

Spring day ticket carping by Dan Wildbore

Many anglers nowadays don't have enough time to justify prices for season tickets and often have to turn to day ticket lakes. We are all very lucky as there are so many day tickets waters across the country, often holding stunning large carp. They have their advantages and disadvantages but the positives certainly outweigh the negatives by a mile! Yes they are often busy, but for me they offer a real challenge at times as you're trying to outwit fish that sometimes have seen just about everything!

Last year I flickered between both Horseshoe and Linear Fisheries, each requiring different tactics in order to catch. The time of year you turn up for a session plays a huge factor in choosing an approach to any lake, but particularly on day tickets venues. March and April is a great time of year and is without doubt my favourite! The carp are just starting to become active and will begin to show on a regular basis – often at a time when an increasing number of fish are gracing the bank.

However, although the fish are more active and will be willing to have a feed, don't go too crazy with the application of bait. Oxford is renowned for 'bit' fishing; in other words small hook baits, including zig rigs, are without doubt a great way to approach lakes such as St. John's in that early spring period. I mentioned St. John's because I spent a fair bit of time down there last April and March when small hook baits along with a minimal amount of free offerings scattered around the rig was definitely an effective tactic!



People were spodding for all they were worth and, at times, it felt like the water level was rising due to the amount of bait that was going in. Don't get me wrong fish were getting caught over bait, but only when introduced sensibly. By this I mean maybe starting off with say 12 spodfulls and every bite put another 12 out there as opposed to starting off with 10kg and completely killing your chances. Because I am lucky enough to fish three nights, it's amazing how many times you will see someone introduce a great big bucket of bait into the lake and when they leave having caught nothing, the fish begin to show over the area and have obviously waited until they know it's safe to eat.

Try and do something different, if there are spods and markers flying everywhere just cast out three singles, you would be surprised just how attractive a single bait can actually be. All of my captures were on single hookbaits or with 5 or 6 free offerings scattered over the spot. There are so many fish in such a small space you are never too far away from them so giving it a try will often prove worthwhile! Try trimming down your hook baits, fishing in areas that are not receiving constant pressure, camouflaging your end tackle into the bottom and keeping your line pinned to the bottom by either slackening your lines off or even with the use of flying back leads.

Don't ignore zigs! They are an awesome way of catching carp especially in the spring. People associate zig rig fishing with those hot sunny days in the summer however they can be equally if not more effective in windy, rainy conditions and even at night! Fished a couple of feet below the surface with trimmed black or yellow foam mounted on a size 10 wide gape hook is always a winning presentation.



Late April last year was a time of year when it all really kicked off! I decided to have a go down at Horseshoe in search of some true English stunners! Now Horseshoe is a lake where location is absolutely vital if you want to succeed! The fish may well be sitting in summer bay in the afternoons but it was very apparent they were doing their majority of their feeding in winter bay, so that's where I opted to fish. Horseshoe is a lake renowned for fishing over big beds of bait, and after asking around and finding out the fish were getting caught over bait that was the way I wanted to approach it.

Odyssey XXX was the chosen boilie and the first trip I took 10kg of hemp and 3kg of boilie. It turned out to be nowhere near enough as these fish were moving around in large shoals and would easily clean huge beds of bait up in minutes! After that it was a case of taking 6kg of boilie and up to 30kg of my homemade chilli hemp with me every trip. As I had located where they wanted to feed it was then up to me to give them what they wanted. I ended up doing 7 nights and landed 21 carp up to 33lb 10ozs - and what gorgeous fish they were.



I hope this has helped as I'm sure there will be many of you planning to get out soon and get amongst the fish once again!

Good luck

Dan Wildbore