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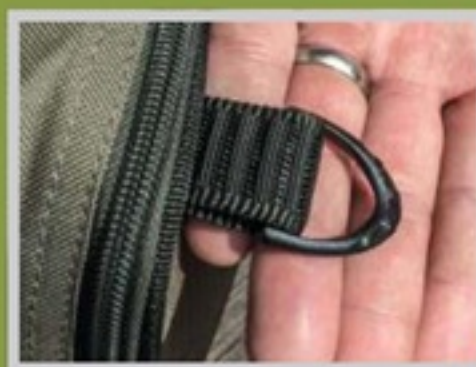


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INSIDE THIS WEEK

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PAGE 16

To keep catching, perhaps you need to think like a fish, says Dom Garnett.

Another seven days of rain – it's endless...

ON the face of it, non-stop rain has scuppered the end of the season for many river anglers.

The next couple of weeks are highly cherished by fans of running water, with fish at their highest weights and in tip-top condition. Many people will have booked time off work for a final assault on their favourite stretches, dreaming of personal bests and beaming trophy shots.

If the weather forecasters have it right, then it's going to be barbel or bust for most, although those who had envisaged seeing out the season on the beautiful River Wye look like they'll have to rearrange and head further west for their last-minute barbel fix. The river has reached its highest-ever recorded level, and some alarming images are doing the rounds showing bridges that

are normally 30ft above water level now having just a few feet to spare before succumbing to the swollen brown waters.

But it's far from being a completely lost cause and in many areas the rivers may drop in just enough to become fishable without having to revert to heavy-duty gear. As the eternal optimist Dom Garnett points out in his piece on extreme angling weather this week (p16), a river finally clearing after weeks of rain can offer especially good sport as the fish get their heads down to make up for lost feeding time.

So, if you can't face the prospect of not fishing running water again until the middle of June, lower your sights, choose a local venue and get out there as soon as things become fishable. You might just end up getting a surprise.

Steve
STEVE STONES
ASSOCIATE EDITOR



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THIS WEEK

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW FROM THE WORLD OF FISHING



IS THE 2019/20 RIVER SEASON FINISHED?

Record floods cause mayhem across Britain

FEBRUARY saw Storms Ciara and Dennis wreak havoc, bringing 90mph winds and intense rainfall to all corners of the UK.

At the time we went to press there were more than 160 flood warnings, of which six presented a serious threat to life. Among the worst affected areas were towns and villages close to the popular fishing rivers of the Wye and Severn, with the Wye at Monmouth

registering a record flood level of over 7m.

Several popular river matches, including the River Wye Feeder Champs, have been postponed. Now, many anglers are doubting whether they'll be able to fish the rivers before they close on March 15. Hope could be on the horizon though, according to Hay Warren Fishery manager Jeff Morgan. "There's no doubt that the floods have caused immense damage," he says. "I've

seen cars swept downstream and fences torn down! On the other hand, big rivers like the Wye can recover quickly from flooding, and if the rain subsides, the barbel fishing could be exceptional."

Not everyone shares the same view, with Heronbrook Fisheries owner Neil Dale adding: "The brook that runs next to the fishery rose 7ft, causing our seven lakes to merge into one. The water has receded, but



Phil Ringer and managing director of Kingsley Beverages Chris Bradshaw (right).

HIGH ENERGY DEAL

CORPORATE sponsorship returned to angling this week following the signing of a deal between an energy drinks firm and a top feederfishing team.

Back in the 1970s and '80s, many of the sport's biggest events – such as the Embassy Pairs and John Smith's Challenge – were backed by tobacco or drinks companies, but this all came to an end following the introduction of advertising restrictions by the

Government. Since then, sponsorship of big teams and major events has been sourced solely from within the fishing tackle industry, but in a development that could spark a wave of similar deals, Dragon Energy Producer, Kingsley Beverages UK, has thrown its full support behind the Ringerbaits Feeder Team for the upcoming World Club Feeder Championships in Bulgaria.

Phil Ringer, Managing Director of



PICTURE CREDIT: ANGLING DREAMS

HOW HAVE THE FLOODS AFFECTED YOU?

Email your stories to
newsdesk@
anglingtimes.co.uk

the car park is underwater alongside the access road. I've had to cancel matches and I can't be certain if I've lost fish to the brook. The fishery just isn't safe for anglers."

With further rain forecast over the next 10 days, rivers will remain high and dangerous. Small tributaries will be unfishable, but on certain parts of the Wye, Severn, Trent and Thames where the banks are high, there is always a chance of wetting a line.

Ringerbaits, says: "To attract support from outside of the fishing industry is absolutely amazing and we can't thank Dragon enough for offering us this stunning package. Kingsley Beverages has just built a £45 million production facility in Peterborough and were keen to support a local sports team – thankfully, Ringerbaits fitted the bill. We will be doing our very best to make everyone proud in Bulgaria."

Under the deal, the firm has supplied the team with a new van and clothing for their title-tilt in Bulgaria... as well as a vast supply of free drinks!

£53M OF EELS SEIZED AT HEATHROW

ILLEGAL EXPORTS EXPOSED

EELS are a critically endangered species across Europe, so you can imagine the impact on their numbers when £53m-worth were smuggled out of the UK.

Between 2015 and 2017, 66-year-old seafood salesman Gilbert Khoo shipped more than five million elvers from London to Hong Kong. When he was apprehended at Heathrow Airport in February 2017, he had 200kg of them stored in containers underneath other species of fish.

The National Crime Agency revealed that Gilbert imported the elvers from countries within the EU and kept them in a barn in

Gloucestershire, before repackaging them to be exported to Asia.

Senior investigating officer, Ian Truby, says: "Eels fetch more than ten times the price they would in the UK on the east Asian black market. Khoo was trading these animals purely for financial gain, with no regard for the controls in place for trading endangered European eels."

Gilbert was found guilty of three counts of failure to notify movement of animals and three counts of evasion of a prohibition or restriction on the export of goods. He will be sentenced on March 6.

JUNIOR BEATS VETS TO CLAIM LEAGUE TITLE

AT JUST 14 years old, Daniel Barlow has become the first junior in 140 years to top the prize table of his club, Preston Working Men's Angling Association.

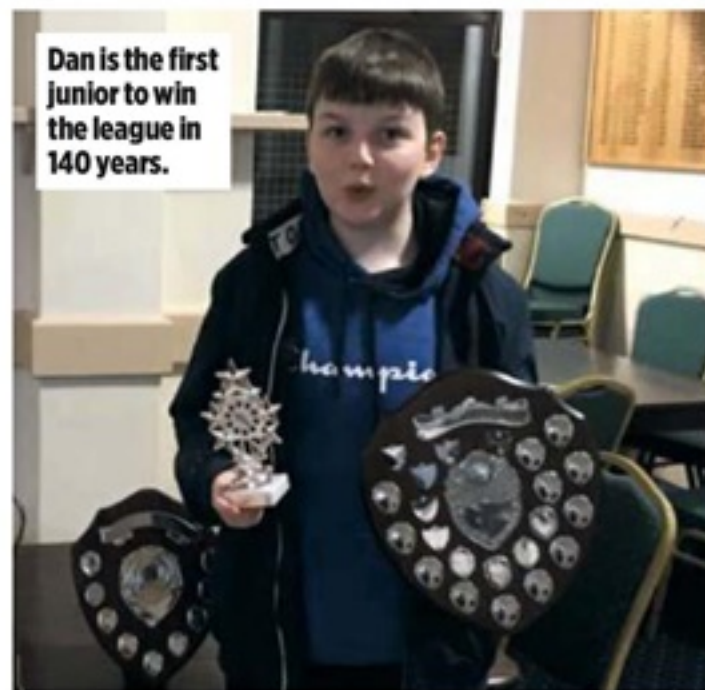
After gaining the most points in eight matches across all angling disciplines, the Lancashire lad secured the coveted first place in his club's historic fishing league.

Dan's achievement has earned him the nickname Dan 'The Fish' Barlow, which seems fair considering the fact that to win he had to catch pretty much everything, from trout to carp.

"It's a great achievement because he was up against some seasoned anglers," says his proud dad Daren.

"Dan's hoping that other youngsters seeing this will be inspired to go out and have a go at fishing themselves."

Dan is the first junior to win the league in 140 years.



Dan had to catch everything from trout to carp.



IS A LEAD WEIGHT BAN ON THE HORIZON?

European ban on lead in tackle and shooting could trigger similar measures in Britain

THE USE of lead in leger weights and swimfeeders could be outlawed in the very near future if an EU report, due to be published this year, calls for an outright ban.

As a result of Brexit, UK anglers wouldn't have a legal obligation to follow suit, but some anglers believe Britain has a moral duty to comply.

Late last year the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) called for evidence to support or oppose a ban on lead in fishing tackle and ammunition used in shooting. The agency is set to publish its

findings in October this year, and if a ban is recommended, the proposal could become EU law by the end of 2022.

Since 1987 it has been illegal to use lead in fishing weights of between 0.06g (no8 shot) and 28.35g (1oz) in this country, but larger bombs and feeders are still almost exclusively constructed from lead.

In 2015, THE European Fishing Tackle Trade Association (EFTTA) released a statement calling on anglers and tackle companies to voluntarily reduce the use of lead weights and use them only where there are no suitable alternatives.

In 2018 they followed up with a report on the state of lead use in fishing and shooting, noting the practice of 'ejecting the lead' favoured by specimen carp anglers. The report stated: "It is estimated that in the EU as much as 2,000-6,000 tonnes of lead is dispersed into the environment by fishing with lead sinkers every year."

It's commonly believed that discarded lead weights and swimfeeders leach toxins into the water, harming the fish in the process, although leading fish scientist

"In most waters lead is stable and does not dissolve"

Dr Bruno Broughton was quick to highlight the "faults, bias and twisted information" in the report.

He said: "In most fishing waters, lead is stable, does not dissolve and gradually sinks into and becomes covered by anoxic [zero-oxygen] bottom sediments, where it is unavailable to the water environment. There appears to be no hard evidence that demonstrates angling lead dissolves in water and produces other environmental impacts."

A number of tackle companies have created lead alternatives over the years, although they are much larger, ounce for ounce, than lead, and therefore less user-friendly and effective.

Nevertheless, Pallatrax boss Simon Pomeroy, whose company introduced Stonze natural weights, advocates a lead ban on environmental grounds. "We're littering our lakebeds with leads. It's a practice that,

Pallatrax boss Simon Pomeroy backs a ban.

The use of swimfeeders and leads would be under the microscope.



in many cases, people have accepted on the grounds of fish safety, even though we could be creating water-quality and bio-mass problems.

"The angling community is often one of the first to highlight and respond to environmental issues, but I feel this one is simply being ignored."

Dinsmores is another early adopter of lead alternatives for use in angling. Boss Nigel May said: "Our alternative split shot is made using tin, and while this gives them a slightly larger profile than lead, they obviously still weigh the same. For making larger weights, zinc is another possible alternative, but again it isn't as dense. The ban currently in place is there to protect birds, and we will have to see what further legislation is brought forward, if any. One of the main problems is that lead is far cheaper than all the alternatives for larger weights."

What happens next will be decided by the recommendations of the report, due in October, although these would probably be consulted and voted upon by the UK government which, post-Brexit, has no obligation to follow suit. Nevertheless, the findings could still influence their decision, and the very real prospect looms on the horizon that within a couple of years, UK anglers will be forced to fork out for less suitable and more expensive means of weighing down their float and leger rigs.

WHAT NEXT? PROVISIONAL EU TIMETABLE

October 2020
ECHA submits its dossier on the restriction of lead to the EU

December 2020
Public consultation

September 2021
Consultation with risk-assessment and social-economic-analysis committees

Spring/summer 2022
Discussions with member states and vote

End of 2022
Restriction adopted, if agreed

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In a poll of 2,000 Angling Times readers, we asked...

If the EU agree an outright ban on using lead in fishing, should we follow, even if this leads to an increase in the price of alternative leger weights?

YES: 43%

NO: 57%

TURN OVER TO READ ROB HUGHES OPINION ON LEAD WEIGHTS

**READER
OPINION**

THE BARGAIN HUNTER

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NEWS EXCLUSIVE

DO WE NEED TO CLEAN UP OUR ACT?

Bad behaviour is a serious problem at many fisheries. We look at how some affected venues have tackled the issue

A S ANGLERS, most of us feel a responsibility to respect our fisheries and the people that run them, but on some venues, a small minority are letting the side down.

Littering, rule-breaking and threatening behaviour are just some of the issues owners are facing, and on a growing number of waters, things have got so out of hand that bosses have had to convert their venues from day-ticket to members-only in order to rid themselves of the problem and protect their stocks.

Mescar Fisheries in Merseyside is the latest to make the change, and owner Andrew Molyneux revealed the gravity of the problems he and his wife Helen have faced.

"It's not been an easy decision, but some of the things we've experienced are simply shocking," he says.

"We've had our lives threatened, and someone even pulled a knife on Helen when she asked for the £7 day-ticket fee. We've also witnessed people kicking fish up the bank and threatening to kill our dog."

After such appalling incidents, it's little surprise that the couple have had enough. Andrew added that first and foremost, the decision was taken in order to make Mescar a better place for well-behaved anglers.

"Most anglers cause no problems at all - you just get a few that don't want to

toe the line. We've had a good response to going members-only, and while we'll take an initial hit financially-speaking, in a few years' time things will hopefully balance out," Andrew adds.

The free-to-fish lakes on the Hampton housing estate in Peterborough have also had serious issues with misbehaving anglers, to such an extent that fishing was almost banned completely at the venue.

"The place was being treated really

badly," says Nathan Minter, founder of the Hampton Angling Association. "Catfish and carp were being illegally stocked, and discarded line was such an issue on one of the lakes that swans were regularly becoming tangled in it."

"Anti-social behaviour was also getting so out of hand that the locals were complaining, so much so that the fishing rights were under threat."

Something had to be done, so Hampton AA was formed in a bid to save the venue from being closed down. After doing over 350 hours of work parties around the lakes, Nathan and the club have made a huge difference to the urban lakes, and the community is now fully behind them.

"It's been great to get the locals on board," Nathan says. "We have a thriving junior section, as well as around 20 adults who are completely new to fishing."

"That's one of the advantages of fishing on a housing estate - there are always people watching you, and that sparks an interest within them."

A fishery taking a different approach is Rolf's Lake in Oxford.

"At this time of year we're open 10 hours a week," says venue owner John Bennett. "In summer this goes up to 15 hours a week, and I would say 99 per cent of this is taken up by



Nathan Minter (third from right) set up the Hampton Angling Association to combat bad behaviour.

WE SAY:

Ian Jones, news editor:

Before an angling club took over my local lake, people used to leave rubbish everywhere and even steal the fish. That all stopped when the club got involved. This shows that when caring anglers come together, we can make a difference and safeguard our angling.



match anglers and private bookings.”

John revealed that he could open the fishery every day and rake in the cash, but fears that doing so would jeopardise the venue’s future.

“We have a good head of large fish, but the constant pressure of day-ticket anglers and poor handling of fish would risk the investment I’ve made. Keeping the fishing restricted has also helped to keep poachers away, who I know have impacted many other venues.”

John reveals that in the rare instance a day-ticket angler is allowed to fish, they go through a very specific and quite rigorous screening process.

“I’ll give any potential visitors a sort of interview over the phone to make sure that they’re the right sort of person I want at the fishery. They have to obey the rules and take good care of the fish,” he says.

“Maybe it sounds extreme, but I’ll do whatever is necessary to protect the place.”

It’s a sad state of affairs when a small minority of offending anglers are spoiling day-ticket sport for the rest of us, but there could be a silver lining. The clubs being formed on members-only waters are attracting new anglers and are filling fishing with people who are aware and caring of their surroundings.



HUGHES' VIEWS

TV STAR & ENGLAND CARP CAPTAIN
LOOKS AT FISHING'S HOT TOPICS

“WE NEED THE FACTS”

I THINK that some proper research needs to be done on the impact lead weights have on the aquatic environment before we, as a country, make a decision on what is such an important issue for angling.

The first thing people think about is how ‘poisonous’ lead can be, but when you consider the size of some waters it’s being used on, you’ve got to ask the question: Is it present in large enough levels to cause a significant problem?

I’ve scuba dived in lakes for many years and have very rarely found a lead on the bottom. I’m not saying that they’re not there, but in my experience, lakebeds are anything but littered with them. They become buried in the silt and if the silt is deep they will become inert.

I once dived at Horseshoe Lake in Gloucestershire, over a spot where people said they could actually ‘feel’ the leads on the bottom as they used their marker float set-ups while searching for suitable areas to

fish. I couldn’t find a single one.

That said, when we broach the subject of carp anglers dumping leads, I fully support the issue that some people have here. I will only use a system that ejects the lead if I absolutely need to, and I agree that it can be classed as littering, which is another issue in itself. It should not be done as a matter of course, only as a matter of necessity.

Indeed, as far back as 2015 the International Federation of Sport Angling (FIPS) banned the dropping of leads in all World Carp events.

The key thing is sensibility and reason from both sides of the argument. Let’s get some accurate facts before jumping to potentially incorrect conclusions.

Rob

“I’ve scuba dived in lakes for years and have rarely found leads on the bottom”



Set-ups that dump the lead might come under closer scrutiny in the future.

YOUR TOP CATCHES

THE BEST FISH **YOU'VE** LANDED THIS WEEK



“IT’S THE FISH I WAS SEARCHING FOR ALL WINTER”

Paul Elt – 15lb 2oz barbel

“I WAS fishing in a proper howling gale and my lines were wiped out three times from branches that had fallen into the river, but with the conditions so mild and the river running at near normal level I just knew the barbel would be on the feed.

My tactic for the overnight session was to attach PVA bags of pellets and broken boilies to my rigs and cast regularly to ensure a bed of bait would constantly be trickled through the swim. In the early hours of the morning I caught a couple of small fish which kept me busy. Dawn arrived and I was in the middle of packing away my kit when one of my rods folded over and I struck into a very good fish, which powered off downstream and plodded around holding bottom. I’d lost a small barbel to a sunken snag in the night which actually helped when I was playing this big fish, because I knew where it was so I could steer her around it and into my net. I was delighted with this barbel as it was a new Trent PB and the fish I was searching for all winter.”



“ALL THE BLANKS MADE THIS CATCH EVEN SWEETER”

Nick Marsh – 4lb 6oz perch

“OVER nine sessions lure fishing a stretch of river I’d failed to record a single bite. I caught perch to over 4lb from the spot so I know it has potential, but it was so difficult tracking them down! On my tenth trip I fished for an hour before work

and searched the water with my Korum Squirmz lure in natural colour. Minutes before I had to leave I had a strong take but the fish and the lure parted ways instantly.

I was gutted, but I had to get back out there after work and try again. On my fourth cast I was in, but because it was such a heavy weight I thought it was a pike. After it surfaced I kept saying: ‘That’s a big perch, that’s a big perch!’ I was over the moon when the needle pinged round to 4lb 6oz.”



NICK'S TOP 3 TIPS FOR WINTER PERCH

Dusk: I've found the last hour of daylight has been more productive for perch than any other time.

Ned Rigs: The Ned rig is a superb winter tactic for big perch. Fish it slow or static for the best results.

Close-in: Covering water at distance can work for big perch, but I caught this one just a couple of yards from the bank.



"I WAS CHUFFED TO BITS WITH THIS PIKE"

Mike Dolan – 26lb 12oz pike

"I'D BOOKED a boat on Chew Valley Reservoir a day before storm Ciara hit, and all I'd packed were two Fox Rage rainbow trout Replicant lures. I'm not a massive lure angler and have always caught bigger pike on deadbaits, but I just thought it'd be worth trying something new.

By lunch all I'd had was a small jack and a trout and the strong winds were battering me all

over the place. Eventually I sheltered from the wind in front of some trees and straight away I hooked something heavy. I thought I was snagged but realised the snag was pulling back!

A few moments later this giant pike surfaced but it was only lightly hooked, so I rushed for the net and scooped it in as fast as I could. I was chuffed to discover it was 26lb 12oz."

"I FINALLY BAGGED THIS AMAZING 4lb PERCH"

Nik Connolly – 4lb perch

"I'VE recently returned to fishing after a good 15-year gap and decided to try my hand at lure fishing for perch and pike, mainly because it

was simple and didn't require much gear.

After a very hard month of trying I hadn't managed a single bite, but I finally bagged this amazing personal best 4lb perch from the River Severn at Bewdley. I was shocked to see that the perch had taken a 10cm-long rubber lure which was originally meant for a pike, but it just goes to show how greedy they can be!"



"WHEN IT SURFACED MY LEGS STARTED SHAKING!"

Patrick Smith – 21lb 9oz roach

"THE River Severn at Stourport was my chosen venue for the afternoon, but it was hard going and I absolutely flogged the swim to force a bite. Just as the sun went down my efforts were finally rewarded and my float buried around 25 yards down the swim and straight away I knew this was a good 'un.

