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AnglingTimes
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2020

INSIDE THIS WEEK

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Forget the terrible weather – get out there and bag up!

WHATEVER type of fishing you favour, it's probably been a bit of a struggle over the past week or two, given the grotty weather.

Storm Ciara was swiftly followed by Storm Dennis, the pair battering the country with gale-force winds and biblical downpours that caused many fisheries to shut their doors in the interests of angler safety. A number of hardy souls persevered regardless, desperate to get their fishing fix! Turn the page to see what happened to Declan Priestly from Salford as a result!

There's little doubt that stillwater anglers have been hit the hardest, and not just because of the slippery banks, high water levels and falling tree branches. Throw in the sleet and snow we've also had between the gales, and conditions below the surface have been just as challenging.

It's been a different story on our rivers, and barbel anglers in particular have been making hay, with yet another 20lb-plus giant hitting the bank. It begs the question, why are our barbel getting so much bigger, and we've sought to find out in our Talking Point story on page 6.

The weather looks set to calm down a little this week, bringing with it the promise of some seriously good sport on both lakes and rivers. Having seen less angling pressure than normal, those fish will be hungry, so get out there and make the most of it!

Steve

STEVE STONES
ASSOCIATE EDITOR



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AnglingTimes

THIS WEEK

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW FROM THE WORLD OF FISHING



Paul Hardy with part of a shared haul of bream. Picture: John Hopes

BEATING THE BARRIERS FOR BREAM CATCH

Huge haul of bream from the River Don in South Yorkshire

ACCESS to our natural waterways is one of the biggest barriers to angling these days – but two anglers tackling Yorkshire's River Don are proof that if you walk that extra mile you can have a red-letter day.

Paul Hardy and John Hopes enjoyed a phenomenal session on a stretch near Rotherham to bank one of the greatest-ever river hauls of bream.

The remarkable 200lb catch of slabs was taken near Deanby, right by a large housing development which poses a few difficulties for local anglers.

"We'd heard about this stretch of the Don for the past year and were eager to get down there with the river dropping down after flooding," Paul explained.

"There are miles and miles of river here, the problem being that it's difficult



The outbreak has seen cargo boats held in port.

WILL CORONAVIRUS LEAD TO EMPTY SHELVES?

THE impact of the coronavirus on the UK's fishing tackle supply could be far worse than first feared.

As officials in China continue to struggle to contain the deadly outbreak, many companies have warned that delays of up to eight weeks in goods-laden ships being allowed to leave Chinese ports will have a serious knock-on effect for Britain's tackle shops this summer.

However, Angling Times has learned that the delays could extend well beyond the summer, with a source, who wished to remain anonymous revealing that the factories of giant



John Hopes returned and took four carp.

to get to. In places the track isn't suitable for driving and the banks are steep.

"If you can make it past the building site, which often blocks access for cars, it can still be very challenging to walk along the muddy banks, which are regularly covered by floodwater.

"The fishing was incredible though, we had two nets in, and we caught so many bream we broke one lifting it out!"

Fishing partner and photographer, John Hopes, enjoyed the fishing so much he went back to the river a week later and had yet more success.

"I walked a bit further this time to a snaggy swim and couldn't believe it when first cast I hooked into an 8lb river carp, followed by three more. I lost a few other fish, and something that felt like a submarine!"

The prolific stretch of the Don is run by the Rotherham & District United Angling Federation, with fishing available to members as well as day-ticket anglers.

A spokesperson for the club told Angling Times: "We are continually working to protect and improve the fishing on this stretch of river, which we believe to be one of the best in Britain."

SILVERFISH DONATION SAVES VENUES

IT'S ALWAYS fantastic to see the angling community come together and you'll struggle to find a greater example of this than with Partridge Lakes and the Environment Agency.

They've helped preserve fishing on two struggling club waters with a massive donation of silverfish.

Nearly 10,000 roach, bream and gudgeon were netted by EA staff from Partridge's Covey 5 match lake which were then stocked across Dunham Massey AC's Heatley Mere and Knowsley Park AA's White Man's Dam fisheries – both of which have suffered from cormorant predation. The EA also added fish protection cages.

"Knowing the fish will once again bring joy to other anglers is the perfect end result," said Partridge Lakes owner Barbara Ikin.



The EA netted Covey 5 for its surplus silvers.

ANGLERS BATTLE STORM CIARA

FISHERMEN are known to go out in all winds and weathers, but the strength of last week's Storm Ciara took more than a few by surprise.

Seventeen-year-old Declan Priestley, from Salford, was on an overnight carp session on a private Bolton lake when he woke to the sound of floodwater hammering past his rods and bivvy.

Luckily his friends were on hand to help out and film the crazy sight as his gear floated around inside his shelter.

"Water was everywhere, and the wind was mental," he said. "Luckily everything stayed put despite getting soaked.

"Even luckier, I had already managed to catch a 17lb carp, so I walked away wet but happy!" The video of Declan's stormy session has gone viral, with more than 400,000 views recorded in the first day.



Caught on camera, bivvy misery as Storm Ciara hits Lancashire.

Chinese tackle producer Heng Feng, which is headquartered in Hangzhou, remain shut.

"The factories are closed and completely empty of staff, so no new tackle is being manufactured or even making it onto the ships in the ports at the moment. The worse-case scenario is that no new kit at all makes it over to the UK this year," he said.

"The carp fishing market is likely to be the worst hit, because nearly all of the bivvies, bedchairs and luggage that we see in this country are made by Heng Feng."

TALKING POINT

ARE BARBEL CHANGING?

With river records tumbling, it's a golden period for barbel anglers, but what are the reasons behind the boom?



Steve Birt landed this 20lb 7oz specimen from the River Thames.

OVER the past 12 months more huge barbel have been landed, from more rivers, than at any point in history.

It's been a remarkable period for fans of the species, and the action shows no sign of slowing down, with another monster specimen of 20lb 7oz reported in Berkshire this week.

Steve Birt landed what he described as 'an angling dream' after hooking the giant during a session on the River Thames, but believes there is even better to come from the famous waterway.

"I know of three different 20lb-plus barbel that live in this stretch, and I think this river will produce the next British record," said Steve. "The Trent will give the Thames a good run for its money, but it doesn't quite have the same numbers of twenties."

But it hasn't just been these two rivers producing huge barbel. A new British record weighing 21lb 2oz was caught from a Sussex river just before Christmas, and seven other river bests have fallen over the past year.

So, why do Britain's barbel appear to be getting so much bigger, in so many areas?

Barbel Society founder Steve Pope believes that part of the reason is that more people are targeting the species than ever before, and the high-protein baits they use have had a big effect on growth rates.

"It used to take many years for fish to hit the weights we're seeing regularly now, but they're doing it a lot quicker these days because they're eating these baits." he says.

Speaking about the River Trent's rise to the top of the barbel tree, Steve believes that the stocking practices of the Environment Agency have also been key to the upturn.

"The river received a big introduction of barbel from Calverton fish farm many years ago and these are some of the fish being caught today."

Well-known all-rounder Bob Roberts also believes that the EA stockings have had a big impact, but not just on the Trent. "The brood stock was taken from the Trent and grown on before being stocked out to other rivers, with fish to 3lb going in. This gives them a head start against predators.

"Barbel were only originally native to eastern-flowing rivers carrying a bit of pace, but they've now been introduced to all these other rivers too, many of which have little flow these days, so the fish have to expend far less energy for a meal, and they've begun to wax fat as a result."

Bob also pointed to the knock-on effects that cormorant predation on silverfish has had on barbel.

"When cormorants began ravaging the rivers, it was the roach and other silverfish that went first. This left less competition for the natural food, and the barbel benefited from that massively," he added.

Phil Smith, who holds the remarkable accolade of having caught double-figure barbel from 32 different rivers, offered yet another slant on proceedings.

He said: "The past few seasons have been phenomenal for barbel due to the perfect feeding conditions. This species feeds like crazy in floodwater, and we've had plenty of that! Plus, barbel are less cautious than other species, and don't wise-up to anglers' tactics as quickly. Combine this with a generation of anglers who are now super-efficient at catching them, with mega sharp hooks and effective rigs, and you are bound to see more big fish on the bank."

So, could the UK's barbel get much bigger over the coming years, or have we reached the limit of their growth potential? Dr Paul Garner believes that we are already ahead of the curve for the species compared to other European countries and can't see maximum weights increasing much more.

"Although barbel grow to over 30lb in

A SEASON OF RIVER RECORDS

British record (Sussex river) – 21lb 2oz – Colin Smithson – November 2019

River Mersey record – 12lb 15oz – Mark Roberts – September 2019

River Don record – 14lb 5oz – Brad Hancock – January 2020

River Wye record – 14lb 12oz – Kevin Clark – September 2019

River Dearne record – 16lb 13oz – Liam Bishell – January 2020

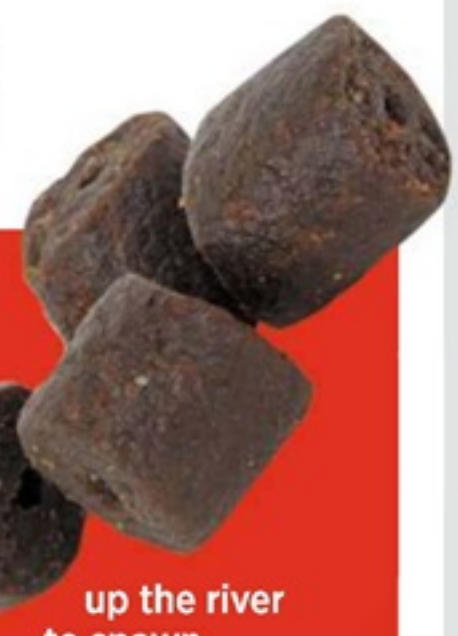
River Yare record – 10lb 1oz – Chris Turnbull – January 2020

Hampshire Avon record – 19lb 11oz – Pete Reading – March 2019

River Thames record – 20lb 12oz – John Llewellyn – February 2019



Spain, those fish are a completely different species called Comizo barbel. Our own species, *Barbus barbus*, don't grow as big in other countries as they do in the UK, so I would say we have just about reached the ceiling. In Germany, for example, the same species only reach about 18lb or 19lb in the biggest rivers."



ARE HIGH-PROTEIN BAITS BAD FOR BARBEL?

IN 2018 Bournemouth University undertook a study into the feeding behaviour of barbel. By taking scale samples and analysing the proteins found in them, they concluded that around a third of the diet of barbel in the River Severn was made up of marine-derived proteins. Much of this came from pellets and boilies used by anglers, but also from creatures such as lamprey and salmon which travel up the river to spawn, before dying. The other two-thirds of the diet was made up mainly of invertebrates.

But are the pellets and boilies being used by anglers detrimental to barbel's health? Paul Garner doesn't think so. "These fish are wild creatures and they have a hugely varied diet, so we're not 'artificially' fattening them up as we are with carp in lakes."

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NEWS EXCLUSIVE

CATCH 'EM YOUNG!



With numbers of young anglers in the UK declining, schemes are being trialled in schools to inspire a new generation

FISHING is something that most of us fell in love with as kids after summer days spent exploring the mysteries of our local rivers and ponds.

Nowadays, though, electronic distractions like iPhones and PlayStations mean that fewer and fewer children know much about the outdoor world, never mind trying to catch a fish.

An initiative called Action for the River Kennet (A.R.K.) is doing something about that by taking fish - quite literally - into the classroom. Anna Forbes, project officer at A.R.K., told us more:

"We go into primary schools in the River Kennet catchment area with a tank containing the eggs of brown trout," she said.

"These eggs then hatch, and the children take care of them by monitoring water temperature and maintaining the filter to replicate the environment of a chalk stream.

"The kids absolutely love it, and I think some of the teachers enjoy learning just as much as they do."

One of the main aims of the project is to increase knowledge and awareness of the iconic River Kennet, as many of the pupils have no idea what species of fish live in their local river.

"Some think that sharks and octopuses live there, while others don't know if it's made of salt or fresh water," Anna revealed.

"We teach them not only about fish, but also invertebrates and water voles."

Just under three months after the fish have hatched, the children release their trout into the Kennet.

"By now, they are conscious and caring of their local river," says Anna. "They can walk past the spot where they released their fish for years to come and think 'that's where my trout went, I wonder how they're getting on?' It will give them a lifelong fascination with the river."

A.R.K. isn't the only project that has had success with fishing in schools. Easington and District Angling Society in East Durham is running such a successful programme that local kids and their parents are knocking on its door asking if they can go fishing!

"Our club has a great relationship with the community here in East Durham, and we have lots of local schools that are interested in using our waters," club secretary, Steve Arnaud, told us.

"The kids that come here don't even have to fish if they don't want to. We've got one group coming to do construction work on our ponds. Most of them don't know anything about fishing, but by simply letting them see our waters the idea of catching fish is sparked in their minds."

Liam Kelk, from Worksop, Notts, has



Liam Kelk and his daughter's classmates about to fish their match at Sheffield's Kiveton Waters.

"Some of the kids think sharks and octopuses live in their local river"



Action for the River Kennet (A.R.K.) encourages schoolkids to rear trout in the classroom, then release them back into the river.

also been doing his bit to encourage young anglers after taking over the annual match at his daughter's school.

An algal bloom in the local pond, where the match was once held, meant that it hadn't been fished for years

"My eldest daughter mentioned in school that I was a match angler," Liam said.

"When the head teacher found out he asked me to take it over. I was more than happy to accept, and the Kiveton Waters sports complex in Sheffield very generously let us use one of its lakes for free.

"The kids had a brilliant day, and big tackle companies kindly put together goodie bags as prizes, as well as giving a rod to the top three in the match. It was such a success that I'm running the match again on June 18 this year."

With the success of these projects it seems that the future of fishing may not be so dim after all.

You never know, maybe one day children will prefer to spend their days gazing over a river or pond rather than squinting into tiny screens. We can but hope...



HUGHES' VIEWS

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

"HUG AN ANGLER"

THE GENERAL public's perception of angling is massively important.

I'm sure that many of them view us as little more than a bunch of bored blokes who like getting away from the family to sit by the edge of a cold lake or river on a wet Sunday morning. Or, worse still, they may hold the naïve view that we don't really care about our quarry or the other wildlife we encounter. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth.

The benefits that angling brings in terms of wellbeing, exercise and spending time with your friends cannot be undersold. Our protection and appreciation of the aquatic environment is enormously important. Yet the public rarely see any of this.

That's why I was so interested to hear about the 'Hug an Angler' campaign currently running in the US state of Colorado. The Americans have got an initiative going on to promote the sport of angling by first and foremost promoting anglers.

But would you hug an angler? Looking at some of the blokes I know, such a gesture might not be too high on the agenda after a long fishing session, but on the whole we are a bunch of diamonds.

So, every time you go fishing or use social media or even when you talk about fishing at work, remember that you're an ambassador for the sport. Use that opportunity wisely and you could well encourage more people to join our ranks. Even if they don't start to fish, they'll remember that nice angler who looked after the fish and cared for the environment. Job done. Hugs all round.

"Every time you go fishing remember you're an ambassador for the sport"

Rob



Canals on a Sunday morning are far from miserable. Nothing could be further from the truth.

YOUR T
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THE BEST FISH YOU'VE L



SEND US YOUR PICS

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Make sure your pics are hi-res and that you are in them

"CANAL SESSIONS DON'T GET ANY BETTER THAN THIS!"

Adam Jones 4lb 5oz perch

"On Sunday I had a ridiculous lure fishing session on my local stretch of canal.

In an hour I hooked 11 perch over 2lb 6oz on a Junebug TRD lure of which five were over 3lb, but the best fish by far was a new PB and an absolute beast of 4lb 5oz.

In the first six minutes of my session I had four casts and caught three perch all over 43cm long, with two of them weighing over 3lb, including the 4lb 5oz fish.

I remember the excitement I felt watching her surface and roll into my net. It's a fantastic memory that will never leave me.

Not wanting to hold the fish in the net and stress them out, a mate and I took some photos and watched them swim off.

Over the rest of the hour, I managed about 20 casts and ended up landing a fish every other chuck. I just thought canal sessions don't get any better than this.

I was truly over the moon – firstly to break my PB but more importantly to have witnessed this unreal fish and also her entire extended family in a crazy, beautiful and completely mad hour of fishing!"



"JOHN WILSON WOULD HAVE BEEN PROUD"

John Davey 6lb 12oz chub

"I hadn't been chub fishing for ages so I headed to this swim on the Waveney where I fished with angling legend John Wilson probably 60 years ago.

I was pleased to see that it hadn't changed much over the years and the area of slack water was still there.

My approach hadn't changed much either and I plopped a cheesepaste hookbait into the slack water on a link leger.

My bait wasn't in the water five minutes when the tip arched round and I struck into a hard-fighting chub which bore hard for the near bank.

I soon had her in the net – a wonderfully proportioned 6lb 12oz chub. I reckon John would've been proud."



"JUST THE ONE BITE BUT I COULDN'T ARGUE"

Adrian Garside 15lb 6oz barbel

"A couple of weeks ago I caught a 16lb 10oz barbel from the middle River Trent so I headed back to the same spot.

I fed a few freebie pellets well upstream to make sure I had a good spread of bait in front of me and dropped a single Hinders dumbbell hookbait on a free-running rig over the top.

Midnight had just struck when I received a powerful take, but almost instantly the fish seemed to bury itself solid against something on the riverbed.

After easing the pressure off it finally moved, taking line into the middle of the river.

There were a few more nervy moments, but the powerful fight came to an end with this giant fish resting in my net at the first time of asking.

Now I could see where all the power came from – the size of the barbel's tail was massive!"



"THEY WERE HEART-STOPPING MOMENTS"

Gavin Barrett 2lb 2oz and 2lb 9oz roach

"My roach fishing on the Hampshire Avon has been phenomenal this winter but my latest session has probably been the best yet.

I fed an area of slack water on my nearside bank then trotted either a single maggot or flake over the top.

In hardly any time at all I was slipping specimen roach into my keepnet – including fish of 1lb 12oz, 1lb 14oz and 1lb 15oz alongside a fine brace of two pounders.

The Avon has been running crystal clear so you get to see you prize long before it's in the landing net. They were heart-stopping moments."

"IT WAS A DONKEY OF A CHUB"

Chay Jackson 6lb 8oz chub

"What a day I had on the River Anker. I'd been targeting a 5lb-plus chub from this stretch for a while now, but I always believed it could throw-up a whacker, having lost a couple of proper fish in the past.

I'd already enjoyed plenty of sport during the day with three chub to 4lb 14oz taking a liking to my homemade cheesepaste but I wasn't prepared for my next bite – an absolute donkey of a chub weighing 6lb 8oz!

I checked later and realised my fish fell just a couple of ounces short of the Anker record.

It was simply incredible."



"A TENSE FIGHT FROM START TO FINISH"

Alfie Naylor 15lb 12oz barbel

"I had an hour to spare while waiting for my wife to come home from work. As we live so close to the Trent I was able to get on the bank and test my winter roving tactics.

After spending 20 minutes in the first swim without any luck, I moved to my second peg and within five minutes something took my paste-wrapped River Plus boilie.

I knew it was a big fish because it stayed deep, held bottom and pretty much did what it wanted until I managed to get it under control. It was a tense fight from start to finish.

I managed to take some great pictures before slipping her back in the water. The job was done so I headed home to find my wife still wasn't back – she had no idea I'd even gone fishing!"



ALFIE'S TOP TIPS FOR A BIG BARBEL

- **Bait:** Always use a hookbait that you have confidence in and make it stand out by dipping it in a soluble glug before casting out.
- **Prep:** Prepare pre-tied rigs and small PVA bags before your session to save time.
- **Stay mobile:** Strip back your tackle and only take essential items. Keep on the move too – a roving tactic can give you a massive edge in the colder months.

AnglingTimes
DRENNAN CUP
WEEKLY
WINNER
2019 - 2020 SEASON



This 33lb 4oz monster was the first fish to ever scare Rob Malseed.

THE GAME CHANGER

"Years of blanking made me think outside the box"

ROB MALSEED – 33lb 4oz PIKE

"IT WAS a Friday and, having finished work, I arrived at my Essex syndicate. I deposited three deadbaits at varying distances from the bank with my bait boat – one to a 10ft-deep spot at 50 yards, another in the margins and a final bait between the two at around 25 yards.

Sadly, though, it was a quiet night and by 3pm the next day I hadn't had so much as a bleep, so I decided to reel in and swap the deadbaits for some fresh ones.

I put lamprey and smelt on two of the rods, but I had also packed this giant herring which was around 1ft long! I'd normally cut a bait this size in half, but I had nothing to lose so I just stuck it on whole.

Before I shipped the baits back out to their spots I realised I had an unopened boilie grinder at the bottom of my tackle bag and had what you might call a bit of a brainwave...

