



Tips & Techniques

Better angling photography: Revisiting an old article with some new details



In the good old days of hunting and fishing bringing back trophies were the norm and done thing. That era of hunting and fishing is long gone and people these days are a lot more aware of the often precarious position wildlife is in around the world. Angling has for long led the way of unsustainably managing fish stocks, by becoming a multibillion dollar industry worldwide. Catch and Release fishing is practiced by a vast majority of anglers around the world who go out on fishing trips looking for that trophy fish or catch of a lifetime. In today's world where communication has become so easy and everyone has the need to stay in touch, a new breed of anglers are travelling the world where now sharing their trophies has become so much easier and all, thanks to the digital camera.

Over a decade ago one had to rely on some 'skill' to take good photographs that captured the moment and kept it as realistic as possible to the actual event. The film then had to be kept often for weeks before it could be processed and then the final print developed before an angler was able to share his images with friends and family. Now, with the advent of digital cameras, taking a good photograph of one's catch has never been easier. Most compact point and shoot digital cameras will deliver excellent results even with the camera on auto mode. For most people, messing about with manual settings, aperture, shutter speeds, ISO, etc. has become a thing of the past. With one's camera set on 'auto', all an angler has to do is concentrate on framing that special picture that may go up as the center piece of his living room wall.

For charter operators like us, catching or knowing where to catch trophy fish are just the beginning in a long list of services we need to provide to the tech-savvy visiting angler. It does help greatly if one can take decent photographs!



Tips & Techniques

A few pointers to taking good photographs are listed below to help future clients 'capture' their fish of a lifetime before they release it to swim back in to the ocean where it belongs.

Taking better pictures

1. Fill the frame with the angler and fish, avoid standing too far back which loses focus on the main subject.



2. Get in the habit of using a flash while shooting in broad daylight. You may have to manually switch the flash on to activate it. What the flash does is eliminate harsh shadows from the sun that usually is quite high up in the sky. Also, many anglers wear caps in the hot sun so the flash will help light up their faces.



The difference can be clearly seen with the images above.



Tips & Techniques



3. Avoid objects growing out of the subject's head or body i.e. trees, rods, structure, or railings. Take your time to get a well composed picture by preparing your surroundings before you take the picture.

4. Hold the fish right! Make sure you're holding the fish upright and well supported so one can actually see the shape and size of the fish. If you don't know how to do this our guides and skippers will position the fish for you and take an awesome picture as well.



5. Do not let the fish slant so one sees mainly the belly of the fish rather than its side. Pictures like this often make the fish look smaller or quite strange and lead to an angler sitting in an awkward position. Worse still, a fish can be dropped, causing it serious injury.



Tips & Techniques



6. Try and keep the eye of the fish in focus as shown above. Pictures of fish often take on life if the eye of the fish is in focus.



7. Keep the fish in focus! Everyone wants to see the fish. Take a second to see your camera's auto focus hasn't locked on to the railing of the boat or some distant object.



Tips & Techniques

8. Keep an eye on the coloration of the fish. Fish are spectacular creatures and come in varied textures and colors. Make sure your photograph translates that in the truest sense.



9. Make the angler smile. Often you can get the mood on the boat across to someone, sitting miles away from the event, that is looking at the photograph. Try and capture the emotions, joy and fulfilment on the boat through your photographs.

10. Boats have limited space. Often there's a lot of excitement and activity on a boat while a fish is caught. There also is a sense of urgency as the fish has to be returned to the water as soon as possible. With all these things in mind please don't cut the poor anglers head in half!





Tips & Techniques

11. Similarly with fish. Try and compose your picture with all fins and tail intact. Composing pictures with all fins etc. intact make the fish look a lot more spectacular.



12. Keep the background in mind. Choose a scenic background that conveys the feeling of being out there in the wild. Often anglers travel to far-off destinations that are visually spectacular. Try and capture a feeling of being out there. This however is debatable. Many anglers are careful to choose their backgrounds as they don't want to give away a productive location to other fishermen who might be scanning their photographs for an indicator of where the fish was caught. It really doesn't matter but, a lot more goes in to catching trophy fish. We know that!



Tips & Techniques

13. Remember a boat is a variable space and constantly moving. Once an angler has the fish in his hand ask the Captain to spin the boat around, so the angler is facing the sun. Try and compose pictures with the subject lit up by the sun.



14. Avoid shadows from rods in holders, the top, other anglers or even oneself while taking pictures of an angler with his prized catch.

