

# Tether Your Tools

Life preservers for expensive gadgets.

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**H**ave you seen the TV clip where a gamefish literally steals the angler's fish-lipping tool right out of his hands? Not only did the fish get away but it also took a valuable tool with it. Double loss.

One botch-job like that wakes most of us up to the notion that we are holding a \$100 bill, or more, in our hands when we reach over the side with one of those expensive grip devices or titanium pliers.

Tools not equipped with flotation, and that's most of them, are the ones that should concern you. This includes most of the fish handling, gripping devices produced by Boga Grips, Berkley, Rapala and Lipper, among other manufacturers. Good advice here is to sheath every one of these very expensive items to prevent them from rolling into the water, and also so you can find them when you need them. It's both aggravating and risky to start digging through hatches looking for your gripper when you have a big fish at boat-side. If it's on your hip, you always know exactly where it is and you can reach it no matter where you are in the boat. Most of these devices come with a sheath, but if not you can locate them on the Internet at sites like [www.knifecenter.com](http://www.knifecenter.com) and others.

If you're not wild about wearing a tool belt, Florida-based SeaSucker makes suction cup-mounted holders that you can stick anywhere on your boat to provide additional places to keep knives, grips and dehookers. The holders can also be removed at will and used over and over. Their site is [www.seasucker.com](http://www.seasucker.com).

When you have them properly stowed, on your body or your boat, it makes sense to attach flotation or a lanyard, or both, to the more expen-



sive toys. The lanyard is simply a safety line. The flotation will allow you to recover the gear if it goes over the side. However, make sure it has a sufficient amount of buoyancy to float the tool. Visit your local marine supply store and shop around for foam flotation. Commercial floats like the ones used on traps or net lines work well. New Boga Grip floats can now also be purchased at [www.fishquest.com](http://www.fishquest.com) and are suited specifically for the recovery of these tools.

To make your own fish tool float, drill a hole through the foam, if not equipped with one already, and pass 1/4-inch nylon line through the foam and around the tool lanyard eye, securing it with a square knot or bowline. Toss your tool with float attachment into a pool and check the level of flotation. The float should ride high above the water. If it doesn't, try a larger piece of foam.

Once you have matched the proper proportion of high-density, closed-cell foam to the landing tool mass, color the flotation device. Bright fluorescent colors, such as yellow or orange, that stick out in your fishing environment work well. A last option, although not necessary, is to paint your foam flotation. By using a two-part epoxy, you

can keep the shiny paint from peeling and completely seal the flotation.

Precious pliers like those produced by Van Staal come outfitted with a holster and a marine-tough Kevlar lanyard. These lanyards can be customized to just about any tool since they have swiveling, stainless gate snaps at loop ends. Like all things Van Staal, they are pricey—about \$60 for holster and lanyard, but if you can afford the pliers, you can afford the sheath to keep them.

When it comes to knives, a full sheath is a must—sticking a knife in your belt is a sure way to win a Darwin award. The Blade Tamer ([www.bladetamer.com](http://www.bladetamer.com)) is a fillet knife sheath engineered to fit curved or straight blades with a belt loop attachment. It comes in pretty handy, since most knives sold do not come with a sheath and you'd be hard-pressed to find the sheath that matches yours exactly.

Here's hoping that you catch fish big enough to tear the tools out of your hand, or that you catch so many that your arms are tired and weak when landing them, and that if that happens, that you can at least get back your tool. Tie them on, tie them down and give them a life preserver. It's money well spent.