BEST CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR ANGLERS



Catch your biggest even toach



PLUS

Greatest deadbaits The forgotten stickleback Secrets to river pike success Winning ways with wafters



TIP OF THE WEEK

Where Quality Counts Supplies Ltd.

THE Richworth Fish Of The Week competition rewards a main winner with a fantastic £100 box of Richworth iconic bait – the brilliant Esterfruit. Our overall yearly winner will receive a huge £1,000 haul of Richworth bait along with a big annual trophy. Hampshire spessy ace Ollie Johnson thinks now is the time to trot for grayling.



become a good target fish,



Ollie said: "With some colder weather forecast, grayling willing to feed in the coldest conditions. Trotting maggots or redworms can be an effective method.

"Fishing several swims for short periods can help you locate pockets of fish. If no bites come in the first five minutes, I'll normally move."

Check out the full baits range at: www.richworth.com



GEOFF SMITH had a great roach result on Oxford's Linear Fisheries before it temporary closed due to flooding, with three PB specimens to 2 lb 9 oz. Cardiff, South Wales-based Geoff tackled Brasenose One, and feeder fished maggots, adding others of 2 lb 3 oz and 2 lb 7 oz.

ROBERT BROWN hasn't had much fishing time this season, but he soon made amends for that when he tackled his local River Trent, landing barbel of 14 lb 11 oz and 14 lb 4 oz.

Nottingham-based Robert, 36, said: "After not much bank time recently, I baited for four days with a few handfuls of boilies and then hit the Trent for the weekend, hoping for a chance of a floodwater barbel. "An early chub gave me some confidence, and early into Saturday morning my rod hooped over and I landed a beautiful 14 lb 11 oz barbel. "After resting the swim for

some of the day, an early take at 7.30pm resulted in another at 14 lb 4 oz.

DARREN CHILD has been moving swims to keep on the fish at Wintons Fishery, in West Sussex, and the effort paid off when he landed a new venue record carp of 53 lb. Local Darren, from Haywards Heath, had the common called The Pretty One from the Socket Swim on Kingfisher Lake. And the commercial technician for Mercedes added a 26 lb common to make a brilliant

brace, using Sticky Baits Manilla boilies.

Boss Paul Etherington said: "The fish is looking in pristine condition. She has the potential to go even bigger over the winter. "Darren certainly deserved to land her, putting in the hours, and he hasn't been static, moving swims to get something to happen. Darren would like to thank Andy Jenkins for getting up to take the picture."



"Both were taken on 3 Foot Twitch SG1 and Redemption boilies over 30 freebies, combined with a size 8 Bank Tackle Continental hook," added the sheet metal worker.

Contact the Mail 01252 555051 (to report news) 0330 333 1113 (subscription enquiries).









CATCH BIG ROACH ROACH ace Dr Mark Everard banked his second 2 lb roach in a week from different rivers, with this 2 lb 1 oz beauty from the Hampshire Avon at Britford. He used his new 'Dr Redfin' 15 ft float rod with a 4.5 g Bolognese float to present bread flake, and added four roach to 1 lb, three dace and a surprise 1 lb 4 oz perch. Turn to p.22-25 for John Bailey's top tips to help you catch a PB river roach.



CHUB – 7 lb 13 oz

dark from a favourite swim on the river as it was fining down after the floods we had recently. "The swim I fished gave me two different 7 lb chub last season, so I knew it had got good form.

"I use stepped-up tackle, as there's a chance of a barbel as well, including 12 lb main line, 15 lb braided trace, a size 8 hook and a 2 oz semi-fixed lead.

"It's my second seven of the autumn, as I had another one of 7 lb 8 dr on similar tactics a few weeks ago.

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83.8% of British record

SPECIMEN ace James Crameri smashed his chub PB with this 7 lb 13 oz giant from the Great Ouse.

The Greater Anglia train station supervisor beat his old best of 7 lb 6 oz from the River Lea from his favourite chub swim on the Ouse, in Buckinghamshire.

The 48-year-old Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, angler explained: "I caught it just into

"It was the only bite of the evening, although in fairness I didn't fish much longer after catching it, as my desire to continue had been overtaken by the size of the chub I'd just caught.

"I caught the fish from a crease where the depth of water had increased from a little further upstream.

"Tactics were a simple legered boilie on a semi-fixed rig cast into the crease with a PVA bag of loose offerings. "It's been really good to finally get a big 7 from the river, as over the past few years I've had a number of low-7s, so it's been exciting to get a new PB," he added.

James' chub adds to his amazing personal best list, which includes barbel to 18 lb 15 oz, zander to 16 lb 11 oz, carp to 44 lb 8 oz, tench to 10 lb 4 oz, rudd to 2 lb 15 oz and bream to 21 lb 12 oz.



OVERSEAS CARP – 64 lb 1 oz 56.8% of World record

■ GARETH EVANS didn't get a good swim draw at France's Domaine de Goncourt complex, but made the most of it to land seven carp, including this 64 lb 1 oz beast. The 38-year-old carper tackled La Traque Lake using Mainline Cell boilies into a far margin. Gareth said: "The peg I had isn't usually that productive, but we had heavy rain for a few days and a strong south-westerly wind blowing into my corner."



star £100 Richworth prize this week and will receive a bumper goody bag of brilliant Esterfruit bait. James and everyone here also receives an exclusive Richworth Fish Of The Week t-shirt.

CEVS GOT A STORY? Email news editor Thomas Petch: anglersmail@ti-media.com Or call 01252 555051.

EDITOR'S LETTER

Let's hear it for mini fish

WE could all name most of the larger fish that are found in our inland waters and around our coast, but identifying mini species can be trickier.

I've been a long-time admirer of the ones that live in intertidal rock pools around our coastline, as they are masters of an ever-changing environment. Glance at a rock pool when



the tide has retreated and you could be forgiven for thinking that it is devoid of a single heartbeat, apart from limpets that have clamped themselves onto rocks. But take a closer look and you may spot a common blenny hiding in a crevice, having changed its skin colour to blend in with its surroundings. You may also notice the smooth, scaleless body of a bearded rockling on the fringes of dulse seaweed, or perhaps a roaming shrimp or prawn, their transparent and colourless bodies making them difficult to see over sand. The same species can also be found in other types of habitat, including in cracks in seaweedcovered harbour walls. A person who has seen fish of all sizes close up is our mini-series guest, underwater lensman Jack Perks, and this week he recounts the time when he fished with a couple of chums, part of a growing breed of Light Rock Fishing (LRF) enthusiasts that have an appetite for dangling bits of plastic down the edge of harbour walls, hoping to hook some ferocious predators, including magnificent 15-spined stickleback. Find out more in p.20-21.

Leading fishery scientist lan Wellby believes that fry and even some bigger fish will have been washed out to sea in the recent floods, unless there was natural shelter available for them to find sanctuary.



Enjoy the issue,

RICHARD HOLROYD

Fry getting washed out to sea

EAVY rainfall and flooding have wreaked havoc in many parts of the country, with many rivers unfishable and stillwaters closed.

But a leading fish expert believes the floods will have caused long-term damage as well to fry survival.

As Angler's Mail revealed last week, Ferryboat Farm Fisheries, in South Yorkshire, was totally flooded, and even Oxfordshire's massive carp complex Linear Fisheries decided to have a two-week break because of dangerous ground conditions. And top environmental consultant Dr Ian Wellby, who runs Blue Roof Ltd, also believes that the flooding will have caused unwanted fish getting into rivers. lan told Angler's Mail: "Fish struggle in floods to maintain their place in the river, particularly if the river has been impacted by flood defence-type operations where the river is



66 The fish often get swept along with the

areas of lower flow.

"If these are not available, the fish often get swept along with the current, either being washed out of the river at the estuary or pushed out onto the flood plains.

"This often means that they become stranded on the flood plain. The Environment Agency often do sterling work finding these fish and returning them to the river.

"River fisheries can help by creating habitat, such as back channels or connection to gravel pits. These make good refuges for the fish to escape from the full flow of the flood. "The other problem is flooding that impacts on stillwaters in the flood plain, where fish can be washed out of their home into the river. "This has led to lots of carp and also non-native species, such as sturgeon and catfish, being washed into our rivers," lan added.

ASSISTANT EDITOR / PRODUCTION



straightened and widened, like many of our British rivers. "Essentially, the fish, particularly the smaller fish, need to get out of the very high flows, and will seek shelter in

Butter fingers • Spessy ace bags PB perch... But drops phone in seconds later

N-FORM Charlie Coppolo couldn't have been happier after catching a personal best perch, but then he unintentionally threw his phone straight into the water.

The 32-year-old tattoo artist was just scrolling through the pictures he'd taken of the 4 lb 10 oz specimen from a boat on Hanningfield Reservoir when the phone impersonated a hot potato. Great Wakering, Essex-based Charlie explained: "I managed to break my PB perch yet again, and got a bit closer to my 5 lb-plus target. "The day started fantastically, with my first bite, using a Z-Man TicklerZ rigged on a ned rig, producing a new PB perch of 4 lb 10 oz.

"Sitting back, I was just buzzing and staring at the photos on my phone when I somehow managed to juggle my phone up in the air and over the side of the boat.

"With no back-up or anything, I could do nothing but just watch the only photos I have of my PB just slowly sink to the depths.

"I had the phone in a waterproof case, which meant I was literally watching the phone sink with the photos still on the screen.

"Bitter sweet doesn't quite cut it.

"Still, I got my game head back on and carried on fishing, hoping for some sort of consolation. And I did get it. My next fish was 3 lb 8 oz, and I followed that up with another huge perch of 4 lb 8 oz.

"On reflection, I can't be too disappointed that I don't have any pictures of my PB, as I did have 12 lb 10 oz of perch for only three fish, but it does sting a bit.

"I've got my eyes set on a big pike this winter, of 25 lb-plus, and if I manage to tick that off then I really want to try for a big chub, of over 7 lb, from my local river," he concluded. Charlie's perch adds to other PBs that include rudd to 3 lb, roach 2 lb 8 oz, carp 35 lb 14 oz, pike 20 lb 12 oz, chub 4 lb 10 oz, tench 8 lb and bream 11 lb.

66 I was literally watching the phone sink with the photos still on the screen. 55 CHARLIE COPPOLO





CEVS GOT A STORY? Email news editor Thomas Petch: anglersmail@ti-media.com Or call 01252 555051.

Trust remove thousands of each year from canals, but now there may be a chance to find them good homes.



• Recycling growth – the Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme will be expanding, thanks to a new sponsor. Cornwall-based WSB Tackle wholesale across the country, and are keen to help stop plastic pollution.

Viv Shears, co-founder of the ANLRS, said: "The team at WSB have been very keen to support what we are doing within angling, and with their help more tackle shops and anglers will get involved.

"The more bins available for anglers, the more line we can prevent going to landfill or being left in the environment, where it can cause issues with wildlife."

Zander to be rehomed?

• 23 waters can take zeds • Possible end to canal slaughter

HE controversy

surrounding zander being killed on our canals could have a happy solution, Angler's Mail can reveal.

Canal & River Trust fisheries manager John Ellis had thought that only one English fishery could take them, Bury Hill, in Surrey, but they only desire specimen fish. John has to organise their removal each year, as they are a non-native species and they have been going to Billingsgate Market in London for food. However, Angler's Mail found out last week that the Environment Agency has 23 fisheries in the country licensed to hold zander. John said: "Absolutely 100 per cent yes, it's our preferred option not to kill them, but nobody has ever come forward, save for Bury Hill, in Surrey, and that was subject to final fulfilment of a KIFR permit condition around enhanced screening. "The EA cannot send us the information about fisheries with permits for zander, I envisage, due to data protection considerations, but we look forward to hearing from any fishery owner in a legal position to be able to accept zander." Top predator hunter, fishery and tackle shop owner Neville Fickling, who is secretary of the Zander Anglers Club, commented: "If we ever

thought about relocation it was a long time ago. ZAC policy is to try not to remove them. We are going to have to look into what waters might be able to take them.

"At present, Mark Powell Bevan is fighting our corner on the canals, and protest and zander cull-free zones is the policy. I'll talk with him about relocation," Nev added.

point of view: create more zander venues and move them there.

"The idea of rehoming is not new, and as far as I know the CRT response some time ago was that there are not many venues that have a zander licence, and the ones that have don't want them and don't want to pay for getting them, but I'm not sure how true these are. "Anglian Waters such as Grafham and Rutland apparently don't want them, as they are mainly trout fisheries, so they don't want any stuff from canals, for bio-security reasons. "This is a difficult one also, as the cost of moving them is involved, so it needs venues that would be interested to stock them. "I know of only a few lakes, such as Ferry Meadows, in Cambridgeshire, or Wyboston Lake, in Bedfordshire, that are connected to rivers, so I doubt they've got a licence, but they have got zander. I wonder about the Fens?



Handshakes all round - the **Anglers National Line Recycling** Scheme is expanding.

Mario Massimino, general manager of WSB Tackle, said: "We are extremely proud to be corporate sponsors. Stopping fishing line and its plastic carriers ending up in landfill and turning it into something useful must be the way forward. We are handing out recycling bins at our local tackle shops, fisheries and commercial charter boats. The response we are getting from our customers has been fantastic."

Zander angler Joanna Davies, of the Polish Lure Fishing Club, who helped organise protests about them being killed, said: "Moving zander alive is better than killing them, but in terms of controlling the numbers it is still pointless.

"I am a biologist, and think it's best to leave them alone, best for controlling numbers and cheapest. From the angling



"Cats are moved to commercials. If they will be interested in stocking zander, that will be great, though I've heard that getting a licence is almost impossible. "Also, it is lots to organise, but obviously if we find a way for CRT to have the money to move zander without killing

them, that would solve the

problem," Joanna concluded.

RIP Brian Watts – tributes were paid to Angler's Mail contributor Brian Watts after he passed away last week. **Proud Yorkshireman Brian** moved down to the Midlands and wrote reports for the Mail in the 1970s and '80s. His daughter, Christine, said: "He covered both river match fishing and in fact many aspects of river fishing, and kept his gear right to the end. He died at Russell's Hall Hospital, in Dudley, West Midlands, at 84, and has gone fishing in that big river in the sky." Mail editor Tim Knight said: "When I first started working on the magazine, Brian told me a swim to fish when I visited the River Severn at Bewdley, and he was spot-on. I had half a dozen barbel. RIP Brian, a real nice guy."

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66 It's our preferred option not to kill them. **99** JOHN ELLIS

Egg-eating ruffe should be removed



YOUR ANGLING WEEK AHEAD

Lunar predictions

Exclusive angling predictions for the week Dec 3-9 by leading astrologer **Marion Williamson**.

TUE: the watery, fishy Moon ensures success if you're not too rigid in your methods today. Leave things open: venue, techniques and mind. **WED:** the best day for catching something impressive – a Pisces Moon with a lucky Neptune conjunction – they'll be chucking themselves into your net. THU: a feisty Aries Moon lends itself to a gung-ho attitude, but be a little gentle or you'll spook every fish in the area. **FRI:** today's cosmic conditions make you stick to one area instead of moving around, but if you get a bit of height, you'll see lots of potential just around the corner. **SAT:** tense lunar angles to Saturn and Pluto could throw a few spanners in your swim and create lots of problems. But with a bit of focus and by keeping a cool head, you'll bag a big 'un. **SUN:** a peaceful Taurus Moon meets fortunate Jupiter – this is the perfect day to be on the bank. Add in a picnic and a pal and it could be heaven. MON: Taurus Moons like stability, so fish well-known spots and use tried-and-tested techniques. Your patience will be heartily rewarded.

 First time ruffe found in Lake Windermere

 Mini species threaten rare native fish The humble ruffe could threaten native species at Lake Windermere, such as Arctic charr.

Scientists have made the first conclusive sightings of ruffe in Cumbria's Lake Windermere – and fear the non-native mini predator could wreak havoc on protected species such as threatened Arctic charr and vendace.

A single individual ruffe was found when Centre for Ecology & Hydrology's scientist Ben James and colleagues examined catches from a monitoring station.

The finding confirms the presence of ruffe in the lake, which had already been inferred from environmental DNA surveys carried out in 2015.

It is unclear whether the species was introduced into Windermere directly, possibly following their use as livebait by anglers, or whether it came from Rydal Water 3 km upstream, where ruffe were previously introduced. Dr Stephen Thackeray, lake ecosystems group leader at CEH, said: "We do not yet know the current size of the Windermere population.



"However, ruffe are suited to successfully colonising new habitats. They can tolerate a wide range of water temperatures and chemical conditions; they feed on a variety of small fish and invertebrate prey and they can spawn at an early age and more than once a year.

"All of this translates into the potential for rapid population growth. Ruffe are also known to feed on the eggs and larvae of other fish, which may be a cause for concern. "It is clear that the the wider ecosystem."

The Environment Agency confirmed that ruffe are now on the unwanted list at England's largest natural lake, and said that anglers could help remove them.

An EA spokesperson told Angler's Mail: "In terms of possible impacts on ecology, as with any other introduced species, it has the potential to interfere with other species who utilise the same habitat and food sources.

"Due to Windermere being a large water body, we are unsure whether removing ruffe by rod and line would have any positive benefit on reducing the population. "However, in accordance with the regulatory byelaw associated with Windermere and catch limits, the removal of ruffe is permitted should an angler wish to do so."

Anglers TV PICK

MORTIMER & WHITEHOUSE: GONE FISHING

Catch two now-classic episodes of Paul and Bob's iconic first series. They kick off with Episode Three, where Paul teaches Bob how to fly fish for wild rainbow trout on a beautiful river in Derbyshire. This is followed by episode four, where Bob has a plan to help Paul recapture his youth, by trying to catch roach on Norfolk's River Wensum. BBC4, WEDNESDAY, 10.30pm

Windermere fish community is undergoing change, and that there is a need for continued vigilance if we are to understand the impacts that these changes are having on **UK Weather** Drier, colder weather coming in for the midweek period. Winds picking up for the weekend, bringing in rain, especially in the north west.

News This week's GREAT CATCHES

Chef's meaty chub



Mark AUSTIN obliterated his chub PB by 13 oz with this stunning fish of 7 lb 9 oz. Tackling the Great Ouse, near Milton Keynes, in Buckinghamshire, the 33-year-old executive chef from Bedfordshire used a Stonze weight to leger a Pallatrax Meat Beast squab on a size 8 Gripz hook. Mark said: "This tactic has produced five big chub of over 5 lb in two sessions on the same stretch. The fish fought very hard, hugging the bottom throughout. I was shocked to see the size of it when it surfaced.

"On my first short session I landed chub of 5 lb 7 oz, 5 lb 10 oz and 6 lb 8 oz, and then fish of 5 lb 2 oz and 7 lb 9 oz on my second. My target now is an 8 lb chub, and I'd also like to beat my perch PB of 4 lb 2 oz, a fish that I caught last winter," added Mark.





OLIVER WEBDALE followed up a PB 3 lb 10 oz eel, caught in late summer, with his biggest pike, at 14 lb. The seven-year-old Ixworth, Suffolk, angler legered a mackerel in a local pit during a weekend session that was plagued by dropped runs from suspected eels.

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MARTIN PAGET caught only one fish during a roving session on a River Thames tributary, but what a fish it was! This superb 3 lb 14 oz perch took the Morden, Surrey-based angler's quivertipped double lobworm on a size 8 hook, the stripy picking up the bait very delicately.

E-MAIL YOUR PICTURES TO: anglersmail@ti-media.com

AUDIOLOGIST Gavin Noone topped a catch of five barbel from his local River Severn with this 10 lb 12 oz specimen. Stourport, Worcestershire-based Gavin, 48, tackled a flooded stretch above Bewdley, where he feeder fished two 8 mm Severn Valley Ambush pellets in a crease.

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FLIFUSIAGE



ANDREW FLOWERS caught two river pike from his local Little Ouse at the same time, the best this 24 lb 2 oz specimen. Both were caught on running leger rigs with luminous beads and dead roach. The 30-year-old handyman from Brandon, Suffolk, said: "We only managed to take a picture of one of the pike, as the other one escaped the net. I reckon the one that got away was around 16 lb."

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Sean Simms

FISHING TACKLE

Carters get cats

FATHER and son duo Gary and Lucas Carter caught lots of fish during a six-day trip to Spain's River Ebro, including three 200 lb catfish and carp to 38 lb.

The Colchester, Essex-based pair were on a trip with Catfish Tours, and caught 'moggies' of 218 lb, 208 lb and 206 lb.

But they just failed to beat their PBs, as 54-year-old bricklayer Gary has had them to 243 lb, and Lucas's best is 224 lb. Lucas, 21, a trainee accountant, explained: "The three big catfish were backed up with a number of other fish of over 150 lb, along with plenty of smaller cats.

"We were guided by Ed Brett, who has provided us with five-star service year after year, always putting us on big fish.

"This is by far our best trip for the sheer number of big fish in one session.

