

TRAILER LIFE

FOLLOW THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

NOVEMBER 2011

**SIMPLE RV
UPGRADES**
LED LIGHTING &
HOME-THEATER
SYSTEMS

JERSEY SHORE
THE RV SITUATION

DISCOVER
THE **DAKOTAS**



GREEN MACHINES

EVERGREEN ELEMENT AND PORSCHE CAYENNE HYBRID

www.trailerlife.com

Reviewed

ECLIPSE EVOLUTION

COLEMAN FIFTH-WHEEL

\$4.99 US & CAN



0 72246 147911 17

LET THERE BE LIGHT

MODERNIZING ONE OF THE MOST UNDERAPPRECIATED ESSENTIALS FOR THE ROAD

by Gary Wescott photos by Gary & Monika Wescott

Of all the amenities afforded by traveling in an RV, one particular luxury we often take for granted is the ability to simply flip on the lights. As we continue on the project of Restoring an Old Friend, our 1981 Terry travel trailer was entering the dark ages. Its lights were showing their long use, with burned out ballasts and dead tubes.

Years ago we had replaced the lights in our back-roads campers with the stylish Optronics Pulsar 12- and 18-inch dual-fluorescents. We liked the smooth rounded corners and compact design.

Now it's not that the Optronics fluorescents don't produce plenty of light, but technology is changing and the industry is moving in the direction of using only light-emitting diodes in RVs. One company that has blazed the trail in diode technology for the RV market is Star Lights, making those old incandescent and fluorescent lamp fixtures easily replaceable with LED fixtures.

LEDs use much less energy than this old-school lighting, allowing trailer batteries to last longer when not plugged in. As a bonus, they produce considerably less heat. Measuring a comparable normal dual-tube compact fluorescent left on for several hours and the same fixture with replacement Star Lights Revolution T5-12 LED tubes, we found

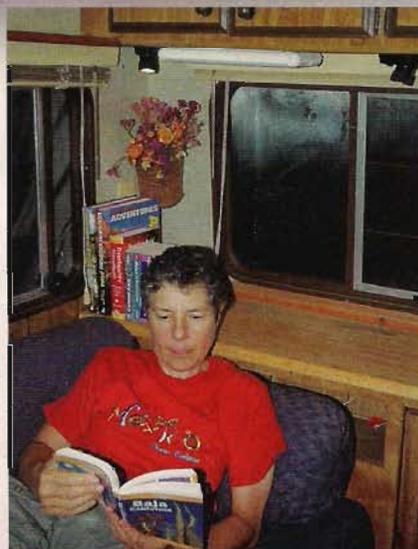
as much as a 20° F difference. Plus, Star Lights LEDs are often direct-replacements for OEM fixtures.

Installing the Star Lights LED tubes isn't difficult, and if necessary, there's help from the company's tech line. The swap can be done without removing the existing lights from the ceiling if you don't mind working upside-down. All necessary wire nuts and quick-disconnects are supplied with each lamp. In the case of our Optronics fixtures, small pop-rivets needed to be drilled out to remove the ballast cover.

After isolating the ballast, which is no longer needed, wires from the harnesses supplied by Star Lights were spliced into power (positive) and ground (negative) and the switch. We shortened wires to reduce bulk under the ballast cover, and we reused the small quick-connects from the Optronics fixtures. Star Lights supplies quick-connects, but they are larger.

We also used Quick Cable butt connectors that have built-in heat shrink, though the supplied wire nuts would also work. The ballast cover was replaced and pop-riveted. With the new LED tubes in place, we connected the small plugs to the harness.

If you are using incandescent bulbs, Star Lights offers a large selection of replacement LED bulbs. According to



Optronics Europa-Ultra Bright reading lights over the bed, sitting area and the dinette add a modern functional touch.

