

Winterizing Your Rods

by Tom
Deschaine



For me, trout season is never over. I may not be on the water, but somehow I still manage to drag the season out all year, repairing waders, tying flies, researching next year's trips and cleaning up my gear. I don't look at any of these things as must do chores but rather as an extension of my hobby which I want to never end.

After my last trip to the water's edge, I start by winterizing my rods. Not only do I enjoy doing this but it's nice to know when spring comes, the work is all done and it's 'grab-n-go' time.

Most of the materials I use can be found around the house. Any specialty items are inexpensive and can easily be acquired.



Let's start with the rod itself. Whenever I'm working on rods and reels I always select an old soft towel or rag, something none abrasive so that it won't scratch the finish on the rod. I wipe the rod down with an alcohol solution. Alcohol will remove the dirt and smudges and will not harm the finish on the rod. Use Q-tips to clean and polish the guides and hook-keeper.

Next, I wax the rod. Over the years I've used everything from paste wax to pledge. They all do a fine job! Boron, glass, graphite and even cane, all accept and appreciate a couple of applications of wax on a yearly basis.

Next, I turn my attention to the cork grip. After several years of use, the handles will darken with normal skin oils and dirt. Cleaning cork is a delicate process. All care must be taken in order to insure that you don't pit the material. The best cleaning agent I've discovered over the years is 'Soft Scrub' (with bleach). I merely dampen the cork, apply the 'Soft Scrub' and use an old toothbrush to scrub it clean. Rinse with tap water and let it air dry for a couple of days.





Once the cork handle has dried completely, I apply a coat of 'Cork Seal'. It is readily available from most rod building suppliers for a nominal cost of \$5-6 dollars. It stores well, and a small container will last you for several years. Just apply, one single coat, with a small paint brush and let it dry. This product seals the pores and helps the cork to resist the build up of natural dirt, grease and grime.

Now that the rod is done I turn my attention to the reel. Most fishermen have a tendency to ignore doing any kind of routine maintenance on this important part of the tackle package. Maintenance is simple, and if ignored, it could become a problem at the most in-opportune time.

Simply open the reel, exposing the inner mechanism. You'll be surprised as to how much river dirt will build up just after one season. Brush out the dirt using an old toothbrush or shaving brush.

Lightly lubricate the moving parts using a general purpose oil, silicone lubricant or WD-40. I've had good luck with all three products. Which one you use is a matter of personal preference.



Lastly, I turn my attention to my fly line. I simply strip all the line from the reel and wipe it down with a product called 'Armor All', available at most auto supply stores. This product penetrates the line, removes dust and dirt, keeps the line soft and supple and reduces friction between the line and the guides. This is the best solution I've found for protecting your expensive fly lines.

When spring comes, you're ready --- ***JUST GRAB AND GO !***

See you on the water.....

Tom Deschaine
~www.michigandryflies.net~

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