I filled it with pieces of chopped mackerel, sardine and herring and mushed them up. Then, I poured the mush into the compartment in my bait boat, added maggots and breadcrumb and ferried it out to each of my three marks, before using the boat again to drop my rigs and deadbaits back into position.

I hadn't put the last rod down when the herring rod at 25 yards bleeped a couple of times then signalled a single-toner!

I was quick to strike, but saw my line kite fast to my right, so it was a bit of a panic trying to keep up with it.

There were a few heavy tugs but I didn't think the fish was that special, at least until I saw the slap of its tail at the net and thought: "This could be the one."

This was the first pike that had ever scared me – its shoulders were massive!

The feeling of seeing the scales pull round to over 30lb was overwhelming. I'd waited 20 years for this moment.

All those years of blanking made me think outside the box, and now I have a new personal best of 33lb 4oz because of it.

It just goes to show that by being brave and trying new things you will eventually get the result you want."



A boilie grinder was key to Rob's fantastic capture.

"I didn't think that the fish was all that special... until I saw the splash of its tail!"



ROB'S TOP TIPS FOR A PB PIKE

LOCATION: Pike can be lethargic in winter so place your deadbaits in different areas of your swim to find where the fish are.

DEADBAITS: Big baits certainly catch big fish. Don't be too hung-up on fishing half deadbaits all the time. A whole deadbait might just catch you a monster.

BAIT BOATS: It's difficult casting a deadbait more than 30 yards, but you can achieve great distances and accuracy by using a bait boat.

PREY FISH: I'm a firm believer that by feeding maggots or breadcrumbs you can draw prey fish into your swim, which in turn attract predators.





200-MILE VENTURE FOR GIANT BARBEL

COLIN Douglas travelled 200 miles from his home near the Scottish Borders to fish the River Trent, and obliterated his barbel best with this 18lb 13oz beauty. He braved horrendous wind and rain during a 48-hour session which also produced six other fish to 15lb.

4lb 12oz PERCH BEFORE WORK

A PRE-WORK trip by Mark Austin brought him this 4lb 12oz perch, the largest of a host of big stripeys taken by the Bedfordshire rod on rubber shads cast tight to far-bank trees on the River Great Ouse.

"I thought it was a pike by the way it was fighting but then it surfaced and I saw its giant white belly," he told us. "That's when I knew I had something special."



Angling Times DRENNAN CUP CATCHES OF THE WEEK

2019 - 2020 SEASON

FOUR-YEAR WAIT FOR FIRST 'SEVEN'

A FOUR-year wait for a 7lb chub from King's Weir came to an end for Ian Harvey in the shape of this 7lb 15oz Lea stunner. The Stevenage rod left his paste hookbait out for more than six hours before the rod hammered over just as darkness fell.

CHUB SUCCESS ON FIRST VISIT!

A MAIDEN trip to a new venue can be daunting, but Rob Ng banked one of the biggest chub of the season on a visit to the River Lea. The giant devoured Rob's GLM and crayfish meal paste bait 45 minutes before he was due to leave. It weighed 7lb 15oz. "My head was obliterated by the size of this fish," he said.





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. For your first award 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 which rewards anglers who target big coarse fish by design.

GET READY WITH

RINGER



MAKE A CHANGE TO THE MAGGOT FEEDER

THERE'S a very important part to be played in winter fishing by the maggot feeder, especially if your quarry is F1s rather than carp.

In cold water, maggots can often get you a bite when all else fails, but they're hard to feed and fish on the hook with most types of feeder. The maggot feeder, though, is made to fish only with this bait and nothing else.

You still get the accuracy and presentation of the feeder but you're giving the fish a helping of lively wriggling maggots, so different to the micro pellets that they see put in front of them nine times out of ten.

You can now get maggot feeders built with a heavy nod to carp and F1s. These can be fished inline or elasticated, and are slightly bigger than the models for river work.

That's not to say that you need to ladle the feed in because even with maggots, minimal feeding is best to begin with.

As the peg improves and you get more bites, extra maggots can be added – let the fish tell you how much bait they want.

GIVE IT A GO...



1 FEEDER SIZES

Small Guru Multi Maggot Feeders are ideal. To ensure the maggots wriggle free in cold water, enlarge the feeder holes with scissors.

2 CLIP UP ON TWO LINES

Casting to an island I'd clip up, with one line at 10 o'clock close to its margins and another at two o'clock further back into deep water.

3 FLUORO HOOKLINKS

Fluorocarbon is far less visible to the fish and stiffer than mono. I use 0.12mm or 0.14mm Guru Pure matched to a size 16 F1 Pellet hook.

4 MAGGOT COLOURS

Red and white maggots are good in clear water, while a red and a fluoro combo on the hook works when the lake is coloured.

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TIDDLER SPECIAL!

BRITAIN'S MINIATURE MONSTERS

In a fishing world usually dominated by pounds and ounces, it's easy to forget about all of the fabulous 'mini species' that first stirred the angler in us all...

WITH double-figure barbel and 40lb-plus carp a weekly occurrence in today's angling world, it's easy to forget about the many quirky, much smaller fish that swim in our waters.

Gudgeon, minnows and ruffe may not make you the envy of your mates, but for a slice of innocent fun, they are fascinating little beasts with their own unique character.

For so many of us, bullheads, sticklebacks and other tiddlers offer a nostalgic trip to revive the magic of childhood.

That said, locating and catching them all can still be surprisingly addictive! In all of our fishing, size is relative and you never know, you might just find a tiny monster or two in a water on your doorstep.

In fact, for any angler who has ever dreamt of holding a British record, these neglected little creatures are eminently more likely to get you on the list than their much weightier aquatic neighbours.

Here, then, are some tiny targets for the big kids among you. Can you catch the complete set or find one of specimen size?

Magical minnows

One of the most prolific freshwater fish, the minnow plays an important part in the ecosystem, providing food for the likes of perch, trout and chub. For most anglers, it's not catching but avoiding these fish that is the name of the game!

Look beyond their tiny proportions, though, and they're beautifully coloured with hues of olive, black and gold. These typical shoal fish teem in their thousands, but singling out a 'giant' of half an ounce or more could prove quite a challenge.

Did you know? Besides being food for everything from kingfishers to barbel, minnows were once fried like whitebait or even pickled! We wouldn't recommend it...

Spikey sticklebacks

For plenty of anglers, their first contact with any freshwater fish was the humble stickleback, the commonest being the three-spined. Found in streams, ditches and ponds all over the country, he's a bold little character with a decidedly mean streak. A tiny worm, or even a speck of red wool, is liable to get him excited and sometimes he will attack and hang on so eagerly you won't need a hook.

Did you know? Sticklebacks build little nests at spawning time, which the colourful males defend aggressively. In aquariums, they are liable to fight rivals to the death!

Bolshie bullheads

The 'miller's thumb' is another much-loved little fish. Characterised by its mottled brown coloration and a huge head for its size, it looks rather like a freshwater goby.

The bullhead does especially well in smaller rivers, where it blends into the stony bottom, eating invertebrates and tiny fish. That said, they also do well on some canals.

Did you know? Bullheads are highly territorial, claiming their own little patch on the riverbed. The males make good dads, too, defending the eggs of their partners beneath a rock.

Rare ruffe

Like a miniature perch dotted with pepper, it's not hard to see why anglers get nostalgic about the cute, pint-sized ruffe, also known as the pope.

Ruffe are perhaps not as common as they once were, with predation by zander cited as one factor in their decline. Catch one on a lure and you can chalk up an impressive little feat of angling skill!

Did you know? Ruffe that were illegally introduced by unscrupulous predator anglers, have caused a serious threat to the fish of Loch Lomond and the Great Lakes of America.

Gregarious gonks

Greedy, whiskery and fantastically coloured, the humble gudgeon or 'gonk' is a

"Bullheads, sticklebacks and other tiddlers offer a nostalgia trip to revive the magic of childhood"



MINNOW
British record: 13.5dr/23.9g
Specimen size: 10dr
Difficulty rating: 4/10



THREE-SPINED STICKLEBACK
British record: 8g
Specimen size: 5g
Difficulty rating: 5/10



BULLHEAD
British record: 1oz/28g
Specimen size: 15g
Difficulty rating: 8/10



RUFFE
British record: 5oz 4dr/149g
Specimen size: 2oz/56g
Difficulty rating: 7/10



Minnows can also be caught in simple bottle traps.

fish still held in huge affection by British anglers. Okay, so the typical sample wouldn't make an ounce, but long before the days of ton-up carp catches, canal experts would win matches with hundreds of the little devils.

However, where you find them in less likely habitats, such as commercial fisheries, they can grow surprisingly big. If only they reached the size of barbel!

Did you know? This species was once widely eaten in the UK, with so called 'gudgeon parties' held, notably on the River Thames, to catch enough for a small feast!

Shy stone loach

These pretty, speckled fish are not uncommon but only rarely caught on rod and line.

In part, this is because they live a life of secrecy on stony river and lakebeds, ever watchful for the many creatures that would eat them.

While it's easy to dismiss a fish that would be a whopper at half an ounce, they're gorgeously camouflaged and whiskered like miniature barbel.

Did you know? Stone loach are thought to be mostly active at night, which may be another reason why they are seldom caught by anglers.



GUDGEON
British record: 5 oz/142g
Specimen size: 45g
Difficulty rating: 5/10

STONE LOACH
British record: 23g
Specimen size: 15g
Difficulty rating: 8/10

Top Tips for small success

GET CLOSE TO THE EDGE
Most mini species are caught at extreme close range. Right under the bank tends to be a good place to start.

BE STEALTHY
When you weigh mere grams, almost everything wants to eat you! For this reason, tiny fish can be surprisingly shy, especially in clear water. Take a leaf from the heron's book and approach with care.

STEP IT DOWN
Regular sized hooks look massive next to mini species. To catch bitterling or stone loach, you wouldn't think twice about using a size 24 or smaller.

GET IN FOCUS
With the right gear, mini species are full of fascinating details. A macro lens is a great investment, albeit expensive. A more affordable investment is a little magnifier device for your mobile. Well worth a look, because up close our tiny fishes have some fantastic colours and details.

EVERY GRAM COUNTS
If you fancy being a micro record breaker, the usual scales won't do. Super-accurate digital kitchen scales or similar are the way to go.

KEEP AN EAR TO THE GROUND
As with bigger fish, the finest mini specimens often thrive on neglect. A lake with a tiny head of your target fish and lots of natural food, for example, is perfect.

THE WORLD'S YOUR OCEAN
We've only mentioned UK coarse fish here, but if you use similar tackle and tiny fragments of bait around the British coast, or anywhere on earth for that matter, there's a whole galaxy of weird and wonderful little fish to catch. Freshwater drop shotting tackle will work in the sea as well.



Most mini species are caught at extreme close range.

18+

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

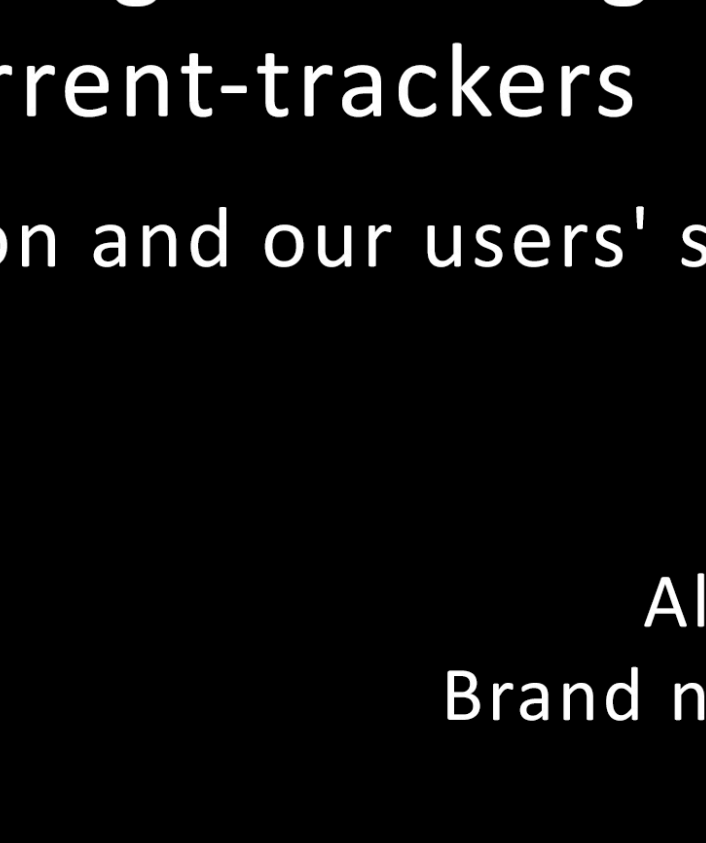
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EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK

"THIS ONE IS A KEEPER"

Tackle editor Mark Sawyer puts Preston's Carbonactive Distance Master through its paces



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

ANYONE whose fishing trips don't always go exactly to plan can relate to this week's live test. And that means all of you!

Traditional match fishing lore dictates that in the chilly waters of winter we should cut right down on how much bait we use. And okay, I confess that my sixth cast in 20 minutes using a big Method feeder full of micros might have been over the top.

The truth is, I was struggling. There'd been a frost that morning, an easterly wind was howling across the water, and I didn't really know much about the Big Lake at Bain Valley Fisheries in Lincolnshire, where I'd pitched up to put Preston's turbo-charged 13ft 2ins Distance Master rod through its paces.

I clocked the chap two pegs away who'd turned up about an hour earlier. Perched on a tatty old fishing chair, he looked friendly enough, so I gave him that 'who knows?' shrug of the shoulders familiar to all anglers who haven't got a clue what to do next.

Talk about being taken down a notch or two. Without even looking at me he muttered: "Thee can put it in, but thee can't take it out," alluding to the fact that I might have been a bit gung-ho with the bait.

Feeders ahoy!

I was determined to put on a show for my critic, and I figured that a mesmerising long-distance cast would surely impress. Standing up on my seatbox footplate, I adjusted the line drop to halfway down the blank and made sure I caught his eye while unleashing a monster cast.

AnglingTimes

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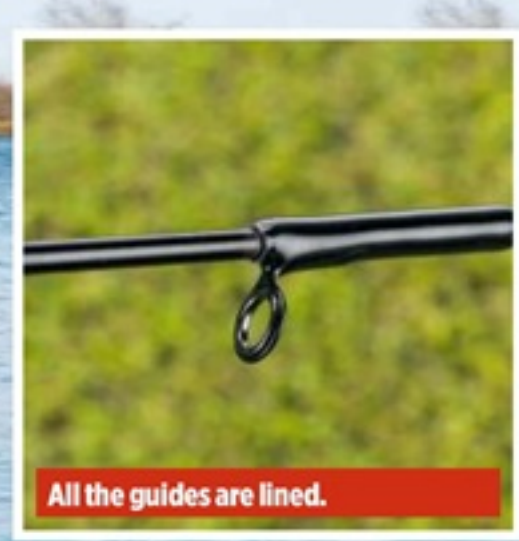

The three tips are colour-coded.


There's an extra-long EVA handle.


It comes with 2oz, 3oz and 4oz tips.


Keeper ring is a nice touch.


The guides are over-sized.


All the guides are lined.

A lightning-fast swoosh of the rod followed, using every inch of its extra-long handle. It was casting perfection, proper textbook stuff, or so I thought.

The 'crack' of snapping line was audible in the next county as my 45g Method feeder flew straight up through the ozone layer. After what seemed an eternity, the old boy broke the silence. "Thee's loosefeeding feeders now then as well?"

In my eagerness to impress, I hadn't noticed the coil of line that had worked itself around the back of the spool! Cue the arrival of photographer Lloyd, who asked my tormentor if he'd caught anything.

"No, but it's entertaining just sitting here watching your pal," he replied.

Casting perfection

When you need to find a fish, staring at the water can sometimes be your salvation, and sure enough, I saw one show way out in the lake.

I didn't wish the niggly neighbour good luck as I hurriedly bundled everything back into the car, and two minutes later I was round the other side of the lake. I already had full confidence in the Preston Distance Master's casting capabilities... it was my own that needed sorting out. Changing from a Method feeder to a 60g straight lead and a hefty 12lb shockleader, I reckoned popped-up bread discs fished as 18ins-high zig rigs would surely do the business.

The slightly thicker knot between mainline and shocker whizzed through the rod's oversized guides as the steely mid-section kicked in, fairly sizzling the lead out well past 100 yards.

For such a supreme casting tool, the rod felt remarkably responsive and tactile, and the crisp tip section generated very little in the way of recoil or post-cast bounce. I was mightily impressed. Barely had the reel line tightened against the 2oz quiver I'd chosen to use when its eye-catching fluoro-orange tip dropped back. It was a typical

OUR VERDICT



"It is a true 'keeper' of a rod that will become a firm favourite"

bite on popped-up bread from a winter carp.

Because I was using a suspended hookbait, rather than snatching the rod from its rest, I wound down cautiously until I made contact with the fish which, feeling the pressure, bolted in a bid for freedom.

Perfect build

At moments like that you realise why all the best 13ft-plus Distance Master Feeder rods are made with short carrier sections. It enables the top section to respond with just enough cushioning to make hook-pulls highly unlikely, even from carp and bream hooked at the longest of ranges.

And there was no danger of such a thing happening with this pretty hefty carp, which I was able to lead towards my waiting net with the absolute minimum of fuss.

The Distance Master comes with 2oz, 3oz and 4oz carbon quivertips, all boasting large diameter rings, and a couple of inches of reinforcing around the top of the carrier section joint point to a rod that's been designed by top anglers who really know what they are doing.

Make no mistake, this is a 'keeper' of a rod that will become a firm favourite the first time you use it. And, compared to many of its ilk, it offers superb value for money.

Price: £245.99, www.anglingdirect.co.uk

BANKSIDE TEST VERDICT

- ⊕ **Casting power to spare, with a progressive action that gives the best of both worlds**
- ⊕ **Reinforcing around the top of the carrier section is evidence of serious expert field-testing**
- ⊕ **The three solid carbon quivertips are well matched to the rod's action**
- ⊖ **The elongated handle is too long. It's designed to generate tip speed, but this may be overkill**
- ⊖ **The lighter 2oz quiver could have been made from glass, as its softer nature better suits bream**



PRESTON INNOVATIONS CARBONACTIVE DISTANCE MASTER ROD 4M 100G

WIN! £1,000 WORTH OF THESE RODS
See page 45

TYPE: Power feeder
LENGTH: 13ft 2ins (4m)
MAXIMUM CASTING WEIGHT: 100g
SECTIONS: Three

DISTANCE MASTER ROD FEATURES

- Elongated butt
- Enlarged grip area
- Screw-down reel seat
- Oversized distance casting guides
- Hook keeper ring
- EVA/cork handle.
- Three carbon tips 2oz, 3oz, 4oz



The handle is extra long – maybe a little too long for me – and this is to increase tip speed. What it does do is to put distance on your cast.

OUR PICK OF THE ALTERNATIVES

SHAKESPEARE SIGMA SUPRA 13FT FEEDER — ON A BUDGET
PRICE: £56.99
Perfect for long-cast feeder tactics, the super-tough Supra has a progressive action and two spare quivertips.

DAIWA CAST'IZM FEEDER — MID PRICE
PRICE: £149.99
One of the best distance casting rods around for still and running water. Champagne quality at lemonade price.

DRENNAN ACOLYTE DISTANCE FEEDER — SIMILAR PRICE
PRICE: £229
A very popular distance feeder rod with bream anglers, but it can be found wanting when used with shockleaders.

ON OUR RADAR

OUR PICK OF THE LATEST GOODIES TO HIT THE BANKS



PRESTON INNOVATIONS DISTANCE ICS INLINE METHOD FEEDERS

WHAT THEY SAY: Cast a long way with these aerodynamically designed and weighty (45g and 55g) Distance Method Feeders. A shallow side wall and side ribs keep the contents in place in flight and upon impact, but an open area to the rear of the body allows for perfect positioning of your hookbait. The ICS inter-change system allows them to be used both inline and with elasticated stems, and a dedicated Distance Method Mould is also available for a truly neat presentation.

WHAT WE SAY: These feeders are superbly built and well designed. Quick tactical changes can be made to suit conditions, while the Distance Method Mould ensures a neat and tidy aerodynamic presentation of micro pellets or groundbait. We love them!

Price: From £2.75

www.bristolangling.com

DAIWA N'ZON EVA FEEDER BAG

WHAT THEY SAY: A wipe-clean waterproof EVA bag with two accessory boxes. The main compartment houses two tackle boxes accessible from the front via a zipped flap. A Velcro-secured top compartment detaches for easy placement of kit to hand when fishing.

WHAT WE SAY: The detachable top section will be a boon to anglers fishing from platforms in the water. Essential tackle items can all be handily placed on your side waiter, and the EVA finish keeps everything dry even in a heavy downpour.