I was only fishing with a light hooklink so I took my time bringing it upstream through the strong flow. When it surfaced my legs started shaking, but thankfully it went in the net first time. I rang my lad to come down and help with the weighing and when he said 21lb 9oz I thought he was joking! Roach like this just aren't caught that often from Stourport."

"A SESSION I WILL NEVER FORGET"

Peter Gray – 26lb 4oz pike

"AFTER catching several jacks from an area on a southern reservoir, my boat partner and I headed into deeper water for a shot at a larger specimen.

I had no idea the decision would pay off after just 10 minutes of fishing when my livebait was snapped up.

After a hectic 10-minute battle my boat partner slid the net under my largest pike ever. A few expletives later we weighed the big girl at 26lb 4oz which smashed my personal best by 10lb. It was a session I will never forget."





THE GAME CHANGER

RICHARD WILBY – 11lb 1oz DACE

"I'd spent three months in pursuit of a big dace but despite catching around a thousand in 30 short afternoon sessions across six Norfolk rivers, not one had been over the 1lb barrier.

I could have headed south to the Avon or Kennet where they're more common but I really wanted to catch a local one.

So, after pinning my hopes on a section of the Little Ouse I was pleased to find a shoal of dace fairly quickly but it was embarrassing how many bites I was missing with the set-up I had!

That night I had nightmares about those missed bites and was up thinking: 'That could've been the one', so I had to do something about it quick.

The next day I called a mate who's an old Thames match angler and he recommended scaling down my glass quivertip and switching my 4lb sinking monofilament mainline for a light braid.

Straight away, I ordered a 0.5oz glass tip

from eBay which replaced my 1oz version, and I managed to find an old dropshot reel in the garage which already had 6lb braid on it.

A few days later I was back in one of my favourite swims on the Little Ouse equipped with my new braid and tip set-up, which also included a simple 2BB link-leger rig with an 18ins 2lb hooklength and a size 18 hook.

From the off it was clear the dace were in the mood so I fed maggots heavily and caught from the first cast!

I had around 20 during a mad hour between 3.30pm and 4.30pm – the braid and lighter tip were working perfectly!

What was even better was that I never lost a dace and I was connecting with every bite.

I'd finally cracked it!

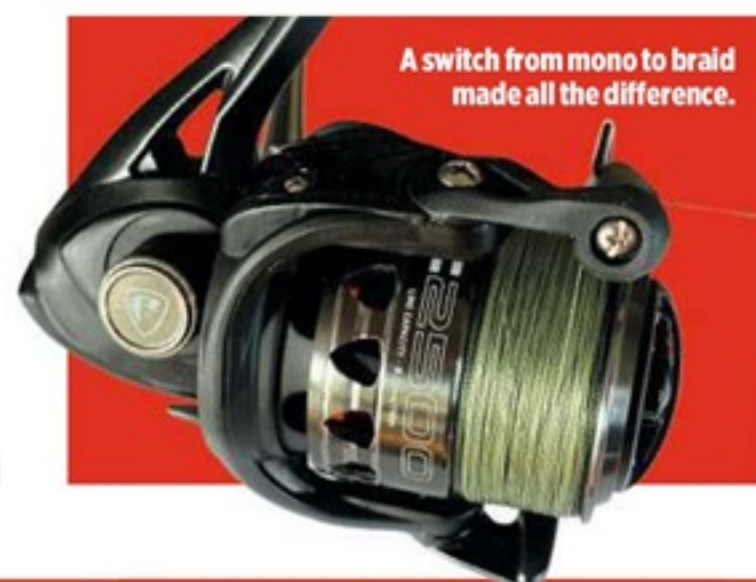
I was about pack away when I bent into one final fish.

I thought a big roach was going to pop up as it felt heavy, so I was astonished to see it was a giant dace, which went 11lb 1oz on the scales and

measured 28cm in length.

I've caught a lot of big fish this season but this dace was the hardest by far and I don't think I'd ever have caught it if I hadn't made those two simple tackle changes.

I reckon I walked over 100 miles over the last three months in pursuit of a giant dace and even dropped my iPhone in the river on one occasion, but it was all worth it, as I'd caught the big 'un I'd been searching for."



A switch from mono to braid made all the difference.



BOB COPSEY
8lb 12oz chub

ONE BITE FOR AN 8lb 12oz CHUB

VETERAN angler Bob Copsey, 69, hoped to beat his previous chub best of 7lb, so imagine his joy when his only bite resulted in this 8lb 12oz Trent beauty. Bob fished a cage feeder loaded with mashed bread alongside a cheesepaste hookbait and struck when his quivertip started bouncing just one hour into darkness. "I was totally blown away by the size of this fish," he says.

30-SECOND WAIT FOR NENE GIANT

JUST 30 seconds after casting out following a change of swim, Terry Theobald struck into this 16lb 7oz barbel. The Welsh specimen ace had been struggling for a take during the morning of his visit to the River Nene, but that all changed when he dropped his luncheon meat offering into a deep slack. "Before I knew it the reel was screaming as this huge fish made off with my bait!" he says.

My original 1oz tip wasn't sensitive enough.

A 0.5oz tip, though, was ideal for big shy dace.



AnglingTimes DRENNAN CUP CATCHES OF THE WEEK 2019 - 2020 SEASON

NEIL HOGG
42lb 4oz pike

BIGGEST-EVER PIKE FROM A KAYAK!

NEIL Hogg made angling history when he banked the largest pike ever to be hooked from a kayak. The 42lb 4oz predator nailed his deep-diving lure on his visit to a Yorkshire stillwater. "It tail-walked a good 2ft out of the water and my mate shouted: 'Blimey, that's a thirty!'" Neil told us. "A forty never crossed our minds!"

3lb ROACH ENDS FIVE-YEAR HUNT

A LONG quest for a 2lb-plus roach ended for Dave Owen when this 3lb 6oz beauty took his maggot hookbait. Targeting a pit on Oxfordshire's Linear Fisheries, Dave cast a maggot feeder 30 yards out. "I'd waited for the right conditions, and with a big low pressure system arriving I knew the time had come to have a go," he told us.

TERRY THEOBOLD
16lb 7oz barbel



DAVE OWEN
3lb 6oz roach



HOW TO ENTER THE DRENNAN CUP

- 1** CATCH a big coarse fish by design. Fluke captures don't count. Take a decent picture of the fish, and forward it to us.
- 2** DRENNAN picks its favourites. If yours is chosen, you win £80, plus a Drennan Weekly Winner's cap and badge.
- 3** AT THE end of the season, readers pick their favourite catches, and the winning angler scoops a cool £2,000!

Running since 1985, the Drennan Cup is Britain's No1 weekly catch competition. Here's how to take part, and be in with a chance of winning £2,000 at the end of the year

GET READY WITH RINGER



“BOOSTED BAITS CAN BE WINTER GAME-CHANGERS”

YOU COULD argue long into the night and probably tomorrow too on the subject of bait liquids, flavours and additives. It's a divisive issue, but even the most cynical angler would have to agree that they

do have a time and a place.

For winter carp fishing they are a must for trying to elicit a response from fish that aren't that active or interested in feeding.

I look at it this way: If I was fishing against 29 other blokes and using the same bait and

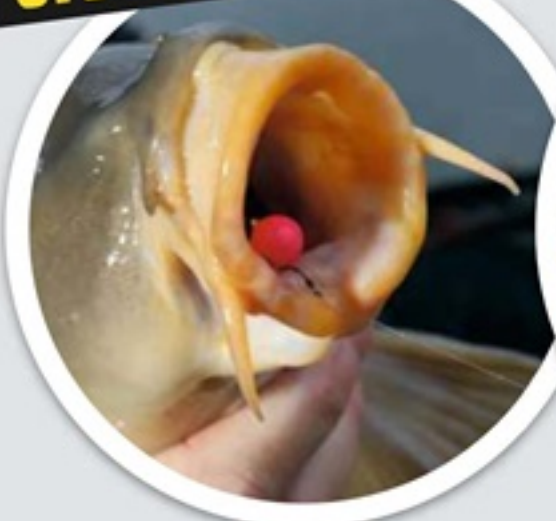
feed, I'd have no edge.

Change that to me using coloured pellets and flavoured corn for example, and then I'm doing something different to try and stack the odds in my favour.

Confidence also plays a huge part with additives and flavours because if you've caught well using some, then you're going to use the stuff again and again.

That's why the flavours and liquids market is so massive, with hundreds of smells and colours to pick from. To me though, which one I use is largely dependent on the colour of the water above anything else.

GIVE IT A GO...



1 HOOKBAIT COLOURS
White or yellow wafers or pellets are highly visible to fish. In coloured water, though, pink and orange offer a clearer silhouette.



2 DYED PELLETS
For clear water I use Ringer Baits Yellow Liquid. In coloured lakes, Dynamite Baits F1 Sweet or Mainline Cell attract by their smell.



3 GLUGS
Glugging involves soaking the bait in a thicker liquid flavouring known as a glug for several seconds until it's fully coated.



4 USING GOO
Pineapple Power Kiana Goo is saved for times when I need to buy a bite. Squirt it on to a loaded Hybrid feeder or on to the bait itself.



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CARRY ON FISHING!

As the country continues to be battered by everything from howling gales and floods to driving sleet and snow, anglers are advised to think like a fish...

WE ALL know that uneasy feeling of watching the latest weather forecast with trepidation. You've waited all week to go fishing, but the weather is an absolute mess. "Conditions look spot-on," says your mate, "to round up animals in pairs and build an ark."

So, would you and should you still bother? And what on earth do the fish do when your favourite venue swells with dirty water, or is battered by a mini tornado? A tricky subject, but if you can figure out what the fish are doing you might still prevail.

High waters & heavy rain

Climate change and seasonal extremes are now sadly a fact of life and that means that our rivers especially have never been more volatile.

A little extra water can actually help the fishing, but what do the fish do when we find surging waters the colour of builder's tea? More to the point, can these fish still be caught? You're far more likely to catch just before or after the water hits the heights. A river finally clearing after weeks of hard rain can be

especially good. For fish that have been struggling to feed for days on end, it's like somebody turning the lights on after a power cut!

Can you still catch on one that is bursting its banks, though? There is no simple answer, although the conditions to avoid most are a combination of high water and bitterly cold temperatures.

If you do get out, the advice "think like a fish" is never more relevant. They can be incredibly close to the bank, for one thing, in any obvious places of sanctuary, including spots that are usually inches deep. That said, in truly extreme flooding, fish can and do end up in adjoining streams, drains and even fields!

If the rain is truly relentless,

however, you may be better off altogether by heading for a stillwater. As uncomfortable as it might be, low pressure and mucky conditions can be excellent for fish like bream and carp.

Snow, sleet & ice

How many of us have tried to get that winter wonderland catch shot in the snow and failed abysmally?

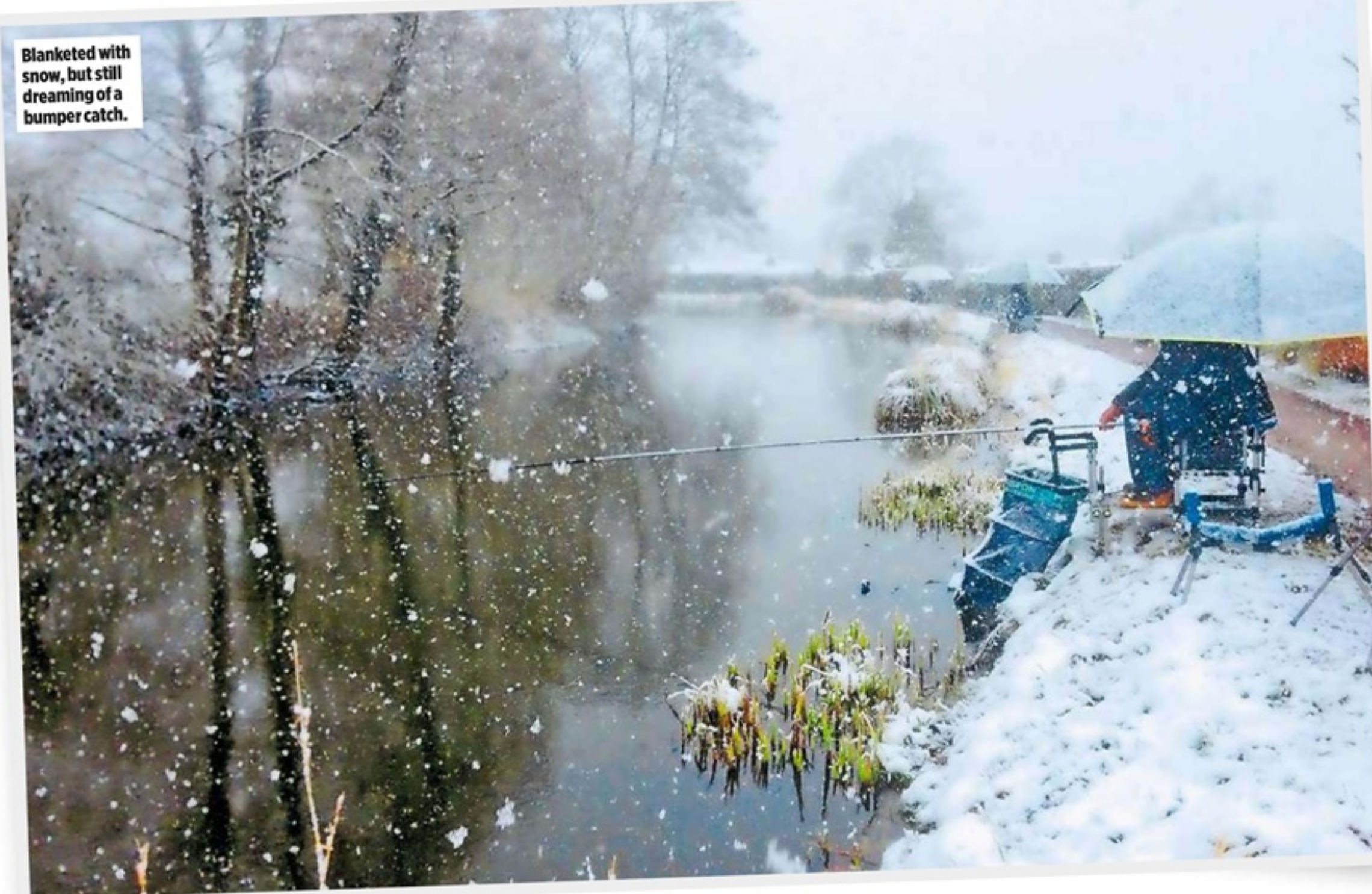
It takes guts to survive for a full day out, or perhaps a screw loose to do an overnigher! For some, though, the show simply must go on. Match anglers will break swims through the ice, while dedicated specimen-hunters have been known to sleep in their cars, waiting for a thaw, so they can bag a popular swim. But is it



Dom Garnett keeping the faith, despite being soaked to the skin!



Blanketed with snow, but still dreaming of a bumper catch.



dedication or sheer desperation?

We'll leave that to you, but if you do venture out, some golden rules apply. Dressing snugly and eating plenty are a must.

You should also pick species and venues with care. If you had to bet your house on getting some bites in the bitterest cold, you'd probably pick a quarry like grayling, rainbow trout or pike – these exist in much colder climates than our own.

Rivers are a safer bet than lakes, too, as the constant motion means fish have less licence to simply go to sleep and miss lunch.

On the hardest winter days, the highlight might be the hot bath when you get home. However, a catch picture with a fine fish in the snow is a collector's item on many an angler's bucket list.

High winds & storms

Some of the most challenging conditions of all are posed by

“It takes guts to survive for a full day out... or a screw loose”

freak storms. It's not much fun fishing in the teeth of a gale, and anglers have taken a battering with Storm Dennis and friends lately. Quite why they give weather catastrophes names like your mild-mannered uncle or aunt is beyond us.

If you can tough it out, though, turbulent conditions can sometimes provide rare fishing opportunities. For one thing, you're likely to have most venues to yourself.

All that disturbance can actually embolden fish, too. Predators might be especially active, while other species can switch on as their food is dislodged and ruffled waters help mask the angler's presence. In fact, lake fish often follow the wind, especially if it's a mild one.

The angler prepared to put up with adverse conditions can reap the rewards for the likes of bream and carp, because warmer water and invertebrates are pushed to one end of the lake.

A raging storm is no place to be with a carbon fishing rod, however, so safety has to come first. You will also need heavier tackle and careful preparation to cope with conditions.

If it's too foul even for the diehards, the calm just after the storm can also be a fine time to fish, whether you hit the reservoir or the beach.

Readers battle the elements



“I was carp fishing during high winds and decided to pack up. I'd just managed to pull my groundsheet out and... seconds later, this happened! A close call...”

Graham Bicknell

“I was fishing a Scottish Highland loch a couple of seasons back and temperatures plummeted below -10°C during the night. I woke up with all my gear frozen solid!”

Chris Morris

“A friend and I were bivvied up on a lake wondering why it was so quiet. My mate's missus rang and said a storm was coming. Another lad arrived and bivvied up. Three hours later both their bivvies were shattered, and everyone was sat in mine! The wind reached 110mph and trees were coming down all over the place!”

Nick Watkins

“I fished at night during the great storm in 1987 when I was 10 years old. It started to get windy and we

battered down the bivvy hatches. Branches were falling around us and we went to sleep holding on to the upright pole. I was scared out of my wits! Probably Michael Fish's fault!”

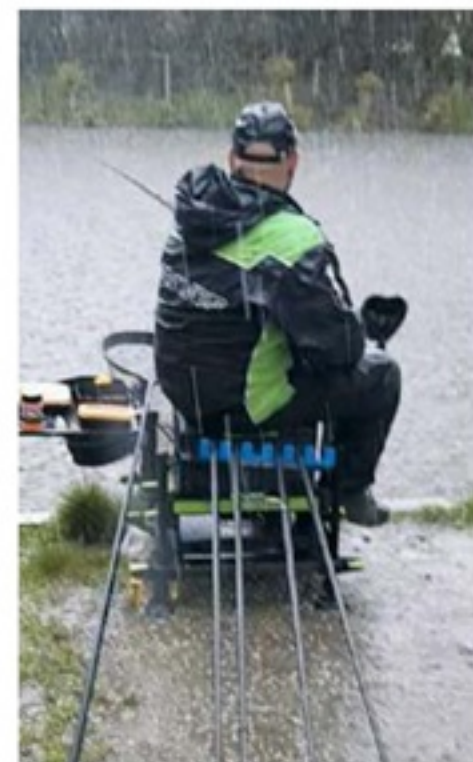
Simon Bol

“I was fishing with my mate on the Foss Dyke canal and it was snowing heavily. A man walked down the bank and said: “Thanks lads, you've just won me a tenner! When I left home my family said there won't be anyone mad enough to fish in this weather – so I bet them a tenner there would be!”

Andrew Clayton

“Here's a shot of me pole fishing at Weston Pools during a hail storm!”

Marc Drew





EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK

'FOR A FLOAT FISHING ROD THIS CAN DO SO MUCH MORE'

Tackle expert Tony Grigorjevs tests out the Korum Glide Power Float rod



HOW WE TEST OUR GEAR

Our team of tackle experts use their years of angling experience to test new gear to its limits.

Mark Sawyer, Tackle Editor

I'D BEEN itching to sample the delights of the River Welland all winter and I finally got the chance when a brand-new rod aimed at running-water anglers arrived in the office.

The slow-moving Spalding town centre stretch of the river is in its best form for decades, with giant shoals of roach packing in.

Catches of over 30lb have been occurring every week, 40lb netfuls have been fairly frequent and there's even been the occasional jaw-dropping

50lb-plus haul too.

When I saw the Korum Glide rods I instantly had images of several rings of the keepnet packed with quality redfins. It's sold in two different sizes - a 13ft version and a 12ft that stretches to 14ft with a mini extension - and it was the former I fancied for the job.

Although it's billed as a power float rod with barbel and chub anglers in mind, I felt the fast-paced nature of the sport on the Welland could suit hitting a bite and instantly swinging the fish directly to hand or towards

the net. Allowing the fish any leeway to fight isn't an option when you're trying to catch such a big bag of roach and speed is of the essence.

Its line rating of 3lb-12lb also suggested that the rod could easily deal with plenty of different scenarios.

Hit every bite

Fish were topping frequently close to where I'd put my seatbox, and although there was clearly a mass of roach sat in front of me, they are renowned for giving lightning-fast bites.

AnglingTimes BANKSIDE PROMISE!

- Genuine on-the-bank tests
- By anglers, for anglers
- Unrivalled insight
- Every week



A screw-down reel seat sits above the full cork handle



Wide rings are designed to handle lines from 3lb-12lb



Gold detailing and a hook keeper ring are classy touches

That means a rod must pick the line up quickly on the strike to set the hook before the fish ejects the bait.

