

Fish Wild

Free Fishing Magazine



Issue 2
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Winter 2021/22 - In This Edition

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Welcome to issue two of Fish Wild for January 2022. As I sit here writing this, gripped by the cold of another dreary Scottish winter, we have already passed the shortest day of the year, the point at which we turned the corner and headed into the home straight towards spring and a new fishing season. It's actually quite extraordinary just how quickly the time passes.

Like many keen trout anglers with a bit of time on their hands, in normal circumstances I might be packing my bags and heading to the southern hemisphere for a month of superb trout fishing in New Zealand. Alas in this pandemic our times 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 rod reviews through DIY tackle tips to fly fishing on remote and lonely hills lochs. As usual it is well illustrated and has an all new layout. Escape for a few hours!

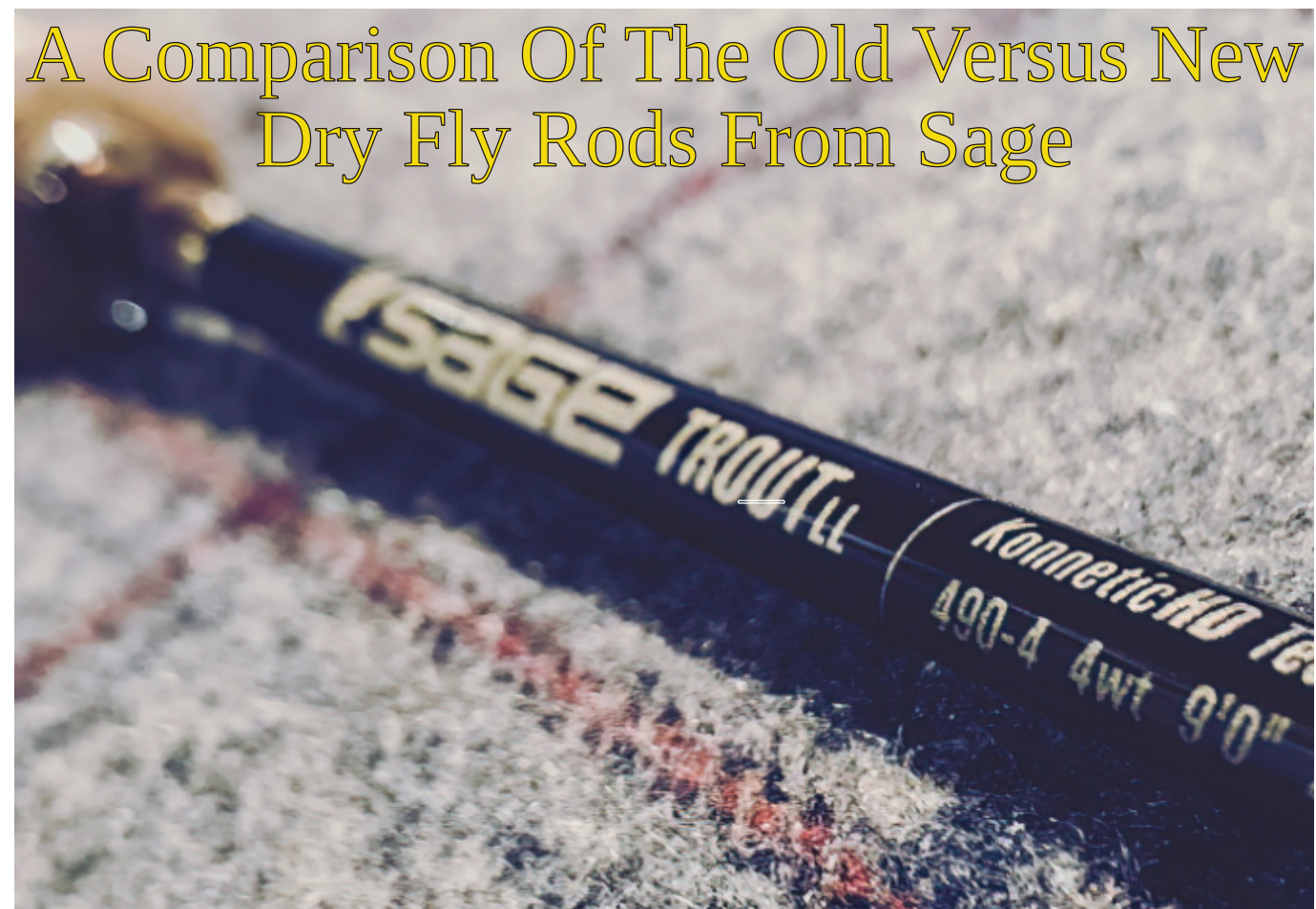
If you would like to email your comments on any aspect of Fish Wild, angling, the great outdoors or conservation please get in touch by using Contact Us in the menu at www.fishwild.org.uk. Any suitable emails will be published in a future Letters Page.

Fred Carrie
Editor

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Cover photo:
An Atlantic salmon
running the West Water,
Angus, Scotland.
F. Carrie

A Comparison Of The Old Versus New Dry Fly Rods From Sage



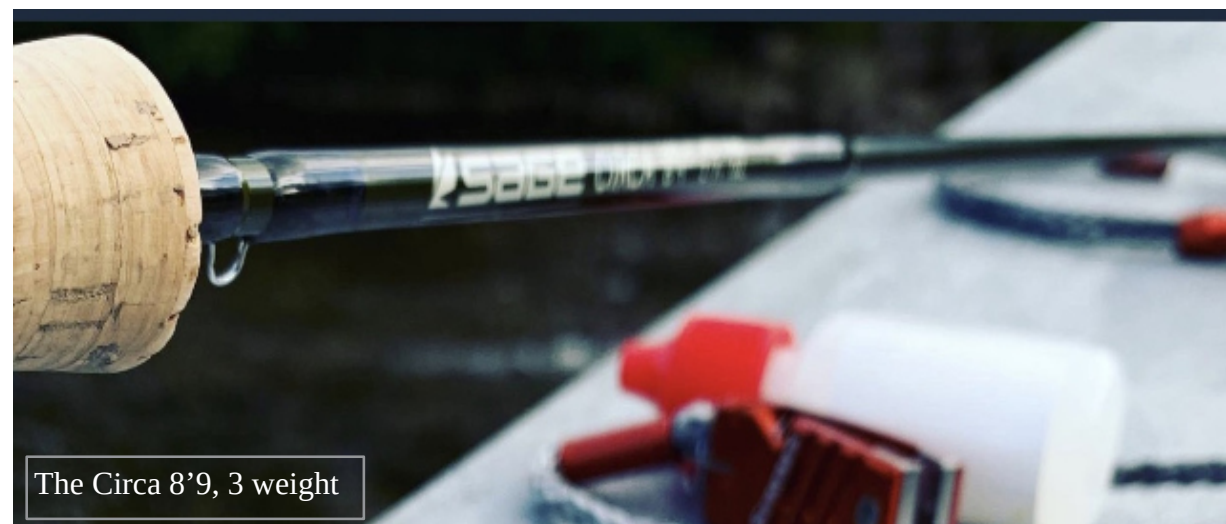
David Walker discusses his lifelong partnership with his Sage fly rods

I have been a Sage fanboy since I first started buying the usual magazines and seeing those famous writers that would not be too subtle in ensuring the Sage logo was clearly seen when their accompanying photos of fish adorned their articles. It was drummed into me that Sage rods were the must have accessory if you were serious about your fishing and I must have been unwittingly indoctrinated at an early age.

The use of good kit is something that I enjoy and enhances my experience of a good day on the river. Unfortunately, most good kit tends to come with a high-end price tag but I find once bought, that a second purchase to replace the first is usually unnecessary for quite some time although when it comes to rods, I find the opposite to be true especially when Sage release their latest design and matching sales patter.

I was long a believer in the faster the rod the better and I flirted with many of the pokers that Sage brought out from the XP to the Z-Axis, the ONE to the current X model but it wasn't long before the need for light tippets and change to barbless hooks required much slower rods and therefore, I focused on such models as the SLT, ZXL, Circa, MOD and now, the re-released Trout LL.

I have gone full circle in what I now prefer and this came about having briefly used a mate's rod on the River Tweed one spring day. I had been catching the odd riser on my then trusty 9ft 4 weight Z-Axis that was certainly well within the faster action of rods that they produced. My mate had just taken delivery of the much softer ZXL model and offering me a cast at the end of that day, I hooked a decent sized trout that bent the rod right down to the butt. The fish felt proper huge but was only around the pound mark.



The Circa 8'9, 3 weight

The rod just felt so good when playing fish and I had been missing that experience when using the faster blanks.