"All of the catfish were caught on halibut pellets fished at range, using a Mequinenza-style approach, rowing the baits out from the bank.



"The carp were caught on boilies with small PVA bags of crushed pellets, though we only fished for them in the mornings," enthused Lucas.



Spoon-fed specimen

CHRIS SHERLOCK had only one Gish during a five-day stint at Furzebray Lakes, in Devon, but was thrilled with this 42 lb 8 oz mirror carp.

Hythe, Hampshire-based Chris, 19, fished a Sticky Baits The Krill pop-up over a solid PVA bag of pellets, spooned out to an island.





CHARLIE FENNER needed to use only one rod to catch this 35 lb common carp from Blasford Hill Fishery, near Chelmsford. Halstead, Essex-based Charlie, 22, presented 16 mm Sticky Baits The Krill Tuff Ones close in, next to a lily bed.



OLIVER COOKE's trek from Suffolk to Buckinghamshire day ticket Farlows Lake was a worthwhile one, as he bagged six carp, including PBs of 32 lb and 31 lb. The 25-yearold carper from Saxmundham offered a boilie-and-corn cocktail at 100 yards.







managed to catch one of the most sought-after original Longfield carp from Berkshire's Horton Church Lake – this 37 lb 14 oz common, known as Blind Eye. Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshirebased David offered a 16 mm Sticky Baits Manilla pop-up over 2 kg of crushed and chopped freebies.

STEVE FALCO was chuffed with this 39 lb 6 oz dark mirror from an undisclosed lake. The 47-year-old carp nut from Hatfield, Hertfordshire, fished a Sticky Baits Manilla pop-up over 50 freebies towards showing fish, at 60 yards.



MITCHELL MILLER caught this 32 lb 15 oz common carp from Frimley Pit 3, in Surrey, on his first trip after buying a winter ticket. After spotting some bubbles near some lily pads at 50 yards, the 26-year-old carper legered Mainline boilies over a few freebies.

E-MAIL YOUR PICTURES TO: anglersmail @ti-media.com



Angler's Mail fans have millions of years of experience, and answer a weekly question. This week...

Do you support the current move to shoot lots more cormorants?

Russell Thain: yes I do, judging by some of the photos I've seen lately. One was taking a pike of at least 5 lb, and the other was a large chub. Our fish stocks are under so much pressure, and something needs to be done to alleviate this onslaught.

dealing with the problem that costs fisheries thousands of pounds per year. They are nothing but a nuisance and eat over five times their own body weight daily. I would happily shoot to protect fish stocks.

Aaron Burnside: the same should be done with otters. l agree it's nature, but so many groups of otters and cormorants are wiping out fish stocks, the numbers should be controlled.

floating factories that hoover hundreds of tonnes of fish, were off the Kent coast. It may be time for bird lovers and fisheries to relocate mating pairs of cormorants to appropriate sea locations?

Mark Scott: nature first.

chickens, or a dog threatening his newborn lambs. Crows are blasted out of trees in the lambing season. If cormorants are destroying fish stocks, what's the difference? A cull by any fishery owner is common sense.

Micheal Ayling: I've been À on the Thames with boats for over 50 years and never seen cormorants until the last few years, except in the estuary. Now they're everywhere. Something needs to be done or there won't be any fish in the rivers or lakes.

Mike Harrison: urgent control is needed. Just fished a match on Killington Reservoir and 12 oz won where 20 lb would have been needed five years ago, all because of cormorants.

Dave Shipman:

understand it costs a lot of money to stock fisheries, but I think you're messing with nature. Cormorants have every right to be wherever they go. Just because we fish at venues doesn't mean the birds don't have a right to be there. It's called nature.

David Calderbank: my David Calderbank: my local day ticket fishery owner had a licence and he goes round the lake and if he sees a cormorant it is 'Boom! Bye bye, cormorant'. It's protecting his livelihood and also the local fishing habitat.

giving our fisheries time to Philip Tew: they are not recuperate. We must cull these marauding, fish-eating birds. What is the point of spending money restocking to feed cormorants.

Chris Hodson: they're living creatures and deserve to live.

What next? Wipe out anything that eats crops? It's about balance.

Melvyn Pruden: on Friday I saw around 30 pairs sitting on a barge on the Thames in central London. Something has to be done.

Sontrolling before it gets Jordan Felski: they need severely out of hand. Just like the grey squirrel.

Richard Warman: of course not. The birds are better at fishing than humans. Get over it.



Steve Hoggins: fact -A cormorants and goosanders are both invasive alien predators to any freshwater ecosystem in England. They cause long-term, catastrophic damage to fisheries, with severe economic consequences for the riparian owner. They are not meant to be there, and should be dealt with accordingly, to protect fish stocks. We shouldn't tolerate fish being viewed as an expendable resource. Fish deserve the same conservation and protected status as the birds.

Matt Cutts: something needs to be done. They are wiping out the whole ecosystem. Pike, perch and zander are disappearing due to cormorants wiping out their prey.

Jake Bigwood: cormorants are sea birds, supposed to be out at sea or on estuaries. Yes, we should be

James Fitzgerald: À something needs to be done about this very clever sea bird, but they've moved because of depleted sea stocks. Only recently two of the biggest fishing ships in the world,

sea should put at least £10m into building at least 100 fish farms all over the planet to try to restock the seriously depleted oceans. Then maybe the sea birds would return to their natural habitat.



NEXT WEEK: what is the best angling present you have ever got?

Match News

New World orders!

Angling Trust launch Feeder National

HE Angling Trust has finally sacked their unpopular qualification matches for the FIPS World Club Championships float and feeder events.

Announcing the 2020 National Championships schedule, the sport's governing body revealed two fresh initiatives – the launch of a new Feeder National and co-opting the long-running Sensas Challenge – to determine who represents England in 2021 FIPS World Clubs events. Winning team of the Sensas Challenge, on the Gloucester Canal on March 28/29, will earn a shot at the 2021 World Clubs float event, in either Italy or Croatia. Meanwhile, the top two sides in the inaugural Feeder National, on Sunday August 23 – also on the 'Glozzy' – will be heading to Ukraine in 2021.

The two-team opportunity in the feeder contest follows a FIPS rule change, which applies with immediate effect, giving this year's feeder heat runners-up Drennan Barnsley Blacks the chance to join winners Ringer Baits in the forthcoming World event in Bulgaria.

Barnsley are already

the more matches held to international rules in the UK the better, for our future on the World stage.



confirmed as England's representative in the prestigious, long-running World Clubs float Champs 2020 showdown in Serbia.

Victorious in France in 2017 and second in Croatia this year, Barnsley became England's default representatives by winning the Division 1 National - a long-established system prior to the AT's ill-judged introduction of qualifiers (for which lack of interest led to cancellation this year). Another attractive carrot



dangled by the FIPS rule changes is the granting of an automatic pass for the winners of the World Clubs float event to the next year's match. This could mean two English teams competing in future.

Given the fact that the Sensas Challenge is a teams-of-five event fished to international bait and tackle rules – a rare occurance in the UK – news of the switch is expected to be well received in the match community.

opened up a week ago," Mark told Angler's Mail.

"The more internationalrules matches we hold, the more young anglers will gain experience, and the better we will remain able to compete on the World stage in years ahead," he added.

An Angling Trust press release stated: "Last year saw our most well-attended Nationals for nearly a decade, and in line with this continued success, the Angling Trust is thrilled to announce the Angling Trust Feeder National, which will take place on the Gloucester Canal on Sunday August 23, 2020. "The format for the competition will follow international rules as closely as possible, and will be a teamsof-six event, with a £120 entry

This Barnsley team won Gold in the 2017 World Club Float Champs.

England manager Mark Downes, founder and organiser of the Sensas Challenge in the UK, certainly believes so.

"There is a clear demand for this match. Last year we had 33 teams fishing, and already this year I've got 27 teams registered, with entries only





Ringer Baits will represent England in the 2020 World Clubs feeder event. 12 | 3 DECEMBER anglersmail.com

2020 Nationals dates and venues

Sensas Challenge (World Float Clubs Qualification) – Sat/Sun, March 28/29

Team Commercial National Lindholme Lakes (25 teams max) – Sat, April 25

Juniors & Youth National Packington Somers – Sat, June 27

Ladies & Disabled National Gold Valley Lakes – Sat, July 18

Veterans (55-65 years) & Masters (66-plus) National Decoy Lakes – Wed, July 29

Fish'O legend Hall: "Never say never!"

A GENERATION raised on commercial fisheries where 200 lb-plus weights barely raise an eyebrow must struggle to understand how any match angler could relish the prospect of fishing canals where 5 lb is a mega weight.

And if that angler has tasted the glory of winning a major commercial classic such as Fish'O'Mania – not once but twice – their disbelief must double.

But for Matt Hall, winner



Individual National Grand Union Canal (Northants) – Sat, August 1

Division One National – Grand Union Canal (Northants) – Sat, August 15

Feeder National Gloucester Canal (World Clubs Feeder Qualification) – Sun, August 23

Division Two National Gloucester Canal – Sat, September 12

fee. All Angling Trust member clubs will be eligible to fish, and the winning side will get a chance to fish in the FIPS-ED World Feeder Club Champs, in Bulgaria or Ukraine in 2021. "Following this move, the decision has also been made to shift the qualification for the FIPS-ED World Float Club Championships to a dedicated match. This will be the already well-established Sensas Challenge in 2020, and qualification will go to the highest ranked English team for their chance to fish in either Slovenia or Italy in 2021."

of the Sky Sports-televised Fish'O Final in 2003 and 2009, scratching around for bites on canals is a big part of his winter fishing focus. And he's unlikely to ever change that.

Following the recent unveiling of qualifier dates and changes for next year's Fish'O format, *Angler's Mail* asked Awsworth, Nottinghamshire-based Matt if he'd be gunning for a third title.

"You should never say never. Everyone loves a sporting comeback," chuckled Matt. "But I've got to be realistic, I'm 57 now and my Fish'O days are done.

"I will always love the competition and will never knock it. But unless you put maximum effort in you stand absolutely no chance against the likes of Jamie Hughes, Andy Bennett and Andy May. People don't understand just how good they are at modern commercial fishing, how much better they are than all of us," he continued. "I worked hard to qualify for the final five times. Nowadays there are byes for the winner and ladies winner, plus international rounds. But I understand why changes like that have been made. Increasing diversity is important to keep it on TV. If we ever make it to Mars I'm sure they'd be quick to stage a qualifier there."

Matt's personal angling has now come full circle, with winter canal campaigns as part of the Cadence Superteam bidding to qualify for the AT Winter League Final as runners-up to Drennan Leicester. "It's been a hard league personally. I had a few ounces in Round 1 on the Soho Loop, then blanked in Round 2 on the Walsall Canal. But we've just won Round 4, and we haven't given up on overtaking them yet," continued Matt.

"In the warmer months I tend to fish either rivers or feeder matches on natural venues. The commercial scene has got to a point where you might need to haul out 300 lb of carp. I don't enjoy that kind of fishing, and physically the demands would be too much.

"My highlight nowadays, since getting selected for the England Masters squad last year, is the World Championships. It's in Slovenia next year and, together

Drennan Barnsley Blacks were runners-up in the 2019 World Clubs in Croatia. Moreton's meaty Severn success

THE annual Bridgnorth AS Fur and Feather Open attracted 60 anglers to tackle the River Severn around the Shropshire town, and 40 weighed in, despite the river still being 4 ft above normal level.

Severn Float League champ Tony Moreton (Preston Innovations) proved his all-round ability, top scoring with five barbel and two chub for 30 lb 14 oz, on legered meat near Linley Bridge.

Bridgnorth AS stalwart Vaughan Witton took second with three boilie-tempted barbel for 23 lb 9 oz, while Mick Fuller slotted in third with 20 lb 3 oz. The contest also raised £200 for the Midlands Air Ambulance service, after a post-match raffle packed with festive fayre.



Thatchers' day on K & A

PI THATCHERS won the final round of the Commercial House League, on the Kennet and Avon Canal at Bathampton, to secure the A Division title with 81 points, from Mosella Bathampton A on 70. Sensas Nomads topped B Division with 77.5. Some consolation for the runners-up came with a 23 lb 1 oz individual victory for team stalwart Nicky Johns, who drew on the wides at Long Pond and alternated red maggots over groundbait on the pole with waggler and casters for skimmers, chublets and roach. Meanwhile, 60 miles east, on the same canal's Wooton-to-Brimslade stretch, in Wiltshire, Gary Etheridge (Garbolino Blackmore Vale) won the 46-entry Upper Thames WL practice Open with 32 lb 11 oz of bream to 4 lb, perch to 2 lb 8 oz and roach and hybrids, on maggots and groundbait with casters at 9 m, from an end peg at Farmers.







Marching ahead after ankle injury

Three weeks on the sidelines with torn ankle ligaments have left match fishing ace Sean Ashby hankering for a return to competitive action.

SIT stands (or not in my Case), I haven't been fishing for three weeks, due to tearing ligaments in my left ankle. My only outing was a disappointing silver fish league match at my local Rycroft Fisheries, at Hemington, which fished way below par. I drew peg 14 on the Old Canal, not the best area, but I still expected a decent day's sport with skimmers, roach and perhaps a few bonus tench. After four hours, my keepnet contained just two perch and one roach. In the final 40 minutes I had a run of bites from roach, but they were small and only amounted to 2 lb. I can only put the venue's poor form down to the ridiculous amount of rain that swamped the Derbyshire area throughout November. With no other matches to report on, I've brought forward my 'look ahead to 2020' column, which I'd planned for the Christmas/New Year. Here are some of the matches I'm looking forward to over the next 12 months.

Fenland town's Old River Nene.

second in the past three years, my Sensas Starlets team are due a win. The Old Nene at March is one of Sean's favourite venues, thanks to catches such as this 20 lb-plus roach and skimmer haul, in a contest last winter.

This is too good a match to miss – a guaranteed 100-peg sell-out on a venue that is fishing better than ever, with big weights of skimmers, including a new venue match record of 60 lb by Steve Winter in a late-October event.

The larger skimmers seem tightly shoaled at present, but March is an incredible venue, where every area delivers a fish race, and 30 lb target weights in many sections, made up of roach, perch and skimmers.

Even the hardest sections normally need a double-figure net to win, a minimum of 150 fish.

Bread punch can work, but my experience from recent winters at March has led to me favouring groundbait and pinkies, for sheer reliability. Light rigs are essential. I generally use 4x10, 4x12 and 4x14 Serge UK pole floats, with a size 18 Sensas 3210 hook. I start down the middle, then follow the fish over to shallower water as the match proceeds. Groundbait is my old faithful of Sensas Gros Gardon and Canal Fine Noire, mixed 50/50. After a Christmas break, I'll be heading back to The Fens frequently in the build-up to the Angling Trust Winter League Final, in late February. After two third places and a

Sensas events at home and abroad

Once the Winter League Final is done and dusted, my focus switches to the Sensas Challenge, on the Gloucester Canal.

It's a four-man team event fished over two days to international rules – float only, maximum 13 m pole and strict bait limits – and I rate it as one of the most prestigious matches on the domestic circuit.

And I'm not alone, as in recent years qualifiers have sold out, with waiting lists.

The 'Glozzy' is certainly a challenging venue, with depths of up to 16 ft. Roach, skimmers, bream, and in some town areas bleak are the target species. Sport isn't always brilliant in early spring, but everybody enjoys it and the atmosphere is superb – helped by at least one French team fishing every year. Depending on overall entry, the top five or six UK teams in the Final receive an invite to the Sensas Challenge Final, held in France every October. Regular readers of this column will recall that I was part of a Sensas Starlets side that won the 2019 title ahead of

CHECK

'EM

OUT!



127 talented rival teams. Venue for our attempt to defend our title, in October 2020, is a canal at Saint-Quentin, just 90-minutes drive from Calais. It's a great venue, full of roach and skimmers, and it is somewhere that we know a fair bit about, having fished there two years ago.

On the first weekend in April I will be travelling to France for the Sensas Cup, a two-day individual event with one day on the River Loire and the other on Chateaudun Lakes, where you could be fishing for roach, perch, skimmers, catfish and carrasio. The 100-peg event includes several English, German and Spanish anglers hoping to defeat the cream of France's match fishermen. I was lucky enough to win it three years ago, and with £4,000 to be won as the top prize it's something I'd love to repeat.

Quick step into Fens campaign

Hopefully, my ankle will hold up and I can 'Quick March' back onto the match scene, starting with next weekend's March DAA Christmas Open, on the

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Sean in action during a past **RiverFest Final**, his priority among domestic individual events for 2020.







A great social scene is part of Ireland's enduring attraction for match festival anglers, and so, too, is great sport from a range of species, including (inset) Sean's personal faves – hybrids.

Team England.

Planning for these events is a case of 'subject to selection'. I'm really hoping to be included when the squads are announced.

The Euros is scheduled for July, on the River Sorraia at Coruche, in Portugal. I've been there before, and the fishing changes every year sometimes barbel and carp on waggler, sometimes small fish on a pole. One thing I do know is that it will be very hot, up to 44 degrees at that time of year. I remember once losing a waggler and going swimming to retrieve it. I've had colder baths. When I was there it was all big wagglers up to over 20 g with just a swivel and no shot down the line. Feed was 'stickymag' for barbel of 2 oz to 2 lb. September's World Champs will be on Italy's River Mincio, where Alan Scotthorne won the first of his five individual Gold medals, back in 1996. Info suggests that there will be a lot of Bolo' and slider fishing for chub, carp and a rudd-type fish called scardola in this beautiful part of northern Italy, near Lake Garda. With Team England currently unsponsored, fishing this big international event will be an expensive affair for everyone involved. The pride of representing your country is a driving force, but hopefully new partners can be found to back the team in the year ahead.

The appeal of Ireland

When May arrives, Ireland beckons for many, and the annual three weeks of spring festival fishing in the Mahons, the Fermanagh Classic and the Mal Scott Memorial.

Great fishing and great fun, with lots of pre-prep required to cover every potential situation.

Pole rigs with various floats from 0.5 to 12 g, whip rigs, sliders for running-line float work, and feeder rods capable of fishing to beyond 80 metres are all needed.

Ireland's Erne system offers the wild fishing that I enjoy so much. You'll need lots of bait, big hooks and strong lines to catch fast when you draw well on pegs holding quality roach, perch, skimmers, bream and, my favourites, hybrids. There's something special about hybrids. Lean and extremely strong, they never

know when to give in, and alongside skimmers they seem to be getting more prolific in recent years.

There still 200 people fishing the Classic. It's the title that everyone who visits Ireland – and all of the top locals – want to win.

I've never come close yet, but you've got to be in it to win it, and you're only ever one good draw away from a chance to win the most sought-after title in Ireland. Maybe 2020 will be my year?

making the 2019 RiverFest Final, thanks to securing a 'last chance saloon' ticket for the final qualifier, at Shrewsbury.

That's if the venue ever drops enough to hold that match, then the two-day Final. At the time of writing this, dates for those events were still unconfirmed, following a month of cancellations due to unsafe flood conditions.

If I miss out this year, it would be the first time in seven years that I haven't fished the Final. Big money matches are the future in all branches of match fishing, but this one is especially important to me, as rivers are my favourite venues. There's something special about fishing on moving water. The only events that hold higher priority and prestige for me are the European and World Championships, which I've fished for over 15 years with

RiverFest and England hopes

My No.1 target on the domestic match scene is RiverFest.

Once the new rivers season opens, I'll be fishing as many qualifiers as possible, in a bid to make the Final.

But back to the near future, I could still have a chance of

STEVE COLLET Britain's leading all-round angler loves taking on challenges at all kinds of venues. Read his triumphs and disasters, warts 'n' all, exclusively in AM.

I could get a job on QVC!



THIS WEEK'S WISSION

Any new edge, bait or method can be exciting for even the most dyed-in-the-wool angler, so I was very keen to try out a range of groundbait that has been specifically produced for the winter months. Without trying to sound like I'm on the QVC shopping channel, I went along to one of my local ponds to put them through my test – the 'it's absolutely freezing cold' test. **Venue:** Shirebrook

Lakes, near Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, can be fished on a day ticket. It's controlled by the Shirebrook Miners' Welfare AC. Tel: 01623 744095 or 07790 442158. **Weather:** the coldest day of the year. It was minus 4 degrees Celsius overnight, and I was greeted with clear skies and no wind. Three of the four lakes were frozen over. Temperature: 2 degrees. Wind: 1-3 mph easterly. Air pressure: 999 mbar. **DON'T** know about you, but no matter how many times I go fishing, I am always seeking an edge, but just a little one, as I'm not greedy.

If I catch ten fish, I want to catch 11 the next time. If I don't catch any, I want to know why, and I will just sit about sulking until I'm back on the bank. At this time of year, those little tweaks and twists are needed more than ever. You run the risk of your session being feast or famine if you plonk yourself in any peg without having any prior knowledge of how it has been fishing. Strange as it sounds, it's the famine pegs that I want to get the most out of.