A first trot through the swim produced the tiniest of dips on the stickfloat, and within seconds a small roach was swung to hand with the hook firmly lodged in the top lip.

The next few runs produced the same result and it was clear the rod was as every bit as responsive as I needed.

Despite having a little bit of 'poke' in the top end of the rod, it wasn't having an adverse

effect on my results, with very few bumped or lost fish.

There was no doubt that if I hooked into something more substantial, the rod would have the metal to put me firmly in control of the battle.

The key to casting

Accuracy is vital when floatfishing. Regular feeding by hand or catapult builds up a bed of bait in a certain area of your peg, and should your rig fall off it, the chances of a bite decrease.

How the eyes are laid out on the rod will dictate how often

you hit the target zone, and the Glide has definitely been built to help you in that department. The eyes are appropriately sized and spaced along the rod, allowing the mainline to pass through without restriction during the cast.

Flicking a light stickfloat to the same spot every time was easy, and had I been using a dumper loafer with more weight behind it on a faster river, the result would have been the same.

As the session progressed, the fish became slightly cagier, pushing further down the peg

to find a little sanctuary from the commotion caused by their shoalmates being whipped out of the water.

The added distance from where I was sat to the float had no adverse effect on the rod's performance, with around 80-90 per cent of bites met with a solid resistance.

Versatile tool

This isn't an out-and-out

OUR VERDICT



"I had images of several rings of the net packed with redfins."

silverfish tool and it doesn't pretend to be either, but it had done the job on the day. I went home confident that it would have done me proud presenting a loafer float under the rod tip for perch or fishing a volatile whirlpool with strong undercurrents for species like chub and barbel.

An appropriate action and balance to the rod is what will ultimately catch you more fish, but there is no harm in treating the aesthetics with a little care too and Korum have done

that. The cork handle is a good length, allowing you to hold the rod over the top of the reel and rest your elbow at the end of it. This stance aids the speed in which you can hit bites, allowing you to use the full power of your forearm to bully a fish in whatever direction you desire.

All-in-all, it's a rod that won't let you down, and when you consider that you'll probably get change from £70, it offers great value for money.

Price: RRP £69.99

www.anglingdirect.co.uk

BANKSIDE TEST VERDICT

- +** Well-spaced eyes on the rod make sure that accurate casting is performed with minimal effort
- +** Tip action is perfect for the all-round river angler. Soft enough to prevent bumping off silverfish all the time, stiff enough to provide power when battling bigger fish
- +** Secure reel handle makes sure your freespool or centrepin is locked securely in place at all times
- The 12ft version loses some of the action when extended to 14ft, making it a little less responsive when trying to hit bites



KORUM GLIDE POWER FLOAT ROD

LENGTHS: 13ft & 12ft-14ft (mini extension makes the longer length)

LINE RATING: 3lb-12lb

USES: Stick float and waggler fishing

BLANK: Lightweight parabolic carbon blanks

HANDLE: Full cork

The eyes are nicely sized and spaced along the rod so the mainline passes through them without restriction when you cast.

The blank has got plenty of beef. This isn't just a tool for catching silvers, it's well capable of taming big chub and barbel too.

This rod has been solidly put together. The reel seat holds the reel nicely, making casting and trotting a float through a real doddle.

The cork handle is a great touch and allows you to hold the rod over the top of the reel and rest your elbow at the end of it, aiding striking.

OUR PICK OF THE ALTERNATIVES

13FT DRENNAN RED RANGE FLOAT

PRICE: £64.99

A well-priced tool ideal for everything from small roach to quality chub. It could be used with both the stick float or a waggler.

SIMILAR PRICE

14FT CADENCE CR10 MATCH ROD #2

PRICE: £129.99

Fantastic rod for anglers who dabble in a variety of disciplines. Can handle everything from small silvers to big barbel.

ALL ROUNDER

13FT PRESTON INNOVATIONS CARBONACTIVE SUPERA FLOAT

PRICE: £169.99

Well worth a look if you have a slightly bigger budget. It is sold in two different weight categories.

TOP SPEC

ON OUR RADAR

OUR PICK OF THE LATEST GOODIES TO HIT THE BANKS

SUFIX ADVANCED FLUOROCARBON

WHAT THEY SAY: This superb line delivers everything competitive anglers look for in a premium grade fluorocarbon. Super-soft and manageable, its refractive properties make it virtually invisible underwater. High abrasion-resistance is teamed with good knot strength. Available in a huge range of diameters, starting at 0.20mm (8lb).

WHAT WE SAY: With far less stretch than standard mono, its durability makes this a must for snaggy and clear water conditions. It's a bit heavier than normal line, which gives it superb fast-sinking properties. Comes on 100yd spools.

Price: £14.95

www.rapala.co.uk



PRESTON INNOVATIONS DES SHIP COMMERCIAL SLIMS POLE FLOATS

WHAT THEY SAY: Designed by England International Des Shipp, these floats cover every aspect of commercial fishery pole fishing. Made from tough high-grade foam, they have very accurate shotting weights and feature virtually unbreakable Dura side-eyes. Five patterns include F1 Maggot, Carp Pellet, and the evergreen Chianti all-rounder float.

WHAT WE SAY: Commercial Slims cover just about every commercial fishery pole tactic. The tried-and-tested slim body shape and clever use of different bristle and stem materials makes for accurate, fool-proof shotting, all adding up to a classic pole float.

Price: £2.10

www.prestoninnovations.com



AT REPORTER CHRIS HAYDONS SAYS:

These feature an almost unbreakable Dura side-eye fitted over the bristle, giving immense strength and durability.



DYNAMITE SWIM STIM F1 SWEET PRO EXPANDER PELLETS

WHAT THEY SAY: Easily prepared by either pumping or soaking, Dynamite's new Swim Stim F1 Sweet Pro Expanders are pre-boasted with F1 sweet flavour. Both 4mm and 6mm sizes come in 300g re-sealable bags.

WHAT WE SAY:

Ideal for F1s, carp and skimmers on the pole, the attractive sweet F1 flavour of these pellets is sure to give you an edge, especially on heavily coloured commercial fisheries.

Price: £2.99, www.dynamitebaits.com



SHIMANO X5 AND X7 ROD RANGES

WHAT THEY SAY: This is an exclusive peek at Shimano's latest rod releases. In the X5 range, 11 models cover all aspects of feeder and float fishing, while the stunning top-end six-model X7 series gives match anglers a choice of feeder rods capable of everything from accurate short to super long-distance casting.

WHAT WE SAY: The proof of the pudding can be seen in next week's Angling Times, as we get to exclusively test one of the new flagship X7 rods. At the moment, though, let's just say they look a little bit special.

Prices: Should be from around £126.99, available from all Shimano main dealers

FIND HUNDREDS OF EXCLUSIVE TACKLE REVIEWS AND TESTS ONLINE NOW! www.gofishing.co.uk





LOK DOWN BOBBIN KIT

IF YOU'RE legering it's crucial that you minimise the resistance a taking fish feels, and using a light bobbin is key to this.

Avid's Lok Down Bobbin kit comes with a variety of customisable features, but crucially it has the option of a small bobbin head, as well as a Dacron cord. This Dacron weighs much less than a more typical metal chain.

Price: £9.99, www.tackleuk.co.uk

TACKLE UP FOR



STILLWATER PERCH

We look at the bits and pieces you need for this weekend's session



CHIANTI POLE FLOAT

POLE fishing is a deadly tactic for big perch because you can not only place your hookbait tight to features, but also achieve incredibly delicate presentation.

Preston Innovations' Chianti floats have a cult following among match anglers, and they're a great option for one of the best big-perch baits – casters. Use strung-out shot along the bottom part of your line so you can lay your rig in and get bites on the drop.

Price: £1.99, www.jptackle.co.uk



CAMO RUNNING RIG CLIPS

STAYING along the lines of minimising resistance, using a wide running ring reduces the friction on the line as a fish moves off with your hookbait. Korum's Camo Running Rig Clips are an efficient option, and you can easily attach a light bomb to the quick-change swivel.

A handy sleeve of silicone tubing hides this away and helps to reduce tangles.

Price: £3.99, www.total-fishing-tackle.com



SUPER SPECIALIST HOOKS

AN ICONIC specimen fishing hook, Drennan's Super Specialist get the nod from big-fish anglers. They're perfectly suited to perch and come in sizes from a whopping size 2 for big prawns and lobworms, right down to a tiny size 20 for maggot and casters.

These hooks also come in a barbless pattern, which is required on most commercials.

Price: £1.70, www.iansfishingtackle.co.uk



HI-VIZ SOLID ELASTIC

ELASTIC choice for perch is important to get right, because you want something soft enough to avoid bumping fish off while also having enough grunt to drive the hook into a perch's bony mouth.

One option worth trying is a doubled-up 6-8 Middy Hi-Viz solid elastic. By doubling the elastic, you maintain the soft benefits of a usual solid while also gaining an extra bit of power when the elastic streams from the tip.

Price: £3.35, www.benwick-sports.co.uk

IT WORKS FOR ME

BOBBER FLOAT PAUL RILEY, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

"YOU'RE supposed to have minimal resistance when fishing for perch, but sometimes I get fed up with silly bites from small fish I can't hit on my delicate wagglers. What I then do is use a big, buoyant bobber float. When it goes under you know you've got something decent on the end."

Price: £1.65, www.anglingactive.co.uk



**READER
RECOMMENDED**

USED & ABUSED

AnglingTimes STAFF RATE THEIR FISHING KIT

OUR RATINGS: POOR ★ AVERAGE ★★ GOOD ★★★
VERY GOOD ★★★★★ EXCEPTIONAL ★★★★★★

SHIMANO SPEEDMASTER AX COMMERCIAL FEEDER MULTI 9-11FT

TESTED BY: FREDDIE SANDFORD



AS SOON as I picked up this rod I knew it was just the job for accurate casts up to islands.

In its 11ft guise it's also ideal for roving for chub on small rivers, or casting feeders short distances on natural venues. When you use it at 9ft, it's perfect for casting small feeders and bombs on commercial fisheries, or when you find yourself in a tight swim.

Quivertips are rated at 0.5oz, 1oz and 2oz and they will cushion small hooks and fine lines, something I was glad of when recently I landed a 17lb carp on a size 20 hook and 0.12mm line!

Price from: £139.99

www.fish.shimano-eu.com

QUALITY: ★★★★★
VALUE: ★★★★★



HOURS USED 175+

DAIWA HYDROLASTIC

TESTED BY: RICHARD GRANGE



IF I had to use just one pole elastic for the rest of my days this would be it.

White (soft), Black (medium) and Purple (strong) are the main colours I use, and their incredible stretch and durability have served me well over the years.

The light blue Hydro, rated 5-8, is not often seen on the bank, but it's absolutely awesome for silverfish.

Price from: £13.49

www.daiwasports.co.uk

QUALITY: ★★★★★
VALUE: ★★★★★



HOURS FISHED 300+



READER TESTED
HOURS USED 200+

RINGERS WAFER HOOKBAITS

TESTED BY: TONY BELL, RUGBY

I'VE lost count of the number of big carp I've caught on these at Boddington and Clattercote Reservoirs.

They are easy to use, virtually guaranteed to catch you fish, and are compatible with both banded and bayonet-type hair rigs.

Price from: £4.99

QUALITY: ★★★★★
VALUE: ★★★★★

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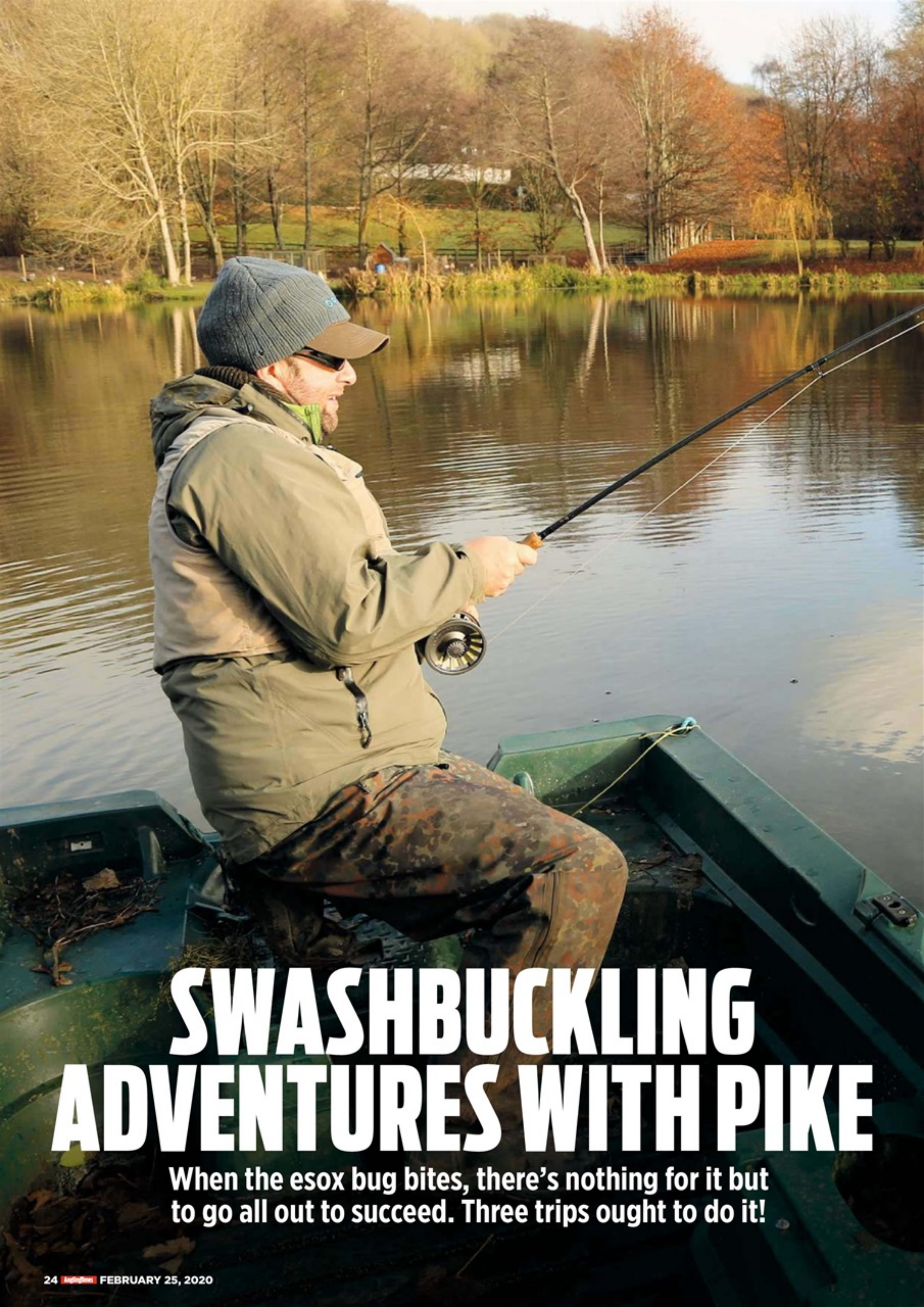
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01603 754305 for more details



HAVE YOU GOT AN ITEM OF TACKLE THAT HAS STOOD THE TEST OF TIME?



If so, send your 'used and abused' review, plus a photo of yourself, to:
newsdesk@anglingtimes.co.uk



SWASHBUCKLING ADVENTURES WITH PIKE

When the esox bug bites, there's nothing for it but to go all out to succeed. Three trips ought to do it!



MY RESTLESS nature has taken me on many angling adventures all over the world, and every trip adds to my memory bank of big fish located, hooked and sometimes lost.

The British Isles offer a wealth of fishing that I could never hope to fully exploit in ten lifetimes, let alone one! Variety is my drug, so when pike were next on my agenda I decided I'd use three different tactics on three separate waters.

Wayne Little, who owns the

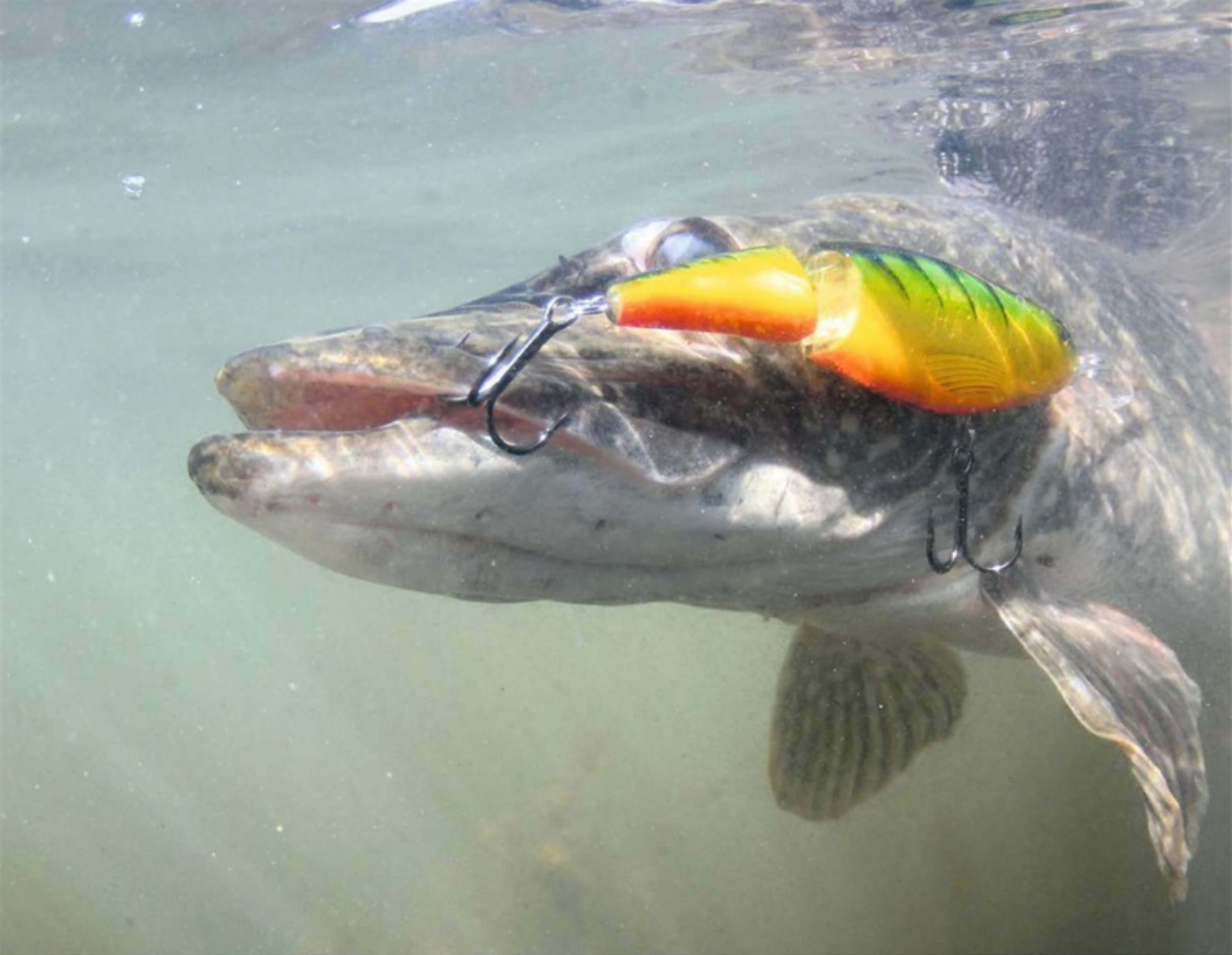
beautiful Milton Abbas estate lake in Dorset, had invited me to fly-fish for pike from a boat, an offer I couldn't refuse. Before the sun had climbed above the valley, I'd left the main road for a quintessentially English village with its quaint pub and thatched cottages.

A coffee was waiting for me in the boathouse, but I was itching to get afloat. In this spring-fed lake the predators grow big and

Continued over the page



A fly-caught pike is returned to its home.



fat, and a 30-pounder is no mere pike dream!

We meandered towards the top end as Wayne felt this was where the most fish would be. Unsurprisingly it was also where

the weed was at its thickest.

Anchor down, we both cast an unlikely array of feathers and tassels into the gin-clear water, bringing these hefty flies to life with fast strips of the line.



Pike flies, huge creations of feather and fur.

Fish have a way of putting you in your place. Amazingly, we struggled to get even a follow and the pike that did notice what we were doing weren't impressed. Eventually a few jacks took pity on us, but by the time I left the village I was glad to be planning my next piking trip with another old friend, and hoping for better results.

Next morning, I crossed the Severn Bridge, bound for the magnificent River Wye. My host this time was George Woodward, a man who doesn't suffer fools or a weak handshake gladly. Offer him a limp lettuce and he'll try to break your fingers! I always treasure our time together as we put the

world to rights.

Truth be told, any trip is as much about messing around as it is about fishing, but with the river at last in fine fettle I was determined to catch something.