Excalibur

I took delivery of my own ZXL in the often-accepted dry fly rod size of 9ft, 4 weight soon after and this was my go-to rod for quite a number of seasons. My mate Robert and I describe it as 'Excalibur' and we would often joke about it when asking each other what rods we had taken out that day when travelling somewhere in the car.

The ZXL came with a half-wells handle and almost claret coloured blank with gold wrappings. A real wood reel seat and polished silver lockings completed matters. In my opinion it suited the old Rio LT lines in its true for rod weight rather than the typical heavier Rio lines that Sage associate with their rods such as the golds. A proper dry fly tool that was at home on small to medium rivers where short to medium casts were required. It allowed for light tippets down to 0.10mm. A day on the San River, Poland had me even further lighter with nylon of 0.08mm when throwing at fussy grayling who had seen everything before. I recall fish of 2lb plus being landed on said tippet with the ZXL soft enough to handle such heavy fish. Every subsequent rod is now directly compared to my ZXL and that is a very high benchmark to match never mind better. I occasionally sell rods to further fund the next model but this one will always remain in my collection.

I had a brief sojourn with the previous model, the SLT which has a huge fanbase with Sage followers. I owned this rod for a season and found it to be almost as good but the feel when playing fish wasn't the same and I put this down to some carbon fatigue given how old it was. Again, it performed well with the Rio LT line.

The next model that I tried and still own is the CIRCA. This doesn't come in 9ft sizes but rather 8'9 or 7'9. I took delivery of the former and in both 3, 4 and 5 weights. A full-wells handle that differs from the more usual half-wells and again, a real wood reel seat and polished chrome locking fittings complete the rod. The 3 weight is still in my collection and is something of a unique and bold strategy from Sage. This is the softest rod I have ever cast and is way out-with the usual offerings by this stable. So much so, that there is very little love for this model out there. I wonder if Sage would ever admit that this release failed their wider audience given how much of a true dry fly wand it is. This model, in my opinion would only truly handle dries and at short range therefore a proper specialist tool. I use mine for small stream fishing



and load this with a Rio Gold. The heavier line helps at shorter range. The feel of fish on this rod surpasses the ZXL for me but requires some considerable work when casting in a stiff breeze. What also stands out with this particular model is the slim blank at the butt of the rod, a direction that Sage seem to have gone with in future models.

The MOD – named and described as of moderate action – comes in the controversial bright green blank.



Marmite for some and especially me, I purchased this rod and immediately disliked it on the rather garish colour of blank. It looks almost luminous! However, all that being said, it cast incredibly well, again with the LT line and playing fish felt just as good as the ZXL. But the colour...wow! I couldn't see by it and with that in mind, a very heavily discounted sale to a mate who happened to like it was made and I managed to recoup some funds for another purchase. A full-wells handle again, like the CIRCA and that same thin blank complete the rod with the usual reel seat components.

The Sage Light Line was a model just before the SLT was released and was a firm favourite among anglers. This old model still holds a relatively high second-hand value but are rare to come across these days. The new release of this model, the Trout LL comes with the same thin blank, same handle and reel locking components.

On fishing, the feel and action of this new LL was somewhat different from Excalibur; the rod was

certainly stiffer – more along the butt section – but still soft enough for light tippets and barbless hooks. The feel of this butt section has taken some time to get used to. Having now used it exclusively for a full season, it has now relegated my old trusty to the back-up position. Several early spring days this season in which some truly memorable dry fly fishing was had, it has cemented its position as my new favourite. Casting and playing fish is a real joy with this rod and from that, I purchased its smaller brother in the 8'9, 3 weight size for smaller streams. I use the new Rio Intouch LT line with both these sizes and find it fits extremely well. I have tried both the Gold and Barrio GT90 lines through the rod but felt they were just a tad too heavy. The LL has continued the now default design of full wells handle, slim blank and reel seat components.



I believe that Jerry Siem has moved on from Sage rod design and is now replaced by Peter Knox. A man who seems intent on designing more in the way of actual fishing rods than casting tools. I am pleased by this change of direction as I am deep within the Sage churn of shelling out for whatever they bring out next and rods should be primarily designed with the angler in mind and not the next casting champion.

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



24 Hours At The Loch Of Storms

Fred Carrie visits a
favourite hill loch
for an overnight
camping and fishing
adventure

It was the weekend of the Wild Fishing Forum meet over by Loch Eigheach on Rannoch Moor, and facing a solo drive round trip from Aberdeenshire that would have cost me the better part of £50 for petrol I reluctantly decided to call off and fish somewhere a little closer to home and therefore a lot less expensive.

The Greens have been proven right. Make fuel super-expensive and you will drive folk off the road. Perhaps they won't be entirely happy until it's even less affordable than it was in real terms back then in summer 2008. Sadly elderly people will also freeze to death in their homes, but that doesn't appear to be a major concern.

Having spent the entire spring fishing rivers, often the Don, but mainly the Deveron, and catching some damn good fish, I fancied a change. Fly Fisherman cannot live by running water alone.

I decided on an overnight camp up at my old favourite Loch of Storms. This is a loch I try to fish a few times each year, always day trips until now. Camping up there was something I had fancied doing for a while, so no time like the present.

The dog and I left the car at about 9.30AM on Friday and arrived at the loch two hours later, totally exhausted. Me that is, not the dog. She could have gone on for miles, but then she was not carrying the 20KG + rucksack for the five KM and 400 meter climb to the loch side.

The climb featured many stops, solely for the purpose of photography of course. As ever I revelled in the alpine botany. It will tell you so much about the geology and thus the fishing prospects, if you are prepared to listen, but it will never shout at the disinterested.

20KG is a lot for an overnight stay, but once the tinned food (I really could not be bothered messing about with dried stuff), the can of beer for effective re-hydration, a hip flask of whisky for medicinal purposes and dog food are factored in the weight soon mounts up.

Sometimes finding a decent camp site close to the water can be a real problem high up in the hills. In the Eastern Highlands green = grass = wet, brown = heather = rough = lumpy = uncomfortable – but at least it's dry. I found a nice, slightly less lumpy bit on the far bank of the loch and pitched. It was a rather fine situation actually.



Top right image - A Resting Place On The Way Up

Lower right image - "Come On, What's Keeping You?"



Alpine Lady's Mantle

Butterwort



Camp Site

Soon I was set up and had lunch prepared; a packet of cuppa soup added to boiled loch water. Incidentally, for those not used to camping in the hills, it's worth spending a bit of time setting up your stove safely with some rocks. At night, or if it rains, you can cover it with an upturned pot and a rock to keep it dry. This only takes 5 minutes and can save a nasty accident or setting the hill alight in dry weather.



The gas stove I used that weekend was given to me by a friend and was the best I had used to date. Piezo igniter, fast, low profile and stable. He tells me it was bought online and was quite inexpensive. Not sure of the details, but I'm pretty certain most of the outdoor stores will offer something similar.

If you are arranging rocks when camping in wild country, please be sure to put them back where you found them when you leave. There is nothing worse than evidence of past camps. Rocks kill the vegetation below them; then, when finally moved, the ground looks like it's suffering from chickenpox and erosion may set in. In any case it just detracts from the wilderness experience you sweated and grunted to get there to enjoy.

Camp fires are the worst of all. They have "neds were here" written all over them and there are few things upset landowners more than open fires.



An Erratic On The Hilltop

Members of the Fishing Forum know many lochs like this. We tend to hold the cards detailing their whereabouts close to our chests. Envious onlookers and those not in the know sometimes accuse us of elitism. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Internet is a big place and not all fishermen who use it are conservation minded.

Most of us have witnessed the devastation that a few undesirables can cause to pristine waters. Dead fish, piles of rubbish left behind, discarded line, bait tins etc. We have no wish to add to this and try to make sure that information on sensitive wild fisheries does not get into the wrong hands. Wrong hands include those who would openly publish information on websites for profit or to attract traffic for commercial purposes. Or sometimes just plain honest to goodness idiots who don't seem to know any better and care even less.

We also live in a litigious society and to be seen to be encouraging people to venture far off the beaten track into potentially hostile terrain could leave one open and vulnerable to action if they got hurt or worse.

I have certainly experienced some unbelievable weather changes in summer up at the Loch of Storms. That's why I named it so. A few years ago, in a matter of minutes, a pleasant, warm late May afternoon changed into a maelstrom of thunder, lightening, high winds, torrential hail and sleet that laid down a thick, even coating of hard ice chilling the body and making the descent treacherous



underfoot. An inexperienced or ill equipped person could have landed in serious trouble

Anglers who guide others and especially if they take money for the services they provide should bear in mind that here in Scotland all ground above 300 meters is classed as mountain terrain (this would include parts of the upper Don in Aberdeenshire) and should have appropriate mountain leadership qualifications and insurance in place. I doubt very much if a standard fishing qualification would cover this.

