

GARY HOWEY | OF THE OUTDOORS

Think You Know About Marine Batteries?

BY GARY HOWEY
Hartington, Neb.

Boat batteries, that start your boat motor on the first crank can't be beat, but when they don't we have other names for them, that would be bleeped out if I included them in this column.

To be honest with you, a lot of boaters install the boat in them in the boat and pretty much forget about them until the next time we crank the motor and it won't start.

They might throw a charge in the battery every once in awhile, but that's about it when it comes to boat maintenance for most boat owners.

I would bet that most of your average boaters, which includes myself, aren't sure what type of battery works best for each application and what needs to be done when it comes to proper care/maintenance of a marine battery. Many will just throw the same size battery in the boat that was there when they bought it. This can be a real problem when you are purchasing a used boat.

To get the latest information on marine batteries I talked with the marine battery experts at Interstate Batteries and they shared some excellent information on marine batteries that will help to make sure the next time you need your marine battery to start your motor, that it will have enough oomph to do it.

The question that I put to them was "I know there's a difference between an automotive and a marine battery, but I'm really not sure what those differences are and could the explain that difference to me?"

"According to the folks at Interstate Batteries, there's a big difference between a battery that's used to start a car and one used in the marine industry. Automotive batteries are made so that they produce a high amount of energy for a short period of time. When a car is started only a small amount of the batteries capacity is used. Once the vehicle is started, the battery is recharged rapidly by the alternator.

There are two basic types of marine batteries, there are those designed to start your main engine and those made specifically for trolling motors/electronics.

Batteries for starting your motor are your cranking batteries and those used for trolling batteries are deep-cycle batteries. The difference between the two is their construction and by the type and number of plates in the case.

Cranking battery have more thin lead plates than a deep-cycle battery and give better bursts of energy for a fast start. A deep-cycle battery has fewer thicker plates and will provide better power output over an extended period of time. Thicker plates can withstand the higher temperatures created when heavy current is drawn down from the battery over an extended run time.

You don't want to substitute a cranking battery for trolling motor use. A cranking battery in a deep cycle application will overheat quickly.

All batteries use lead plates which are separated by spacers and immersed in a solution of some type of an electrolyte. Traditional lead-acid batteries contain a mixture of about 35% sulfuric acid and 65% distilled water.

As batteries are used, they'll generate heat evaporating the water, exposing the lead plates. Exposed plates are subject to overheating and warping. When plates warp and touch an adjacent plate, it's not long before a new battery will be needed.

To avoid this problem, you'll want to keep from introducing contaminants like chlorine into your battery, never use tap water to top off the fluid in a battery. Distilled water is always the best choice.

When a battery is discharged, there'll be sulfur deposits forming on the lead plates. When you recharge the battery, the sulfur dissolves back into electrolyte. This sulfur oxidizes the plates and can shorten battery life. If these sulfur deposits become thick enough they can short out the plates prematurely, cutting the battery's life down dramatically. That's why it's important to recharge batteries right after use and check water levels frequently, preventing sulfur from forming and solidifying.

Another type of battery used for marine purposes is the Gel cell battery which generally cost about twice as much as a wet-cell battery; however, gels are not as prone to sulfur buildup. Another plus when it comes to gel cells is the safety factor. Since gel cells are sealed, they won't spill acid when tipped over or sloshed by heavy waves. Another factor is gels aren't subject to the danger of explosion that's possible under certain conditions with lead-acid batteries.

When purchasing a marine battery, it's good to know how batteries are rated and the terms used that indicate information about the battery.

A couple of these terms that you should understand are MCA@32° (Marine Cranking Amps at 32 degrees Fahrenheit), CCA@0° (Cold Cranking Amps at 0 degrees Fahrenheit), and Ah (Ampere-hour rating).

The Marine Cranking Ampere (MCA) rating refers to the number of amperes a battery can support for 30 seconds at a temperature of approximately 32°F.

Cold-Cranking Amperage (CCA) of an automotive battery is the amount of current a given bat-

tery can deliver for 30 seconds at zero (0) degrees F.

An ampere-hour (Ah) rating refers to the capacity of a battery. A typical battery that's rated as a 100Ah battery, at the 10 hour rate of discharge, is capable of delivering 10A for 10 hours."

Hopefully, you won't need to do a whole lot of cranking at 0° or lower, but the reason 0 degree is used for the rating standard is batteries are at their lowest efficiency under really cold conditions. Batteries that have high ratings under the worst conditions will perform even better during moderate or ideal conditions.

When it comes to the size of a battery needed, it's better to have a marine battery that's larger than required to do the job rather than one too small.

One thing that you'll need to take into consideration is the amount of space you have to store the battery in the boat. The larger the amperage of the battery, the larger the battery is going to be.

For motors up to 60 horsepower it's recommended that you use a 465 MCA. If you're running a 150 hp or larger motor, you're going to need a 500 MCA.

Since marine deep-cycle batteries are built with larger plates than an automotive battery, they have to take repeated charging. Because of this, the charging requirements are different than those of a standard automotive battery.

Marine batteries work the best when they are recharged after each trip. If you don't recharge them after each trip, your battery will develop a memory and when you do recharge, you'll find that it won't take a full charge.

