek Lodge	47
Six Robbles	19	Mat-Su	
Slippery Salmon Bar & Grill	111	Camper Valley RV Sales & Service	14
Tebow Financial Group	110	Deshka Landing Outdoor Association	14
The Bait Shack	91	Fishale River Guides	63
The Lakefront Anchorage	65	Naknek	
The Surveyor's Exchange	13	Naknek River Camp	73
Trail Ridge Air	91	Ninilchik	
Trout Realty AK	33	Afishunt Charters	12
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Women's Flyfishing	93	Nushagak	
Yukon Rack	14	Bristol Bay Adventures	85
Aniak		Nushagak River Adventures	84
Aniak Air Guides	73	Palmer	
Bristol Bay		Bleeding Heart Brewery	92
Alaska's Bearclaw Lodge	85	Tebow Financial Group	110
Angler's Alibi	85	Petersville	
High Country Guide Service	85	Bent Prop Lodge	23
Pride of Bristol Bay	6	Prince of Wales Island	
Cooper Landing		Alaska Sea Otter Sound Lodge	107
Kenai Riverside Lodge	51	Alaska's Fish Tales Lodge	107
Cordova		Log Cabin Sporting Goods	107
Alaskan Wilderness Outfitting Company	17	McFarland's Floatel	107
Deep Creek		Sportsman's Cove Lodge	83
Bottom Line Charters	13	Thorne Bay Lodge	65
Dillingham		Quinhagak	
Nushagak River Adventures	84	Reel Action Alaska Lodge	10
Eagle River		Seldovia	
Eagle River Polaris & Arctic Cat	95	Between Beaches Alaska	8
Glacier Bear Gourmet	12	Seldovia Fishing Adventures	63
Egegik		Seward	
Becharof Lodge	84	Grande Alaska Lodge	59
Fairbanks		Harbor 360 Hotel	12
Big Ray's	98	Major Marine Tours	12
Explore Fairbanks	18	The Fish House	100
Pristine Ventures	15	Sitka	
Haines		Alaska Premier Charters	53
Outfitter Sporting Goods	92	Vonnie's Guide Service B&B	53
Holy Cross		Soldotna	
Alaska Monster Moose Transporters	16	Alaska Drift Away Fishing	99
Homer		Alaskan Fishing Adventures	20
Alaska Coastal Marine	8	Birch Ridge Golf Course	99
Bay Weld Boats	25	Corsetti's Guide Service	99
Beluga Lake Lodge	8	Kenai Riverside Lodge	51
Best Western Bidarka Inn	9	Kenai River Suites	17
Homer Boat Yard	25	King Salmondeaux Lodge	12
Homer Chamber of Commerce	25	KPTMC	12
Homer Marine Trades Association	25	Randa's Guide Service	99
Kachemak Gear Shed	25	Soldotna Trustworthy Hardware & Fishing	5, 87, 115
Nomax	25	Sweeney's Clothing	64
North Country Charters	8	Sterling	
Sea Tow Southcentral Alaska	14	Alaska Canoe	99
Sloth Boats	25	Anglers Lodge	99
		Talkeetna	
		Alaska Off-Road ATV Adventures	33
		Dave Fish Alaska	33
		Love-Lee Cabins	33
		Thorne Bay	
		McFarland's Floatel	107
		Togiak	
		Togiak River Lodge	84
		Valdez	
		Best Western Valdez Harbor Inn	9
		Eagle's Rest RV Park	112
		Fish Central	31, 112
		Totem Hotel and Suites	112
		Valdez Convention & Visitors Bureau	16
		Valdez Fish Derbies	112
		Valdez Outfitters	112
		Valdez Saltwater Adventures	112
		Wasilla	
		Extreme Fun Center	58
		Man Gear Alaska	36
		Whittier	
		Major Marine Tours	12
		Whittier Marine Charters	13
		Willow	
		Deshka Landing Outdoor Association	14
		Yakutat	
		Glacier Bear Lodge	73
		Leonard's Landing Lodge	63
		Monti Bay Lodge & Resort	92
		Yakutat Lodge	105
		Statewide	
		Alaska Division of Forestry	14
		Alaska Marine Highway System	12
		Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute	110
		Deshka Landing Outdoor Association	14
		Dewey's Cook Inlet	31
		Kodiak Custom Fishing Tackle	82
		Man Gear Alaska	36
		PenAir	101
		Pristine Ventures	15
		Ravn Alaska	4
		Salmon Sisters	64
		Sportsman's Warehouse	116
		Three Bears Alaska	101
		National	
		AMS Inc.	17
		Acme Tackle	40
		ACR Electronics	55
		Adventure Products	46
		Ahi USA	49
		Alaska Outdoors TV	88
		Angler West TV	109
		Beckman Nets	89
		Bissell Insurance Agency	19
		Black Hills Ammunition	81
		Blue Fox	45
		Caddis Waders	61
		Clackacraft Drift Boats	56
		Cousins Tackle	35
		Daiwa	80
		Fish Fighter Products	54
		Fish-Field	42
		Hi-Point Firearms	70
		Hyde Drift Boats	29
		Leelock Anchor Systems	27
		Luhr-Jensen	43
		Ochocos Outdoors	2
		Okuma Fishing Tackle	39
		P-Line	41
		Penn Reels	79
		Rogue Jet Boatworks	28
		Salamander Sinkers	46
		Sea Eagle	57
		SeaArk Boats	26
		Seaguar	47
		Silver Horde	43
		Skinner Sights	51
		Smokehouse Products	76
		Spyderco	49
		Temple Fork Outfitters	36
		TEMPRESS	57
		Triik Fish	83
		Work Sharp Tools	50
		International	
		Bradley Smoker	75
		Hot Spot	42
		Islander Precision Reels	37
		Jurassic Lake Lodge	111
		Scotty	21

