

"YEAH, BREAKER 1-9, THIS  
HERE'S THE RUBBER DUCK."  
PHOTO: VIRGINIA MARSHALL



## CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

"Thunder Bay Coast Guard, this is sea kayaker Alison requesting a radio check." From our remote pocket beach, we strain to hear a response through the VHF radio's speaker. Alison tries several more times, the other Guide's Course students encouraging her. Suddenly a voice crackles through the static, "This is Thunder Bay Coast Guard, please say again." Alison's composure flees as swiftly as a startled deer. "Yeah, hi, um...can I get...I mean can you...um...check my radio?" Silence, but I swear I can hear them laughing across the lake. **VIRGINIA MARSHALL**

### McMurdo

#### FastFind 220 PLB

[www.mcmurdomarine.com](http://www.mcmurdomarine.com)  
\$249.99

For peace of mind without the annual price tag, a personal locator beacon (PLB) is the simple solution. McMurdo's FastFind 220 is subscription-free and transmits your precise GPS location via dedicated frequency to the global network of search and rescue satellites, alerting rescuers within minutes. Slip this palm-sized, waterproof device into your PFD pocket so it's there if you need it. The FastFind 220 floats with its supplied storage pouch, and features a six-year battery standby life, minimum 24 hours of continuous transmitting and an SOS strobe. **Best for:** Emergency signaling and positioning.

### SPOT

#### Global Phone

[www.findmespot.com](http://www.findmespot.com)  
\$499

Smaller than the cordless on my desk, and every bit as easy to use, SPOT's new Global Phone is an affordable satellite phone that lets you speak with friends, family or emergency responders (just dial 911) and receive text messages from almost anywhere in the world. Even better, with the launching of SPOT parent company Globalstar's second-generation satellite network last year, the Global Phone has more reliable connectivity, crystal clear voice quality and the fastest data speeds in the industry. With an optional data kit, you can even check and respond to emails. Airtime plans start at \$24.99 monthly. **Best for:** Two-way voice communication with friends and emergency services.

### Cobra

#### MR HH450 Dual

[www.cobra.com](http://www.cobra.com)  
\$149.95

A rugged, waterproof handheld marine VHF radio like Cobra's versatile HH450 is a touring kayaker's best friend. Access weather channels, receive severe weather alerts and communicate with other marine traffic or the Coast Guard. Cobra's exclusive Rewind-Say-Again feature automatically records the last 20 seconds of incoming audio, so you can replay missed calls. Other handy features for life on the water include a floating design, vibration call alert and hands-free, voice activated transmission. Plus, switch to GMRS/FRS band to make private calls within your group and on land. **Best for:** Routine and emergency two-way communication with Coast Guard and other vessels, short-range intragroup communication, weather updates.

### DeLorme

#### inReach Explorer

[www.delorme.com](http://www.delorme.com)  
[www.inreachcanada.com](http://www.inreachcanada.com)  
\$379.95 / \$439 CAD

Just like DeLorme's previous flagship, the new inReach Explorer allows you to send and receive text messages from anywhere in the world through the Iridium satellite network, or trigger an SOS and communicate back and forth via text with search and rescue services. The Explorer's enhanced navigation functions mean you can also create detailed routes, drop waypoints, see and share your GPS coordinates and navigate with the on-screen map view. Pair it with your mobile device to access downloaded topographic maps and charts. Data plans start at \$11.95/\$16.95 (US/CAD) monthly. **Best for:** Two-way texting with friends and emergency services, GPS navigation, route planning and tracking.