Gearing Up for Big Fish, Part 5 of 5: Putting It All Together

It is important when fly fishing to have the right gear so you're able to respond to any situation or condition. Consider moments like these (all of which have happened to me): Your heart stops as you watch your only pair of hemostats disappear into the depths. Or when one of your fishing buddies flips their pontoon boat upside down, a sudden 30 mile an hour wind gust sweeps you to the far side of the lake, or a motorboat gets too close, wrapping your tippet, leader and line around its propeller. Being prepared ensures you can keep fishing regardless of changing conditions, or situations like these.

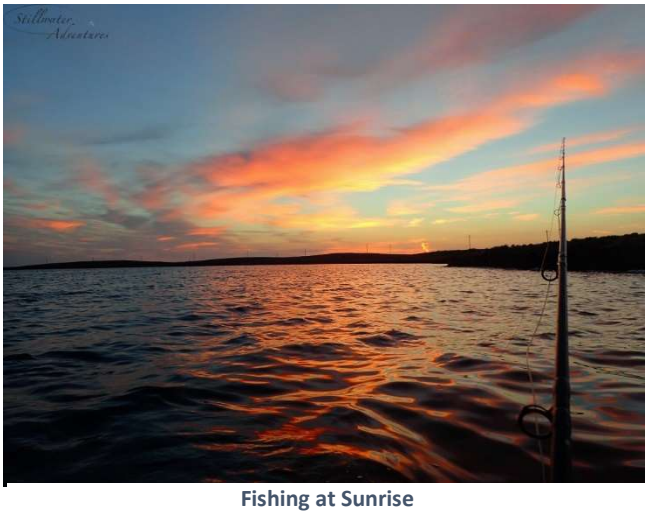


Gee, I wonder why I was the only angler on the lake? Well, at least I was prepared….

In the previous four parts of this series we discussed my recommendations for rods, lines, leaders and tippets, and nets to use when fly fishing stillwater for trophy trout. In this fifth and final chapter I'll review and summarize what we covered and finish with a checklist you can use to make sure you have everything you need.

Reviewing the essential tackle components

1. Rods



Fishing at Sunrise

My rods are pre-strung with each of the lines that I use. The benefit is that when the bite changes, I can quickly switch to the rod that has the appropriate line experiencing minimal down time. For lakes that support large trout, gear up to a

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six-weight rod. I prefer 6-weight, 9-foot rods with a comfortable grip, progressive bend in the tip, and large guides. The only time that I use a five-weight rod is when I am fishing dry flies, as I find it provides a more delicate and softer landing of the fly on the water.

2. Lines

The lines that I use are: Floating lines, Clear Camo Intermediate Sinking Line, and a 7-foot Clear Camo Intermediate Sink Tip.

Floating lines: I use two floating lines each on a separate rod. One line is dedicated for dry fly action, the second floating line is used when fishing with indicators. Having two rods makes it quick and easy to switch, since there is usually a short window when adult insects are hatching on the surface.

Clear Camo Intermediate sink line: (sink rate: 1.25- 1.75 inches per second or about one foot in 10 seconds). This line is used for fishing shallow shore line areas and the top five feet of the feeding zone in the lake. This line covers 75% of the time I spend fly fishing.

7-foot Clear Camo Intermediate Sink Tip: (sink rate: 1.25- 1.75 inches per second). This line is effective for covering shoreline edges as well as fishing the top few feet and fishing in between weed beds.

3. Leaders and Tippets



Leaders: To avoid breakoffs, I use either a 0X or 1X, 9-foot monofilament, tapered, leader. Over time, monofilament leaders absorb water and can become brittle with exposure to light. Thus, at the beginning of each season I replace the leader with a new one. A monofilament leader will slightly stretch, allowing the leader to be stretched straight if it begins to coil. I use a nail knot to secure the leader to the line.

Tippets: To the leader, I add a minimum of 3 feet of 1X or 2X fluorocarbon tippet. I secure the tippet to the leader using a blood knot. Fluorocarbon tippet material reflects less light, subsequently less noticeable to trout. Since fluorocarbon is stiffer than monofilament, use a loop knot to tie on the fly. A loop knot allows the fly to move freely, more accurately mimicking the natural movement of a fly. The tippet size should be one size smaller than the leader. For example, if the leader is 0X, I use a 1X tippet.

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Longer and smaller tippets are best used when casting dry flies or when you are faced with clear, glassy conditions. I aim for a combined length of leader and tippet of 15-feet. Lighter weight leader (2X) and tippet (3X) provide a more delicate presentation when using a five-weight rod. Using any lighter weight tippets will snap when trophy size trout attack your fly.

4. Landing Net

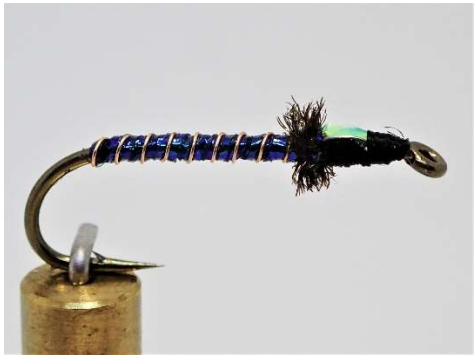
Bring a landing net that has a large, deep basket made of rubber material with a long handle.

Summary

Now that you have the essential gear, what else do you need to bring? The following checklist can be used to help assure that you have all the essential items you need for your next fly fishing adventure. When I am on the road for an extended period, I always include backup gear. Any tackle failure such as a broken rod, damaged reel, as well as a tear in my waders, the loss of a fin, or a broken strap means I must stop fishing.



Tiger Trout caught on Vickie's UV Midge Pupa


Vickie's UV Midge

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Be sure to read the other parts of this 5-part series on Gearing Up for Big Fish!
Part 1 of 5: Rods
Part 2 of 5: Line Selection
Part 3 of 5: Leaders and Tippets
Part 4 of 5: Landing Nets
Part 5 of 5: Putting It All Together

Vickie's Gear Check List

Boat

- ☐ Air Pump (pontoon boat)
- ☐ Fins (pontoon boat)
- ☐ Personal floatation device
- ☐ Fly Box(s)
- ☐ Large, Rubberized Landing Net
- ☐ Rods
- ☐ Stripping net (pontoon boat)
- ☐ Waders

Boat Accessories

- ☐ Backup Clippers
- ☐ Backup Hemostat
- ☐ Depth finder and/or water thermometer
- ☐ Drinking Water
- ☐ Flashlight
- ☐ Marine grade rope with D-ring (for towing another angler to safety)

Items to have with you:

- ☐ Extra tippet and leaders
- ☐ Fishing license
- ☐ Hemostat
- ☐ Hook sharpener
- ☐ Knife
- ☐ Nail knot tool
- ☐ Pliers
- ☐ Clippers
- ☐ Whistle
- ☐ Other:

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