But back to this fine, warm day: I was fishing with my son Martin's travel rod. An 8 foot, 7 piece Nielsen Powerflex bought on Ebay for £35! Quite fast actioned, it's a #5 weight, but it works well with a #4 if you are even an average caster. A really lovely rod for the money that I

would recommend if you can still get one! With a tiny Vosseler RC2 reel and a DT #4 floater it was a feather-light combination and a delight to fish with.

There was a fair old wind blowing, but warm enough, so I started with wet fly. The wind died down a touch and one or two fish were now showing. I changed to dries and stuck with

them for the rest of the trip. I soon had a few fish on f-flies but they were small. In fact the biggest fish I had on Friday was only about 10 inches. I had lots of them.

This was very odd as fewer and bigger fish have, in my past experience, been the order of the day at this loch. Just like another loch I could mention, but won't, it looks like there must have been a very successful spawning a few years earlier and a big increase in the numbers of fish.

Too many fish? Not enough angling pressure? Let's git a' killin'? Well no. Even when the fish were all bigger this loch suffered no angling pressure at all. In nature things change, they run in cycles. Leave them alone I say and nature will sort it out. By all means kill fish to eat, but let's not be tempted to

play God "for the good of the loch". Fish don't swim around worrying about how big they are. That's my take on it anyway.

I stopped around 5.30 PM heated a few tins and ate. The loch was now dead, so I went for a walk along a few of the surrounding hill ridges. These rounded hills are not high, perhaps up to 850M, but they have some odd, huge rocks balanced on their rounded tops. Geologists call them erratics, they were dumped there by glaciers.

The walk was pleasant, giving a new perspective on the loch and the surrounding area. Nature is a wonderful thing and taking time out to enjoy it just adds to the overall quality of the fishing experience.

After an hour or so I was back at the tent and still no fish showing. Time to chill out with a beer and a dram. The weather had been wonderful, quite hot during the day and still warm in the evening. Wild camping in the eastern highlands in early June very often offers the best weather of the year and even after a mild winter it's still too early for midges and clegs. Believe me that makes a heck of a difference.

Time for another dram. Still nothing happening OK, let's have another dram. A fish rose, and another. Look! There's another! By the rise forms it looks like they are feeding on buzzers. Sod it, time for another dram! I'm way too chilled out now and catching fish seems to have lost some of its urgency. Not that it's ever the only or even the first consideration, there's more to fishing than catching fish. If catching fish is all that matters, best to forget about places like this and go to one of your local stocked rainbow trout ponds.



Up At The Erratic

By 9.30 PM, I was dead on my feet. I clambered into the sleeping bag for 10 hours.....I guess I'm not as young as I once was! Or was it the drams? The dog behaved impeccably in the small one man tent. I was however glad she was a small Border Collie and not a Great Dane.

I was up at 7.30 AM-ish. A good breakfast was shared with my fishing pal. The morning was beautiful. Rings from rising trout dimpled the flat calm loch. It was an idyllic scene, so rare in cold windy Scotland.

I struck camp, partly packed and was fishing by 9.00AM.

I took a few slightly bigger fish. on a CDC and Elk, then one just over a pound on a big black Klinkhamer. The fishing was steady, but never easy. The calm conditions called for care. These fish fought like only Loch of Storms fish can. Unbelievable. Pound for pound these are the hardest fighting trout I know by a long chalk.

By 1.00 PM it was windy, bright, sunny and roasting hot. I had lunch, finished packing and left. I took one or two photos on the way back to the car. It took just over an hour.

The dog was attacked by a pair of lapwings. I guess she looked too much like a fox.

Not a bad 24 hours at The Loch Of Storms.

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.

A Diet Of Worms?



A Sideways Look At The UK Carp Scene By Dave Felce

“Carping without fly is ambition without intelligence” (with apologies to Salvador Dali)

Hey, you know I really have no problems with people using bait. It's their choice and if they're happy with it, that's fine by me. However, as Steve Yeomans of Midlands Fly Fishing said back in 2000, 'Fly rodding for carp is not the same as fly fishing for carp' and I'd generally go along with this. Dom Garnett describes the baiting approach as a 'gateway drug', bringing people into the fascinating world of fly fishing. I kinda' like that.

I've been accused of being both elitist and purist, and attracted a fair degree of criticism for it. One guy, who was actually pretty nasty, wrote to tell me that, 'There are no rules in fishing. They're there for you to make up'. Well, that's not strictly true, certainly as far as angling is concerned. The guy in question is a fishery manager and I don't think he'd be too impressed if I turned up with a

compound bow (bow fishing is regarded as a legitimate sport in many parts of the world) and I don't think many trout fisheries would be very happy if you turned up with a bucket of dog biscuits and pellets to 'get 'em on the feed' before fishing with a deer hair pellet fly?

My main problem with the baiting approach is the attitude that it's the best or the only way to do things. This way of thinking has been demonstrated to be wrong many, many times by both myself and literally thousands of folks all over the world. Strangely it's only the UK that seems to regard chumming as an acceptable fly fishing method (but only for carp), and its exponents are especially blinkered and defensive of it. I'm anti dicta of all kinds and it's the attitude that annoys me, not the methods used. I don't use them myself, but that's my personal choice and

it's how I derive the greatest pleasure & satisfaction from my fishing. I'll freely admit that I place a far higher value on a fish that's been stalked and targeted in the wild, than a stocked fish induced to feed with bait, not the least because the degree of difficulty is far higher. If that makes me elitist or purist in some folks eyes, then so be it. The closed minds and attitudes are actually coming from other anglers, as you'll see from the following examples:

When I first set up the Facebook Carp Champions group we had a long running debate with a faction of UK anglers who were adamant that non-baiting methods wouldn't work for 'their' carp. We responded by posting a series of photos and articles that showed they would. It got so farcical that one guy went so far as to state, 'It might work in the rest of the country, but I can assure you it won't work in Kent!' Needless to say we found him a photo of a carp caught on a lure from Kent, the upshot of which was that he flounced off, saying, 'You're obviously convinced that your opinion is the only correct one....' or words to that effect. Uh huh..... ! (rolls eyes)

Some anglers refuse to believe that carp are predatory and also believe that they feed primarily by smell, they have poor eyesight etc, etc. And many authors and publications have promoted these prejudices; once again, particularly in the UK. Almost without exception the authors are sponsored by bait companies or are repeating information generated by them. One book, purporting to be about the science of carp fishing, misinterprets genuine scientific data to confirm what the bait companies want you to hear, stating, amongst other falsehoods, that, 'Feeding on fish must be difficult for the carp due to the prey's escape movements' and, 'Large, fast, struggling prey can not be effectively processed'. Yet the independent scientific data published alongside this text actually demonstrates that carp are capable of ingesting prey up to 4% of their own length in diameter. Think about this for a moment; A 1 metre carp is thus able to swallow a prey object up to 4cm in diameter..... That's a pretty decent sized organism.

Similarly, one highly accomplished carp angler has recently been promoting a theory that carp are capable of determining which foodstuffs contain the best ingredients (chemicals) to promote their optimum growth, and will select those foods in preference to any other. However, the subtitle of this book is, 'A Hypothesis', which kinda' says it all.... In some respects of course, observation and experience do actually bear this hypothesis out, but not in the way the author would have you believe. For sure, any regular

observer of wild carp will tell you that they'll often take bait fish or a big, juicy crayfish in preference to other foods. Even the stocked fisheries are aware of this. More than one has organised netting sessions to rid their lakes of silver fish (small fish and fry) which the carp were targeting to the extent of avoiding to the baits of the anglers. You couldn't make it up..... Of course, from the carp's point of view this is all highly understandable. Given the choice of a nice grilled seabass or a lobster thermidor, would you really take a fish- flavoured Quorn burger in preference? Well, some folks might. But hopefully you get my point.

Some of the fly fishing magazines haven't exactly helped in this regard. You would have thought that promoting any kind of fly fishing, especially for a hard-fighting, relatively accessible 'new' species would be in their best interests, especially where folks might be persuaded to buy some new tackle (thus keeping the advertisers happy) or tie some different fly patterns? But one leading title has barely covered the subject at all, and when it has it's almost as if fly fishing for carp is a novelty item, not quite as worthy as fishing for other, more 'serious' species such as trout or salmon. Almost invariably UK magazine coverage has concentrated on the chummed-up, pellet fly approach. To return to my dislike of dicta, one quite famous writer described his 'new' imitation bread fly saying, 'To go fly fishing for carp you first have to chum them up!'. You almost wonder whether there's an unwritten agenda to denigrate the activity and alienate the more 'traditional' fly-fishers who wouldn't be seen dead using bait? And before you write this off as some weird conspiracy theory, consider this: the publisher of the magazine referred to earlier is also the publisher of two premium carp titles; again, heavily subsidised by the advertising of bait suppliers. Go figure....

