



My bench at home has the right tool for just about every task but in the woods, we usually make compromises that can damage expensive equipment. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

The right tool wins in the end



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

During the years I was imprisoned in high school, I elected to take woodshop. I figured it would be an easy class, considering I took woodshop in middle school and really excelled at it. The doorstop I made was truly an engineering marvel.

A burly old man, with the disposition of a coiled rattlesnake, taught the shop class and he never smiled. Mr. Burrell spent most of his time screaming at kids who were using power tools. He constantly delivered a lecture about the right tool for the right job. Once again, I made a landmark management decision choosing this class.

One lecture he delivered was about the most misused tool in the shop being the lowly screwdriver. This tool was designed to turn slotted screws for the purpose of tightening or loosening. Period. Nothing else.

In reality, the screwdriver is used for prying, lifting nails, stabbing, hammering, opening paint cans and hammering them back shut, and scores of other misuses. You know you are guilty, as am I.

What brought this memory back to the forefront was an incident that occurred at the range the other day. I was happily shooting one of my hunting rifles when I noticed one of the action screws was loose. I should have waited until I got home, where the proper tools are, to tighten it.

Since I did not have a screwdriver, I tried a dime. That failed miserably, so I moved up the food chain and tried my pocket knife; a rather expensive pocket knife I might add. Within minutes I had a buggered up screw head, a big

scratch on my stock, a cut on my finger, and a broken blade on my knife. Mission accomplished; the day is now a dumpster fire.

It matters not what your chosen outdoor activity may be, we have all been there. Trying to fix a shifter on your bike, battery terminal on the ATV, the sight on your expensive bow or a screw on your firearm.

How about those tiny screws on your fishing reel? The ones that don't come lose until you are on the stream but never at home where the proper tools are. After attempting to tighten the screws with the end of a file knife you have a stripped screw, cut finger, broken file knife and blood all over your fishing outfit, not to mention you have scared all the wildlife in the area with the tirade of profanity you unleashed.

Mechanical objects can and will fail. They will not fail at home, where the proper assortment of tools and parts are located to accomplish a proper repair. The object will fail 17 miles northwest of the turnoff from nowhere. My buddy Murphy, of Murphy's Law fame, will see to that.

We all carry, or at least should carry, a toolkit of sorts in our vehicle, boat, bicycle and ATV. I won't give you a suggested list of what tools to carry but will make a comment about quality.

Anyone who has ever turned a wrench for a living will attest to the pitfalls of using inferior, made in Taiwan, wrenches, ratchets and sockets. The professional probably has the scarred up knuckles to show off as a punishment for using junk tools.

The tool kit you are

going to carry in the backcountry will probably live in a dirty, dusty, wet and dark environment, full of neglect. That makes it difficult to justify an expensive wrench set for such a place.

However, when the time comes that you really need to fix something, you will be very happy you went for the quality tools. Nothing like busted up knuckles from a failed cheapo ratchet to improve the mood you are in as you attempt a trailside repair on your vehicle.

It is probably not possible, let alone practical, to always have the complete set of tools needed for any type of outdoor activity repair. I do have a set of decent tools in the truck, ATV and boat. Whenever I am off in the hills with any one of those, a tool kit is relatively close. It is the

specialty tools that we need to consider.

Your trail bike probably comes with one of those fix-all tool kits, crammed into a plastic carrying case. The same kind of kit comes with motorcycles, ATVs and outboard motors.

Do not rely on that kit. Check with your dealer, friends, repair shop, and fellow outdoor people to see what little tools and spare parts are most likely to be needed. A master link for the chain of your bike, or a set of spark plugs for the motorized vehicles is a good place to start.

In my fishing kit, I always carry an extra spool of line, with a freshly serviced set of drag washers and new line. A tiny screwdriver, matched to the screws on my reel, and a small pair of needle nose pliers.

See TOOL page A12

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