

## Start of the Season

Start the season off right.

If you could see my desk you would understand. I am not the most scheduled or organized person you will ever meet. I'm no clean freak by any stretch of the imagination. I'm kind of in the middle. Average if you will. My car gets cluttered, my tackle box is in disarray, and Goodness only knows what's been stuffed into the jump boxes on the poor Baitkiller.

Holidays and time changes help me to remember certain things and help to schedule others. For example my birthday is in June so on new years and my birthday I check and shake all my hand held fire extinguishers and smoke alarm batteries. Let's see, two in the kitchen, three in the garage, three on the boat, two in my truck, one in the mom mobile and one in my little car. That makes an even dozen plus five smoke alarms if I count Grampies place. I have only had to use one once but I was sure glad it was ready when I needed it. BTW I rotate new extinguishers onto the boat and the old boat units get distributed as mentioned above. When an old one goes into the red or hits 10 years old it gets disposed of.

"So that's fire extinguishers, but what has that got to do with my boat?" Nothing really except to make this stretching segue about using the calendar events or time changes to schedule stuff that you never really seem to have time for. (Or in my case even remember) The daylight savings time changes mark start and end of boating season for many and simply divide the year for the rest of us. So when the clock changes, clean your boat.

"But John, I keep my boat clean and organize my tackle box every trip". That's great but pay attention to what you may be missing.

First empty the boat. I am talking empty of everything that isn't glued or screwed down. Pull off all cushions, all tackle, all lines and fenders, foul weather gear, spare parts, tools, books, charts, bird guides and long eyes. Strip the galley of dishes and flatware, food, fridge, blankets bedding, curtains and settee cushions. Even the mattresses if equipped. I want the boat empty. Remember to pull the drawers from the cabinets and take them off the boat as well. Because you picked a glorious sunny day you can put the textiles on the lawn for some nice sunshine and fresh air. Keep an eye on the sky and protect your gear as conditions merit.

OK, now grab a 5/16" nut driver. That is a screwdriver handle with a socket head that fits hose clamps. Start at the pointy end of the boat and work back until you have checked every clamp on board. If one breaks while tightening that's a very good thing because you get to fix it at the dock instead of offshore. I think you may be surprised at how many clamps there are. Look behind the cabinets where the drawers go and you may see some side hull fittings with clamps. Make sure to check them all.

Now grab a shop vacuum and get busy getting all the little stuff and dirt from these areas that are normally full of stowed goods or gear. Wipe out the cabinets with a little Murphy's oil soap or whatever works best for you. When you have the whole boat clean and tight spray a little indoor safe bug spray in those nooks and crannies.

Now you can take inventory of your gear, cull the unused or half dead stores, check your flares and fire extinguishers and re-pack the boat. Congratulations. You now know exactly what is on your boat

**and where it is. You now know all your clamps are tight and know where they are. Your familiarity with the bowls of your boat has been renewed and the mattresses smell sunshine fresh.**

**Don't let gas prices or the economy keep you high and dry. There is plenty of inshore and near shore fun to be had. Dust off those old water skis, picnic baskets and light tackle and go boating. You may email Capt. Campbell with questions, comments and ideas for topics you would like to see him address at: [Baitkiller@comcast.net](mailto:Baitkiller@comcast.net) or 239-389-9769 Capt. John Campbell AMS is an Accredited Marine Surveyor associated with the Society of Accredited Marine Surveyors, The American Boat and Yacht Council and the Collier County Marine Trades organization. Capt. Campbell is available to all local groups and civic organizations for speaking engagements on a wide variety of marine related topics.**