As to which method is 'best', for the open-minded angler the jury is not so much out, as dismissed and the trial abandoned, as far as I'm concerned. In any given situation baiting, chumming or stalking could all produce the best results. Or no results at all. I was once having an especially lean time of things, fishing a narrow, overgrown river in the depths of rural Spain. The carp were resolutely ignoring anything I threw at them, cruising up and down a roughly 200m stretch, in and out of the reeds, under the tree branches... I'd pretty much gone through the box, including terrestrial patterns, fry imitations and the various weighted head-standers and crustacean patterns that have become the staples of the modern carp fisher. In sheer desperation I decided to sacrifice my lunch and made a loose bread paste from a

couple of bread rolls. 'If you can't beat 'em.....', was pretty much my thinking. Surely a few free offerings would attract the carp towards me and 'get 'em on the feed'? Not a bit of it. The fish ignored the lumps of paste on the bottom and even swam through the clouds of particles tumbling through the water column from the flakes of bread on the surface, completely oblivious to the attractions of the new food source. Not once did they even pause or alter their paths. All I did succeed in doing was spooking a couple of cruisers when I plopped some bread right in front of them. They simply didn't recognise the bread as potential food. Maybe they just weren't that hungry? Maybe so, but I eventually managed to tempt one with a well placed San Juan worm pattern, just upstream of where I'd baited. However, I don't doubt for a moment that a determined bait angler could have achieved much the same result with a genuine stalking approach, and an open-minded attitude to what constitutes 'bait'.

My buddy (whom we'll call Bruce; not his real name, for reasons that will become apparent) runs a Euro-style (bait, for the uninitiated) carp guiding business in the Spanish outback. His clients regularly catch 20kg fish and a number of 30kg+ specimens have been landed. It was therefore not an especially great surprise when he was approached by a well known group of UK carp experts to assist them in the making of an episode for their latest TV series.

They arrived with a mountain of gear, which is usual for these kinds of productions, and literally tens of kilos (80, to be precise) of commercial bait, 'boilies', contrary to Bruce's advice prior to their trip. 'Well, you won't be needing that lot, for starters.....', remarked Bruce.

'No, no, no! We're the experts; these methods are tried and tested. We know they work. You just put us on the fish and leave the tactics to us,' said the Crew.

Sure enough, the 'experts' deposited carpets of boilies, set up their cameras and sat back in their bivvies, whilst Bruce shook his head. They were the clients, after all. Two days passed, with a hardly any fish to show for their efforts. They piled in yet more bait, but time for filming was running short and they still hadn't achieved their objective of catching huge, wild carp in a remote Spanish paradise. Eventually, in frustration and with a growing sense of panic, they turned to their guide for advice.

'It works like this,' explains Bruce. 'Carpet baiting might work on commercial fisheries where the

fish are dialled in to processed baits, but it doesn't work here.... These are wild carp that have an abundant and highly nutritious natural food supply, namely clams and big crayfish. They don't normally eat boilies, but being naturally inquisitive they can be persuaded to try something that's out of the ordinary as they cruise past.'

Bruce's method is to use very small, highly concentrated piles of boilies, maybe around a dozen 'free offerings', with the hook bait placed right alongside. Often he'll use brightly coloured baits to get them to stand out more. The thinking is that passing carp will be attracted by something unusual and maybe sample it, picking up the hook-bait in the process. And it works! He goes on to say, 'The alternative approach of providing a huge amount of free food is actually counter-productive, as it lessens the chances of the fish finding the baited hook before they move on. The hook-bait is only one of literally hundreds of food items out there, so it's much more of a lottery.'

Bruce likens this behaviour to being at a dinner banquet. 'You might circulate around the bowls of nuts and plates of canapes, and occasionally sample one that catches your eye; but you're hardly likely to stand there and scoff the lot when you know you've got a sumptuous main course to look forward to!'

The film crew switched their tactics and duly got their footage in the can. You can see their results on the television and it's a cracking programme. There are a couple of lessons in here, and I'm quite certain you're capable of working them out for yourself.

I work really hard in the pursuit of truly huge fish with my fly gear. My smallest carp for 2019? 8.5 kg. Think about that for a mo'.. For various reasons I had fairly limited opportunities for fishing last year, but a question from a very experienced carp angler prompted me to do a quick review. The 'scores on the doors' make interesting reading:

15 days fishing, 13 carp caught.

Biggest 15.5 kg, smallest 8.5 kg. Average 10.5 kg.

A couple of blank days amongst those, a couple chasing bass, and so on. All on the fly, wild, stalked and sight-fished. No chumming, no deer hair pellet imitations.

As my correspondent said, “That's a cracking average Dave, and one that most carp anglers who fish standard carp tactics will envy!”

What the majority of carp fishers seem oblivious to is the fact that carp have been around considerably longer than commercial boilies (or indeed fishermen) and are actually quite happy to munch away on natural food-stuffs. More than happy, in fact, as we've seen above. Some of the older literature picks up on this fact, stating that carp have to be educated to recognise modern particulate baits over their natural foods. Hardly any suggest trying to identify what natural items the carp may be feeding on and trying to match them.

One of the reasons that natural baits have fallen out of favour with the bait fraternity (but not with the carp!) is that it's very difficult to attach them and present them using standard coarse equipment. Even free-lining something relatively large like a grasshopper, for instance, requires incredible skill and patience. Not to mention a complete absence of wind. But not for us! Presenting an imitation of a single nymph or chironomid larva to a potentially feeding fish is what we do all the time. It's what our equipment is designed to do. We're actually rather good at it.

Note that I'm not suggesting that fly fishing is superior to “coarse” fishing as a method, just that often it can be at least as productive, and sometimes more so. The folks who actively stalk carp with coarse gear are essentially applying the same methods of observation and approach as the fly-fisherman. It's just as skillful and an equally valid approach. I just happen to prefer fly fishing and I'm well aware that on occasion I might be handicapping myself. I'm also well aware that chumming for carp, especially on commercial fisheries, is an enjoyable and viable approach; even with a fly rod. I'm not convinced that it's necessary, but each to their own as I said earlier.

Take a look at the American scene, for instance, and it's a very different affair. Not only have they actively embraced the carp (and many other fish for that matter) as a suitable target for their fly rods; they've adopted the same principles of observation, imitation and presentation of food items that underpin the fly-fisher's approach. Have a look at the modern fly patterns for carp, have a read of the problems/behaviours they're trying to reconcile and you'll see what I mean. In

a modern world where fly-fishing in particular is increasingly seen as archaic and out-moded, these folks are showing that it's quite the opposite; a progressive, logical and effective method for capturing a wary, intelligent and powerful fish.

And it's fun, too!

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.

Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun

Fred Carrie takes a trip into The Angus Glens





Autumn is one of my favourite times of year; it's bitter sweet in many ways, holding a threat of the coming winter, but some of the mist effects at this time are unbeatable. As I crossed from Donside into Deeside the inversion fog over The Dee looked great.

Apart from getting temporarily lost in the labyrinth of sign-post-free single track roads between Edzell and Kirriemuir (birthplace of Peter Pan or Bon Scott of ACDC – I can't remember which) the journey went smoothly enough and I met Joe and Alan outside the Glen Clova Hotel just after 9.00AM. Memory is at best a fickle guide, but I made it.

By this time it was getting hot so we set off uphill straight away.

The ascent is pretty brutal 1300 feet straight up. The heat did not help, but it was a stiffer climb than I remembered. The first ½ in particular is very

surprisingly, the name of this loch has nothing to do with Scotland's less than healthy relationship with alcohol but is, according to Dr Adam Watson, a corruption of the Gaelic - Loch Branduidh - the raven-black loch.

All week the forecast had been promising a warm sunny day on Sunday. Sun! Now wouldn't that be nice after what had



Deeside Inversion

been a dreadful summer!

Sunday dawned cool and sunny – no – in fact it was cold and sunny. When I stepped into the car at 7.30AM it was telling me the air temperature was 3 deg and the ice warning was flashing. But despite this I quickly set the controls for the heart of the promised sun and we were off.

steep in places, although the £200 per meter footpath, complete with stairs, certainly makes it easier.

