

Gift prowling to make reader-shopping easy

Outdoors / By Paul Bruun | Posted: Wednesday, December 11, 2013 12:15 am

In May my minivan's rearview mirror collapsed. No screwdriver aboard could tighten the device.

Ken Farson, a passing engineer, spied my struggle.

"It needs a star drive," he explained, producing the proper tool from his Satellite Beach, Fla., garage.

Ken's Harris Corp. career included everything from computerizing the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railway traffic system to designing satellite communications for the Melbourne, Fla., company. His workshop is an inspiration when I'm visiting his fishing guide neighbor, Frank Catino, who is now also mayor of Satellite Beach.

Ken's explanation of the newest screw-head designs dictated a tool upgrade.

And, with Christmas in mind, here's some other holiday upgrades to wrap and put under your tree.

The Craftsman Ratcheting Magnetic Screwdriver with a 25-bit variety of standard slot, Phillips, star, square and hex drives at Ace Hardware is an all-time practical Christmas gift.

Everyone needs a camera

Point-and-shoot cameras rugged enough for Jackson Hole must be waterproof, shockproof and able to perform amazing feats. My favorite is the Nikon AW series.

My Nikon has survived two seasons without being trashed. For your gift-giving, consider the latest Nikon AW110. It is WiFi compatible for instant hero-pix sharing, says Aaron at DD Camera Corral.

Now waterproof to 60 feet, this tiny unit is shockproof from 6 feet and boasts 16 megapixel lens capable of 5X optical. Available in can't-lose-it orange and blue as well as black and where'd-it-go camo for \$249 with a case and two-year extended warranty.

If a camera is too pricey, consider another interesting optical tool.

A breakfast table of visitors at Nora's stared at me until one of the members came over and asked, "What's that on your cap bill?" A wonderful "I get it" expression came over him as I clicked on the tiny LED light that regularly helps when darkness sneaks up on me.

Headlamps are critical. There are a number of options available. Princeton Tec Quads and Petzl Tikka LED headlamps are my preferred night navigation systems, when I remember to put them on before it's pitch black.

Gary Taylor, a Louisiana guide of note, introduced me to the small cap bill light device, perfect for us

forgetfuls to strap down boats and stow gear in the dark. Available almost everywhere, cap lights cost from \$5 to \$12 and use watch/calculator batteries. Caution: They are not waterproof, so take them off in the rain!

There are lots of cool items for the anglers on your Christmas list. A hunter at Snake River Angler had a perfect description for the collection of handsomely-machined gadgets I fondle in tackle shops.

“Those are things you probably won’t buy for yourself,” he said as I snipped some braided line with the latest Hatch fishing pliers and whirled spools and checked drags on the newest Hatch, Tibor and Abel fly reels. Such gleaming creations cost plenty but will last a lifetime.

When Abel Line Nippers (\$50 in black) appeared three years ago, it was love at first snip. Compact, handsome and efficient, this piece trims bulky saltwater leaders as fast as delicate 6X tippetts. New this season is the Hybrid Hemostat (\$125) that locks handily then pops open upon touching a sensitive thumb bar.

Abel’s anodized fish artwork patterns remain impressive on reels, knives and other accessories. Orvis is selling the Abel Nipper as well. Simms introduced a new machined nipper version that reportedly costs less, but I haven’t seen them yet.

Fighting the cold

Being a founding member of the frequent sinus infection club whose heroic antibiotic rescues are showcased between September and May, protecting head, neck and feet from chills and soggiess is paramount.

Double-wrapping a silk Cattle Kate scarf around my neck has been a pleasant prescription to fewer colds and nasal infections, and I find that merino wool socks with thin synthetic liners underneath are excellent medicine to ease cold feet. The same holds true for long underwear applications. Merino and thicker synthetic neck gaiters (over the cowboy scarf) are added insurance. Robbie Kingwill’s Avalon 7 custom designs and snazzy colors highlight a batch of neck and head-and-face pullovers and face masks for winter and summer protection. I guess even ’boarders need to be warm!

While seeking new gift stuff it was imperative for me to spool a couple of Rio Intouch Deep 7 full-sinking 7 and 8 weight. lake fly lines, touted to have a “fantastic sensitivity for detecting the softest take.” The original 7 weight version of this skinny line sinks flies for lake trout (deemed Public Enemy No. 1 by this paper, Yellowstone National Park, Trout Unlimited and do-gooder scribes nationwide) to about 25 feet. The latest version weighs a ton, tangles less, gets deeper faster, and feels more sensitive. Propelling full-sinking lines at lake trout isn’t for everyone. To improve your chances, add the latest Deep 7 and go long.

Fluorocarbon leader, until recently, was regularly considered to be an expensive luxury for reducing visibility and improving presentations with sinking flies. Not so, reported longtime friend and premier

New Zealand trout hunter Tony Entwistle during a fall visit to Jackson. Tony regularly fishes the world's clearest trout water on the South Island and ties on fluorocarbon tippet every guiding day.

"I don't like the shadow from loops of mono tippet above the surface and fluoro is tougher and stronger," says Tony.

His theory is good enough for me. Fluoro is pricey but a few tippet spools of Rio, Orvis Mirage, Dai-Riki, Seaguar, Trout Hunter, Climax and SA are a generous gift.

Fish art, books are good gifts

For your favorite fly fisherman's stocking, consider a tube of Tiemco Dry Magic Fly Floatant, the latest trick stuff to keep flies on top. Forking over \$12 for floatant makes me long for the days of Mucilin and 25-cent-a-gallon gas.

It's hard to think of a more accomplished outdoorsman, angler and artist than Jeff Currier. Having shared trips with Jeff, his ability, stamina and enthusiasm are marvelous. Winning the only medal (bronze) by the U. S. in international fly competition sums up his skills.

At holiday time, Currier's collection of original fish artwork has been transferred to mugs, T-shirts, household and kitchen decorations. I'm sure there's more.

Local fly shops carry Jeff's great artwork, dishwasher and microwave-proof ceramic mugs and clothing. See all at Aspen Leaf Marketing's FishArtGifts.com. Check his latest travels on JeffCurrier.com.

Although Joseph Boots Allen collected his Ph.D. several years ago, he continues to avoid "working for a living" because of his passion for guiding fly fishermen on rivers surrounding his Idaho home. Boots is the only Doctor of Fly Fishing that I know.

And while he avoids classroom teaching, he has published three books about western fly fishing. His latest, "Modern Trout Fishing: Advanced Tactics And Strategies For Today's Fly Fisher" is an amazingly thorough and diverse collection of trout fishing lore that will benefit those who enjoy chasing the earth's most beautiful creatures.

Wrap up Christmas shopping with one of the newest Croakies fish pattern belts. They come in a giant length suitable for Bruun or St. Nick and can be trimmed to fit the friction buckle. They come in your favorite trout as well as billfish, bonefish and tuna designs. Very neat.