

First time out on the Live System

by Stuart Court

Having just received my first batch of the Live System boilies I was keen to get out and give them a go as soon as possible so an overnight session on a local Colne valley syndicate was hastily planned. I arrived at lunchtime to find 3 other anglers fishing; on my way round the lake I stopped for a chat with a couple of them who informed me that they were packing up but there had been one or two fish coming out so my confidence was high right from the off. I hadn't fished the lake for a number of weeks so wanted a good look at the water before I chose which area to fish. It wasn't busy so I had plenty of options at my disposal and could take my time in choosing where to plot up.

After an hour of watching for any signs of life, all I had to go on was a few questionable bubblers which looked suspiciously like they could have been Tench. Nothing showed as such and although I had been told where some of the fish had been caught from recently I always tend to try and avoid jumping in the going swims as I feel like I'm cheating a little bit.

I prefer to catch them on my terms using my knowledge rather than just following on from someone else's success. I did 2 laps round the lake and eventually settled on a swim that had produced lots of fish for me in the past. I knew the spots well so I could be fishing with very little disturbance to the swim. Judging by the thick reed growth at the front of the swim it hadn't been fished for quite some time, this was a good thing for me but it could mean that the spots on and around the gravel bar which ran across the swim may have some weed coverage on them too. I really needed to know if I would be fishing over weed or clean gravel as this would be the deciding factor for whether I used a pop up or a bottom bait, a quick cast with a lead just to feel for a drop would tell me all I needed to know. A fairly soft landing into some silkweed on both spots meant that I would be using pop ups so I tied a 14mm Live System cork ball to my hinged stiff rigs and cast both rods to their prospective areas; one just off the gravel bar in 7 foot of water and one slap bang on top of it in 4 foot.

Normally in the summer months I tend to fish this lake for one bite at a time so only fish over small beds of boilies, topping up with more if I'm lucky enough to catch. I would generally only use about 25-30 baits but this time, as we are heading into Autumn and the fish are bound to be looking for a bit of food, I decided to give them slightly more and introduced a kilo in a relatively tight line along the bar. The seagulls were a nightmare but eventually all the hard work was done. On the fishing front all I could do now was wait and see what occurred. With the nights getting ever earlier at this time of year it was time to set up my shelter and settle in for the night with some food and a cuppa. As the light faded from what had been a warmish day, the temperatures dropped quite dramatically. It was forecast to go down to 4 or 5 degrees with a slight northerly breeze and clear skies; a big moon was lighting up the sky too.

Although it didn't feel like the best conditions to catch a carp in I was still confident of some action so I sat up with eyes and ears trained on the water for as long as I could. I listened to my radio until 1am but I only heard one fish crash out and that was a good 300 yards down to my right- quite a way from where

I was plotted. A couple of bleeps on my left hand rod woke me from my sleep at around 5 am; it was just a liner but I was happy in the knowledge that there was at least one fish in front of me. Then again, just as I was drifting off to sleep, a few more bleeps on the same rod saw the bobbin move up off the floor and drop back down again; there must be fish feeding around my baited area I thought.

Sure enough I was right, just a couple of minutes later the same alarm burst into life, a strong steady take saw line peeling from the clutch at a decent rate of knots. I lifted into what felt like a good powerful fish which boiled on the surface and went on a run down to my left margin under some trees. As I slowly pumped it back towards me I could feel that it was a good fish; a couple of times it just stopped and sat there, its mass alone holding it stationary against my the pressure of my rod. Eventually though, after a bit of head shaking, a nice common rolled over my net cord. I left it there to recover while I sorted out the mat, scales, sling and camera self take equipment still not knowing how big my prize was. My head torch batteries must have been low as I tried to peer into the net but couldn't really see a lot.

Everything set up; I lifted the fish from the water and was pleasantly surprised as to how heavy it was; a good 30 I thought to myself. On the mat I set about unhooking the fish and, as usual, found a strong hook hold that was never in any danger of slipping out. Those hinged stiff rigs nail them in the middle of the bottom lip every time. On the scales she went 38lb 9oz, not bad for my first night on the Live System! I rattled a couple of shots off from the tripod and slipped her back home.



By the time I'd re-baited and re-cast it was just starting to get light and you know what it's like when you've just had a good fish, the adrenaline won't allow you to get back to sleep so I sat up and watched the dawn break across the Colne Valley before packing up.....Lovely!