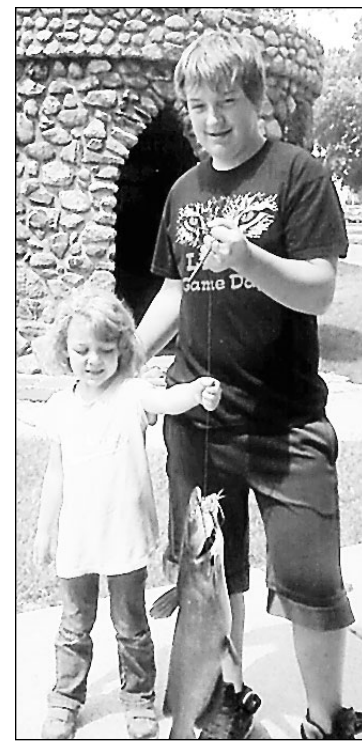
"It's very important when charging a deep cycle battery that you use a "true" deep cycle charger. A 10 amp regular automatic charger with a deep cycle setting works very well to recharge marine batteries. Voltage is the key to charging deep cycles. With the right charger you'll be able to charge your marine battery 40% faster using a deep cycle charger."

In the winter, it's recommended that prior to storing your boat for the winter that you charge up the battery, if possible, it's also a good idea to hook up your charger and put a charge into your batteries from time to time during the winter to make sure that they survive through the cold weather and are ready to go in the spring when you're ready to head for the water.

With proper care/maintenance, clean connections, and correct charging, your marine battery will last for years.

Gary Howe, Hartington, Neb., is the producer/host of the award winning *Outdoorsmen Adventures* television series that can be seen throughout the upper Midwest. For more information on the outdoors, check out www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

OUTDOORS SPOTLIGHT



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

TOP: Kyle Katterhagen caught this 9.3-pound walleye below Gavins Point Dam on May 28.

MIDDLE LEFT: Darian Jones caught this 3.15-pound Smallmouth bass on May 26 below Gavins Point Dam.

MIDDLE RIGHT: Elijah Storm caught this 3-pound, 11-ounce Largemouth bass at Lake Yankton on May 26.

LEFT: Tate Nedved caught this catfish on June 2 at Westside Park. He was fishing with Alysha Beck (also pictured).

Weigand-Burbach Rec Area Near Crofton Open For Business

BY LINDA WUEBBEN
P&D Correspondent

It's business as usual at the Weigand-Burbach Nebraska State Recreation Area northwest of Crofton on Lewis & Clark Lake.

"We just want to let everyone know there aren't any high water issues on the reservoir and we are in good shape here at the Marina and boat basin," said interim supt. Larry Joachimsen. The park officials fielded phone calls all weekend asking if they were open.

"We are telling people and boaters to be cautious on the water and watch out for debris," said Joachimsen. "There are some really big logs out there." He also added the boat ramps are open and the level of the reservoir is about normal for this time of year.

Joachimsen was out on the Lake last week a couple times and boaters will be seeing a lot of corn stalks and cat tails floating on the water's surface also. He said the conditions for water skiing are not favorable either but there are fishermen heading out in the Lake waters. He adds fishermen are tough birds and they enjoy fishing in all kinds of weather.

As the Missouri flows into the Lewis & Clark Lake reservoir about 30 miles upstream near Santee, Joachimsen said it picks up trash from the sandbars and brings it into the Lake area.

But opportunities to access the Lake have been greatly improved in the off-season by the completion of the Miller Creek area. It is already seeing increased use as a boat ramp area and the dredging of the basin has made the channel deeper and wider for boat use.

Joachimsen said the jetty system designed by the US Army Corps of Engineers was done with the aid of satellite imagery. The satellite views gave the engineers

a more correct picture of the water currents so they could build the jetties to offset the continual sweep of silt carried into Miller Creek by the river current.

The same engineering concept was used at the inlet and basin at South Shore. The water access and boat ramp in that camping area has been unused for at least ten years. The mouth of the basin was literally plugged by shale sliding from the river bluffs into the opening.

Crews in South Shore expect to be completed with the restoration of the boat ramp and parking area in the next couple weeks. Early projections estimated the boat ramp would be usable by July 1 and it seems the project is right on schedule. Continued rainfall would slow the ground moving process to level the parking area but the jetties are in.

The boat ramp is almost completed and will have a hand-capped accessible sidewalk along the ramp with a concrete pad for loading and unloading wheelchairs. A walking path was also created along the basin out to the jetties so walking fishermen can walk out and fish off those areas as well. The solar powered lights need to be installed yet and the



PHOTO: LINDA WUEBBEN

The marina at the Weigand-Burbach Nebraska State Recreation Area is one of the many facets of the location that is ready for steady use.

shale dredged out of the inlet is being spread on a hillside near the basin.

Joachimsen said the Corp is very pleased with these two improvements to the Nebraska State Recreation Area on Lewis & Clark Lake.

"We really needed more river access on this side of the river," said Joachimsen. "The improvement to these two areas offers boaters a place to pull in when the weather is threatening instead of having to travel across the Lake to the South Dakota side." Boating safety is a priority to the Corp.

The Weigand-Burbach crew will be hanging posters around

the recreation areas alerting campers and boaters to the situation the Lake and the seriousness of the water conditions this sea-

son. Joachimsen said campers and boaters usually communicate with each other very well and look out for each other.

Last season there were 280,000 visitors to the Weigand-Burbach Area and Joachimsen wants to increase that number to 300,000 this year. He said they have noticed a drop in visitors in the last few years and attribute the lower numbers to the price of fuel and the slow economy. After studying park records more, another trend was noticed. He said they used to be full Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday every week all season long. But in recent years, they seem to have lost a day and are only full for the last three days of the week.

Joachimsen wants to change

that and the park may offer activities to attract campers to come and enjoy the river and lots of relaxation.

"We are open for business; we were full this past weekend and plan on having a successful summer of fun," said Joachimsen.

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