

Fish Wild

Free Fishing Magazine



Issue 3
Spring 2022



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Balgavies Loch
Angus, Scotland
Photo; F. Carrie

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First Cast



Welcome to issue three of Fish Wild for Spring 2022. As I sit here writing, gripped in a cold snap of another dodgy Scottish spring, we are already a few weeks past the brown trout season opening day, looking forward to things warming up a touch and raring to go!

Like many keen trout anglers with a bit of time on their hands, in normal circumstances I might have packed my bags in January or February and headed to the southern hemisphere for a month of superb trout fishing in New Zealand. Alas in this pandemic circumstances are far from normal and one wonders if and when they will improve.

Still, it's better to have a half full than a half empty glass; if we have our families, our health and our strength we should be thankful for that. Dream pleasant dreams of warm and happy days to come on your local water wherever that may be. It won't be long!

In the meantime I hope you enjoy this new issue of Fish Wild. It is jam packed with articles ranging from news and views to fly fishing on remote and lonely hills lochs. As usual it is well illustrated and we continue trying to improve the layout. Escape for a few hours!

If you would like to email your comments on any aspect of Fish Wild, angling, the great outdoors or conservation please get in touch by using Contact Us in the menu at <https://www.fishwild.org.uk/>. Any suitable emails will be published

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Cover photo:
A Master Fisherman
Photo: F. Carrie

Carpe Nostra (Our Carp)

The early UK scene



Dave Felce looks at secret societies, obfuscation and vested interests in the UK carp world

“England is the centre of the world as far as carp fishing goes.” - Rod Hutchinson speaking to Tim Paisley ‘Big Carp’ 1990

The UK carp scene has long viewed itself as the originator and major influencer of the carp fishing phenomenon world-wide. In many respects it’s quite right to do so; without doubt many, if not most, of the significant advances in carp fishing tackle, tactics and bait have emerged from the efforts of dedicated enthusiasts from across the UK. With the formation of The Carp Catcher’s Club in 1951, a select band of talented anglers was seminal in its single-minded approach to greater understanding and targeted pursuit of what was regarded an almost impossible fish to capture by design. It was undoubtedly the birth of what has become known as ‘specimen hunting’, and was the catalyst for what has become a multi-million pound industry with carp specific fisheries, tackle, clothing, news-stand magazines and, significantly, a number of incredibly profitable bait companies. However, with respect to fly fishing, the UK’s carp history is somewhat more chequered, as we shall discover.

In conclusion to his forward in Maurice Ingham’s book ‘The Carp Catcher’s Club’, published by Medlar Press in 1998, the renowned angler Bernard Venables (‘Mr Crabtree’) wrote:

“Precisely how the Carp Catchers set themselves to the circumvention of carp is outside the scope of this book, which is concerned with the nature and philosophy of fishermen rather than their methods, and such indication as has been given has been to emphasise their disregard for tradition and their free and experimental approach. In fact the whole essence of the creed they preach - and they do preach a creed - is that methods as such should be avoided, particularly when methods become inseparable from morality.

But, given enough time, their followers will forget this. They will remember the physical sequences that arose from theories and proved successful, and these will be methods to flout which will be heretical.”

In view of what follows, that last statement is visionary. But we’re getting ahead of ourselves.

In Kevin Clifford's otherwise excellent History of Carp Fishing, there's no reference to fly fishing as a

method at all. However on page 26 it does have a rather tantalising photo from 1908, clearly showing the captor holding a fly rod and reel. A fact completely unremarked upon by Kevin, or anyone else later for that matter!

The caption says:

'The Hertfordshire Lee (nowadays usually referred to as the Lea) also had a reputation for large carp in the early part of this century. A London tackle dealer, L.J. Childs, is seen on the left with a fish of 15lbs 10oz, caught from the Broxbourne area. Mr Childs, a member of the Clapton Fly Fishers & General A.C., caught the carp on the 6th August 1908, using paste, having his rod and landing net broken in the process'

Yet the photo raises more questions than it answers; he caught it on bait, breaking his rod in the process? Yet he's a tackle dealer, so why pose with a fly rod if he didn't use it? Did he use the fly tackle to cast his bait (quite possible, since the vast majority of UK anglers are still doing exactly the same....) But then he's a tackle dealer: wouldn't he have had access to more specific equipment? Was it a spare rod, just used for the photo since the original was broken (again unlikely in view of the first point)? Or did he in fact capture it on the fly....?

And if so, why not report it as such? Is it possible he was concerned that such a revelation might damage his reputation amongst his fellow fly fishers and customers? As we'll see later, he wouldn't be alone in that regard...

I put these questions to Kevin myself, but his reply does little to help solve the enigma:

“Unfortunately Dave, there is nothing I can add to the capture other than what I wrote. From memory that was pretty much all I managed to gather from the report I found. Whether the guy was actually fly fishing at the time, spotted the carp and used the gear he had, or whether there are other aspects to the capture I simply don't know. Sorry I can't help further!”

However, his revised, and much more comprehensive 'A History of Carp Fishing Revisited', published in 2011, shows the same photograph on page 60 with a different caption that states, “This 15lb 10oz River Lea carp caused quite a stir when it was caught by Mr L. Childs, a member of the Clapton Fly Fishers & General Angling Club, on August 6th, 1908. He was legering with paste and had his fly rod and landing net broken in the process.”

Which at least acknowledges that it was caught with a fly rod....

Intriguingly, there's another photograph alongside this in the newer book, showing a Mr C. F. Haines with a Medway carp from 1914. He appears to be using remarkably similar tackle to Mr Childs, yet the caption states the angler was using boiled maize.

There's a further reference to fly fishing in Kevin's updated work, which may shed some light on these photos. On page 236 he quotes the famous carp angler, Otto Overbeck, as saying, “The rod is immaterial. I have landed carp up to 10lbs on my fly rod.”

Overbeck is an interesting character (some would say very interesting. Kevin Clifford devotes an entire chapter to him and alludes to a darker side to his personality...) and an undoubted pioneer of carp fishing techniques (including using live bumblebees for bait!), especially active at the famous Croxby Pond, near Grimsby, in the 1890s. His comments, if true, certainly demonstrate that fly rods, if not flies, were regarded as suitable equipment for carp fishing at the time, and this trend may well have continued into the early years of the twentieth century. Indeed, as mentioned elsewhere, the practice of using bait with fly gear is still common amongst many British carp fly fishers today. Unfortunately, despite being an acknowledged carp expert, both Overbeck's fishing records and his business pursuits, albeit very successful, show a distinct tendency to hyperbole. As Kevin Clifford states, “It would seem Overbeck could 'gild the lily' when detailing his achievements.” (Page 89)

Whatever the truth of the matter, the fact remains that we have a photograph of an angler with a large carp and, what appears to be, a fly rod and reel. Not only that, he appears to be, understandably, very pleased with himself! Could it be that we're looking at the first ever photograph of a fly-caught carp and its captor?

Moving forward, without doubt the most significant figure in the history of UK carp fishing, and arguably

that of the World, is Richard ‘Dick’ Walker.

Dick Walker pioneered the targeted carp fishing approach. He designed and made tackle himself at a time when there was little else to go on, many of his designs becoming commercially successful products and spawning an entire industry; the legacy of which can be seen today in the multi-million pound carp angling trade. His writing output was nothing short of staggering, either in his many books or his unbroken series of articles in Angling Times for over thirty years. Dick’s famous capture of a record 44lb common carp in September 1952 from Redmire Pool really brought carp fishing into the spotlight. This most celebrated of carp really did move the goal posts on the understanding of the potential size carp could grow to in the UK. The fish was transferred alive to the London Zoo Aquarium at Regent’s Park and was subsequently seen by tens of thousands of anglers and members of the general public over a period of nearly 20 years. Richard Walker is rightly looked on as the father of modern ‘Euro-style’ carp fishing.

In addition to his other fishing exploits, Dick Walker was a highly talented and enthusiastic fly fisher. In the classic book ‘Drop Me A Line’ (1953) he writes to Maurice Ingham:

“You will find that the ability throw a fly will come in very useful for other fish beside trout; you can catch rudd, chub and dace on a fly, as of course you know.”

Which shows that he’d successfully applied the technique to species other than trout, although interestingly there’s no mention of carp.... Earlier in the book Walker describes a technique for ‘long range dapping’, beach caster style, to present a fly to carp taking insects from the surface all through the summer; complete with detailed diagrams of the set-up. And in his biography of Walker, ‘Richard Walker, Biography of an Angling Legend’ (Medlar Press 2007) Barrie Rickards states that he believes Walker was influenced in his design of the now famous Mk IV Avon and Carp rods by his early experience of high quality split-cane fly rods. The rods were designed so that free-line tackle could be cast easily without losing distance or bait, which is of course exactly what fly rods do.

Carp historian Kevin Clifford refutes this though, saying:

“I cannot recall Dick ever mentioning fly fishing for carp to me, but I'm sure he considered it. In the 1940s and 1950s as, let's say, an all-round specimen hunter, he was chasing big carp and, being very single-minded, was using methods that he thought were going to give him the very best chance. In his later years when he became fascinated by fly fishing and spent most of time trout fishing, I simply think he'd lost interest in carp. I think carp fishing was a "phase" in his life that he grew out of and moved on to other things. I don't necessarily think the MK IV was a concept influenced by trout rods. Walker seems to have first adapted a Wallis Wizard split cane rod for carp fishing, by simply cutting 6 inches off the top. (I think from memory - but it's written down in the History book and elsewhere). The Wallis Wizard was a very popular rod of the 1930s. 11ft, in three pieces. Bottom section was solid Tonkin, and the middle and top sections were split cane. It was produced by Allcocks (and I think later also Hardys) to a design by the famous FWK Wallis of Nottingham, which Wallis used for catching barbel from rivers. Walker owned and certainly extensively used a Wallis Wizard, but felt he could improve on it for carp. After talking the matter over with his University maths teacher he came up with a specific design. Don't

really think fly rods had much influence of Dick's famous carp rods.”

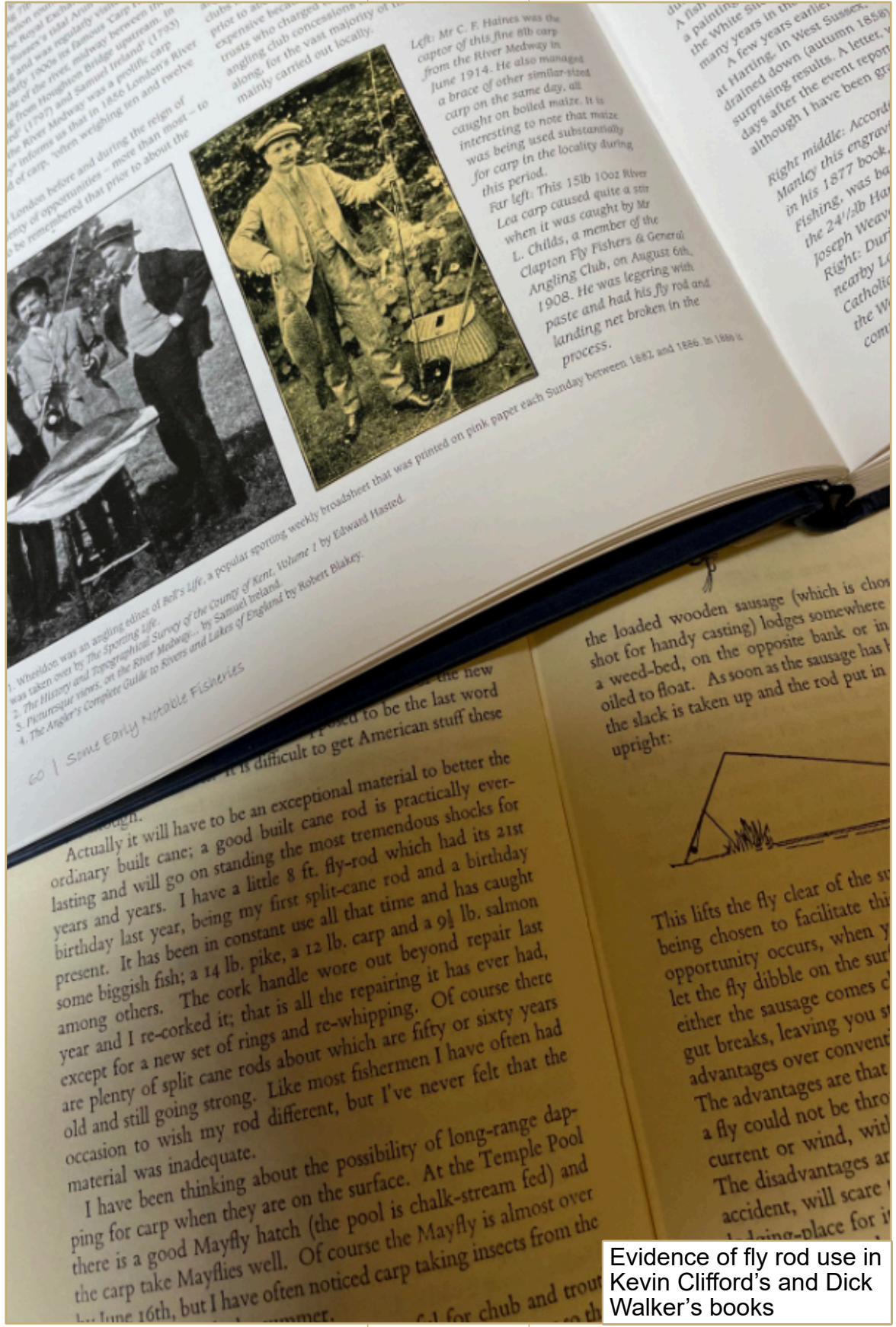
Peter Rogers (co-author of ‘The Carp Catcher’s Club’ with Maurice Ingham) adds:

“I fear what little I can add is likely to be of limited use. Whilst I knew and spent time with many of the CCC and/or their families, to the best of my knowledge fly fishing for that species was never something they seriously considered or tried during their influential years because, primarily, the waters they fished were heavily overgrown, the fish were few and far between and extreme stealth was the name of the game. Walker, BB, Bernard, Maurice, Fred, Pete and Gerry all were dab hands with fly tackle but the method never really lent itself - nor did available tackle at that time.