Star Lights, incandescent bulbs can degrade and lose as much as 60 percent of their "designed luminous output" after just a few hours. They also require up to 90 percent more amperage to run than do LEDs. Replacements include common usages like turn, stop and running lights on trailers and tow vehicles. For example, we found a Revolution Wedge 250 Natural Light LED bulb the perfect fit for the dim incandescent light in the stove hood. Now we can really see what's cooking! And LED bulbs rarely

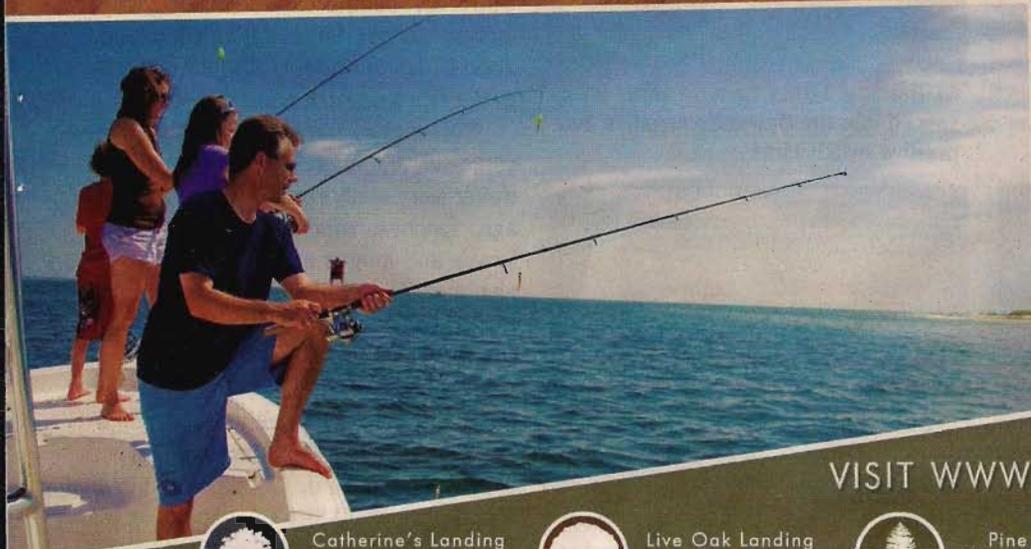


rvc outdoor destinations

Great Fishing + Stellar Amenities = Better Vacation

RV SITES • COTTAGES • YURTS • CABINS • BOAT SLIPS • CAMPING

Valid thru 2/28/2012
Based on availability
Multi-night reservation required
Must present coupon upon arrival
Last Night FREE!
Clip Here!



- FREE WI-FI
- CABLE TELEVISION
- UPSCALE LODGE
- OFF-LEASH BARK PARKS
- SALINE SWIMMING POOLS
- COFFEE AND WINE BARS
- CONCIERGE SERVICE

VISIT WWW.RVCOOUTDOORS.COM



Catherine's Landing
Hot Springs, AR
(501) 262-2550



Live Oak Landing
Freeport, FL
(877) 436-5063



Pine Mountain
Pine Mountain, GA
(706) 663-4329



Carrabelle Beach
Carrabelle, FL
(850) 697-2638

RVC Outdoor Destinations, Circle 120 on Reader Service Card

burn out. We've had LEDs on our truck going on 11 years and 130,000 miles.

For an additional touch of modern lighting, we installed flush-mount Optronics Europa-Ultra Bright reading lights over the bed, sitting area and the dinette. To mount these compact adjustable lights, it was simply a matter of drilling a 1/2-inch hole where we wanted the new light to be mounted, and then using a "snake" (a stiff piece of wire), feeding negative and positive wires to the hole. (Of course, be sure to turn off all power when doing this.) We used butt connectors to steal power from the existing OEM 12-volt DC wiring. To further reduce heat and amp draw, we replaced all the bulbs in the Optronics Europa-Ultra Bright reading lights with Star Lights Revolution 1156 single contact bayonet-style bulbs.