We took to the boat, with our plan being to occasionally stop and fish from the bank if we felt a spot needed a little bit of extra attention. Fishing as many swims as possible is essential as it's the Wye's nomadic pike, not you, who decide when and where they want to feed.

I love the wild nature of the Wye Valley, and in the company of a man who knows more about the river than anyone else I've ever met I couldn't think of anywhere I'd rather be as I

“Swashbuckling pike fights begin with promise but end quickly”



A Wye pike savages my jointed plug.



George, not a man you should mess with.

began casting my lures.

Downstream we went. Occasionally we switched from lures to float-legered sardines in order to explore floating rafts of debris, but for no longer than 15 minutes... George's boredom threshold!

Back on the boat at the insistence of my restless friend, I swung my lure behind a salmon crib that was deflecting the flow. The hit was brutal, as was the battle that followed, although neither the nearby cattle nor my companion seemed that impressed. "Stop messing around," grumbled George as a mid-double fought for all its worth. But as I hoisted up my prize for a picture, I was already rating this among my best angling adventures.

I like fishing with my friends, but on my third trip it was time

to go solo. I find if I want a big fish this is the way to do it, with no banter to distract me from my task. This time my focus was on a large lake and its large pike.

I arrived before dawn and had three baits out just before sunrise. Two were on running lead set-ups terminating in my favourite 28lb Green Wire and two size 6 trebles supporting a smelt and a lamprey section, respectively. Both of the baits were pimped up with a glug of Sticky Krill attractant.

On rod number three I rigged a herring on a sunken paternoster

so it lay gently on top of a large weedbed. The weak link carrying the lead was formed from 10lb Drennan Double Strength that would snap if snagged during the fight.

I expected a take almost immediately, but apparently my quarry wanted a lie-in. An hour later, though, two rods went off simultaneously. Now that the pike had a taste for the baits they were greedy, and that morning eight came to the landing net. None weighed more than 10lb, but I knew with every bite that the odds were swinging in my favour of something bigger.

After a two-hour lull the indicator pulled free of the braid and the alarm warbled into life. On the strike, the rod took on a healthy bend and the clutch yielded line.

Pike fights are swashbuckling episodes that begin with promise but end quickly. This one was no different, as all the fish's energy was spent after two minutes of fast runs. Then it was game over!

Not that I minded: my three-part odyssey was concluded in the best possible way with a cracking fish. Time to reminisce? No way. Before I'd turned the key in the ignition I was already planning my next angling mission.



My three piking trips ended on a big-fish high!

WHERE TO FISH

CANAL TO BANK ON IN THE WINTER

GU CANAL,
LEIGHTON
BUZZARD

Grand Union sport never flags in the cold

VENUES located in town centres are always packed with fish during winter.

The shoals migrate to the shelter provided by the dozens of buildings and bridges which make the water ever so slightly

warmer than elsewhere.

This is often a recipe for red-hot silverfish sport, and the Leighton Buzzard stretch of the Grand Union Canal in Bedfordshire is a case in point.

The best pegs are within a stone's throw of the hubbub of shops and several industrial estates, but you'll soon forget about the nearby commotion.

Boat traffic is minimal at this time of year and the Luton AC-controlled day ticket stretch isn't popular with dog walkers and bike riders either. That means few interruptions throughout the day, leaving you to get on with the task of catching a fish every chuck.

Numerous cheap car parks and street parking surround the canal, so there's no need for long walks laden down with tackle. The towpath has also been fairly well maintained, making pushing a trolley easy and ruling out the chance of hitting a pothole and tipping your gear into the drink!

Graham West lives a short

15-minute drive from the stretch and has spent more than his fair share of time there over the years. "A lot of anglers rave about how reliable commercials are for plentiful bites in winter, but if I needed to go to a venue for guaranteed action then the Grand Union at Leighton Buzzard would be my choice," says Graham.

"It's full of fish and they aren't all tiddlers either. There are lots of bonus specimens in there that will pull a fair bit of elastic out when you hook them."

Small roach provide a bite pretty much every drop in, but if you're after something more substantial then big skimmers and perch to 3lb are there for the taking as well.

Picking a peg that gives you multiple options will increase your chances of catching fish of all species and sizes.

"I usually look for moored boats and plenty of far-bank cover to locate the bigger fish," Graham reveals.

"Lots of roach tend to sit down



Graham West and a canal stripey.



Andy Loble with a GUC carp from West Hyde, Herts.

Mark Pollard with a good mixed net from the Grand Union Canal at Milton Keynes.



the channel in 4ft of water, and squatt or pinkie over a few balls of groundbait will concentrate the shoal.

"A dark mix such as Sonubaits Super Crumb Black Lake adds a little colour to the clear water, making it harder for the fish to detect your pole just above the waterline. Use a solid No3 elastic and 0.10mm mainline to a 0.07m hooklength and a fine wire size 22 hook.

"Chopped worms and casters are a deadly combo for the skimmers and perch, and half a lobworm on a size 14 hook will do the business.

"The rest of your tackle also needs beefing up for the bigger fish," says Graham, "and a Preston Innovations 7H elastic to 0.13mm mainline and 0.11mm hooklength will make sure you land everything you hook."

There aren't many venues that can promise a really high level of consistency at this time of year, but the Grand Union Canal at Leighton Buzzard is certainly one of them.

VENUE FACTFILE

LOCATION: The canal is a five-minute walk from Leighton Buzzard railway station. Off-peak day tickets from 10am onwards are priced at £6.50. Use Station Approach, Leighton Buzzard, Beds, LU7 2LY to find the station

CONTACT: Call 01582 728114 or visit www.lutonanglingclub.co.uk

PRICES: Day tickets are available on the bank priced at £6 adults, £3 concessions, £2 juniors

SPECIES: Roach, bream, perch and carp

RULES: Night fishing permitted for members only



Graham West gets among the perch.



A fish a chuck is the norm here, even in winter.



Bob Nudd with a net of Old River Nene silvers.

AnglingTimes FISHERIES ON FIRE

- Local know-how for bumper nets
- Your tried & tested top waters
- Expert venue tactics

WINTER SILVERFISH HOTSPOTS

NORTH

STAINFORTH & KEADBY CANAL, THORNE, S YORKS

The popular 'Stainy' is a real hotspot for anglers, where large shoals of roach head in winter.

Try bread on the short pole.

Contact: Stainforth Angling Centre, 01302 846623

Postcode: DN8 5QP

TRENT & MERSEY CANAL, MIDDLEWICH, CHESHIRE

For good bags of roach to 2lb, try the Trent & Mersey Canal.

A number of affordable clubs in the South Cheshire Anglers Consortium share the rights.

Contact: Daves of Middlewich, 01606 833853

Price: Wyche Anglers, £30 membership

LEEDS & LIVERPOOL CANAL, ADLINGTON, LANCASHIRE

Dumpy roach are being caught on bread on this stretch of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, and casters can sort out quality fish.

Contact: Adlington Angling Centre, 01257 474823

Price: £28 membership, Wigan and District AA

MIDLANDS

OLD RIVER NENE, MARCH, CAMBS

The Fenland rivers are famed for their prolific silverfish sport, and in winter huge shoals of roach and skimmers can be plundered from town stretches.

Contact: Mill View Fishing Tackle, 01354 660566

Price: Free fishing



RIVER OUZEL, NEWPORT PAGNELL, BUCKS

Anglers have been enjoying some terrific silverfish sport on the Ouzel at Newport, with occasional bonus perch coming to pinkie over groundbait.

Contact: Waters Edge Tackle, 01908 690969

Price: Free fishing



RIVER WYE, HEREFORD, HEREFORDSHIRE

You'd be hard-pushed to find a better stretch of river than the Wye near Hereford town centre, where you can bag a monster net of dace and roach.

Contact: Woody's Angling Centre, 01432 344644

Postcode: Woody's Angling Centre, HR4 0QD

SOUTH

RIVER TONE, TAUNTON, SOMERSET

A length of the Tone known as the 'fast stretch' throws up good nets of chub and dace. Float tactics score well.

Contact: Enterprise Angling, 01823 282623

Price: £7 day tickets, Enterprise Angling

EXETER CANAL, EXETER, DEVON

The basin of the Exeter Canal is very deep, so in winter fish naturally gravitate to it. Good bream, roach, perch and rudd can all be landed on a variety of tactics.

Contact: Exeter Angling Centre, 01392 436404

Price: £6 day tickets, Exeter Angling Centre

TURN THE PAGE FOR MORE GREAT VENUES TO FISH THIS WEEK

CHOOSE HOLBAR FOR A VERY

Packed full of silverfish, the lake's legendary stocks of 20lb commons

PARTRIDGE Lakes is without doubt one of the North's most popular commercials, and Holbar is often the pick of the bunch among anglers.

The venue's well-kept appearance, wide selection of waters and top-class facilities all get the thumbs-up from visitors but it's the quality of sport on Holbar that is the biggest draw.

Features at range make it the ideal place to wield the waggler or feeder. Initially created as two lakes, it has been redesigned and merged into one pool.

Big mirrors and commons to over 20lb are still a key part of the attraction but there are also giant F1s to over 6lb, roach to well over 1lb and impressive shoals of quality skimmers.

It's fair to say the 47-peg water never disappoints.

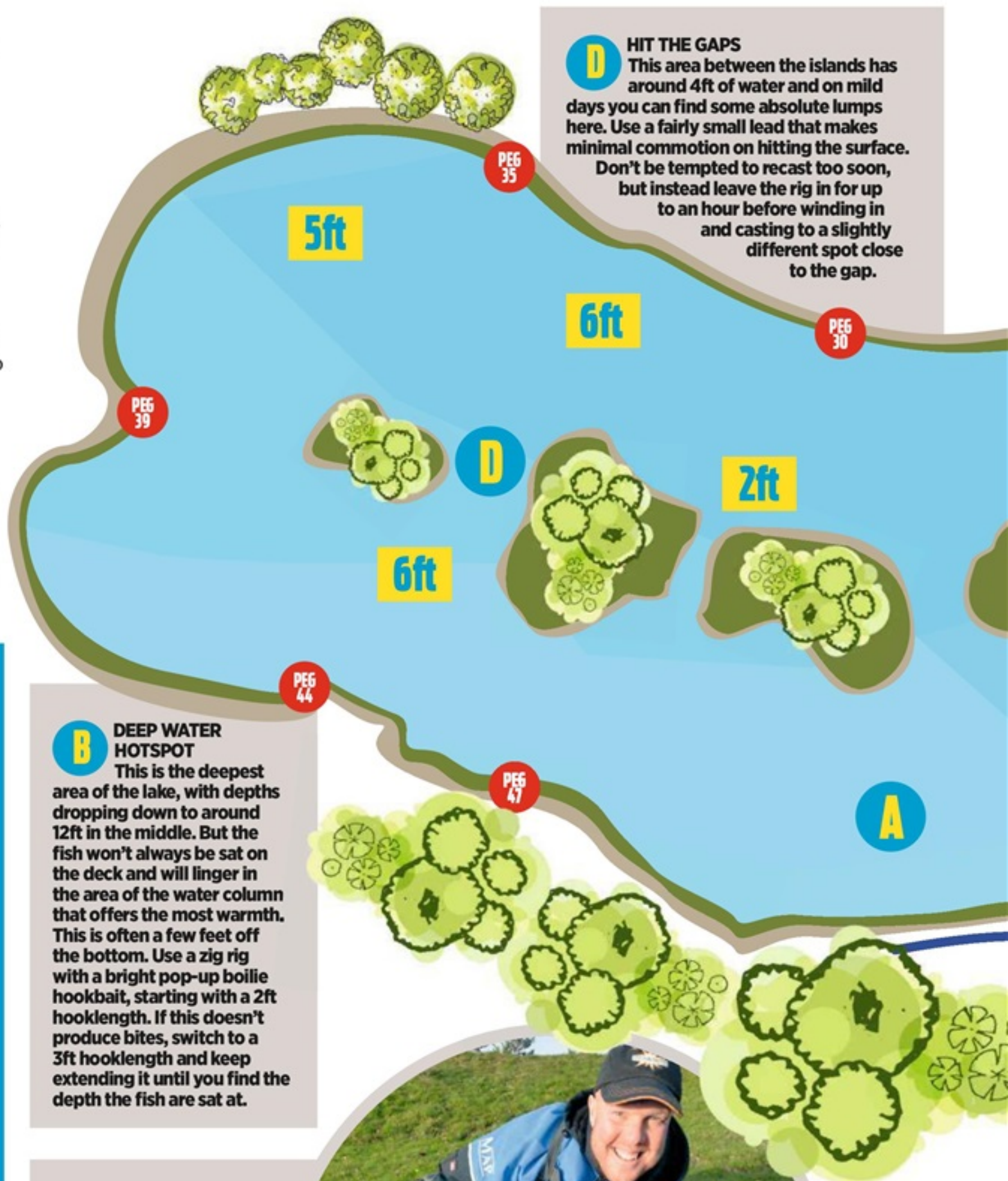
I FISH IT... LOCAL EXPERT Andy May

"While anglers on Holbar await their dream fish they will be kept occupied by plenty in the 6lb-15lb bracket.

"A somewhat negative baiting approach can often pay off. Use small PVA bags of pellets alongside your hookbait.

"If silverfish are more your thing Holbar is an equally attractive proposition. The pole-fished short and long - or the waggler will keep them coming. Strung-out shotting slows the fall of your hookbait so you catch at all depths.

"Make sure your float is well dotted down because bites can be really finicky and you won't even spot them if you have too much of the bristle on show."



D **HIT THE GAPS**
This area between the islands has around 4ft of water and on mild days you can find some absolute lumps here. Use a fairly small lead that makes minimal commotion on hitting the surface. Don't be tempted to recast too soon, but instead leave the rig in for up to an hour before winding in and casting to a slightly different spot close to the gap.

B **DEEP WATER HOTSPOT**
This is the deepest area of the lake, with depths dropping down to around 12ft in the middle. But the fish won't always be sat on the deck and will linger in the area of the water column that offers the most warmth. This is often a few feet off the bottom. Use a zig rig with a bright pop-up boilie hookbait, starting with a 2ft hooklength. If this doesn't produce bites, switch to a 3ft hooklength and keep extending it until you find the depth the fish are sat at.

A **STUNNING SILVERS**
Hauls of 30lb plus are always on the cards. Big roach and skimmers tend to live in the open water, preferring to stay away from the carp hug. Maggots will work if you want to get stacks of bites, but if you want to be more selective and pick out the bigger samples, use worm and caster or hemp to trigger the wished-for response.



BUSY SESSION

are there for the taking too

SPOTLIGHT ON HOLBAR, PARTRIDGE LAKES



THE BAILIFF SAYS

Andy Nelson, AKA 'Nellie':

"Holbar Lake is one of our most popular waters, and in summer we sometimes have to turn people away!"

"Originally it was two separate lakes, but seven years ago we turned it into one larger water. This has given a variety of depths to try, with some parts going down to 12ft and other areas tight to islands where you get into just 10 inches of water."

"Some visitors prefer to sit it out with a bigger bait for one of the better carp, but you'll never need to go much bigger than a 12mm boilie – you'll catch everything on these."

"Big Skrettings pellets are also well worth trying."

"Holbar is also home to some good silverfish, and maggots will catch a bit of everything. Soft pellets are a worth a try for the better bream and skimmers."

Lake bests:

- Barbel: 6lb
- Roach: 11b
- Bream: 6lb
- Carp: 26lb

C MATCH-STYLE TACTICS
As this lake is heavily fished by dedicated specimen carp anglers, you could be forgiven for thinking that boilies would be the best loosefeed and hookbait. But often this isn't the case as a 2kg limit applies to them. Pellets are fed in greater quantities and the fish seem to prefer them. Use an 11mm hard pellet hookbait either straight on to the hair rig or banded, and fish a small PVA bag of 4mm, 6mm and 8mm pellets alongside it.



THE HOT PEG

LOTS of water to attack. Chuck one rig close towards the deepest part of the lake and another either straight in front or directly to your left towards the island.

The silvers sport on Holbar is great.



NO
FISHING

VENUE FACTFILE

HOLBAR, PARTRIDGE LAKES, CHESHIRE

LOCATION: Glaziers Lane, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 4AQ

CONTACT: Call 07950 057613 or visit www.partridgelakes.co.uk

TICKETS: One rod £10, two rods £15

RULES: Barbless hooks to a maximum of size 12, no fixed rigs, 2kg maximum of boilies and groundbait

FACILITIES: Parking, disabled access, tackle shop, café, toilets

ABBROOK POND, KINGSTEIGNTON, DEVON

RECOMMENDED BY:
KEVIN DOBSON

Fishing for: 24 years
Favourite Species: Carp
Favourite Tactic: Either surface fishing or using a multi-rig



READER
RATED

“It’s an ancient pond filled with features and a great stock of big specimens”

My local water is...

Abbrook Pond is just seven miles from my house, and I’ve been fishing it for decades. It’s an ancient lake that’s on the Exeter Angling Association ticket, and over the years I’ve done some work on it, trimming the trees and removing silt. I’ve also helped to stock fish into it, so I have a bit of a soft spot for the pond.

Favourite swim

Abbrook is absolutely filled with features, including a lily bed, silt holes and bars, but my favourite swim is the one facing the main island. This is the largest of the many islands on the lake and it’s a real fish-holding feature. Its overhanging trees and shallower water offer the fish an attractive

patrol route, particularly in the summer months.

Best moment

A few years ago, I had a great day on a mild March weekend, when I landed six carp to 17lb. I wasn’t expecting to catch much, so it was a real result.

Go-to method

In the summer you can’t beat a bit of floater fishing, but when it’s cooler, fishing with pop-ups can also be very effective. The bottom is quite silty, but a buoyant bait keeps you away from any silt or bottom debris.

Inside tip

There are some good perch in Abbrook, and prawns are a great

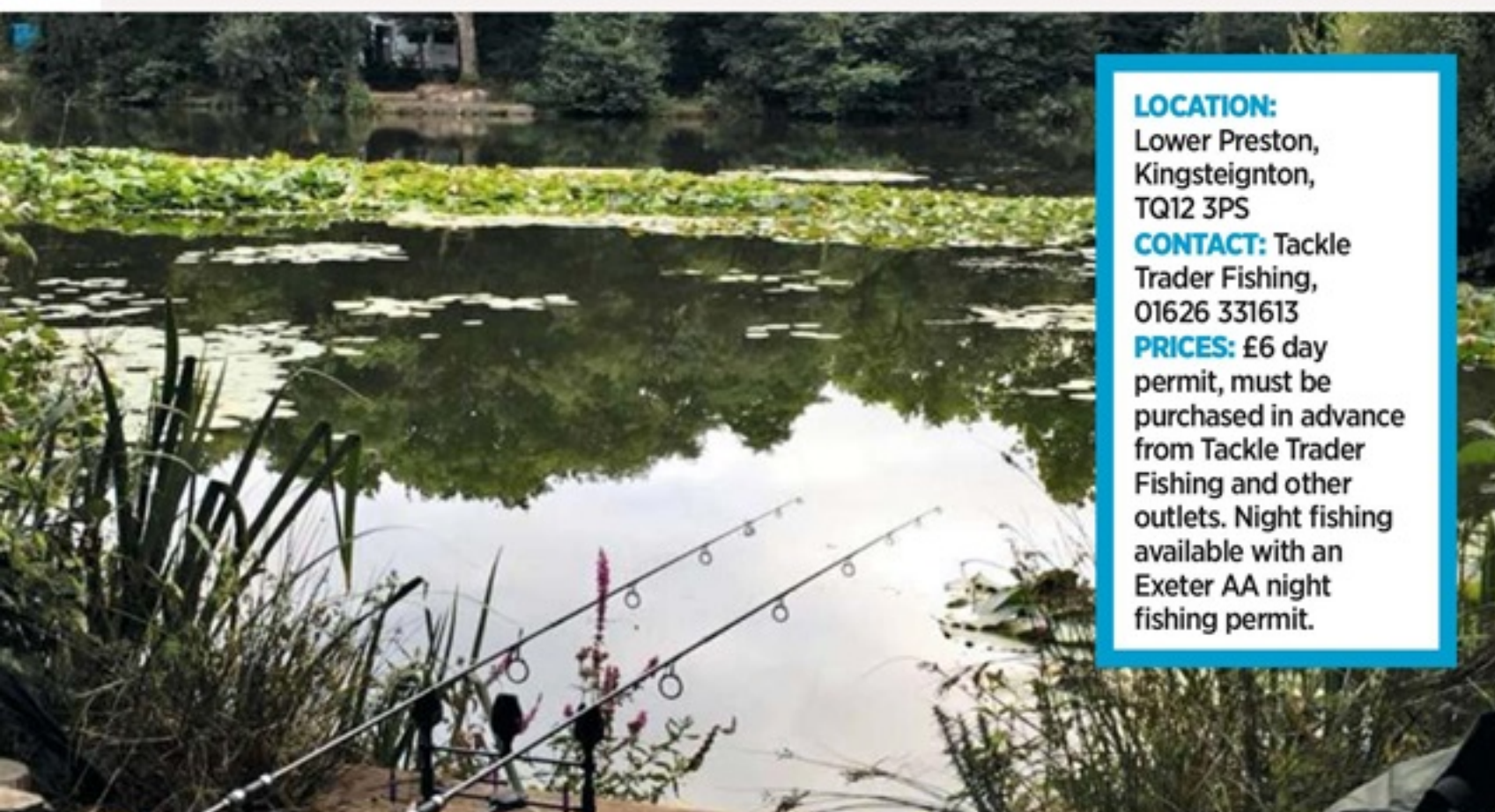
bait if you want to single out a bigger fish. Roach and skimmers can also be caught on pole fishing tactics to a variety of hookbaits. If you want to target the pond’s carp stocks, I’ve found that fishy-flavoured baits work much better than the more traditional sweeter offerings.