These days carp anglers (and perhaps the fish too) are more common and widespread than any other specialism. Not that this is meant to be disparaging but the simple truth. The fish grow fast and large, offering ready and now relatively easy sport for all who seek to catch them - young or old. And why not? But in the early days (even as recently as the 40’s and 50’s) the species was rare and hard won because of its scarcity as much as anything else. Also, angling for most people meant local waters which was restrictive. Personal transport too was a luxury and the preserve of those with money. Look at periodicals of the time and you will find any number of adverts promoting fishing holidays by train or coach - some fishing books even being devoted to this approach.

The popular notion is that carp were mostly to be found in overgrown ponds on private Estates in those days is not strictly true either. Why so? Principally because BB recounted his evocative experiences in these places in Bedside Book and Confessions, and where he led, others followed (and emulated). For him, the mystery as much as the fish, was half of the appeal and, ironically (perversely perhaps) that has endured to this day, despite the best efforts of technology to reveal all! Look deeper however and there were a number of productive waters (even then) that were largely free of foliage and could have been tackled from the bank with fly tackle. But - but - they were not, principally, I think, because fly fishing was preserve of the game fraternity and a wholly alien technique to everyone else. No small matter learning how to throw a fly line for the ignorant and uninitiated. Bought specialist tackle was also prohibitively expensive for most, hence self-made rods being fashioned. But a fly rod? Impossible except for the highly skilled with access to machinery, carpentry knowledge and zeal. Where would Joe Soap buy a silk line, let alone know how to treat it? As for fly reels, they mostly came from expensive manufacturers completely out of the league of ordinary sorts. Coarse fish then - quite simply - meant coarse fishing tackle, baits and methods.

Have a good look through Kev Clifford’s excellent books on the history of carp fishing to see the topography of the waters and the early practitioners. These photographs will reveal lots, not least the practicability of fly fishing for carp in mostly unsuited waters. Don’t forget also that pre-BB, the Old Hands of the Highbury Angling Society at Cheshunt Reservoir, had already worked out that the nocturnal hours were by far the most productive time for success - another disincentive for an approach using fly tackle. Amongst them too were experts with fly gear (Marston, Senior, Sheringham, and more besides - professional men who travelled to Scotland or abroad to fish for salmon) but even they never gave the possibility a second



Evidence of fly rod use in Kevin Clifford’s and Dick Walker’s books

Angling Society at Cheshunt Reservoir, had already worked out that the nocturnal hours were by far the most productive time for success - another disincentive for an approach using fly tackle. Amongst them too were experts with fly gear (Marston, Senior, Sheringham, and more besides - professional men who travelled to Scotland or abroad to fish for salmon) but even they never gave the possibility a second

thought.

So there we are. As innovative as the CCC were, the method was ignored or discounted because they were the direct descendants of an earlier school. Carp fishing was hard enough and for the most part unproductive, making anything other than the tried and trusted unviable and time wasted. These days it's completely different. Not only are carp widespread but frequently overstocked in small waters, making most offerings a potential food source because of the fishes competitive instincts. Also, we understand far more about the species (has any fish other than trout and salmon had more column inches devoted to it?), its habits likes and dislikes. Same with the options available to us and how we choose to catch our fish, rather than hope to catch our fish. But you get the gist...

There will have been early fly fishing exponents who tried their luck for coarse fish but they will be the exception to the rule.”

All very interesting and, taken on face value, some authoritative and compelling arguments as to why Walker and other UK innovators wouldn't have explored the possibilities of fly tackle for carp.

Dick Walker and his chums continued their successful experiments, culminating in Walker's magnificent capture of his record 44lb carp on 15th September 1951 as mentioned earlier. This has of course been covered in great detail elsewhere but it's fair to say that it was a pivotal moment in carp fishing.

By 1956 The Carp Catcher's Club had essentially ground to a halt, although Walker's seminal work 'Still-Water Angling' was published in 1953 and provided the inspiration for generations of carp fishers to come. There is no specific reference to fly fishing for carp in the book, yet Walker does allude to the catholic tastes of carp; citing fish roe (eggs), daphnia, maggots and caddis grubs, amongst many others, as acceptable food items. All of which are readily imitated by the fly angler, of course. He also mentions reports of carp having been taken on live (fish) bait or spinners and remarks:

“One often sees small fish making off with all possible speed when a big carp approaches, and there has been much discussion as to whether a small fish might prove a useful bait for carp. I am told that small dead fish have been used in the U.S.A. with success.”

Richard Walker went on to be the first President of The British Carp Study Group (BCSG); founded by Peter Mohan and Eric Hodson in 1969 - partly due to Peter Mohan's distress at being turned down for membership by the elitist National Carp Club (which folded shortly afterwards). With that in mind, it's interesting that membership of the BCSG is also restricted to approved applicants. Kevin Clifford comments that membership is dependent on “certain, rather vague, qualifications”. The BCSG was the first carp organisation to have a regional structure, regular meetings, published the first carp magazine and organised the first national Carp Conference. From the outset it attracted high-profile carpers, and that has continued to the present day. Many of the movers and shakers from the flourishing carp industry are members, with interests in publishing, bait and tackle manufacture. As such, it comprises an 'elite' of the UK scene; but unfortunately that has led to an elitist attitude from some members and a high degree of secrecy; especially where fly fishing is concerned....

Chris Ball is another highly respected member of the UK carp scene. A member of the BCSG since 1969 (he was one of its youngest members at the time; the youngest ever member was none other than Jeremy Wade of 'River Monsters' fame...), he was the founding partner of the company responsible for publishing the magazine 'Carp Talk'. He is widely regarded as an authority on the history of carp fishing. He writes:

“Though Walker was keen on fly fishing from early on, and later when UK reservoirs started opening in the mid-1960s when he was again at the forefront of things, developing rods and flies for reservoir trout. However, I have no reference at all about him trying fly fishing for carp. I can't even find a passing reference to it. So the answer is a negative regarding Walker and fly fishing for carp.”

Unfortunately a couple of articles from 'The Carp', the BCSG's own magazine, show that, putting it at its most charitable, these highly respected bastions of the UK carp fishing establishment are either incredibly ill-informed or, more likely, being somewhat economical with the truth.

For instance, how about this from issue 32, dating from November 1979? The author is Andy Spreadbury, Kent Regional Organiser, and his article is titled 'Trout, Fly-Fishing and Carp'. In it he discusses the

principles of imitating natural foods, as espoused by Brian Clarke in 'The Pursuit of Stillwater Trout'. His observations are so open-minded, they're worth reproducing in some detail:

“He (Brian Clarke) went on from this, and used his eyes and his brain and came up with a satisfactory answer; what were the trout doing? 'Taking natural flies', but exactly what natural flies? Alder fly larvae, or midge pupae or whatever it is in that situation; how are these flies behaving and how are the trout taking them? The trout are taking them just beneath the surface, the flies rising up to the surface film in little jerks'. How do you fish for these trout? 'By exactly imitating the insect and the way it behaves'. For Brian Clarke this was the way to catch seemingly uncatchable trout - by presenting to them the particular Sedge or whatever, fishing it the way the natural behaves.

What of carp? Is it not true, that carp become completely preoccupied with the same 'bugs' the Brian Clarke's trout do? For is not the infamous bloodworm the larvae of the common midge? Is it not common sense to follow Brian Clarke's way and try to imitate the natural that the carp are feeding on? Perhaps we don't even entertain this thought, knowing as we do that carp never eat anything other than the high protein baits we've been piling into the lake! The very thought of using anything other than a H.P paste ball is pure heresy in some people's minds, and I shall probably be burned at the stake for suggesting anything otherwise!

Sixty-four thousand dollar question: is Flyfishing for carp a practical suggestion, and what is the best way of going about it?

I'm no fly angler so I can't really say, though after this summer I hope to be able to do so. In answer to the second part of the question, I would guess that with ordinary carp tackle it is out of the question, though I suppose some sort of floating weight could be devised with a one leader to the fly, but I wouldn't mind guessing that the splash from this 'weight' would have considerable scare value. The best way of going about it is with conventional fly gear - perhaps a big powerful reservoir rod and 8lb leader. Perhaps some of our fly-fishing members could make suitable suggestions.

I return to the basic concept; if carp are 'into' bugs and flies (on the surface or underneath) why the goodness we persist in trying to take things completely alien to them on the bottom; offering a copy of a natural, and working it to behave like the real thing has got to be better, hasn't it?

I offer these thoughts on fly-fishing for carp to you not as some novelty method to be undertaken 'just for a laugh' but as a serious method for fishing for carp pre-occupied on things we can't get on a hook, but can imitate in a fly. I don't for one minute suggest that fly-fishing for carp will ever supersede standard methods, but what I do suggest, is that it may catch fish when other methods are hopeless.

Carp fishing will have moved on I think, the day we see 'For Sale — Carp Fly-Rods'!"

At the time Dick Walker was still President of the BCSG, and he replies in issue 35 of The Carp, from November 1980. The title of the piece is 'Carp and Artificial Flies' and although generally it's rather dismissive of the whole idea (and Brian Clarke's book!), the final paragraph is revealing:

“I am less concerned than Andy Spreadbury about adequacy of the tackle. I have caught a score of trout between 10 and 18 1/4 lbs, on a 9ft , 3 1/4oz carbon fly rod and a leader tapering to about 6lbs b.s. The fighting qualities of trout are not very different from those of carp, and in the absence of too much weed or too many snags, I would give myself a better-than-even chance of landing a 20 pound carp on the same tackle, if I could hook one. Indeed, both Pete Thomas and I have caught carp up to 14 pounds on trout fly rods in the past, and not long ago I saw Fred J Taylor land a 12-pounder on a 3oz 9ft rod made from a fly-rod blank. I should think that one of the very powerful reservoir trout rods, with a No 9 or No 10 fly line and a leader tapered to 9 or 10lbs b.s. would be almost as effective as the kind of carp rod we commonly use.”

Of the 43 BCSG magazines examined, based on title of chapter, only these two mention fly fishing for carp, although sources tell me there appears to be plenty about fly fishing on the BCSG forums.

At around the same point in time as these articles (1977 to be precise) Frederick Warne published a neat little volume, 'The Observer's Book of Fly Fishing', number 68 in this well-loved series. Its author was Peter Wheat, a highly respected angler who was for three years the editor of Angler's World, a leading magazine of the time, and a contributor to many high profile publications for over sixteen years. It is a

relatively undiscovered gem, yet its section on carp is a revelation. Although running to only just over two pages, it not only tells the reader almost everything they need to know, it also shows that the author had thoroughly researched his subject, stating:

“Catching carp on artificial flies is nothing like so outlandish an activity as dyed-in-the-wool coarse fishermen might suppose. In fact, like fly fishing for pike, it is a very old practice, and in sporting magazines dating from as far back as the early years of the 19th century are to be found remarkable engravings of artificial flies specifically designed for catching carp.”

The dust cover notes that Wheat was a member of the BCSG at the time and, “is at present concentrating on the development of fly-fishing methods for coarse and sea fishing.”