Price: £59.99

www.tackleuk.co.uk

AT REPORTER FREDDIE SAYS:
Have a dedicated bag for my feeder tackle really helped me up the pace when fishing matches





RAPALA X-RAP OTUS LURES

WHAT THEY SAY: Rapala's X-Rap construction with a colour-matched curl tail creates a seamless hybrid bait. With its slow sink rate and wide, wafting tail, the lure is an ideal choice for cold water and challenging conditions. Given a jerky retrieve, the tail acts as parachute for a slow, mesmerising fall. Comes in 17cm and 25cm sizes and 14 colours.

WHAT WE SAY: A spare soft tail adds value, and the lure is tough enough to withstand its fair share of hits. Super-sharp trebles are strong and well fixed – just flatten the barbs off, though.

Price: From £13.95

www.fishingmegastore.com



DYNAMITE FRENZIED SWEETCORN

WHAT THEY SAY: To be released in early March, this freshly cooked, preservative-free sweetcorn contains proven fish-catching flavours and essential oil feeding triggers. A few red grains are included as a 'change bait'. Comes in Krill, F1, Scopex and Match Super Sweet flavours.

WHAT WE SAY: Dynamite has resisted the temptation to alter the colour of the corn – a wise move – but the inclusion of red kernels adds another fish-catching dimension to the bait. Strong flavours and aromas will add to the corn's attraction when used in coloured water.

Price: £2.49

www.anglingdirect.co.uk

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TACKLE UP FOR RIVER ROACH ON THE FLOAT

We look at the bits and pieces you'll need in your tackle box



KAMASAN B511 HOOKS

YOU won't find many top roach anglers without a few of Kamazan's iconic B511s in their box. Their fine wire, sharp points, long shank and wide gape are perfect for classic roach baits such as bread and hemp.

While usually known as a matchman's hook, some of the top big-roach anglers use these hooks in larger sizes for trotting breadflake. They are also available tied to nylon.

Price: £1.75 hooks, £2.55 pre-tied, www.matchmansupplies.co.uk



GURU PURE FLUOROCARBON

ONE of the most annoying things when fishing with light lines is it coiling up after catching a few fish. One of the best ways to avoid this is using fluorocarbon line.

Fluoro is virtually invisible in water, and even in very low diameters it should stay stiff throughout the day.

Guru's Pure is a good option to try.

Price: £6.99, www.willysworms.co.uk



MIDDY SLOT SHOT

IF YOU'VE ever floatfished for roach, you'll know how much difference your shotting can make.

Using a large number of small shots gives you much greater versatility, and Middy's Slot Shot is easy to put on the line as well as being soft enough to move around without damaging it.

As well as coming in individual dispensers, they are also available in multi-packs, with No4s right down to No12s to suit all your angling needs.

Price: £9.25 for six-way dispenser, £1.80 for single dispenser, www.benwick-sports.co.uk



PRESTON INNOVATIONS ORIGINAL SLIP ELASTIC

FOR pole fishing, it's crucial that you have the right elastic, and Preston's Original Slip has stood the test of time. Sizes 4, 5 and 6 will work for just about all situations and will land everything from small fish to 2lb specimens.

All of these elastics have been treated with Slip lubricant, which gives them incredible abrasion resistance and avoids bumped fish.

Price: £2.99, www.brownsangling.co.uk



JOHN ALLERTON STICK FLOATS

AS ONE of the greatest stick float anglers of all time, John Allerton's floats are the go-to choice for many river anglers.

With wire stems and a shoulder to allow you to hold back, plus a unique sharpened tip for sensitivity, John's stick floats are up there with the best. They come in a range of sizes.

Price: From £2.20, multipacks also available, www.allertonsangling.co.uk

IT WORKS FOR ME

ENTERPRISE TACKLE ARTIFICIAL HEMP

HARRY WESTERLAND

"I'VE always struggled to hook hemp, especially the stuff out of a tin that is only good for feeding. A few years ago I discovered Fake Hemp from Enterprise Tackle. It's easy to hook through the soft rubber kernel, and you can often catch multiple fish on the same grain."

Price: £1.99, www.anglingdirect.co.uk



USED & ABUSED

AnglingTimes STAFF RATE THEIR FISHING KIT

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





IN the short time I've owned this rod it's transformed my lure fishing.

It's incredibly light and easy to carry on roving sessions, but its versatility is what sets it apart. I hate carrying two lure outfits, one for pike and the other for perch, so this rod allows me to chase both species with one tool.

One minute I can be using it with 3g jigheads and micro lures for perch, the next I can be casting 15g jigs or big paddle-tailed soft plastics a good distance for pike.

Price: £85
www.tackleuk.co.uk

QUALITY: ★★★★★
VALUE: ★★★★★

SONU PRO EXPANDER PELLETS

TESTED BY: FREDDIE SANDFORD



THESE make pellet preparation an absolute doddle.

Just put some in a plastic bag, add just enough water to cover them, leave overnight in the fridge and bingo - perfect hookbait pellets!

I've been adding a booster liquid to the water before soaking the pellets for an edge.

Price: £3.99
www.willyworms.co.uk

QUALITY: ★★★★★
VALUE: ★★★★★





MAXIMA CHAMELEON LINE

TESTED BY: ROY DOBBS, STROUD

I'VE been using this line since it came out decades ago and I can't fault it for its brilliant knot strength, abrasion-resistance and stretch.

I also like the fact that it sinks quickly. I mostly use it in 6lb breaking strain for all my feeder fishing.

Price: From £3.75 (100m)
www.anglingactive.co.uk

QUALITY: ★★★★★
VALUE: ★★★★★

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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

Bristol Channel stalwart Kieran waits for the tide to flood in.

WAITING FOR A FLOOD

Whether it's freshwater or the sea, fish can't resist a little extra water

A SEA of mud on a dull winter's day... not the most attractive proposition, and I questioned why I'd come to such a place.

There was nowhere to cast, and the only water was falling from the sky, adding damp discomfort to my bewilderment. But when a bag of winter cod is on the cards, we anglers can endure far worse than that!

On what passed for the shore, Bristol Channel stalwarts Kieran, from Premier Angling in Keynsham, and his friend



Lee were busying themselves putting up rods and tying pulley rigs - I just hoped they knew something I didn't!

"Be ready!" was all they told me, and since their last sortie had resulted in nine cod in two hours, I wasn't about to argue. Under their guidance, Continental beachcasters came out, rigged with big fixed-spool reels, 15lb Syncro XT mainline and Greased Weasel shockleaders. We'd be using black lug, so a 1/0 hook on a 25lb Amnesia hooklength would be big enough. A stop knot tied on to this could be pulled down to hold two worms in place. Finally, a 5oz grip lead allowed the rig to be clipped up on the cast. This would release on impact with the water - should there ever be any!

My sarcastic comments about my colleagues' sanity were falling on deaf ears. The huge tidal variance found in the Bristol Channel reveals muddy

Continued over the page



This Bristol Channel cod came in on the flood.



This barbel fought like a tiger.

banks that stretch as far as the eye can see – inhospitable for us, and definitely not places to venture on to, but fish see the world a little differently to us. Time away from the sea leaves the banks rich and fertile, so when water floods in there's a rush to search for fresh food.

Darkness came early, and still we had nowhere to cast! The first indication of a change came with a growing rush of water across the estuary. Once the flood had started, the surge was rapid and unstoppable. One minute the coves and peninsulas were dry, the next the Channel was lapping against the bank at my feet.

There was no time to waste, and under instruction I cast 50yds into no more than 1ft of water. I placed the rod on a tripod and almost immediately hooked a cod. A fluke, obviously, but then I looked down the bank and saw both of my friends playing fish. Cod had been as swift as the tide to exploit a fresh food source, a lesson to remember on dynamic venues everywhere.

A couple of days later I was surveying another flooded place, but despite its height, the river seemed tame compared to the liquid mud of the previous trip. Sea and freshwater fish aren't that dissimilar when it comes to food, though, and the flooded water meadows were impossible to ignore.

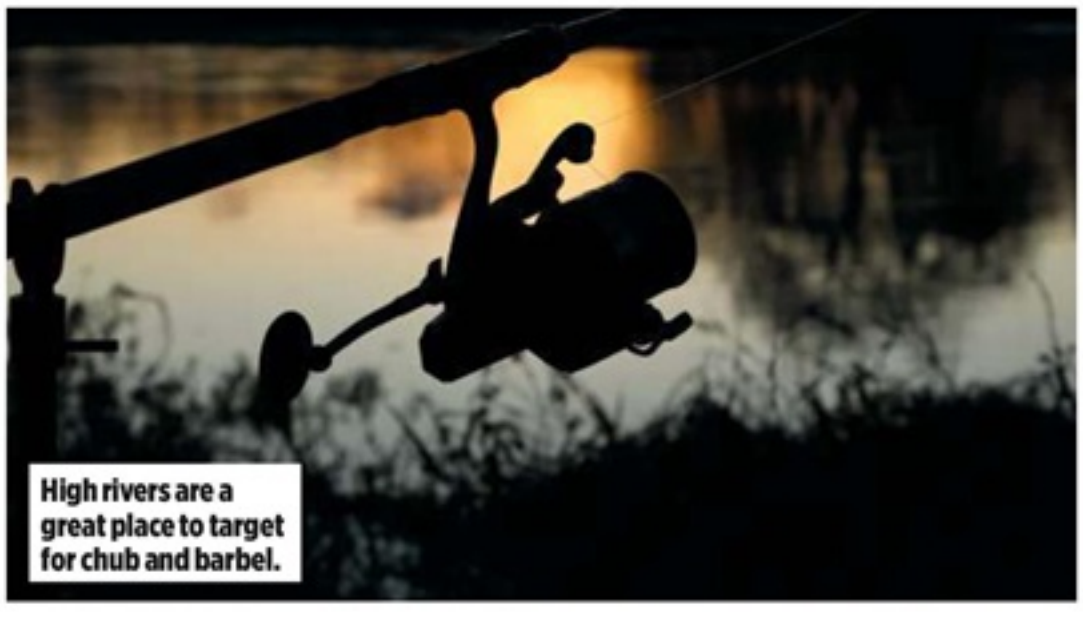
An abundance of drowned worms and insects meant the chub would be keen to venture out of the river and explore fresh territory. Sure enough, wayward dorsal fins cut through reed beds and into open water, their presence given away by the occasional boil on the surface.

Donning waders, I crept across the meadows. I had brought a 1.25lb tc Avon rod teamed with 6lb Method Feeder mono. I suspected I'd need every ounce of its breaking strain.

A short paternoster link held between float stops carried just a couple of shot, and a size 8 hook with a lump of Sticky Krill paste smeared around it completed the set-up. Why not mimic nature and use a worm? The trouble was, it would bury itself in the mud and grass to avoid the chub, snagging me up.

I took refuge against some reeds with the water around my knees, waiting for a chance. The chub would have to come to me, as they wouldn't tolerate any disturbance. It took a while, but eventually I spotted a fish, guessed where its head was and made a cast. Instantly a bow of line zipped across the water and I struck.

In bonefish fashion a 5lb chub tore across the shallows and I ran after it, gathering line. I had ruined any further chances but I didn't really care – this was



High rivers are a great place to target for chub and barbel.

"Why not be like the fish, wait for a flood, and reap your rewards?"



fun, and once again I had used a flood to catch a fish.

More rain over the following days meant another fishing trip, this time to the Hants Avon. Despite the burgeoning flood, the water hadn't taken on much colour. That would enable safe wading, but my next target, barbel, would have a clear view of proceedings. I stuck to a summer-style set-up with 15lb fluoro mainline and the weight trapped between float stops. A 4ft fluoro hooklength carried a size 11 Super Specialist barbel hook and a short braided hair holding half a boilie. This would be pushed over by the flow and cover the hook.

I've never found barbel willing to leave the riverbed for the flooded banks, but that doesn't mean they don't enjoy all that extra water - they adore it! So I waded to the river's edge and lowered the rig into place.

I knew a bite would come in the mild temperatures. In fact, it was two, and each time those barbel fought like tigers, to the point where at times I couldn't budge them off the bottom.

Wonderful sport, so why not be like the fish, wait for a flood, and reap your rewards?



An abundance of drowned worms and insects brought the chub out.

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AnglingTimes

WHERE TO FISH

MONKHALL FISHERY, BRIDGNORTH

PUT SOME PLEASURE BACK IN YOUR SPORT

Monkhall Fishery adds a touch of class



COMMERCIAL fisheries strive to make their visitor experience as pleasurable as possible, but it's fair to say that the in-form Monkhall Fishery is one step ahead of its rivals.

Top-class fishing is assured on all six lakes at the Shropshire complex, but that is only part of the appeal.

Each pool is surrounded by an electrified fence - which is switched off when anglers are present - to make sure the vast stocks of carp, F1s and silverfish are protected from predators. The pegs are also very generously sized, and even the biggest tackle tart will have plenty of space around him to place his equipment.

There's no need to bring smelly nets with you because the fishery provides them free of charge in a bid to stop viruses being transferred from other venues. Rather than insist that you collect them from a central point and then place them damp and unprotected into your car for the drive to your swim, there are 'net stations' next to each peg.

Add to this secure parking close to every peg, on-site accommodation and toilets and you realise why Monkhall's stock is quickly rising.

When it comes to the fishing itself the hype doesn't drop away either, and local expert Adam Rumble reckons there are very few places that can offer the same level of action.

"The owners have ploughed a lot of money into making Monkhall something special and there is no doubt they have done just that," he says.

"Kingfisher, Lark, Owl and Swallow all have a central island and fishing to it with the long pole or a small feeder with maggot or pellets will keep bites coming. Fishing in open water between 7m and 9m out is a good alternative.

"Buzzard has two islands, Hawk has three, and the latter is my favourite lake on the complex.

"This is because it is so versatile. You can fish a waggler and maggot just off the island and catch ide between 4oz and 1lb every chuck, or turn to a small pellet feeder or long pole and get among the F1s and carp.

"It is also a very fair lake and no matter where you pitch up on it, there are bound to be fish in front of you."

When it comes to tactics, little and often feeding of maggots with a catapult will soon get the ide competing on the waggler, with 4lb mainline and a 0.11mm hooklength to a size 18 hook all that is required.

Step it up a little on the tip, using the smallest pellet feeder



Decent carp and F1s fell to Adam Rumble's attack.



BIG F1 BANKED
Jordan Halls with a huge 7lb 14oz F1 hybrid.



RECORD HAUL
Morgan Davidson with part of his 328lb fishery record catch.



Local expert Adam Rumble reckons Monkhall is in great winter form.

you own packed with micros.

Spool up with 6lb mainline on your reel and use a 4ins 0.17mm hooklength to a size 16 hook that is baited with hair-rigged bread discs.

There are thousands of commercials dotted across the country but very few have gone to the lengths of Monkhall to provide their customers with the ultimate package.

VENUE FACTFILE





LOCATION: Off the B4368, Monkhopton, nr Bridgnorth, Shropshire, WV16 6XF (nearest available, follow road signs for the entrance)

CONTACT: Call 01746 785481 or visit www.monkhallfishery.co.uk

PRICES: Adults £8, concessions £6

SPECIES: Carp, F1s, ide, bream, chub, tench and crucians

RULES: Barbless hooks to a maximum of size 12, no stink bags on site, no braid, fishery feed pellets only



Ian Chadburn with a mixed net from McCallums.

Anglingtimes

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- Expert venue tactics

COMMERCIALS WHERE YOU DON'T NEED A POLE TO CATCH

NORTH

POOL BRIDGE FARM, YORK, NORTH YORKSHIRE

There's a good head of quality carp to target in Horseshoe and the Carp Lake. Fishing the bomb with corn on the hook or a waggler through the water will find good fish.

Contact: 07928 359420
Postcode: YO19 4SQ

CUDMORE FISHERY, NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME, STAFFORDSHIRE

There's a really good mixed head of fish in Drumble and Edwards Lakes. Fishing a waggler while feeding maggots and casters should result in bites from skimmers and chub.

Contact: 01782 680919
Postcode: ST5 5HW

McCALLUMS FISHERY, DONCASTER, S YORKSHIRE

Try a feeder on East End Lake, using a sweet groundbait and maggots on the hook. Expect mainly skimmers with the occasional very good carp.

Contact: 01302 770224
Postcode: DN3 3NT

MIDLANDS

LAKE ROSS, SPALDING, LINCOLNSHIRE

Even though it's only a small pond, Lake Ross is solid with fish and contains lots of F1s and carp. The waggler with bread on the hook can be very effective.

Contact: 01775 761690
Location: PE11 3NA

BODDINGTON RESERVOIR, BYFIELD, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

One of the most popular winter venues, Boddington is home to some huge carp that can be caught on the feeder at range.

Contact: 07740 534891
Postcode: NN11 6UD

BARSTON LAKES, SOLIHULL, W MIDLANDS

Try a cage feeder with maggots at short range for the skimmers, or cast a Hybrid around 50m out for a bigger carp or F1.

Contact: 01675 444890
Postcode: B92 0LB

SOUTH

GOLD VALLEY LAKES, ALDERSHOT, HAMPSHIRE

You'll catch on a rod on all the lakes, of which the best is Syndicate. Either the tip or a big waggler can produce the goods.

Contact: 07786 827333
Postcode: GU11 2PT

VIADUCT FISHERY, SOMERTON, SOMERSET

When the water clears in the winter the waggler really comes into its own, particularly on Spring Lake, where you can catch silverfish on casters or carp on corn by the island.

Contact: 01458 274022
Postcode: TA11 6LJ

TURN THE PAGE FOR MORE GREAT VENUES TO FISH THIS WEEK

BURY HILL'S OLD LAKE HAS

Picturesque water is home to big bream, tench, zander and pike – and you can

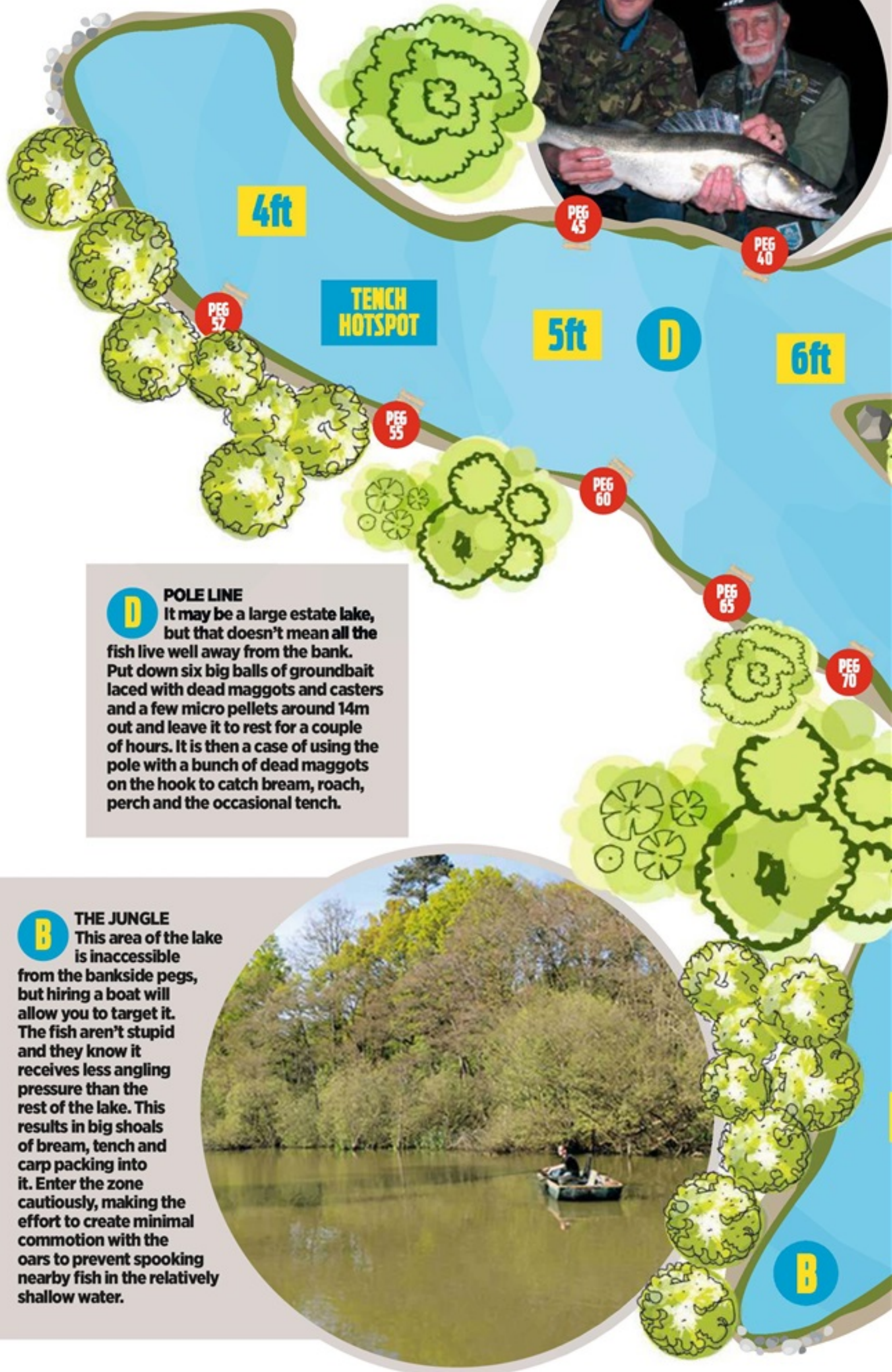
NO MATTER what style of fishing you fancy trying your hand at, the Old Lake at Bury Hill Fisheries can almost certainly cater for you.