I popped over to my local lake to try something that I hadn't done before. It was another itch that needed scratching. Which bait to use in winter has always been a conundrum. Do you use spicy and oily or sweet and dry, in black, brown, red or white? When you have selected your peg and worked out what colour bait to try, you then have the mind-bending question that can make a good day turn bad, or vice versa: how much should you feed? I have been on lakes where



66 Do you use spicy and oily or sweet and dry, in black, brown, red or white? **99**



one piece, yes one piece, of corn is all you need for a bite, and others where you could feed ten pints of maggots and still not catch a fish. I have been on lakes where you pick a peg and just throw out a white wafter on a straight lead. That's it. Any feed will kill your swim dead. So, what do you do? Well, while I was in a tackle shop, came across a few packs of groundbait specifically designed for winter, with the taglines 'Low Feed' and 'Cool Water', and immediately I thought I could gain an edge. While I was there, I thought

I would buy all the terminal bits to go with it, a whole new tackle wardrobe for the winter season.

A Guru Method feeder, a pack of ready-tied rigs, some pink dumbbell thingamajigs and two bags of groundbait relieved me of a few quid, the kind of amount that would have Chappy applying for a loan. You may think that's a bit steep for a day's fishing, especially if a blank is on the cards, and with three out of the four lakes frozen solid, a blank was definitely on the cards.

Continued over





Steve's WINTER TRAF

Fish on! My bait worked,





I keep groundbait moist with drips from my net.





and the action warmed me up.



Still, after the session, at least I'd have a few baits and bits to use on another day.

After taking three hours to get all of my layers on, I spoke to a few other anglers who had also braved the freezing cold weather, to see how they had got on. Understandably, it had been tough going. As a few fish were showing to the left of me, I plonked myself well away from them, as it would have been pretty pointless to 'practice' on a shedload of fish. Fishing a small Method feeder, I prepared two lines, one about four rod lengths out with a dark mix, the other about 30 yards out with a light, sweet mix, both with no, or little, feed. The plan was to keep putting an enticing menu down without worrying that one feederful of bait might fill a fish up.

I clipped the lines on my reel clips and cast both feeders five times, to try to attract any passing fish.

Judging by the info on the packets, I pictured a carp swimming into the swim, then having a good browse through the pile of 'stuff', before finding my hook bait, the only thing worth munching. That was the theory, anyway. No sooner had I put the rods on rests than the old grey matter started whirring, and I started to think how on earth would they see black groundbait, or will it stick out like a sore thumb, because the bottom is a clay colour? I then wondered whether I had fed enough. Should I get the catapult out? After a few recasts and a period of sitting on my hands, I couldn't bear it anymore. I'm not the most patient angler, by any means, so the long swim was going to get the treatment. The hook bait remained the same, but the groundbait was light in colour and fluffy in texture, and it had a sweet smell to it. Would this be the key? Don't forget that I had already put five feederfuls of groundbait into each swim, so I was hoping that I wouldn't

Pink wafters are simple and effective.

Pop your bait in first.

The perfect winter trap groundbait and a hi-vis hook bait.

> On both of the lines I would use the little pink thingamajigs that I had just purchased, with the focus on the attractiveness of the groundbait, rather than the hook bait. By the time I'd set up, the other anglers had succumbed to the cold. I had my gloves ready for a period of inactivity but, as I always say, 'You won't get a bite in the house.'





5



This can remain motionless for an age in winter.

He didn't look too pleased.



need to wait long before fish started to feed on it.

And I didn't. It's a strange thing, a bite out of the blue, in winter. In a split second, you find yourself questioning your sanity. Was it a bite or was I seeing things?

It was definitely a bite, as the tip started jumping and then it curved right round.

Keeping this carp away from the far side snags wasn't going to be a problem, as I was using summer bagging gear (6 lb hook length and 8 lb main line), which would allow me to apply pressure on the fish.

Picking up the fish was painful, believe it or not, as it was absolutely bloody freezing. Thinking that might be the only fish on a very cold day, I wobbled my head when the tip went round again.

Fish No.2, was followed by 3, 4 and 5, and I'd forgotten it was winter, as I had switched to bagging mode. There wasn't a dull period for the next hour, as the fish came thick and fast, and all were beauties, fighting as hard as they do in summer. Out of interest, I went back on the line with the dark groundbait, but I didn't even get a 'knock'. I have no idea why. It has 'fried my noodle'. All the experts say that you have to use dark groundbait in winter, but here I am, bagging over a light one.

Whatever the reason, I was genuinely sold on this stuff, and even our cynical, seen-it-all-before Chappy was impressed. But, and this is a big but, did the groundbait catch me fish, or was it the confidence that it gave me to keep recasting without thinking about filling the fish up or killing the swim? Who cares? I enjoyed catching carp on the coldest of days, and the session sent my brain into overdrive. Maybe I'll use this bait when targeting specimen carp on my syndicate. Fishing... you can't help think, eat and sleep it when you're hooked.





JACK PERKS The natural history photographer has filmed all 53 UK freshwater fish species, and this week he reveals how he captured a mini predator.



The forgotten stic

ANY of us will be familiar with the three-spined stickleback, often captured in jam jars and small nets. There's also a nine-spined stickleback, Britain's smallest freshwater fish, growing to little over 3 cm, and mostly confined to the East of England. Then there's a third cousin in the stickleback family, the imaginatively named 15-spined stickleback. Technically speaking, they have anything between 14 and 17 spines, so their name must refer to the average number of spines, though I can't imagine people going around counting them. Unlike their little relatives, they are a marine fish, often found in harbours and jetties among weed. These sticklebacks are brown with an olive tinge on their backs, and have large eyes to spot their prey. They can reach a whopping 25 cm in length, and the male will guard the offspring in a small nest in seaweed. Being distant relatives of seahorses, it's no surprise that they exhibit strong parental care. My first encounter with these weird-looking fish was at Weymouth, when I was trying to film sand smelt for the



first time with all-round fish enthusiast Dominic Garnett and light rock fishing (LRF) extraordinaire Andy Mytton. After quickly finding sand smelt, we went to the harbour

to fish for whatever came along. It was a fairly sunny day, so there were plenty of people around, and boats were moving through. I have to admit that I've always been a practical

angler, wanting to use the best method to catch fish, so when Andy and Dom presented me with some tiny rubber lures for catching blennies, I did pause for a moment, thinking whether

A close-up of a 15-spined stickleback (*Spinachia spinachia*), a cousin of the three- and nine-spined sticklebacks.





I could sneak a bit of ragworm on the hook, but I gave the rubber a chance. It was great watching Andy fish, as he has so much enthusiasm, running up and down the jetty. At one point he was shaking at the prospect of a black-faced blenny taking his lure, and we filmed it sucking in and then spitting out the rubber. Being landlocked in Nottinghamshire, I don't get to do much sea fishing. I feel much more at home along a riverbank, but I'm an all-rounder, both with my filming and fishing, so relish the chance of catching new species on new methods. Many of the harbours around the south coast are excellent for LRF, due to the sheer multitude of species found in and around them, from the more familiar species of bass, flounder and mullet, to the mediterranean interlopers such as triggerfish and gilthead bream, both far more common around our shores in recent years. LRF is not about specimen hunting, as all fish are welcome, no matter what size they are. It's more about how many species you can catch on an artificial, which requires a great deal of skill.

I largely stuck to one spot, and I could see some shapes looming near the pillars of the harbour front. I'm a fairly visual person, hence why I love photography, and really enjoy watching fish in clear water having a go at a lure or bait. I first thought that the shapes were small pike, but pike don't live in saltwater, so I donned a pair of polarised glasses and spotted some 15-spined sticklebacks. To try to catch one, I threaded a tiny bit of Isome on a size 18 hook with a couple of shot to weight it down. Despite their size, they have miniscule mouths, so are tricky to catch, making them a prized fish in the LRF community. It's when I found myself staring intensely at a fish that was only a few inches long that I realised that I had joined the ranks of Dom and Andy, becoming a fully fledged LRF angler. I twitched the lure and a fish struck it with great gusto. I can't say it was a rod-shattering fight on 6 lb line, but my heart was in my mouth as I carefully swung it in. I had a huge cheesy smile, and I was beginning to understand what Andy and Dom saw in this lark. The sticklebacks were mostly Jack managed to hook and swing in this ferocious fish in miniature, a 15-spined stickleback.

Hooked on LURE FISHING



Jack worked with Dom and Andy on producing the book *Hooked on Lure Fishing*, which is packed full of lure tips, for all kinds of fresh and stillwater species. You can purchase a copy at www.dgfishing.co.uk

hanging around the boats, picking off shrimps and tiny morsals of food that floated by. It surprised me how predatory they were, as they quickly attacked the lure when it went past them, sometimes two or three of them fighting over it. We spent most of the afternoon catching more sticklebacks and plenty of other species, before retiring for a cider or two. If you get the chance, it's well worth having a go for some of the mini species lurking around our harbours.

JOHN BALEY You'll always learn loads and be inspired by this vastly experienced traditional angler, who also relishes exploring the latest coarse techniques... with help from his friends.

Catchabig

John holding Will Leonard's PB1 lb10 oz roach, taken this November.

ANY of us remember what Liverpool legend Bill Shankly said about football and life, and the same has been true with me and roach, but with knobs on.

When I was a kid fishing the Macclesfield and Peak Forest canals, a two-ouncer was a good one, but I yearned for the two-pounders from the Hampshire Avon and River Wensum that I saw featured in the Mail.

Those silver-sided, scarlet-finned fantasies were all my heart's desire, the fuel of my dreams.

Of course, there have been other roach rivers in my life, too numerous to mention, but it has always been the Avon and the Wensum that have been the meccas. Throughout roaching history, they have been the two top rivers for two-pounders. With my driving test behind me, and with student life beginning, I had the time to fish both of these rivers. In the first of endless mini

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vans, I was up and down the A338, to fish the Avon, and also the A1067, to fish along the banks of the Wensum.

Two rivers different in so many ways, they were only really equal in terms of monster roach.

I fished the Avon up until five years ago, and I worshipped it, but geography and my canal roots always kicked in. I lived in Norfolk and worked in Norwich, so the Wensum ran outside my back door.

Vitally, it was smaller and more intimate than the Avon, a river that always awed me with its muscularity. The greater of the two river roach giants, I hear you ask? Equal, in my book. It has been a privilege for a Stockport lad to have known them both.

roach men have lost, and why. But the whole thrust of this column is the potential roach comeback on both rivers.

Open the *Mail* any time between now and mid-March and you are likely to see reports of 2 lb-plus redfins from Britford, Winkton, Longford or anywhere along the Avon.

Perhaps the work of the Avon Roach Project is coming of age. Perhaps the protection afforded roach by river men such as Pete Orchard is bearing fruit. Perhaps it is just the cycle of river life that is seeing big roach hitting the net again. And perhaps the Wensum is

Ups and downs and ups again

Any coarse angler knows what old guys like me, John Wilson, Owen Wentworth, Gerry Swanton, Dave Howes and scores of dyed-in-the-wool



beginning to stir in similar fashion as we move into the winter of 2019/20?

I have haunted three stretches of my home river for the past 14 months. These five or six miles are, in truth, the only acres of water that truly grip me like a vice. I can't get them out of my head. It is painfully true that over this period I haven't seen a 'two' landed but, my, I have seen fish way over the magic mark.

Night after night I have driven home, happy with what I have seen caught, but with a real ache for a fish a few ounces bigger.

Like the Avon, there are slabs of roach back in Norfolk, and I'm so close to landing some big ones. I am simply desperate to get the Wensum back on the legendary river roach map.



succession before the night when I landed my first three, at 3 lb 2 oz. In my best season, I landed nigh-on 100 two-pounders, but I was out on the river 200 days, often fishing two sessions, early and late. Mark Wintle's fabulous Big Roach 1 and Big Roach 2 books explain the challenge of catching a 2 lb river roach best. Even heroes such as Terry Lampard and Vic Beyer would take endless blanks in their stride. Big roaching in rivers has always been about putting pieces of a puzzle into place. Suddenly, the river and the weather come right, and history is made with some great roach catches. Then, all of a sudden, they are gone, and the grind starts all over again. Let's not forget that if the

Big redfins, big problems

Roach of over 2 lb have rarely been easy. It is easy to look back through rose-tinted glasses, but the roaching reality was somewhat darker. I recorded 33 blanks in



big roach quest was hard last century, it is even tougher today, simply because there are fewer fish.

If, like me, you think a 2 lb redfin is worth any hardship, where do you begin?

Huge roach pointers Now that I am firmly back in the

Now that I am firmly back in the big roach game, I'd like to share my beliefs, based on 50 years of their pursuit.

First, let me say, you can never be sure. All these rules that I'm about to lay down can be broken. Just when you think you have sussed these fish, they humiliate you and bring you crashing down. Forty years ago, on a freezing January night, with a biting easterly wind ripping up the swim, a massive roach came



Continued over

to the surface to sip in a some sodden crust. That should never have happened, so never say never when it comes to the behaviour of monster fish. However, if you are looking for 'mostlys', here's my advice.

Weather and river conditions

East winds kill sport, and northerlies are not far behind. I detest falling barometers.

Air temperatures in excess of 7-8 degrees are best, along with mild westerlies and cloud cover. However, big roach do feed in bright light, and in daytime temperatures less than half that figure, if you can find them.

Dawn, dusk and up to three hours into dark are the best times to catch big roach, but water colour is key. If visibility is less than 12-15 in., roach will feed day-long. If the colour drops out as you fish, expect sport to stop.

Best winter baits

l see no point in using anything but bread in various forms, maggots and sweetcorn. As a rule, I favour maggots and corn when I am trotting, but bread flake when fishing static on the bottom.

I loosefeed more than I did. If you watch bait in the flow, much of it goes everywhere, and unless the river is very still, a pinch of maggots or liquidised bread simply vanishes.

Trotting and 'tipping

I love to trot when the wind is slight and the visibility is around 12-18 in.

If visibility is more than that, feel that a float is too obvious to a big roach, so I'll opt for a static bait on the bottom. I will use a quivertip, but I have yet to find a decent successor to my 1970s Persuader. Any suggestions? I prefer to lay-on in the margins, often a couple of feet out. A float with buoyancy up top is great, and I put the shot 6-9 in. from the hook. The float is set a couple of feet overdepth, more in strongish flows. The Drennan Acolyte rod range is cracking for this, due to their wand-type tips.



My favourite swims

Roach are hugely nomadic, but I do like long, steady glides averaging 5 ft deep, especially where the riverbed is clean.

I like slower, deeper bends and runs beneath willows, but alders especially. I have no doubt that thick marginal reed beds attract roach, for their cover and protection.

I like slower, deeper sections of a river above mills in December to January, but faster, streamier sections in the last 6-8 weeks of the season.

Tackling a swim

On big rivers, you can settle, bait and build. On smaller rivers, such as the Wensum, uber-wary roach tend to shy away from prolonged

disturbance. Land a couple of smaller roach, for example, and you will scare their grandmothers.

During a small river session, might chose anything from five to ten swims, fishing each one for half an hour in rotation, other anglers permitting.



Going for the one

I do believe that long-term baiting of a swim can persuade big roach to visit it on a reliable basis. This is something that I am just about to embark on, along some all-but-deserted stretches that I know of.

A campaign like this can produce big fish like no other approach, provided you have the time, the application and the right access. I'd suggest half a bucket of mash with grains of corn mixed in. You might attract Signal crayfish, too, but they will not deter the roach in the least. Then we have night fishing. In the 1970s and '80s, over 70 per cent on my big roach came after dark. Age has softened me. I no longer relish the wind, cold and sleet of winter nights like I did. This choice is dependent on you and your lifestyle. Me? I'm stealing myself for two night sessions a week.

The perfect laying-on set-up, presented in a slack, close to some reeds.



John's roach floats of choice.

Beware addiction I'm not being OTT here. Back

John's POINT OF VIEW What's caught my attention this week!

Make 'em proud

behind a memory equally golden, and roles that have been impossible to fill. So, in these dark winter days, how do we pay homage to their legacies? Both Rob and John were teachers and communicators, and it is good to help anglers young and old. Angling is a sport for all, like no other, and whilst we are right to

focus on kids, older anglers often need a helping hand, perhaps with a lift to a water or a hand with a heavy basket. How we behave on the bankside was a big deal with both men. Litter was a particular horror for John. Even empty tea bags belong at home, not rotting in the margins of a river or lake.

those who enjoy water in other ways. Saying hi to an elderly dog walker doesn't cost anything, and can enhance an otherwise lonely evening.

Let's take on board the pleasures of each and every fishing session, remembering the little things that we take for granted. None of us is here forever, and none of us knows how many sessions remain to be fished. Never again watch a kingfisher uncaringly, and perhaps think of these two men as you do.

IT IS just around a year ago that fishing lost two East Anglian legends.

John Wilson was known to everyone, but Robert Shanks was equally loved by the whole Norwich and Broadland community, angling and otherwise. I'd say both have left

Swearing is a no-no, especially considering how sound carries over water.

Above all, let's fish with a smile on our faces, saying hello to all



MY RECENT ROACH RIVERS

Here are the rivers where I have fished for my beloved redfins this century, apart from the Wensum and Avon.

Dorset Stour – some lovely roach to 1 lb-plus.

Test – best fish 1 lb 7 oz.
Frome – best fish 1 lb.
Wye (around Hereford) – best fish 1 lb 6 oz.

Trent – best fish 10 oz.
Bure – best fish 2 lb 3 oz.
Tidal Yare – best fish 1 lb 12 oz.
Thames – best fish 6 oz.

Do you believe in monsters?

in the day, big roach hooked me more than I did them. I was addicted.

I felt empty when I was away from a cold, dark riverbank. I

The Tweed – blank.

actually felt guilty when I was not out on the bank. This was an obsession that interfered with my work and my family life. Redfin obsession? There is no challenge like that of catching a 2 lb river roach. To catch them is a triumph like no other, many would agree. Good luck, and mind how you go!



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GUEST INSTRUCTION

AMI URUNIA



An addiction to ri

South Coast taxi driver **Nathan Edgell** is addicted to pike fishing at this time of year, especially when it comes to targeting wild river predators that have slipped under the radar. Preferring to fish short sessions, the Fladen-sponsored piker has developed a tactic that has helped him to bank more fish. Here's how.

MABSOLUTELY addicted to fishing for predators. River pike are my true love. From October through to March, I'm out on the bank as often as I can be, usually two or three half-day sessions a week, but more if I can get away with it. I love being out on rivers, as they are wild, challenging and unpredictable. I'd rather fish a local water and catch a 7 lb fish that's probably never seen a hook before than travel, queue up and then fish a popular water further afield.

Catching a fish is just the cherry on an already beautiful cake. I just love being out in our countryside, with all the flora and fauna it has to offer. Being married with two children, I have to make the most of my time on the bank. Due to an absence of stillwaters and canals local to me, around Dorchester, in Dorset, I've learned my craft on Wessex



Deadbait switch

Over the years, I've learned a great deal about river pike, especially their behaviour and habitat. I have refined my approach over time, and I'm now able to get the best results in the shortest amount of time.

The key to fishing for river pike is being mobile, especially if you are constrained by time, and with shorter daylight hours in winter, along with other commitments, most anglers do not spend a great deal of time on the banks.

I like to fish with lures, as they allow me to cover a lot of water. My biggest lure-caught river pike is 33 lb, a catch that was featured in Angler's Mail. I love lure fishing, as it's a great way to catch pike, but I also lure fish for another reason. Fishing with lures, especially the biggest, brightest and ugliest ones, is actually a great way of locating pike, as they will often break cover and follow them.

missed or half-hearted takes, and other times you lose fish. With this in mind, I always have a few Fladen Slotted Pike Bung Floats and some size 4 treble hooks in my lure bag, and will add a few packs of deadbaits, usually roach, just before I leave my house for a session.

When a pike follows a lure but doesn't take it, I don't even have to untie my set-up, as I can simply attach the Slotted Bung Float to the line, remove my lure, and replace it with a treble hook on the lure trace.

I then slip a deadbait on

Sometimes you get

the treble, hooked through the back, behind the dorsal fin, before casting it out. More often than not, I will get a take in minutes.

This method allows me to travel extremely light, and also allows me to fish in a good-looking area for a bit, giving me a break from lure fishing.

My biggest fish after switching from a lure to a deadbait is 27 lb, and I've also had several other 20s.



Nathan Edgell's stealthy approach helped him to tempt this wild pike.



rivers. I'll fish for pike anytime and anywhere, and I've caught them from all types of water, but my favorite will always be a flowing one. In my eyes, river pike really are the stars of the show, as they have to survive floods, drought, predation and anglers. To get big, they have to target wild food in a hostile environment, which certainly isn't easy. That's what makes them special.