In view of this and his undoubted eminence in fishing circles (he was later a founder member and first President of the Barbel Society), it is somewhat inconceivable that he didn’t share his experiences and findings with other members. Unfortunately Peter wasn’t able to contact me directly, but Peter Rogers very kindly offered to contact him on my behalf. His response in view of the foregoing is rather strange, to say the least:

“I’ve today heard from Pete Wheat who sends his apologies but says he can add nothing more of any value on the topic. Bit short and sweet, but quite understandable given his fly fishing has, for a very long time, been exclusively and conventionally in the direction of trout rather than coarse fish.”

However, a BCSG source tells me that in 1973 there was a ‘letter to the editor’ from Peter Wheat complaining of cliques and in-fighting. So he appears to have left in a huff at some point and this suggests negative forces were already at work in the BCSG.

I contacted Chris Ball directly regarding the UK carp on fly scene in 2016. He replied:

“There is not much written content on fly fishing for carp that I can recall in the UK. Chris Yates and the late Chris Seager both had concerted tries with a fly for carp - but in both cases it was only a kind of crude fly used with ordinary carp gear, either freelined or with a small controller. It’s only in recent times the likes of my namesake Dave Ball has caught numbers of 20-pounders on flies that Chris Sandford has developed especially for carp. Indeed Chris himself has used them to good effect also. These catches have been made with fly gear. Cheers, ChrisB”

At this point we should return to Walker and Ingham’s classic ‘Drop Me A Line’ from 1953. Easily overlooked on page 124, opposite the diagrams of the intriguing ‘beachcaster rig’, is this nugget from Richard Walker:

“I have a little 8 ft. fly-rod which had its 21st birthday last year, being my first split-cane rod and a birthday present. It has been in constant use all that time and has caught some biggish fish; a 14 lb. pike, a 12 lb. carp and a 9 1/2 lb. salmon amongst others.”

Hidden in plain sight, all this time....

A BSCG member (who wishes to remain anonymous for obvious reasons) comments:

“I reckon that the dogmas now are very similar to those faced by the Carp Catchers’ in the 50s. Entrenched mindsets about how fish can and can’t be caught. Big carp were thought near-impossible to catch by design - both in tackle, bait and tactics. The book Drop Me A Line captures the context of all this excellently, possibly better than the Carp Catchers’ rotary letters. And here we are 70 years later with a multi-rod brigade often not even stepping out of their bivvies to look for fish let alone stalk them. Ironically, it’s the top bait experts/manufacturers are the ones who understand entomology and a carp’s natural diet, yet often they will keep this to themselves and instead push their baits. Just think of the King of Redmire, a fish of 60-100lb that was never caught, yet commonly thought to eat only fry and gudgeon. If the water wasn’t so choked with weed, I bet a lure pulled back through it would have been successful.”

In the late 70s Walker himself confided to Kevin Clifford and Len Arbery (co-author of ‘Redmire’ with Clifford) with some regret that: “More and more as I look around I see a greater obsession with the technicalities of carp fishing, and a lot of it I must admit I’m responsible for.” (A Century of Carp Fishing, Chris Ball, Kevin Clifford, Tim Paisley, Carptalk Enterprises 2000)



In the first chapter of the same book, ‘From Carp Catcher’s to Canada!’, the eminent Fred J Taylor (a member of the Carp Catcher’s and, at the time of writing his article, President of the Carp Society), writes (of Canada):

“Where else could I, with my laid back attitude, knock out a dozen carp before going off to the cafe before breakfast? Where else could I catch carp on a trout fly, or a small plug?”

Sadly, it is the only mention of fly fishing in the entire volume (although to be fair, Tim Paisley does reference Richard Walker’s ‘beachcaster rig’ in his excellent section, ‘Rigs and End Tackle’).

Brian Skoyles, himself a highly accomplished and respected carp fisher (the co-author of ‘Floater Fishing’ with Chris Ball in 1991), and also a Regional Officer for the BCSG, wrote as recently as 2017 to say:

“In the main the vast majority of BCSG members are what I suppose you would call traditional carp anglers and that tends to be very much the focus of the group. We are aware that a small number of the group have dabbled in catching carp on the fly, some very successfully, but they are very much in the minority. In a couple of years when possibly carp angling will have moved on, group interests might have broadened.”

As we have seen, carp fishing had already moved on, and indeed had already done so prior to the inception of the BCSG...

So why would the UK carp ‘establishment’ feel it necessary to obfuscate the origins of, ignore and even deny the efficacy of fly fishing for carp; or even any references to it?

Andy Spreadbury’s remarks from 1979 bear repeating again here, especially as they essentially fulfil Bernard Venables’ prophecy:

“Perhaps we don’t even entertain this thought, knowing as we do that carp never eat anything other than the high protein baits we’ve been piling into the lake! The very thought of using anything other than a H.P paste ball is pure heresy in some people’s minds, and I shall probably be burned at the stake for suggesting anything otherwise!”

Our anonymous BCSG insider again:

“Seeing the evolution of articles in the magazine, I can see what Seth Godin (globally famous marketing guru) calls ‘Tribe Culture’ where “people like us do things like this”. So you have to behave in a certain way to be part of it.”

David Stocker (of whom more later) says, rather more appositely:

“Several years ago I made a YouTube film about fly-fishing the dog biscuit for carp. On the fishery where it was shot, I regularly used to out-catch the guys using bottom fishing techniques during the the time that I was fishing. I came to conclude that carp actually preferred feeding on top, to feeding on the bottom. Given the huge investment ‘mainstream’ bottom fishing carpers make in their waterside homes, rods, run indicators, baits and time by the waterside, I suspect that they seriously don’t want to be exposed to the fact that there might be more effective ways to catch them. Check out how many commercial carp fisheries don’t allow floating baits...”

And that, I suspect, absolutely nails it.

Author’s note:

Despite containing only scant references to fly fishing and the wider, global scene, Kevin Clifford’s ‘A History of Carp Fishing Revisited’ (Sandholme Publishing, 2011) is without doubt the most comprehensive and detailed book available on the subject. Lavishly illustrated and eminently readable, it deserves a place on the bookshelf of any carp angler with an interest in the development of carp fishing in the UK.

There’s also an intriguing reference (page 357) to Geoffrey Bucknall’s Sundridge Tackle company running Spicers Lake (renowned carp fishery) as a fly-only trout fishery in the 1970s: “The carp were still present and fished for by some of the members. At this time there were rumours of fish to around 30lb.



Dave Felce, aka “Corsican Dave”, has been fishing since childhood; now a very, very long time ago. Cutting his teeth on the canals & clay pits of Milton Keynes, he first picked up a fly rod around 40 years ago. He promptly attached his trusty spinning reel & wondered why it didn’t work very well...

Things have moved on a bit since then & Dave has been actively pushing the boundaries of fly-fishing for many years with wide experience in SWFF, kayak fishing, pike on fly and, most importantly, carp. Living in the carp desert of the Scottish highlands he has mostly concentrated his efforts in the wilds of Spain, primarily using imitations of natural food items & basing his approach on observation & experimentation.

Brimming over with passion & enthusiasm for his subject he has set up the popular “Carp Champions” group on Facebook which has attracted active participation by successful exponents of fly fishing for carp from around the world. He has been published in a number of magazines and online media, and is currently compiling a history of fly fishing for carp; which he has presented as a lecture at the prestigious British Fly Fair International

An Applied Biologist (somewhat lapsed) and a qualified outdoors instructor, he has said some very rude things about the UK’s carp scene and claims to have never visited a commercial carp fishery in his life. He is the Brand Ambassador for Gouldfish Custom Rods, a member of IGFA and the American Carp Society, and an enthusiastic patron of the Wild Carp Trust.



The Chest Of Dee

Fred Carrie Goes For A Long Hike With A Rod And Ends Up With A Nice Brace Of Blistered Feet

In Scotland there are many remote, hard to get to lochs, then there are some that are out there in a class of their own. Loch nan Stuirteag, most definitely falls into this later category.

With a 10 mile walk-in over rough and often boggy terrain and a climb of over 2000 feet, not including the many ups and downs in between, a visit to this loch is for the fit, keen or stupid only.

I have to be honest at the outset and say I did not catch a damned thing when I visited this wonderful area of Scottish montane tundra, so if you are only interested in fish catching triumphs you can stop reading right now. If however you are interested in reading about a bit of modest exploration in remote, wild country then read on.

The more astute may have noticed I use the term “exploration” rather than “fishing”. This is in order to avoid deep philosophical discussions and / or heated arguments over whether or not I was actually fishing. To my mind, use of the infinitive – “to fish” assumes there are fish present. There has to be otherwise you are not fishing. If you cast a fly over a puddle in the road, this looks like fishing but clearly it is not, no more than is casting on grass. Now, I am not arrogant enough to claim that just because I

caught nothing at Loch nan Stuirteag this means there are no fish there – but I honestly believe there are, very probably, none.

Read on to discover why.

Loch nan Stuirteag, on Monadh Mor, is “Loch of the Black Headed Gulls” in the now extinct Braemar dialect of Scottish Gaelic. Something now lost forever as the last speaker, Mrs Jean Bain, passed away in the 1980’s. Mrs Bain was actually born south of the border and had moved up to the area to live with relatives when she was a young girl. Never a fully fluent native speaker, but she picked up a large Gaelic vocabulary, including many of the unique local dialect words, Gaelic place names and, most importantly, the correct local pronunciations. Much of this was recorded and saved by well known Cairngorms lover, conservationist and biologist the late Dr Adam Watson.

There are no black headed gulls there now, just a very small colony of common gulls on the tiny island. I think they may have been surprised to see me. The loch lies over 2800 feet above sea level, this is not high by alpine standards, but Scotland’s latitude ensures that the climate and terrain are arctic in nature. Make no mistake, this

is wild tundra. The gulls must have thin time of it.

The dog and I left the National Trust For Scotland car park at Linn o’ Dee, west of Braemar, at 6.20 PM on the Friday evening. Even with a 20KG + pack full of camping gear and a few items of fishing tackle I made good time and was at The White Bridge in 50 minutes. It was a grand evening. This was the last decent spell of weather we were to have during the dreadful summer of 2007, but fine, hot weather can be a double edged sword and so it proved to be later in the trip.

Every stream I crossed, right down to the tiniest, seemed to have small trout or salmon par rising in it. Even in the small rock pools of a tiny cascade coming down from the high plateau, there were one or two tiddlers jumping at flies with enthusiasm.

The way in follows the course of the upper Dee, one of Scotland’s most famous salmon rivers. About ½ way between Linn o’ Dee and The White Bridge there lies, on the far side of the river on a green and fertile sward, the ruins of the old settlement of Dubrach (pron. Doobrach),

The Braemar area was a Jacobite stronghold and after the ’45 there was a garrison of English soldiers stationed here, one of whom was murdered on the hillside up the Allt Cristie. The last remaining occupant of Dubrach was Peter Grant. – locally known as Al’ Dubrach (old Dubrach). He lived until he was 110 and was the very last of Bonnie Prince Charlie’s Jacobite fighters. In 1822 at the age of 108, he was introduced to King George IV, direct descendent of the Hanovarian “Wee Bit German Laddie”.

The King took him by the hand saying “You are my oldest friend”. Peter replied “Na, na yer Majesty, I’m yer aaldest enemy”. Hundreds attended the funeral of this great Deeside character in 1824, headed by pipers playing “Wha wadna fecht for Charlie”.(1)

There is so much local history in these now remote and lonely glens. Each pile of stones tells its own story

Heading-on, up Glen Dee by the track on the south side of the river I noted the Dee at this point, starting at Ciste Dhe (Chest of Dee), and for about a further ½ mile up the glen lay a series of small falls and long deep pools. It looked tantalising. I would walk back down to here on Saturday after fishing Loch nan Stuirteag, camp and chuck a dry fly over these pools for an hour or two on Sunday morning. That was the plan anyway.

The walk up Glen Dee is interesting. Soon the



Trout Rising In Small Lochans

impressive mountain, The Devil’s Point comes into view and the path is good and well drained. Incidentally, “Devil’s Point” is not an accurate translation of the Gaelic “Bod an Deamhain”. No, that would be “The Devil’s Penis”. Perhaps John Brown was too embarrassed to give Queen Victoria an accurate translation as they rode thorough the Lairig together on their ponies and anyway, the name “Cock of the North” was a title already taken by the 4th Duke of Gordon!