Finally, we installed the unique Star Lights Brilliant Light fixture. By adding plug-in accessories, the LED Brilliant Light can be controlled by a dimmer, a day/night sensor or a motion sensor. It



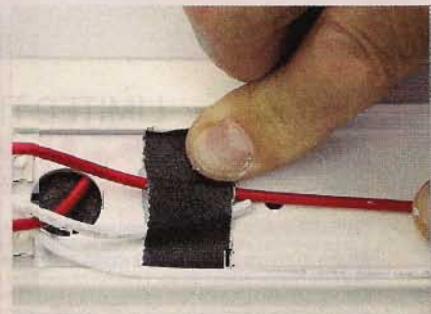
1) The ballasts covers on our Optronics were attached with small pop-rivets that needed to be drilled out.



2) We cut the ground wire from the ballast to the switch.



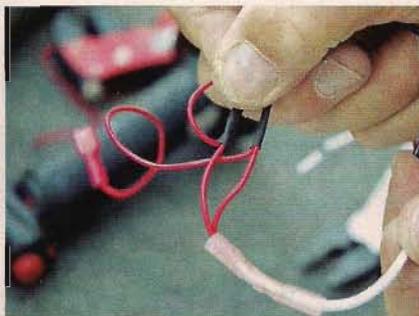
3) We reused the small quick-connect from the Optronics wiring. Star Lights supplies quick-connects, but they are larger.



4) We taped down any unneeded wires from the ballast to help keep them out of the way.



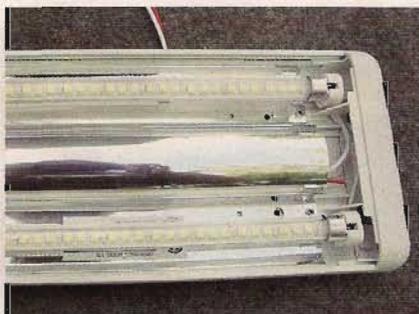
5) We used QuickCable butt connectors with built-in heat shrink for maximum reliability.



6) The Star Lights harness wires were spliced into the Optronics negative and positive switch wires.



7) We used a PowerFast pop-rivet gun to reattach the ballast cover, making sure it is secured.



8) Star Lights were a direct replacement for the original compact fluorescent tubes.

also has a night-light feature — All this is in one unit, (single or double), with three replaceable LED strength options.

LEDs are bright and robust, ideal for areas where we wanted plenty of light, like over the sink and countertops. For the dinette, we still preferred the softer Optronics compact fluorescents. The motion sensor Smart Light 1000 and 2000 series for indoor/outdoor use are perfect for the porch and entry steps.

Now that we have plenty of light, we could see that many other details in the trailer were really starting to show their age. Latches, window blinds, cabinet knobs and hinges and new carpet will give a fresh and much brighter look in the next installment of Restoring an Old Friend. ☺

Optronics Inc., (800) 826-5483,
www.optronicsinc.com. Circle 202 on Reader Service Card.

Star Lights, (800) 883-5444,
www.starlightsinc.com. Circle 203 on Reader Service Card.

DIRECTV for Your RV and Home!

PACKAGES
START AT JUST
\$29⁹⁹
/mo*

FAMILY™ PACKAGE
FREE
Home Installation



FREE! NASCAR HotPass™
When you order any DIRECTV Package

All offers require 2-year agreement. ** Programming/pricing may vary in certain markets. FAMILY™ Package not eligible for offers. Offers end 12/31/11. Credit card required (except in MA & PA). New approved customers only (lease required). Handling & Delivery fee may apply. Applicable state tax adjustment may apply on the retail value of the installation. If you fail to maintain your programming agreement, you agree that DIRECTV may charge you a prorated fee of up to \$400 (\$20/month remaining) for standard or advanced equipment and receivers within 7 days of discontinuing or disconnecting your programming.

