

Homage: Fishing Hats
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Pity the lowly fishing hat. It seldom gets the respect its proud owner believes it is due. Usually, for good reason. Fishing hats traditionally are the ugliest, oldest and, yes, most superstition-conjuring pieces of headgear in an angler's closet. It might be an old sweat-stained Blue Jays ball cap you wore when you caught your first musky - and just can't put away because such disloyalty might jinx you forever. Or it might be a battered straw cowboy hat that shielded you in that memorable blue-winged olive hatch during which you enjoyed the hottest brown trout fishing of your entire life - and you know you'll luck into another if you keep wearing it. Or it could be that fashionable Indiana Jones-style wool and fur blend number you'll always mentally connect with your biggest Arctic grayling yet.

Every angler has a lucky fishing hat; indeed most have several over the course of their angling lifetimes, depending on their favorite target species, fishing technique or geographic location. Some hats are downright goofy - what else would you call a white porkpie chapeau featuring a red cartoon devil asking "Where the hell is Cranberry Portage?" Others are functional, built to protect against rain, wind and sun without disintegrating from hundreds of applications of insect repellent. Some fishing hats are festooned with flies and lures, ensuring their owners are always prepared even when they've forgotten their tackle boxes back home.

Hats are selected because *we think* they look good on us - even if our spouses want to burn them with last year's leaves - because they declare our individualism or they advertise a favorite beverage or tackle company.

All fishing hats, though, make the same statement: *I don't care what anyone else thinks about it, because when I wear it I know I'm going fishing.*