

Getting those All-Important Late Winter and Early Spring bites



BAIT

As the harsher part of winter is out of the way with temperatures slowly rising as spring is just around the corner, it is important that every trip to the bank is well prepared and you have the best armoury out there to pick up them winter carp. It is no easy task, to catch a carp is one thing, but to catch a carp which is not interested in feeding due to the cold temperatures is another! The way I look at it is 'a person who's not hungry doesn't want to eat right? But that person can be easily tempted with a slice of chocolate cake or sweet dessert?' I think so, and it works in the same context with the carp.



CC Moore's live system is a good starting point as a base of your armoury to tempt tricky winter carp. Live system is a superb and instantly attractive food bait that has become something of a cult following due to its ability to get a bite when literally all other boiled baits have fail. It has a distinctively sweet, yeasty aroma and taste that triggers a strong feeding response in even the most unfavourable conditions. Its light, sandy colour also mean it has the added advantage of stimulating fish to feed based on its visual attraction, therefore making it a superb winter bait to base an attack to tempt these winter carp.

Like I said, sometimes you need that little extra kick to grab the attention of those winter carp and entice them to feed. I always base my thinking of how a carp thinks to how we think, as I believe we think on the same lines or thereabouts. Me, personally if I was to walk into a bakery and there was a plain doughnut or a doughnut with caramel icing with a gluey caramel centre I know what one I'm choosing and I think the carp think in the same way. CC Moore's live system corkball pop-ups are great to fish with the standard live system bait, they are made by wrapping Live System freezer bait paste around a cork ball with the appearance of these hook baits identical to the Live System bottom baits, making them ideal to use when targeting tricky winter carp. To give them that extra kick, I glug mine for at least a week before using them with live system bait dip, this gives them that kick effect to tempt those winter carp. It has landed me big winter carp in the past and last year I managed to bag a huge winter carp of 36lb+ using these little glugged bad boys, which was a great achievement with the last 30lb+ carp to be captured the year previous from this venue.





Another dip I like to soak the live system cork ball pop-ups in is CC Moore's Feedstim XP. Feedstim XP bait dip works by stimulating the fish's chemoreceptor's to motivate it to feed, much like certain foods and palatability enhancers do to humans and other animals. The natural enhancers are combined with a group of essential amino acids in such a profile that almost guarantees to supply fish with nutrients (and limiting amino acids) that they need but often find very difficult to source in their natural environment, particularly at this time of the year when natural foods are less plentiful. Making this bait dip a vital piece of armory to attack

winter carp! This bait dip reminds me (in a human's scenario) of when I've been in bed on a Sunday morning and the smell of a bacon-toasted sandwich with tomato sauce has woken me up by the sure smell. And when I've gone down stairs to investigate there it was sat on the kitchen table for me to eat a gorgeous bacon sarnie. I believe this product does this for the carp, maybe not in the same context but gives them that same stimulant. I have caught many fish using this dip through winter and summer, and it played a major part in banking my personal best.



Another hook bait which goes very well with live system and is probably one of the best baits I've used as a single at this time of year is CC Moore's Northern Specials. These sweet fruity hook baits are perfect to use when casting to showing fish or used with a live system bottom bait. I have found most success using them in 12mm and in pink but they are available in white and in 16mm too. CC Moore also does a booster dip, which I recommend to get. Every time I'm on the bank I will put a couple of drops into the pot and shake well to re-energise that sweet fruity flavour and give that little bit of liquid attractor on the lake bottom which could be the difference from tempting those tricky winter carp!



RIGS



Having the finest bait in your armoury is one thing, but not having a correct or efficient set-up to present your bait then you're wasting your time. If I was to see a slice of pizza in a mantrap, I am not touching it, so how do you expect a carp to take bait attached to a highly visible rig?



The two most important factors when assembling your set-up is how efficient is it going to be in hooking a carp and its visibility. I have found through winter especially that fishing a combi-pop-up rig to be my most successful set-up. This combi style pop-up-rig is my favourite which I will always fish through winter at least on one rod. I've found it to be very efficient, because we all know how hard it is to catch a fish through winter and the last thing we want is for it to fall off through hook pull. Also for visibility this set-up disappears on any lake bottom. As you can see in the pictures my combi-rig is attached to a helicopter style set-up, the basics for this is the lead core leader is pinned down to the lake bottom to avoid the fish spooking off it, you have free movement around the swivel stopping tangles when casting and free movement for the rig as a carp sucks at the hook bait. The only time I wouldn't use this set-up is in heavy weeded lakes and close to snags, as I want a set-up that ejects the lead if snagged up giving you a better chance of freeing the fish and fish safety on a break off.



The materials I've used to make this set-up is a semi stiff fluorocarbon hook link to kick the hook away from the lead making the rig more efficient. The fluorocarbon section is attached to a Korda rig ring which is connected to a length of Korda's N-trap hook link with a stripped back section near the rig ring link to give the hook rig a more natural movement as the carp sucks at it. The combi-rig section is 8-10 inches long, which I prefer to use. I feel it gives the pop-up hook bait a more natural hook presentation as the carp sucks at the hookbait, which I found to be very successful. The hook is a standard korda choddy hook with a blow back rig ring attached to the hook and hair. Lead putty is used to critically balance the pop-up and masks the ring link. For the helicopter set-up I'm using leadcore leader of around three feet, a camo Atomic lead, with korda rig beads, helicopter cover and a korda rig ring swivel.



When using the combi pop-up rig if I'm not fishing singles I will always tie a three-boilie triangle PVA stringer. The benefits of using this is it masks the hook point as the rig hits the lake bottom avoiding the hook snagging in any debris, it also allows the rig to lay on the lake bed correctly, it makes the hook end heavy stopping any tangles when casting and obviously gives you three freebies around your hookbait.



Another important factor though winter (or through summer) is which line your using. In clear water I've found Fluorocarbon lines can't be beaten and as through winter water clarity gets much clearer I would advise using fluorocarbon, it will help you get more bites and that's the aim of the game.



When using fluorocarbon lines I recommend that making sure your line is pinned down to the lake bottom is a must! Slack lines and dropback leads will help you achieve this.



This low 20lb picture perfect common was caught in cold conditions through winter using this combi pop-up rig using CC Moore's Northern Special.



This chunk was caught last winter using CC Moore's live system and the combi pop-up rig and lead set-up, the first winter chunk to be caught since the summer proving these methods work.



Tight lines

Warren Fenn