Arguably one of the most visually stunning waters in the land, the Surrey venue is home to a wide range of species that can be caught on literally dozens of different approaches.

Huge bream shoals, big tench, hard-fighting pike and even zander all play a part in the stocking policy, and any one of them could end up in the net if you pay this highly rated gem a visit this week.

There are 75 pegs to launch your attack from, but that isn't your only option as boats are also available to hire, enabling you to explore every nook and cranny on offer.





D POLE LINE
It may be a large estate lake, but that doesn't mean all the fish live well away from the bank. Put down six big balls of groundbait laced with dead maggots and casters and a few micro pellets around 14m out and leave it to rest for a couple of hours. It is then a case of using the pole with a bunch of dead maggots on the hook to catch bream, roach, perch and the occasional tench.

B THE JUNGLE
This area of the lake is inaccessible from the bankside pegs, but hiring a boat will allow you to target it. The fish aren't stupid and they know it receives less angling pressure than the rest of the lake. This results in big shoals of bream, tench and carp packing into it. Enter the zone cautiously, making the effort to create minimal commotion with the oars to prevent spooking nearby fish in the relatively shallow water.

I FISH IT...

LOCAL EXPERT Pemb Wrighting

"I find that chucking to Old Lake's island with a medium-sized Guru Hybrid feeder is a great way of catching the bream and tench. This is combined with 4ins hooklength to create a bolt-rig effect, so every fish hooks itself when it takes the hookbait.

"I use dampened micros and Mainline Match Sweet Marine groundbait on the frame. This leaves plenty of flavour in the swim without overfilling the shoal.

"Don't be afraid of fishing fairly heavy. I use 8lb mainline and a 0.15mm hooklength to a size 14 Guru Kaizen hook."



GOT IT ALL...

catch them on dozens of methods

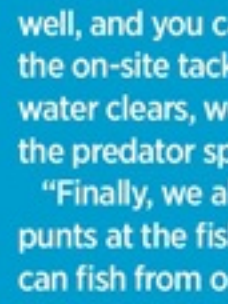
SPOTLIGHT ON OLD LAKE, BURY HILL FISHERIES

C DEEP HOTSPOT
This is the deepest part of the lake, with depths of around 10ft. It draws in stacks of skimmers that can come thick and fast on a traditional cage feeder attack. The vast numbers of silverfish are a magnet for the pike and zander, and a legered deadbait could soon be snapped up by a double-figure specimen of either species.

HOT PEG

This swim has been in fine form, producing big bream bags on several occasions. Match angler Wayne Hughes rotated between the feeder to the island and long pole for a 36lb netful, while pleasure angler Mark Lambert used a similar attack for nine slabs to 5lb in just a few hours of fishing.

A ISLAND SWIM
The island is shrouded with cover and, as you would expect, the carp – which run to over 30lb - love to linger nearby. But more surprising is that many of the bigger bream also sit tight to the feature despite the fairly shallow water. This is because of the large amount of bait that is fed here, with the slabs always confident of picking up their next meal when patrolling it. Start by casting a few metres short and get tighter if you don't get bites or the action dries up.



THE BAILIFF SAYS:

Dave Roberts

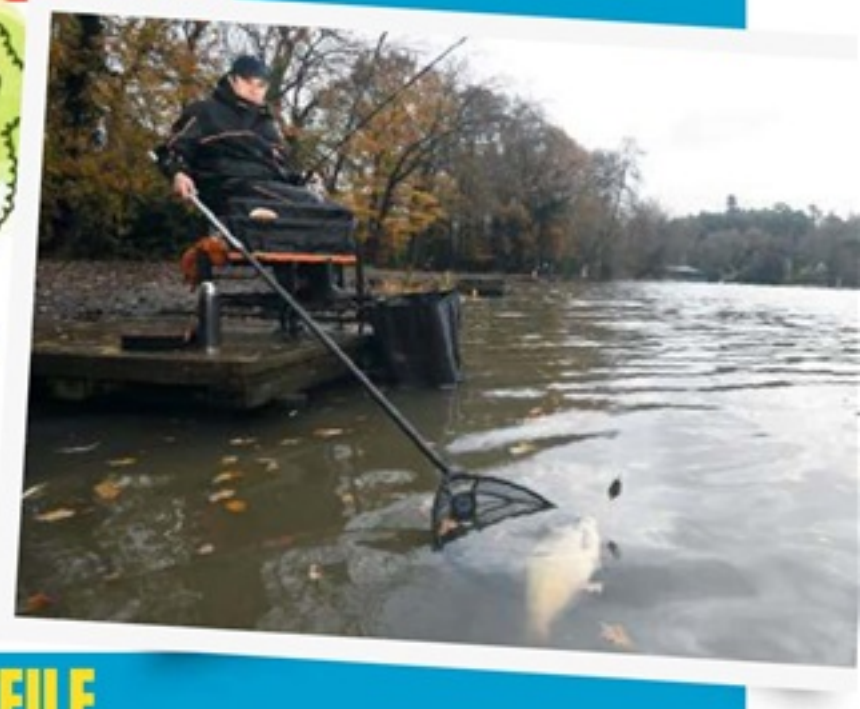
"The Old Lake is one of those places where catching fish is a bonus – it's just a pleasure to be there. It's a genuine estate lake that was dug more than 200 years ago, and it was originally owned by the Barclay family, who were in charge of Barclays Bank!

"People love spending time in its idyllic surroundings, and recently good bream and even the occasional tench have been showing in matches.

"Unusually, we also have a good head of zander in the Old Lake, and these always draw anglers in over the winter months. Freelined roach deadbaits have been working well, and you can buy these at the on-site tackle shop. As the water clears, we only expect the predator sport to improve.

"Finally, we also have two punts at the fishery that you can fish from on the Old Lake. Not only is it a lovely way to spend a day, but from a punt you can access secluded and unfished water."

Venue Best:
- Carp: 30lb
- Bream: 10lb-plus
- Tench: 9lb-plus
- Zander: 16lb-plus



VENUE FACTFILE

BURY HILL FISHERIES

LOCATION: The Boathouse, Old Bury Hill, Westcott, nr Dorking, Surrey, RH4 3JU
CONTACT: Call 01306 877540 or visit www.buryhillfisheries.co.uk
TICKETS: Adults £13 one rod, concessions £11. Extra £7 per person for boat hire. Memberships are also available
RULES: All nets must be dipped, no fixed rigs, barbless hooks only, predator fishing permitted October 1 to March 14
FACILITIES: Parking, disabled access, tackle shop, toilets

RIVER NENE, PETERBOROUGH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE



RECOMMENDED BY:
MARK SMITH, PETERBOROUGH

Fishing for: "I started as a kid, had a 30-year break, and have been back at it for about 12 years now."
Favourite species: Chub
Favourite tactics: Roving with link legered cheesepaste

"The River Nene gives you the chance to catch chub, barbel, carp and even zander"

My local water is...
The Peterborough and District Angling Club's stretches of the River Nene and its backwaters are close to my home, and some stretches are just a bike-ride away. They are full of specimen chub, barbel, carp and zander.

Favourite swim
The chub can be anywhere, and I like to fish different bits of the river all the time, so I don't have one favourite spot.

I got my biggest fish recently just by targeting open water, but I also look out for overhanging trees and bends in the river.

Best moment
It would have to be my recent PB-equalling 6lb 11oz chub. It was from a new bit of the river for me that nobody really fishes. It took a lot of effort to get there – me and my mate walked two miles! Catches like that make me tick.

Go to method
At this time of year, a moving bait works well. I'll cast upstream and let my bait swing round in the flow and search the riverbed, bouncing along so that it looks natural. You have to match the weight of your link to the flow to make sure your bait is moving at a natural pace. I don't feed much, just a few bits of paste if I know fish are in the area. I will wait around 15 minutes before moving.

Inside tip
Don't overburden yourself with tackle, I don't even bring a chair. I just put all the things I need in a fly-fishing waistcoat and I'm good to go. Don't camp in a swim all day, either, keep on the move.

In the area
The village of Castor is right by the river, where there are some good pubs and a coffee shop that serves food as well.



LOCATION: Castor Backwater, Station Road, Ailsworth, Peterborough, Cambs, PE8 4DE
CONTACT: 07702 440892
PRICES: £5 day tickets

AnglingTimes

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LINDHOLME LAKES, DONCASTER, SOUTH YORKSHIRE
Few venues in the country compare to the mighty Lindholme. Try a Hybrid feeder with pellets and a wafter on the Strip Pond.
Contact: 01427 875555
Postcode: DN9 1LF



PACKINGTON SOMERS, COVENTRY, WEST MIDLANDS
The maggot feeder always works well here, particularly on Little Gearys, where searching around your swim will find good F1s.
Contact: 01676 523833
Postcode: CV7 7PL



TODBER MANOR, STURMINSTER NEWTON, DORSET
Homeground Lake contains a great head of carp. Try a waggler or a small feeder towards one of the islands for a few bites.
Contact: 01258 820384
Postcode: DT10 1JB

YOUR VOUCHER
Valid from Tuesday, February 18 to Monday, February 24. Excludes weekends.
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Steve Jackson had this silverfish catch from King's Sedgemoor Drain.

NORTH

LEEDS AND LIVERPOOL CANAL, WIGAN, LANCASHIRE
The Top Lock section at Wigan has been producing plenty of action.
What's been out? Plenty of roach, some bream, and pike to 22lb.
Tactics to use: Try pole fishing with red maggots for silverfish. Get your lures out for explosive pike action.
Contact: Angling Direct, 01942 255993
Postcode: WN2 3AD

CRIMPLE FISHERIES, HARROGATE, YORKSHIRE
This two-acre lake with an island in the middle has been producing good mixed sport.
What's been out? Decent bags of roach, crucian carp, and commons and mirrors in the 6lb-9lb range.
Tactics to use: Floatfishing maggots or bread for silvers. Floating crust is deadly for carp off the top.
Contact: 07733 545501
Postcode: HG3 1DF

MIDLANDS

RIVER WAVENEY, BECCLES, SUFFOLK FREE TO FISH
The picturesque Beccles town centre stretch of the Waveney, offering free fishing from the quay to the sailing club, has been producing decent silverfish bags.
What's been out? Match anglers have enjoyed regular 20lb-plus hauls of mainly roach and skimmers.
Tactics to use: Try feeder fishing using a dark groundbait. Use worms and/or maggots on the hook. Switch to hemp and tares or caster for a better stamp of redfins.
Contact: Angling Direct, 01502 713379.
Postcode: NR34 9QB.

DECOY LAKES, WHITTLESEY, CAMBRIDGESHIRE
All 11 lakes are producing at this popular long-established match and pleasure complex with 263 pegs.
What's been out? Multiple bags of carp, F1s and silvers. A few barbel to 6lb have been taken on maggot and pole from Cedar Lake.
Tactics to use: Maggot on the pole, Method feeder and yellow and orange Band'ums pellets.
Contact: 01733 202230.
Postcode: PE7 2AD.

MARIO'S LAKE, HEVINGHAM, NORFOLK
The three and-a-half acre specimen lake at the Cobbleacre fishery has been in good form this winter.
What's been out? A stream of carp to 28lb from the stock of commons, ghosties and mirrors, and hefty catfish of 45lb, 54lb and 56lb.
Tactics to use: For carp use boilies and a bloodworm and snail Spod mix. Catfish are taken on Mainline Cell boilies or 20mm-30mm pellets.
Contact: 07864 251647
Postcode: NR10 5NL

R SEVERN, SHREWSBURY, SHROPSHIRE



Top barbel sport is to be had here.

THE Severn is currently in fine form, and nobody is enjoying it more than Adam Williams, who had a brilliant weekend on the stretch at Shrewsbury.

After winning the Perry Dalgarno Memorial Match with a superb 19lb 5oz of dace, he hit the Sydney Avenue Fishery the next day and landed this quality barbel weighing 11lb 10oz... landed on a size 20 hook!

It came on his very last cast, and was the perfect end to a weekend that Carlsberg would be proud of.

Contact: info@shrewsburytownfisheries.co.uk
Postcode: Sydney Avenue Fishery, SY1 2JD
Prices: £7 day tickets, www.shrewsburytownfisheries.co.uk

SOUTH

KING'S SEDGEMOOR DRAIN, SOMERSET GREAT FOR BIG RUDD
The Bridgwater AA stretch of the drain, which can be fished on a £5 day ticket, has been producing consistent sport, as well as the occasional surprise.
What's been out? Mainly roach and skimmers, with the occasional bigger bream and the odd tench. A recent match on the Parchey to Bradney stretch produced a top individual weight of 27lb. A near-2lb rudd made a surprise appearance in one of the bags.
Tactics to use: Maggot on the whip, or rod and waggler. Use pole or feeder tactics with worms to tempt bigger specimens such as 1lb-plus roach or bream up to 7lb.
Contact: Somerset Angling, 01278 431777
Postcode: TA6 4PL

THROOP FISHERY, CHRISTCHURCH, DORSET
More than five miles of the Dorset Stour, plus side streams, offer some of the best river fishing in the South. They can be fished on a Ringwood DAA day ticket.
What's been out? Plenty of silverfish in many areas. Quality chub and pike have been showing on Beat 2, Throop Mill.
Tactics to use: Floatfish maggots for silverfish nets. Use leger tactics for chub with small pellets on the hook. Deadbaits and lures are scoring for pike.
Contact: Christchurch Angling, 01202 480520.
Postcode: BH7 6SH.

UPPER TAMAR LAKE, BUDE, CORNWALL PERCH TO 5lb
Anglers have continued to reap the benefits of the ongoing stocking programme, which has substantially boosted big-carp numbers at the vast 80-acre venue on the Devon/Cornwall border. While there is always huge potential for specimen perch (up to 5lb), eel and bream fans are also well catered for, with big fish on the cards.
What's been out? Carp up to and above 20lb, 3lb-plus perch, mixed silverfish bags.
Tactics to use: Standard carp tactics with good-quality boilies. Leger prawns for big perch. For silverfish use a whip with maggots and casters. Catch bream with swimfeeder tactics, using worm or maggots on the hook.
Contact: 01288 321262
Postcode: EX23 9SB

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ALL-NEW MAG ON SALE TUESDAY FEB 25



YOUR FISHING WEEK

SEND US YOUR LETTERS AND PICS TO:
atletters@anglingtimes.co.uk

ANGLING TRUST IS PROTECTING US ALL

I WAS horrified to read that America is to relax its laws on effluent discharge into waterways – the effects on aquatic life are potentially catastrophic.

Next time I hear people moaning that the Angling Trust isn't worth our support, I'll remind them that Fish Legal is part of the package, keeping careless or greedy polluters in line and pursuing them successfully through the courts if incidents still occur.

Ron Bradley, email

MEN VS WOMEN – LET'S GET IT ON!

IF THE England Ladies National team fished a match against their male counterparts, would the result be a foregone conclusion?



I can think of a few reasons why the men might emerge the victors, and a few more why the lasses might pull off a surprise result.

What do others think? I'd really like to see such a match take place!

Paul Howes, email

WE HAVE TO ACT NOW

THE sooner people stop denying that otters are a problem on our waters, the sooner something can be done to save our sport.

To see a photo of a 52lb carp mutilated by otters is nothing short of tragic. This wouldn't have been an isolated case.

I love wildlife and would never want to see otters exterminated, but when the problem gets to the stage it is currently at, something has to be done.

Otherwise the warning signs are there that our waters will soon be devoid of fish.

John Bailey, Stanton, Suffolk

SUPPORT YOUR TACKLE SHOP

I TOTALLY agree with Alan Baker (Letters, January 28) when he said we have to support tackle shops.

I have used Outdoor Antics in Downham Market, Norfolk, since it first opened and Darryl and his daughter Jodie couldn't be more helpful.

I have bought lots of items as special purchases at better prices than I could get them for online. It's always a pleasure to go into the shop and have a chat with them and other like-minded people. A friendly face and a laugh goes a long way.

Neil Paske, Downham Market

WE WANT NO LEVY ON ROD LICENCE FEES

TO expect us licence-paying anglers to subsidise the matchmen – and women – to fish the World Championships is just outrageous.

Whenever they win a title the rod, reel, pole, line and T-shirt manufacturers all say: "Buy this gear, it won a World Championships."

Like the mugs we are, we buy it and the World Champion makes out like a bandit.

Let our World hopefuls pay for themselves – after all, you have to speculate to accumulate.

Chris Woolley, email

THAT'S CLEVER

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



MAKE YOUR LINE SINK

Help your fishing line to sink by spraying a little diluted washing up liquid over the spool. The liquid makes the line cut through the surface tension of the water – perfect for floatfishing.

Chris Roberts, via email

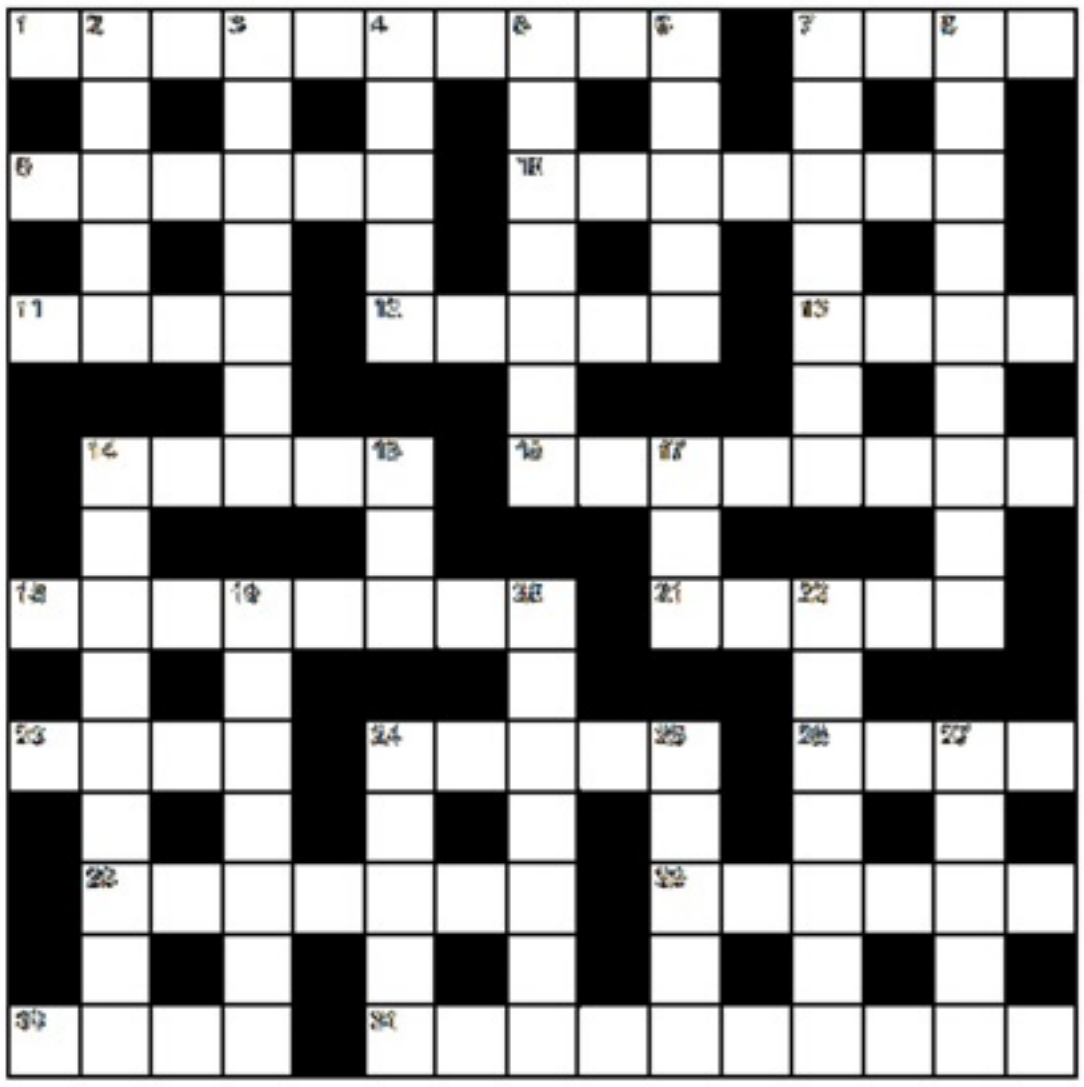


NEVER LOSE SWIVELS

I keep things like my swivels and clips on a safety pin once I've opened the packet. It stops me losing them and keeps them tidy. It also means that they're close to hand whenever I need them.