With the heavy pack, the outrageous humidity and heat I became aware of a slight “twinge” on the ball of my right foot. Never mind: stop for 10 minutes, cool the feet off in a burn, tape it up and away again. No sign of a blister. I had to stop a few more times to attend to the feet and sure enough by the time I got to my camp site in Glen Geusachan, below the Devil’s Point, I had a fair blister to nurse. I had passed several small feeder burns and small lochans on the way and noticed good olive hatches with rising fish, especially on



Devil's Point

Fionn” – Corrie of the battle of the Fingalians – the heroes of Celtic legend. Right under the summit of Beinn Bhrotain – named after Fionn’s hunting hound Brodan – it is clear that this area once held some special significance to the local people. It is sad that all of these past connections are now lost.

Even at this early hour the heat was oppressive; the glen was like an oven. The path up to

the lochans. The path deteriorates about ½ way up the glen and soon becomes poorly drained and very hard going. The walk in, to this point, had taken about 3 hours.

My camp site, about ½ way to the loch, beside the Geusachan burn (one of the Dee’s more important salmon spawning burns) was delectable. Right below The Devil’s Point, a much underrated mountain in my opinion. Were this peak more accessible it would be rated as one of Scotland’s finer. It is magnificent, especially in the early morning light with rolling mists

The midgies were out! Not millions but enough to warrant the DEET. Bloody annoying – they don’t usually appear in the Cairngorms until well into June. The good spring had its disadvantages.

A good nights sleep with an impeccably behaved dog followed. I was up at 7.30 AM, breakfasted, fishing gear sorted and away before 9 AM.

Glen Geusachan (glen of the pine wood) is the finest high level glen in the Cairngorms. It is superb. Infrequently visited, wild with massive slopes on each side, gigantic slabs running with water and magnificent high corries. The finest of these corries is “Coire Cath Nam

Loch nan Stuirteag is mostly overgrown, steep



Camp Site



Coire Cath Nam Fionn

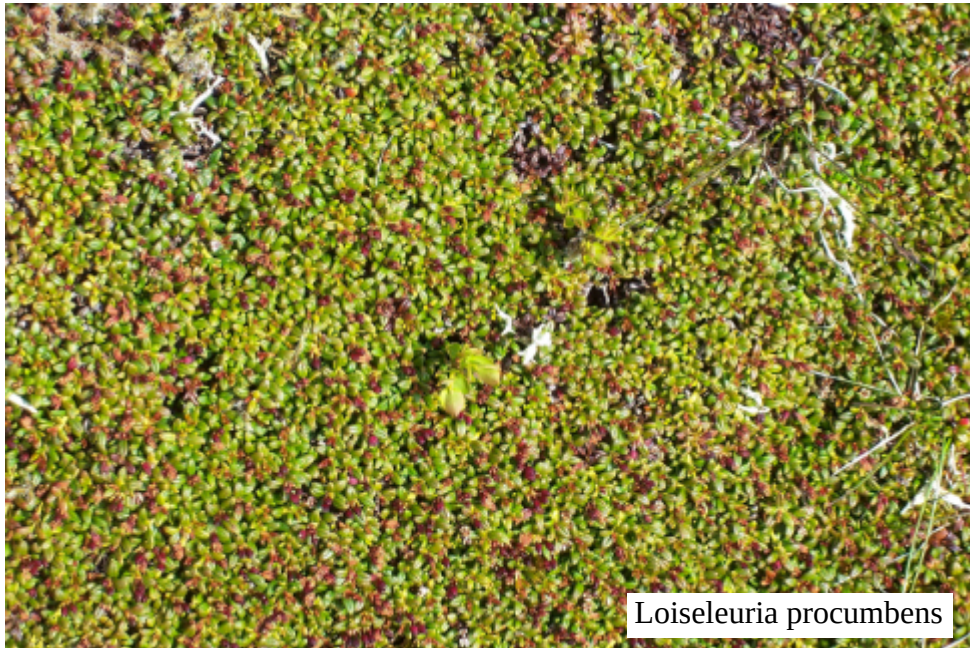


Arrival

and very hard going. It is a fair climb, the loch lies at over 2800 feet. After much grunting, sweating and cursing I crossed the final rise and there it was. The feeling of elation was overwhelming. Even the dog was excited, she

seemed to sense this is what we had come all this way for. The setting is arctic. True tundra, wild, remote and not a beer bottle or empty can to be found anywhere.

After refreshments and a rest I tackled up. A bright heavy fly on the tail, bibio on the dropper. As soon as I started fishing I was sure I was not going to catch anything. This loch is very shallow. With Polaroid's I could see it was shallow all over. I doubt if there are any areas deeper than 6 feet. It has decent weed growth and looks like a Caribbean lagoon. The water is of incredible clarity and shallows above wide areas of bleached white granite grit give way to darker areas of slightly deeper water creating the lagoon effect. The water was not at all cold.



Loiseleuria procumbens

I fished all round the loch and even on the occasions it fell calm there was no evidence of fish, despite the reasonably abundant fly life on this very warm day.

There are records of fish here in the past. Dr Adam Watson and others saw fish rising many decades ago and local keeper Willie Grant claimed to have caught trout in the 1940's.(2) It may be this loch was seeded with fish in the 19th Century – during the “Victorian sporting era” there was a friendly rivalry between estates: who had the biggest stags, the highest trout etc. But perhaps not. The fish may have died out or there may still be a few! I did not see any in what were really pretty much ideal conditions. In severe winters like some of those we experienced in the 1960s and 70s, a high shallow loch like this would have been frozen for at least ½ the year to



Rubus chamaemorus

great depth. Whether fish could have survived this is anyone's guess. The Scottish Government's web site claims there are trout and char in this loch – far be it from me to argue with HM fisheries scientists but I do wonder if any of them have actually been there to check? In my opinion, this loch is far too shallow to be typical char habitat.

My other great interest in the hills is alpine flora. Not much to note here on the poor granite – I was just a touch early to find Loiseleuria procumbens

in flower – a wonderful dwarf azalea making mats a foot or more wide but no more than ¼ inch high and a sight to behold when in flower, covered with small stars in all shades of pink – occasionally white! The plants I found were covered in buds and would have been magnificent one week on. There were a few cloudberry (Rubus chamaemorus) plants in flower.

I headed back down the glen to the tent and cooked some food. Packed up, shouldered the pack and

headed back down towards The Chest of Dee. By the time I was ½ way there I was in trouble. Both feet were now in bad shape. The extreme heat and sweating coupled with the long distances and outrageous pack had my feet looking like two tins of corned beef. Frequent stops, boots off, feet in burn – this brought some relief. It was clear by



Cairn Toul Above The Loch

now that I had best keep going while I could. To camp and risk not being able to walk out on blistered feet next day was not an option. Fishing the Dee with sore feet would not have been much fun anyway. Another problem was dehydration. All the burns (save but one) were tepid and foul to drink, I had not taken in nearly enough liquid. If I could have got my hands on the bastards who discontinued “Creamola Foam” I would have murdered them!

I got back to the car at Linn o' Dee at 7.30 PM. feet killing me. Headed down to Braemar and absorbed gallons of Fanta and orange juice.

A fishless expedition but one I would not have missed. Quite wonderful country. There is a tendency to think of the Cairngorms as shapeless big hills. They are anything but. The scale of the landscape, the remoteness and the terrain are quite awesome.

Will I be back to Loch nan Stuirteag? I doubt it, there are just so many other places to go and I am not getting any younger. There is another loch a few miles to the west of nan Stuirteag – Loch a' Cnapan. A touch lower, so it just might have fish in it.

Any takers?

ref: (1) The Cairngorms SMC Guide – Dr Adam Watson 1975

ref: (2) The Cairngorms their natural history and scenery – Nethersole-Thompson, Watson 1974

Fred Carrie started fishing in the mid 1960's, hillwalking in the 1970's and has been combining the two on and off ever since. Fred runs the successful Wild Fishing Forum and enjoys the hike up to the wild hill lochs as much as the fishing itself.

Fred now lives back in his native Angus, fishing the modest waters of his boyhood one of which flows a mere 10 minute walk from home.



The Expert And The Novice

A tale of two anglers by Alexander Birrell

The Expert

It was February. The weather had been fine for a few days and I needed to get the cobwebs out of the casting arm. I packed the gear in the boot of the car and headed for the local fishery. It wasn't one of my usual haunts as I prefer to fish the wild lochs for brown trout, but it was in easy reach, and more to the point, open.

I tackled up in the car park and went into the lodge to pay for the permit, ten pounds for the sporting ticket. I had no intentions of paying thirty pounds for four fish that I may, or may not, catch. The first things to catch my eye were the 'budgies' and 'parrots' arranged by colour and size all round the counter. After buying my permit, the lad behind this array of multicoloured feathers tried to sell me some. He said something about the 'killing' pattern of the week. I declined and left him tying more 'parrots' to add to his collection.

I picked up my rod, which I had propped up against the side of the lodge door, and walked round to one of the wooden platforms that were dotted around the edge of the water. I got myself settled, pulled some line off the reel and had a few practice casts. I was rusty but after a few minutes I was beginning to get the rhythm back and the line and flies were going where I intended them to. Casting and retrieving began to become automatic and, even though I was getting the odd knock or two to my cast of wee flies, I wasn't really bothered if I caught anything or not.

It was a few hours into the day and my casting had improved; I even had caught and returned a couple of fish, when, out of the corner of my eye, I saw him come out of the lodge. Brand new

waistcoat, new thigh waders not quite pulled up with the white insides flashing as he walked, new over the shoulder fishing bag, and clutching his new rod like it was his best friend. I smiled to myself. Santa had been good to him this Christmas; a new fly fisherman had joined the ranks. He scanned the loch like the intrepid hunter he now was. I carried on casting and retrieving. He paused, made up his mind, and settled on the platform two down from where I was perched.

For the next half hour he flailed the water to froth. 'Budgies' and 'parrots' flew back and forwards like rainbows after a storm. I slowly reeled in, walked off the platform, and headed towards the lodge. This of course meant passing this unfortunate gentleman who had obviously never held a fly rod in his hand before. I asked him how he was getting on. "Not too well." was his reply. I asked him if he wanted some help. "That would be great." he said.

Putting my rod on the bank out of harm's way, I asked if I could try his rod. Nothing matched. The rod was soft and whippy, the line was the wrong weight and, as for the reel, he would have been better with a wooden bobbin and a nail for a handle. I told him this and he said the people at the tackle shop had made it up for him saying it was the best setup for a beginner. I advised him not to go back there except to return it and get his money back. Asking him to wait, and picking up my rod, I returned to my car where I had an old rod, line and reel that I keep as a backup. I returned to where he was and tied a small piece of red wool to the end of the cast, no flies yet - I didn't fancy fly earrings. I pulled some line out and began to show him how to extend line till it loaded the rod. I cast a few times to make sure it

was right then handed him the rod with the line extended out in front. He took the rod and I stood directly behind him. I asked him to hold the loose line from the reel in his free hand and I took the rod and his other hand in mine and started into a back cast. I could feel him fighting to control the casting but asked him to relax his arm and let me do the casting and for him to feel the effect he had to aim for. It took a few casts before I felt he could try himself. On his own it was a disaster, not lifting off quickly enough, not high enough on the back cast, too quick on the forward cast and aiming at the water rather than the horizon. I went through it again with me holding the rod and after a few more casts he finally managed on his own to get the line out straight and no splashes.

Next was shooting line. I took the rod and cast a few times releasing line on the forward cast while he watched. This, of course meant I had to retrieve some line for the next cast. The piece of red wool was skimming the surface and every other cast a fish came up and took it. I thought it was hilarious, he thought it was 'magic'. I handed him the rod and he practiced shooting line, distance didn't matter, but he was shooting a few extra yards with each cast and on the retrieve the fish were still rising to the wool, which really seemed to make his day.

I looked at my watch, it had been two hours since we started and I decided it was time to leave. I picked up his rod, removed the 'budgie' and tied on a small nymph. He began to fish, getting a half decent cast considering the outfit, but now with an idea of what to look for when he replaces it. As I reached the lodge I looked back to see his rod bent into his first fish on the fly. That made my day more than the fish I had returned and was definitely worth the ten pounds.

The Novice

At last, I can finally get out and try my new fishing gear. I packed my new waistcoat, waders and fly outfit into the car and drove to the fishery a few miles along the road. There were one or two cars in the car park when I arrived so the place wouldn't be busy. I got myself ready and walked into the lodge to buy my permit. I settled on the four hour permit at twenty pounds, which would allow me to catch two fish. The lad behind the counter then asked what flies I would be using and I showed him the small selection the tackle shop had sold me. He turned up his nose at them and suggested I bought some of the flies on show around his desk, suggesting three yellows, three whites and a couple of rainbow coloured ones, flies of the

week he called them, fifteen pounds. I didn't think fly fishing would be this expensive. I paid him and left.