Seeing is believing

Over the years I've done at least 25 slideshow presentations in different regions around the country, for the Pike Anglers' Club of Great Britain and other clubs in Ireland and Scotland. I've read countless books and gleaned lots of information about Esox lucius, and love old tales of pike taking dogs, and of anglers having two-hour fights with huge pike in Irish loughs. **Continued over**



While these old tales may or may not be true, there are a couple of observations that I see or hear about that I just don't agree with.

The first of these is the old classic that "pike are easy targets, as they will take anything". On a particular day, yes, this may be the case, but tell that to the thousands of anglers who spend hundreds of pounds on lures, deadbaits and tickets, only to then clock up a number of blanks in winter.

River pike, in my opinion, certainly aren't easy, and definitely will not take anything that's offered to them. When I leave my house for a session, I have one target, and that's not to blank. On most trips I like to fish for one fish. If I catch one, I'm happy, but it often takes all the skill and dedication that I can muster. It's anything but easy. Maybe you can wrap some

tin foil around a hook and catch a pike, but doing it consistently takes a little more than that.

The second observation that I'd like you to consider is the old saying that's banded about all the time, which goes along the lines of: "Pike follow the bait fish" or "find the bait fish, find the pike".

This may be true to a certain extent on stillwaters, but it is the last thing that they do in rivers.

I walk miles along riverbanks in autumn and winter, searching every margin and slack for pike, and I've yet to see a pike moving through the river to follow a baitfish.

You'll be lucky even to see a baitfish in this time and, believe

How I attack a river swim

Obstructions in a river, such as trees, bushes and bridges, provide slacker water for pike to lay up and ambush their prey. Remember to stay a rod length back from the water to begin with, keeping noise to a minimum, as pike will often be next to the nearside bank, where they will pick up vibrations from the bank easily.

Areas of slack water are the perfect places to find pike in autumn and winter. This large slack is created by an upstream tree, and is a real hotspot for predators.

They are usually caused by an obstruction upriver, and pike feeding actively will often be holding just off the crease, in the slacker water, ready to grab anything that passes by.

It's easy to be persuaded by the saying 'the grass is always greener on the other side', but always fish the side that you are on before considering the far bank.

The main flow is the last 5 place that I cast to, as it's rare to find fish in fast water. **Underwater features, such as** old weedbeds and rocks, are areas where pike like to lie up, making them great areas to present your lure or bait.

Top tips

Use good quality traces and main lines. Don't skimp on tackle, because river pike will exploit any weakness that you have in your set-up. They fight incredibly hard, so go heavy. I use up to 80 lb Fladen Maxximus braid, as it allows me to bully fish in quickly, avoiding any snags. I'll never lose a potential fish of a lifetime because of using weak tackle.

me, I've looked for them. The first thing a pike needs in the harsh winter environment of a river is a safe and secure place to lie up, and the biggest fish are often found in the best places.

These areas include slack water or in the margins, where pike can ambush their prey. Once pike have found a safe spot, they will expend very little energy, patiently waiting for food, but will rarely go looking for it.

In winter, it's inevitable that rivers will flood, and fish of all species can't stay out in heavy flow, so they will enter the safer, slacker areas, and guess who is already there, waiting patiently? Yes, it's a pike.

Favourite Softy

could fill this whole feature



of the Lure Attack features for Angler's Mail a few years back.

Over the past two years my number one go-to lure has become the Fladen Maxximus Softy softbait. They come in eight colours and two sizes, 55 and 105 g, and they both work incredibly well for river pike, but will catch equally well on canals and stillwaters, too.

They come with a

separate stinger hook and a quick-change weight. Pike just seem to love them. Gone are the days of using big lures that sink straight to the bottom. What I love about the newer

them incredibly slowly while still imparting the required action to trigger a take. You can also leave the lure for the maximum amount of time in a pike's strike zone without any risk of it snagging on the bottom.

The Fladen Maxximus Conrad Softy is perfect, and retails for under £10.

A typical session

As I mentioned previously, the key to getting the best from rivers is mobility, and that's why I like to travel light.

In one hand I have a rubber

Be stealthy. River pike are top predators, and the bigger fish don't get to be big by giving themselves up easily. Tread carefully and quietly. Keep your silhouette or shadow off the river. Always approach swims with care and caution, and never blow your cover.

While river piking can seem a serious affair, never forget to have fun, and enjoy every single moment. For me, it's all about fun and adventure, and even when I lose fish, blank or when things go wrong, I still remain grateful that I'm out doing what I love. Just remember that even the very best anglers in the world don't catch every fish they that try for, so neither will you.

on lure fishing. I wrote several

softbaits is that you can work



mesh landing net with a landing mat attached to the pole. In



Take a minute or two to try to read a new swim, as you want to make your first cast count.





Another beautifully marked river predator that was successfully searched out by Nathan Edgell. It weighed just over 22 lb.

as you need to be prepared for a big 'un.

Once I've fished the water immediately in front of me, I will make my way to the edge of the bank, still crouching down.

I will then work the margins to the left and right of me, before 'fan casting' the lure, to cover all of the water in front of me. I'll fish a swim for 5-10 minutes, before moving to the next one. I rarely spend longer than ten minutes in a swim, and I never walk in a straight line up the bank. Instead, I like to zig-zag my way along the bank, out and back, so as not spook fish. The reason for not spending too much time in a swim is that

I prefer to try to find a 'taking fish', rather than sitting it out and hoping that one will come to me. The more water I cover, the more that my chances seem to increase.

The only exception to this is when a pike follows a lure without taking it, which can often happen, as they are curious creatures.

My personal choice is a Fladen Vantage Predator rod with a 100 g casting weight. Rods should be strong enough to cast a bait as well as a lure, and I would recommend any models with a casting weight in the 40-150 g range.

Reels need to be durable for river pike fishing, and need a good drag system. I'm currently using a size 40 Alu Pro loaded with at least 50 lb braid.

bring a lure back into the swim as naturally as possible. I work on the probability that the more casts I make, the less chance I have of catching a big pike.

Big pike don't need to 'nail' everything that they see, as they have reserves of fat, so I tend to find that they dismiss a lure after a while, switching off. Jack pike, on the other hand, want to get big, as it's their sole purpose in life, so they 'nail' everything that they can, their activity also switching big pike off. Get it right first cast and you stand a good chance of a pike taking the lure. Just make sure that the net is to-hand, and that the reel drag is set right,

My approach is simple. I like to stay a rod length back from the bank and crouch down. I take at least a minute to read the swim, thinking about how and where to cast my lure. The first cast is vital; you have to get it right. You want to

Then there are times when I just fancy a break from lure fishing, which is when I may swap over to float fishing a deadbait for a while. My method works on rivers, it really does, so why not give it a go for yourself, and see just how wonderful wild river pike really are.

Looking for Christmas gift ideas? Features editor Richard Howard is here with some great suggestions to help make this Christmas even more special.

Colouring book and

It contains a series of amusing black-and-white illustrations, fishy characters and witty captions.

Supplied with coloured pencils, so that the characters can be coloured in, I reckon



swivels

THERE are some environmentally friendly items in Sean Simms Fishing Tackle's growing portfolio that would make perfect Christmas presents.

Last month I wrote about some classic-looking wooden disgorgers that would be great stocking fillers, as would the items that I'm highlighting this week, including a 32-page fishing book, called Fishing Under The Surface.

it'll be a great gift for a young angler in your life. It's priced at just £5.99, and is available from www.amazon.co.uk (£1 delivery).

Another cracking stocking filler from self-confessed fishing addict Sean Simms are the Sean Simms Swivel Sets (glass jars full of Small, Medium or Large swivels).

The jars, swivels and cork stoppers are all recyclable. The narrow neck of the jar means that they will deposit one or two swivels at a time, keeping most of them contained should you knock it over.

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HARPER Fine Angling Books has just released two new hardbacks.

Dark Water, by specimen hunter, artist, designer and publisher Stephen Harper, and *Redmire*, by fellow author Tony Meers.

With 224 pages and 22 chapters, Dark Water is about Stephen's successful campaigns for Wensum and Great Ouse barbel, including the capture of 'The Beast', at a river record 19 lb 10 oz, big Ouse perch, estate lake carp to 36 lb 5 oz, pike to 29 lb 10 oz, and mighty mahseer from India's Kaveri river.

Some of the chapters are written by Stephen's son, Oliver, who accompanied him on many of his adventures. Describing the thrills and spills of big fish angling at famous waters, as well as conveying the message that you need to appreciate them while they last, this book includes quality colour photos on almost every page. *Redmire* looks at the historic carp water's past through the eyes of a host of well-known anglers. With 304 pages and 40 chapters, including ones by Chris Yates,



Dick Kefford, Eddie Price, John Nixon, Pete Climo, Dave Short, Rod Hutchinson and Pete Springate, you get an insight into what it was like to tread its banks. With accounts from the 1950s through to details on present-day restoration work, this book contains black-and-white and colour images, and captures why a small farm lake is still held in such high esteem. Priced at £35, the books are available from www.harperanglingbooks.co.uk

Treat yourself to a work of art

ANGLER'S MAIL has highlighted the work of several angling artists in recent years, and we know how wellreceived their artwork is.

Have you thought about ordering some of their artwork for your home or tackle den?

There are two recent additions to big fish specialist Chris Turnbull's online gallery, along with many other paintings. One is of carp taking floaters, and another is of a Fens pike about to take a wobbled lamprey (pictured top). Visit www.christurnbull-artist.co.uk to view limited-edition Giclee prints, available from £65, and original paintings. Tel: 01692 630565. David Miller has been an artist for over 30 years, and is best known for his stunning underwater paintings of coarse, sea and marine fish, (pictured middle). You probably already have a copy of his work in your wallet, as his stunning artwork has featured on UK rod licences since 2008. You can view his original works and prints at www.davidmillerart. co.uk All his prints are personally signed, and prices start at £35. If you remember the Angler's Mail mini series with Maurice Pledger and his beloved Shih Tzu, Mouse, earlier in the year, you will know all about his love of wildlife and fish, and his wonderful ability to portray his passion in his unique paintings. One of his latest examples is an autumn perch about to engulf a float fished worm



Mortimer and Whitehouse: Gone Fishing Box Set

SIT back, laugh and enjoy Series 1 and 2 of the highly acclaimed Mortimer and Whitehouse: Gone Fishing series, now available as a DVD box set.

Join comedy legends Paul Whitehouse and Bob Mortimer on their angling adventures, following their life-changing heart surgery.

Bob is a keen apprentice, willing to learn new fishing skills, while Paul is a lifelong angler. Follow them as they travel around Britain trying to catch iconic fish species in picturesque locations, all the while discussing life and death.

Series 1 and 2 is available on DVD and Digital as a box set, from Amazon, priced £22.99. They are also available to buy separately, in Blu-ray and DVD formats.

(pictured above). The acclaimed artist's work can be viewed and purchased from www.mauricepledger.com

For enquiries or commissions, email m.pledger111@btinternet.com





Improve your skills with help from a Mail coach

WHETHER you're looking to brush up on a favourite technique or you want to learn a new method, a day with Hampshire-based Duncan Charman, Norfolk's John Bailey or Essex's Mike Salisbury will be time well spent. Rivers or stillwaters, the trio of coaches have an impressive big-fish list and a wealth of experience.

All-rounder Duncan offers sessions of up to ten hours, with tackle and bait supplied, but you're welcome to use

your own. Prices start at around £145, and include catch pictures from the day. Vouchers are also available, which you may want to slip inside a partner or friend's Christmas or birthday card. Email: duncancharman@me.com or tel: 07928 617006.

John Bailey has been writing about his exploits in Angler's Mail for years. He's also been guiding for over a quarter of a century, and you can join him on one of his many favourite

East Anglian venues.

"I tend to take anglers pike or river roach and chub fishing in winter, for tench and carp in spring, and chub and barbel in autumn. Season after season. we catch some cracking fish in lovely places, but most of all I think we all learn and have fun," enthused John.

Days with JB cost approximately £200 to £300, depending on the number of anglers and the venue. Christmas vouchers are

available for £100 each. Email: info@baileyandfishing.com

If you're in the Essex area and need a helping hand, whether it's for carp, predator or match fishing, all-rounder Mike Salisbury is the man to provide it.

Mike is a qualified Level 2 Coarse Angling Coach, and his prices start at £75 for a half day.

Email: msalisburyangling coach@gmail.com or call him on 07702 567623.









or Duncan **Charman will** improve your fishing skills, and you may even catch a specimen or three.

Dr An Well-travelled freshwater biologist and top angler brings you his fascinating weekly insight into the secret lives of fish.



River fish populat



What are the most common species of fish in rivers? J. Burton, via email.

You might initially think that the answer to this question simply depends upon which river, and to a certain extent it does, but the answer can also vary significantly within any given river over time, and most certainly with which part, or zone, you look at. Although there is a considerable degree of overlap, rivers are scientifically classified into a series of six defined zones, these being attributed in relation to the slope of the riverbed, its cross section and its fishery potential. Rather conveniently, these

zones are, mostly, named after the key species of fish that are present in the zone. The most common species present within each zone are monitored and recorded over time. The species population structure of the various zones within our rivers is routinely, and regularly, monitored by the Environment Agency, as part of their National Fisheries Monitoring Programme. This is an extensive, scientific survey that forms part of the Water Framework Directive, an EU initiative designed to preserve, restore and improve the aquatic environment.

Monitoring is usually by electrofishing, with species numbers and weights in the designated area recorded, with scales taken for laboratory age analysis. By standardising the areas sampled, the techniques employed and the timing of the surveys, a degree of consistency to the results is achieved, allowing comparisons in fish population structures to be compared over time, with records often dating back decades.

A call to the fisheries department of your local EA office should point you in the direction of a detailed analysis of the survey results of your chosen river, giving you a

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Environment Agency staff carrying out electrofishing on the River Wandle, their findings helping them to establish fish populations in different zones. with fast-flowing, well-oxygenated water, usually flowing over rock and large gravel particles. Species-wise, it is characterised by trout and salmon, but smaller species, such as bullhead and stone loach, are also present.

Grayling Zone

Similar to the Trout Zone, but the water may be warmer, with a slightly reduced current flowing over hard gravel. The species commonly present in this zone include all of those from the Trout Zone, with the addition of grayling, chub, dace and minnows.





Barbel Zone

The middle section of a river, upstream beats of the zone may retain characteristics of the Grayling Zone, but with a more gentle gradient and current, with well-oxygenated water flowing over a substrate of silt and gravel. Chub, dace and minnows are present from the Grayling Zone, with pike, perch, roach, rudd, eels and barbel also appearing.

Bream Zone

The lower river with a gentle gradient and slow-flowing water, often over a silty substrate. The water can be turbid with highly variable water temperature and oxygen concentrations, and the fish fauna is typified by species such as bream, carp, tench



good indication of the current population structure and how it has changed over time.

The six river zones

Fishless Zone

The clue here is in the name! These are excessively turbulent, high-gradient, shallow streams washing over hard rock. Fish cannot survive.

Trout Zone

This zone has a steep gradient

and gudgeon, with pike, perch, roach and rudd from the Barbel Zone also present.

Tidal Zone

Clearly defined as the length of a river subject to a tidal influence. Salinity governs the species present, with all of the Bream Zone species present at the top of the tidal range, where there is minimal salt incursion. Downstream, in areas of higher salinity, carp, bream and roach are relatively common, often swimming alongside sea species with a high freshwater tolerance, such as mullet, bass, flounder and smelt.

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Whipping up a frenzy

Whip fishing is rarely seen or mentioned these days, which I think is a bit strange, as it can be a devastatingly effective method. Here's how to do it successfully.

APPROACH It's easy to overcomplicated your fishing on prolific venues, as you can easily fall into the trap of feeding too much, fishing too far out, rotating feed lines and casting over more fish than you will ever catch. If you are not careful, it's possible to end up chasing bites all over the place.

SIMPLE

There is a simple technique that will usually outscore all other methods on fish-packed venues, and that's whip tackle, fished to-hand.

Fishing close to the bank gives you a huge advantage. You can feed more accurately and a lot faster by hand, you can control your rig better, and you can catch a lot quicker. It's a nice, comfortable way of fishing, too.









of grub, as it will spook silver fish and attract carp.



alongside bread punch, squatts or pinkies.

RESPONSE

A big advantage with whip tackle is the way in which it gets you among the fish instantly. After plumbing up and deciding how far out to fish, I feed a small ball of groundbait every cast. The trick is to get the fish used to regular feed breaking up as it nears the bottom. You don't want to be putting in big helpings

I have opted for six metres of pole on this occasion, because my swim is 12 ft deep. It took only five minutes before I started to catch decent-sized skimmers, a species that don't tend to get caught from further out on this lake. They must like hanging around the deep end of the inside shelf. feed small nuggets of groundbait on short-to-medium length whip lines is with an underarm flick of the wrist.

I like to form walnut-sized balls of groundbait, which I've laced with casters today, along with a smattering of micro pellets and a bit of chopped worm. On a canal or drain, I would feed a cloudier mix, On this session I started with a red maggot on a size 18 fine wire hook, but tiny perch were onto the bait straight away, so I switched to a single dark caster and soon started to catch skimmers. My active, fishmeal-free, dark groundbait is slightly on the firm side, which helps it to get down to a good depth before it breaks up.




When fishing the nearside shelf, I always drop my groundbait slightly short of the float, to compensate for any feed that might tumble a bit further down the slope. Fishing just past your main feed area tends to pick up better-sized fish, too. super-sensitive tip that is long and fine, which helps me to see bites develop better, as skimmers often mess around with hook baits, causing the float to dither before it goes under. It's best to wait a few seconds before striking, otherwise you won't connect with many fish. When my groundbait hits the water, a few casters ping off it, adding extra attraction. **5 SUPER SKIMMERS** When skimmer bream get their heads down, they often go into a feeding frenzy, which is exactly what's happening today. Conditions are perfect, being overcast, relatively mild and not too windy. Fishing to-hand with a long line and an ultra-slim whip is a great method when wind makes long pole fishing tricky. Using a good-capacity

pole float and sinking the line helps to stop the tackle drifting. I know you have to strike through sunken mono, but you can still hit bites successfully. I can leave the line floating on the surface today, simply using the flick-tip on my pole to correct any bow that forms in it. The skimmers I've located on this session are all lively and absolutely pristine.



I'm using a pole float with a



DEEPER DINOS The specialist Dino pole floats that I use for this type of fishing are made by Hungarian International angler Denes Lorincz. They have long and sensitive fibreglass tips, a finely tapered body-down shape and extra-long carbon stems. They are perfect for

catching silver fish in deep water. I first found some in the tackle shop at Orchard Lakes, in the New Forest, and I actually met Denes at The Big One show this year, when I managed to get some more of these superb works of art. I'm using only a 0.5 g model today, with a strung bulk of No.8s, for a slower fall through the water.





FLICK TIPPING I glue a Stonfo connector to

faster on the strike than a cut-back top kit fitted with elastic, which doesn't work so well when long-lining.



more slowly as it nears the bottom. I think the milder weather has put the big roach off feeding, as they seem to feed better in deep venues when it's much colder. What fascinates me most about whip fishing is the way in which this method uncovers fish that you don't normally see when using other tactics. It's certainly a winning silver fish tactic when carp go into 'hibernation'.

the end of my whip. The tip section has a fine, solid carbon flick-tip, which is the only 'cushion' that I rely on when playing fish. It's surprising how big a fish can be landed with this set-up, considering I'm only using 0.10 mm rig line and a size 18 fine wire hook.

A flick-tip lets you 'feel' the fight when a fish is hooked, and it's a lot

I have another more powerful, hollow flick-tip that I take to Ireland with me, as it is ideal when fishing further out. I combine it with stronger rigs, bigger floats and up to 10 m of carbon pole, with the intention of bagging big roach, bream and hybrids. as I've had a bite almost every chuck. Most of my catch turned out to be skimmers, with just a few perch and occasional hybrids. Strangely, I've had no roach today, a species that usually muscle in on the action here, especially when using a slightly strung bulk and three spread dropper shot below, which allows the hook bait to fall





Prepping a swim with pre-bait



RIDGEMON

Is it best to pre-bait an area before fishing, or will I be overfeeding the fish? Sam McAlinden, Sheffield, South Yorkshire.

I would be a little nervous of pre-baiting at this time of the year, unless the venue is a vast one. As the water turns colder, fish require less feed, so a careful feeding approach is best.

When fishing a big water with no obvious fish-holding features, I would be tempted to pre-bait a swim with 20 good-sized balls of

groundbait laced with a few freebies a couple of days before fishing. In the warmer months, prolonged pre-baiting right up to the eve of a session would be feasible.

On smaller venues, there are usually some obvious fish-holding features, such as deeper areas, islands and sheltered swims. I wouldn't pre-bait these kind of waters at all, and I would introduce feed only when I've plumbed the depth and cast around, to find any unseen underwater features.