Final Drift

Notes from the Kid Reporter

Story by Brady Blum

Photo by Molly Blum

Once more my grandfather, mother and I are in Yakutat, Alaska, and we are ready for another week of fishing. In September of 2016, we had a great time and experience. We were catching silver salmon every few minutes. However, September of 2017 seemed different. It had been raining every day for a whole month now and the high-water levels dramatically changed how many fish we caught each day. Last year it was much harder to catch silver salmon, but much easier to hook a dog salmon. We were also lucky that

when we arrived there were a few days that it didn't rain. Regardless of the weather or water levels, it was just great to be in Yakutat!

Going out on a charter boat and fishing all day is exhausting, but it's worth the experience, because you're fishing in the Last Frontier. We weren't on the nicest boat I'd ever seen nor the cleanest, but it did the job. At first, we were landing dogfish every fifteen minutes. One time we landed a 40-pound halibut and everybody was really excited. Our captain was fabulous (at least that's what I think). He's rigging us up with whatever we need, guiding us the whole way. He's really the only one working. The boat is weighed down with halibut by the time we start to fish for coho salmon. There's blood from the fish all over the floor, and pretty much every



object in the boat stinks. It doesn't matter if the boat stinks more than hell itself, it was one of the best times of my life, a time that I will always cherish, and the fish taste delicious.

We started back to the bay after catching our fish, which didn't take long. As Charlie, an employee for the lodge in Yakutat, was getting our fish off the boat, we watched as people filleted the other boats' catch. We did a pretty good job of catching fish ourselves. The fact is we caught so many coho salmon that we had to put two fish on the same hook for a majority of the dock's hanger hooks to take the picture. We did well trying to catch halibut in deeper water. One man caught a 43-pound halibut while jigging. Luckily, everybody caught at least 10 fish each. My friend, Troy, told me that the cheek of the halibut was the best meat and pointed it out every time they filleted a new fish. Finally, we had our picture taken. It took some time to take our photo due to how many fish we caught.

The day before we went out on the ocean charter, we had gone fishing for silver salmon on the Situk River. Every time someone hooked up we wondered whether or not they were going to land the fish. That was occurring because the fish weren't hitting our lures or flies very hard. But everybody still managed their limit.

Every dinner and breakfast were phenomenal compared to what I get at home. At dinner we ate just about any type of seafood you could think of, and boy they prepared it well.

The trip was fabulous, bringing home an enormous amount of fish and having just about the best time of my life, as it happens every year when I get to go to that wonderful place. This year's fishing trip was just as good as any, for it took place in Yakutat, Alaska!

Eleven-year-old Brady Blum from California is no stranger to fishing, largely because his gramps, Dave, and mom, Molly, not only encourage his fishing, they enable it by taking him to destination locations such as Yakutat. After Brady mentioned he wanted a job as a 'Kid Reporter' to Fish Alaska author Troy Buzalsky, who was at Yakutat Lodge researching the feature published earlier in this issue, we asked him to write-up his best effort. So here it is, Yakutat fishing in the words of Brady, the Kid Reporter.



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