

# N-Gage XP – A year to the day (Part 1)

By Spencer Wright

With a year passing since I had received my first batch of N-gage, I thought it best to write down my thoughts on how the bait has performed for me over the period of time, the methods that have proved successful and also the captures that these products have produced.



Using a new bait at any time is always an unnerving prospect.

Will it catch? Is there a specific method that will produce better results? Only time on the bank and ultimately how many fish will it put on the bank will prove one way or another just how good the product is.

Luckily for me, it has produced fish quite literally from day one and, with my hand on my heart, over what has now been a year to the day, the results have been extremely consistent with some really good fish caught right throughout the year from a variety of waters.

My first impressions of the bait were really impressive. It was a nice dark colour, not too hard or soft. Upon breaking the baits open there was a real rich texture and a savoury smell that you just knew would be a successful.

The freezer baits were available in 14mm and 18mm sizes as standard. There was also the possibility of getting baits rolled between 10mm (winter only) to 32mm on an extended lead time and at a slightly increased price.

There were also shelf life baits, 2 sizes of cork ball pop ups, air ball pop ups, wafers, hardened hookbaits, pellets, dips and paste to complete the range.

There was also the possibility of making your own bait up with the dedicated N-gage base mix with the N-gage liquid additive. For specialist hookbaits there was also a hardened hookbait mix which I knew would come in handy once I had played about with the bait. It was a mighty range that would cover every eventuality that I would ever need and “moore”!



My first outing was in August to my local syndicate. The water quality was poor with an algae bloom in full effect. Results were few and far between since the opening of the season so I was really up against it from the start. For as many years as I care to remember I had pretty much used bottom baits exclusively for all my hookbaits. On this occasion though I would try a pop-up on at least one rod as I felt it trying another tactic was worth a go.

I used the new cork ball pop-ups which I had in 14mm & 18mm sizes, separated into different pots. Some were dipped and some were un-dipped. I plumped for the 14mm as I did like the smaller sized hookbait.



The cork ball pop-up held up the stiff link which I was really happy with, especially for such a small hookbait. It was

fished amongst a scattering of 14mm and 18mm freebies over the shallowest part of a bar that was in front of the swim in question. The other 2 rods were presented with a single and double 14mm bottom baits; my preferred presentation.



The day was quiet; no fish were seen nor heard and it was nearing time to pack up.

With this in mind I had another quick wander around before reeling in. This was certainly time well spent as before I got back to my swim I was away on the pop-up rod. After a mammoth scrap in which I had to take to the lake and wander along the bar in question to get to the snagged-up fish, I netted a common whilst in the middle of the lake up to my chest in water.

After wading back to dry land the mesh was opened to reveal something rather special and also rather large! On the scales it pulled them down to 40-11lb.

First trip, first blood, I was an N-Gage convert. This was something special!

My next proper trip was about 6 weeks later; a trip to Cemex Roach Pit on the mainland. It was a large weedy gravel pit that had a reputation for not easily giving up its residents. I knew the N-Gage hadn't been used on there before so I was looking forward to seeing their reaction if I was lucky enough to get near them. After 2 nights I was sure that the fish were out of range so moved for my last night after spotting a fish at the other end of the lake. Due to the weed I could get a drop but not a pull on the lead so again decided to use the pop-up presentation on the extended stiff link with a supple boom. To compliment this I was securing the curve section in a solid pva bag of N-Gage crumb which I ground up with a Krusha tool.





With the rods out on the spots and a scattering of 14 & 18mm baits in the area I was happy with the rods.

Unbelievably, within an hour 1 of the rods was away and after weeding me up a few times I netted another large common of 32-0; the largest known common in the lake.

The rod was straight back out with the same tactics. I awoke to another screamer at 11pm; the power of this fish scared me as I held on for dear life as it went from weed bed to weed bed; then it was gone....

I was left shaking as I thought about what I had lost.

I again got the rod back out and for a 3<sup>rd</sup> time in the morning using the same tactics and again the rod ripped off.

After another frantic battle I landed a weed bed the size of a car, but inside the weed was a thing of beauty. "The Dark One"; its weight was 36-0. I was in heaven!

I packed up and made the 2 hour journey back to the island with a huge smile on my face.



It was another tactic that I knew I could rely on.

There was definitely something that the fish found appealing with a large crumbed up ball of N-Gage crumb; Fish just couldn't resist it!



For the rest of the year it would be back on the island fishing the local syndicate. I would be able to spend more time at the lake, even if my fishing time was at a premium. I would start a baiting campaign that would hopefully pay dividends. Time was spent walking, looking and baiting. Spots were identified; the hard work was then to start.



After a couple of weeks of baiting, I felt the spots were ripe. I was only able to do the occasional overnighter which wasn't ideal. It was more a case of applying hit and run tactics.

This time I was going back onto the bottom bait hookbaits, especially as I was using a lot of 14 and 18mm freebies.

The tactics worked and within a few weeks of overnights I had landed commons of 23-10 and mirrors of 36-11 and 38-1.

It seemed as though I couldn't do anything wrong. Confidence was at an all time high and as far as I was concerned I was using the best bait EVER made. The N-Gage ruled!



With dwindling water temperatures the fish decided that they were shutting up shop. I had kept up with the pre-baiting in the hope of getting one more take before Christmas.

It was at this time that I started playing around with the hardened hookbait mix - combined with the white bait dye. One egg mixes were made with an approximate 50% cork dust added. It produced a hookbait that was perfect with my size 6 hook. They would pop-up the length of the hair off the bottom, whilst the hook balanced them out.

They were later to be known as the "IOW" specials and would be the perfect critically balanced presentation.



I was also playing around with the Active Feast groundbait which I was using as a stick mix. It contained all matter of carpy ingredients with crushed nuts, hemp and insects. It was a very buoyant mix that was the ideal stick presentation.

This was especially relevant when fishing over weed or silt where the stick would hover above the bottom before finally settling over the lake bed.



I arrived in the dark for my last overnighter before Christmas. A quick flick out with a bare lead indicated that I was on the correct spots before clipping up and marking the lines with some pole elastic in case I was lucky enough to bag anything through the night.

The white wafer / active feast combination was dispatched on all 3 rods before I hoped that my prayers would be answered.

I awoke at 4am to a screaming 'Neville'. Another crazy fight unfolded, during which the fish snagged me up. In the freezing cold waters I even contemplated going swimming for it!

Thankfully after some patience the fish freed itself and finally sailed into the waiting net. It looked big, very big. The scales settled on 41-12lb. A December mirror in all her winter glory! Deep joy..... it works in winter too!



It was a startling turn of events, it being only just over 4 months since I had been lucky enough to be chosen to test the bait. I couldn't wait for the New Year and the spring. I had high hopes for what lay ahead and knew with the N-Gage in my armoury anything was possible.

*See you soon  
Spence*

**Part 2** of Spencer's 'N-Gage XP – A year to the day' will follow shortly..... Watch this space.