I would then tread very carefully with groundbait and loosefeed, feeling my way into the session, rather than gambling on any sort of heavy feeding regime.





Long-range rocket feeder rig

Rocket feeders with lead on their bases can be cast extreme distances. To prevent the feeder tangling with the hook length, it's best to place a rubber line

stop and then a No.8 Stotz

above a twisted boom. The free-running fluorocarbon link creates a safe paternoster-style rig that is particularly good for long-range bream fishing. It suits hook lengths of 24-36 in.

BILLY & JAMIE

Long-time pals Billy Flowers and Jamie Londors are two of the World's most consistent carp catchers. The two England Carp Team members share their sessions and insight in *Angler's Mail*.

Blankety blank

This week: Billy, a hard-working family man, has been fishing in rock-hard conditions.

Drawing a blank. Loading the barrow in frosty conditions isn't ideal, especially if

you've fished for 48 hours without a bite.

Atime for catching huge carp, especially if you target the right waters when the weather is spot-on. Get everything right and some big 'girls' can be banked.

Since catching fish to nearly mid-50s a few weeks ago, at Crete Lakes, in France, I wanted to keep the big fish ball rolling.

Unfortunately, due to being busy with work, I had to plan two trips around limited spare time. The weather wasn't great for the first trip, an overnighter at Berners Hall, in Essex.

I haven't fished Berners that much, but I know it holds a big head of 30 lb-plus fish. It's not that far from my house either, making it an ideal venue for a quick session. On arrival, the lads in the shop said it had been fishing very hard. With temperatures due to plummet at night to under zero degrees Celsius, things weren't looking good. But, as always, I stayed positive, loaded my barrow and headed to the far bank. I found a shallower spot straight out in front, at 30 wraps, so I decided to cast two rigs on top of eight Spombs of bait in this area. It isn't a great deal of bait,

but just enough to encourage a passing fish or two to get their heads down. I then cast a maggot rig with a PVA bag of grubs to a much shorter spot, at 18 wraps. I got the house (bivvy) up for the night, before putting the kettle on just as the temperature began dropping rapidly. That evening I drank tea and listened for signs of fish. Even though frost began to appear on my bivvy at 9pm, I did manage to hear three splashes in front of me, around my far spot. I had two rigs in this area, but still hadn't had a bite by 11 pm, so I decided to change one rig

to a 2 ft zig, as I felt that the fish were in mid-depth.

Unfortunately, I managed only

performance. It gives you the chance to fish in the middle of the lake, and also slightly towards one corner, providing you with plenty of options. The fish are a massive stamp for a good reason – they like to eat a lot of grub. Knowing this, I found a clear spot among weed, at 28 wraps, where I put out a bucket of 10 mm Mainline Cell boilies, crushed freebies, corn and plenty of maggots. I decided to present three different rigs to this spot, all with ultra-sharp hooks. One was baited with a 15 mm bottom bait and a fake maggot, one had two pieces of slow-sinking corn, and the last was a spinner rig with a pink pop-up. All three rigs landed perfectly, and all the Spombs hit the clip, so I felt extremely confident of a bite or two.





Frosty blanks. If you don't have the luxury of hand-picking the best times to go fishing, sometimes you have to stick it out, staring a good night's sleep inside a t very warm sleeping bag. I woke y to an extremely frosty set-up, as temperatures had dropped to for minus 2.

I was fishless, and pushed a barrow full of wet, frosty kit back to my motor at first light.

I hoped for better weather for the following week's 48-hour session at famous Holme Fen, in Cambridgeshire.

Having landed some amazing fish to well over 50 lb from the venue, I was absolutely buzzing at the thought of getting back on its banks.

I booked a Monday-to-Wednesday session, but the weather forecast suggested that it was going to be another very cold one.

On arrival, I walked around the lake, but I didn't see any signs of fish, though I had a few swims in mind. The important draw for peg placement took place at 11am, and my name came out fourth out of ten, so I opted for a swim called Harry's. I've had a good hit of fish from this swim before, so I was hoping for a repeat I didn't see a single fish show during the session, and it was extremely cold both nights, as low as minus 4, so it was always going to be hard fishing for carp in deep water. There's a lesson here: if you can pick and choose your autumn and winter fishing times, go when the temperature is mild, usually when there's a southerly wind.





Wicked wafters

HERE'S a new big player in the hook bait league, and that's the wafter.

Selling as many units as pots of pop-ups, the wafter is a hybrid hook bait halfway between a pop-up and a bottom bait. If you wanted a slow-sinking hook bait that would settle on weed or lightly over a soft, silty lakebed, in the past you generally had to work backwards from a pop-up, by adding weight. The same applied if you wanted a rig that negated the weight of the hook. Or you could add buoyancy to a standard boilie, but whichever way you did it, it was a bit fiddly. Wafters are designed to be balanced when the weight of the hook is factored in. They are buoyant, but nowhere near as buoyant as a traditional pop-up. They have carefully calculated buoyancy, so that when they are mounted on an appropriately sized hook, they sink slowly. They give you the advantage of a hook bait being taken into a carp's mouth more easily than a free offering, allowing hooks on modern rigs to twist and find a hold instantly. It's a headache for bait manufacturers to achieve, of course, because everybody has different ideas what a suitable hook is for a given bait size. There are also significant differences in the weight of hooks that are the same size



Get your wafter fishing right and you should get more carp in your weigh slings.

but with different wire gauges. Then there are differences in rig construction – bait screws versus rig rings and tungsten beads, and kickers versus PVC rig tubing. If you're a new recruit to the wafter fan club, you do need to be realistic about how perfectly a rig sits with a bait straight out the pot. In the NashBait factory, each batch of paste for wafter manufacture is tested with a selection or rigs and hook sizes prior to rolling, to ensure that they are as close to perfect buoyancy as possible.





Wafters are best suited to rigs that have no separation between hook and bait, including the majority of modern rigs that incorporate screws or rings.

The baits are slightly buoyant, so they will potentially sit up off the bottom, no matter how long a hair is. With rigs such as the popular big D loop, they will sit directly above the hook, so both are taken into the mouth together. Get into the habit of checking that the wafter isn't so buoyant that it is sitting the hook up off bottom and it is resting on its point. You can catch fish like this, but with the trend for ultra-sticky, hand-sharpened hook points, it's also a recipe for a hook point being dulled or completely turned over if the rig is disturbed. If any tweaks are needed to adjust buoyancy backwards, to ensure that the hook sits flat on the bottom, it's easiest to snip off small sections of the bait using rig scissors, until you're happy. Trust me, it won't take long before you achieve a presentation that you're happy with.







Out for the count

One aspect of wafter hook baits that I rarely see discussed is how perfect they are for rigs that stay in position for long periods, whether it's miserable 15-hour winter nights or 48 hours on extreme venues.

The benefit of a wafter is that it uses the same manufacture and ingredient profile as a pop-up, but with the buoyancy reduced.

They have elevated flavour levels compared to a standard

boilie, and the same really nice, rubbery, durable texture of a needle-friendly pop-up that doesn't soak up water and soften like a bottom bait out of the bag.

Whether you have nuisance fish on your mind or want to leave baits out more confidently, they add those extra few notches of confidence.

Add a rig that you know will reset itself into the equation, and you'll be able to sit behind your rods full of confidence.



Do it yourself

If you want a piece of the wafter action but you can't find one to match the bait that you use, or you still make your own boilies, it is possible to achieve the same buoyancy benefits with a bit of DIY. The easiest option is to use one of the 4 or 6 mm bait drills that are readily available, removing a core from a boilie and then adding a foam or cork plug. This can then be trimmed

to suit the presentation you want. If you are a committed boilie maker, it is also easy to find the correct combination of cork ball and paste wrap to produce a bait that sinks when the weight of the hook is added. A 12 mm cork ball and a 16 mm finished boilie is a good starting point for a home-made wafter. But the reality is that we live in a world of convenience, and picking a pot from the shelf for a fiver is much simpler.

TIME TO CHANGE WOLF" WE'RE COMING TO GET YOU

ANDY BLACK The fishery scientist is passionate about predators, having caught pike to 34 lb 8 oz, perch to 5 lb 1 oz, zander to 18 lb 8 oz and eels to 7 lb 2 oz.

Deadly deadbaits

HEN it gets really cold, most pike anglers switch from lures to deadbaits. This isn't always the best idea though, as you can catch pike on lures even in the coldest of conditions. The problem is, you will quickly get cold hands when casting lures repeatedly in cold conditions, whereas deadbaiting allows you to sit under an umbrella, out of the wind. There are times when I find deadbaiting very effective, and it usually coincides with the first really cold snap. When water temperatures start to go below 10 degrees Celsius, pike tend to move to deeper water, where they often become more concentrated. If you know these areas, or are able to find them with a sonar device, you will often catch fish by presenting a static bait. When it is cold, pike are less likely to move around, but the scent trail from a deadbait can often trigger a dormant fish to perk up enough for it to move a few feet to take it. I always use frozen deadbaits, rather than fresh, simply because I believe they are more effective. The freezing process changes the structure of a deadbait. Water inside the dead fish's cells expands when it starts to freeze, damaging some of the cell walls, which helps body juices to leach out of it when it thaws, making it more appealing to pike. Frozen deadbaits are far more effective when kept fresh, so it is best to store them in a quality freezer box and cool bag when you set off for a trip. If I am planning on fishing for a couple of days, I will put a couple of ice packs over the deadbaits in an Icey-Tek cool box and leave in the car, putting just a few packs of them into a PikePro cool bag before making my journey to the bank. Always try to use all your defrosted bait, as it loses its attractiveness and becomes mushy when refrozen and thawed again, making it tricky



below 10 degrees Celsius, I switch to less oily deadbaits that have a scent that disperses easily in the water. Here are my three favourites...

to keep on the hooks. If I have any deadbaits left at the end of a session, I'll throw them in or take them home to refreeze them, for feeding a swim.

I find that deadbaits are most effective when fished hard on the bottom, simply because pike are used to finding dead fish on the deck, not hovering in mid-water. Sometimes it is useful to pop them up, certainly when the fish are positioned off bottom or when you are faced with weedy swims.

A deadbait will nearly always settle on the bottom with the hooks underneath it, which is not ideal, as the hooks can pick up debris, reducing your chances of hooking a fish. A simple way to prevent this from happening is to add a little bit of buoyancy to the rig. A bit of foam on the trace between the hooks will flip the bait over as it is falling in the water, helping it to land the right way up (the hooks above it). The buoyancy of the foam also allows a pike to suck a deadbait in easily, resulting in more takes.



Smelt of cucumber

Smelt are the first bait that I will reach for in my cool box when water temperatures are low. Smelt have a proven track record for working well in cold water. Their scent is unique, often described as being like cucumber, and it is certainly attractive to

pike. Not only do pike like the smell and taste of these baits, their pale colour makes them really stand out on the bottom. They are often hard to get hold of though, especially in Large or Turbo sizes, which tend to be the ones that pike like most.



Adding a splash of colour to your deadbaits can work wonders on hard-fished waters. I use spray-on colours, either coating the baits individually or several together, by putting them in a bag, squirting them with a colour and then giving the bag a good shake. It makes your bait look a bit different from everything else that is being presented, and using the right colour will make all the difference between blanking and catching. It is also worth colouring your feed, as the pike will get used to eating bait of your chosen colour, reducing the possibility of another angler catching fish from your pre-baited spot.



Bloody good lampreys

Lampreys are long, eel-shaped parasitic fish, feeding on the blood of other fish. Due to the way in which they feed, they have an unnatural amount of blood in their body, which is one of the reasons why they work so well when it gets cold. trail that will last quite a long time

. . . .

I prefer to fish a lamprey with its tail nipped off, as it creates a scent

in the water. They are quite tough, withstanding recasts very well, and to revitalise them after they've been in the water for some time, you can simply slash or squeeze them, to allow more blood to flow out. Like smelt, they can be hard to get hold of, and they are one of the most expensive baits, too.

Natural choice

Coarse fish are the natural prey of pike, so it stands to reason that they are less wary of picking one up off the bottom. They also have a distinct 'fishy' scent that flows in the water easily. I like roach and rudd, but most silver fish work well for pike, and are easily caught from most waters. I usually fish whole coarse baits for pike, stabbing them with a pair of scissors to let their flavour release quickly. In waters that also contain zander, I prefer to cut their heads off and hook them in the tail.



BILL&VIRGINIA

Angler's Mail

Husband-and-wife fishing fanatics Bill and Virginia Rushmer reveal their latest adventures in this fortnightly column.

Just the tonic! Bill reels in a nice dace from a punt in the Bridge Pool, Duncan on hand

to do the netting, while Lewis watches the fight unfold.

FIRST fished the Bridge Pool on the Hampshire Avon in 1975, but even today I get the same amount of excitement when I visit this famous stretch of river. Having moved from Ashford, in Middlesex, to Christchurch, in Dorset, I now regularly walk along the banks of the Bridge Pool, remembering all of the great sessions that I've had

on this wonderful water, and always looking for signs of life. In early May it was full of grey mullet, two of which I estimated at 8 lb, but when the rivers season opened on June 16, they had all but disappeared. On closer inspection of the river, Virginia spotted some very big perch under the first arch of the bridge, at least two of them



Bill's life-long pal Lewis with the fish of the session, a 3 lb 1 oz perch.

Recovering from sciatica and a urinary infection, Bill mustered the strength to catch this stonking dace. He's in much better health now.



hailanor



Magic memories

Bill looks back on some of his most memorable moments fishing the Bridge Pool.

When baitdroppers got bigger

I used to take six pints of maggots and lots of sweetcorn to the Bridge Pool, in the days when tackle shops sold gallons of maggots on a regular basis, during an era that I liked to call 'The Block Feeder Craze'. It would take ages to feed a swim using the small baitdroppers that were around back then, wasting valuable fishing time.

After mentioning this to an engineering friend, he set about making a baitdropper big enough to hold half a pint of maggots. When he handed me one of his jumbo baitdroppers, I couldn't get down to the Bridge Pool quick enough. Using a powerful rod to cast it out, I caught a lot of sea trout, roach and dace. I also remember tackling up with a short waggler that I made myself, a float that I called a 'skittle', which helped me to continue to catch sea trout when they moved further downstream, over a shallow bar.

The tackle trade soon cottoned on to the benefits of using a big baitdropper, and in under two years they had started to appear in tackle shops.

The jumping sea trout



Mine's bigger than yours. Take

I remember the day when a big sea trout took my bait while I was fishing the Bridge Pool from a punt. It leapt over a chain that was attached to the punt from the bank, and then disappeared through one of the arches under the bridge, before jumping out of the water on the other side.

Believe it or not, I was still in contact with it, so I applied steady pressure, slowly bringing it back through the arch.

But the trout wouldn't come higher than 3 ft under the surface, making it impossible to net it as it came towards the punt.

Lewis then quickly lifted the chain attaching us to the bank, so that I could pass the rod underneath it, which then allowed me to work the fish up to the surface. Much to our relief

looked to be over 4 lb, the biggest pushing 5 lb.

During late summer, we did see some very big sea trout, which I estimated at over 8 lb, but it wouldn't surprise me if they were double-figure fish.

Unfortunately, in September I had sciatica followed by a urinary infection, so I didn't get down to the Bridge Pool at that time, but my friends Lewis Deeks and Duncan Charman (the Mail's very own Where To Fish South East scout) recently invited me to fish with them. It was an invite that I couldn't refuse. I was not very mobile, but Duncan kindly lent me his gear, and warned me that the fishing wouldn't be easy. We'd be fishing from a punt, something that I'm used to, having been a member of the Francis Francis AC, a club that fishes

the River Thames on punts. I felt at home, and managed to catch several dace, which I was happy about, but Lewis caught the best fish of the session.

Fishing a sunken paternoster rig with a small dace livebait, he quickly caught a 3 lb 1 oz perch. I fished for a couple of hours before heading off home, but Lewis and Duncan fished on for another few hours, though they didn't catch anything bigger than that early specimen perch. have made a good recovery since this session, and believe it was a more effective tonic than any medication that a doctor can prescribe. For enquiries about fishing from the Bridge Pool punt on the Hampshire Avon, contact Davis Fishing Tackle, Christchurch, Dorset. Tel: 01202 485169.

a look at the size difference between these baitdroppers.

and laughter, we finally managed to get it safely in the net.







The smallest tactical change or tackle tweak can transform your fishing session, so here are some of the very best fishing tips to help you put more fish in the net.

Single out silver fish Catching commercial fishery silver fish on pellets can be tricky, as lots of other species are used to eating this popular bait, too. If you're not careful, you'll end up attracting bigger species, especially carp, which have a tendency to muscle smaller silver fish out of the swim. Mail columnist Dave Coster's advice is to use small pellets to single out quality silver fish, feeding 4 mm sizes and presenting a 6 mm offering on the hook, as carp tend to prefer a bigger mouthful.



Give chub Some grub

When fishing a maggot feeder for chub at this time of year, it's best to feed a swim for 15 minutes or so before introducing your hook bait.

By feeding the swim with maggots, introduced via a maggot feeder without a hook link or a baitdropper, you'll build up the fish's confidence, giving you a great chance of hooking a chub on your first cast.

Small, strong hooks are best when targeting chub on a maggot feeder rig. The versions that match anglers use for hooking powerful commercial carp are ideal.







Cast accurately every time

When you've found a gravel spot or a pocket of clean ground among silt with a marker lead, to present a bait for species such as carp, make a mental note of where you are standing.

By having your feet in exactly the same spot, facing in the same direction, you'll be able to cast to the same spot every time, especially if you also pick out and aim for an obvious feature on the far bank, such as a gap in a line of trees.

Swap between wagglers quickly

A waggler adaptor isn't just for attaching a float to the line, as it allows the float to 'fold' easily on the strike, helping you to set the hook.

It allows you to swap floats quickly without having to cut the line, which is great when you want to change to a design that has a tip with a different colour, to help you continue to spot bites in changing conditions.

Top anglers like to have two





or three floats of the same

and black being most popular.



Give carp want

lines with different loadings, you can find out what the carp prefer on the day. If you're not getting bites on hair-rigged corn, try banding some dead maggots. Carp can change their tastes from day to day, so you have to try to find out what they want every time you visit a fishery.

Capitalise on short feeding spells

they want

Sometimes carp show a preference for dampened pellets around a Method feeder, but on other days they want a feeder loaded with groundbait. By targeting a couple of Pike feeding spells can be short, and this is why many pike anglers experience two takes at once.

If you do hook and land a pike, unhook it quickly and safely, rest it in the margins in a landing net, to allow it to get its breath back, and then cast out another bait, as you might get another run quickly. Always have your unhooking kit laid out on the bank before casting, and treat pike with the utmost care. Despite being a fearsome predator with a set of sharp teeth, they're quite a fragile species.

WHERE TO FISH

14 PAGES of the finest waters to fish around the UK, what they hold and how best to tackle them.

Great winter fisheries to bag silver fish



1 WAGGONERS WELLS LAKES, GRAYSHOTT, HAMPSHIRE.

DESCRIPTION: a trio of picturesque, stream-fed lakes set in a steep-sided valley, dating back to the 17 century. Controlled by Grayshott AC, they offer great sport for pleasure and specimen anglers.

Fishing is mainly on the Middle Pond and Bottom Pond, both of which require a long walk through trees, with fantastic roach bags to over 20 lb possible, the best



fish topping 1 lb 8 oz. Pole or running line both score.

They also hold original Leney carp to over 30 lb, tench to 5 lb, perch and eels to 3 lb, rudd to 2 lb, crucians to 1 lb, and some gudgeon and brown trout.

Start early for the best chance of a good bag, fishing bread punch on the hook for the bigger fish. Mild and overcast conditions are best for tempting lots of roach.

Start by feeding a decent-sized ball of fine liquidised bread, to create an attractive cloud of bait in the water, and then present a rig with shot bulked together, to get your hook bait to the bottom quickly. Be prepared to shallow up, if and when the fish move up in the water. Try a 4-8 mm punch on a size 14-18 hook, and introducing another ball of feed later into the session often attracts a greater number of bigger roach. It can also be worth introducing some casters when you are trying to single out bigger fish.

TICKETS: only available from Bordon Angling Centre (contact details below) before you fish, priced £10 adults. Grayshott AC yearly membership costs £45; OAPs £38; family ticket £77, plus a £10 joining fee. Barbless hooks only. No braided lines. No carp to be retained. No floating baits. No nuts. No nights. Food outlets nearby. Open all year, apart from March 15 to June 15. Visit: www.grayshottangling club.co.uk SWIMS TO TRY: the dam end of the middle lake is best when it's cold.