Harry Webb, Watford

THE ANGLER'S CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Cornish venue of Frenzee festival in March (5,5)
7 River joining the Ouse at York – in UFOs sensation! (4)
9 A cross, e.g. between rudd and bream (6)
10 Cod has prominent _____ on its chin (*rub bale) (7)
11 River flowing through Knighton (Wales) and Ludlow (4)
12 Slow, S. American tree-dweller (5)
13 Grasp ... a ship's storage area (4)
14 They control water flow in canal locks (5)
16 Fishing with e.g. spoon-bait or teaser (8)
18 Scottish islands including Skye, Mull, etc. (8)
21 Bum bag, or ____ pack (5)
23 Stylish ... bit of catfish I caught! (4)
24 Sheffield's underground river, tributary of the Don (* H. safe) (5)
26 ____ Helleur, carper and dynamite stick inventor (4)
28 Inactive, like fish in cold weather (7)
29 Sound given off by e.g. encased ball-bearings (*latter) (6)
30 Uses a shallow rig to put bait in front of fish (4)
31 City venue of Northern Angling Show in February (10)

DOWN

2 River flowing into St Ives Bay (* 'Hey, Al') (5)
3 Ferry-port on Isle of Harris – in Gibraltar, Bertie! (7)
4 S. American mountain range (5)
5 Strings, or _____, of toads eggs (*Ron's bib) (7)
6 ____ Collins, CEO of Get Hooked on Fishing (5)
7 Derry salmon/trout river emptying into Loch Foyle (*hug a fan) (7)
8 Sort of hitch for tying tippet/leader to baited hook (5,4)
14 10-14 grade elastic good for chopped worm (4,5)
15 A 50yr-old+ carp at Horton Church Lake (3)
17 Briefly, location of Ryde (3)
19 Best-ever fish catches, say (7)
20 What e.g. Betalin will do to bait (7)
22 Sets on fire (7)
24 Mass of e.g. midges (5)
25 e.g. Solway's estuary (5)
27 A river of Essex, and West Yorkshire (5)

(* indicates an anagram)

Solutions to February 11: Across: 1 Bulk shot 6 Chard 9 Finn 10 There 12 Elastic 14 Morgan 15 Shells 17 Electric 19 Clarissa 22 Bacon 24 Scents 26 Redditch 28 Polo 29 Tetra 30/3 Abbi Kendall 32 Tench 33 Ridgeway. **Down:** 2 Unite 4/30/11 Hit and hold 5 Treacle 6 Cream 7 Ashurst 8 Dalmatian 13 Tasks 16 Hallcroft 18 Ebbed 20 Runcorn 21 Aerator 23 Climate 25 Sitch 27 Cobra.



1989 "My dad took me out to teach me how to catch plaice. I'm still catching flatties to this day." Adrian Lilburn



2013: "My daughter Lucia was so proud of this perch. She was only four at the time." Colvin Archard



2016: "We were fishing in France when my boy Fletcher took this, his first roach. His beaming smile says it all." Lenny Bee



2015: "My son's first trip ended with this 4lb tench. He couldn't stop smiling." Paul Lander

YOU NEVER FORGET YOUR FIRST FISH

HOW YOU STARTED YOUR JOURNEY

Send your first fishing pictures and angling memories into: newsdesk@anglingtimes.co.uk



1982: "I was 16 when I landed this, my first-ever river carp. It was an 18lb specimen taken from the River Nene." Bryan Diggle



1998: "I was 12 when my mates and I took disposable cameras to the River Ise. Luckily I caught this brown trout." Tom Scarr



2018: "Me and my son Logan were fishing at Goldstone Vineyards when he took this perch. What a fish!" Jamie Norman



1990: "This 3lb 4oz pike appeared in Angling Times back in October 1990. It got me hooked on piking for life." Luke Reed

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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KINGFISHER CLUB

CELEBRATING BRITAIN'S KIDS AND THEIR CLEVER CATCHES

Carp worth saving for!

BRADLEY Hughes saved up his pocket money for weeks to buy his own fishing set-up and was rewarded on his first-ever trip with this 1lb 8oz carp.

"We were fishing at Northgate Fisheries, Whychnor, and no-one had got a bite all day," said dad Christopher. "Just when we thought it would be a blank, Bradley's rod whipped around and after much excitement he landed this common.

"He was the only person on the whole lake to catch that day, so he was absoultely overjoyed."





Elliott Acton

11lb 4oz mirror carp, Chester Lakes.



Bradley Heaton

Jack pike, Merseyside canal.



Isla Howes

5lb 14oz bream, Fenland river.



Thomas Robinson

12lb 2oz pike, Basingstoke Canal.



Poppy Newport-Vanner

Common carp, Mere Moore Fisheries.



Ray Reynolds

9lb common, The Pump Station, Liphook.



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Email us your child's details, including their name, the weight of the fish, where and how they caught it, along with a photograph, to

kingfisherclub@anglingtimes.co.uk

Open to children up to the age of 16.



Henry Murray

3oz roach, Three Ponds Fishery, Newhaven.



Faye Gradwell

4lb 10oz carp, Four Crosses Fishery, Cannock.

A very happy birthday

EDWARD King received a great birthday present when he landed a personal best 14lb 3oz pike on a fly.

"We went out on the River Test at Timsbury the day after Edward's 11th birthday," said proud dad James.

"Not only was it a personal best, but it was also his first-ever river pike on a fly. He did really well to land the fish and was delighted by the catch. I'm so proud of him."





OUR BLOKE ON THE BANK
DES TAYLOR

"Early success is the kiss of death"

Fishing is so much more fun when you take your time

IMAGINE inventing a dart that can hit the treble twenty every time, or a cue that pots every pool ball you line up. Would you sell many? No way! It would take all the skill out of these two classic pub sports.

So why take a new angler to a commercial, put a whip into their hand and get them a bite-a-chuck in a water that's like fish soup? I reckon that making fishing too easy is the main reason why it's not as popular as it used to be.

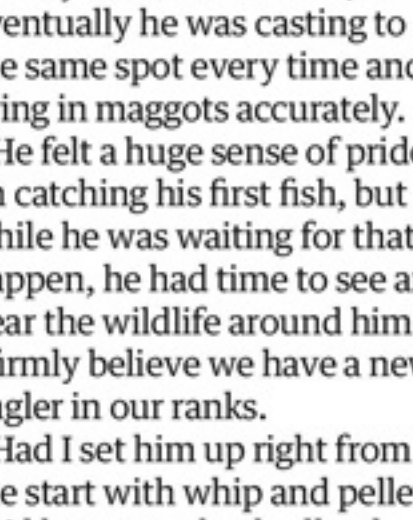
Let's get this sport of ours back to the days when it was about enjoying time on the bank, forgetting all about the pressures of life and just sitting there enjoying the surroundings and maybe the company of a fellow angler.

Teach beginners the very basics of fishing – what species there are, where they live and what they eat – then show them a rod and reel. If they don't succeed straight away it's because they don't deserve to just yet... but then, when they do finally catch a fish, it will mean something.

Recently I guided a young Welsh lad called Osian who had never coarse fished before. For the first few hours he was too busy learning how to cast, undo tangles and bait up to get anywhere near a fish, but eventually he was casting to the same spot every time and firing in maggots accurately.

He felt a huge sense of pride on catching his first fish, but while he was waiting for that to happen, he had time to see and hear the wildlife around him. I firmly believe we have a new angler in our ranks.

Had I set him up right from the start with whip and pellet he'd have caught shedloads more fish, but where's the achievement in that?



MUNTJAC DEER SINCE they were introduced from China in the early 20th Century, these little deer have become widespread. I even saw a couple of them around the back of my bivvy the other night.



Osian learnt the basics and reaped the results.





ARTHUR'S ARCHIVE

Keith Arthur looks back to weigh up the contributions made to the sport by Benny Ashurst, one of angling's true greats

ANY mention of angling legends has to include Benny Ashurst. He and son Big Kevin, the 1982 World Champion, were both truly brilliant anglers.

Benny is pictured above fishing the stick float, which he designed to cast across the Leigh Canal with just one No4 shot down the line. That allowed the caster hookbait (which he 'discovered' too) to sink slowly and catch rudd and roach well over to the far bank.

Benny made this branch of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal nationally known. Plank Lane, Pennington Flash and Common Lane all featured prominently in match reports, and Benny's name would be there too.

Benny's stick floats travelled well too. The combination of a heavy tropical wood base and light balsa top created a semi-self-cocking float that cast superbly, although I'm sure I recall Benny telling me the originals had porcupine quill bases. When Benny and his pals took them to the Trent and fished casters 'on the drop' they took the river apart.

"Perhaps his most famous gift to angling was the stick float"

That style survived the coming of the waggler and bronze maggots when the roach population declined and chub became the main quarry.

There's a wonderful story of Benny, who also ran a maggot farm, accidentally tipping a 56lb drum of maggot dye over himself, acquiring a proper Love Island tan for a few weeks.

Benny loved fishing in Ireland and Northern Ireland, where his legendary status owes as much to his playing of the spoons to accompany son Kevin's fine singing voice as it does to his fishing skills...albeit after a couple of sips of the Black Stuff.

Wherever he fished, crowds would gather, and you can see his innovative mind in action in the photo. Notice the basket legs sticking out? Benny is sitting on the back of it so the shape eliminates the sloping bank, and he's sitting comfortably. That's genius at work right there.

WHAT ELSE WAS HAPPENING



ANDY CAPP DEBUTS

The cartoon character Andy Capp first appeared in northern editions of the Daily Mirror.

THE SKY AT NIGHT APPEARS

The BBC TV astronomy series The Sky at Night was launched and ran for 55 years. It was presented by Patrick Moore from episode one until his death in 2012.

BEATLES LEGENDS MEET FOR FIRST TIME

John Lennon and Paul McCartney met for the first time as teenagers at a garden fête in Woolton, Liverpool at which Lennon's skiffle group, The Quarrymen, was playing.

NUMBER OF CARS ON UK ROADS HITS 4 MILLION

The Morris Minor was the country's best-selling car, just ahead of the Standard Vanguard.



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A fine net of river bream for Avon expert Ed Warren.

IF YOU TRY ONE THING THIS WEEK...

GET OUT THE FEEDER ROD

Bream are having it right now, as Ed Warren reveals on the Warks Avon

WITH the exception of barbel, no species appreciates coloured water more than bream.

That murky brown tinge is perfect for the fish to feed, and although the pole and, at times, the waggler can catch bream, nothing beats the feeder.

It puts your bait close to the feed and keeps everything still on the bottom, something bream demand. In a wind the feeder is a whole lot easier to fish than the long pole, and all in all it's a very simple way of fishing, with easy-to-tie rigs and bites that are a doddle to spot.

Pick the distance

Traditionally, bream favour the deepest water possible, but that's not always the case. I'd have a few quid on them living towards the far bank, well out of the way. Water 4ft-plus deep is a good spot to base your attack around.

Find this depth by casting a leger bomb around the swim and counting how long it takes



AnglingTimes

BAG MORE THIS WEEK!

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



The feeder holds choppie and caster.

GIVE IT A GO

Essential stuff for river bream



CHOPPED WORM
Finely-chopped worm puts scent into the water and pulls fish towards your feeder.



PLUGGED FEEDER
Small groundbait plugs at either end hold the chopped worm and caster in place.



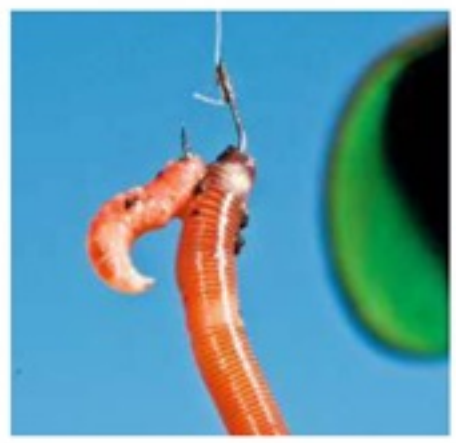
ROD UP IN THE AIR
Point the rod up in the air with the line off the water to detect the often delicate bream bites.



SENSIBLE LINES
I use 0.20mm MV-R Feeder Mono to a 0.16mm MV-R hooklength and size 14 hook.



FEEDER CHOICE
A 40g cage feeder empties fast, holds bottom and isn't shifted by passing fish.



TOP HOOKBAITS
Use a dendra with the end nipped off and a red maggot, or two redworms.

to hit bottom. A count of three or four is about right. This searching of the swim will also highlight any snags in the area. You need to be fishing on a clean riverbed, so bear this in mind.

Easy rig

For river bream, a simple rig is best. The feeder slides on the mainline, stopped by a couple of float stops and a bead, below which I twist around 6ins of line to create a stiff boom to eliminate rig tangles.

That leaves the hooklink, and how long it should be. I'd start at 1m and be happy with this, never making it longer and only shortening it if I were catching fish that had taken the bait well down. Going to a 50cm link will show bites up quicker and mean every bream is hooked in the lip.

All about feed

Chopped worm and caster is packed into a feeder capped off at each end with groundbait. The mix is 50:50 sweet and fishmeal, that pongy fish smell putting scent into the water to help the bream find the bait.

I make five quick casts to get some bait in, then rely on each cast to keep the swim on the simmer. Casts are five minutes apart. Bream won't be eating a lot at this time of year so there's no need to pile in the bait.

Fish direct

Some river anglers like to create a long bow in the line and rely on the quivertip dropping back to show a bite. I prefer to have a tight line from rod-tip to feeder to show every small indication from a fish taking the bait.

The Avon is fairly slow-flowing so the pressure on the line from the flow won't move the feeder. This is why there's no need to have a bow on the go.

NEXT WEEK
Pick the right lines on a snake lake with Andy May.

WATERCRAFT

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

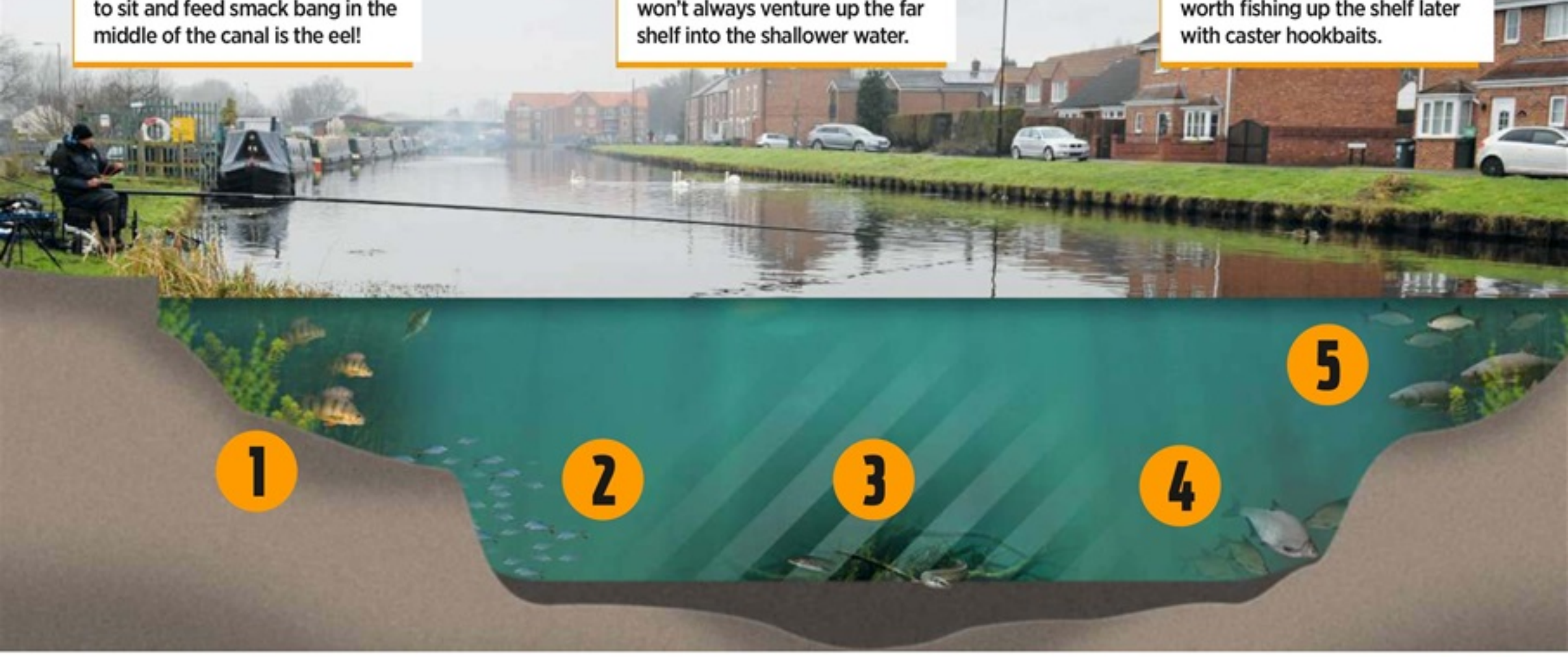
1 NEAR SHELF
Perch of all sizes can be found very close in, often right next to the cover of reeds, weeds or even your own keepnet. Don't fish here for very long, though. As soon as the bites dry up, it's time to switch focus.

2 BASE OF THE NEAR SHELF
Find where the bottom flattens out. This is a great spot for an initial burst of small roach on baits such as bread, but you're unlikely to catch here all day because the shoal will spook and move off after a while.

3 CENTRAL TRACK
This is where silt gathers and the bottom is softer than on the shelves. Being flat, it's also where any snags and detritus collect and boats take this course when passing down the centre of the canal. As a result it's not actually a very good a place to fish. One of the only species which prefers to sit and feed smack bang in the middle of the canal is the eel!

4 BASE OF THE FAR SHELF
A really good area, and you'll find fish back off to here after being caught on your side of the canal in the early part of a session. It's also an ideal spot for bream and skimmers, which won't always venture up the far shelf into the shallower water.

5 FAR SHELF
If you've got any kind of cover on the far side of the canal, you can bet that's where bigger species such as chub or carp will hide out. You'll also find some quality roach here, so it's worth fishing up the shelf later with caster hookbaits.



GET THE LOWDOWN ON CANALS

These urban waters are a haven for fish of all species

CANALS were once a staple among pleasure anglers, but have declined in popularity over recent decades due to the rise in popularity of commercial fisheries and the convenience they offer.

Many people have gone along with this fall from grace, but others have embraced canals and carried on enjoying the brilliant sport they still offer.

Britain is criss-crossed with hundreds of miles of canals, many of which are free to fish or can be accessed for the price of a cheap club book or a few quid in day ticket fees.

At this time of the year canals act as a haven for many species of fish, which are attracted to these urban areas by the extra warmth and protection they afford. There are also a few surprises to be had. As well as big predators such as perch and pike, some canals also hold big carp and tench, and even chub that may have escaped from nearby rivers.

The vast majority of canals are open all year round, offering great sport when other venues are out of sorts. Give one a go!

"If there's cover on the far bank, that's where the bigger fish will be"

STARTING POINT

THE best place to start your session is at the foot of the near shelf, but only after lightly baiting your other spots. You can pick off smaller species such as perch and roach close-in, at around 4m-5m, while you give the longer pole lines time to settle (the longer you can leave them, the better).

Once the bites start to dry up close-in, move over to the base of the far shelf.

After that, you can then spend the last hour fishing up the far shelf, using casters to target the larger fish just as the light starts to fade.

Need some help with your watercraft? Send your questions to Angling Times
newsdesk@anglingtimes.co.uk

COMPETITION

WIN! A CARBONACTIVE DISTANCE MASTER ROD

FOUR RODS WORTH £1,052 TO BE WON



IF YOU'VE read our review of the Preston Innovations Carbonactive Distasnce Master rod, then you'll no doubt be dying to get your hands on one.

Well, it could be your lucky day because we've got four to give away this week. There's one of each model - 12ft 6ins 80g, 13ft 2ins 100g, 13ft 10ins 120g - and the 100g model tackle editor Mark Sawyer tested. That's a total prize pot worth £1,052.96!

The rods are supreme distance casting tools, come with 2oz, 3oz and 4oz carbon quivertips and have a maximum casting weight of 100g.