I picked up my rod and walked round the lodge. I stood there at the waters edge and thought, where do I go? There was one angler to my left and he looked like he knew what he was doing so I headed in that direction but stopped a few platforms before the one he was on so I wouldn't disturb him too much. I watched him as I got myself settled, fly casting doesn't look that hard; this would be easy. Half an hour later I had caught my neck, my ear, the grass behind me and the platform. When the line did land in the water, it was like an explosion with water and spray everywhere; this wasn't as easy as I thought. The guy on the platform up from me started to reel in. He's coming towards me, probably coming to give me hell for disturbing his fishing. "How are you getting on?" he said. I told him not too well as it was my first time fishing with a fly rod. "Can I help?" he said. I told him that would be great. He asked me if he could try my rod, so I handed it to him. After a few casts, and after asking me who had made up the outfit for me, he advised me to take it back and get my money back and to get someone who fly fishes to go with me next time, preferably to a different tackle shop. He asked me to wait where I was and a few minutes later he returned with another rod and line.

Tying a piece of red wool to the end of the nylon, the cast he called it, which was to simulate a fly without the sharp bits he said so that nothing could get caught anywhere, he pulled of some line and began to cast. He said to pull enough line off that would load the rod, like a weight does with a spinning rod, and that it was something I would get to know with practice. With the line lying out in front of the platform he handed me the rod, told me to hold the free line from the reel in my hand, and walked behind me. He reached over and covered my hand on the rod handle with his. Aye! Aye! I thought, but he explained that he would do the casting and this way I would be able to 'feel' the action better than he could explain it. After a few failed attempts he told me not to try and cast but to relax my arm, which I did, and then I could feel the rod bend as it lifted the line off the water, the pause at the top, the line pulling on the rod as it went back and the stop at the front as the line flew out in front of me. After a while he let me cast on my own. I tried to do as he had but it just didn't seem to be right and I just couldn't seem to control the line at all. He went through the process again, and when he left me to cast myself it was much better and the line was at least going out in front of me and landing without too much of a splash.

Next he said he would show me how to shoot some extra line to get a bit more distance. He took the rod and cast a few times releasing line from his hand as it flew out in front. Each time he cast he brought some line back in with his free hand, the retrieve he called it, which was used to 'fish' the flies but also so that there was just the right amount of line outside the top rod ring for casting, too much or too little would lead to a bad cast. As he retrieved line he began to laugh because there were fish coming up to the surface to get the red wool, which I thought was incredible but he thought was funny. He handed me the rod, and after a few attempts, I gradually got a little more line to go out. I started to retrieve this and I couldn't believe it when fish started going for the wool. It was brilliant. Here I was my first time fly fishing and getting fish without even a fly on my line.

"I need to go" he said. I turned and handed him back his rod. He picked mine up, removed the yellow thing that was there and put this little brown thing in its place, a nymph he called it. I thought, "What's that going to catch?" I thanked him for his help and advice and he said it was a pleasure and he walked off towards the lodge. I walked to the end of the platform and began to cast. I could see now what was wrong with my setup. The rod was too soft, the line just didn't work right and the reel was terrible. I could get a better cast with it now though and I thought I would carry on; I still had two hours left on my

permit. On my third cast I felt a tug on the line and I was playing my first fish on the fly. I finally got it onto the bank and I looked for my mentor but he had already left so he didn't see that his tuition had worked. I carried on until my permit time had run out.

In the end, for my thirty five pounds, I had two hours tuition and my first fish on the fly, two eventually, both on his 'nymph'. I was well pleased. If it hadn't been for his time and help, I would probably have packed up and never gone fly fishing again. As it is, I can't wait to pick up my new outfit and get out again. I might even try this 'wild' fishing for brown trout he was talking about.

Alexander Birrell has been fly fishing for over forty years, concentrating more on the wild side over the past twenty, which he says he will continue to do as long as he can climb the hills. After that he'll start on the more accessible roadside waters! Sandy ties and fishes only his own flies getting more satisfaction from doing that than with shop bought or flies tied by others. He enjoys reading old books about fishing. Sandy is also an occasional salmon and grayling angler and fishes both loch and stream.



Naomi: deadly. Never be afraid to be unconventional

Strong Deeside Turnout For Salmon Film Premiere

A press release from the Dee Catchment Partnership

The Deeside premiere of 'Riverwoods', a feature-length film about the plight of Scotland's salmon, was held at The Barn in Banchory on Monday 28th March.

The evening screening attracted over 120 people, who joined a Q&A session afterwards with some of the documentary's contributors, covering themes from across the linked crises of biodiversity loss and climate change.

Produced by rewilding charity, SCOTLAND: The Big Picture, and narrated by Peter Capaldi, 'Riverwoods: An Untold Story' is about the fractured connections between salmon and the lands through which their rivers flow. Dr Susan Cooksley, Manager for the Dee Catchment Partnership, a key contributor for the film, was on the panel responding to questions from the audience. She said: "It was fantastic to see such a strong turnout to this spectacular film. Land managers and policy makers were a key target audience for this film and we had good representation from both sectors as well as the general public, with an engaging discussion covering everything from the types of trees we need to be planting to the benefits of learning the lessons from other river catchments and countries."

Edwin Third, River Operations Manager for the Dee District Salmon Fishery Board, is another of the film's contributors. He said: "The current situation is bleak but thanks to the foresight and positive actions of many, including initiatives such as this film, there's a growing awareness of the need to act, and restore river woodlands at a catchment scale to help secure the future of Atlantic salmon."

Susan Cooksley agreed, and is keen to see the momentum generated by the film translated into wider advocacy and action: "There is hope - and it lies in using nature-based solutions to restore our catchments, whether by adding large woody structures to waterways to create better spawning habitats for salmon, or by planting a mix of native woodland habitats that will sequester carbon, reduce erosion, provide shade and food for aquatic creatures, improve water quality and slow catchment run-off. The health of our rivers and the life they contain depend entirely on the health of the landscapes through which they flow, and both need our immediate attention."

SCOTLAND: The Big Picture's Executive Director, Peter Cairns, added: "The motivation behind Riverwoods is to inspire action. The film shows some amazing examples of what people are already doing but we need to roll this out across the whole of Scotland."

The film's 12-venue screening tour kicked off in Edinburgh on 18th March and continues across Scotland until the end of May. Visit <https://www.scotlandbigpicture.com/riverwoods> to book a free ticket at the following locations:

- **Helmsdale** | Timespan (4 April)
- **Dumfries** | Theatre Royal (7 April)
- **Perth** | Perth Theatre (21 April)
- **Fort William** | Highland Cinema (28 April)
- **Stornoway** | An Lanntair (3 May)
- **Drumnadrochit** | Glenurquhart Hall (20 May)
- **London** | British Film Institute (24 May)

The film is part of a wider initiative involving a broad partnership of organisations focused on restoring a network of riverbank woodland and healthy river systems throughout Scotland, and increasing the

ecological connectivity between land and rivers. You can find out more here: <https://www.riverwoods.org.uk/>

You can follow the screening tour and join the conversation on social media using the hashtag #Riverwoods. Other relevant hashtags include: #wildsalmon #atlanticsalmon #GenerationRestoration #climatecrisis #climatechange #WildlifeComeback #BigPicture



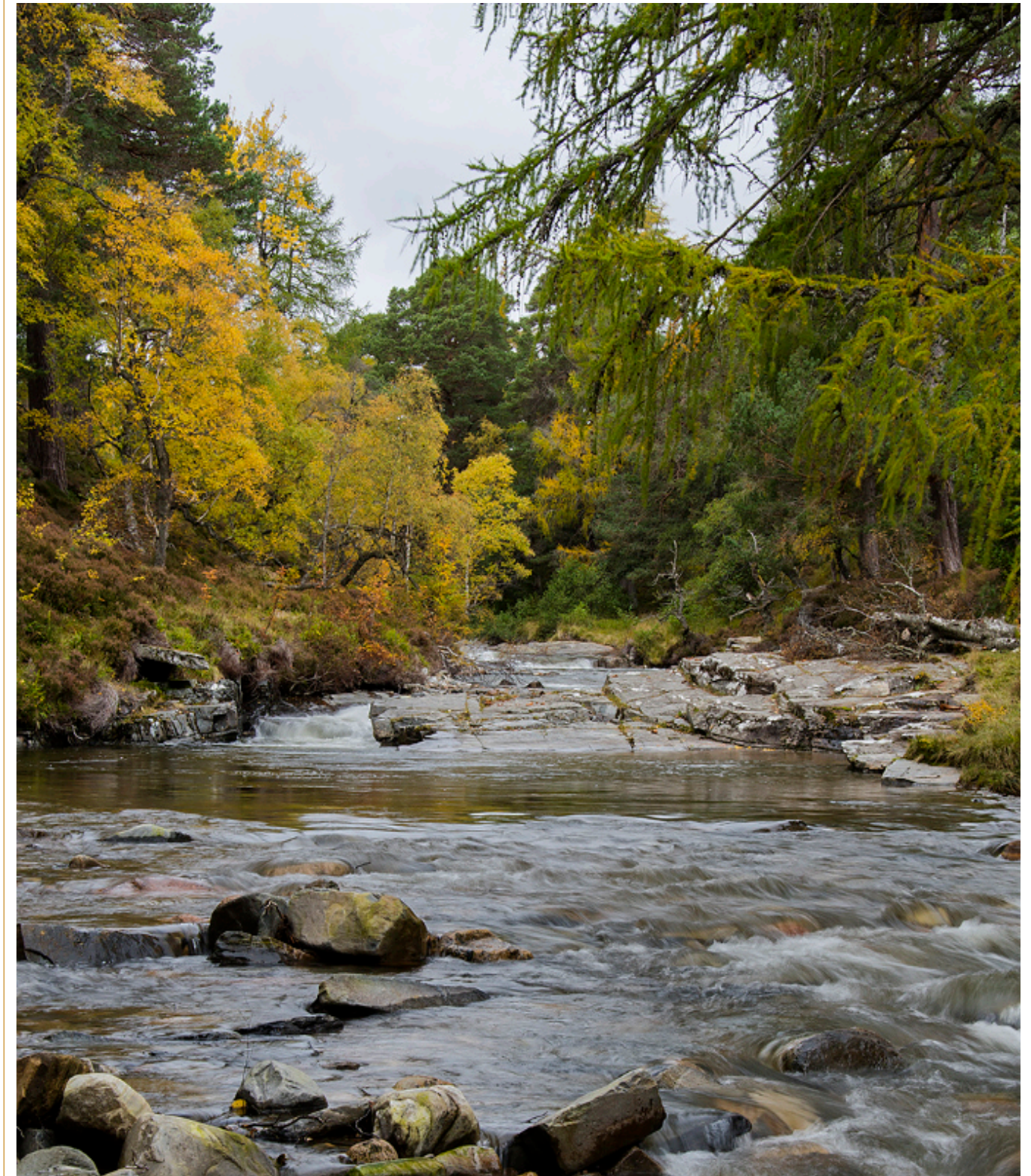
Planting more riverside trees brings major benefits to rivers and the creatures they support



Executive Director for SCOTLAND: The Big Picture, Pete Cairns, introduced Riverwoods at The Barn on Monday 28th March



Riverwoods highlights the plight of Atlantic salmon



Autumn on the River Quoich in the Caledonian pine woods. Part of the Aberdeenshire Dee Catchment. An important spawning stream for Atlantic salmon

Gallery

Fishing, nature and outdoor images sent in by readers

The Punch Bowl
River Quoich, Deeside,
Scotland
Photo: Fred Carrie

If you would like your fishing, nature or outdoor images published here please get in touch
via the Contact Us page on
www.fishwild.org.uk



Extremadura Wild
Fly fishing for carp and barbel in Spain
Photo: Dave Felce



Job Done!
A nice Spanish barbel on the dry fly
Photo: Dave Felce



Old Swinger

Imagine the all-around you (back with the old of heavy industry. Come along, from a small looking across the 100-foot railway swing bridge, chuffing over tracks running beneath your feet into Port Dundas.

Take a closer look - it's supposed swinging the poles but the gear system is still in. Can you see it?