LOCAL TACKLE SHOP:

Bordon Angling Centre, 1 Elmfield Court, Lindford, Bordon, GU35 OQA. Tel: 01420 472573. **LOCATION:** exit the A3 at Hindhead, heading towards Grayshott, on the A333. After 500 yards, turn left at the roundabout, into Headley Road, and follow for 1.25 miles. Turn left into Waggoners Wells Road and you'll arrive at the Waggoners Wells Lakes car park after 700 yards. SAT NAV: GU26 6DP.

Bradshaw Hall Fishery, Greater Manchester. Location: Slack Lane, Bolton, BL2 4JW.

Description: there are lots of roach, skimmers, ide, chub and perch in all the waters here. These former mill lodges are full of hungry carp in the summer, but they tend to switch off when cold weather arrives, which is when the huge head of silver fish species come to the fore. Expect bream to 3 lb, roach to over 1 lb 8 oz, ide to over 1 lb, perch to 3 lb and chub to 2 lb. The key part of putting a mixed bag together is to feed regularly. Take up to four pints of casters or red maggots and some 4 mm soft pellets and hemp. Start by feeding a pot of hemp at 11 m, then introduce six to eight maggots or casters over the top every couple of minutes, until the fish respond. Sport tends to pick up after noon. Try a caster

WAGGONERS WELLS LAKES TOP TIP

A long length of line between your pole tip and float avoids creating a shadow on the water and spooking the fish.



on the hook to single out the better stamp fish. **Tickets:** £8.50 adults; £6.50 juniors and OAPs. Tel: 01204 307197.

3 Emerald Pool Fishery, Somerset. Location: Puriton Road, Highbridge, TA9 3NL. Description: four prolific waters, Emerald, Sapphire, Ruby and Jade, set in eight acres of well-managed grounds. They offer a wide variety of well-established species, including a massive head of roach, skimmers, bream and

 Hallcroft Fishery, Nottinghamshire.
 Location: Hallcroft Road, East Retford, DN22 7RA.
 Description: Moat and Bridge Pools are renowned silver fish lakes, offering fantastic roach, skimmer and perch sport.
 They come into their own in the colder months, when the carp sport slows, with roach to 1 lb, bream to 4 lb and perch

carp sport slows, with roach to 1 lb, bream to 4 lb and perch to 2 lb-plus featuring in bags topping 40 lb. Pole, waggler and feeder all produce, with loosefed maggots and casters over groundbait the best way to attract them. Be careful not to overfeed in cold weather; little and often is the way to go. If you decide to use a pole, target lines at 5-6 m and 11-13 m, but explore further out if you opt for waggler or feeder tackle. **Tickets:** £6 adults; £5 concessions; £4.50 juniors; £2 for an extra rod. Tel: 01777 719911.

Old River Nene, Cambridgeshire. Location: March, PE15 8. **Description:** vast shoals of roach, skimmers and rudd make this town centre stretch their winter home. It averages 14 m wide and 4 ft deep, with steep banks, and recent match catches have topped 40 lb. Pleasure anglers can prosper, too, using pinkies over dark groundbait, or bread punch over liquidised bread feed, at 7-8 m. The wider bypass section on the town's western fringe is noted for tench and bream to 4 lb, and rudd to over 2 lb. Chopped worm and casters scores on long pole, waggler or bomb tactics. Perch, ruffe, zander and pike are also present. **Tickets:** free fishing. Tel: Mill View Tackle on 01354 660566.

Location: Willowbrook Coarse Fisheries, Islip, Kettering, NN14 3LE.

Description: a superb piece of river offering some fantastic silver fish sport. When it is heavily coloured, make bream your number one target, using an open-end feeder with a worm on the hook. Nets of over 60 lb are taken regularly, individual fish topping 7 lb, corn sometimes picking out the largest fish. In low water, chub can be caught on waggler, fish to 6 lb attracted to loosefed maggots. A maggot feeder is a useful ploy for the big chub. Pole anglers catch roach to over 1 lb on casters over balled-in groundbait. This also produces some chunky dace, especially when the river has a bit of colour. **Tickets:** £55 a season, which will give you access to three lakes and 6 km of river. Tel: 07999 589011.

tench. The roach can top 1 lb and some of the bream are 'slabs. Bags of silver fish on this complex can top the 'ton', and bite-a-chuck action can be had in the coldest months. **Tickets:** £7 one rod; £9 for two rods; £24 for 24 hours. Deals available for parent and child, just ask. Tel: 01278 794707.



WHERE TO FISH MIDLANDS

Steve Lockett

Travelling angler with Midlands roots, enjoys finding new venues. Tel:07968 185681. Email: stevenlockett63@gmail.com

Born torun

F you're anything like me, winter means fishing rivers. I do enjoy the challenge of fishing stillwaters, but there's something about running a float through a cold river. You have to concentrate on your float all of the time, always anticipating a bite as it makes its way downstream. Given all the recent rain, it has been almost impossible to find any decent river fishing, but some hardy souls have still been out there and catching some good fish. Floodwater fishing is an art all of its own, and not one that particularly enjoy. But over the years, when faced with a swollen river and the need to score points in a match, I have done it. My tip is to try some of the smaller venues. They will run off faster and some may not

When there's a lot of water in rivers, it can pay to fish the higher reaches. Steve caught this cracking grayling from the upper Severn.

even be particularly flooded when a nearby major river will be over its banks.

The higher reaches of a big river can also be fishable much earlier in a spate cycle, so get on the road and discover some new running water venues when your local is out of sorts.

RIVERS River Severn

Where? Newhalls Meadow, Stourport, Worcestershire, DY13 OAA. Members only. Birmingham AA membership £40, from their website. Tel: 01562 882116. What's being caught? When levels have been right, there have been some cracking nets of roach. 20 lb is on the cards, with fish of 8 oz to 1 lb. Always a few pike, perch and chub around. **Tactics?** In swims with some nearside flow, try a stick float in shallower water, or a Bolo' float in more than 8 ft, and loosefed casters when the river is low and clear. When coloured, feed regular balls of groundbait. For swims with the flow further out, and when there is some colour in the water, bronze maggots with a waggler is the way to go. A few pouches of hemp at the start will keep the roach in a tight area, and will also draw any chub. Look to ease the float through at a slower rate than the flow. Also some pike and perch on lures fished along the nearside drop-off, long-tailed jellies being successful here.

CV34 6PR. Warwick & District AA membership £17, from their website. Tel: 07866 943623. What's being caught? Plenty of small silver fish showing as the fish move into the warmer waters of the town centre. Jim Burton had skimmers to 2 lb in a double-figure net from the early pegs in a recent match. **Tactics?** Best results to long pole. Ball-in groundbait containing casters and dead pinkies at 13 m. Fish double pinkie on the hook for regular bites, or swap to worm and caster cocktails for bonus fish, as Jim did. Flat floats in a range of sizes to 8 g will be needed to hold the bait still or inch it through. A big-bodied float of 2-3 g can be eased through at half pace.

Tactics? Bread punch in the deeper, centre track is the prime starting method. Feed a good pole cup of liquidised bread and fish a 4 mm punch at dead depth, which is close to 5 ft. Feed some chopped worm across to the far bank and loosefeed sparingly over the top with casters. This long pole line should give some better skimmers on double caster or half a worm later. For the pike, small spinners are a safe option, or try a small diving plug or crankbait.

at 4 m for an early flurry of small roach, loosefeeding casters in the deeper water to one side at 8 m. Bonus perch will come to this caster line. A back-up groundbait line at 13 m will bring skimmers and roach on big maggots or pinkies.



CANALS Droitwich Canal

Where? Droitwich, Worcestershire, from Lock 4, WR9 OAN, to Lock 8, WR9 OAL. Droitwich Spa AC membership £35. Tel: 07917 523735. What's being caught? Match weights have been around 10 lb through the autumn, but now getting double-figure nets of skimmers and a near 14 lb winner. Also small pike coming out to roving anglers.

Loughborough Canal

Where? Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 5JB. Day tickets £5, in advance from Netbusters Carp and Coarse, 34 Lisle Street, Loughborough, LE11 1AW, tel: 01509 260610. Loughborough Soar AS membership £40. Tel: 01509 502970. What's being caught? There have been plenty of reports of nets to 10 lb of roach, perch and skimmers from this branch of the Grand Union Canal. Bonus fish are often the perch, individual fish nudging 2 lb, while the skimmers are usually up to 12 oz. The Albion 'wide' is in good form. **Tactics?** Start on bread punch

STILLWATERS Alcott Farm Fishing Ponds

Where? Weatheroak,
Alvechurch, Worcestershire,
B48 7EH. Day tickets £6, on the bank. Tel: 07718 159951.
What's being caught? Despite lots of rain, there are still small carp of around 4 lb, big skimmers to 2 lb and some barbel being caught. Also roach and perch of 1-2 lb in pleasure nets around 40 lb.
Tactics? Long pole and maggots will bring consistent

results on all pools. Feed steadily using a catapult in the deeper pegs, which offer close to 8 ft of depth on all pools. Cupping in a small nugget of dampened micro pellets may encourage carp and big skimmers to settle on this line. To target the carp, fish a small pellet feeder on Roman Lake, cast towards the island. Load up with dampened micros and use a 6 or 8 mm wafter or a grain of corn on the hook.

Warwickshire Avon Where? Myton Fields, Warwick,

E-MAIL YOUR PICTURES TO: Dtoprods@ti-media.com

Birch House Lakes

Where? Ednaston, Ashbourne, Derbyshire, DE6 3AB. Day tickets £6.50 one rod; £9 two rods. Tel: 07796 874058. What's being caught?

Skimmer nets of 20 lb in recent matches on Mallard and Teal Lakes. F1s and carp in nets to 60 lb and a few bigger carp to 15 lb.

Tactics? Long pole towards the far bank, with corn or a 4 mm expander pellet over a few micro pellets will pick out the better quality skimmers on Mallard and Teal. Feed a short line with maggots to get off to a fast start. Kingfisher Lake giving carp sport on small Method feeders loaded with dampened pellets. Pole at 9-11 m with corn for the carp on Horseshoe. Corn and waggler on Buzzard for F1s and carp. Leger corn or a prawn on Osprey for the bigger carp.

Pool. Longer lines scoring on Island and Meadow. On Moors, Bank and Middle, most weights are of carp in the edge, on pole with banded pellets. In windy weather, bomb and pellets is better than pole.

Packington Somers Fishery

Where? Meriden, Warwickshire, CV7 7PL. Day tickets £6. Tel: 01676 523833.

What's being caught? Match nets still over the 'ton', 130 lb winning on Little Geary's not long ago. Plenty of sport with F1s and carp, skimmers also showing well. **Tactics?** Targeting two lines – long pole across at 13 m and shorter at 4-6 m – will keep bites coming on the narrower pegs. Maggots are now best on all lines. Pleasure anglers will do well casting a small block-end feeder and maggots to the far bank. Waggler and maggots on the wider pegs.



Lower Broadheath Fishery

Where? Lower Broadheath, Worcester, WR2 6RQ. Day tickets £8, on the bank. Tel: 07985 541146.

What's being caught? Recent matches at the 'Jam Factory' have been won with nets of carp, with those finding better quality coming out on top. Carp to 10 lb are the mainstay, backed by skimmers, chub and plenty of roach. **Tactics?** As a good depth of water can be found within 5-8 m on all pools, the fish will come close in all weathers. Meat is still picking up decent fish on pole, but corn will come into play as temperatures fall. Smaller carp and silver fish on maggots at 4 m. Try bomb and pellets or corn on Island Pool, casting a couple of metres short of the far bank. Excellent silver fish sport on short pole and loosefed casters from Elgar Pool.

Stockton Reservoir

Where? Stockton, near Rugby, Warwickshire, CV47 8LD. Day tickets £8 one rod, on the bank. Nights with two rods £25. Tel: 01926 812249.

What's being caught? There have been some low-20s carp coming out, several anglers reporting two or three fish in a short session, including some mid-doubles. Underrated for silver fish and perch, with roach to 1 lb and perch close to 2 lb. **Tactics?** Bright bottom baits and a stringer to target the

Best-ever UK haul o

Tiddenfoot Lake, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 2AE (nearby). Seventeen-year-old Harry Burr had a successful 24-hour session at his local water, landing this 41 lb 2 oz mirror carp and a 28 lb common, on a yellow

pop-up over 12 mm Sticky Baits Manilla boilies, hemp and maggots. This historic former quarry in a waterside park is owned by Central Bedfordshire Council and controlled by Leighton Buzzard AC. Venue latest: 01525 634826.

bigger carp. Aim to fish on the edge of any ripple, especially in the lee of the islands, though some fish may still be close to any quiet margins. Cast to showing fish, even in open water. For the silver fish, a small feeder filled with liquidised bread and double red maggot on the hook. For the perch, present a long pole alongside marginal rushes with worms over maggot feed.

tickets £8, on the bank; £20 for 24 hours. Tel: 01455 888104. What's being caught? Carp to 20 lb with plenty of doubles, bream in nets to 50 lb, and perch of around 2 lb. Tactics? Despite the cooler weather, stalking in a few baited margin swims is a great way to target the carp. Corn over loose pellets is the best bait combo. though meat should also pull a few. For the bream and perch, long pole with loosefed casters and a little chopped worm in the deeper swims, which can be nearly 8 ft on the small lake.

Moorlands Farm

Where? Hartlebury, Worcestershire, DY117XN. Day tickets £7, from the café. Tel: 01299 250427. What's being caught? Match weights of 70-80 lb in the past few weeks, carp and F1s being the main targets. Plenty of backing weights of 50-60 lb. Good silver fish nets for pleasure anglers. **Tactics?** Maggots and pellets are the top baits right now. Some fish are being caught on short pole at 4-6 m on Silver

Watery Gate Fishery

Where? Earl Shilton, Leicestershire, LE9 7TS. Day

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WHERE TO FISH SOUTHWEST

Brian Gay

Somerset matchman turned specimen angler, loves to unearth hotspots across the region. Tel: 07768 612872 Email: Brian62@mac.com

RIVER **Bristol Avon**

Where? Swineford, near Bristol, BS30 6LN. Day tickets £7. Amalgamated Fisheries Ltd membership £60. Tel: 01179 603378.

What's being caught? Catch it when the levels have dropped and the bream, roach, perch, chub and dace should go on a feeding spree. Double-figure mixed bags or 50 lb if you can get on a shoal of 'slabs'. Always a chance of a 3 lb-plus chub. **Tactics?** Trotting a top-andbottom float or waggler with maggots, casters or bread is usually good for action from the silver fish and chub. Crumb feeder and worm or red maggots is also a very good way to tempt the bigger bream. bites. Worms often sort out the larger fish.

Kennet and Avon Canal

Where? Horton Road, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 2JS. Day tickets £4.50. Devizes AA canal membership £30. Tel: 01380 725189.

What's being caught? Fine section of towpath for mixed bags to double-figure weights, featuring skimmers, roach, hybrids and perch. Some bigger bream and perch can take catches to 15-20 lb. Tactics? Usually good on pole and bread, pinkies or casters down the track and up the far shelf. Try double red maggot for the bigger skimmers.

Take it to the Bridge

HE Bridgwater and Taunton Canal has been producing some excellent sport while the rivers have been out of sorts, including some big perch.

Local rod Mark Affleck topped a cracking day on the Taunton AA section of the cut at Charlton when he slipped the net under a stripy that took the scales round to over

a few bream, too. With perch of that size and stamp, it also underlines just what a great prospect this canal is when it comes to targeting them with artificial baits.

The canal often tows gently while in normal winter condition, and can be quite clear, but at the Taunton end in particular it does tend to colour up when the rivers are swollen by rain. This can make targeting the perch and plentiful pike with lures somewhat tricky, but a worm can often work very well in these conditions. Chopping up worms releases an attractive oily scent trail that draws fish in water with poor visibility, and when they arrive at the source they will find your big worm hook bait offering. Dendrobaenas are great, but lobworms excel in coloured water and should always be carried when floodwater conditions are anticipated. At the Bridgwater end of the

CANALS **Ilminster Old Canal**

Where? Recreation Ground, Canal Way, Ilminster, Somerset, TA19 9DS. Day tickets £5. Ilminster AA membership £30. Tel: 01460 57247.

What's being caught? Good for small silver fish and perch in 5-10 lb bags, while bigger bream and carp can bump up the returns.

Tactics? Pole and casters chopped worm, usually in the deeper water or near to cover. or bread punch for plenty of

Stroudwater Canal

Where? Ham Mill Lane, Thrupp, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 2ES. Stroud & District AC membership £30. Tel: 07775 357438.

What's being caught? Mostly

roach and some perch in 5-10 lb bags. Most fish tend to be on the smaller side, but some 12 oz to 1 lb roach can show, and there's a chance of a 1 lb-plus stripy. Tactics? Reliable results on pole and punch or casters, while the perch can be targeted with

4 lb.

That fish topped a cracking bag that included another three chucky perch, as well as a good number of smaller silver fish.

The big perch put up a hell of a scrap on pole and worm, and Mark didn't even see it for ten minutes. The previous weekend he landed a quartet of quality perch on similar tactics.

Pole and worm works extremely well for the big fish on this canal, including the perch, tench, big rudd and

STILLWATERS Bitterwell Lake

Where? Ram Hill, Coalpit Heath, Bristol, BS36 2UF. Day tickets from £7. Tel: 07407 657429. What's being caught? The

pinkies, for the silver fish. The carp tend to be more towards the middle of the lake, falling to a feeder or waggler chuck.

Jennetts Reservoir

Furzebray Lakes, South Molton, North Devon, EX36 4ER.

Carp angling writer and guide Gaz Fareham hadn't fished these lakes before, but on a 48-hour session giving tuition to Marcus Leek, he managed to tempt this fine 32 lb 6 oz fish, called 'The Leather', on

a 12 mm hand-rolled hook bait over half a dozen 12 mm Sticky Baits The Krill baits dusted with GLM, The Krill Powder and salt, and cast under an overhang on the back of one of the islands near to deeper water. Venue latest: 01769 572653.

plentiful stocks of quality silver fish provide most of the action now. You can get a bite a cast for a double-figure net or 20 lb-plus of silver fish. Don't write the carp off yet, as they are also showing, usually later in the day.

Tactics? Try pole or waggler with smaller baits, such as chopped worm, casters and



Where? Near Bideford, Devon, EX39 5JH. Day tickets £9. Tel: 01288 321262. What's being caught? Some decent carp to doubles still picking up baits, or roach, skimmers and perch in big bags. Some roach of over 1 lb are showing among the feeding fish. Tactics? Cut-down, bright boilies are tempting the carp. Pole or waggler with maggots leads to lots of bites and big bags of quality roach and skimmers.

Shearwater Lake

Where? Clay Street, Crockerton, Wiltshire, BA12 8AH. Day tickets from £10; 24 hours £20. Tel: 01985 844496 or 07889 625999 (8am-6pm). What's being caught? Carp are still having it regularly, several fish a day to the more successful anglers. Lots of bream and roach on the feed. and some decent perch, too. **Tactics?** Carp on PVA bags of pellets and boilies, while the bream are picking up Method feedered maggots, corn or mini boilies. Roach galore on waggler and casters.





canal, the water tends to remain clearer for longer, making it a better option for lure anglers when the Taunton end is affected by colour.

I enjoyed a very memorable day at the Bridgwater end, fishing under the M5 motorway bridge, where a huge shoal of perch gave me bite-a-chuck sport while drop shotting.

The canal tends to be often overlooked, following the general demise of its appeal to match anglers, but that is great news for pleasure anglers looking to explore and cover a lot of ground.

Even when the rivers are in fishable trim, there are still a few locals who will pick the cut as their first choice venue, because they know the rewards that it can provide. If you want to know more about the fishing on this canal, get in touch with Taunton AA through their website or by ringing Dan Baldwin on 07753 120460 or Bridgewater AA on 01278 671868 or 07947 910522.

Spires Lakes

Where? A3072, North Tawton, Devon, EX20 2SG. Day tickets £6. Tel: 01837 82499. What's being caught? Higher Lake is in better form for the larger fish, including double-figure and occasionally 20 lb carp. Some big perch showing on Higher, too. Lower Lake is more prolific for smaller silver fish, but also offers top-quality perch action. **Tactics?** Carp on Higher tend to fall to corn, pellets, meat or bread. Livebaiting is effective for the perch, but they also come to lobworms, prawns and lures. Pole and bread punch for the silver fish on Lower.

single-figure carp, on leger or waggler and pellets.

Todber Manor

Where? Sturminster Newton, Dorset, DT10 1JB. Day tickets from £10. Tel: 01258 820384. What's being caught? Topquality bream, roach and carp action on Ash, Homeground and Hill View, where big bags are coming out. Good numbers of specimen carp from Big and Little Hayes, as well as Wadmill, Paddock and Willow Bank. **Tactics?** Boilies over PVA pellet bags attracts a lot of runs. Corn, pellets, maggots and casters on pole, waggler or leger rigs all score on the match-style lakes.



