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November 21, 2010 in Outdoors

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Good guy guide to useful gear

OUTSHOP – Outdoors editor Rich Landers has been noting the gear he either used heavily or needed badly this year – two top reasons to consider putting them on your shopping list.

Among them:

- **Waterproof blankets** by Mambe (mambeblankets.com/) are more than just a few square yards of Polartec fleece. Whether you're enduring the wet weather in the stadium at the Apple Cup or in a duck blind, these blankets have a waterproof layer that keeps your butt dry.

The stadium model also has a radiant heat reflective lining. The pet model is lighter fleece with a waterproof barrier to protect the seats of your vehicle and the couch when you get home.

- **ChargeCard**, (stuffjunction.com/) is perhaps the lightest, slimmest portable charger available for smartphones, PDAs, iPods, MP3 players, PSP devices and handheld GPS units.

Basically the size of a credit card, it has twice the battery capacity of a cell phone. The usefulness became obvious at elk camp this year, when the young-uns in the group slept in every morning after their cell phones went dead and they lost use of their only alarm clocks.

ChargeCard would be handy in an emergency, too.

- **Best American Science** and Nature Writing, (marinerbooks.com/) is an annual anthology of slick articles from publications such as GQ, National Geographic, The New York Times and The New Yorker. Topics range from Darwin to distant galaxies – heady subjects tackled in vibrant prose.

For example, to describe the largest creature on earth, one writer notes that the blue whale weighs as much as “the entire NFL” and if Jonah had been introduced to the whale intravenously instead of orally, he could have swam through the arteries. Good stuff.

- **Peet boot dryers**, (peetshoedryer.com/) of St. Maries, Idaho, so simple, so effective for active people who don't have time to let the boots dry before it's time to go out again.

- **Campfire cooking grills** by Purcell Trench (purcelltrench.com/contact.htm) of Addy, Wash., come in a variety to suit everyone from backpackers to horsepackers and car campers. Light and strong and, most of all, useful and effective.

- **Bird Calendar** by Spokane Audubon Society (spokaneaudubon.org/) features birds of Eastern Washington by local photographers. 2011 version is \$10.

- **Map** of Washington streams and lakes, one of 22 wall-size state maps by Vivid Publishing (streammaps.com/) showing virtually every seasonal and permanent creek and body of water in the state. This isn't gear for the field, but rather a wall-hanger to marvel at when your luck has gone dry.

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