HOW TO ENTER

Simply answer the question (right), fill in and send the coupon to: **Distance Master competition, Angling Times, Media House, Lynch Wood, Peterborough, Cambs PE2 6EA** or enter online at: **www.anglingtimes.co.uk/distancemastercomp**

Closing date for entries is Monday, March 16, 2020

How many sections does the Distance Master 100g model have?

A) Two
B) Three
C) Four

Answer..... Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Email ..... Phone.....

Yes please, keep me up-to-date via email: ☐ via phone: ☐ with the latest news and special offers from Angling Times. Please do let us keep in contact so we make sure you don't miss out.
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CARP SKILLS WITH MAT WOODS

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



DO YOUR HOMEWORK TO GET AHEAD

With time limited, Mat Woods reveals how to stack the odds in your favour

YOU can't catch fish sitting at home. Technically, that statement is correct.

My sessions, however, begin long before I leave the house. And I don't just mean in terms of rig and bait prep. I'm also talking about watercraft preparation.

Appy chappy

There are a few apps that I could not be without when it comes to judging my tactics and bait application before a session.

The main one is XCWeather. This provides information on wind speed, air temperature and barometric pressure. If warm winds are predicted, and the air pressure is below 1000mb, the more bait I'll take. If the pressure is higher I'll plan to use zigs, or singles and PVA bags.

Another app I use is called Fishing Calendar. This has the sunrise and sunset times, and offers a percentage to you about your chances of success on that day. The other apps I'm reliant on are Facebook and Instagram.

You can get an accurate idea of how well a venue is fishing and what tactics are working by following a fishery's page or by talking to the anglers who are fishing there.

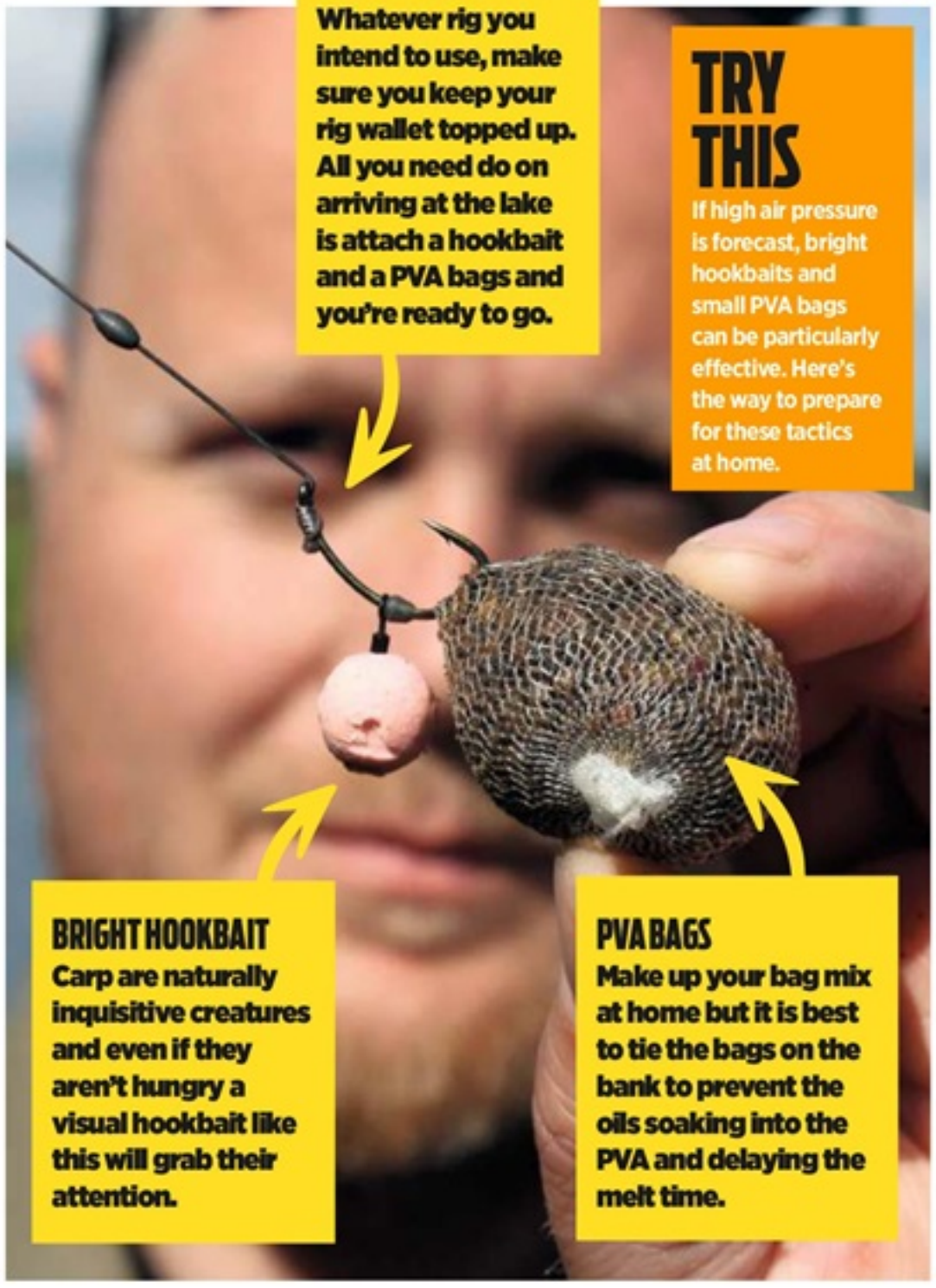
Another use of Facebook is to track the times of year certain fish get caught, or to check back on the weather conditions. I've caught a few fish by being on the bank at the right time, during windows of opportunity when



Fishery manager Harry Hales showing me what to do at The Monument.



The forecast will determine which tactics I use.



the weather is bang on for a certain part of the lake. For the last few years it's been waiting on those first strong north-westerlies in the spring for a bit of bagging on the zigs.

Expert advice

Another way of being more successful on day-ticket venues is to be a sponge when you're speaking to the fishery staff. Nobody knows the lakes like the people who live and work there. I've caught lots of fish based on information from something they've seen on their morning rounds that day.

When you get to the lake, always speak to the anglers who are fishing. Don't just ask 'how many wraps are you fishing at?' or 'what boilie you using?'. Ask more open questions that should give you clues to how the fish are behaving.

I always make a point of speaking to the anglers whose swims have the best view of the lake... while you're chinwagging you can see all of the water.

Keep in touch

The great thing about our multimedia world is that you can stay in contact with the venues you plan on fishing.

Being a nice guy goes a long way, and congratulating people for catching a fish on social media will get you a lot further than questioning how much it weighed, or how dodgy the photo is. As those who message me every day will confirm, I'm more than happy to put people on areas or tactics that will help them get a bite.

What goes around comes around, and good karma has helped me bank a few more fish over the years. So remember, while you can't catch fish at home, you can still fish at home!

DAY-TICKET MONSTERS!

The carp catches that have caught our eye this week



WILL Davis banked 26 fish to 28lb 14oz at A12 Cuton Lakes, in Essex. He used Sticky Manilla wafters tipped with half a pop-up.



A SOLID PVA bag approach at Carpdell Fishery in Watford accounted for this fine 48lb 3oz common for Aaron Foster.



THIS 37lb mirror was the pick of seven fish from Cromwell Lake, Notts, by Matt Hopkins. All fell to 12mm Sticky Manilla bottom baits.



CHRIS Joly targeted a far-margin shelf with Manilla wafters to catch this 37lb 12oz mirror from Pullens Lake at Elphicks Fisheries in Kent.



A CHUNK of heavily glugged zig foam at 100 yards fooled this 31lb 8oz mirror for Ben Hutt on a session at Linear Fisheries, Oxford.



JAMES Stone used a 16mm Sticky Signature pop-up to catch this new pb of 35lb 8oz from The Res, at Berners Hall Fishery in Essex.

TO SEE ALL 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



HADRIAN WHITTLE
River Wye expert renowned for his speed fishing for bleak

STICK FLOAT RIG

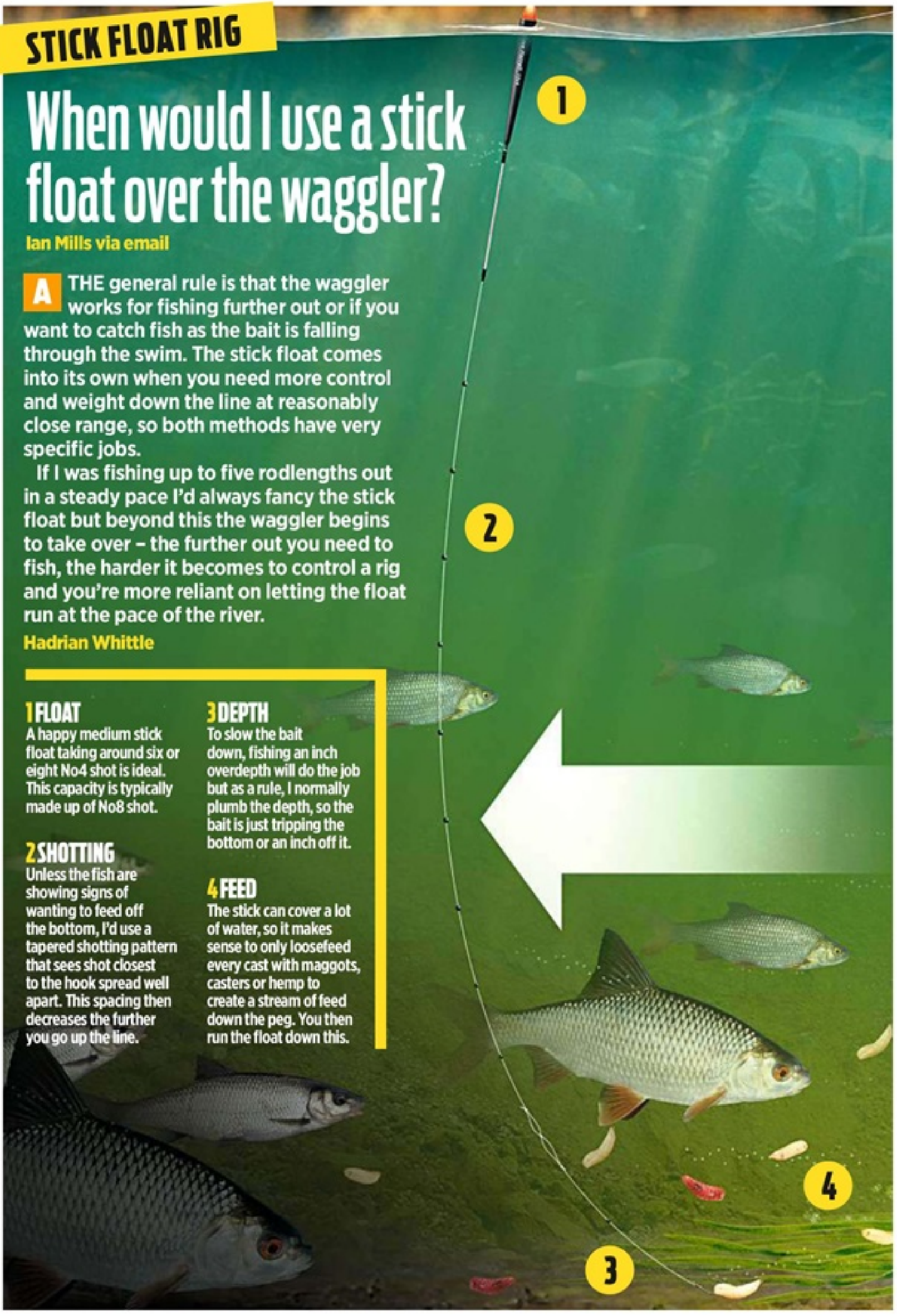
When would I use a stick float over the waggler?

Ian Mills via email

A THE general rule is that the waggler works for fishing further out or if you want to catch fish as the bait is falling through the swim. The stick float comes into its own when you need more control and weight down the line at reasonably close range, so both methods have very specific jobs.

If I was fishing up to five rodlengths out in a steady pace I'd always fancy the stick float but beyond this the waggler begins to take over – the further out you need to fish, the harder it becomes to control a rig and you're more reliant on letting the float run at the pace of the river.

Hadrian Whittle



1 FLOAT
A happy medium stick float taking around six or eight No4 shot is ideal. This capacity is typically made up of No8 shot.

2 SHOTTING
Unless the fish are showing signs of wanting to feed off the bottom, I'd use a tapered shotting pattern that sees shot closest to the hook spread well apart. This spacing then decreases the further you go up the line.

3 DEPTH
To slow the bait down, fishing an inch overdepth will do the job but as a rule, I normally plumb the depth, so the bait is just tripping the bottom or an inch off it.

4 FEED
The stick can cover a lot of water, so it makes sense to only loosefeed every cast with maggots, casters or hemp to create a stream of feed down the peg. You then run the float down this.



What diameter braid should I use?

Nigel Francis, Whitwell

A ALL I use is 0.10mm braid. In fairness you won't break braid like you can mono, so the only difference the diameter will make is how far and how accurately you can cast. I find that the thinner and thicker ends of the spectrum can be a bit unwieldy on the cast but 0.10mm is about right for when I fish braid direct to the hook without a shockleader at short range. Braid gets better over time. I've had stuff on my reels for five years which is still as good as new so don't think it needs to be changed every 12 months.

Adam Wakelin





SIMON SCOTT
Fisheries management lecturer and carp behaviour specialist.



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IAN DAY
Boss of Sonubaits and no mean carp angler in his own right, he's made many 'how to' videos



ALFIE NAYLOR
Big-fish specialist who fishes the Trent for mainly chub and barbel



Do fish see colour like we do?
Alan Lawson, Bristol

A YES, but it's a completely different spectrum. Pink is the last colour that they see fade out in deep water so, in very clear water, a brightly-coloured bait will easily be seen. However, in murky water fish rely very little on sight and that's when scent takes over.

The only variant on this is when fish are swimming well off the bottom of a river or lake. In this instance, they can see the difference between a light and a dark-coloured bait as a silhouette.

Simon Scott



What are the top bait flavours for cold water?
Eric Colley, Stevenage

A TRADITIONALLY, sweet and fruity flavours are best which won't congeal when temperatures are low, as can happen with oil-based flavours and additives. Use something that's soluble when the water is freezing. Old favourites like Scopex, Strawberry and Plum still catch loads of fish and Sonubaits Pina Colada flavour, which is Pineapple and Coconut, is the perfect example of a more modern cold water flavouring for winter use.

Ian Day



Is it worth trying to flavour deadbaits?
Phil Baldwin, Walsall

A I MUCH prefer to fish a natural deadbait and have never flavoured or coloured them. I think this defeats the point of what you're trying to do with it in the first place. I liken it to ordering a steak and then smothering it in sauce. You may as well be seasoning a piece of cardboard, because all you'll taste is the sauce.

It's more important to find where on the lake or river the pike are and when they are going to feed. Do this, keep it simple and the rest will be easy.

Des Taylor

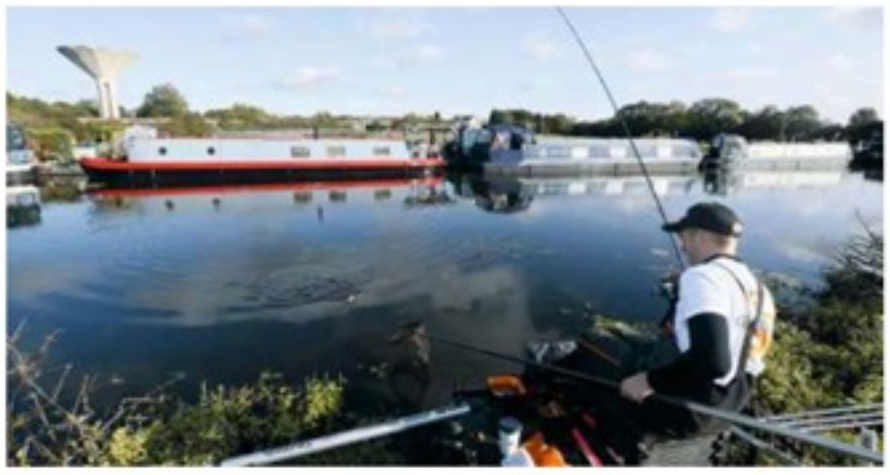


What's the best tactic for barbel in clear water?
Neil Richardson, Sudbury

A MY approach centres around 14mm Nutrabaits Trigga Ice boilies, wrapped in paste and heavily glugged just before casting out. I hook on a small PVA bag holding four or five boilies. The idea is to attract fish into the area without giving them lots to eat. I like to rove a river over six or seven pegs, relying on the glug from each cast to put a scent trail down the length of river I'm fishing.

Alfie Naylor

TURN THE PAGE FOR MORE ADVICE FROM OUR EXPERTS



How do I plumb up on the waggler?

Luke Davies, Selly Oak

A SMALL plummet and a buoyant float are key here. I use a small waggler adaptor and clip on a float that's a lot heavier than the one I'm going to be using, so if I'm planning on a 3g loaded float, I'll use a big 4SSG thick-topped peacock to plumb with alongside a 10g plummet. This set-up is easy to cast overhead and, being very buoyant, the waggler will pop up easily on its own and naturally tighten the line from float to rod to give you a super-accurate reading.

Matt Godfrey

Can I use groundbait for river chub?

Peter Lightfoot, Ombersley

ON RIVERS like the Wye groundbait works, but they're an exception. To me, fishing for chub is all about creating a trail for the fish to follow, using loosefed hemp, casters and maggots. Once the column in the water is created and you've identified where it is, having caught a few fish, the next job is to find where in this column they are – hard on the riverbed or maybe at half-depth in a 10ft-deep swim. Feed gently to begin with, but as the day goes on, I like to wind things up and lash the bait in.



Darren Cox



How close can I cast to an island?

Dave Denham, Wigan

WHERE it shelves up into the shallow water is a natural carp patrol route, but I'd always want it to be away from the island so that I have water to cast into closer to the feature later in the day. To find the depth, cast a bomb and count how long it takes to sink. A 1oz lead takes around four seconds to sink in 7ft of water, so if the count is a couple of seconds before hitting bottom, that will be about right.

Paul Hiller

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RINGER

Champion angler Steve

What should I do immediately after drawing a match peg?

Michael Fenner, via Facebook

HERE'S what I would do on a typical snake lake swim such as the one at Barby Banks Fishery, which has good stocks of carp, some F1s and silverfish.

On arrival at my peg I'll have a look at what I have in front of me and look for obvious fish-holding features such as aerators, overhanging trees, big rush beds or even a bridge.

However, maybe there's just a far bank sparsely lined with rushes. This still gives me cover to go and catch a few.

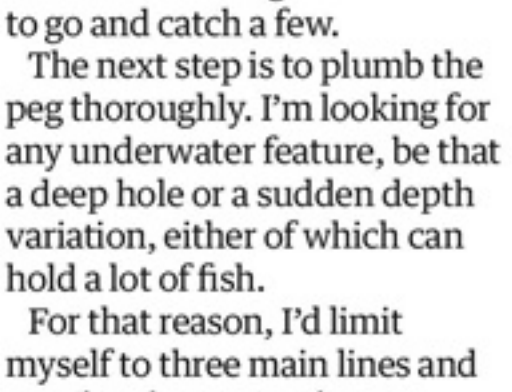
The next step is to plumb the peg thoroughly. I'm looking for any underwater feature, be that a deep hole or a sudden depth variation, either of which can hold a lot of fish.

For that reason, I'd limit myself to three main lines and one 'just in case' swim on a largely featureless peg. Here's where they will be and how I will fish them...

HOW TO TACKLE YOUR SWIMS



Bread is the hookbait choice for swim No1, the first one I'll fish.



Trickle in a bit of corn and pellet down middle swims Nos 2A/2B.



In swim No3, the margins, plumb up to find 3ft of water to catch.



I fish a single grain of corn in swim No4, trying for a bonus carp.

TO THE RESCUE

takes an in-depth look at your angling problems

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Swim 1

The first swim will be across to those rushes. Setting up my kit will spook fish and push them over to the far bank, so it makes sense to start there.

I'll kick off dobbing bread to all the likely spots. If I catch a few carp in a couple of areas I'll make a note of this - once bites on the bread dry up, I'll start feeding a bit of bait in areas where I have already caught.

Fish don't move far in the cold so if I've had signs in an area on bread, it's safe to say there's a pocket of fish there. When the bread dies, I'll switch to dripping a little bit of bait in to try and get a response that way. Pellets and corn are a good option for feed and hookbaits.

Swims 2A & 2B

My second line is what I call my deep-water swim, which is usually fished down the middle or just past the middle of the peg. If there's nothing obvious to fish to, like an aerator, I will opt for two swims at angles of 10 o'clock and two o'clock.

I like to have two swims on the go in the cold because if I do start to get a few bites, I can rotate them to try and keep the fish coming. Angles are important, as they allow me to hook a fish and steer it out of the swim. I can then play it in the middle of the peg without ruining my two baited areas.

