

The spit brings a dream ... by A Angler

It was the first hot day of the spring...

I'd been waiting ages for some fish spotting conditions so was buzzing to be out there. I headed for a group of big pits that ranged in size from 50 to 140 acres, all lightly or not fished. I parked on the roadside and put more clothes on as the paths are heavy with brambles. Once toggled up, Optix on, I went into the jungle.

After walking what felt like a mile I'd not seen any water, the small gap between nettles that constituted a path was never ending and didn't give up of a view of the lake. I was sweating, scratching and uncomfortable when a noise I heard further down the path turned out to be a bird watcher.

"Hello mate, how you doing?" I chirped politely.

The 'birdy' twitched and retreated a couple of steps. *"I'm fine thank you"* he replied in a rather royal accent.

I thought I'd try my luck. *"Do you know where the lake is?"*

"You shouldn't be fishing here, it's not allowed" was the predictable reply.

I quickly back-tracked. *"I'm not fishing; I haven't got any rods... Do you know where the lake is?"*

Birdy mumbled and pointed in the direction he'd come from, so I carried on into the nettles.

Eventually the path opened out and to my joy a lake appeared to the left. Gazing through the tree branches I could see sailing boats and canoes full of kids. This was the pit I was interested in, years before fishing had been allowed but not anymore, so long as the fish hadn't died or been moved, there should still be a few about.

I carried on up the path but the bank was completely overgrown, I could just make out the old swims but they were all un-fishable as trees and brambles had taken over. Eventually the path went away from the lake into some gorse; I tried to make a way through but gave up and headed back to the car.

I drove further up the road and gained access to the other side of the lake via an old stile, this side was much easier to walk with the path being used regularly by dog walkers. There were more openings along this side with a few sections having a high bank, so I looked down into every set of snags without seeing a fish until I got to the very corner of the lake. Here I saw a small common slide out from under the branches confirming to me that further investigation was worthwhile.

I sat down and rolled a smoke expecting it to be a while before I saw another, but it wasn't too long. I hadn't even lit up when I saw a much bigger common break the surface 15 yards out. As he drifted along for about 10 yards two others appeared behind him; they were all big fish!

I was putting weights on them when another one swirled to the right. Over the next two hours I saw twenty or so good fish swimming about in front of me. Then I saw the kipper. He was lower in the water, and his sheer size made me initially think it was two fish together, until he turned.

I scurried along the bank as he was close in but further round the corner. I got up the tree to get above him and was now in no doubt that this was a very big fish.

He was now 20 foot directly beneath me and in crystal clear water; his eyes were so far apart it was unreal. He had massive shoulders and was a beautiful dark golden colour along his back with a creamy belly. He had the front end of a huge fish but towards the tail was quite thin which made me doubt his weight a bit. The fish was sat mid-water gobbling daphnia with his fins busily fanning to keep him place. The corner of the lake had a light breeze blowing in which was blowing daphnia into the corner and filtering it right towards him.

The bay in which he sat was cut off from the main lake by a spit of land; this offered the ideal opportunity to cast to the snags. I popped round there to see if it was fishable but couldn't get onto the spit at all. The old path was very overgrown but with the use of a sturdy stick I managed to make some progress. It took a good 20 minutes to get half way along where I found an old peg looking towards the snags. This would have been the ideal place to fish from but a big tree had fallen across the front of the swim making it un-fishable.

I carried on with the stick beating away at the old path until the end of the spit revealed another swim. This one looked good with good high cover given by some reeds in front with two places to stick rods out from. I couldn't cast to the snags but could at least fish the entrance to the bay.

I sat watching the fish until late in the evening and noticed the boats had packed up and gone. I suspected there would be bars running off the end of the spit so turned back home with the plan of baiting these.

I arrived back at 6am to do my business, well before the boats came out. The swim needed a clear out as brambles littered the floor and old branches had fallen about over time. I tidied it up so a small dome tent would fit in; I stashed the tent down there with an airbed rolled up inside; a bit of camo netting kept it all hidden away.

Leading about found me two bars running out into open water, I decided that these must be the patrol routes in and out of the bay so baited them heavily. I slung hemp and boilies as far as possible with a spoon on the end of a bank stick and also paid attention to other features so baited the snags.

I was down on the Wednesday and could see that the bait from the snags spot had gone. I baited again in the snags and waded out on the bars putting the hemp and boilie in. As I drove home talking to myself I pondered "this weekend I'm gonna ave one..."

Work lasted for ever on Friday but when it was over I raced to that lake. I made my way along the spit and had a righ shock; a swan was on the nest right in my peg! As this awful sight sunk in the male swan spotted me and started to charge, I back off into the pathway but he followed until stood at the entrance blocking me off.

This was a real problem, as it's "welovebirds", "youcantdoshit" on these lakes and there was a very big bird in my swim! What's more, she's sat right on my tent spot and had made her nest with the branches I cleared to one side. I didn't know what to do so went home to think up plan B.

Plan B turned out to be come back the next day to have another look, which I did, but the swan chased me off again! I saw two commons in the snags and left the lake in a mood. A mate told me that swans nest for six weeks; this was the killer blow. I tried to bait the ends of the bars with the throwing stick but gave up. It's at this point that this tale takes an unusual twist; I moved to another lake and didn't return for two years. The swan won!