By Scottish standards these hills are fertile. The rock here is base-rich and that can be seen in the vegetation. Lots of lush green grass and not just the usual endless rough heather moorland. To the observant with even a little botanical



A Well Prepared Path

knowledge this should scream 'fishing potential'. Alkaline rock means sweeter water, richer vegetation and more invertebrates. This is all good for fish.

The surrounding corries and cliffs are well known for their calciphile alpine flora and indeed were the stomping grounds of pioneering botanists like George Don of Forfar who made discoveries (often conversational) of plants no one, at the time, believed grew outside of the European Alps. As a bit of a layman, he was much criticised by the scholars of the day who seemed to delight in casting doubt on his discoveries, many of which were subsequently re-discovered and Don vindicated. The botanical community seems to have mirrored much of the stubbornness seen in the fly fishing world over past years.

On a more general note please remember to respect and be wary of this environment. The danger of the Scottish hills is often their modest height compared to the great ranges of the world. A glance at the map can suggest an easy walk but

Soon we arrived at the loch. It was as stunning a setting as I remembered it.

There were a fair number of heather fly around and fish were rising. All the best fish were rising well out on the drop-off between the wide shallows and the deeper water. Waders however would not be a good idea up here. True they might be useful at the shallower west end, but away from there they would be dangerous. Anyway, it was just too far to cast. Even Steve Rajeff would have struggled and in any case with that amount of line on the water



A Long Climb

the weather up there can be as violent as one might find in the Arctic and can change rapidly and unexpectedly. These hill should always be respected. There have been many deaths from exposure and falls in this area.

About ½ way round the corrie rim there is a memorial to a young Royal Marine from Arbroath who died up here in 2014 having been overcome by atrocious weather. Twenty years old, a real tragedy for any family to lose one so young. Please take care and never go unprepared.

any kind of control over hook ups is pretty much random at best. If going to Loch Brandy and you want better fish, you could take a float tube, but that has its own set of problems and risks not least being the requirement to lug the damn thing 1300 feet uphill!

Anyway, it was still OK and Joe quickly got the first fish. A wee greenish thing.

Alan and Joe both had a few small fish and I still had to get on the board, so I took off my go-to huge terrestrial and replaced it with a very small claret hopper. I had 4 fish in 4

Please excuse the blatant Pink Floyd plagiarism, but it just seemed to fit this day so well.

I'd really been looking forward to this trip up to Loch Brandy in The Angus Glens, I think the last time I was up there was during the long hot summer of 1976 and I was swimming rather than fishing. I mean, fishing was just something we cool dudes didn't do back then, that was for kids and old guys, and it sure didn't impress the ladies. Mercifully we mostly get over that stage of life, sometimes even unscathed. One day it dawns on us that trout are a lot less problematic than romance and besides it's been a hell of long time since I could ever claim to be a cool dude.

Now normally when writing or filming matters fishing related I don't mention the name of the loch or stream, but Loch Brandy is so well known it just seems farcical to try to hide it. The loch and surrounding hills are very popular with walkers, picnickers and the like and although I've yet to come across an angler up there, to misquote Lillian Beckwith, Some Hills Is Not Lonely.

Now, before I start,



A Wee Greenish Thing

loch but they are not in the shallow water, not on days of bright sun anyway. The water is astonishingly clear, the banks high and better fish in these shallows will see you and clear off long before you see them. I have seen this in New Zealand a thousand times. Scottish trout are not any different. They are not all small, it may just be you have chased the bigger members of the population away without realising it.

I did manage one nice fish on the wee claret hopper in a perfect ripple. It had not seen

casts, this quickly increased to 12 then I stopped counting.

I decided to look for deeper water within my casting and control range and set off for the south bank. The views were fine.

Along that bank I caught a few more wee greenish things. Now away from the west bank the terrain gets a bit rough and the water is deep close in. You are also right below some impressive cliffs and there was evidence of some pretty lethal landslides, so be careful out there, wild fishing in wild country can be a bit wild!



A Better Fish

There are better fish in this

me. Not a monster, but certainly the biggest I have caught on Lochs Brandy or Wharral (just over the hill) and well above the average of the fish normally caught there.

There was the occasional upwing fly seen, like this one, a claret dun spinner perhaps?

Sadly by early afternoon the cloud thickened a bit and the wind got up, limiting the rise, while not killing it off completely.

We had more fish, but nothing



Claret Spinner?

of note, packing up just before 4.00 PM.

Loch Brandy is a nice place, but it can be busy. Not busy with anglers, but a lot of walkers pass through. Lots of day trippers in trainers and t-shirts go up for a look, but appear to confine themselves to the arrival point. 50 paces takes you away and out of sight of them.

I really enjoyed the day and will go back if I can make it up the hill again.

Finally a quick mention of neighbouring Loch Wharral.

I first fished Loch Wharral in the 1970s. Back then it was remote, unspoiled and could only be reached by a hard slog up the trackless hillside. Sadly all that has changed. The estate has bulldozed a new rough

road up the hill right to the loch side and erected a garish building that might fit in better on a motorway construction site. To each his own of course, but in my opinion this has

trashed the area. Difficult access protects wildness! Could this be the same place where I

climbed and skied over Ben Tirran back in the 1970s? Where I fished with old Donald, from Meigle, who first

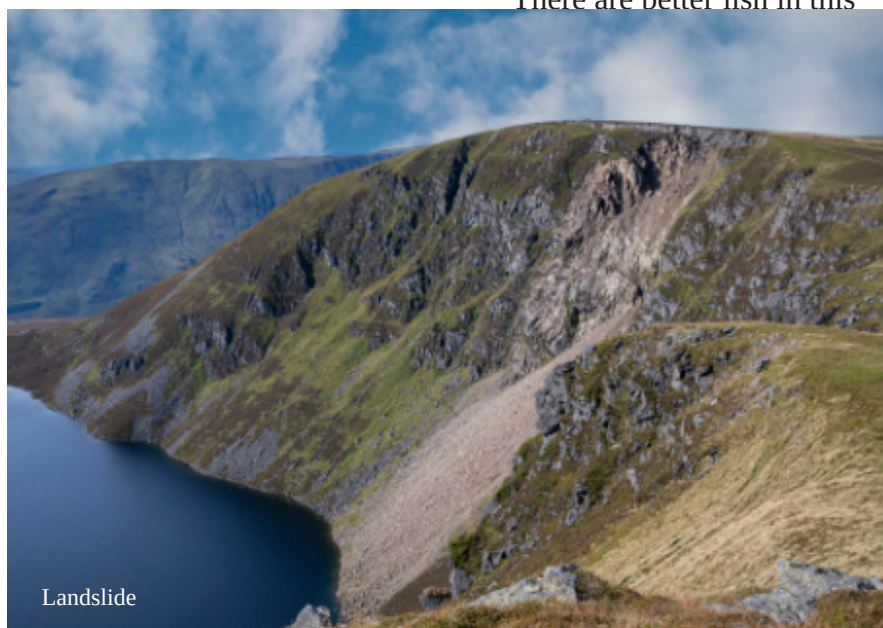
of its charm. Old Donald must be spinning in his grave.

For fishing permission one could enquire at the Glen Clova Hotel for guidance. They also offer good food, rather fine real ale, and indeed tea, coffee and scones for us ex-cool-dudes. Phone: 01575 550350.



Joe

took me there and who had fished there since he was a boy? It certainly has lost much



Landslide



Loch Wharral

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.