I will often feed both lines very negatively to start with and then, if there is no response, I will up the feed on one line to see if I get a bite. If I don't, it means that I haven't ruined both lines as one will have had very little fed into it.

I must add that if I do find some sort of deep hole I will always fish it, as the chances are it will hold fish. At first, I will go in without feeding, using just a grain of corn on the hook to discover if any fish are present. Sometimes, if there are fish there already, feeding will spook them, so I always like to have a dob around first. By doing this you can sometimes get a quick run of fish before you need to feed anything.

Swim 3

My final main swim is in the margins. Catching in the 'edge' depends on one thing - depth - so if there's little water to work with, chances are you aren't going to catch much.

I'm looking for a minimum of 2ft and ideally 3ft-plus with some cover, such as rushes. If I can find that depth, I reckon there is a real chance of a late fish or two on this line.

The feeding strategy is again a case of 'less is more', and more often than not I won't even feed the margins until 30 minutes before I want to have a look there. When I do, I will feed just enough bait to try and catch a fish - six or eight grains of corn and a pinch of pellets.

Swim 4

There is one final swim that can come into play during the match, and that is a short line straight in front of me at the bottom of the near shelf.

If the margins are too shallow to fish, this is an area I will look to target but quite often I will use it purely as a 'throwaway' line and just trickle a bit of bait in throughout the day.

Normally this means flicking in three or four grains of corn every five minutes or so. I will then drop in here every now and again just to see if a carp is at home.

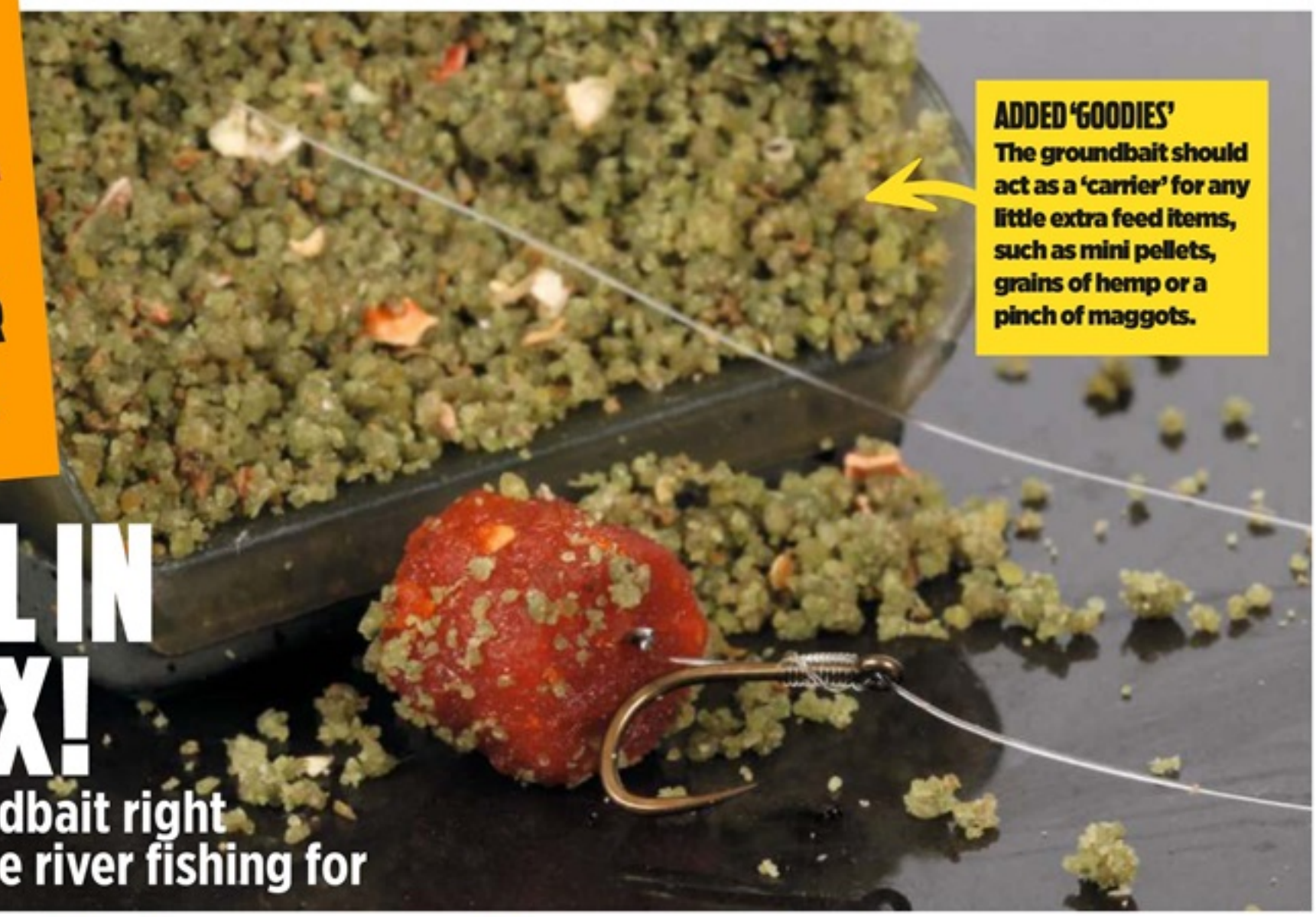
Late in the day, the fish often frequent the bottom of the near shelf. This is a great area to target with a little bit of bait because it is a natural patrol route for the fish.





BAIT CLINIC
WITH DR PAUL GARNER

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



ADDED 'GOODIES'
The groundbait should act as a 'carrier' for any little extra feed items, such as mini pellets, grains of hemp or a pinch of maggots.

IT'S ALL IN THE MIX!
Get your groundbait right whatever you're river fishing for

IT'S INTERESTING to compare and contrast how different anglers approach the same species.

One area where match anglers have a definite edge is in the art of using groundbait, especially on rivers. Many anglers would never consider using it on running water, but they're missing out by not doing so.

Roach

Dark mixes are the way to go with roach. Roach can be very spooky over brighter groundbaits because they are silhouetted against the light substrate. A scattering of maggots in the mix will give the fish something to eat when they arrive, and they can also be used as a hookbait.

Bream

Fishmeal groundbaits are brilliant for river bream, to the point where I know a lot of barbel anglers who avoid these kinds of mixes because they attract the 'slabs' so well!

I tend not to stray too far from the Marine Halibut groundbaits, which are sticky enough to hold a lot of feed.

A large cage feeder loaded with groundbait, chopped worm, and caster is a winning combination for the species.

Chub

Over the years I've tried a lot of groundbaits for chub, but one has really stood out - Swim Stim Green - which is actually made using a crushed koi carp pellet mix. I add crayfish meal to boost its attraction further, and this can be a real edge when fishing rivers that contain a lot of these invasive crustaceans.

Barbel

Few people use groundbait when barbel fishing, but it can be deadly. In warm water conditions when the fish are feeding well I use a mix containing whole and crushed pellets, whereas when the going is tough I'll use a finer mix containing no large particles.

To avoid catching the bream at your chosen water, try adding three drops of Black Pepper Oil to each pint of mixing water.

Barbel love this additive, bream less so.

TEN-MINUTE MAKE
CREATE THE PERFECT GROUNDBAIT MIX

GROUNDBAIT for rivers needs to be mixed firmer than it does for stillwaters, but that doesn't mean it should be coarse or lumpy. You need to get your mix right to ensure it works effectively. Here's how to do it.



Always add any liquid additive to the mixing water and powdered additives to the groundbait.



Riddle off any big lumps of dry groundbait when fishing for small species, such as roach.



Use a large round bowl and slowly add the water to the groundbait, not the other way around.



When the mix starts to bind, let it stand for a few minutes so the water is fully absorbed.



Add a tiny amount of extra water, mixing well all the time, to get a damp, but light and fluffy mix.

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As one of the UK's largest counties Lincolnshire offers a host of varying fishing opportunities to visiting anglers. If you like exploring, the vast and flat expanse of the Lincolnshire Fens provides untapped potential for big perch, pike and carp. On the east of the county, fisherman can even have a crack at saltwater fishing, with cod, whiting, dabs, mackerel and bass all possible from the North Sea. For something more organised there are several quality commercial venues scattered around the country providing affordable fishing to day ticket anglers. It's not all about fishing though, there is plenty else to do, with the historic city of Lincoln and its medieval cathedral being well worth a visit. Whilst the popular seaside resort of Skegness allows you the chance to stay close to water. With a stroll along the sandy beach, arcade games on the pier and a trip to the seal sanctuary all recommended.

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AnglingTimes
MATCH SCENE
THE VOICE OF MATCH FISHING

"WHEN THE WIND CHANGED SO DID I!"

Maggots in the margins proved key for Callum Dicks as his side clinched the Tunnel Barn Farm Winter League



Callum's 94-10-0 was more than enough for victory at Tunnel Barn.

THERE'S no better feeling in team fishing than seeing your side crowned champions with the help of an overall win on your part. Just ask Callum Dicks after he helped his South West All-Stars quartet to take the Tunnel Barn Farm Winter title after winning the day with a near-100lb net of carp and F1s.

Fished over 10 rounds by some of the biggest names in the sport, the 'Tunnel' league is a tough one to win. Going into the final clash at the Warwickshire fishery, Callum's team were sitting in third place but well within striking distance. A good draw on the morning gave them a chance but, in winter, anything can happen.

Handed peg 8 on Jenny's Pool, former England star Callum really didn't know what to expect given the mixed form of his peg. After 50 minutes, he was beginning to think it might be one of those days. Until he changed to the margins that is...

PRE-MATCH PLAN

- **TARGET SPECIES:** Carp and F1s.
- **FEED:** Nothing, then maggots trickled in for the margins and fed by hand.
- **TACTICS:** Dobbing bread and then maggots in the margins, and maggots at 6m and across to the island.
- **TARGET WEIGHT:** 100lb or 30lb depending on how the peg fished.
- **CONDITIONS:** Mild, with a strong wind.

At the peg

"My draw was a corner peg which can really be hit and miss, but I was very happy to see the wind blowing into my bank, so I fancied it for some big carp and F1s. I took the water temperature and, at 6°C, it seemed bang on.

"I planned to begin dobbing bread around the peg looking for a few early fish but also put in lines across to the island and in front of me at 6m into the deep water for late on. There was also the empty pallet to my right to possibly fish at 16m down the edge.

All change

"The weather had been cold all week so I felt feeding immediately might not be best. I started dobbing a piece of bread all over the peg but after 50 minutes I hadn't had a bite.

"One of my final chances was that margin swim where there was 36ins of water and with the water being coloured I was hopeful. Fishing a 7mm piece of punch 4ins off bottom, I went in tight against the pallet leg and had a run of 10 big F1s and two carp.

The F1s begin to feed

"I was halfway through the match but bites on bread died off. I knew the fish were there, so I fed some maggots. I'd already seen anglers netting fish and I could see they had a little pot on the pole tip so that told me they'd been feeding some bait. Tapping in 15 maggots and fishing two reds on the hook did the job with another 15 F1s.

A bonus at 6m

"Eventually, the wind got up so much that I couldn't fish to the pallet, but I had been throwing in maggots by hand at 6m in 5.5ft of water. There were about 25 minutes remaining when I dropped in a 4x14 float fished a couple of inches overdepth for another eight F1s on double red maggot.

"When to change lines is always tricky but I had a good angler in Adam Rumble next to me and used him as a guide. He tried short with 40 minutes left and didn't catch so that told me it wasn't quite time to change, plus I was still catching an odd F1 from the pallet swim. It was only when the wind became ridiculous that I changed.

At the scales

"I knew I had 35 fish and worked them out at 2lb each taking me to 70lb! Obviously, they weighed a bit bigger for almost 95lb at the scales and the overall win."


The winning team from left to right:Andy Neal, Callum Dicks, Jon Harvey and Des

Result: 1 C Dicks, South West All-Stars, 94-10-0; 2 D Shipp, South West All-Stars, 82-4-0; 3 R Small, Matrix Midlands, 78-5-0; 4 W Ainsworth, Mosella, 71-3-0.
Teams: 1 South West All-Stars, 74pts; 2 Maggot Mafia, 61; 3 Drennan Banbury Gunsmiths, 59; 4 Matrix Midlands, 57.
Final league: 1 South West All-Stars, 580pts; 2 Guru, 566; 3 Team Dynamite, 555; 4 Matrix Spotted Fin, 554.

CHAMP'S DIARY



JAMIE HUGHES GIVES YOU THE INSIDE LINE

GOING DOWN A STORM – WELL, VERY NEARLY!

WHAT a weekend that was! Someone decided to turn the wind machine on as Storm Ciara leathered the UK. In the Wirral we copped it big time, so it was a no-brainer for me to pass up fishing for at least part of the weekend.

I was planning on going back to the Jacob's AC lake for another go at those carp and F1s but you couldn't stand up outside, let alone fish. But I think I missed out as half-a-dozen lunatics went and the match was won with 200lb! Obviously, the fish didn't mind the storm as much as we did.

Before all of that I did get out to Lingmere Fishery for the Saturday match. It was still windy and I was hoping to draw on the sheltered bottom lake. So what happened? Out came peg 17 on the top Match Lake. Typical.

There was still a section and lake to be won and I spent four hours casting the maggot feeder around, picking off an odd F1. A good last hour in the margins on maggots produced another 15 fish for 39lb. It earned me a lake win and third overall so it wasn't all bad.

"A few lunatics still fished the match"

You may be wondering why I fished the maggot feeder. Because the Match Lake is very silty, pellets that you fish on feeder just sink into the muck, so maggots are miles better plus it was a cold day and the F1s were in winter feeding mode. Very few fish were caught on pellets that day.

We are on the verge of pellets becoming a winning bait. I had a coaching day at Partridge Lakes and we caught lots of big skimmers and carp on expanders so a change is on the way.



Ian 'Speedy' Ward banked this 6-10-0 of dace on day one.

ANOTHER WIN FOR SPEEDY ON THE SEVERN

IT'S been a magical few months on the River Severn for Ian Ward. The regular on the river around Shrewsbury followed up his RiverFest victory before Christmas with a second big crown as he took the Shrewsbury Classic with a perfect two section wins.

On a river still struggling to get over the floods, Ian, known as Speedy to his fishing mates, proved his mastery

THE RIG THAT WON

JOSH SETS THE PACE AT DECOY!

Bomb and wafters were as complicated as it got in big practice match

THE Willows Lake won't be a pool many will fancy drawing in this weekend's Winter League Final at Decoy Lakes, but it can be a winner as local man Josh Pace proved in the latest Decoy Lakes open, weighing in 124-11-0 of carp from peg 29 to win the 48-peg match.

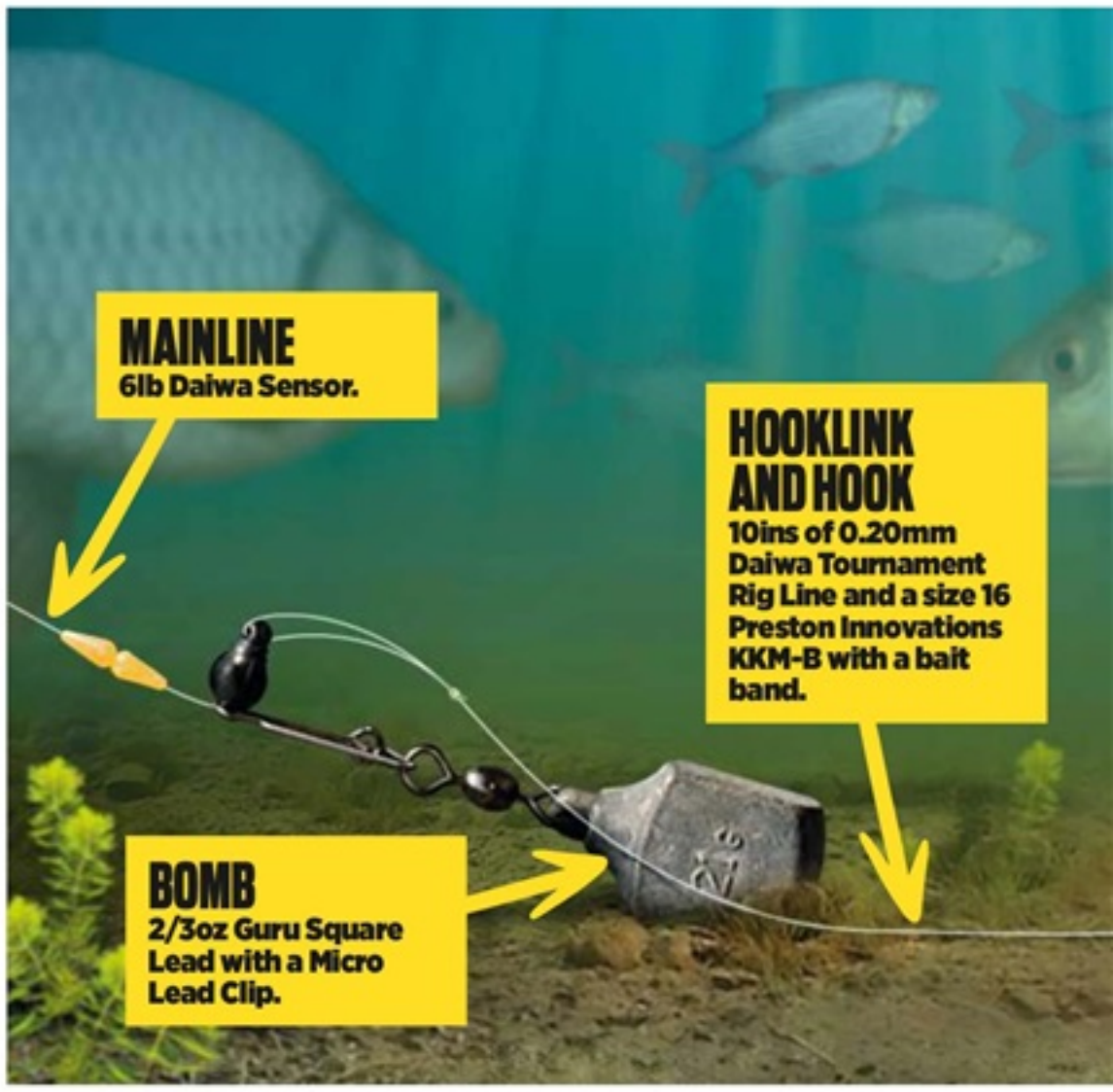
Most would want to be on the strip lakes or perhaps Horseshoe, but Josh's win shows that you just never know where the winner will come from. His net came using bomb and wafters cast to the island in the windy conditions, including a great start that produced eight fish in as many casts.

After that, the fishing proved trickier and Whittlesey-based Josh went on the hunt, casting around and making a few risky



JOSH PACE:
A local lad to Decoy Lakes, former Fish O'Mania finalist and a member of the Daiwa Tackle & Bates side.

RESULT: 1 J Pace, Daiwa Tackle & Bates/Bag 'Em Baits, 124-11-0; 2 M Denton, Drennan Oxford, 114-11-0; 3 S Skelton, Dynamite Baits, 113-15-0; 4 S Colclough, Browning, 83-11-0.



of the mighty river to get in ahead of Bridgnorth rod Chris Holmes. Ian Courtney was third on a match that was reduced from three to two days due to the arrival of Storm Ciara.

Day one put Ian on peg 34 at the County Ground, bolo rod and maggot giving him a 6-10-0 net of small dace to score his first section win. Twenty-four hours later he was off to peg 46 at the quarry to target perch.

Lobworm fished at 6m gave him just three fish, one a small dace but the other two were big perch that all added up to 4-4-0 and enough for that valuable second section win.

RESULT: 1 I Ward, Frenzee/ABC Baits, 2pts; 2 C Holmes, Bridgnorth AS, 3 (19-10-0); 3 I Courtney, Birkenhead, 3 (17-13-0); 4 M Francis, Wolverhampton, 3 (7-4-0); 5 A Paddock, Wrexham, 3 (1-8-0); 6 P Davis, Wrexham, 4.

chucks into the channel behind the island to the left of his peg. That snaffled another 10 fish to just see him home by 10lb from visiting Oxford angler Mick Denton.

"Peg 29 is one of the best on the lake because the carp live there all year round," Josh said. "The water was very clear so I felt it might be a day where I wouldn't catch steadily from one area. Feeding any bait also seemed to be the kiss of death lately and that ruled out any type of feeder. Instead it was a day for the bomb with a wafter hookbait that stood out.

"There are reeds around the island that hold the fish and that's where I had my great start from, but when it went quiet I knew the carp had backed off up the channel," he continued. "This area is very snaggy so when I hooked a fish I had to stand up with the rod above my head and pull hard to get them out of danger. You'll always lose a few fish doing this and I did have three come off but my 18 carp were just enough to win."