On site

You won’t find any fancy facilities at Abbrook, just a toilet and the car park.

In the area

The seaside towns of Teignmouth and Shaldon are just a short drive from the pond, as is the market town of Newton Abbot, where you can find plenty of places to stay and eat.



LOCATION:

Lower Preston,
Kingsteignton,
TQ12 3PS

CONTACT: Tackle
Trader Fishing,
01626 331613

PRICES: £6 day
permit, must be
purchased in advance
from Tackle Trader
Fishing and other
outlets. Night fishing
available with an
Exeter AA night
fishing permit.

AnglingTimes

2 FOR 1
FISHING

HOW TO TAKE PART

Take the special weekly voucher to one of the three participating fisheries listed here and you’ll receive two day tickets for the price of one.



BROOM FISHERIES, ANNAN, DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

Wallace Lake has seen some excellent catches of carp. For silvers, Queensbury water is also worth a try for ide and skimmers.

Contact: 01461 700386

Postcode: DG12 5PF



WOODLAND VIEW, DROITWICH, WORCESTERSHIRE

This prolific fishery offers good sport throughout the year. Try soft pellets 11m out on any of the pools for bites from quality fish.

Contact: 01905 620872

Postcode: WR9 0AU



LAKE JOHN, WALTHAM ABBEY, ESSEX

The bottom lake has been producing well, with decent nets of skimmers and carp. The top lake is famous for both.

Contact: 07958 938153

Postcode: EN9 2BJ

YOUR VOUCHER

Valid from Tuesday, February 25 to Monday, March 2.

Excludes weekends.

NOTE: You still require a rod licence when using our 2for1 vouchers

Subject to availability

UK ROUND-UP

NORTH

RIVER DEE, SHOCKLACH, CHESHIRE

This pretty stretch on Warrington Angling Association's books is ideal for trotting a stick float for grayling. But beware! Chub to 5lb or even the odd barbel can gatecrash the party.

What's been out? Grayling to 2lb, roach, dace, chub.

Tactics to use: Try a centrepin and stick float with maggots or get the fly rod out for grayling.

Contact: 01928 716238

Postcode: SY14 7BH

SANDIWAY LAKES, WHITEGATE, CHESHIRE

The smaller of two lakes at the site covers 17 acres and is 18ft deep. It holds specimen roach, bream and tench as well as big carp.

What's been out? Mainly mirrors and commons to 40lb.

Tactics to use: Feeder fishing for silvers, boilies for carp.

Contact: 01928716238

Postcode: CW8 2AZ

MIDLANDS

WICKLEWOOD LAKE, WYMONDHAM, NORFOLK

If you believe that variety is the spice of angling life then Wicklewood Lake is the place to head for. This heart-shaped, spring-fed, one-acre lake has a "little bit of everything" according to owner Barry Fulcher. There is a good head of carp, roach, rudd, ide, orfe, as well as chub and barbel to 4lb.

What's been out? A match at the 20-peg venue was won with a 40lb net of carp and silvers. There were several 20lb-plus back-up bags.

Tactics to use: Try leger tactics with a bomb and popped-up bread. Pole fish 8m out, feeding bread with breadpunch on the hook.

Contact: Barry Chilvers (07788 560946) for day ticket (weekend only availability)

Postcode: NR18 9HW

DRAYTON RESERVOIR, DAVENTRY, NORTHANTS

Carp anglers and predator fans have

THE HOTTEST PEGS NOW!



Chris Haydon with a Chard Reservoir bream.

found a winter hotspot at Drayton Reservoir, which is open 24/7 all year round. The deeper water, which drops to 17ft at the Dam Wall, has been delivering the goods.

What's been out? The middle of the Dam Wall, pegs 24-36, has delivered carp to 24lb recently, and many doubles. A few pike to 17lb have also been landed along the wall.

Tactics to use: Try zig rigs, sticky mixes, bottom baits and pop-up boilies for carp. To tempt pike use mackerel and other sea fish.

Contact: Mark and Angie, 07889 532563

Postcode: NN11 5SG

RIVER GREAT OUSE, OLNEY, BUCKS

Big perch and chub are a feature of the fishing on the Olney and Clifton Fishing Association stretches of the Great Ouse, amounting to over three miles.

What's been out? A recent match on the Bathing Steps and Weston Road sections produced two 3lb-plus stripeys, but two-pounders can be caught almost anywhere. The Mill stretch is a big chub haunt. If river levels are high, Weston Road is recommended.

Tactics to use: Floatfish worms or leger and twitch worms for perch. For the chub, trot breadflake.

Contact: 01234 240061 (book day tickets in advance)

Postcode: MK46 4DW

SOUTH

BATHPOOL, BRIDGWATER AND TAUNTON CANAL, SOMERSET

The half-a-mile long Bathpool stretch just outside Taunton town centre has been keeping winter anglers busy with regular double-figure roach bags. Specimen perch and rudd have also been caught at the Taunton AA venue.

What's been out? Roach nets of 20lb have been common, with specimen perch to 3lb and 2lb rudd.

Tactics to use: Loosefeed liquidised bread and use punch on the hook on the 5m whip line for roach and rudd. For a super stripey trot worm and feed caster on the far shelf.

Contact: 07753 120460

Postcode: TA2 8BZ

KINGFISHER LAKE, MERSTONE, ISLE OF WIGHT

100lb BAGS

This two and-a-half-acre lake offers good mixed coarse fishing for a wide variety of species, with 100lb bags possible.

What's been out? Double-figure bags of carp averaging 3lb-5lb and assorted silvers. The lake contains chub and ide, as well as bream, tench, perch and double-figure carp.

Tactics to use: Cast a Method feeder to the island or use pole tactics down the edge. Boilies, pellets, maggots and corn all score.

Contact: 01983 539939

Postcode: PO30 3BT

CHARD RESERVOIR, CHARD, SOMERSET

The mild winter has brought a bonus for Chard Reservoir anglers in the form of consistent bream action, while carp anglers have enjoyed good sport. Chard AC manage the fishing at the 48-acre venue.

What's been out? A 100lb bream bag won the Christmas match, while the most recent contest this year was won with a more modest 20lb.

The bream average around 5lb, although double-figure specimens have been reported. Plenty of double-figure carp have been taken.

Tactics to use: For bream cast a feeder 50 yards with dead red maggots, worm or sweetcorn on the hook. Go long for carp, with boilies.

Contact: 0146068231

Postcode: TA20 1HR



Ben Collins with his 20lb Severn pike.

FREE TO FISH

BIG PERCH

RIVER SEVERN, TEWKESBURY, GLOS

AS one of Britain's premier rivers, the Severn is somewhere that everyone should fish at some point in their lives.

Barbel, chub, roach and dace are among its most famous fish, but its predator sport is also of fantastic quality, as Ben Collins discovered when he banked this beautifully marked 20lb pike.

Targeting the stretch of the river in Tewkesbury, Ben was using lure tactics when the big predator smashed his Savage Gear bait right by his feet.

Contact: Bankside Tackle, 01684 294511

Location: Bankside Tackle, GL19 4BP

Price: Free fishing

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Des Shipp, **Lee Kerry**, Tommy Pickering,
Des Taylor, Mark Holmes & **Ian Russell**



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Get your tickets!

The Big One Show is at the NAEC Stoneleigh on February 29 and March 1, 2020. VIP tickets are limited and cost £45 for one day's entry. You can save 10% off a standard adult ticket by using the code SAVE10 at checkout - offer expires 29/02/2020. Tickets on the door cost £12 for adults, £8 concessions and under 11s are free.

**FOR FULL DETAILS PLEASE
VISIT OUR WEBSITE
WWW.THEBIGONESHOW.CO.UK**



DON'T TELL HIM PIKE!

Your answer to the letter querying the existence of a giant pike film (Feb 4th issue) prompted me to send you this picture of the mechanical beast. After filming came to an end it was suspended on the quay-side

at Windermere. It measured approximately 10ft! I have no idea where it is now.

Ian Knight, via email

WHY I GO FISHING

I STARTED fishing during a hard time in my life. I'd lost my job and was struggling to find a new one. At first, I found myself getting annoyed if I'd blanked, but slowly I realised that catching fish is almost the secondary point of fishing. We should be grateful for the chance to get outside and take in the fresh air. If I don't catch a big fish it's good just to be there.

Tom Shannon, Wigan.

BAITS ARE THE SAME

IN reply to the letter by Gary Ashwell 'Plastic's good for me', (January 28) I would like to point out that we have not switched from using plastic for our baits and terminal items, as it appears Mr Ashwell assumes when he says "With regard to Enterprise Tackle switching from plastic to biodegradable baits".

We are still using the same plastics and the baits will look and feel the same as before. We are just adding a very small amount of a new additive to the plastic that enables it to be broken down by natural microbes found in the environment, much quicker than plastic items not containing it.

Also the process does not break the plastic down into 'micro plastics', which have been the main cause for concern in recent times, as highlighted by the BBC programme 'Blue Planet'.

Chris Hornsby, Enterprise Tackle

MY WRONG CALL WAS A PERSONAL BEST

Des Taylor's article about making wrong calls when predicting which fish species

you've hooked (Feb 4th issue) reminded me of a session I fished at Claypole Lakes last summer. I had been catching F1s and carp on a variety of baits when I switched to cold water prawns, feeding mushed up prawns over the top. The next time my tip went round I was into a big lump. My first thought was: "This is the double I've been after." Imagine my surprise when it turned out to be this



Robin Piper was surprised by this pb eel.

massive eel. And at 4lb 4oz, the eel turned out to be a personal best too!

Robin Piper, Orpington

THAT'S CLEVER

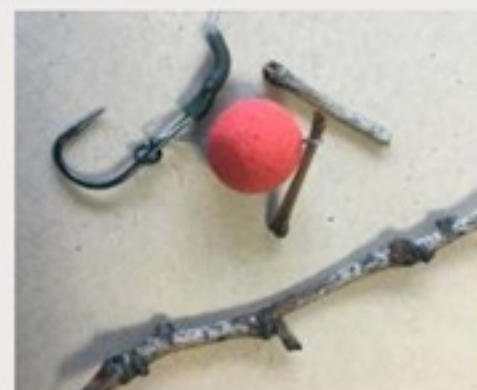
Have you got a brilliant solution to an angling problem? Send your quick fixes to atletters@anglingtimes.co.uk



BLACK IN YOUR TIP

Carry a black marker pen with you when float fishing. If the sun makes it hard to see your float tip, you can black it in to make it more visible instead of having to waste time changing rigs.

Brian Smyth, Milton Keynes

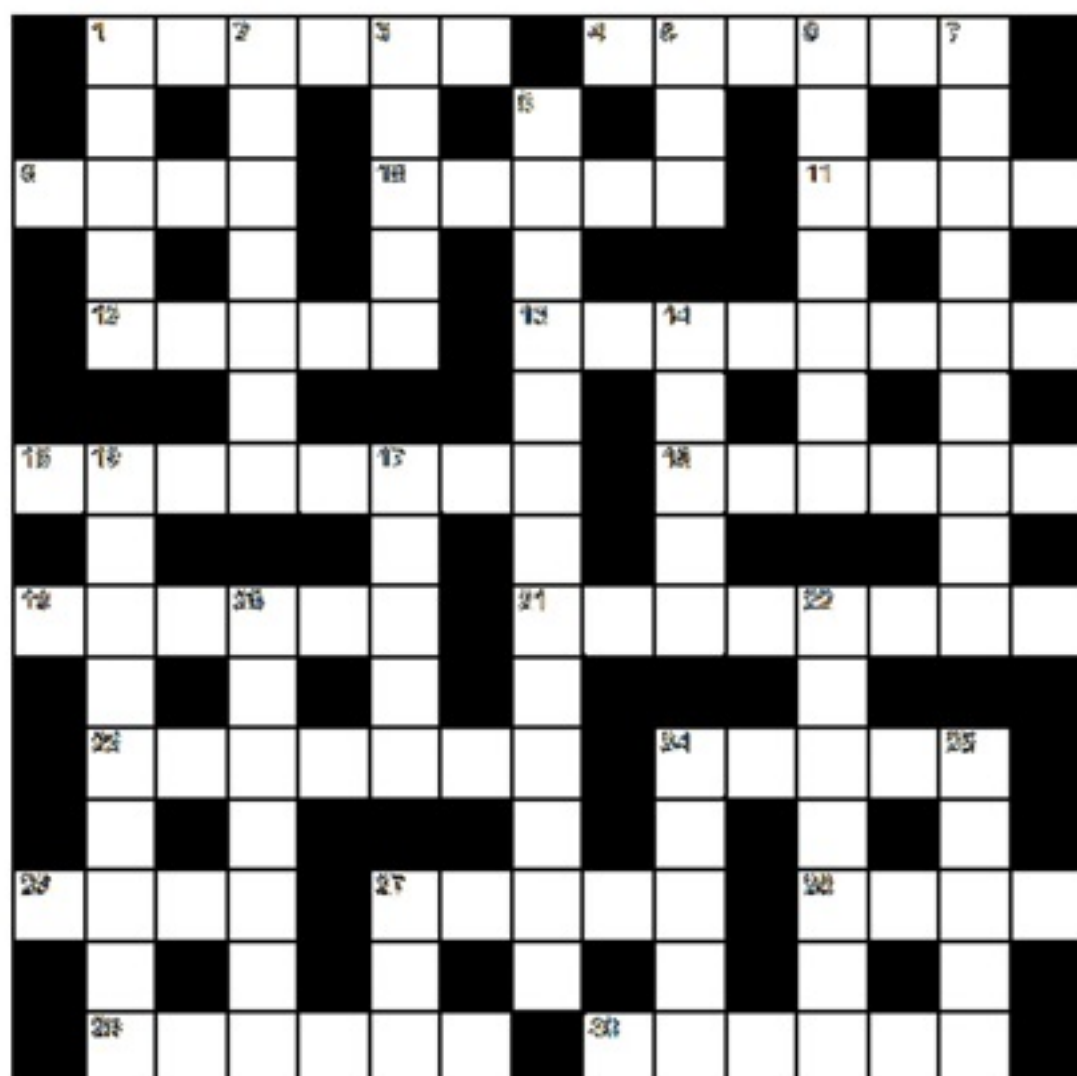


MAKE A HAIR STOP

If you arrive at the bank to find that you've forgotten your hair stops, don't worry. A sturdy piece of grass or a small twig can be used as a handy substitute instead.

M Colvin, Middlesbrough

THE ANGLER'S CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Fishes using static weight to keep bait on bottom (6)
- 4 Artificial lures – and cutlery (6)
- 9 Predatory seabird – turning back auks (4)
- 10 Trail baited line behind moving boat (5)
- 11 Animal den – in central Airdrie (4)
- 12 Depth-finding instrument ("arson") (5)
- 13/25 Twice winner of Ladies Fish 'O', 2017 / 2018 ("my hake is light") (8,5)
- 15 Dismissive term for e.g. tiny fish (5,3)
- 18 / 1dn. A top Leics. fishery for pike and zander ("tickle scale") (6,5)
- 19 Split-cane fly rod material (6)

- 21 Angling Trust events to coax families into angling ("it's flesh") (4,4)
- 23 Torbay resort / fishing port (7)
- 24 The ____ football betting scheme used by anglers! (5)
- 26 A splasher waggler's top end is ____ (4)
- 27 Like a loafer float's plastic body (5)
- 28 Excursion tumble? (4)
- 29 Private investigator ("hustle") (6)
- 30 One of the Essex Nash Lakes – for worshippers? (6)

DOWN

- 1 See 18ac.
- 2 Small, clawed anchor – confused "angler P" (7)
- 3 Revolving part of fixed-spool reel (5)
- 5 Friend – in Spalding (3)

- 6 A drilling for petroleum – apply a lot of lube? (3-4)
- 7 Bite indicators more sensitive than quivertips (5,4)
- 8 Heavy bite indicator with sliding bobbin on steel pin (6,7)
- 14 Sailing boat (5)
- 16 Rounded lumps of cooked mince – great for barbel (9)
- 17 e.g. sea foam (5)
- 20 The tip inserted into a pole float (7)
- 22 Sort of bait for on-the-top fishing (7)
- 24 Scottish city on River Tay – and Australian city (5)
- 25 See 13ac.
- 27 Black Country term for "canal" (3)

(* indicates an anagram)

Solutions to February 18: Across: 1 White Acres 7 Foss 9 Hybrid 10 Barbule 11 Terme 12 Sloth 13 Hold 14 Gates 16 Spinning 18 Hebrides 21 Waist 23 Chic 24 Sheaf 26 Nick 28 Dormant 29 Rattle 30 Dobs 31 Manchester. Down: 2 Hayle 3 Tarbert 4 Andes 5 Ribbons 6 Sarah 7 Faughan 8 Snell knot 14 Grey hydro 15 Sid 17 IOW 19 Records 20 Sweeten 22 Ignites 24 Swarm 25 Firth 27 Colne.



1981: "I was only 10 when I landed this tench from a Cotswold gravel pit, but it started off my angling life." Richard Baker



2017: "My son Jude, then 7, was delighted with this perch. He's still fishing and his pb is significantly bigger now." Rob Evans



1990: "My stepdad gave me a fishing lesson at a small farm pond near Wisbech. This mixed net was the result." Ricci Cox

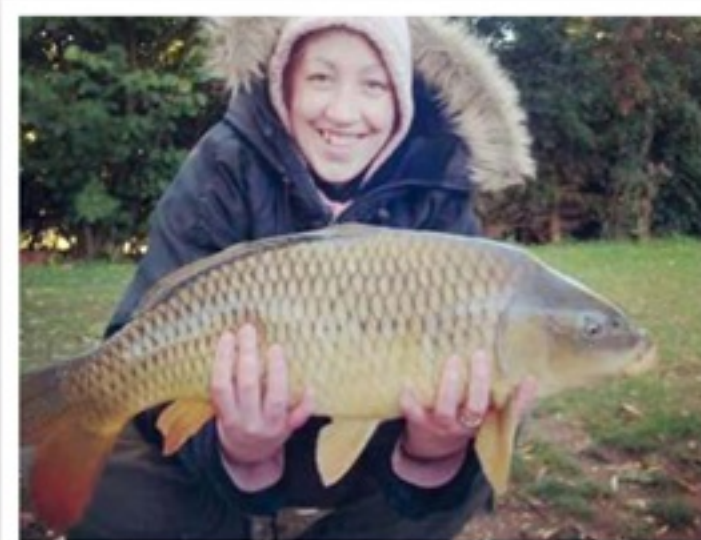


2019: "It was nearly as big as him, but my boy took this 15lb 2oz carp from Lowerhouse Lodge." Gazza Spencer

YOU NEVER FORGET YOUR FIRST FISH

HOW YOU STARTED YOUR JOURNEY

Send your first fishing pictures and angling memories into:
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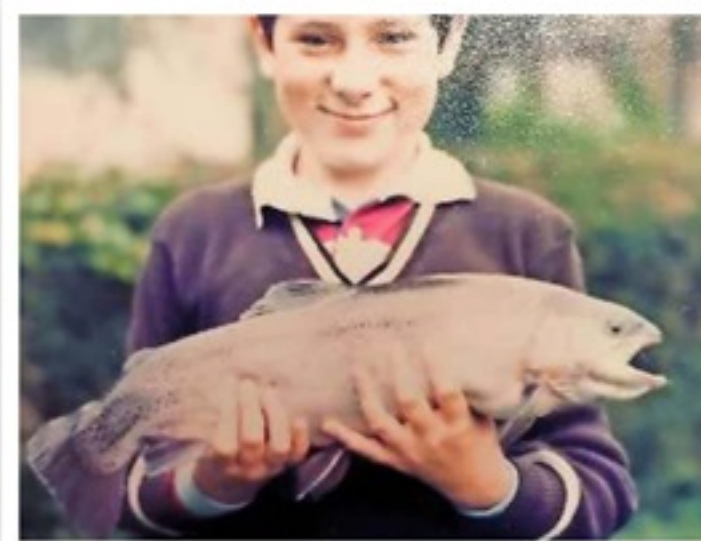
2010: "I turned up late at Manor Farm and took this carp. Most of the men on the lake walked away in disgust!" Emma Jane Rock



2015: "My son Harry was four when he took this. We now have to go every week – not that I'm complaining." Tom Sayce



1980: "Cheespaste worked for me on the River Nene for my first chub when I was 12. I'd made the bait myself." Robert Hardy



1982: "I must have been 12 when I fished Rooksbury Mill near Andover and took this trout." Dominic Palmeri

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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KINGFISHER CLUB

CELEBRATING BRITAIN'S KIDS AND THEIR CLEVER CATCHES



Kingfisher Club
TOP CATCH

River campaign ends in joy

GEORGE JOHNSON and his dad were determined to bank the 15-year-old's first river carp – and landed this 12lb common.