Gallery

Fishing, nature and outdoor images sent in by readers



The North Esk High In Glen Esk
One of Scotland's best trout and salmon
rivers
Photo: Fred Carrie



Red Kite
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



Dave West-Beale About To ‘Go In’ At The Infamous Pink Punters
Photo: Dave Felce



Pollack On The Rocks
Photo: Dave Felce



Black Throated Driver On A Scottish Loch
Photo: Adam Caird



The Salmon Run
Photo: Adam Caird



Osprey With Trout, Aviemore Scotland
Photo: Charlie Davidson



Puffins
Photos: Charlie Davidson



All Men Dream But Not Equally
Photo: Dave Felce



Crested Tit, Cairngorms Scotland
Photo: Ron Mitchell



Otter, River Don, Scotland
Photo: Ron Mitchell



Snow Bunting, Cairngorms Scotland
Photo: Ron Mitchell

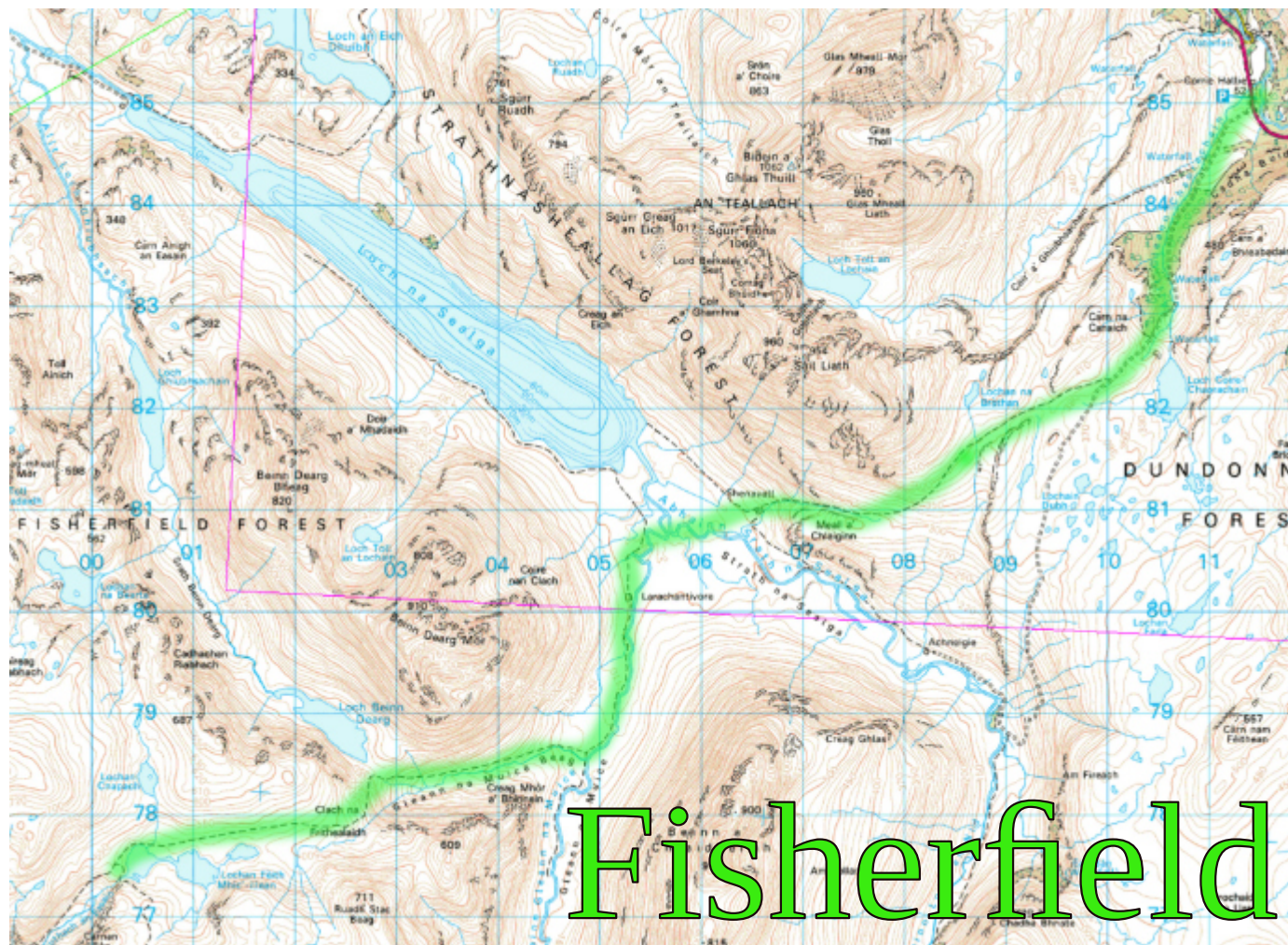
Photographers In This Issue

‘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>

Charlie Davidson lives in Peterhead, Scotland. Charlie is a well travelled and skilled photographer whose main interests are landscape and wildlife work. Charlie is a Nikon shooter and his work can be viewed on his Instagram page here: https://www.instagram.com/charlie_davidson_photography/

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>



Sandy Birrell fishes Scotland's last great wilderness

Fisherfield Forest lies to the North of Loch Maree in Wester Ross. If you look at the map, it is the area behind An Teallach ("The Forge"), and it's about as wild and remote as you can get in Scotland.

The approximated route is shaded green on the map.

It was our usual start to a trip: up at 4:30 AM, work till one, get everything ready and into the car. A six hour drive got us to the Corrie Hallie lay-by, just south of Dundonnell, at about ten o'clock just as the light was going, so we decided to sleep and start walking in next morning. After an uncomfortable night on the



An Teallach

reclined front seats of the car I woke just as the grey light of dawn was creeping over the horizon. I eased myself upright and looking out of the side window I was amazed to see a pair of partridge scrabbling about in the loose gravel just beside the door. I watched them till they wandered out of sight, it was the first time I had ever seen partridge in the wild.

I woke George. We had a quick snack, got our gear together, boots on, rucksacks on our backs and crossed

the road to the start of the path; it was about 5am. Not long into the walk it started to rain, we

stopped long enough to put on waterproofs and carried on.

At first it's a long steady climb through trees on a good landrover track but before long you reach the first real climb. We were still on the track, but it was a killer. We soon got into our stride though and the ground just fell away behind us. We came to a fork in the track where we turned right; this took us over the end, and round the back of, An Teallach with magnificent views of the glens and mountains all round us. The path isn't too bad until it follows a burn down a deep cut in the hillside and before long we had to do a bit of scrambling. Not easy with a rod in your hand. It wasn't long before we saw Shenavall bothy bellow us. The bothy and surrounds were quite busy with climbers and walkers so we stopped long enough for a bite to eat and a chat.

Did I mention it rained?



Waiting For The River To Drop

It wasn't raining when we were at the bothy, so after a pleasant interlude we set off down and across Strath na Sealga. We crossed the Abhainn Strath na Sealga without too much bother then crossed the marshy ground between it and Abhainn Gleann na Muice, where we looked for a place to cross. The first place we looked at we thought was a bit too deep; we walked down to a riffle that looked alright but it too was deeper than it looked, and wider. We walked back up to the first spot and it looked even deeper than ten minutes ago. The river was rising, and rising fast. It must have been raining hard farther up the glen to cause that rate of rise.

It took two hours for the river, which was in spate, to drop far

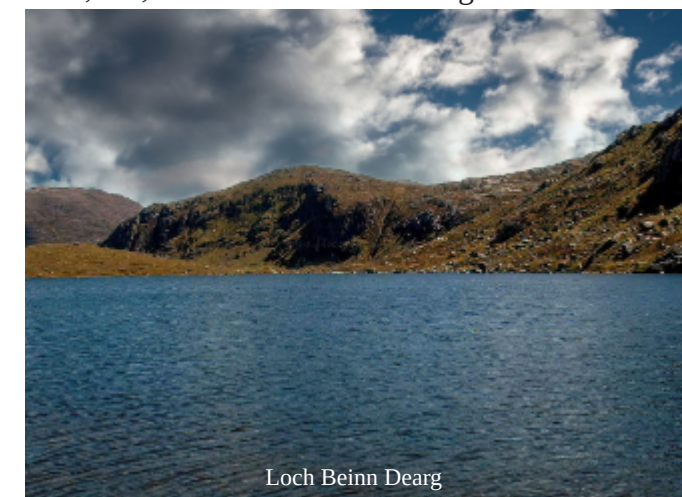
enough for us to ford it, but I didn't waste my time. I had a few casts and caught the first brown trout of the trip, all of 2inches. Once across we started the next climb, a long slow trudge of six hundred feet up the side of Gleann na Muice Beag. As we reached the top we could see the path going on up for another six hundred feet, so we decided to call it a day. We camped at Loch Beinn Dearg, knackered after a ten hour walk in.

It was still raining.

After a night of howling gales and torrential rain the tents were still up and dry inside. We decided to fish Loch Beinn Dearg, as it was closest. We started to fish down the loch from the tents, but, as the wind was blowing in our faces



Camp



Loch Beinn Dearg



First Trout!

we decided to walk down and fish back up. All the time we were fishing we never saw a fish rise. Eventually I rose, and after it jumped a few times, lost one on the iron blue dun.. George finally landed one on a floating hill loch nymph. Both



Looking West Over Lochan Feith Mhic'-illean

were 6oz bars of silver. It was very hard fishing.

Did I mention the strong winds and rain? Temp 10°C.

The next day, as if we hadn't done enough climbing, we headed up to Lochan Feith Mhic'-illean. There is a good stalker's path all the way, and after the first bit, six hundred feet in the first half mile, it is reasonably flat for the next two.