BAIT
6mm white Bag 'Em Baits Wafter.

TOP WINS

NOTABLE RESULTS FROM MATCHES FEBRUARY 8-9

IT'S TIGHT AT MEADOWLANDS AS RANDLE WINS

JUST under 3lb covered the top three in the latest leg of the Garbolino Silverfish Winter League at Meadowlands Fishery, Pete Randle getting the nod to top the 49-peg match with 23-0-0 of skimmers.
Drawing peg 9 on the Lambsdown Lake, Pete swapped between maggot and worm on the cage feeder all day for fish to 2lb.

THREE MORE OFF TO BIG FINAL

THE fishing is always good at Devon's Tamar, as Chris Parr found out in topping this qualifier with 12-0-0 of roach. The win sees him into the £10,000 final next month at Larford Lakes and was taken from peg 31 on Devon Bank using a small cage feeder with groundbait and maggot. Andy Power was next in line with 10-0-0 of roach on feeder and maggot but as he was in the same zone at Chris, it meant he didn't qualify.

RINGER BROTHERS BEAT STORM TO WIN!

THE 48 anglers fishing at Boddington in Storm Ciara probably needed their heads testing, but the carp fed. Leading the way with a section win and a second were brothers Steve and Phil Ringer.
Steve won the match outright with eight big carp on Hybrid feeder and wafters from peg 90, followed by Simon Parker with seven carp on the same approach for 62-0-0 off peg 109.

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'SCRATCHING' FLOAT – MALMAN WINTER WIRE FINESSE

The one to use when not a lot is happening. In this instance, the fish will be on the bottom, so I'll fish it with a bulk of shot. The bristle on this 4x14 float is incredibly sensitive to show even the tiniest of bites.

ALL-ROUND FLOAT – RW WINTER MAGGIE

This is the float I use for fishing maggots through the water with a strung-out shotting pattern. That'll be a 4x12 size in up to 4ft of water and a 4x14 for up to 6ft.

SKIMMER FLOAT – MALMAN BENNY

Skimmer fishing requires a very different float, one that's a lot of heavier to let me fish a big bulk of shot and keep the bait stable. At 4x16, this pattern lets me use a bulk to fish overdepth and to hold back against it in any wind or tow.

"HELP ME PICK THE RIGHT RIG F

Steve Anderson is in a bit of a pickle when selecting the right rig from his box. You can



THE TUTOR

JAMIE HUGHES

A triple Fish O'Mania champion, Match This and Golden Reel winner and former Matchman of the Year.



THE STUDENT

STEVE ANDERSON

A lapsed match angler that understands about the rigs he should use but is unsure when to use the right one relevant to the time of year.

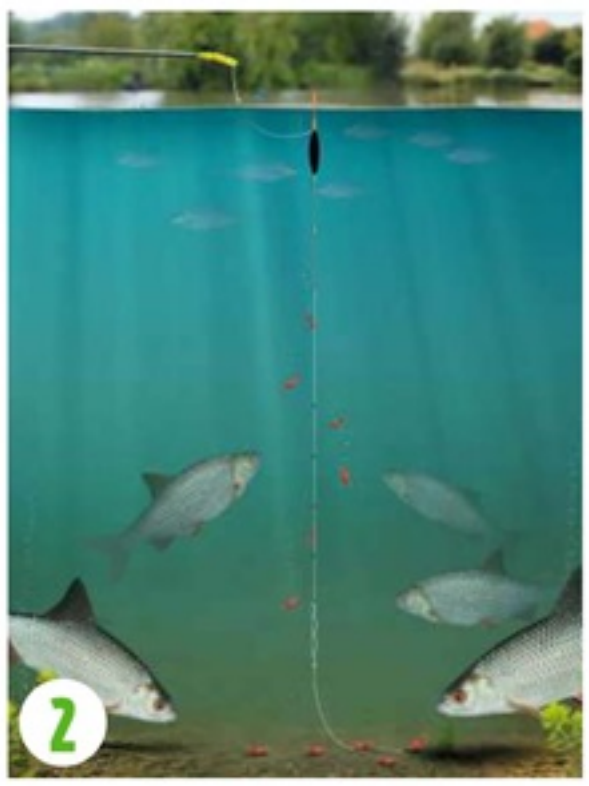
THE LESSON



1

GO OVERDEPTH

WHEN plumbing up for skimmers you want the hookbait to be a fraction overdepth in good conditions to keep the bait still, which is how skimmers want it. Every bite, no matter how shy, will show up. Leave the middle of the float body upwards showing but if it is very windy, you can fish up to 10 inches overdepth.



2

STRUNG SHOTTING PATTERN

IF FISH are feeding in all layers, a strung pattern of shots evenly spaced will catch best. If you think they are in the bottom half, spread the shots over the lower half of the rig. If they are feeding further up in the water, string them over three-quarters of the rig. My shots are never smaller than a No10 for this way of fishing.



3

YOU ONLY NEED ONE HOOK

WHETHER I'm fishing for roach or skimmers, there's one pattern that will do – the Gamakatsu Green. You can still land rogue carp and a size 16 is perfect for maggots, corn or expander pellets. Scale down the hooklink, with 0.08mm for small fish or 0.10mm for skimmers or those days when you are catching well.

Back shots – what on earth are they?

A BACK shot is a small shot or shots, typically No8s, that are fixed on the line between the float and the pole. Some anglers like to use up to three or four of them, but one, or at most a couple, is ample for my fishing. Don't dismiss back shots as unnecessary as they do make a big difference, especially when there's a nasty skimming wind blowing.

WHEN TO USE THEM

When fishing for F1s, a back shot helps to keep the line to the float tight and hit fast bites but for silver fish, the aim is different.

The shot will sink the line above the float enough to maintain good presentation of the rig in any windy conditions.

SHOT POSITIONING

The key here is to place the shot, or shots, closer to the pole tip than to the float. This ensures that the extra shot will not register on the float itself and make it sink, so on a 20-inch length of line place the shot around eight inches from the pole.



FOR SILVERS"

bet that Jamie Hughes will put him right!



FISHING A BULK OF SHOT

WHEN fish are on the bottom, there's no point having the bait falling slowly in the upper layers. A simple bulk of larger No8 or 9 shot will get the bait down quickly. Finish with a couple of No10 droppers for a natural bait fall in the final foot or so. This set-up also works overdepth or if you are getting lots of line bites.

PROGRESS REPORT

THE TUTOR: There you have it, Steve! Hopefully you'll catch a lot more fish from now on. You've got the basics sorted but it's those finer points that make such a difference. I've caught thousands of fish on those three rigs so if you understand when to use them, you won't go far wrong.

THE STUDENT: This is brilliant advice. I've always known how to set up rigs with a bulk or strung-out shot but thought a strung rig was only for summer. The use of back shots is new to me and I'll be using them from now on.

Got a problem with your match fishing skills? Angling Times can help.
www.atmatchresults.com

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As well as over the counter sales, Tackle & Bates now have a very busy eBay store, to find us, please look up our selling page Tackleandbates1989 for reliable and fast service.
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LOBWORM TAILS

PERCH are greedy and will eat most baits we use, but lobworms seem to be particularly loved. You don't need the whole worm, though. Most anglers swear by fishing only the soft tail section, which is the flattened part at the end of the worm. This bait will be around 2ins long but, being so soft, it will be easy for a big perch to get hold of and take confidently.

5 WAYS TO WIN WITH BIG PERCH

On rivers and canals, a fat old perch is normally the bonus fish that will make a difference on the scales...



HOOKS

IF YOUR hook is too small, you won't set it properly in the bony mouths of perch on the strike. Taking into account the size of the lobworm tail bait, hook sizes can be on the large size, with a 14 or 12 being about right. This will leave plenty of hookpoint showing to ensure maximum penetration and hold on the strike. Be sure to pick a pattern that's strong but relatively light in the wire it's made out of. This will improve the presentation of the bait no end.

FLAT FLOAT

IT'S possible to catch perch by running the bait along with the current of the river, but these fish much prefer a worm or maggot that's completely still on the bottom. Normal pole floats may lack the bulk to present the bait naturally, and that's where a flat float comes in. These lollipop-shaped floats look odd, but they will hold still in the strongest of flows and also allow you to present the bait slightly overdepth.



BAIT DROPPER

FEEDING chopped worm and caster via a pole cup is haphazard, especially in flowing water, as it's hard to concentrate the feed and the fish in one place. Using a bait dropper instead will solve the problem because you can lower a consignment of bait into a specific spot and know that it's resting in a pile exactly where you want it. This is where you will then place your rig.



FINELY CHOP YOUR WORMS

YOU can't fish for perch without having chopped worms as bait, but there is a question to be answered – how finely to chop them. Mincing the worms into a fine soup can be good in very cold water, but on a normal winter river and with big fish in mind, cutting each worm into four or five pieces will result in lots of chunks that give the fish a really substantial meal. Feeding in this way doesn't seem to attract the vast numbers of small perch that more finely chopped worms can.



WORK THE BAIT

READER RECOMMENDED

TONY MORGAN, DEWSBURY

"ONE great bit of advice I've never forgotten is to keep moving the worm, whether I'm fishing the pole or feeder. This means turning the reel handle half-a-turn or lifting the float out of the water by 6ins and letting it fall again. This is enough to make any perch close to the bait decide to have a go at it. It's amazing how you can go from not having a bite for ages to catching steadily if you do this every cast."

MATCH ROUND-UP

The latest results from events near you

NORTH

ANGLER'S WORLD HOLIDAYS SATURDAY SERIES (SAT)

Yorkshire Ouse, Linton (35 pegs)

Result: 1 A Fox, Bradford No 1 AA, 7-15-0; 2 S Haigh, Angler's World Holidays, 6-11-0; 3 S Newns, KL Tackle, 6-6-0.

BLUNDELL'S FISHERY ROVER (SAT)

All lakes (30 pegs)

Result: 1 A Musgrove, Edgeley Sports, 46-11-0; 2 K Marler, Tight Lines Shaw, 40-8-0; 3 S Clegg, Saints, 34-6-0.

NORTHALLERTON DAC (SAT)

River Swale, Morton & Scruton (35 pegs)

Result: 1 G Hall, Soppy Chops, 28-0-0; 2 T Morgan, Aidbrough, 10-0-0; 3 L Furness, Selby, 7-0-0.

OAKS LAKES SILVERFISH WINTER LEAGUE (SAT)

Willows, Firs, Oaks & Alders Lakes (36 pegs)

Result: 1 K Heptonstall, The Oaks, 25-0-0; jt2 K Smith, Preston Innovations and T Peters, Tri-Cast Calder, both 21-3-0.

PARTRIDGE LAKES TEAMS OF FOUR WINTER LEAGUE (SAT)

Covey Canal Lakes (40 pegs)

Result: 1 M Lavin, Partridge Lakes, 78-2-0; 2 S Berry, Mosella Dynamite Baits NW, 72-12-0; 3 S Parry, Guru, 61-9-0.
Teams: 1 Partridge Lakes All-Stars, 11pts.
League: 1 Guru, 58pts; 2 Preston NW, 64.

PARTRIDGE LAKES (SAT)

Covey & Spey Canal Lakes (45 pegs)

Result: 1 J Howarth, Partridge Lakes, 71-15-0; 2 P Holland, Guru/Blake's Bait, 52-0-0; 3 L Taylor, Partridge Lakes, 47-7-0.

MIDLANDS

CADENCE STARLETS PACKINGTON SOMERS VETS WINTER LEAGUE (TUES)

Molands Mere, Little Geary's & Willow (56 pegs)

Result: 1 D Longford, Packington Vets, 53-14-0; 2 R Durrant, Packington Vets, 51-3-0; 3 D Wood, Packington Vets, 34-5-0.

COLMIC WIGSTON CANAL SERIES (SUN)

Grand Union Canal, Wigston (23 pegs)

Result: 1 P Wootton, Dynamite Baits/Wigston AS, 6-9-0; 2 K Warley, Wigston AS, 6-4-0; 3 J Brockway, Notts, 4-11-0.

DRENNAN MANOR FARM LEISURE WINTER LEAGUE (SAT)

Island, Middle & Windmill Pools (24 pegs)

Result: 1 T Need, Top Tackle, 88-4-0; 2 M Wakeman, Manor Farm Leisure, 56-14-0; 3 T Shepherd, Banbury, 55-12-0.
Final league: 1 C Newton, Smithy's Angling, 11pts; 2 N McKinnon, Preston Innovations, 17.

EREWASH VALLEY WINTER LEAGUE (SAT)

Erewash Canal, Ilkeston & Langley Mill (56 pegs)

Result: 1 M Harrison, Team 1779, 13-3-0; 2 J South, Cadence Bait-Tech Superteam, 9-7-0; 3 C Close, Soar Tackle, 7-8-0.
Teams: 1 Drennan Leicester Van Den Eynde, 27pts.
League: 1 Three Counties, 12pts.

KIDDERMINSTER DAA JOHN FIELD MEMORIAL (SAT)

River Severn, Bewdley (40 pegs)

Result: 1 J Rivers, Kidderminster DAA, 17-9-0; 2 M Maginnis, DH Angling, 16-4-0; 3 T Chalk, Cadence, 10-10-0.

MAINLINE MATCH FEEDER LEAGUE (SUN)

Barston Lakes, Main Lake (50 pegs)

Result: 1 K Wright, Lane's Bait, 57-4-0; 2 S Pulsar, Guru, 45-8-0; 3 P Mountain, HT Angling, 40-2-0.



Jim Rivers lifted the John Field Memorial trophy on the Severn.

SOUTH

COLEMAN'S COTTAGE FISHERY WINTER LEAGUE (SUN)

Wood & Stepfield Lakes (26 pegs)

Result: 1 G Bridge, Browning Wickford, 135-0-0; 2 A Reynolds, Browning Wickford, 123-0-0; 3 C Nada, Browning Wickford, 113-0-0.

GOLD VALLEY LAKES (SUN)

Gold Lake (24 pegs)

Result: 1 P Hiller, Daiwa Dorking, 42-8-0; 2 S Gent, Kennet Ospreys, 39-8-0.

SOUTHEND FARM FISHERY SILVERFISH WINTER LEAGUE (SUN)

Match Lake (24 pegs)

Result: 1 D Tennant, Browning Wickford, 29-2-0; 2 R Dean, Burt Baits, 29-0-0.

TODBER MANOR FISHERY (SAT)

Hill View, Ash & Homeground Lakes (39 pegs)

Result: 1 A Oram, Bristol, 90-2-0; 2 J Shepherd, Bristol, 80-14-0; 3 S Denmead, Keyford, 80-10-0.





LAST CAST WITH DOM

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



Crazy but true: the pike I had three times in 10 minutes!

"I wasn't stalking this pike... it seemed to be stalking me"

OF all the fish we try to catch, pike are among the most intriguing of the lot. Which other species swings so dramatically, often between uncatchable and ridiculously bold?

Speak to a guide like Mark Watson, who's spent decades trying to understand *Esox lucius,* and it gets even more fascinating. Along with the time-honoured herrings and pike bungs, a look inside his boat cabin reveals a wholly 21st Century approach.

Indeed, with a powerful fish finder it's possible to not only find the depth, but identify shoals of roach and bream, and even get a rough idea of the size of pike stalking them!

All this seemed quite alien to me and my pal Jim Sutherland. But with an unfamiliar water and just a day at our disposal, what a brilliant opportunity to reduce the odds of catching a Broadlands monster.

As we passed vast pods of prey fish, it was hard not to gawp at the screen. The level of detail was astonishing, as was Mark's commentary, whether it was "smaller pike there, but active" or "that one could go twenty." But would all that tech make our task any easier?

In a word, no. Fish finders don't make fish hungry. And while the scanner can help, it doesn't half make you wonder how often you were closer to a pike than you ever realised, but your timing was off.

Our first sleeping giants refused to budge, sadly. The conditions are one explanation, but you also ponder why any pike would fancy snacking on mackerel when it has a hundred bream in front of it?

So, rather than sit it out for sleeping beasts, we decided to work closer to home and see if the smaller but more numerous pike here would be more cooperative with lures and flies.

It proved a good decision as we enjoyed a gloriously low-tech afternoon casting lures and flies, Mark expertly drifting the boat through the best bits. We soon found the jacks - but little did we expect the bizarre encounter to come.

On a reedy bay, I hooked a lively fish that fought in an odd manner. The line had somehow lassoed around it and I'd nicked it in the shoulder. Unsurprisingly, it was angry!

The very next cast, I then had another hit. "Looks about the same size as the last one," I said. A correct assertion, as it turned out, because it was the exact same fish!

We were still chuckling in disbelief when, five minutes later, my fly was grabbed once more. Again, it looked uncannily similar in size.

"I don't believe it!" said Mark. "It's the same fish!" He wasn't pulling my leg; there was the mark on its shoulder where I'd nicked it minutes earlier! In case you're wondering, we hadn't been drinking. Will we ever figure out these crazy pike?

"We enjoyed a gloriously low-tech afternoon casting lures and flies"



My mate Jim takes aim in deepest Norfolk.

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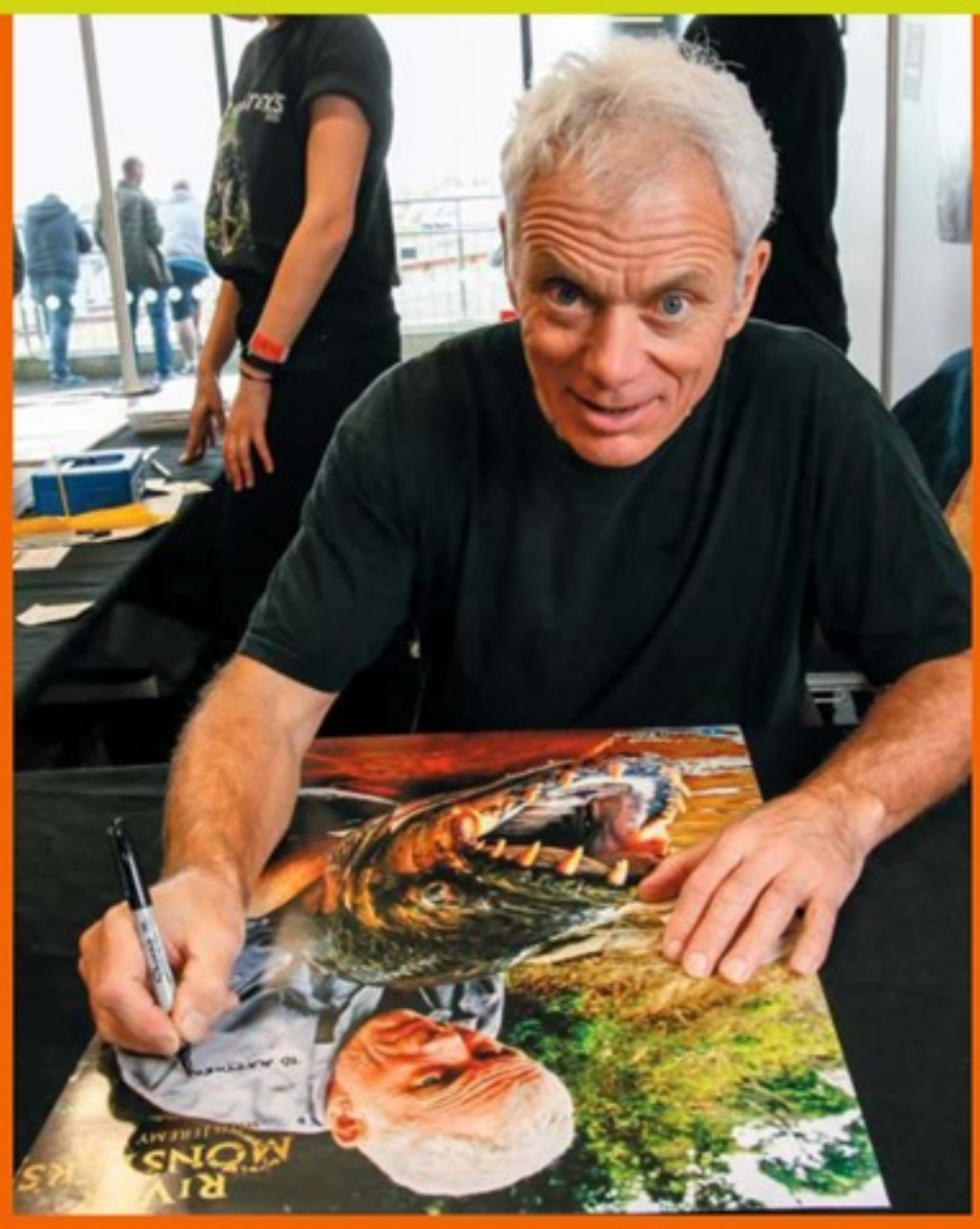
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