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Old Swinger
Photo: Dave Felce



Sunset Loch Katrine, Scotland
Photo: Adam Caird



Red Grouse, Cairngorms, Scotland
Photo: Ron Mitchell



Sunset River South Esk, Scotland
Photo: Adam Caird



Red-breasted Merganser, Montrose, Scotland
Photo: Ron Mitchell



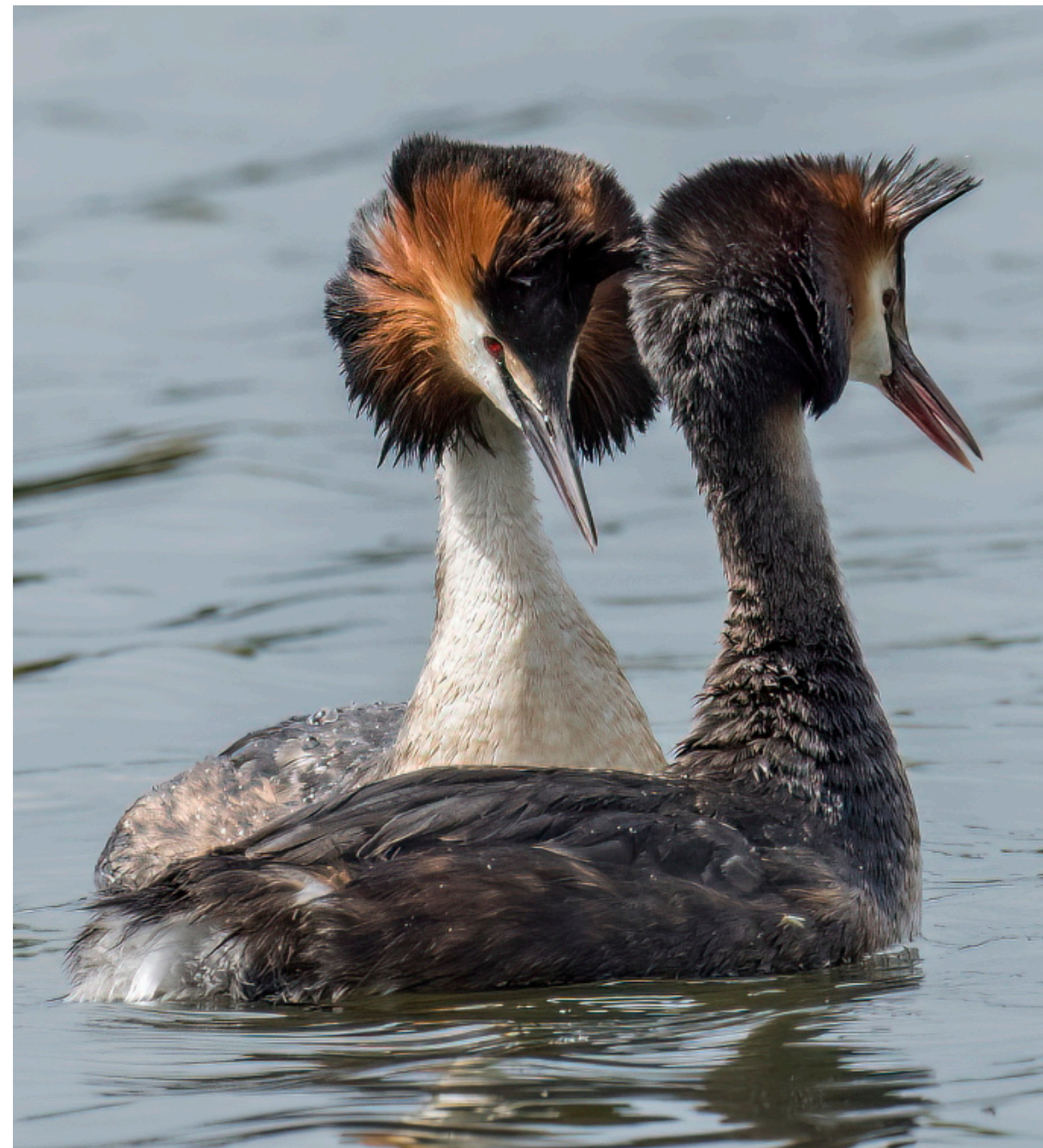
Evicting A Squatter
Photo: F. Carrie

Photographers In This Issue

‘Corsican’ Dave Felce lives in Highland Scotland and is the antithesis of the formulaic angler. Always bursting with enthusiasm Dave is one of that rare breed of genuinely interesting people. Dave’s full bio can be found elsewhere in this and other issues of Fish Wild. Dave is a Nikon shooter.

Adam Caird lives in Arbroath, Scotland and is a lifelong angler who has recently returned to the sport after a hiatus that is familiar to many of us. Adam is an enthusiastic and talented amateur photographer with interests ranging from wildlife through landscapes to aviation. Adam is a Canon Shooter. His Flickr page can be viewed here: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/53926777@N03>

Ron Mitchell lives in Montrose Scotland and travels all over the country in pursuit of his hobby. His main focus, not unexpectantly, is the Montrose Basin Wildlife Reserve a mere stone’s throw from home. Ron has produced many photos and videos for the Scottish Wildlife Trust and is a Canon shooter. His work can be viewed on his Flickr page here: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/137319226@N03>



Lovebirds On Forfar Loch, Scotland
Photo: F. Carrie

If you would like your fishing, nature or outdoor images published here please get in touch via the Contact Us page on www.fishwild.org.uk

Worth A Watch?

A selection of online resources you might find useful or interesting

Dave Felce's page on "The Floating Fly"

<https://www.thefloatingfly.com/dave-felce?fbclid=IwAR3ulkHUfSAOP3hNC27CpxBE6T2sEb0Nt8OKhuhIocWAAcjBPCgXVQ59rcY>

If you are thinking about chasing wild carp on the fly this is well worth a look. Advice on gear, tactics, reading the water etc. Fly fishing for coarse fish should be more popular than it is; start here!

Wildfisher Youtube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC78zV3mlbF2vn566g2a1Ifw>

Mainly short, small stream fishing videos with a sprinkling of wildlife and photography. No shouting, loud rock music, no whoopin' and hollerin'. Peaceful, introspective fly fishing with an old guy with lots of time on his hands.

Chris Matthews' Youtube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyO4pLVBKLA2bKE9gc6O-LQ>

Chris fishes several rivers and small streams in Devon. Once again, no raucous stuff, Chris just takes you fishing with him and shares his experience, the highs and the lows.

Caorach Youtube Channel

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHclad9VIQW_rbGA8Oi6XyA

Run by Philip Blair from Northern Ireland and mainly features fly fishing for trout and salmon on Lewis and Harris. Delivered in a quiet, laid back style with much emphasis on drinking tea as well as catching some fine fish.

Jensen Fly Fishing

<https://www.youtube.com/user/jensenflyfishing>

Dave and Amelia Jensen are based in Alberta, Canada and fish all over the world. Highly informative, well shot and edited videos. Quality stuff.

Southside Fly-Fishing Youtube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/c/SouthsideFlyFishing>

Based in Glasgow, Scotland, Sean fishes and shoots quality videos in Scotland and beyond. Good honest fly fishing content.

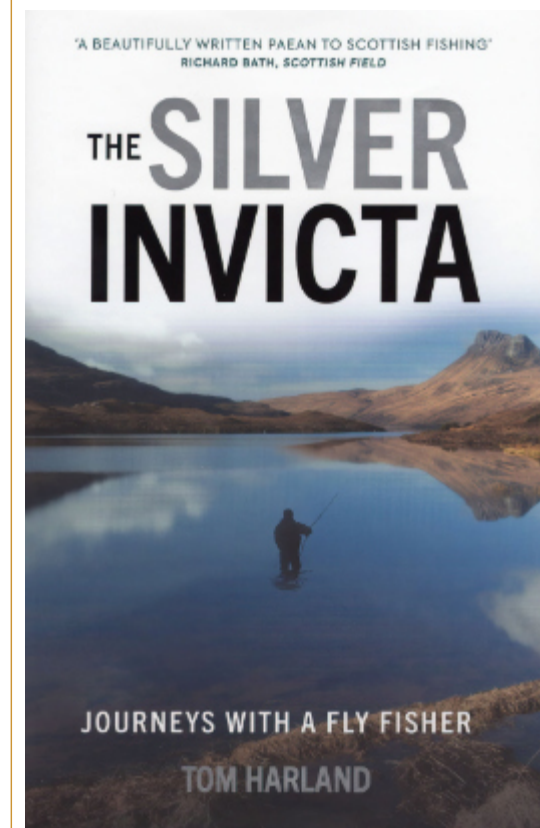
Trout Hunting NZ Youtube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/c/TroutHuntingNZ>

Gareth lives on New Zealand's North Island but fishes all over this, the best wild trout fishery on the planet. Lots of variety and quality fishing.

Publications

A quick look at a few printed books and magazines



It is sometimes said that one should never judge a book by its cover. Well in this case at least that is nonsense, the cover of this book is stunning and the book is a delightful read.

Author Tom Harland takes you on a journey through his fishing life that will be instantly familiar to those of us anglers who love fishing, wild camping or just tramping the hills and along the banks of our wild rivers and lochs, fly rod in hand.

While trying not to give too much away and spoiling the reader's enjoyment of this delightful book, Tom will take you on his many trips to the wild lochs of Assynt and the wider North West Highlands of Scotland as well as through the Scottish Borders, the Western Isles and even down under to New Zealand.

The style is relaxed and light hearted.

And the Silver Invicta? Well that was the fly Tom caught his first ever Atlantic Salmon on and has a special significance for him. It was also my youngest son's favoured trout fly on the lochs of Assynt, so for this reader it was a delightful reminder of wonderful and happy days past.

Permits for all of the waters mentioned in this book are readily available and very affordable, which is important.

A great read for anglers and others who just love wild places.

£17.99 in hardback from <https://www.polarispublishing.com/>

ISBN: 9781913538897

Fishing Rights In Scotland

A few useful notes. **Please note this is not legal advice**, just a rough guide that will hopefully dispel a few myths. For full and accurate details of the law you should consult a lawyer. Keep yourself on the right side of the law.

There is a wide spread belief that fishing for brown trout in Scotland is a public right. This is totally incorrect. All fishing rights in Scotland are owned by someone and the public has no right whatsoever to fish without the permission of the rights holder. The same applies to other freshwater fish.

The law concerning salmon and migratory trout is a separate matter governed by criminal law, much stricter with heavy penalties for any breach. There are also Brown Trout Protection Orders in force on some Scottish waters, once again, governed by criminal law.

Here is a brief summary:

Fishing rights are private. It is not the fish but the right to fish for them that is owned.

Fishing for trout and other freshwater fish

Fishing for freshwater fish without permission is a civil rather than a criminal offence (unlike salmon fishing). However, unauthorised fishing can be made the subject of criminal proceedings under the Theft Act 1607, where any person removing fish from a stank (that is any artificial pond or reservoir which has been stocked and has neither inlet nor outlet through which fish can pass) without authority is guilty of theft. Where a Protection Order is in force, it is a criminal offence to fish for or take freshwater fish in the inland waters in the prescribed area without legal right, or written permission from the correct person.

The rights to fish for freshwater fish belong to the owner of the land that is adjacent to the water, unless held separately from the land. An exception is public waters.

Trout fishing in public waters

In public rivers, members of the public have a common law right to fish for trout but in order to constitute the right, it must be shown that the river is both navigable in the ordinary sense and also tidal. The right to fish will extend upstream as far as ordinary spring tides.

In lochs, some lochs are considered public waters e.g Loch Ness, Loch Lochy and Loch Lomond due to their size and capability of navigation by large vessels. In contrast where the loch is bounded by lands of one owner and there is no evidence of public navigation the right is considered to be private.

A public right of fishing for trout can only be established where there is a public right of access to the banks or where fishing can be carried out from a boat in tidal waters.

Trout fishing in private waters

Where both banks of a river is under the ownership of a single proprietor, then he has the right to fish for trout from either bank. In the case where the river separates two properties, then each owner has the right to fish for trout from his own lands.

Some private rivers may be navigable but not tidal and the general public may have a right of navigation e.g. by canoe. This is similar to a right of access over private land and does not confer a right of fishing upon members of the public exercising the right of navigation.

The right of salmon fishing is considered to be a superior right to trout fishing.

The right of salmon fishing can be held separately from ownership of the land. In other words salmon fishing rights can be bought or sold and these rights may or may not be held by the landowners.

Trout fishing in relation to salmon fishing:

The right of salmon fishing contained in a grant from the Crown includes the lesser right of trout fishing by one who is not a proprietor of lands adjoining the waters in question. However, the right of trout fishing where it is included in a grant of salmon fishing does not exclude the right of a landowner adjacent to the waters and persons authorised by him to fish for trout in the same waters as the holder of the right to fish for salmon.

Where the rights to trout and salmon fishing in the same waters are held by different persons, the right of trout fishing must not interfere with the superior right of salmon fishing. If a proprietor of trout fishing exercises his right in an illegal manner or intentionally disturbs salmon, interdict may be obtained against him.

Lastly: Scotland has some of the most open and liberal land access regulations in the world that guarantee access to most land as long as this is carried out responsibly and with respect and regard to other land use.