Hidden away

In my two year absence some interesting things happened and I learnt a little more about the lake. I told two mates about the big common and they went for a look in the snags. Over the course of the year both of them saw the big fish, one of them said "its heads is as big as a human's; you could put a cap on it". He fished the lake and caught one or two. We would call the big one 'Human head'.

After the two years away I did a random night in June, I'd been for a walk about and seen two fish in the snags. I did a night on the spit fishing half way along towards the snags. The old tree that blocked casting had died and dropped off. I fished tight to the snags with pop ups but didn't have anything, although two fish showed closer in early during the morning.

It was August when I next went down after learning that someone had seen a good fish in the bay. I couldn't resist hearing this news so popped down for a look.

I got to the snags and saw 2 fish, both 20+ commons. They were swimming about quite quickly and were then dropping down. The commons came back up and as they did so I noticed a spot off the snags sheet up with loads of fizzing. I saw 3 more fish coming in from the far tree line with the one at the back being a light coloured common of some size, definitely a good 30.

My mind was made up. I'd bait the snags heavily with hemp, corn and Odyssey XXX boilies.



The spit bay

I put two big buckets of bait in, one bucket on the snags, half on a marginal spot on the way into the bay and the other half on the old bars off the spit point

By the time I returned to fish the following weekend I'd baited again but had put considerably more boilies in. I set up on the Friday and cast two baits to the snags, with the third rod off the other side of the spit. This rod required using my little side boat as casting was impossible.

The night passed without event and boats came out at 9am. I didn't feel comfortable with the boats about so I went to see some mates on another lake. I was back by 6pm and launching baits back to the snags where they stayed until the boats came out the next morning.



Finest details

After packing up I popped out in the boat and had a prod about with a long stick. I found a bar running through the bay and a nice feature off the other side of the spit. I baited the new spots and the snags with another big hit of hemp and Odyssey XXX. The fish seemed to be in the bay in the day time but not when I had the rods out so I decided that next weekend I'd fish in the day. Fortunately the boats didn't come into the bay as the wind is always cut off by the trees.

The following weekend I set up on the end of the spit fishing the bar in the bay and the bars off the spit. In the evening I saw fish cruising far out and to the left. The following morning I again woke to no takes but a text from the only other angler fishing. He'd had a 30 and wanted photo's which I shot round to do. It was a stunning long fish and was his first 30 from the lake. I was chuffed for him, and it was certainly nice to see one.

Back on the spit I had seen things that made me decide to move along a little and fish the snags. The sun got on them at about 9am and the fish usually soon followed. I got the baits out and tucked myself away, out of sight from the boats. About mid afternoon I popped round to the snags for a look, and it wasn't long before I saw two commons drift in. Excitedly I noticed there was also a bit of fizzing so I decided to get back to the rods.

As I came down the spit path I heard a beep, a beep and a beeeeeppppp!!!

The fish was kiting out of the bay taking line into a tree to my right. It started to get right into the snag so I put the rod down. There was no way of getting this in without getting wet, that was it, trousers down and in I go. I swam the rod round the tree which went pretty well. I propped the rods in the branches and felt the line down to the roots, one pull and it came free! I dropped the line, picking up the rod, and wound tight to a line that stretched all the way up the side of the spit! I half-waded, half-swam (doggy paddle with the rods in the air!) down the spit until I reached the bars on the end. Standing up I wound in the slack line. To my horror the line ran straight to a boy 20 yards out. It was time for a rethink...

If, and that was a big IF, the fish was still on, the net was still back with my kit half way down the spit. I needed that net! On top of that my foot hurt. One looked confirmed the worst as blood poured from my big toe! There was only

one thing for it so I made the bloody run back and forth for the net which I hastily slung in the margins.

Swimming out to the boy was easy, as was looping the line over the top but it was caught on a rope as well. It was whilst freeing the line from the rope that I felt the fish pull the line from my fingers. It was still on and I was close to getting the rod directly on him! Back at rod and..... up she goes. I bent into the fish with pure relief only to find the reel was jammed! Arrgghhh, the line's under the spool. Nightmare!!!!

I went for the hand line option and pushed the rod back to grab hold of the line. This was the moment when sheer panic became pure clam. The line stretched nicely and for the first time I was in control. The fish wallowed, and then popped up on the surface just past the net. I saw it for the first time..... a massive golden common. One more, deep lunge with line fizzing through my fingers was all he had and he soon slipped into the net. I dropped to my knees in the margin and nearly collapsed, no shouting, no dancing just pure exhaustion and an overwhelming sense of relief.

I was soaking wet from head to toe (which also poured with blood!) and slowly parted the mesh. I set eyes on the most stunning fish I'd caught in 30 years of angling; a true peak. I looked about; the boats were in for a break and I felt alone but elated as I stood with this huge fish.



Pure gold



I'll never forget

Two friends came to do the photos, which were a joy. Once in the water with the fish I could feel he simply didn't want to swim away.

As he sat next to me he fully recovered until I waved his tail wrist; he got the message and swam slowly into the depths.

My time with this truly great fish will be treasured for a long, long time to come.

Was it Human head? Who knows???