Stafford Moor Fishery

Where? Toad Hall, Winkleigh, Devon, EX19 8PP. Day tickets from £10. Tel: 01805 804360. What's being caught? All the lakes are in good form, with some bagging carp action still giving big weights. Carpers are catching doubles and 20s on Beatties and Lodge. On Tanners, Pines and Woodpecker, there's some excellent silver fish sport with bream and roach. **Tactics?** The big specimen carp are coming out on boilies or pellets, while the silver fish anglers are finding success with pole and expanders. Match carping is best for the

Viaduct Fishery

Where? Cary Valley, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 6LJ. Day tickets from £8. Tel: 01458 274022. What's being caught? Still good numbers of fish to be had when you drop in the right swims. Silver fish well spread out, making up bags of 15-25 lb of roach, bream and perch. **Tactics?** Leger meat or corn for the carp when you find them. Have a cast around and look for line bites to locate the shoals. Silver fish can be lined up well by alternating short and long pole swims fed with chopped worm and casters, offering red maggots on the hook.

Caspe Fishing on the bank of the River Ebro in Spain



All enquiries contact Bill Coxon Tel: +34 679670087 Email: wjcoxon@msn.com www.caspe-fishing.com



WHERE TO FISH SOUTHEAST

Duncan Charman

Specimen angler with an incredible list of personal bests to his name.

Tel: 07928 617006 Email: duncancharman@me.com

Go get a grayling!

Every year I say it, but if you haven't tried catching a grayling, it's time you did, as it's great fun, and the fish keep biting even when it's bitterly cold. I've already planned five grayling days this winter. All of them will involve me heading to a river with a friend, to enjoy watching a float travel downstream, before hopefully seeing it disappear, then feeling my rod bend and 'pin spin. difficult, John Merriman and I landed 58 fish, comprising grayling to almost 2 lb, chub approaching 4 lb and brown



My first trip has come and gone. Although a howling wind and rubbish coming downstream made it and sea trout to 6 lb.

I was John's guest. Thank you, John. My treat next time! If you need some guidance, I can teach you the art of chalkstream trotting on the Itchen or the Test. Just email me for further details.

If you want to go there for yourself, the details for the Lower Itchen Fishery are on their website, or ring 07477 790210. Likewise for Timsbury Fishing, or ring 07759 331385.

RIVERS River Colne

Where? Hithermoor Road, Stanwell Moor, Middlesex, TW19 6AT. Bath Road Piscatorial Society membership £100, which includes a £25 joining fee. More details from www.brps.co.uk Tel: 07546 459996. (nearby). Day tickets £6, from local tackle shops, including Nicks Tackle and West Mailing Angling. Maidstone Victory AS membership £80 plus a £20 joining fee. Tel: 07557 271909. **What's being caught?** Bream

What's being caught? Chub

to over 5 lb and barbel to over 10 lb have featured in catches over the past few weeks. **Tactics?** Meat after dark seems to be most productive for the barbel, especially when the river is carrying colour. Chub falling to roving anglers using bread flake when the river is running cold and clear.

River Lea

Where? Aquaduct Fishery, near Dudswell, Hertfordshire, EN10 6HE. London AA membership £50. Tel: 0208 520 7477 (office hours).

What's being caught? A short, difficult stretch, but you could be rewarded with a very big chub or barbel.
Tactics? A stealthy roving approach using a link leger with bread for the chub, but target barbel with meat when it's coloured.

0.0

in noted pegs above the lock and occasional chub, pike and barbel below.

Tactics? Groundbait feeder for the bream, pike on lures, and barbel and chub on boilies and pellets.

River Thames

Where? Beale Park,

Pangbourne, Berkshire, RG8 9NW. Members only. Reading Fishing Club membership £50, from Angling Direct, Reading. Tel: 01189 412896.

What's being caught? The bream pegs are still producing fish getting on for 10 lb. In other

pegs, expect mainly perch and roach, double-figure match weights needed to win.

Tactics? Whip to-hand with maggots or casters for the silver fish, the bream falling to feeder, and perch on worms.

What's being caught? Mostly a few decent chub along with increasing numbers of roach and perch. There are also barbel and carp here, but they are difficult to locate.
Tactics? Stick float and maggots will bring bites from small fish, and casting a small lure around should get attention from pike and perch.

CANALS Basingstoke Canal

Where? Iron Bridge to Ash Wharf, Surrey. Day tickets £8, from local tackle shops, including Yateley Angling Centre. Basingstoke Canal AA membership just £28.
Tel: Tackle Up on 01252 614066 or 616129.
What's being caught? The stretch below Iron Bridge is producing good bags of perch, including a few fish of over 2 lb, along with small roach. There are some big carp to over 20 lb, too. **Tactics?** Some areas still choked with weed, but beginning to die back, and really clear, so punch on a pole to the far bank is beginning to produce silver fish, and chopped worm and casters down the edge works for the perch. Avoid fishing on cold and clear days, especially after a frost.

Grand Union Canal

River Medway

Where? Teston Bridge, Maidstone, Kent, ME18 5BX **River Wey Navigation** Where? Broadford Bridge, GU4 8DT, to Guildford Rowing Club, GU1 3XL, Surrey. Godalming AS membership £155, which includes a joining fee. Tel: Apollo Angling on 01483 428885. Where? Slough Arm, Slough, Berkshire. Gerrards Cross & Uxbridge DAS membership £75. Tel: 0208 4210769.
What's being caught? Mostly small roach and perch with a few bigger stripys showing.
Tactics? Pole best, with punch for the roach and chopped worm for the perch.







Bury Hill Fisheries,

float fished dendrobaenas

Dorking, Surrey, RH4 3JU.

The very first cast of the day on Milton Lake produced this personal best 1 lb 10 oz roach for David Brookhouse, who had another of over 1 lb, on

and double maggot over loosefed krill micro pellets, while fishing for perch in the margins. Venue latest: 01306 883621.

STILLWATERS **Alderwood Ponds**

Where? Horsham Road, Steyning, West Sussex, BN44 3AA. Day tickets £10 one rod; £14 two rods; £18 three rods; 24 hours £27. Tel: 01903 816377 or 07713 468264. What's being caught?

Corsican Pond for lots of smaller carp of 2-10 lb, along with perch to 2 lb. No reports of any big perch from Island Lake, but plenty of silver fish and carp to over 20 lb. **Tactics?** Perch falling to float fished prawns, as are other species on Corsican, and PVA bags and quality boilies such as Citruz catching plenty on Island Lake.

Witney, Oxfordshire, OX29 5BB. Day tickets £15 two rods; £20 three rods; 24 hours with two rods £25; three rods £30. Tel: 01865 882215.

What's being caught? Things have quietened down since Scott Phillips' incredible eight-fish catch that included 'Kev's Linear' at 48 lb 14 oz, but still a few whackers showing, as Leon Saunders proved with a stunning 44 lb 7 oz common. **Tactics?** Sticky Baits Manilla boilies doing the business, but you need to keep your eyes peeled and move if necessary.

of perch to 3 lb and a few carp to over 20 lb. Kestrel produced a 37 lb 2 oz mirror recently. **Tactics?** Float fished prawns for the perch and occasional carp on Kingfisher, and PVA bags and small frozen (no shelflifes) boilies on Kestrel.

Southend Farm

Where? Waltham Abbey, Essex, EN9 3SE. Day tickets £9 one rod; £12 two rods. Tel: 07950 012614.

What's being caught? The Match Lake is where you need to head for to enjoy plenty of winter action, as it has an incredible head of silver fish, with roach to 2 lb, perch of over 3 lb and lots of skimmers and bream. Plenty of carp as well, mostly to high teens, but to over 30 lb. **Tactics?** Pole or waggler up in the water with casters for the

roach. Try down on the deck using maggots if you want a mixed bag. Carp falling to PVA bags and pellets (boilies are banned here).

Thorpe Lea Fishery

Where? Thorpe Lea Road, Thorpe, Egham, Surrey, TW20 8RH. Day tickets £12; 24 hours £24. Tel: 01784 492182 or 07934 000559.

What's being caught? Sport has slowed due to the drop in temperature, but a few carp are still showing, such as Carl Shackleford's mid-20 from peg 15. Sport should improve as the weather settles. Tactics? Bright boilies and pop-ups doing the business right now, and if you see any signs of carp, move to them, as they are probably shoaled tightly, giving you a chance of catching a few of them.

Linch Hill Fishery's Christchurch Lake Where? Stanton Harcourt, **Mousehole Lakes**

Where? Maidstone Road, Nettlestead, Maidstone, Kent, ME18 5HR. Day tickets: Kestrel £15; Kingfisher £12 two rods; Swift £7 one rod. Tel: 07725 783405. What's being caught? Plenty

WHERE TO FISH EAST

Tom Legge

Cambridgeshire angling coach who is always fully informed with the latest fishery news. Tel: 07801 627465 Email: tomlegge@yahoo.com

RIVERS River Bure

Where? Oby to Acle, Norfolk, NR29 3BW. Free fishing. Tel: Wroxham Angling on 01603 782453.

What's being caught?

Often overshadowed by the upstream reaches, the lower river from Oby to Acle also offers excellent winter roach and skimmer sport. Bags to 25 lb are reported from the farm stretch at Oby, with Acle bridge producing nets to 15 lb, including some prime roach to 12 oz. Pike to doubles are also on the cards.



Hertfordshire angler Colin **Crowson loves** visiting the Fens in pursuit of pike, and he kicked off his winter campaign on a rain-swollen **River Lark at** Prickwillow with this 7 lb 10 oz 'snapper', tempted on a herring in the margins.

Tactics? Groundbait feeder with double or single red maggot hook baits is best at Oby. Long pole or Bolo' with casters over regular egg-sized balls of groundbait scoring at Acle.

River Lark

Where? Prickwillow, Cambridgeshire, CB7 4UN. Day tickets £7. Cambridge FPAS membership £40. Tel: Graham Tweed on 01223 234616. What's being caught? After weeks of hard sport in gin-clear water, prospects for all species are much improved

Barbel 'back from the dead'

THE past decade's demise of huge barbel on the upper Great Ouse and its River Ivel tributary led many to believe that the species had been totally wiped out on these rivers by otter predation.

That's just not true, as a recent conversation with Bedfordshire angler Vito Napoli confirmed.

As a member of the Chub Study Group, Vito's main target species is obvious. Last winter he caught 52 Ouse chub of over 5 lb, three over 6 lb and 47 more topping 4 lb. Already this winter he's had two 6 lb-plus chevins, 12 topping 5 lb and nine 4s. A huge fan of traditional tackle, tactics and baits, Vito fishes mainly with cane rods and Mitchell 300 reels loaded with 12 lb Maxima mono. His simple rigs include running leads of 1.5-2 oz and luncheon meat, lobworms, cheese or brown bread on size 4 or 2 hooks, fished under or just beyond his rod end. Those tactics often bring him big fish of other species, including perch to 3 lb 3 oz, roach to 1 lb 12 oz, a 4 lb 2 oz eel, and 16 barbel to 13 lb 1 oz since mid-September.



"Some anglers honestly think that all the Ouse barbel are gone, due to otters and mink. But they are missing out on some great sport," Vito told me. "I even caught one less than half an hour after a big otter passed through my swim. Most anglers pack up

Vito Napoli with a 13 lb 1 oz Great Ouse barbel and a 5 lb 7 oz chub.

and move if they see an otter on the hunt, but I decided to stay and was glad I did. "With frosty mornings and the river fining down, current

conditions are ideal for chub. Unless it's heavily flooded, they are always my main targets. "But I wouldn't be surprised to bump into one or two more barbel before the season ends," he added.

Several clubs control stretches of the Ouse between Bedford and its Cambridgeshire border, which marks the end of barbel territory, including Blunham AC (01234 823959), Biggleswade & Hitchin AC (01234 740062), Shefford DAA (07594 253239) and Luton AC (01582 728114). Call for membership and day ticket availability.

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on a river fining down from the first big flood. Expect roach to 8 oz, skimmers, rudd and perch on both sides of the roadbridge. Pike to doubles also on the cards.

Tactics? Pole with maggots or pinkies over groundbait for mixed bags to 10 lb. Legered or wobbled deadbaits cast and retrieved for the pike.

River Welland

Where? Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE111UL. Free fishing.

route to big bags of roach, feeding liquidised bread little and often. Perch on chopped lobworms or light lure kit. Sprats, sardines or roach deadbaits for the pike.

STILLWATERS Felthorpe Lakes

Where? Hevingham, Norfolk, NR10 5NL. Day tickets £7; £18 for 24 hours. Tel: 07765 258000. What's being caught? Carp to over 20 lb backed by a variety of species, including tench, rudd, roach, perch, grass carp, bream, crucians and even a few rare ruffe in this mature, three-lake complex. Mirror Lake is the largest water, holding the biggest carp. Foxes and Shadows pools are smaller, more intimate, but still offer a chance of quality fish of several species. The venue's best tench, at 9 lb, was caught from Foxes. **Tactics?** Legered boilies, pellets, corn or meat produce the bulk of the carp on Mirror Lake. Float, pole, bomb or light feeder with worms, maggots

and casters are usually a better option to tempt shy fish from the two smaller waters.

Lawn Farm Fishery

Where? Elsworth, Cambridgeshire, CB23 4JX. Four-lake complex with on-site tackle shop. Day tickets £7 one rod; £9.50 two rods. Tel: 01954 718269. What's being caught?

Despite water levels still low but gradually rising, steady sport with carp to doubles, bream to 3 lb, roach, perch and occasional chub is reported on Willow Lake. A recent Fred's MG weekend match was won by Tony Hayden with 99 lb of carp, at peg 33, followed by Allan Archer with 40 lb 5 oz, skimmers and three carp, at peg 35. Crab Tree and Cherry Tree Lakes offer brisk sport with chub and carp for pleasure anglers. **Tactics?** Top approach on Willow is bomb and bread for the carp, or long pole and casters over groundbait for the skimmers and roach. Maggot feeder, long pole or

waggler towards the islands on Crab Tree and Cherry Tree will catch everything with fins, but the larger carp can be tempted on corn or meat in the near margins on warmer afternoons.

Oulton Broad

Where? Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 9JS. Free fishing. Tel: Oulton Broad Fishing Tackle on 01502 539593. What's being caught?

Although famed for its bream, the species is currently scarce, but the flipside is lots of roach to 8 oz providing busy action in nets to 20 lb. Jack pike are also active, and quality perch can switch on to the feed at dawn and dusk. Skimmers and bream to 3 lb have figured in nets to 30 lb in the nearby Oulton Dyke area. **Tactics?** Pole with casters over groundbait at 8-11 m for the roach. Small livebaits or lures for the perch and pike. Groundbait feeder with worms and corn for the bream at Oulton Dyke, where the best sport comes on ebb tides.

Tel: Granz Angling on 01775 712206.

What's being caught? Extra flow and a lovely tinge of colour have brought the town centre stretch alive with roach to 10 oz in nets to 20 lb-plus. Hotspots include the Moorings area and the deeper pegs between the town bridge and Holland Road footbridge. Perch to over 2 lb are possible in clear-water conditions, with jack pike always active.

Tactics? Pole or whip with bread punch and hemp mid-river at 5-7 m is the fastest



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WHERE TO FISH NORTH EAST

Alain Urruty

Knowledgeable Yorkshireman who loves fishing all types of venues. Tel: 07808 367519 Email: preston-a@sky.com

A welcome pint of mild

WINTER always used to be a time for scratching about with pinkies and maggots to get a few bites. How times have changed.

A few days of milder weather has brought a boom in carp sport, with a number of local fisheries producing 100 lb-plus bags. The top six at The Oaks Fishery, at Sessay, weighed in over 100 lb each, while at Sykehouse Fishery there was even a 'double ton'. Despite these tremendous catches, there's still a place for a more cautious approach with maggots and casters. Silver fish such as roach, perch, skimmers and ide will give bites, but there are also plenty of carp and F1s being caught on natural baits, according to the fishery owners. There is still a place for pellets, corn and bread when targeting carp at the moment, but for consistent sport with mixed bags that include carp, don't ignore the humble maggot and caster. And don't think that you need gallons like you sometimes do in summer, as a pint or two fed sparingly goes a long way in cold water.



popped up, best for the bigger carp and cats.

Lambwath Lakes

Where? Off Seaside Road, Aldborough, East Yorkshire, HU11 4RZ (nearby). Day tickets £6. Tel: 01964 527740.
What's being caught? Moat Lake is producing the best sport at the moment, thanks to a recent restocking of 1,000 lb of carp up to 1 lb 8 oz.
Tactics? Pole with pellets and maggots doing the damage on Moat Lake, with bomb or small feeder and the same baits next best.

Newhay Lakes

Where? Cliffe, Selby, North Yorkshire, YO8 6PL. Day tickets: coarse and match lakes £6; £8 for two rods; nights an extra £10; Specimen Lake £15; £20 for 24 hours, booked in advance on the specimen lake. Tel: 01757 638383. What's being caught? The specimen lake has been on good form, despite the mixed weather, with carp to 28 lb 2 oz banked. The coarse lake is producing good mixed bags, with carp, barbel, bream and chub. The plan is to stock a 40 lb-plus carp into the specimen lake over the winter. The owner reports the fish has already been bought and will go in as soon as conditions are right. **Tactics?** Boilies on the bottom over a sprinkling of loose offerings is producing the best carp sport on the specimen lake. Feeder with wafters or mini boilies best on the coarse lake. Maggots and casters for bites from the smaller silver fish.

Alain's old pal Jim Baxter shows what can be caught at this time of year with just a pint of maggots, with this 20 lb mixed bag of roach, skimmers, ide, perch and carp.

CANALS Beverley Canal

Where? Waterside Road, Beverley, East Yorkshire, HU17 OPP. Day tickets £4, from the Co-op shop on Waterside Road before fishing. Tel: 07976 779983. What's being caught? Good bags of roach, perch and skimmers reported, along with a few better bream and ide. Weekend match won with 15 lb, and the top six all weighed in double-figure bags. **Tactics?** Bread punch producing the best bags of roach and skimmers, with pinkies and maggots over groundbait for bites from all

species. Chopped worm and casters for better quality fish.

Fossdyke Canal

Where? West Common, Lincoln, LN1 1TE. Day tickets £5. Lincoln & District AA membership £35. Tel: 07530 475076. What's being caught? Roach, perch, skimmers and a few tench in double-figures bag. Also pike and quality perch. **Tactics?** Pole with pinkies over groundbait producing the best catches. Bread punch also produces good catches of roach. Lobworms close to the banks for the perch. Lures or deadbaits for the pike.

STILLWATERS Elvington Fisheries

Where? Wheldrake Lane, Elvington, York, YO41 4AZ. Day tickets £6; £7 for two or three rods. Tel: 01904 607504. What's being caught? Some great bags of roach and skimmers in recent weeks, up to 30 lb reported. A few carp feeding in milder conditions, and there was even a catfish of 49 lb out. **Tactics?** Pole with maggots over groundbait, waggler with loosefed maggots or casters, or groundbait feeder for the roach and skimmers. Legered boilies, on the bottom or

Pine Lakes Fisheries

Where? Kirton Lane, Thorne, South Yorkshire, DN8 5RQ. Day tickets £7. Keepnets and landing net heads supplied. Tel: 07867 553645. What's being caught? Carp, ide, roach, rudd and tench have been feeding well. Recent match on the small lake was won with over 100 lb of carp, while the big lake gave a pleasure catch of 114 lb. More fish are due to be stocked over the winter. **Tactics?** Pole to the islands or in the edge with pellets, dead reds or worm and casters best for the carp and mixed bags on the small lake. On the big lake,



dead reds or chopped worm and casters on a pole has brought the best bags of carp and silver fish.

Portsmouth Reservoir

Where? A646, Cornholme, Todmorden, West Yorkshire, OL14 8QE. Members only. Todmorden AS membership £42. Tel: secretary on 07766 428009.

What's being caught? Some good catches of carp have been reported, along with bream, ide, roach and perch. Tactics? Pole with worms or soft pellets over micro pellets for the carp, and maggots or casters for mixed bags. Method feeder with groundbait or dampened micros, or bomb with small boilies, wafters or pellets on the hook, also producing carp.

Sykehouse Fisheries

Where? Mawson Green Lane, Sykehouse, Goole, East Yorkshire, DN14 9AJ. Day tickets £8. Tel: 07885 745538. What's being caught? Carp still feeding well, a weekend match won with 209 lb, followed by a number of 100 lb bags. Plenty of roach and bream to be had, if targeted. Weekend silver fish match won with 35 lb, and good backing weights.

Tactics? Pole with dead red

SOO PEGS, 184 ACRES, 13 LAKES, I FANTASTIC ANGLING HOLIDAY

Sunrise Lakes

Where? Green Haggs Lane, Follifoot, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG3 1EQ. Day tickets £7; £4 an extra rod. Tel: 07979 803207.

What's being caught?

Skimmers, roach, ide and F1s feeding well, along with a few better carp in milder spells. Some good perch to target as well.