"Dad and I headed for one of his old haunts on the River Adur and we started a baiting campaign of homemade groundbait and Robin Red pellets," says George.

"After a few weeks of baiting we started the session and I fished the Method feeder. We didn't have much luck until nightfall when I hooked this 12-pounder. I was over the moon and so grateful to my dad, whose experience was key to my success. It was a thrill to watch the fish swim away when I released it."



NEW
PERSONAL
BEST

Archie Evans

13lb pike, local stillwater



Mason Brient

Common carp, Allington Pond



George Wakefield

2lb 8oz carp, Forest Lane Fisheries



Archie Markham

5lb common carp, Tattershall Farm Park Lakes



FIRST
FISH

Eden White

1lb 1oz F1 carp, High Farm Holiday Park



FIRST
IDE

Emmie Jinks

1lb 8oz ide, Float Fish Farm



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Charlie Earl
4lb common, Cockfield Fisheries



William Beebe
5lb pike, Old River Nene

“I can't wait to bag my next pike”

BARNEY HIPKIN tried his hand at predator angling and was rewarded with this 8lb pike caught on a smelt deadbait.

“I was on the River Wissey about 15 miles from my house in Dersingham, Norfolk,” says a

delighted Barney.

“I normally fish for carp, but I decided to give predator hunting a try. I was really pleased with my first-ever pike. I can't wait to get out there again after a bigger one.”



OUR BLOKE ON THE BANK
DES TAYLOR

“You'll never catch on every trip out”

The fact that fishing is so unpredictable is part of the charm of being out on the bank

THE OTHER day I was struggling to get a bite, despite the apparently perfect conditions, but that happens quite a lot in angling, doesn't it?

On such days my mind starts working overtime to try to solve the problem. Is it the bait I'm using? Is it the wrong colour? Have I started off with too much loosefeed, or not enough? Are the fish up in the water, or hard on the bottom?

In spite of this, over the years I've learned that on some days, no matter what you try, you're going to catch very little because the fish are preoccupied with natural food. There's no shortage of that throughout the seasons, with frogspawn, tadpoles, fly hatches, emerging bugs, bloodworm, terrestrial creatures blown on to the water from surrounding trees and small fish fry all helping to make the fish turn their noses up at our bait offerings.

Sometimes you can see what the fish have chosen to eat



Some days pike are mad for a bait, on others you simply can't buy a bite!



SISKIN
These lovely birds are members of the finch family, preferring to sit in the top of trees. They're widespread across the UK and live here all-year-round.

from this natural larder. All you have to do then is imitate the food source and you'll catch. But when the fish are feeding on something you can't see, that's a totally different story. The chances are that you will never know what they're snacking on, and if you start changing things around too much then when the fish are back in 'normal feeding mode' a few days later, you could well be using a rig or a bait that is way off the mark.

So remember, no matter how skilful you are, you'll never catch on every trip out.

I, for one, find that uncertainty plays a big part in the attraction of angling. Experiencing those frustrating days is what will make your next capture all the more special. It's a sport where we are always guessing what's going on beneath the surface, and I hope that it stays that way forever. Fishing was never meant to be easy!

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BYDGOSZCZ CANAL, POLAND, 1975



ARTHUR'S ARCHIVE

Keith Arthur remembers how Ian Heaps tricked the stewards and the crowds to be crowned World Champion in Poland

ONE OF the great treats for all anglers is listening to Ian Heaps relating how he became World Champion on his England debut back in 1975.

His sonorous voice explains in wonderful detail how the huge crowds massed on the far bank of Poland's Bydgoszcz Canal, and how his slider float rod-and-line tactics caught quality fish, while most of his opponents had a small fish race on the pole.

His winning weight of 22lb 8oz was a record for the event, with his catch of mainly bream being

augmented by two carp.

On the big day there was a strict rule, adhered to by the stewards, that any hooked fish that went outside an angler's 'zone' during the fight would be disqualified. With such narrow pegs as they were in those days, keeping a hooked fish 'legal' was all-but impossible - which was

"With narrow pegs, keeping hooked fish 'legal' was impossible"

one of the reasons why most of the competing anglers targeted small fish. However, Ian fooled the stewards, and the crowd, by plunging his rod tip well under the water so they couldn't judge where the fish went.

That title is far from Ian's only 'world best'. He held the match weight record with a 166lb bag of roach from the town water in Enniskillen, taken from a peg that still bears a plaque marking his triumph.

Due partly to his fabulous matchfishing career and amazing personality, he also became one of the first sponsored anglers in the sport when German giants DAM signed him up, and he was instrumental in the success of Polynet keepnets too.

In the early 1980s I spent a few days on an exploratory trip to France with several top anglers, and shared a room with Ian. The only reason he couldn't become World Champion at snoring is because Dave Vincent just pipped him, but the decibel levels were right up there, possibly enhanced by his love of red wine...

WHAT ELSE WAS HAPPENING



HOME COMPUTER REVOLUTION BEGINS

The Altair 8800 is released in January, sold through ads in specialist electronic magazines.

IT'S JUST A FLESH WOUND...

Cult film Monty Python and the Holy Grail is released. In 2005 it was adapted into award-winning Broadway musical Spamalot.

THE GREATEST FIGHT IN BOXING HISTORY?

Muhammad Ali fights Joe Frazier in the Thrilla in Manila. A record global crowd of one billion watch Ali win by TKO in the 14th round.



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**TRACK NEAR SIDE**

A great spot in summer but no good at this time of year. It's a little too near to where you're sat for the fish to feed in numbers, so I'd discount fishing here completely.

TRACK MIDDLE

The deepest water tends to be silty, making bait presentation difficult, so I wouldn't make it my main line of attack.

IF YOU TRY ONE THING THIS WEEK...

SEEK OUT THE DEEP WATER

Former Fish O' champ Andy May reveals how to tackle a snake lake



The 'sweet spot' is on the far side of the track.

IT'S all too easy to turn up at a peg, take in the fishy features such as overhanging trees or reedbeds and make the decision to fish there all day. Surely there's nothing wrong with that?

In summer, I would definitely be fishing these spots. They will have shallow water that F1s and carp want to be in. However, at this time of year every lovely far-side feature is likely to be devoid of fish.

That's especially true on snake lakes - narrow canal-type waters that are typically 14m wide. You're faced with less water to go at and that makes understanding where the fish are going to be doubly important. Working it out isn't Krypton Factor stuff, though - just look for deep water.

Just like canals, snake lakes have the same sort of underwater contours made up of shallower areas close in and across to the far side that slope gently into a deep channel down the middle of the lake known as

the track. It's in this channel that winter carp and F1s will want to be when the water is on the clear side, as they feel safest here.

Prime the swim

Although the fish will be in the track, they'll need some convincing to feed so it's important to prime the peg by feeding it for a few hours before fishing. You could begin the day fishing here and catch, but the bites won't last, and the swim will get worse and worse as the session goes on.

I want the fish to be confident and taking the bait quickly when I do decide to fish down the middle. Get it right and the fishing will be fantastic. In just an hour you can catch upwards of 20 fish, one after the other.

Initial feeding

Priming the swim is done at the rate of three or four feeds every hour. Each time I'll put in 25-30 maggots with a pole cup or large pot on the pole tip. Throwing them in by hand is too inaccurate in winter.

BAG MORE THIS WEEK!

- Tactics to take to **YOUR** water
- Tricks & tips for bigger bags
- Trusted knowledge
- Every week

TRACK FAR SIDE

At this point the deeper channel begins to shallow up to the far bank. The lakebed is quite hard but there's enough depth for FIs and carp to feed happily and enough distance between me and the fish to catch steadily.



Find the right spot and the FIs will follow.

Pick your spot

When it comes to deciding where to feed and fish, it's not necessarily a case of going straight down the middle of the swim. This very deepest part can gather a lot of silt, so I prefer to target an area where the water just begins to shallow up on that far-bank slope.

On most snake lakes, this

will be around 8m out - a nice comfortable distance to fish at.

I'll have two swims on the go, fishing at angles away from myself. One swim will be at 10 o'clock on an imaginary clock face and the second at two o'clock. This will allow me two bites of the cherry, with two areas to alternate between and keep the bites coming.

GIVE IT A GO

Tackle the track with confidence



SENSITIVE FLOAT

A slim pencil-shaped pattern of 4x12 is shotted with a bulk of No10s finished with three No11s shots spaced 3ins apart for the middle of the peg, or a spread of No12 shot down the line for the far-side slope.



FIND THE DEPTH

You must fish the depth that the fish want to be at, 3ft 6ins to 4ft. To find this easily, set the rig at that depth and work around the area you want to fish until you find the depth that you're looking for.



STRICT FEEDING

A dozen maggots go in every eight minutes. If I don't have a bite after this time I will repeat this. If I do catch I will feed straight afterwards, as I know fish are eating what's going in.



EASY TO FIND HOOKBAIT

Double maggot hookbaits can be picked out easily by the fish. I'd only consider using single maggot if the fishing was rock hard and I was trying to get just the one bite.



VITAL PULLER KITS

MAP's Twin Core hollow elastic in orange grade 3 covers most of my winter fishing on snake lakes. You can still land big carp on it if you use a puller top kit and take your time.



USE BACKSHOTTING

Backshotting keeps the float still. Mine is made up of two No8 Stotz fixed 5ins-6ins away from the float. I colour the shot with Tipp Ex to make them instantly visible.

No bites?

There's a chance that you may drop in down the middle after three hours of feeding it and not get a single bite.

Don't worry, this happens, and it could be that you need three or four looks here before you finally catch.

Around 10 minutes will be enough time without a bite to

tell you to move on and fish somewhere else.

If the fish are down the middle you'll soon know, as a response will be very quick in coming.

NEXT WEEK

The legendary Bob Nudd on how to fish breadpunch with a twist.

WATERCRAFT

Understanding what's going on beneath the surface will help you to catch more

ISLANDS OF OPPORTUNITY

The plum draw on any lake, these swims boast a host of fish-holding features

1 MARGINAL COVER

FIs and carp love a bit of cover over their heads, and both species are drawn to island margins with reeds or overhanging bushes. Use either a small Method feeder, casting to the same spot each time, or the long pole, if range allows.

1

2 DOWN THE SLOPE

If the water is clear or the weather cold, the fish will move away from the shallow margin and into slightly deeper water a few metres down the slope. You can expect to catch skimmer bream, FIs and carp in these areas, plus perch, if present.

2

3

4





Islands are a prime spot to catch a big net.

3 MIDWATER LAYERS

Roach will be the main quarry when fishing off the bottom in open water. Target them using a slow sinking hookbait, such as maggots, on the pole or waggler. You can expect to find them anywhere from half-depth to just off the deck.

4 DEEP CENTRAL CHANNEL

The deepest water in the swim is often home to the biggest fish. As well as carp and barbel, any larger bream in the lake will be located here. It's perfect for either the Method feeder, a waggler set slightly overdepth, or the long pole.

ALL ANGLERS prefer fishing up to a feature of some sort rather than out into open water, and in this respect swims with island margins are among the very best on offer on any lake.

If the island is fringed with reeds or bushes, that's the place to start. Carp are drawn to these areas all year round, but especially when the water starts to warm up.

If there's a cold wind blowing across the lake, then look for spots around the island that offer shelter from the elements.

Hitting the spot

Depth is crucial, and you're looking for 2ft-3ft close to the island. If it's shallower than this, then gradually edge your rig away by a foot at a time until you find the right depth. Once you've found it, accurate casting is key. You need to hit the same area every time in order to build up a 'hotspot'.

"The deep channel is where you'll find the bigger fish"

The slope

Moving away from the margins, skimmers and F1s will be found slightly further down the slope, along with any perch. If targeting these areas with a feeder, make sure to use a flatbed pattern, so that it will hold station on the gradient.

The deep channel between the islands is where you'll find the bigger fish in the lake, such as barbel or proper bream, but big carp also favour these areas.

These spots are best fished with a clipped-up feeder or, if conditions allow, a long pole with the hookbait set slightly overdepth.

THE BEST BAITS

SOME loosefeeds are better suited than others to priming island margins. Hemp, micros and casters are good choices. They will stay put and not roll away, but bigger pellets and maggots could work their way into deeper water, taking the fish with them. It's the same with groundbait. Try a loose mix, which will sink better and stay put, rather than balls.

Need some help with your watercraft? Send your questions to [Angling Times newsdesk@anglingtimes.co.uk](mailto:newsdesk@anglingtimes.co.uk)

CARP SKILLS WITH MATT POVEY

The rigs, baits and tactics
you need to catch big on
your next session!

This 18lb common
shows that short
sessions can be
effective.



QUICK-HIT ACTION IS THE WAY

Matt Povey reveals his top tactics for
more bites when time is limited...



Casting small bags
means that loosefeed
doesn't get spread all
over the peg.

IT'S better to fish two minutes in the right place than two days in the wrong one. This popular carp saying couldn't be more apt than when the water is still cold.

If you can put a bait directly in front of the carp there's a good chance that they will eat it. They are unlikely to move a great distance to find food, though, so if your location isn't absolutely spot-on you are in for a cold and fishless session.

To help me find this fruitful area of the swim, I fish tactics which enable me to stay mobile and don't restrict me to one spot for the duration of the trip. I aim to really work the water and actively look for signs such as line bites which will eventually lead to a fish or three.

I have a full-time job and a

busy family life, so much of my angling revolves around quick sessions, although I occasionally get to fish for longer spells of 36-48 hours. However, at this time of year, regardless of the length of the session, I still use my short session tactics.

Tactic one: Pellets & paste

For quick-hit sessions, small PVA bags are ideal. They offer the carp a mouthful of two of bait at most and enable me to cast around without leaving loads of loosefeed spread about.

I fill the bags with a 50:50 combination of Dynamite Baits' Complex-T and Tiger Nut pellets. Then, combine two different flavours because they flood the swim with flavours and food signals. I then cast every two hours either to a totally new area or to where



PVA bags are
perfect for
short sessions.



TRY THIS

Regularly cast out PVA bags of maggots to the same spot to build up a bed of feed over the session.

HOOKLINK

The rig is a standard combi-rig tied from a length of coated braid with a section of the outer coating removed above the hook.

HOOKBAIT

Thread 15-20 maggots on to a length of dental floss then tie the floss on to a hair-rigged rig ring.

PVA BAG

Fill the bag with maggots covered in boilie crumb. This will add to the maggots' flavour without filling the carp up too quickly.

I've seen signs of fish.

Fishing fluoro baits isn't my thing because everyone tends to use them at this time of year. I do things a little differently.

On the hook, I've started playing around with Dynamite's new Tuff Pastes. Again, both the Complex-T and Tiger Nut versions are mixed together until they become uniform in colour, then, mould the paste around an 8mm corkball.

Once formed, I boil the hookbaits for two minutes before air-drying them for a week. These much smaller hookbaits work very well with the smaller pellets in the PVA bag, and over a short period of time the paste wrap will start to slowly dissolve and break down. This pumps much more attraction into the water than a standard boilie.

The other great advantage of these bespoke hookbaits is that

they only last for around four hours, so I'm forced to recast when they start to break down.

Tactic two: Maggots

Maggots are a great cold-water carp bait, but you have to fish them correctly to get the most out of them.

Remember that to a fish, maggots resemble a hatch of naturals. The carp know that this hatch won't last long, and this triggers an urgency to feed before the hatch ends and the food supply disappears.

As for rigs, I use a standard combi-rig made from coated braid for both tactics.

The paste balls are simply hair-rigged, while the maggot rig has a small rig ring and a sliver of foam threaded on to the hair. I then thread 20 maggots on to a length of dental floss before tying the bunch on to the rig ring (see above).

OUR PICK OF THE CARP CATCHES THIS WEEK



42lb

DAY-TICKET GIANT!

JACK Gabriel banked this gorgeous mirror of 42lb 15oz from Devon's Furzebray Lakes on a Sticky Manilla dumbbell boilie.



44lb

DAY-TICKET GIANT!

NICK Oliver's first visit to Baden Hall's Quarry Pool, Staffs, resulted in a 44lb 8oz mirror. He used a Dynamite Baits Hit N Run pop-up.



33lb

MOVING swims to a bay on the end of the wind gave Josh Harris this 33lb 14oz chunk during 48 hours at The Quarry, Essex.



48lb

A SINGLE pop-up presented in a silty channel at Yateley Match Lake, Surrey, produced this huge 48lb mirror for Laurence Aslett.



30lb

BIG day-ticket carp are rare in East Yorks, so Anthony Weldrick's capture of this 30lb 10oz mirror from Majestic Pool is impressive!



41lb

DAY-TICKET GIANT!

THIS 41lb 8oz mirror was one of 10 fish banked by Will Davidson from Linear Fisheries' Brasenose 2. He used trimmed-down pop-ups.

TO SEE ALL OF THE LATEST CARP CATCHES, TACKLE REVIEWS AND TACTICAL ADVICE CHECK OUT WWW.CARPFEED.COM



ASK THE EXPERTS

THE ADVICE YOU NEED TO GET THE BEST FROM YOUR FISHING



STEVE RINGER

World Feeder champ and a constantly successful matchman



DAI GRIBBLE

Top all-round big-fish angler and former Drennan Cup champ

Should I use particles or groundbait on the feeder for barbel?

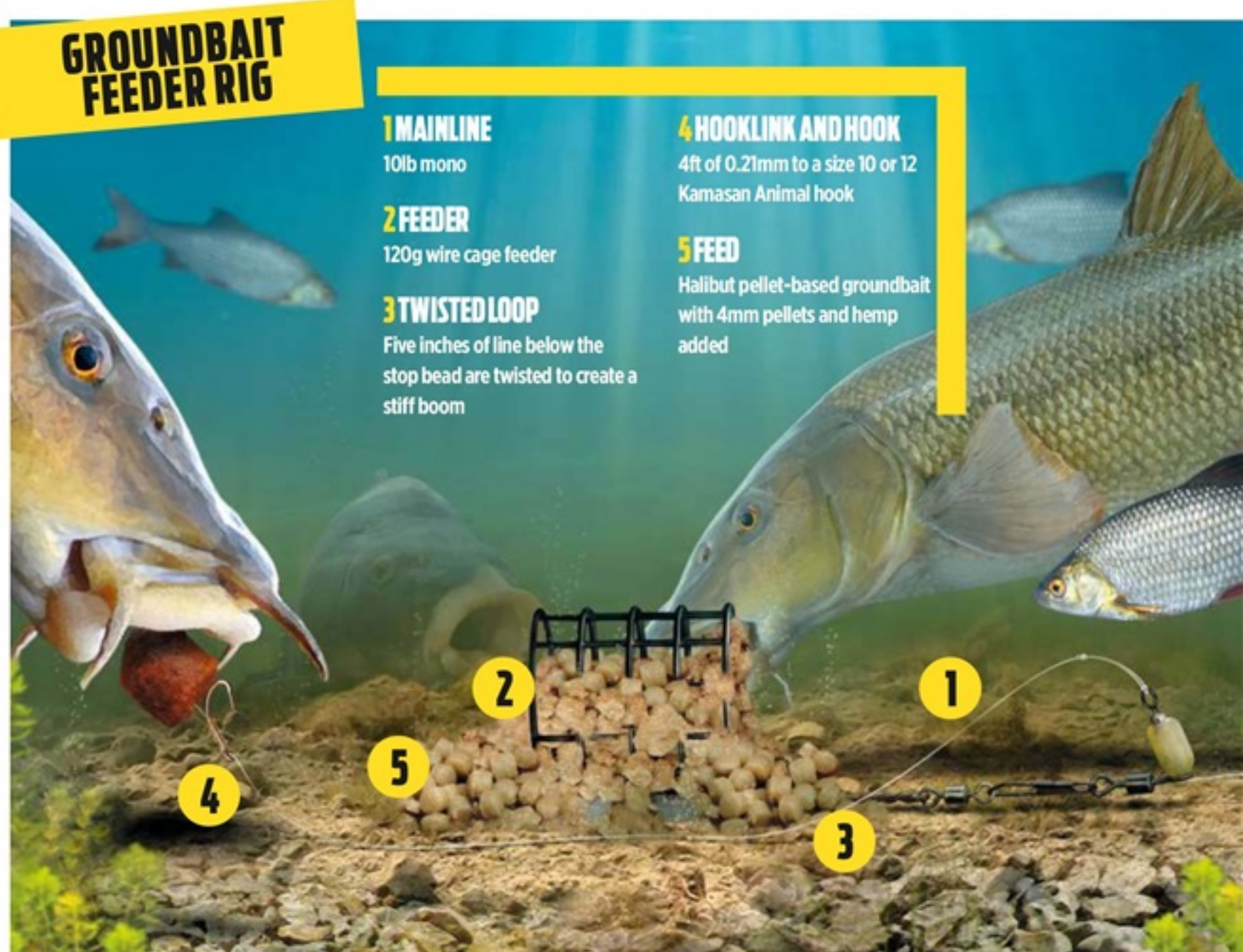
Tony Owens, Rugeley

A ON MY local River Wye, I work on the principle that groundbait is best in warm and coloured water while particles like maggots and hemp are better when the river is clear and the weather cold. It's all down to the colour of the water really, as a smelly pellet-based groundbait will be much stronger and allow the barbel to feed by scent as opposed to sight.