This loch is actually three lochs strung in a line east to west. We fished the western loch right down at the west end and worked our way round the north shore. The casting is quite easy as the hills are well back from the shore and there are some nice sandy beaches. I fished my usual combination: floating line, an intermediate braided leader, and a Maxima Chameleon cast with three flies. I rose two, and lost one. George caught two, 8oz and 1¼lbs.

We then moved up to the middle loch. This looked better. There were fish rising here. I fished where the burn between the two lochs runs out, and worked my way round this shore to the reeds.

I missed five on all three flies. I watched one head and tail to the floating nymph. George lost one.

It was still windy and raining but beginning to clear. Temp 8°C.

Day four and it was sunny with showers this morning, the wind was also lighter. We climbed back up to fish the middle loch of Mhic'-illean. We started at the west end and round the south shore to the reeds. The fish were in a good mood today and were rising now and again just to let us know they were still there. George was soon into a fish and I went to watch as he brought it in, or at least he tried to. The fish wasn't having any of it and it took him quite a while

to bring it in and release it. It was a nice fish of around a pound. I worked my way round fishing behind him but he was soon off into the distance following more rising fish. I picked up a few fish



George Fishing Loch Cnapach

on the way. I even caught one in the middle of a heavy hail shower, it head and tailed right over the dry fly.

The sun was beginning to drop below the surrounding hills as we reached the far end of the loch. At night the fish were rising all over the loch, in a flat calm, but we still managed a few. George found that some of them were taking at

the extreme range of his cast and others were taking the wet flies as if they were dries, splashing and head and tailing to them. By that time George had returned seven fish ½lb - 1½lbs, and I had six fish ½lb - 1¼lbs. My fish were caught on floating nymph, dry fly, iron blue dun, hill loch nymph and George even had one on a



Sandy Fishing Loch Cnapach

carrot fly. These fish fought way above their weight giving a good fight even on our ten foot rods. The only naturals we saw of note were some olive spinners. Temp 6°C.

Day five. It was bright sun all day although there was a cold west wind, and it didn't start raining till we went to bed.

Having decided on another rest day we fished Loch Beinn Dearg again. We fished all round the loch this time but saw nothing move all day. Finally I caught one at ½lb; it head and tailed to the dry fly then took the hill loch nymph. George rose and missed one, and that was it. It looks to me as if this is a late loch as the other lochs were fishing well. Temp 10°C.

Day six. We went up the hill again today but this time we fished Lochan Cnapach. This small loch is in the hills to the North of Mhic'-illean, an easy climb for a change. When we arrived we dropped the rucksacks and I started fishing in the first bay, George deciding to fish farther round. There was nothing moving but then I noticed one or two fish just breaking the surface. I covered them and after missing one or two managed to get one.

We fished right round the loch. I missed three caught two, 6oz and ½lb, on the west side. George missed three, caught one 4oz. We saw

fish but didn't catch any on the east side. Dry fly, suspender nymph, hill loch nymph and iron blue dun were my successful flies.

We moved down to Lochan Mhic'-illean and had lunch. We fished the west end again but this time we fished round the south shore. I caught and

returned two at ½lb; George caught one of 1lb. At the end of the loch we moved up to the middle loch. The fish were obliging enough, still rising. I missed one, and George caught one at 1¼lbs. By the time we had to leave I had missed a few and returned two at ½lb, George had missed a half dozen more.

It was sunny all day but the temperature dropped to 2°C during the night. Temp. 10°C.

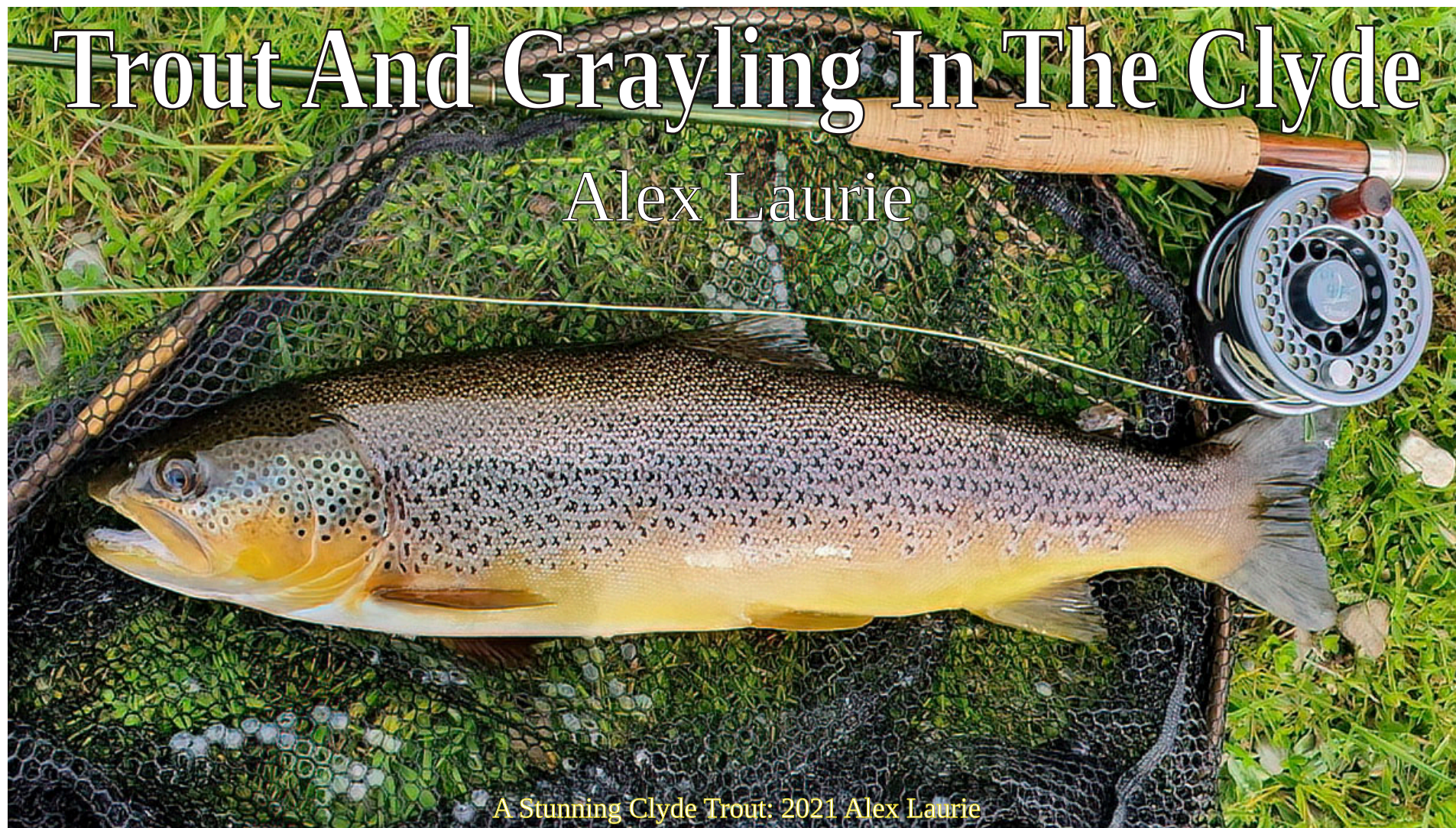
Day seven. Pack up time. The walk out was a lot easier than the walk in as most of it was down hill! We managed to do it in just over six hours, stopping a couple of times for something to eat and

drink, and it didn't rain so no hold-ups at the river crossing.

The trip was certainly worth it. The fish were well mended after the winter and fought way above their weight. The walk in was hard, 8.5 Miles and over 2000 feet of ascent, with a 20 kilo rucksack, but once there the scenery was breathtaking.

I would certainly go back, I don't know about George though - these young ones have no staying power!

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.



A Stunning Clyde Trout: 2021 Alex Laurie

Although there are trout and grayling within Glasgow's city boundary, it is only from Motherwell upstream that the river really appeals to the fly fisherman.

Not that the Clyde is exclusively reserved for the man who fishes "the flee". The Clyde fisher, historically speaking, has been a man who uses "stick bait" or cased caddis larva, as well as the spun natural minnow or maybe the "bairdy" or stone loach. The nymph of the stonefly, or "the gadger", is another famed Clyde natural bait.

The old Clyde fishers were masters at tying their "flees" sparsely on small hooks. Trademarks of



Clyde Style Flies

the Clyde style of wet fly include the unusual upright wing cocked at almost 90 degrees to the

body. Hackles were very sparse, no more than one or two turns. Colours, too, were subtle and generally subdued, in keeping with the natural insects they were intended to represent. Pearsall's "Gossamer" silk was the tying silk of choice, the thicker "Naples" thread being too thick on the size 16 hooks used as standard on most of the patterns.