99.9% Signal Reliability

Over 200 of the Best
HD Channels*

DVR Scheduler

Ability to record your favorite show anytime,
anywhere with DIRECTV® DVR Scheduler*

FREE!
RV KIT

Dish, Travel Tripod
& 50ft of cable*

Other Ends 12/31/11. FREE RV Kit for new customers only.
Available to existing customers at additional charge.
While supplies last. Sit fees will apply.
Courtesy of Direct Sat TV.



DIRECT
SAT TV
An Authorized DIRECTV Dealer

LIMITED TIME OFFER—MUST CALL THIS TOLL FREE
Call Now! 800-279-3809

DIRECTV

**24-MO. LEASE AGREEMENT: Must maintain 24 consecutive months of any DIRECTV base programming package (\$29.99/mo. or above) or qualifying international services bundle. DVR Service \$7/mo. required for DVR and HD DVR lease. HD Access fee \$10/mo. required for HD Receiver and HD DVR. Lease for first two receivers \$5/mo; additional receiver leases \$5/mo. each. FAILURE TO ACTIVATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE EQUIPMENT LEASE ADDENDUM MAY RESULT IN A CHARGE OF \$150 PER RECEIVER. IF SERVICE IS TERMINATED EARLY, A CANCELLATION FEE OF \$20/MONTH REMAINING WILL APPLY. ALL EQUIPMENT IS LEASED AND MUST BE RETURNED TO DIRECTV UPON CANCELLATION, OR UNRETURNED EQUIPMENT FEES APPLY. VISIT directv.com OR CALL 1-800-DIRECTV FOR DETAILS. RECEIVER UPGRADES: Second advanced receiver offer requires activation of an HD DVR as the first free receiver upgrade and subscription to Whole-Home DVR service (\$3/mo.). Advanced receiver instant rebate requires activation of the CHOICE XTRA Package or above; MAS ULTRA or above (for DVR Receiver, OPTIMO MAS Package or above); JadeWorld, or any qualifying international service bundle, which shall include the PREFERRED CHOICE programming package (valued at \$38.99/mo.). Additional advanced receiver upgrades available for a charge. INSTALLATION: Standard professional home installation only. Custom installation extra. *RV SATELLITE KIT OFFER: Courtesy of Direct Sat TV with new residential home service activation and purchase of CHOICE programming or above. Includes satellite dish, travel tripod and 50' of coaxial cable. HD dish will incur additional fees. Tripod for HD dish not available. Programming and pricing may vary for service in your RV. For service in RV, customer will receive NY Distant Network Signal, based on geographical location. LA Distant Network is available upon request and requires special hardware, which will incur additional fees. DNS waiver required. Programming, pricing, terms and conditions subject to change at any time. Pricing residential. Taxes not included. Receipt of DIRECTV programming subject to DIRECTV Customer Agreement; copy provided at directv.com/legal, and in first bill. DIRECTV and the Cyclone Design logo, CHOICE and CHOICE XTRA are trademarks of DIRECTV, Inc. All other trademarks and service marks are the property of their respective owners.

Direct Sat TV. Circle 106 on Reader Service Card



9) The Optronics Pulsar 12- and 18-inch dual fluorescents were direct replacements for the old Thin-Lites in the Terry.



10) A "snake" was used to feed wires to the new Optronics reading lights.



11) Star Lights Brilliant Light fixture can be used with plug-in accessories including a motion sensor and a night-light.



12) The Star Lights Brilliant Light fixture accepts three different power level LED cards.



13) The Optronics stylish Pulsar compact fluorescent light fixtures add a modern look to any RV.



14) The Star Light replacement LED bulb, left, is clearly much brighter than the incandescent.

www.LanceCamper.com | 661 888 2267

New lightweight champion

Lance 1575 | 2480 pounds base weight | All fiberglass/aluminum construction | Super-Slide™ dinette slideout
 Queen bed | Dry bath | Instant-on water heater | Premium dual-pane windows | Award-winning Lance quality






Lance Campers, Circle 131 on Reader Service Card