

Preparing for a collecting trip

By Daniel J. Logan

Collecting fish is a fun and exciting way to spend some leisure time. As with other activities, good preparation of a collecting trip guards against interruptions or other inconveniences and helps to make the trip more enjoyable. Following are several suggestions to help you prepare for your next collecting trip. If anyone has any other good suggestions to help plan a smoothly flowing trip, let me know.

The first suggestion is that before conducting any collections you contact a biologist at your state wildlife conservation agency or

fish and game agency and ask questions. Oh, I can hear it now - some people believe that I am being too legalistic and that I am just asking for trouble - that I am setting myself up for a major dose of red tape and meddling. I think that the benefits of speaking with an agency biologist outweigh any inconvenience. Anyway, red tape before collecting is less cumbersome and probably less expensive than after collecting. Most states have some restrictions on collectable species, sampling methods, bag limits, and open seasons. Find out if your State requires permits to collect fish. In Oregon, a

collector needs a permit to use gears other than a fishing rod, such as a seine or minnow trap, there are few exceptions. Also, in Oregon, to transport live fish, a second permit is needed. In Oregon the permit process is simple; the applications for both permits are only one page long each, and there are no fees. The only drawback is that

the turnaround time can be a bit excessive, about two months. After discussing permit requirements, ask the biologist for suggestions for collecting locations. He or she may send you to a location from which the biologist needs information. Perhaps, the recommended site has not been surveyed or maybe the biologist would want you to follow-up on someone else's earlier report. The biologist may ask you to collect at a site as an evaluation of a stocking project or species removal project. The biologist may ask that you to keep your eyes open for an unusual fish, bird, plant or what not. Ask the biologist what fish species they would expect in the area. Be sure to find out what species are rare or protected? After all, It would be unfortunate or uncomfortable or expensive if you were to walk into a biologist's office with a bucket or bottle full of protected fish. Ask the biologist to recommend good field guides for the regional fauna. The biologist may be another source of a collecting partner, either themselves or from a pool of volunteers. Who knows, maybe the biologist will call you in the future and ask you to make other collections - it has happened to me.

The second suggestion is to contact local game law enforcement officers (wardens) before each collection. It saves the wardens the trouble of following up on a report from the public that someone is fishing illegally.

In Oregon, collection pen-nit holders are required to contact the Oregon State Police (OSP) before collecting. It takes me five minutes to contact the local OSP office and let them know about my collecting plans. By the way, wasn't there a recent story in *American Currents* about someone who collected fish in Kentucky and did not follow the rules? The collector in that story paid for his activities with an embarrassing situation. Keep game enforcement officers on your good side.

The third suggestion is to show respect for private property. *Always* get permission to trespass on private property. A phone call, letter, or personal visit to the landowner are simple activities to do and are generally well received. Property owners have granted permission to me to access private property most every time. If allowed access, be sure to close any gates you open and never damage the property (crops, livestock, fences, buildings, etc.). Let the landowner know about any problems you find on their property. Also, a "thank you" to the landowner is always appreciated.

The fourth suggestion is to use your NANFA Membership Directory to find a collecting partner. A primary purpose of the directory is to help members find collecting or trading partners. Put the directory to use - find others in your region that share your interest in native fishes. If you are lucky, you will start a friendship that will blossom beyond fish.

The fifth suggestion is to make a thorough checklist. Simply, a checklist is a reminder

to make the necessary phone calls and to pack the necessary equipment. It is really irritating to get to your collecting site and realize that you have left something important at home. Also, as you are loading your equipment in your vehicle after a day of

collecting, use the checklist to make sure you have not left a piece of equipment on the stream bank. This past summer I went on a collecting trip and did not use my checklist at the end of the day. I left a dip net on the bank of a river. One extra minute at the end of the day using the checklist would have saved me a long drive the next morning - 1 1/2 hour drive each way! Figure 1 shows a

generic checklist that can be used as a model. Inclusion of most items on the model checklist is self evident. The inclusion of bottles, plastic bags, alcohol and labels are for preserving specimens. A future article in *American Currents* will discuss preserving specimens. In short, you never know when you may stumble upon something noteworthy that you may want to preserve.

The sixth recommendation is to leave a note with a spouse or friend - just in case the unthinkable occurs. The note should include an itinerary and the names, addresses and phone numbers of your collecting partners.

Lastly, have a great time collecting.

Figure 1. Model checklist to be used for preparing a collecting trip.

<input type="checkbox"/> call game mgmt agency	<input type="checkbox"/> call warden	<input type="checkbox"/> itinerary
<input type="checkbox"/> contact landowner	name _____	
	address _____	
	phone _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> permits	<input type="checkbox"/> first aid kit	<input type="checkbox"/> maps
<input type="checkbox"/> seine	<input type="checkbox"/> dip net	<input type="checkbox"/> bucket
<input type="checkbox"/> acerator	<input type="checkbox"/> field guide/key	<input type="checkbox"/> notebook
<input type="checkbox"/> bottles	<input type="checkbox"/> plastic bags	<input type="checkbox"/> alcohol
<input type="checkbox"/> camera	<input type="checkbox"/> film	<input type="checkbox"/> labels
<input type="checkbox"/> pencils	<input type="checkbox"/> waders	<input type="checkbox"/> rain gear
<input type="checkbox"/> personal flotation device		
Other _____		