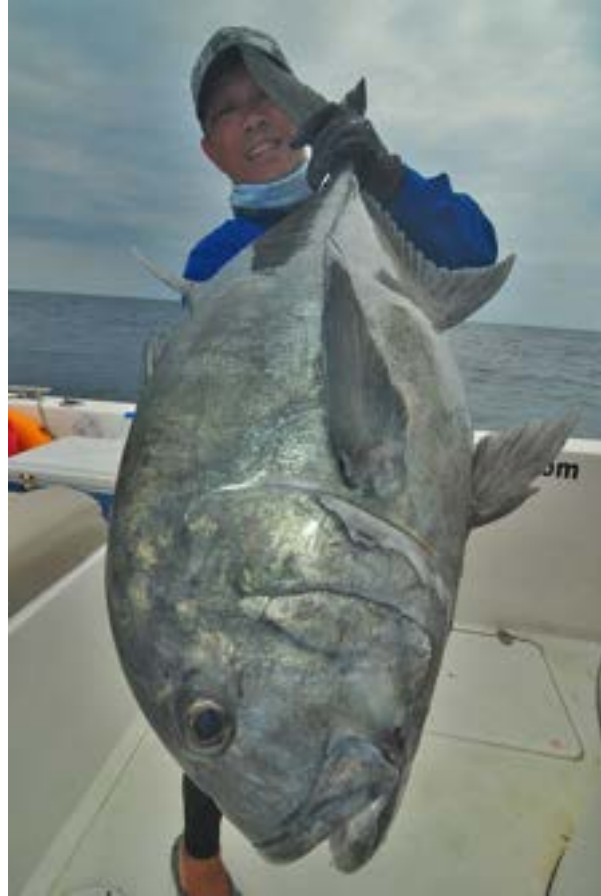
15. Try and keep the horizon flat. Boats are moving most of the time and life gets a lot harder when there's wind. Make sure you concentrate to get the horizon as flat as possible. Also keep in note that its natural for us to take photographs with the top right hand corner of the frame lower than the top left hand corner, this makes the horizon slant again. This is true for most right handers who take photographs. The opposite is true for left handers.





Tips & Techniques

16. Most pictures are shot horizontally. See when you can shoot a photograph vertically. This often changes the monotony of shooting horizontally all the time. Also with long fish like mackerel, wahoo and barracuda one can get some interesting angles and perspectives.



17. Avoid taking pictures of dead fish or fish covered in blood. Apart from portraying this great sport in bad light it also just makes photographs of the angler and fish an ugly sight.



Tips & Techniques

18. Matching the hatch is fine while you're out fishing, but matching the catch is something else. Try not to wear the same colors as the fish you catch. They tend to look better!



19. Taking a fish back for dinner is fine, but try and finish off your photography session on the boat or by the water. Pictures in kitchens, in studios and other locations on land just look strange and for all one knows you could have just bought the fish from the market!



Tips & Techniques



20. While out fishing there's so much happening on the boat. Take more pictures of the action around you, like an angler fighting a fish with his rod bent over or a multiple hookup with 2 anglers fighting their fish at the same time. Try and get creative and capture all the action up to the point where the crew lands the fish for the angler.

Tips & Techniques



21. Capture photographs of people casting. It's often a challenge to get an angler's lure in the air as he casts.

22. Look for interesting angles to shoot from. Try shooting from deck level or from an angle that will make a person look twice at your photograph.



Tips & Techniques



23. Look for interesting skies. Being on a boat gives you a sense of space and wide-open expanses. Often, early mornings or late afternoons have spectacular clouds. Try and frame your photograph capturing an interesting sky as well.



Tips & Techniques



24. It is all not about catching fish it's about releasing them as well. Try and lean over the side and photograph the crew or the angler releasing fish back to the sea.



25. Angling for us all is a lot more than just catching fish. It's the whole deal of being at an exotic place, often with friends, sharing good times and having a great time. Try and capture all that as well.

And finally the most important one



Tips & Techniques



26. When using a wide angle or fish eye lens use it in a subtle way without overdoing it, oversized knees and fingers are a sure giveaway that the fish is not as big as it looks in the picture.

Use some of the tips we have included in this article, so we can look forward to seeing some great photographs taken on our boats in the Andaman Islands the next time you are out fishing with us. We'll get you to catch the fish and you can take the photograph that will be a memory forever.

Tight lines and good luck
Darran Davis