My rig for a groundbait feeder set-up is very simple but strong – you can't give barbel an inch when the river has extra water in it and is flowing hard.

Dave Roberts

GROUNDBAIT FEEDER RIG



1 MAINLINE

10lb mono

2 FEEDER

120g wire cage feeder

3 TWISTED LOOP

Five inches of line below the stop bead are twisted to create a stiff boom

4 HOOKLINK AND HOOK

4ft of 0.21mm to a size 10 or 12 Kamasan Animal hook

5 FEED

Halibut pellet-based groundbait with 4mm pellets and hemp added

What's the best trace material for pike fishing?

Rob Morgan, Staines

A I USE Gold Label Tackle Crocodile Wire and have done so for years, but I don't

believe it's available now, so I'd try seven-strand uncoated wire trace material instead. This is easy to make a trace out of and is very robust, but I'd steer clear of coated materials because these are very hard to twist and add crimps to.

Dai Gribble

What makes the perfect swim for fishing a stick float?

Roy Blair, Tadcaster

A AT THIS time of year, most of our river levels have been up, so avoid the shallow pegs that you'd fish in summer and head for a steady swim with a bit of depth. You don't want the water to be 'boiling' as this is a sign of uneven depth or snags, and if the river is carrying extra water a peg with some slacker water is well worth trying. You won't have to fish as far out as you do in summer.

This winter I've found that fishing overdepth has been by far the best way to catch on a stick float. If you're really struggling, try a Bolo set-up instead – you can fish this well overdepth and slow your bait right down.

James Robbins





JAMES ROBBINS

Boss of Cadence UK and all-round river expert



DAVE ROBERTS

River Wye champion and angling guide



RAY MALLE

King's Lynn AA match promoter and Sensas Mark One angler, expert on Norfolk rivers



JOHN WEEDEN

England Disabled World squad manager and fund-raiser



ALAN STAGG

Big-fish specialist and captor of a host of specimens of all species

When trotting for chub with maggots, what's best – stick float, Avon or waggler?

Derek Clooney, Evesbatch

A IF I was expecting bites up in the water, I would use a loaded crystal waggler. This would be easy to cast and allow the bait to flutter down the water column when bites could possibly come anywhere at any depth along the coarse of the trot. In this case I'd be spraying maggots regularly at the top of the run. These are also great for fishing further out, on larger rivers like the Severn, Trent or Wye.

Avons are very buoyant, and offer greater control in pacey shallow water. They can be held back easily against the current.

The most traditional float pattern of them all, the stick, is made solely for running water. These, like the Avon, are attached top and bottom and offer finesse and control.

I'd opt for the stick float if I was trotting down to a feature in the swim, something like a fallen tree or a deep hole, where you would expect a bite in close proximity to

the riverbed.

In this case, I'll accurately catapult maggots well upstream of the feature and calculate how long they take to sink so I can try and get my loosefeed running under the feature as close to the bottom as possible.

Darran Goulder



Does the colour of hooks make any difference?

Anthony Flynn, Congleton

A I RECKON this is a mental thing rather than anything more scientific. Although fish can see certain colours, I'm not a big believer that a red hook will work better than a silver-coloured one.

In any case, the bait will be covering most of the hook, so how much of it can the fish pick out? The only thing I will say is that in clear water, a silver hook is better only because it can't be seen as easily against the surface as a darker colour.



Far more important is the weight of the hook in terms of getting the balance right so the bait can fall in a natural way.

Ray Malle



How often do I need to change my reel line?

Paul McIntosh, Ashford

A I DO a lot of fishing so I will change my lines every five or six weeks, especially in the summer. If you only go once a week, I think you can get away with changing every three months or so, but no more.

Reel line does get a lot of hammer, and for the sake of a £5 spool it's worth changing regularly.

A good tip is to feel the line between finger and thumb to see if it feels rough from damage. If it does, then change it!

John Weeden

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ADVICE FROM OUR EXPERTS**



When do I change to fishing with a flat float?

Andrew Tindall, Rotherham

A I've seen a lot of people fail to make this change, but knowing when to go to a flat float can be tricky.

If I'm fishing a normal pole float and slowing it down to run through the peg but am having the hookbait chewed by fish without me seeing the bite, then I know there's something wrong with my presentation.

This is the time to use a flat float, which slows the bait down to a standstill and will show up every indication.

Mark Pollard



Is it better to floatfish or leger worms when fishing for specimen perch?

Duncan Ainsley, Thame

A I rarely fish the float with worms because I think that when you're waiting a while for a bite, legering is better in so many ways. You can keep the bait in one spot for longer, it requires less concentration from the angler and you have more chance of hooking a fish. A float runs the risk of being pulled out of position by any wind and would only come into play for me if I was fishing with small livebaits.

Alan Stagg



Can I still catch on paste in winter?

Julian Willock, Canvey Island

A Very rarely – paste can pick off some big carp late in the day if you're fishing into deep water, but the weather needs to be very mild for this to happen. Even then, the size of the paste will be tiny, almost like a pea, fished alongside a few pellets, and it'll be a proper sit and wait job.

I'd fancy a paste that breaks down quickly in the water and which is made from crushed expander pellets, so it's got that pellet taste that carp really love.

Jason Collins

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RINGER

Champion angler Steve

Is there an all-round elastic that works for silverfish and carp?

Jason Rowntree, via email

GOOD question! My first thought is that with only one top kit and one elastic choice the key is to make things as versatile as possible.

Straight away, we're talking about hollow elastics, so you can eliminate solid elastics from the equation.

Hollow is a lot stretchier than solid elastic and allows you to catch silverfish while still having a great chance of landing a rogue carp or two should they come along.

The next question is, which hollow elastic? There are loads to look at in the tackle shop and they cover up to a dozen different grades or strengths.

Many are very similar, offering only marginal improvements in softness and power as you move up or down by a grade at a time.

What size are the fish?

Your choice depends on the size of silverfish that you're catching. If the roach are 20z-40z apiece with some bigger skimmers mixed in, I would opt for a Blue Hydrolastic set to a very soft tension.

If the fish are smaller, I would probably go for Pink Hydrolastic, the next grade down, again set very soft.

Both options will allow you to catch silverfish without losing many on the strike or while playing them, but at the same time they will give you every chance of landing a carp should one be hooked.

Try puller kits

Equally as important as your elastic choice is using a top kit with a puller system. This allows you to pull or 'strip' elastic out of the kit when playing a big fish close to the bank, and is brilliant when you hook a carp on light gear.

It also means you don't have to try and land the fish with several metres of pole up in the air! This would increase the chances of the pole breaking.

What I use and why...

Most poles have several top kits, and that opens up a wider problem when deciding which elastics to put in them.

It's easy to sort a light from a very heavy grade but the picture in-between those two extremes can become blurred. To help, here are the elastics I love and when I'll use them.



Hollow elastics are the way to go.

TO THE RESCUE

takes an in-depth look at your angling problems

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Yellow Hydrolastic

A winter silverfish and F1 elastic. I could land a carp on it, but I wouldn't choose to try and do so! For skimmers and roach it's spot on, allowing me to strike hard and ship the pole back without having to worry about hook pulls.

Pink Hydrolastic

Mainly used for winter F1 fishing. When I was a regular at Tunnel Barn Farm fishery targeting F1s week in week out, Pink Hydro was always first out of the bag.

Blue Hydrolastic

The most versatile elastic of the ones I use, as it can cope with roach, skimmers, F1s and carp in equal measure. I tend to use it for mixed fishing when I'm not quite sure what I'm going to hook next.

White Hydrolastic

Perhaps my favourite elastic of all-time as I can catch 1lb skimmers on it but also land a double-figure carp. White Hydro is also superb for fishing up in the water for carp and F1s in spring and summer.

Black Hydrolastic

I pick this for carp fishing, catching fish from 3lb to 10lb-plus. It's relatively soft on the strike yet 'powers up' quickly, which allows me to quickly get control when I hook a fish.

Red Hydrolastic

My margin elastic for carp from 6lb to 20lb when I'm looking to catch big fish fast. Red Hydro is far softer than most people realise, but it still has the power to turn the head of the biggest of carp.

A place for solid elastics?

Not on commercial fisheries there isn't, but when I fish in Ireland for roach and there's no chance of a big fish, I'll fish a solid No4 elastic.

This is doubled up inside the top kit, effectively giving me twice the strength of a single strand of elastic. I reckon solid elastic is better for swinging in fish to hand as it 'powers up' quicker than a hollow does, with far less stretch.

3 SIMPLE STEPS TO SUCCESS

With connectors

YOU can use old-fashioned connectors with hollow elastic, but I find Dacron connectors much easier and more reliable. How I attach them is a little different to the norm, and it's something

I picked up from Fish O'Mania champion Andy Bennett.

It's totally tangle-free and also very direct on the strike, so as far as I'm concerned there is literally nothing not to like fishing

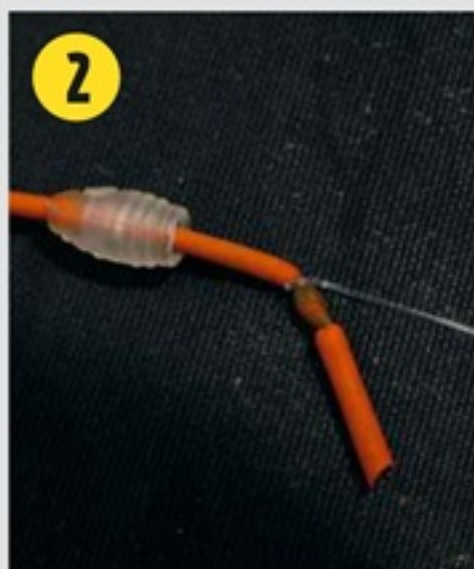
this way. I use Guru's Dacron Connectors but discard the Dacron part and just use the bead, varying the bead size depending on the grade of elastic I'm using.

Here's how to do it...

TIE A BEAD CONNECTOR



1 I thread the bead on to the elastic as shown, then tie a double overhand knot in the elastic.



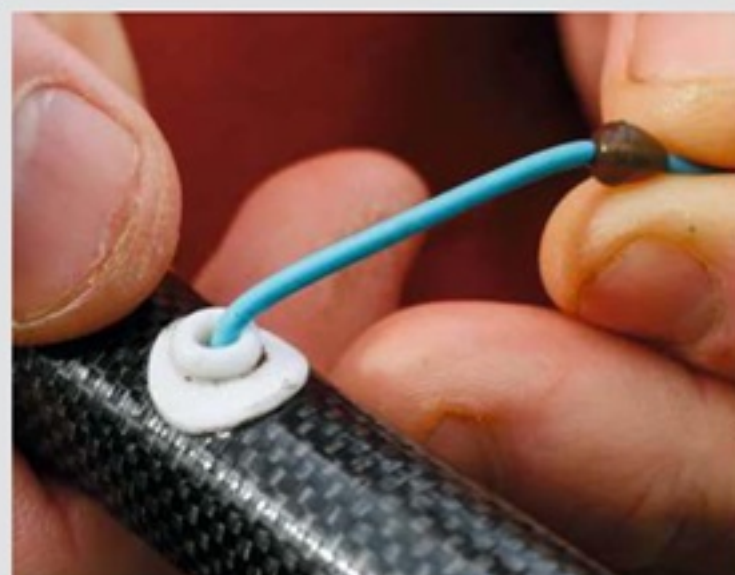
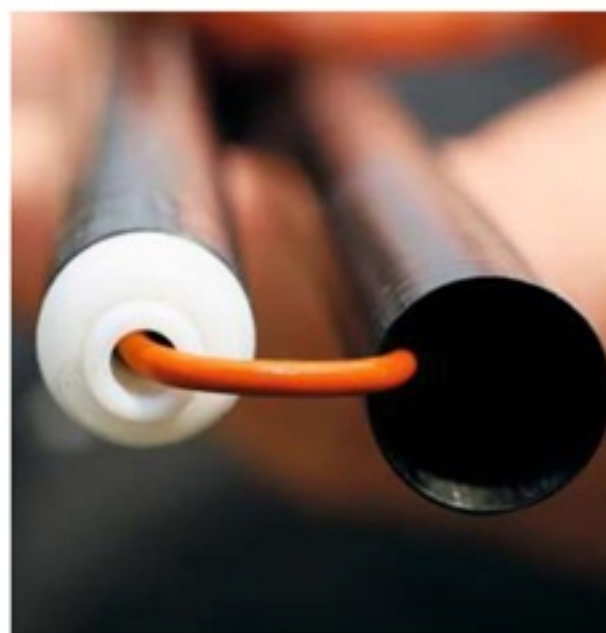
2 To attach my rig I use the double loop method, pulling it up tightly behind the knot in the elastic.



3 Once that's in place I then pull the bead over the top to stop the loop pulling over the knot.

SMOOTH ELASTIC PERFORMANCE

To help stop my elastic sticking to the inside of the top kit, I like to fit a small aligner made of PTFE into the end of the pole's No2 section. The elastic is threaded through this and will then always run perfectly.



FISH WITH A PULLER KIT

Try to land a big carp with light elastic fitted into a standard top kit and you're asking for trouble! You'll never be in control of the fish and will end up trying to net it with lots of pole sections pointed skywards, which runs a very real risk of an expensive breakage.

This is exactly what side puller kits were invented for to prevent. Once you've shipped the pole back to the top kit, it's a simple job of pulling elastic out of the slot on the side of the kit until you have enough power over the fish to land it.



BAIT CLINIC WITH DR PAUL GARNER

Honest advice to help you to catch more fish on every trip, without breaking the bank.

TRY A SUPER SINGLE!

A hookbait-only approach is the way to go for carp



You can increase the buoyancy and give a splash of colour to a hookbait by adding half a 10mm boilie to the hair.

CARP won't be hungry right now, but they'll still struggle to ignore a bright, smelly lump of food in front of their noses. Curiosity alone leads to them getting caught.

Most of the time I rely on my own customised hookbaits. Here are two of my favourites, and how I make them.

Boosted meat

Luncheon meat readily takes on flavours and colours. I cut a block into 10mm chunks then use a punch to core out cylinders. I then add half a teaspoonful of flavour to a plastic bag, add the punched sections and give the bag a good shake. You can use the baits straight away, but it's much

better if you leave the flavour to soak in overnight.

DIY wafers

In just an hour or two you can make enough wafers for a whole winter campaign. You'll need boilie base mix powder and an equal amount of pop-up mix. Blended together in equal volumes, these powders

produce perfect hookbaits that will be balanced by just the weight of the hook.

I make up small batches of paste, using an egg to bind the mix together. Liquid flavours and colours are added to the egg first. My favourite flavour combination is half a teaspoonful of Scopex and the same of pineapple.

TEN-MINUTE MAKE CUSTOMISED PINEAPPLE WAFERS

MAKING your own wafer hookbaits allow you to come up with your own flavour and colour combos, and their pliable texture is a real winner with the carp. They are well worth the effort involved!



1 Mix together a cup of boilie base mix and an equal volume of your pop-up mix.



2 Crack a large egg into a bowl and add half a teaspoonful of Scopex flavour and the same of pineapple.



3 Next, add half a teaspoonful of pink dye, or a colour of your choosing.



4 Slowly add the dry mix to the egg, stirring well all the time until a firm paste is produced.



5 Roll the paste into a thin sausage and then cut it into pieces with a sharp knife.



6 Boil the baits for about a minute and then allow them to dry for an hour. Job done!

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MATCH SCENE

THE VOICE OF MATCH FISHING

"I THOUGHT I MIGHT BREAK THE 100lb BARRIER!"

Adrian Jeffery toughed it out to take the latest round of the Viaduct League

BIG WINTER league matches can be among the toughest events to win, given the randomness of the weather, the number of anglers fishing and the added pressure of doing your bit for the side – fail to return with good points for the cause and you could well find yourself walking home!

Bristol man Adrian Jeffery took the pressures all in his stride to top the latest leg of Somerset fishery Viaduct's series. Up against 80 of his fellow anglers, the fish and Storm Dennis, he won with a hard-earned 86-9-0 net made up of a dozen carp, with corn skins proving the key to victory.

So good was his start, that Adrian allowed himself to dream of a 100lb net, but the rest of the match was a struggle, with the odd fish here keeping the weight ticking over.

At the peg

"Although the league is a team event, we tend to fish each peg accordingly as opposed to having an overall plan because we all know Viaduct well and are in tune with how it's fishing and the form of each swim.

"Peg 129 on Campbell isn't a bad draw as there's a finger of land that sticks out into the lake for several metres. This is always a great spot for holding carp but with the wind, my hope was that I'd be able to fish



Top three Dom Sullivan, Adrian Jeffery and Mark Ruff.

PRE-MATCH PLAN

TARGET SPECIES: Carp.

FEED: Nothing for dobbling or the rod and line, corn in the margins.

TACTICS: Dobbling bread to the spit, meat on the bomb and waggler and corn in the margins.

TARGET WEIGHT: 100lb going on previous match results.

CONDITIONS: Mild but very windy.

the pole alongside it.

"I also set up the bomb and waggler, as these have been catching lots of fish lately, and a margin line for the last hour. It's not quite time for the margins but if you can nick an odd carp or two, it's worth a try."

Whirlwind start

"My first port of call was fishing up the side of the spit to overhanging brambles at 5m, dobbling bread 2.5ft off the bottom. My first fish was a roach, so I changed over to a corn skin, nipping the middle out of a grain so that the bait sank slowly," he says.

"That worked as I nobbled a carp immediately. Five more fish followed quickly and I began to think I might be on for catching 100lb. Moving about from 5m to 6m and dropping the bait all around those brambles was best but I knew I couldn't keep fishing here all day so I had to move."

Time for the rod

"The next hour was spent swapping between the waggler and bomb to the middle of the lake with yellow meat, but it wasn't solid with fish. The carp I caught were smaller too at around 5lb compared to the 7lb fish I'd had from the spit."

Keep plugging away

"Having rested the spit, I moved back



Adrian had an early run of fish that made up most of his 86-9-0.

expecting a run of fish but only got the odd bite on the corn skin. I seemed to be waiting longer and longer for a bite and resting the lines didn't make much of a difference, so I made the decision to keep alternating lines and take what came along."

A look in the margins

"The margins were my last resort and you never know how good this part of the peg will be. I only caught one small carp and a tench on corn, and once I got that tench I knew that no carp were about."

At the scales

"I finished with 12 carp, that tench and a roach for 86-9-0. From what I could see, I was confident of winning the lake and doing my job for the team. Given the quality of the anglers fishing and the other lakes being used, I can't say I felt I'd do any good overall so to win was a surprise."

RESULT: 1 A Jeffery, Silver Fox, 86-9-0; 2 D Sullivan, Sensas 88, 79-7-0; 3 M Ruff, Sensas 88, 74-8-0; 4 J Gray, Team Keyford, 72-7-0.

TEAMS: 1 Preston Innovations Thatcher's Vets, 61pts; 2 Sensas 88, 60; 3 Preston Innovations Thatcher's, 59; 4 Second Time Lucky, 57.

LEAGUE: 1 Preston Innovations Thatcher's, 263pts; 2 Preston Innovations Thatcher's Vets, 215; 3 Moaning Maggots, 195; 4 Team Keyford, 194.

CHAMP'S DIARY

JAMIE HUGHES
GIVES YOU
THE INSIDE LINE



"I WENT FROM HERO TO ZERO IN A DAY!"

"GALES, rain and more gales - but when there's the chance of winning £2,000 I don't mind putting up with the weather and that was the prize on offer at Tunnel Barn Farm, in Warwickshire, on Saturday.

Along with 20-odd other madmen I lined up for the final match of the Catch More Media Winter Champs as Storm Dennis battered the UK. Winning the whole thing and that big prize if I won my section was my aim.

My draw, peg 1 on the New Pool, was good, if not horribly exposed to the storm! At least it made my tactics an easy choice, maggots in the margins and in front at 5m.