This is laid out in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and clearly stipulates it gives no right at all to fish.

In other words you may well be free to walk up to a loch, to canoe or swim in a river but this does not give you the right to fish without the permission of the holder of the fishing rights.

Always seek permission before fishing.

Please check out the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

<https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/act-and-access-code/land-reform-act/land-reform-act-legal>

Disclaimer: This information is given in good faith and comes with absolutely no guarantee of accuracy. Parliament changes laws from time to time and sometimes local by-laws are in force. Anglers should always check the current regulations prior to fishing. Stay on the right side of the law, stay safe!

Nymph Mania!

Alex Laurie

It started when I was about 14, I suppose. That is about the age when nymphs did suddenly seem quite attractive to this boy-angler.

Until then, I had been chasing the brownies and the ladies of the stream pretty unsuccessfully, with maggots and worms and occasionally with wet and dry fly. I caught some, but I knew I should have been doing better. Then I read Sawyer.

Nymphs and the Trout was, and still is, a great angling book. It transported me from my Avon (the Lanarkshire one) to “his Avon”. It really was his Avon, as Frank Sawyer was the keeper on the stretch of the Hampshire Avon at Netheravon. I learned a lot from that book and I’m not alone in that.

Where Frank had the edge on me, apart that is from skill, experience, maturity...was the fact that he could see the fish.



In those days, his river ran as clear as gin and the fish sat there as if suspended in mid air, so clear was the water. I know this, because I was fortunate enough to fish Frank’s Avon many times, due to the fortunate accident that it flowed through Christchurch, which is close to Bournemouth, which is where my parents took me on holiday. I’ll let that lie for now, but I may come back to this another day, because I really loved fishing that river for the barbel, chub, red finned roach, even

the big mullet...and I learned a lot because I too could see the fish and their reactions to my baits.

Meanwhile back at my Avon, I tried to put into practice Frank’s lessons. I greased the butt of my leader. I watched, no I stared at, the hole the leader made in the surface film, and I caught fish. I didn’t begin to match the huge numbers of fish that Sawyer was catching, but I was happy. I started regularly catching fish of a stamp that my downstream wet flies would only occasionally catch.

Fast forward now. Twenty-odd years have gone by and I’ve caught quite a few nice trout and grayling over the years. I’m fishing with an American I met on the banks of a fairly obscure river in New Zealand’s South Island. He is a student and part time fishing guide back home, but very well respected as I later discover. At this point, I’ve had a very good year on the Clyde, but I soon discover we are all just students in this art of angling, and I’ve not done my homework.

I spot a fish about 6lb. It is a big fish by my standards and lying quite deep in fast swirling water. I decide a nymph is the way to go. I can see the fish from my casting position – a rare luxury.

I start casting. After several attempts I got a decent cast and drift. The fish moves to the fly and I tighten, but no contact is made. Being a typical New Zealand trout, it exits stage left! My young friend expresses surprise that I’m not using any form of strike indicator. I explain that they just spook the fish and that I do ok without using one. He reckons I may have struck too soon.

He spots the next fish. This one is really deep down and so he puts on a tungsten beadhead, with a yarn indicator above. He starts casting.

Being a guide and a better caster and angler than I am, he covers the fish perfectly first time. Not being used to using an indicator, I being the spotter, watch the fish for a reaction (he can’t see this fish from his position). I’m guessing that the fly is about where the



fish is, when suddenly my pal strikes and he is into a hard fighting fish about 5lb. He tells me after I net it that his indicator went down.

No sooner is this fish landed, than I spot another just a few metres upstream. As my pal is already in pole position, I insist that he tries for this one too.

I could go on, but basically the whole scene was replayed and I never saw that fish take the fly either. Since that day, I’ve rarely fished a nymph without some form of strike indication. Occasionally, in really shallow water when I can see the fish clearly, I’ll do without.

Nowadays, my indicators range from dry flies to the bend of which, I tie a short dropper with a nymph below, to wisps and larger portions of yarn that I can slide up and down the line, to foam and balsa floats, for want of a better description. They all have their uses.



It is much more pleasant to cast and aesthetically pleasing to fish with the lightest and least obtrusive indicator possible, but sometimes I have to get down and dirty with the big guns. Casting these beasts overhead is fraught with the ever-present danger of tangling and also danger to thin walled rod blanks, so I tend to use some form of roll cast rather than an overhead cast.

I always work upstream. The basic method of fishing a light or a heavy rig is to treat the indicator as a dry fly, doing aerial mends, curve casts, wiggles...in fact, the whole spectrum of dry fly casts as well as off-the-water mends. My motto is “as long

as it isn’t dragging, let it drift”, meaning that a long drag free drift is the way to more fish. Just the same as dry fly, really.

The rest of it: the depth/weight balance and all that, that is just trial and error, for me at least. Sometimes I get it right straight off. Other times I don’t get it right at all, but I hope this helps give a flavour of my approach to fishing the nymph and why I do it this way.

Alex Laurie , now in his 60s, has been fishing since the tender age of 12. He used to do a lot of coarse fishing and, until the mid 2000s, held the Scottish bream record with a 10lb 4oz fish. Alex has fished all over the world, including Alberta Canada and has cast a fly in New Zealand for more years than is good for anyone. He prefers rivers, but loves our wild highland lochs too.

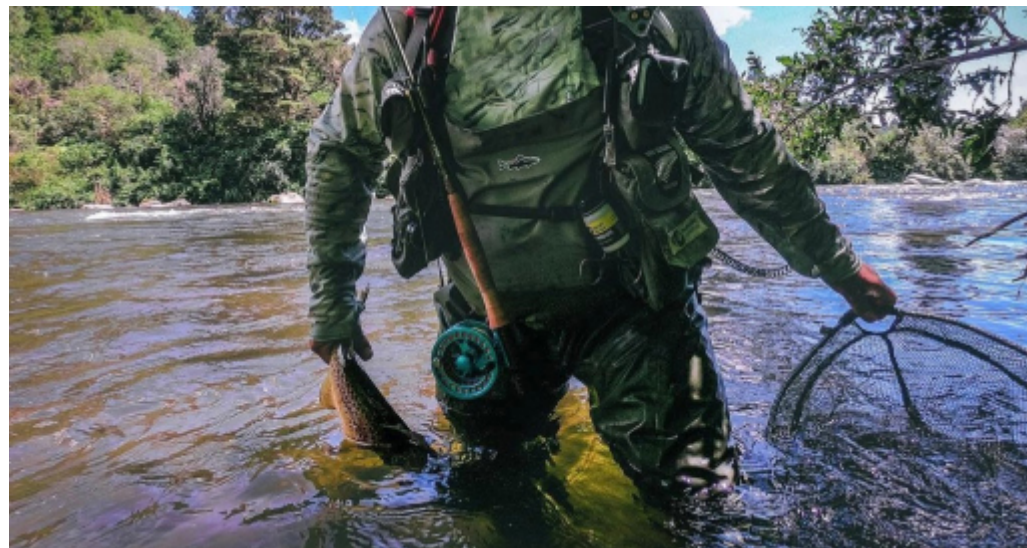
Alex , now retired, says he is a frustrated blues guitarist and lives with his very understanding wife Linda in Glasgow.

The Good, The Bad And The Ugly

David Walker discusses the role of social media in today's fishing world

The role of social media in today's society has been well discussed on various platforms. It equally divides opinions as much as it forms them and with that, it is a phenomenon that has a wide-ranging ability to direct and influence behaviours in some of us.

With this, the world of fishing – in more recent times – has spawned a new generation of anglers that crave attention and 'likes' as much as the sport itself. Today, on various media platforms, there are reams upon reams of posts and videos of poor technique, of poor fish-handling and the myriad of such scene-setting processes whereby the superstar, with such movie director-esque attempts at creating the perfect shot, abounds. I see some of these from time to time and my mind wonders at the levels of effort involved and more importantly, how long each and every fish unnecessarily suffers just to create something that is being designed for attention and recognition by others. One particular example stands out...



Wow...

Allow yourself a minute to appreciate what is in the picture. What stands out for you? Is it the fact the angler is dragging a sizeable fish through the water surface, part-submerged, by its tail? Why isn't it in his net? It looks like he has had the time to secure his rod to his person but has thought better of securing the fish.

I challenged this angler on his post. He has a rather sizeable following reaching into multiple thousands – his response was that he had numerous Go-Pro cameras tethered to surrounding trees and this picture was a still of a rolling camera shot. It still doesn't explain the

fish being tail dragged through the water.

I have come across numerous incidents as above and have even raised debates on several fishing forums by starting threads discussing these issues; by and large, the mood of these threads usually display similar worries.

I have seen out of season grayling being held up for show on fishing forums that were caught in late April and as black as three in the morning. Said captor was a mature gentleman but new to the fishing scene – he didn't take the advice offered in response to his trophy posts that he'd be better leaving those fish to get on with producing the next generation and continued with his assaults on that particular beat well into the trout season.

Warnings have been issued by my own committee in respect of some insta-heroes that land trophy fish and then carry said fish numerous

yards up the bank so their mates can get the hero pose. I have even heard of phone-calls being made to mates who are miles upstream to drive down with their digital cameras and get the pic, how long does that fish suffer in the net waiting for its hero shot?!

This year has even seen the capture of a large Tweed trout being paraded out of

season by a self-proclaimed, five-minute guide with the accompanying description saying they had sought out opinion before posting...perhaps if they had then the post wouldn't have been published!

Some excuse can be offered that this new generation of anglers will learn through bad practice as I am sure we all have done who have been fishing for more than five minutes. Such anglers who feel the need and the want of attention, that drive to increase their imaginary profile they think exists in the world of fly-fishing will perhaps mature then take on-board such criticism; even critique their own behaviour in

respect of fish-handling and looking after our sport, the ethics of it and the accepted conduct that goes right along with it.

As said, we all learn through our practices – some good, some bad – and the teachings and experiences of others. I look back on some fishy pics of my own and wince at some of the pictures I have stuck online. Squeezing a little too hard, a raised fish way above the water and I have had numerous captures laid out on dry grass, stones etc. I had a few years of competition fishing that despite bringing some success, also brought practices during heats and events into sharp context. For example, the counting and preferred tactics of targeting and counting spawning grayling on our rivers never sat right with me, nor should it. But SANA and SANACC obviously see it differently.

Nowadays, most of my fishy pics will be along the length of a wet net, part submerged on the edge of the river bank and perhaps my rod in the frame for perspective. If done right, a thoroughly presentable snap usually entails and your trophy can be back in the water quickly from its moment of capture.



A trophy shot done right.

Listening to a podcast recently, the participants mentioned 'pile-ons' when a challenge was made to those displaying poor practice and the end result was one of exasperation. I am sure we have all engaged in and seen these types of discussions that ultimately find the author of the post backed up by mates and fail to engage in what experience is being offered up and passed on. The Fly Culture Podcast, hosted by Pete Tyjas, often asks his guests how they see fishing today. Most people go down the route of whether there are enough youngsters coming through amongst

other things but I would suggest that social media is a clear and present danger to our sport.

By my reckoning, it appears to be getting worse year on year. Everyone now has a profile that needs grown and be seen to be active and catching when others aren't. A short time spent online can leave one in some despair at what is being put out there by the new generation and I find myself wondering where it will end up.

I do hope that we don't see these practices – fuelled by social media attention – become the norm and that we, as the angling community, continue to speak out on posts displaying bad practice and attempt to educate those who would benefit from it, ultimately benefiting our sport in the longer term.

David Walker has been fishing since a small boy on the lochs of his local hills and further afield on the banks of Loch Shin and Merkland when visiting family. This fishing education has led to international recognition for Scotland at both World and European Championships. Equally at home drifting afloat, on the river and hill lochs, his passion is casting at rising fish which helps rebalance the stress levels the role of a senior scientist within the NHS entails

Old Glasgow Tackle Shops

Nostalgic memories with Alan Goodwin

Saturday morning early we hopped on the 59 bus from Mossspark to Glasgow City Centre. Our pockets jingling with the proceeds of our weekly endeavours. Me with my paper round, Tim with his milk money and Gerry, well he always had money. Where he got it from we never did find out but he always had the best of gear.

Wherebye we had Milbro and Shakespeare gear he turns up with a new Hardy Jet. That was Gerry, always travelled first class.

