

Carp Diver



story by
Dustin Vaughn
Warncke

Seize the Catch of the Day with High-Tech Bowfishing Gear

PHOTO: CANSTOCK

TEXAS FISH & GAME®

MARCH 2017

47

I OFTEN MARVEL AT SOME OF the advancements in the outdoor industry over the years, and bowfishing is no exception.

Just about everything has improved in the bowfishing realm, from the types of boats we use, to the bows and other hardware we shoot fish with.

Bowfishers have been targeting carp for many years now, as they are an invasive species to our river, creeks and lakes. Carp are usually easy to find and never fail to provide a good shooting opportunity when you're trolling around the shallows in a boat or even walking the shoreline if you are land-bound.

To break down the equipment to bowfish for carp and other "rough fish," we must examine the components that make a bowfishing trip successful. After all, quality gear makes bowfishing more productive and fun.

The first thing to look at is the bow. I often advise new bowfishers not to spend \$800 or more on outfitting a brand-new bow for this sport. That's my advice simply because the sport of bowfishing can be hard on the equipment you use.

I usually recommend you search out a low-cost, used bow in the \$50-\$100 range—or maybe a little more. Most older bows you will find will be old compound bows, but you can also get a recurve or lever bow at a good price.

My favorite bowfishing find is a used lever bow. Older Onieda bows such as the Screaming Eagle model combine the power of a compound bow with the design and feel of a recurve bow. These can be found used for around \$200-\$350.

Because most of the shooting done in bowfishing is "snap shooting," the recurve design allows for cycling quick shots. This is desirable when the action gets heavy on the water.

The next item is the bowfishing reel. Lots of advances have been made in this product category over the years. The most basic reel you can find is the hand-spool style, which is not really much of a reel.



Oneida Screaming Eagle lever bow and one night's haul.

With as many shots as you take in bowfishing, you will most likely find that hand-winding your line after every shot is tiring and time consuming. This is a fast-paced game so you want to play it that way.

The AMS Retriever Pro bowfishing reel kit was one of the first true bowfishing reels on the market. I have used one of these on my bow for many years. The line stacks loosely into the plastic bottle of this reel system and easily pays out when you shoot.

To retrieve, you hold the trigger of the reel, and it brings the line back into the bottle. This kit mounts directly to the mounting set-up of many different types of bows with no extra holes to drill.

The only issue with this style of reel is that it lacks power when it comes to the retrieve. This especially frustrating when you're trying to bring in a large fish.

Another style of bowfishing reel that has plenty of retrieval power is the Muzzy XD and XD Pro reels. These look just like large spincast reels, and they are designed for powerful retrieves.

These reels usually mount on to the stabilizer hole of a bow using a reel set, which is similar to the bottom reel mount area of a fishing rod. The only issue with this style of reel is that you have to push the release button before every single shot or you might

have a snap back or dry fire when you go to shoot your bow.

A Muzzy-style reel is usually lower in cost than the AMS style. Many professional bowfishing guides I know prefer it to an AMS.

For bowfishing line, you should use line made for the kind of bowfishing reel you have. Some lines are designed for use with spincast reels and some can be used both in spincast and other designs. I usually choose a 200-pound to 400-pound test bowfishing line, depending on which species you are targeting. For carp, 200-pound test line should do the trick.

For bowfishing arrows, there are many to choose from. The brands I prefer are TRUGLO, Muzzy, and Innerloc. The joy we have as bowfishers is that just about every major manufacture on the market today makes a good arrow. Expect to pay \$10 or more for a good quality bowfishing arrow and point combo or sometimes just that much for the arrow without a point.

The nice thing about modern bowfishing arrows is that they are as strong as an ox and will usually last for a while. Always carry one or more backup arrows because you never know when you might need it. For this reason, most bowfishing kits that include arrows, such as the ones sold in Academy Sports and Outdoors, come with two arrows

to get you started on a successful bowfishing adventure.

For bowfishing points, numerous designs are on the market. The most basic and common one I use for carp is a two-barb design with a trocar tip. A good example of this style is the Muzzy Carp Point or Gar Point.

The point is designed to penetrate a fish, and the barbs hold it until you land it in the boat or on the shore. After you connect with a fish, simply unscrew the tip of the point and the barbs easily reverse, allowing you to release the fish from the arrow into your fish bucket. Points are sold separately and can be pricey, so I usually look for a complete arrow with the point included.

Whatever way you enjoy bowfishing, be sure to concentrate on having fun with this action-filled sport. If you've never been bowfishing before, think about hiring a guide such as my friend and professional guide Marty McIntyre from GARQUEST Bowfishing Adventures (www.garquest.com).

Most guides will be happy to show you all the gear you need to go out on your very own adventure. Aim low, think big, and have a blast out there on the water.