Tactics? Pole with maggots and casters producing the most consistent sport for mixed bags. Small expander pellets over micro pellets also producing. Bomb or small feeder with dead red maggots, corn or bread also worth a try. maggots producing the best carp sport. Aim to find 6 ft of water, fish full depth and introduce feed with a pole cup. Pellet waggler at 4-5 ft or bomb with banded pellets also catching carp. Casters for mixed bags of silver fish, or soft pellets over micro pellets to target the bream.

Tees Valley Lakes

Where? A67, Eaglescliffe, Stockton-on-Tees, Durham, TS16 OQD. Day tickets: Yarm Lake £7; Alpha and Eagle Lakes £10; 24 hours £24; Sangemere is a syndicate only lake, at £325 per year. Booking ahead is essential. Tel: 07980 179585. What's being caught? Yarm Lake is the mixed coarse lake, with roach, bream, tench, chub, perch and carp. Alpha, Eagle and Sangemere Lakes are all carp lakes, each with quality fish of over 20 lb, up to 32 lb. Tactics? Legered boilies and pellets best on the carp lakes. Many tactics can produce on Yarm Lake, from pole to feeder.

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Tyram Fisheries, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN7 6DR.

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WHERE TO FISH NORTHWEST

an Chapman

Chorley-based Chappy champions rivers, canals and stillwaters all across the region. Tel: 07510 405123 Email: ianchappy@yahoo.co.uk

A change is a challenge

THINK it's fair to say that no two days are ever the same when you're fishing. You can go back to the same swim under similar conditions and your results can differ greatly from one day to the next.

Being a successful angler is all about being able to adapt to given situations. There are a lot of 'one-trick ponies' out there on the bank – anglers

'own' venue, but move them to somewhere unfamiliar and they often struggle. There's a lifetime of learning to be done about methods, species, baits and watercraft, and I think it's important to vary our fishing sessions between different types of water, so that we maintain a challenge in our angling, or it can become repetitive and boring, and we

River Ribble

RA

Where? Shawes Arms, Walton-le-Dale, Preston, Lancashire, PR2 5AX. Free fishing. Tel: 01772 253476. What's being caught? Catches to 20 lb of quality roach possible on this length, with a few to 2 lb among lots to 12 oz. Dace to 8 oz and perch to over 2 lb are also feeding well. Productive spots include the sandbank pegs by the tree stump up opposite the church. A pike of 24 lb was caught recently, too. Tactics? Try a medium-sized stick float with a caster on a size 16 hook, over hemp and casters loosefeed, for the better specimens. Alternatively, 3-4 pints of maggots should also prove successful. Red or bronze maggots can work really well, on a size 18 hook to 0.12 mm hook link.

Scarisbrick, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L40 8HQ. Day tickets £5, on the bank. Wigan DAA membership £35. Tel: 01704 896252.

What's being caught? You should find roach to 6 oz and skimmers to 1 lb, with perhaps one or two bream to 3 lb. A few decent perch to 12 oz are also usually in the mix, with 8 lb a respectable winter haul. Tactics? Pole with bread punch is usually productive here, casters and worms also worth trying, on a size 16 hook, to tempt the bream. Try a session by the boat basin mouth.

who are hard to beat on their don't learn much.





River Weaver

Where? Red Lion, Winsford, Cheshire, CW7 3AA. Day tickets £5, on the bank. Tel: 01606 833853. What's being caught? Fairly reliable sport on offer on this deep section. Catches can top 15 lb, of roach to 10 oz, hybrids to 2 lb, bream to 2 lb and perch to 10 oz.

Tactics? Try a Bolo' or big stick float for an enjoyable day. Pole will score well, too, in slower swims, offering supreme presentation. Casters are best to sort out the quality fish, but bronze maggots also bring a lot of response. Try worms for the bream and hybrids.

STILLWATERS Blundell's Farm

Where? Moss Side Farm, Prospect Lane, Rixton, Cheshire, WA3 6EJ. Day tickets £6. Tel: 0161 775 2124. What's being caught? Match anglers are still getting 40-100 lb. Mainly decent carp to 8 lb with a few silver fish. **Tactics?** It's worth trying bread, pellets and maggots, and be prepared to adapt to conditions. Bomb and waggler are typically best, and it pays to cast around to find the fish, near to underwater features. Be patient and persistent and they will usually come on the feed after midday.

A lifetime of learning on the banks – rivers, lakes and canals are all worth a try to advance your fish-catching skills.

RIVERS River Dane Where? Off Vickers Way,

6 oz in the main flow, catches to 10 lb possible when the levels are settled. **Tactics?** A light stick float or waggler will usually bring plenty of bites. Try loosefeeding 6-10 maggots every cast to draw the fish and entice them to feed. If you haven't caught something in an hour, move on until you find a shoal of fish. Your end tackle should include a size 18 hook to a 0.11 mm hook length.

CANALS **Bridgewater Canal**

Where? Astmoor Bridge, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 1NW. Lymm AC Bridgewater Canal membership £25. Tel: 07432 874977.

What's being caught? Results will depend on conditions, so try to fish on as mild a day as possible, for a chance of maybe 10 lb of mixed roach, skimmers and perch. It could be tough after a frost.

Tactics? It makes sense to target the deeper water in the boat channel with small bread punch on the hook to start, then casters later, or maggots on a pole, with fine end tackle of 0.09 mm line to a fine wire size 22 or 24 hook, though step up if larger fish turn up.

Brookside Fisheries

Where? Tarporley Road, Whitley, Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 4DT. Day tickets £7. Tel: 07471 102479. What's being caught? Catches of 20-40 lb to be expected on the Snakes, with pegs in the 40s worth a try. It's going to be hit and miss in the colder months, but milder days will make fish switch on to feed eventually, so it's worth fishing until dusk for a few bonus carp to 6 lb. Tactics? Soft pellets and

'dobbed' bread are effective, maggots also worth a try, on a size 18 hook. It's usually vital to search around your peg to locate the fish, pick off a few and then find more in other spots.

Cheshire Oaks Fisheries

Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 5QH. Day tickets £5, in advance from local tackle shops. Northwich AA membership £50 and no joining fee. Tel: 07570 976539. What's being caught? There's both banks to try here, so it's worth having a wander with minimal tackle to target dace to 6 oz, chub to 2 lb and roach to

Leeds-Liverpool Canal Where? Southport Road,

Where? Strawberry Way West, Backford, Chester, Cheshire, CH1 6PN. Day tickets £7. Tel: 0151 355 9547. What's being caught? Small mirrors, commons, F1s and ide are providing all the action, and it's been pretty reasonable for those willing to have a go on these short days. Be patient,



and the fish will respond reasonably well in the afternoon. **Tactics?** Pole is good for the ide, but bomb and pellets can bring more carp. A small Method or pellet feeder is also well worth trying, so you can sit back and relax in peaceful surroundings.

Hampton Springs Fishery

Where? Shay Lane, Hampton Malpas, Cheshire, SY14 8AD. Day tickets £8. Tel: 01948 820789. What's being caught? Best to focus on roach, skimmers and perch at the moment. Encourage the silver fish to feed, and a few carp will show eventually. It's cold, so cut back on the feed, but you will catch fish here, match anglers winning silver fish matches with up to 50 lb, which is top sport. Carp to 20 lb from Folly carp lake. **Tactics?** Pole with maggots and casters effective for plenty of bites. Corn or pellets may tempt a carp or two at some point later in the day. Rock Pool and Meadows are favoured. Venuesupplied baits being used with success for the carp on Folly.

so feed lightly with corn and dead red maggots, using a size 16 hook, and a small amount of fishmeal groundbait to stimulate them to feed.

Old Hough Coarse Fishery

Where? Forge Mill Lane, Warmingham, Middlewich, Cheshire, CW10 OHQ. Day tickets £6 midweek; £7 weekends. Tel: 0161 427 2039. What's being caught? A bit unpredictable now that the temperature is colder, ruling out big catches, but 30-40 lb is still decent. Plenty of small carp to 3 lb with skimmers and roach, once you get them interested. **Tactics?** If it's not too gusty, pole is by far the best choice, but on the more open waters a small Method feeder can work well. Moses and Lucky Dip are in-form.

WALES



Keith Williams

The angling newshound is a former fishery inspector with the EA. Tel: 0752 650 3862 (before 9pm) Email: kewill23@sky.com

Let's all club together

'M hearing more and more about the problems facing clubs in Wales, which are suffering low membership recruitment, especially among our young adult age groups, who are the future of every club. Times are tight, as we all know, but there is a lot that clubs and associations can do to encourage angling. The role model of Get Hooked on Fishing could be rolled out and managed as a partnership between all angling disciplines, the education authorities, social services, Police forces and the fisheries regulators, such as Natural Resources Wales and

the Environment Agency. Such a scheme existed successfully in North Wales for a number of years, where many youngsters considered at risk of getting involved in anti-social behaviour were coached by EA Wales, angling Police officers and, importantly, the Welsh Federation of Coarse Anglers, but it has unfortunately dwindled through a lack of focus and participant support. Are there clubs in the Principality willing to pick up the baton and start this scheme? There are many qualified coaches out there, I'm told, but where are they coaching?

Lloyds Meadow Fishery Where? Delamere Road, Chester Cheshire, CH3 8B

Chester, Cheshire, CH3 8BD. Day tickets £8. Tel: 01928 740710.

Sycamore Fisheries

Where? Ashton Road Farm, Golborne, Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 3UU. Day tickets £5. Tel: 07710 780864.

What's being caught? Silver Birch and Rowan are producing some decent carp hauls to 50 lb on milder days, with carp to 5 lb. David's is decent for silver fish and a few carp. Willow and Joe's Canal are also worth a session for small carp and silver fish. Tactics? Match and pleasure anglers doing well on pole with red maggots and soft 6 mm pellets. A light Method feeder with corn and pellets on a hair-rig will also work.

RIVERS River Dee

Where? Bridge Street, Holt, Wrexham, LL13 9JG. Dee AA membership £25, from bailiff Reg Williams by arrangement on the bank. Tel: 07706 0868344. Chester Tackle Locker, CH3 5EE, on 01244 345069.

What's being caught? The Holt water is fishing well now that the river is lowering, for big dace and chub averaging 1 lb 8 oz and 10-25 lb bags of roach. Also barbel of 3-9 lb on meat. **Tactics?** Fish pegs 6-11 with 3-5 g Bolo' floats, holding back using casters over hemp or bread flake, for the roach. Regulars catching well on sliding balsa floats in the deeps, with double maggot, and on 8 m whip to-hand with maggots or casters over groundbait and two-thirds molehill soil, and hemp down the inside.

What's being caught? Chub to 3 lb, dace, roach and gudgeon. Tactics? Go early to avoid boat traffic at weekends and fish the wides with maggot feeder with some fluoro pinkies, or pole to the far shelf and boats. Hold back and fish overdepth to start, until you can get the fish up in the water. Try big bread punch and crumb for the better roach.

STILLWATERS

What's being caught? Try to choose a mild day to fish these shallow pools. You can expect chub to 2 lb, skimmers to 2 lb, perch to 2 lb and roach to 10 oz on all of the waters, with perhaps a few carp turning up later in the day, depending on temperature.

Tactics? Lightly loosefeeding with red maggots best on all of the pools now. Try side hooking to tease out bites on the drop. Catapult the bait in sparingly but regularly, to gradually spark some interest.

Mescar Fisheries

Where? Mill House Farm, Eager Lane, Lydiate, Lancashire, L31 4HS. Day tickets £7. Tel: 07834 562697. What's being caught? With the help of deeper water on these **Whitmore Fisheries**

Where? Bradshaw Lane, Greenhalgh, Preston, Lancashire, PR4 3HQ. Day tickets £7. Tel: 01253 836224. What's being caught? The Basin is providing enjoyable sport with ide to 2 lb and a few bream to 2 lb. East Lake is also reliable for ide to 3 lb and small carp. Club Canal is worth a session for skimmers and a few specimen perch. Doughnut is also good for plenty of skimmers. The East Canal is producing plenty of carp to 3 lb. **Tactics?** Loosefeed red maggots regularly and the ide will come to pole or waggler with lightly shotted rigs on The Basin. To tempt barbel, chub or carp, try a feeder with a bunch of maggots or hair-rigged corn. Perch respond best to worms or prawns, and on The East Canal, pole with maggots is starting to do well, along with soft pellets.

River Wye

Where? Llanstephan to Boughrood Bridge, Powys. Members only. Rhymney & District AS membership £35. Jesse Pugh on 01685 840122. What's being caught? Chub averaging 5 lb.

Tactics? Terry Moss of Tredegar had five chub for 23 lb on legered meat on the 'tip.

Mathern Mill Fishery

Where? Baileys Hay, Mathern, Chepstow, Monmouthshire, NP16 6JP. Day tickets £7. Tel: Chris Jones on 07801 513943. What's being caught? Carp of 8-16 lb, lots of roach, bream rudd, skimmers and perch. Tactics? Fish the deep water at 13 m with casters and corn over pellets, or waggler with maggots to the island, for good nets of bream to 4 lb. Try 'dobbing' maggots and bread down the margins when the colour drops out. No boilies.

Riverside Fishery

Where? Ffrwd Farm, Hengoed, Mid Glamorgan, CF8 7SN. Day tickets £7 one rod; £10 two rods. Tel: 02920 889436. What's being caught? Plenty of silver fish, bream to 5 lb and roach to 1 lb 8 oz. Lee Callaghan of Merthyr Tydfil had six carp to 16 lb 8 oz. **Tactics?** The matches have brought nets of fish averaging 25 lb, roach and bream on casters and corn down the margins. Carp to 16 lb on the main lake, on Strawberry boilies and pop-ups.

lakes, there is fairly reliable winter sport to be enjoyed. Half a dozen carp to 8 lb would be a great pleasure session at this time of year, with good numbers of silver fish in the mix if you use lighter tackle.

Tactics? Pole or Method feeder best. It may take a couple of hours for the carp to respond,

CANAL Llangollen Canal

Where? Maesterfyn Bridge, Llangollen, to Welsh Frankton, Shropshire. Canal & River Trust Waterway Wanderers tickets £20. Angling Trust members £10. Tel: 0303 040 4040.



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We will endeavour to acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days and we aim to correct substantial errors as soon as possible.

Angler's YOUR VIEWS this week E-MAIL YOUR LETTERS TO: amletters@ti-media.com



N THE dark days of Victorian Britain, wildlife persecution was rife, and anything that flew, ran or swam was considered fair game. As a result, a number of iconic species were lost, or pushed to the brink of extinction. Nowadays, such actions are considered abhorrent and have largely been consigned to the dustbin of history, except, it seems, in the angling world. I have never understood the hysteria surrounding cormorants, and don't accept that these birds alone have been responsible for wiping out fisheries, although in some venues they may have exacerbated underlying problems and accelerated the depletion of stocks. There are plenty of waters in which silver fish populations remain strong, despite the presence of cormorants, my local Aire and Calder Canal being one such example. Where habitat has not been degraded, fish look after themselves, regardless of predation. Public attitudes towards wildlife persecution are

hardening. Grouse shooting has hemorrhaged support as a result of covert RSPB videos showing gamekeepers shooting and trapping birds of prey on their nests.



Councils and utility companies no longer wish to be associated with the sport, and have banned it on swathes of publicly owned moorland.

Imagine the consequences of organisations such as the RSPB and Wild Justice switching their attention to angling.

We lack political and financial clout, because so many of us refuse to back the Angling Trust. How long before we are looking local bans in the face, and perhaps ultimately an outright ban?

The intransigence of so many in the sport worries me. If, heaven forbid, cormorants are added to the general licence, there will no doubt be much rejoicing, but I fear it will be a pyrrhic victory that might one day return to haunt us. Anglers need to overcome this irrational obsession with predation and drag themselves into the 21st century – fast. **Dave Tipping, Harrogate, North Yorkshire.** Top specimen hunter Dave Tipping, shown here with a fine tench brace from 1973, thinks that being granted a general licence to shoot cormorants could be a very short-lived victory for the sport.



Bailiff powers clarified

WE ARE concerned that individuals following advice included in recent articles about the new volunteer group Fishery Watch may be injured or find themselves subjected to legal action as a result of attempting an unlawful arrest.

Schedule One of the Theft Act 1968 creates an offence relevant to fisheries protection.

Note that the offence wording is 'unlawfully takes or destroys, or attempts to take or destroy' this is a different definition from theft, which is defined elsewhere in the Act. The 'any person' specific power of arrest for this offence was repealed by the Serious **Organised Crime and Police** Act 2005. The offence is 'summary only' (triable at Magistrates' Court); 'Citizens arrests' are limited to indictable offences, and are only lawful when certain conditions are satisfied. Consequently, only a constable acting under their Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 powers may arrest for this offence, and even then only when certain conditions are satisfied.



Chief Inspector Louise Hubble, Graeme Storey from the EA and the Angling Trust's Dilip Sarkar all say that arrests should be left to properly qualified professionals.

> offence of unlawful fishing exists under Schedule One.

ALE-IVE EPIC CATCHES Our classic fishing series moves back in time, and this week we bring you a special look at...

When a schoolboy beat the British perch record, by a whisker

DEAN RAWLINGS was just 11 years of age when he became the youngest angler ever to hold a British record, inspiring juniors everywhere that they, too, could enjoy their big moment of fame through fishing. The schoolboy did it when he caught a perch of 5 lb 9 oz 8 dr from a one-acre lake on March 28, 2002. Carp were Dean's target at Glebe Lake, in Fringford, Oxfordshire, but the catch is best remembered not just for his tender age but for the bait. He tempted it with an offering that became known as a 'Union Jack' bait – a bunch of five red, white and blue maggots. Float fishing with a pike bung attached bottom-end only, 10 lb line and a size 6 hook, he hooked the huge perch at 2pm in bright sunshine. After he hadn't had a bite, Dean moved the bait, fished close to a weed bed, and that induced a take from the enormous perch. It was landed on an 11 ft 2 lb 8 oz test curve carp rod that he had borrowed from his dad. His father, Trevor, went on to become vice-chairman of the Perchfishers, after getting involved in the group when Dean was invited to join. When the famous catch happened, Trevor was fishing nearby and described the old perch as "like a dinosaur".



Fish in stillwaters under single ownership are considered property, and can therefore be stolen. Fish in rivers and streams, however, are considered 'wild animals free to roam' and cannot be owned until caught. Whilst unlawful removal of fish from stillwaters can technically be defined as theft (an indictable offence), it is arguable whether this is the most appropriate legislation, when an alternative specific

Crucially, advice from the Crown Prosecution Service is that a Citizen's Arrest should only be attempted or effected in serious cases when a constable is unavailable.

It is unlikely that the court would consider the theft of a fish sufficiently serious to justify a Citizen's Arrest. The advice, therefore, is that arrests are best left to the professionals – especially in this context.

Our primary concern is public safety, and we are concerned that these inaccurate statements could put well-intentioned citizens at risk of both physical harm and litigation.

We strongly advise that anyone interested in contributing to the protection of fish and fisheries should contact a law enforcement professional before embarking upon any direct action. Chief Inspector Louise Hubble OBE, National Wildlife Crime Unit. Graeme Storey, fisheries manager, Environment Agency. **Dilip Sarkar MBE, national** enforcement manager, Angling Trust.

Dean Rawlings was an 11-year-old schoolboy when he caught this record-breaking 5 lb 9 oz 8 dr perch.

> It beat the previous record of 5 lb 9 oz caught by John Shayler from Furnace Pond in March 1985, and held the record for another four years, before being beaten by a beast of 5 lb 15 oz from East Sussex's Stream Valley Lakes, by Les Brown in February 2006. Dean's stonking stripy was returned safely after being weighed and witnessed.

> The small pool, usually tackled by locals only, soon attracted some of the nation's noted specimen hunters, but the lake – and that perch – was never heard of again. Who knows, the next British record perch may lurk in a similar overlooked lake near you? The target to beat today is 6 lb 3 oz, shared by two experienced specimen aces – Neill Stephen and Ken Brown.



QUICK CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1. Silver hake **6.** Penning, Rooney or Ant 7. Type of mussel 9. Italian method 13. Hook link

17. Miller's thumb **18.** Flatfish

DOWN

- **2.** Part of the cod family **3.** Type of blenny **4.** Fish-eating bird
- 5. River, originates from the Chiltern Hills



8. Fish eggs 10. Trammel, Seine or landing **11.** Fish armour **12.** Heavy weights **14.** Rod station **15.** Recede **16.** Hamidi, *Monster Carp*

Answers to last week's puzzle: ACROSS: 1. Cormorants 6. Topmouth 7. Slug 8. Shipp 10. Star 12. Knot 13. Tippet 14. Tony

DOWN: 1.Catfish 2. Riparian 3. Odon 4. Artists 5. Stinger 9. Putty 11. Tope 12. Kit



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