First stop was Wm. Robertson in Wellington St. Windows were scanned before entry, was always the way to do it our faces pressed hard against the glass and to this day I still love nothing better than browsing tackle shop windows in the towns I visit. I admired the J.W. Young reels and I swore that one day I would possess a Beaudex. I have four now along with Pridex and Condex so I guess I got my way albeit late in life, funny how things move on. Waders were Altona and Keenfisher lines Kingfisher and the new Cortland and Gladding PVC lines were admired and we wondered if they would really catch on. A row of the new Abu Hi-Lo's, Nevison Sprats, Mepps and Vibro spoons

Entering the shop, dark and foreboding to us young boys but Angus the then owner knew us boys and we soon settled in .Whilst Gerry admired the huge Tarpon in the glass case my eyes were transfixed by the 9lb plus record fly Trout from Loch Leven with the actual cast that caught it within its glass confines. “A Shanty Cast” and later on in life I would purchase a few for my rare visits to the Mecca that was Loch Leven. Tim would buy a few Model Perfect bait hooks. Me a couple of flies and maybe a Buldo bubble float for up the Dams, Gerry, oh he could buy the shop but settles on a couple of Pike Plugs, no not the cheap wooden pained ones but ABU Hi-Lo with their adjustable vanes. Trust him, he was a bit of an expert with Pike and many fell to his top of the water tactics something he was rather adept at. Way ahead of his time Gerry was.

Moving on we cut through Central Station to No 3 West Nile Street the home of our second port of call Arthur Allan tackle. Here we buy a tin of maggots or a packet of brandling worms. He always got a fresh supply delivered on Friday and you had to be quick to get some. Maybe a spool of Luxor Kroic or Platil line for making up casts, we after all will be out that Saturday afternoon up to the Barrhead Dams or if a river invites us The Gryffe or Calder at Lochwinnoch. I liked Arthur Allan's as he always had a window dedicated to guns and many a nice model resided within its glass confines. Rods were Bruce and Walker Abu, Milbro and probably the best fibre glass Salmon rod of all time The MilbroVerre.

Moving north we call into C C Mann in West George Street. A funny shop which had to be entered below street level and to the uninitiated would pass by without so much as a glance. The owner Charles if whose name I remember right was a gentleman and a well travelled angler who thrilled us boys with his tales of Highland Loch fishing and in particularly the art of Dapping, something which I took to with relish in my later years.

At the top of the town in Cowcaddens one could find the smallest of all the shops Cafaro Bros and unlike the others I mention still plying their trade all be it some distance from their old shop. Sadly I have not paid a visit for many a year. I wonder if Pat, one of the sons, is still there? He was always helpful. Here I bought a few Clyde Style flies and a couple of Murray's Bluebottles. And so to the last in the journey, Alex Martin in Royal Exchange Square. Whilst not the friendliest of shops catering for the better off of Glasgow fishermen had the most interesting of windows. The left one was devoted to hunting and displayed the most beautiful of guns and equipment. It was here I fell in love with the Puma an American hunting knife, something I bought many years later. The fly and spinning window to the right had a lovely display not just of their own Thistle fly rods but rods by Hardy, Sharpe's and Pezon and Michel. Fly reels by Hardy and Farlow and I particularly liked the understated Sharpes The Gordon.

Barbour jackets, deerstalkers, woolly jumpers with suede patches, spinning reels such as Mitchell , the Italian Alcedo and the Intrepid range, all were shown to their best in their display. Early visits we entered the shop with some trepidation but after a time they got to know us and it was not so bad after that. I

often stood and admired the framed Parachute and Waddington flies on the wall and to this day I still have a few tucked away in their little metal tin somewhere in my fishing cupboard. Here Gerry was in his element as he wiggled the latest split cane. Me I always cringed that he would hit if off the wall and break it but he never did and he certainly had an affinity with the salesman who probably realised that he had money and I am sure that shop was visited more than a few times when we were not there to make a purchase. Shooing Gerry out the door just as he enquires about an American Heddon River Runt in its wee plastic box we catch the bus home and get ready for the off.

Sadly most of the shops have gone. and I for one certainly do miss them; they shaped us boys to what we are now. Tim has gone now and I have lost touch with Gerry, I wonder if he still fishes. But those boyhood memories linger on. Other shops were Anglers Rendezvous which bought Wm Robertson and though they moved location sadly the name has passed on though I believe they still ply their trade from Stockwell Street under the former name. Another good shop albeit a wee bit out of the city worth a visit was James Kent in Yoker. Sadly the big man passed away but a good wee shop it was; the few times I visited he was always up to a bit of a chat. Now called Danny's Den but I have not been by since the change. Again, most amiss of me not to pay them a visit. Maybe bitten with nostalgia I may well take a city tour and see what is still out there. Who knows?

Alan Goodwin lives in Erskine Renfrewshire, married with two children and two grandchildren. A long time devoted traditional fly fisher for brown trout. Alan also specializes in tying Clyde style flies for this unique form of fly fishing

What Have You Tied Today?

Flies tied by readers and Wild Fishing Forum Members



These superb loch flies were tied by Wild Fishing Forum member Allan Hutton whose winter tying regime has certainly produced results! Allan consistently ties excellent and very neat flies.



Four exceptionally well tied wire bodied spiders by Wild Fishing Forum member Robert MacDonald-Lewis. These flies will cut through the surface film and fish perfectly.

Fry Feeders

A tongue in cheek investigation by Fred Carrie

As the days shorten and the long close-season approaches, it is customary for anglers and angling publications alike to turn their attention to the challenges of fry feeders.

But what has all this got to do with the here and now and why would an article on fry feeders appear in the spring edition of a fly fishing publication like Fish Wild? Autumn after all is the season of fry feeders and fry feeding articles. In fact you could set your watch by it, with Lady Of The Stream articles just confirming beyond doubt that the trout season is all but over and winter approaches.

Of course for those “in the know” fry feeding is not limited to autumn, but to be fair, there is little doubt that cooler back-end conditions coupled with shortening day length present fry feeding opportunities that simply do not exist in summer. The northern-based angler, in particular those spending time in remote highland locations, will find fry feeding opportunities severely limited during the long summer days, when they may well still be out on the water at 11.00 PM or even later. At this late hour in most northern locations very little if any fry feeding will be witnessed.

So yes, it is customary to associate fry feeding with autumn but it is less well known that good fry feeding is to be found at any time of the year when the day length is short. In my own experience, the best fry feeding opportunities are to be found from mid September, through winter and into spring, right up until about mid May, when lengthening daylight hours make things far more challenging.

Before looking at fry feeding in more detail, it is important to differentiate between the various types of fry feeder. To keep things as simple as possible, we will, for the purposes of this article, break fry feeders down into two broad categories: deep fry feeders and shallow fry feeders.

Deep Fry Feeders

Here in Scotland, without doubt, most deep fry feeders show a distinct preference for the fish supper. Not any fish mind you - it has to be haddock. Over the years, the supremacy of the fish supper has been challenged by various pretenders to the throne: haggis suppers, white and black puddings, king ribs, Mars Bars and others have all made their moves at various times. The fish supper, however, still reigns supreme in the minds of most hungry anglers heading home after a hard day on the river or loch. It is worth noting that, in some areas of Scotland not normally associated with fishing, it is possible to buy a fish supper at almost any hour of the day. Some may remember, many years ago, the famous Scottish philosopher Rab C. Nesbit walking the streets of Govan in Glasgow and asking the question, "Where else can you get a fish supper at 9 o'clock in the morning?"

Autumn brings with it a shorter day length and most anglers are off the water before 6.00 PM. It can be seen, at this time, that opportunities for deep fry feeding are greatly enhanced. A few of my own favourite deep fry feeding locations are at Ballater and Inverbervie in Aberdeenshire. These places are deep fry feeder Nirvana, but most anglers will have their own preferences, probably based on geographical location. Another superb deep fry feeding location is in Wick, Caithness, where a truly magnificent pie supper can be had directly across the road from Hugo Ross's tackle shop. Some complain it is unfair that Caithness anglers seem to have everything laid on for them; they just don't realise how lucky they are up there.

Shallow Fry Feeders

Shallow fry feeding, at the end of one's fishing day, can be an altogether more challenging business. In most take-aways, deep fry feeding is the order of the day and shallow fry feeding opportunities may be confined to bacon or sausage rolls. Beware however that, in some establishments, the bacon for your roll may not be shallow fried at all, but instead grilled, and this is not always made clear. It is completely unethical to attempt to pass-off grilled bacon as fried and knowingly turning a blind eye to such abuse is as bad as using the worm on a fly only water. The salvation of the shallow fry feeder is the transport café or "greasy spoon". Within such fine establishments shallow fired cuisine of the highest quality is to be

found. Bacon, sausage and egg, fried bread, gammon steaks, side portions of beans, these are but samples of the delights on offer. Some, if asked, even offer hybrids and will include deep fried chips with the shallow fried main course. In such choice spots, fry feeding frenzies are witnessed from time to time, but be aware that these are usually short lived and success is all down to timing. The major limiting factor on shallow fry feeding is opening hours. Most places are closed by about 6.30 PM, thus, for the angler, reliable shallow fry feeding is normally a spring or autumn experience.

The main enemy of both the deep and shallow fry feeder is the saturated fat anti. Organised groups of these antis have made worrying and powerful alliances with the salt police, anti-smoking, anti-drinking and anti-fun groups, making it their life's work to interfere with and disrupt the natural seasonal rhythms of the fry feeder. Those most at risk are anglers who like to wash their fish supper down with a beer and enjoy a smoke afterwards. There is little point in even attempting to reason with these people; just keep low on the skyline, approach the counter carefully and quietly, point to the menu, then cast a ten pound note in the direction of the assistant. Hopefully you will not fall within the anti's narrow window of vision.

To conclude: with spring now here, the cream of fry feeding can still be with us. Get out there and make the most of it. Happy munching and don't forget to take some wipes to remove the grease from your hands before you grasp the steering wheel and drive home. Safety first, heart attacks notwithstanding!

Fred Carrie started fishing in the mid 1960's, hillwalking in the 1970's and has been combining the two on and off ever since.

Fred runs the successful Wild Fishing Forum and enjoys the hike up to the wild hill lochs as much as the fishing itself.

Fred now lives back in his native Angus, fishing the modest waters of his boyhood one of which flows a mere 10 minute walk from home.

Maxcatch Avid Fly Reel

Tackle Review



Even although I do own some pretty classy fly fishing gear I certainly would not describe myself as a tackle tart.

However as Rabbie Burns once wrote

*O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us!*

So being honest, I guess compared to some I probably do fit into that category. I especially like a well made, well engineered fly reel. Good quality is hard to argue against and for over 15 years I have used quality German made Vosseler reels and they have never let me down. Looking at my old DC3 it has taken a lot of knocking around. It is covered with dents, nicks and scratches mostly picked up on very rough, rocky rivers in New Zealand and boulder strewn hill lochs here in Scotland, yet it just goes on and on.

Last winter in a fit of boredom browsing the Amazon web site, I came face to face with the Maxcatch Avid Fly Reel. They looked good in the picture and the description, boasting solid CNC construction, disk drag, various line capacities and blingy colour choices. All this for a mere £51.

There had to be a catch and the only way to find out was to buy one and see. I ordered a nice 5/6 weight capacity reel in tasteful blue that I thought might brighten up dull days on my local river.

On arrival the reel looked fine. Not as robust as my old DC3, nothing like it, but light, well made and the blue colour was quite cheerful. I was impressed enough to order a second reel in green.

Now to be honest, if spare spools were still available for my old DC3 (mk1) I'd have bought these as the real driver behind these purchases was the desire to carry a few extra fly lines for different situations.

I have had a few chances to fish with these reels now and I'd say they offer very good value for money. Certainly they are no Vosslers but at quarter of the price I would not expect them to be. The drag is not as progressive as I'd like, it's not exactly just "on or off" as cheap reels tend to be, but again for the price it's acceptable. If you are not worried about smooth progressive drag (and many trout anglers are not) then this is not an issue.

The reels are well made, light, have a classy, stylish look and the spools are easy and quick to swap out.

I'm not going to straight out recommend them that would not be right as I quite simply have not used them enough. All I will say is I have used a lot of reels over many decades and the Maxcatch Avid Fly Reel is at least as good as any budget reel I have tried and is probably better than most. At £51 it's hard to go wrong.





So that's it for the third edition of the new Fish Wild. Hope you enjoyed it!

As was said at the off we are still experimenting with layouts etc and nothing has been set in stone.

The 'magazine-like' facing page layout used in this issue has allowed the use of larger images that can be printed across two facing pages. We hope you like it. There are bound to be mistakes, typos etc that have been missed, we don't have a team of proof readers, so please be understanding about this.

If you have any suggestions please get in touch using the Contact Us menu on the Fish Wild website and please remember contributions of articles, photos etc are always welcome.

<https://www.fishwild.org.uk/contact-us/>

Tight Lines



New Zealand Backcountry Fly Fishing
Photo: F. Carrie