It was always going to be a maggot day as I felt the rig would be moving too much in the wind for pellets to work and I nicked two or three fish from each line before moving on. At around 2lb apiece, the FIs were a good size and a bonus 6lb carp helped.

I couldn't see anyone around me who had caught as well as I had, but the phenomenon

that is Andy Bennett was first to weigh and had over 100lb. My 91lb put me second in the section but I was hoping I'd still get among the main prizes. Back at the café, third overall it was and £1,000 for my troubles.

The following day I went from hero to zero! I fancied a crack at the Jacob's AC lake again, but thanks to heavy overnight rain I caught nothing for four hours. Only when I moved into the margins in 2ft of clear water did I get bites, and I had around 30lb of small carp to finish nowhere."

"The phenomenon that is Andy Bennett weighed in first"

Andy Bennett proved his versatility at Bradshaw Hall.



'BAGGER' BENNETT LEADS THE WAY

MANY people assume that Fish O'Mania champ Andy Bennett is an out-and-out expert when it comes to FIs and carp.

THE RIG THAT WON

20lb OF ROACH - ON JUST A TOP KIT!

Old Nene glory using two pole sections



JASON CUNNINGHAM

Canal master who's not half bad on rivers and drains either!

SOMETIMES, fishing can be ridiculously easy, as the result of the final practice match before the Winter League final on the Old River Nene proved.

Topping the 70-strong field on the tiny wind-lashed Fenland river was Jason Cunningham, who put together 23-11-0 of small fish on just a top kit with pinkies and groundbait to leave the rest fishing for second.

In a strong wind and increasing flow his original tactic of fishing at 6m down the middle of his swim was abandoned in favour of his top kit, and the float kept going under for the rest of the match.

Drawing near the culvert at Wigstone's Bridge, Jason kicked off on pinkie and groundbait for some early fish. But even a big flat float failed to catch fast enough for his liking after 90 minutes.

"I had some slacker water close in and had fed a bit of groundbait there, so I took a look," Jason says. "With 2ft 6ins of water it looked spot on and it was almost a bite-a-chuck from then on.

"I gave the fish a conker-sized ball of groundbait full of pinkies and squatts every five or 10 minutes and caught best fishing two inches off the deck.

"By the end the fish were right down the peg and when I held the float back hard, the bites almost pulled the elastic out of the pole!"

RESULT:

1 J Cunningham, Cadence Bait-Tech Superteam, 23-11-0;
2 G Welton, Stanjay Tackle, 22-8-0;
3 M Pollard, Matrix/Hinder's Bait/Stanjay Tackle, 21-6-0; 4 B Taylor, Browning Ossett, 19-1-0.

FLOAT
1g Andy Jones
Wootton RR1.

HOOK
Size 20
Hayabusa 128
Black Nickel.

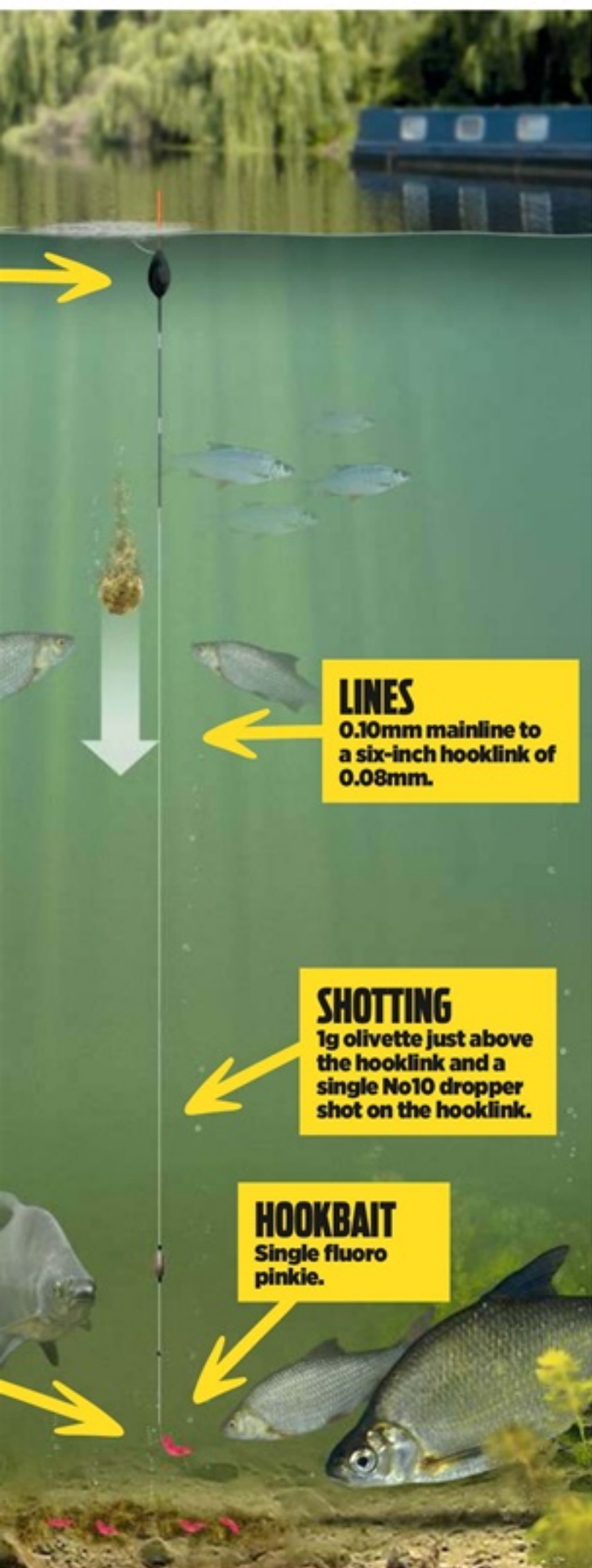
However, like all top anglers, he's just as good when fishing for silverfish, as the Manchester man's latest victory at Bradshaw Hall Fisheries proved.

Demolishing the 51-strong field as he fished the Tonge Moor Angling Winter League at the Lancashire water, Andy weighed in 43-7-0 of roach, skimmers, ide, perch and a few unseasonal tench.

That gave him top billing by a little over 3lb from Saints man James Place's second-best 39-15-0.

The tactics weren't anything special either, with caster fished at 7m doing the damage from peg 1 on Lake 3 - although Andy also caught a few shallow on caster.

RESULT: 1 A Bennett, Guru, 43-7-0; 2 J Place, Saints, 39-15-0; 3 L Addy, Saints, 35-6-0; 4 C Lowe, Sensas NW and W Kearney Tri-Cast, both 30-14-0.



LINES
0.10mm mainline to a six-inch hooklink of 0.08mm.

SHOTTING
1g olivette just above the hooklink and a single No10 dropper shot on the hooklink.

HOOKBAIT
Single fluoro pinkie.

TOP WINS

NOTABLE RESULTS FROM MATCHES
FEBRUARY 15-16

PEG-TO-PEG CANAL BATTLE

THE latest leg of the Dave's of Middlewich Trent & Mersey Canal Winter League was fished on the Cherry Lane section where John Cookson and Ian Sargent went head to head. Drawing pegs 58 and 59 at Rode Heath, they pinned their faith in caster at 9m-10m. John won with 17-7-0 of quality roach to 1lb, Ian missing out by one big fish as he ended the day with 17-0-0.

TIGHT FINISH AT LINDHOLME

THE weight of one big carp covered the top three as the Golden Rod bandwagon rolled into Drennan Lindholme Lakes. Vic Molyneux won on 59-0-0, Martin Harrell had 55-11-0 and Mark 50-1-0 was third. Vic drew on the Bonsai Lake at peg 68 and used Method feeder and wafers to pick off carp and FIs to earn his place for a shot at the £10,000 top prize in next month's final.

FLOODY HELL! GOLDEN ROD GOES AHEAD - JUST

It was touch and go for the second big Golden Rod qualifier of the weekend following extensive flooding around the Worcestershire area. Larford Lakes almost overflowed but it was still a good match topped by Polish rod Przemek Solksi. He fished Hybrid feeder and wafers from peg 32 on the Match Lake to take 145-3-0 of carp for a place in the final.

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FAULT FIXERS

EXPERT HELP TO GIVE YOUR MATCH FISHING THE EDGE



“I CAN’T CATCH WHEN IT

Graham Hallam often struggles after a good start. According to Lee Kerry, the answer



THE TUTOR

LEE KERRY

England international, reigning Feedermasters champ and one of the UK's top all-round match anglers.



THE STUDENT

GRAHAM HALLAM

A regular on Midlands commercial stillwater fisheries, Graham wants to know how to fill the gap between catching early and fishing the margins.

THE LESSON



FISH AROUND THE EDGE

Kick things off by fishing closer to you than you would think you have to. Carp can be very easy to catch in the opening hour of a session, but when it goes quiet it's time to make a switch and catch them from the edge of the shoal. This allows you move out to where you think the fish are if things go quiet.



USE A MINI FEEDER

It's easy to see the feeder as something to cast out and hope that the tip goes round! A more refined set-up can help to keep the fish coming. I'd recommend using a tiny ICM maggot or Mini Method feeder holding a small helping of bait with a white 6mm Band Um wafer on the hook. I'll then use the feeder to search the swim past where I've been fishing the pole.



TARGET EVERYTHING

Another important option to keeping the fish coming when things go quiet is being prepared to top your catch up with any fish that you can get your hands on. You may think roach and perch aren't worth the effort, but how many times have you missed out on a winning weight by a few pounds or ounces, or even just had a boring couple of hours with no bites?

TWEAKS WITH PELLETS

SOMETIMES, simply dropping down a bait size can get a brilliant response from the fish.

Take a short pole line that's been fed with pellets. This may have been fed with hard 4mm

or 6mm pellets for carp. By tweaking the feeding to softened 2mm pellets and fishing a soft expander pellet on the hook, you can suddenly catch skimmers from a seemingly fishless peg.



When to change over

AS the bigger fish back off the smaller, more competitive species such as roach, perch and skimmers will move in. By altering your tackle and feeding, you can fill those slacker hours with bites and a few more

pounds going into the net. The key to taking a good weight of these fish is to scale the tackle down and try to catch consistently. That means using lighter lines, elastics, smaller hooks and floats.

GOES QUIET"

is swim management



FISH IN THE MARGINS

We tend to associate the margins with big fish, but this isn't the case in winter. By having a line close in, I can let my main swims rest and keep some smaller fish going into the net. I'd treat this area as a mini silverfish session and set myself targets such as 20 fish in half-an-hour. This keeps you in the race while your bigger fish lines benefit from a rest.

PROGRESS REPORT

THE TUTOR: "It's important to make things happen by feeding more or changing tactics. When Graham did this he started catching more consistently, showing that his tactics and feeding are working. His next step is to 'manage' the swim and make any changes at the right time."

THE STUDENTS: "Lee's advice was invaluable. It was reassuring to hear that I'm not the only person who struggles with not catching in the middle of the day. Now I know that the fish are there in front of me, I'm confident that I can keep them coming."

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POSITIVE FLOATS

Skimmers will rarely feed very far off the bottom so most of your efforts can be concentrated on catching close to or on the deck. In deep water that means a heavy pole float to get the bait down fast and keep it as still as possible in all conditions. Aim for a classic rugby ball-shaped body with a wire stem and a highly visible bristle taking between 1g and 2g, depending on the wind and any tow on the lake.



EXPANDER PELLETS

As good as maggots are, they are prone to attracting small fish and they're not what you want. The good news is that skimmers love pellets in equal measure and you're far less likely to be plagued by roach if you fish an expander pellet. Their soft texture and light weight make expanders the ideal winter hookbait, but don't go too big with the size – a 4mm or even a 2mm pellet will get you consistent bites.

5 WAYS TO WIN WITH SKIMMERS

Silverfish matches on commercial fisheries are gaining in popularity, and big skimmers are the fish that will give you the best chance of a few quid at the end of the day!

GROUNDBAIT

To kick things off, it's a good idea to pop in two or three balls of groundbait. This initial helping of feed will quickly pull fish into the area and give them something to root about in for a couple of hours.

Place your hookbait in the middle of the groundbait and you're in business. In terms of which type of mix to go for, traditional sweet-tasting groundbaits are fine, but if you're using pellets it makes sense to lean towards a sweet fishmeal type. This gives you both the sweetness that skimmers adore plus that all-important fishy pong.



HOLLOW ELASTIC

Although skimmers aren't famed for their fighting abilities, they can put up a decent scrap if you're using very light pole elastic. As a result, it can take a lot longer than you'd expect to land them and put a weight together. The answer lies in a hollow elastic with the perfect blend of softness to prevent the hook pulling out of the fish and the power to land them that bit faster. Aim for a hollow with a grade of around a No3 to No6.

PICK A MARKER

Keeping the float perfectly still can be a nightmare when the wind is blowing. By using a bump bar attached to the front legs of the seatbox the job becomes a whole lot easier, and it also leaves your hands free for feeding with a catapult or having a cuppa. Resting the pole on the bar means the float won't move an inch.



KEEP THINGS TIGHT BARRY PROUD, CHELTENHAM

**READER
RECOMMENDED**

"Being accurate is vitally important for bream and skimmers. To help with this, if I'm fishing the pole or feeder I'll pick a marker on the far bank that won't move, feed everything and lay the rig or land the feeder in line with this. As a result I always catch a lot more. Even moving six inches away from this sweet spot is enough to stop me getting bites!"

MATCH ROUND-UP

The latest results from events near you

SOUTH

BAIT-TECH VIADUCT FISHERY (THURS)

Campbell & Cary Lakes (22 pegs)

Result: 1 D Romain, PR Floats, 136-7-0; 2 C Dyer, Langport, 76-12-0; 3 A Jeffery, Viaduct, 70-3-0.

COLEMAN'S COTTAGE FISHERY WINTER LEAGUE (SUN)

Wood & Stepfield Lakes (35 pegs)

Result: 1 W Candy, Browning Wickford, 132-0-0; 2 J Fowler, Browning Wickford, 108-8-0; 3 C Nada, Browning Wickford, 104-0-0.

OCKENDON BAIT & TACKLE (SUN)

Puddledock Farm, Snake Lake (23 pegs)

Result: 1 D Gladwin, Preston Innovations, 210-2-0; 2 R Miles, Ockendon B&T, 128-14-0; 3 J Brooks, Ockendon B&T, 113-0-0.

MIDLANDS

DECOY LAKES (SAT)

Damson, Elm, Cedar, Yew & Oak Lakes (56 pegs)

Result: 1 J Dent, MAP, 154-2-0; 2 J Cartwright, Preston Innovations NW, 147-0-0; 3 S Godfrey,

Daiwa Tackle & Bates, 138-10-0.

DECOY LAKES (SUN)

Lou's, Horseshoe, Four Islands,

Willow & Beastie (56 pegs)

Result: 1 T Edwards, Daiwa, 175-9-0; 2 B Holmes, Dynamite Baits, 151-13-0; 3 T Scholey, Catch More Media, 150-14-0.

GARBOLINO SILVERFISH WINTER LEAGUE (SAT)

Meadowlands Fishery, Lambsdown Lake (35 pegs)

Result: 1 N Hughes, Nathan's of Derby, 40-0-0; 2 R McEneaney, Dynamite Baits, 38-2-0; 3 J Walkden, Evesham, 30-2-0.

MEADOWLANDS FISHERY TEAMS OF THREE WINTER LEAGUE (SUN)

Lambsdown & Warren Lakes (48 pegs)

Result: 1 N Smith, Meadowlands, 93-0-0; 2 W Sharman, Lane's Bait, 91-4-0; 3 G Merritt, Captain Crooks, 83-8-0. League: 1 Captain Crooks, 54pts.

PACKINGTON SOMERS WINTER LEAGUE (SUN)

All pools (50 pegs)

Result: 1 L Richards, Packington, 99-10-0;

2 P Canning, Frenzee, 91-9-0; 3 S Bellion, Team Milo, 84-5-0.

League: 1 L Richards, 19pts.

RINGER BAITS PAIRS (SUN)

Boddington Reservoir (48 pegs)

Result: 1 A Walker, Leicester, 226-0-0; 2 G Wright, Worcs, 111-0-0; 3 J Minter, Wellingborough, 101-0-0.

Pairs: 1 S Cawthorne and J Patchett, 4pts.

NORTH

AJ JEWSON SILVERS LEAGUE (SAT)

Sunrise Lakes (24 pegs)

Result: 1 A Barker, The Oaks, 10-4-0; 2 G Hudson, AJ Jewson, 8-11-0; 3 S Faunthorpe, Bradford, 8-4-0.

BLUNDELL'S FISHERY ROVER (SUN)

All lakes (25 pegs)

Result: 1 D Ryan, Wayne's Tackle, 73-6-0; 2 J Vernon, Elton Tackle, 58-4-0; 3 A Musgrove, Edgeley Sports, 55-12-0.

OAKS LAKES WINTER LEAGUE (SUN)

Ash, Beech & Sycamore Lakes (26 pegs)

Result: 1 A Stock, Tri-Cast Woodlands, 94-13-0; 2 P Sellars, The Oaks, 94-4-0; 3 L Hawke, Tri-Cast Woodlands, 78-3-0.

OLD HOUGH FISHERY ROVER (SAT)

All lakes (27 pegs)

Result: 1 T Jackson, Team Bushy, 62-5-0; 2

Lee Richards shook the ton at Packington with this 99-10-0 winning net.



M Reed, Old Hough, 57-14-0; 3 N Bolton, Old Hough, 44-13-0.

PARTRIDGE LAKES (SAT)

Covey Canal Lakes (43 pegs)

Result: 1 F Cooke, Ray's Tackle, 53-10-0; 2 D Martin, Wigan MG, 48-0-0; 3 R Parker, Warrington Tackle & Guns, 45-2-0.

PARTRIDGE LAKES TEAMS OF FOUR WINTER LEAGUE (SUN)

Willow, Piper, Spey, Marsh & Covey Canal Lakes 5 & 6 (48 pegs)

Result: 1 M Halliwell, Partridge Lakes, 56-14-0; 2 A Dyson, Spotted Fin/SonuBaits, 56-9-0; 3 M Goulding, Mosella NW Black, 50-1-0. Teams: 1 Mosella NW Black, 9pts (129-13-0); 2 Guru, 9 (117-3-0); 3 Matrix Bait-Tech Leigh Tackle & Bait, 11. League: 1 Guru, 75pts.

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LAST CAST WITH DOM

Dom Garnett – one man determined to keep the pleasure in angling



Friend or nuisance?
Muscovy ducks are a
bit of both.



Geese can be fiercely
territorial, as my
angling mate Chris
Guest discovered.

“What followed was a blur of panic as my mate was pecked relentlessly”

IT'S one of the unsung joys of angling that the sport brings us into contact with so many beautiful wild creatures.

In fact, there are bleak and biteless days when waterside animals spark our interest more than the fish.

On the bank, our angling encounters with wildlife range from poetry in motion to slapstick comedy. My dad still claims that a sudden encounter with a kingfisher was the moment he knew he'd made the right decision to move the family to Devon. It sat on his rod for a small eternity while nobody dared to breathe.

If only all God's creatures were so well mannered. These

days the majority of anglers are nature lovers who are careful and clued-up about avoiding swans and other boisterous customers. However, some creatures can be a real nuisance.

Among the worst of all have to be geese and other large water birds. This is never more true in the spring, when the nesting season seems to be the avian equivalent of drinking 10 pints of Stella and calling someone a slag.

I know of one trout stream where farmed geese are especially violent. Last month I went to meet a friend in the hope of some peaceful fishing, but as we made our way to the river it was clear we weren't welcome. The alpha male that

immediately challenged us reminded me strangely of Roy Keane, committing a heinous foul and then arguing fiercely with the referee.

Also a bit daft but somehow too loveable to dislike, the Muscovy ducks on one of my local lakes are more clumsy than vicious. Leave any bait tub open and they will casually help themselves, knocking over all your stuff in the process like drunks at a buffet.

Perhaps the ultimate animal encounter, however, goes to an angling friend who will remain nameless. On a small farm lake, the owners once kept black swans and one of these was simply nicknamed “Psycho”.

After hours of this nutter

hissing, pecking and barely giving anyone a moment's peace, it was decided that drastic action was required. Covering arms and face with his coat, our brave or foolish friend managed to scoop up the angry bird and take it for a walk.

Before any animal lovers get irate, it should be pointed out that this is never a clever or kind solution. What followed was a blur of panic as my mate was pecked relentlessly, before managing to shut the bird in the venue's portaloo.

A final, peaceful hour's fishing was enjoyed, although you could occasionally hear Psycho knocking at the walls and hissing. At home time, our anglers packed their gear away, before opening the door of the portaloo and running like fury!

Wherever you fish this weekend, do respect nature and take time to admire the wild creatures you meet. And if you see Psycho or one of his mates, keep your distance.

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