The casts were of horsehair and gut and could accommodate as many as five or six flies! I get quite enough tangles with the two flies I prefer to use when fishing wet flies!

Grayling

Once upon a time the river held only brown trout in the upper reaches. In 1858 however, 160 young grayling were released after having been held for several months in the old stock pond at Abington. These thrived and the grayling fishing on the upper reaches was, at one time, excellent. These days the upper reaches seem to hold fewer but bigger grayling. During May 2006 a huge fish of 4lbs was reported from the Crawford area. This was obviously exceptional, but there is a fair chance of landing a two pounder, anywhere from Motherwell to the headwaters. There definitely

seem to be more grayling in the lower reaches these days though.

During the winter I used to love trotting a float using my old Aerial centrepin reel. These days I prefer to fish nymphs for the grayling. Although the Czech nymph method of fishing just a couple of feet of line out of the tip ring works in some runs, I prefer to use a yarn indicator or a Fish Pimp. Using one or two weighted nymphs and a shortish leader of around 9 to 12 feet, this set up can be fished at short to long distance and I think is more versatile than the short line Czech nymphing method. I use a #6 line for ease of casting when I know I will be using the deep nymph.

By using line-mending techniques like stack mending, the indicator can be made to run drag free like a float, which is partly what it is in this method. This deep nymphing method is also how I fish for trout at the start of the season when nothing is showing at the surface.

Trout

When the trout start to show an interest in the first hatches of large dark olives at the beginning of the season, I will usually switch to dry fly. This is normally an F Fly with a flexifloss body or more recently an F Fly variant which is basically the same fly but tied using snowshoe hare fur rather than cul de canard, which can get gunged up with trout slime. Then again, this is a rare occurrence at the start of the season, unfortunately. Another fly, which I have been doing pretty well with, is a small, olive-bodied elk hair caddis. For emergers, I use small Klinkhamers or Bob Wyatt's Snowshoe Hare Emerger, which is the same fly as his Deer Hair Emerger, only tied using snowshoe hare instead of deer hair.

Next main event is usually the march brown hatch, the bulk of which happens during April and peters out during early May. This usually provokes a short but furious rise. It is easy to get conned into thinking the trout are taking the duns. The splashy nature of the rises though is a give away that the trout are rocketing about here and there to take the nymphs just sub surface. For every trout taking duns there are many more targeting the nymphs. I, of course, get conned every year and fish dries when I should be fishing wets. Next year I intend fishing wet flies like the Partridge and Yellow and March Brown Spider as a first line of attack. This makes more sense when you consider that the nymphs can rise to the surface several times in the half-hour prior to actually emerging. No wonder the trout get keyed into the nymphs at the expense of the duns. They are available for a longer time.

Around the same time as the march browns are on, the big stoneflies are hatching. The trout undoubtedly take the nymphs, which crawl out of the water to hatch. Although I have seen many adult stoneflies scuttling across the surface, I cannot recall seeing a single one being taken, although I don't doubt that this happens.

The sandfly appears around the 20th of May and has a short season. The trout can go crazy for this fly. I have always thought the sandfly to be the caseless caddis more commonly known as the "gravel bed", but have recently heard it being described as a terrestrial.

The grannom also appears in May, and the yellow May dun starts to appear around the end of May and can last into July.

Although I have seen some fish concentrate on the yellow May dun, it is another fly which seems more attractive to the trout at the emerger stage rather than as an adult. In fact the grannom, yellow May dun, March brown and caddis in general all fall into this category, as far as I am concerned. Maybe I should be fishing wets more often than I do.

The rest of the season is pretty predictable as far as flies are concerned. Summer brings blue winged olives, light olives generally and sedges, as well as terrestrials like the cow dung, beetles and, occasionally, ants. One to look out for is the heather fly in August/September in the extreme upper reaches. A fall of these beasts can provoke total abandon on the part of the trout, but only occurs occasionally. Anything black and leggy will do, but we have used Oliver Edward's "Foam Terrestrial" to good effect. It has enough mass to pitch into the usual howling

downstreamer which prevails on the upper Clyde, which is where you will find the heather flies. Another fly worth trying at the back end is the Daddy Long Legs.

On the subject of wind, a west or southwest wind is upstream on the lower reaches up to Kirkfieldbank. Annoyingly, wind from the same direction blows downstream in the reaches from about Carstairs upstream. The east or north wind blows upstream in the upper reaches.

April and May is the time when the river throws up most of its really big fish.

There have been at least three fish of over 10 lbs



taken since the 1950s. The biggest of these was well over 15lbs and was caught at Abington during the mid 1970s. This fish was witnessed by a U.C.A.P.A. office bearer. Apparently the lucky captor arrived on the doorstep with the fish in a plastic bag for the U.C.A.P.A. man to see. When he lifted the bag he said, "My God, how many fish have you got in here?". To which came the reply, "Just the one".

Around twenty years before this, a 13lbs + fish was caught at exactly the same spot.

The third big fish weighed 11 lbs and was caught by Thomas Queen in the mid 70s from the dredgings at Lamington. It took a Rapala plug while he was after pike. I spoke to John Queen, the brother of the captor. He told me they were amazed when they saw the huge trout leaping on the end of the line instead of a pike as expected. He was good enough to let me photograph him holding a fibreglass cast that Thomas had made of the fish.

Although these fish are exceptional, there are usually 5lbs plus fish taken each season and some of these are taken on fly. Over the last two or three years I have seen fish which I reckon are around the 10lb mark. A couple of years ago an angler caught 2 fish on the Lamington water weighing 7lb 8oz and 5lb 8oz in a night session using fly. Not a bad night's work!



Spotting Fish

Big fish are pretty obviously easier to spot than smaller fish, so when the sun is shining and fish are unwilling to rise, this is the approach I prefer to take.

Polaroids are essential. I take advantage of high banks and wooded backdrops to check out likely areas and will often sit and watch from a vantage point rather than fishing the water blind when there is nothing rising. Any big fish spotted are cast to, if possible, and mentally noted for future reference.

Sometimes it pays to work with a partner, as a team. The man who is casting is often out of position to see the fish, so his partner does the spotting and calls the shots. I can't so far, claim



any tremendous success doing this on the Clyde, but I am getting a picture of where a few big fish are. I did spot a fish for a mate and had the pleasure of watching the fish's mouth open to sip in his wee nymph. I called "go" and he tightened

into a fish of approaching 3lb. He had not seen the fish beforehand and he did not see any evidence of the take before I called. This is a really satisfying way to catch fish, both for the angler and for the spotter, who gets a kick out of helping his mate and learns something of trout behaviour in the process.

Of course, spotting is not always possible and if no fish are rising it is necessary to fish the water blind. I always work upstream and will often concentrate on the pocket water and the fast water at the run into a pool as I seem to take more fish from this type of water when fishing blind. Usually I will use a nymph like a PTN or a similar fly I tie using UTC wire as the abdomen, which gets a lot of weight in a small package. These are fished under a small yarn indicator, or sometimes under something buoyant and visible like an elk hair caddis, used as an indicator cum dry fly.

Permits

Almost the whole of the river from Motherwell upstream is in the hands of three clubs, as far as trout fishing is concerned. They all offer day tickets for the price of a few pints.

The United Clyde Angling Protective Association offers tickets at the following prices.

Adult Annual £60.00.
Adult Annual (over 65) £50.00.
Juvenile Annual Permit £1.00
Day Permit £12.00

Annual = 2 Grayling seasons & 1 Brown Trout season

The U.C.A.P.A. stretches extend from Motherwell bridge up to Stonebyres at Kirkfieldbank, from Easter Sills Farm at Carstairs Junction to Thankerton Bridge and lastly, from Robertson Burn up to the headwaters. U.C.A.P.A. tickets can be had from various outlets.

Website: <http://www.ucapaltd.com/>

The Hozier Angling Club has the fishing from Stonebyres up to Easter Sills Farm. No permit details available at the time of writing.

The Lamington & District Angling Association leases the fishing between Thankerton bridge and Robertson Burn.

Annual Trout & Grayling Permit £60.
Junior permit free.
Grayling season ticket £20.
Junior permit free.

Day permits are available priced £10 for Trout and £10 for Grayling. Weekly Trout permits are also available for £30.

All juniors MUST be accompanied by an adult at all times.

Trout Season 15th March 2021 - 6th October 2021.

Grayling Season 7th October 2021 - 31st January 2022.

Please note a close season operates on Association waters from 1st Feb - 14th March inclusive each year.

Website: <http://www.lamingtonfishing.co.uk/index.html>

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!

What Have You Tied Today?

Flies tied by readers and Wild Fishing Forum Members

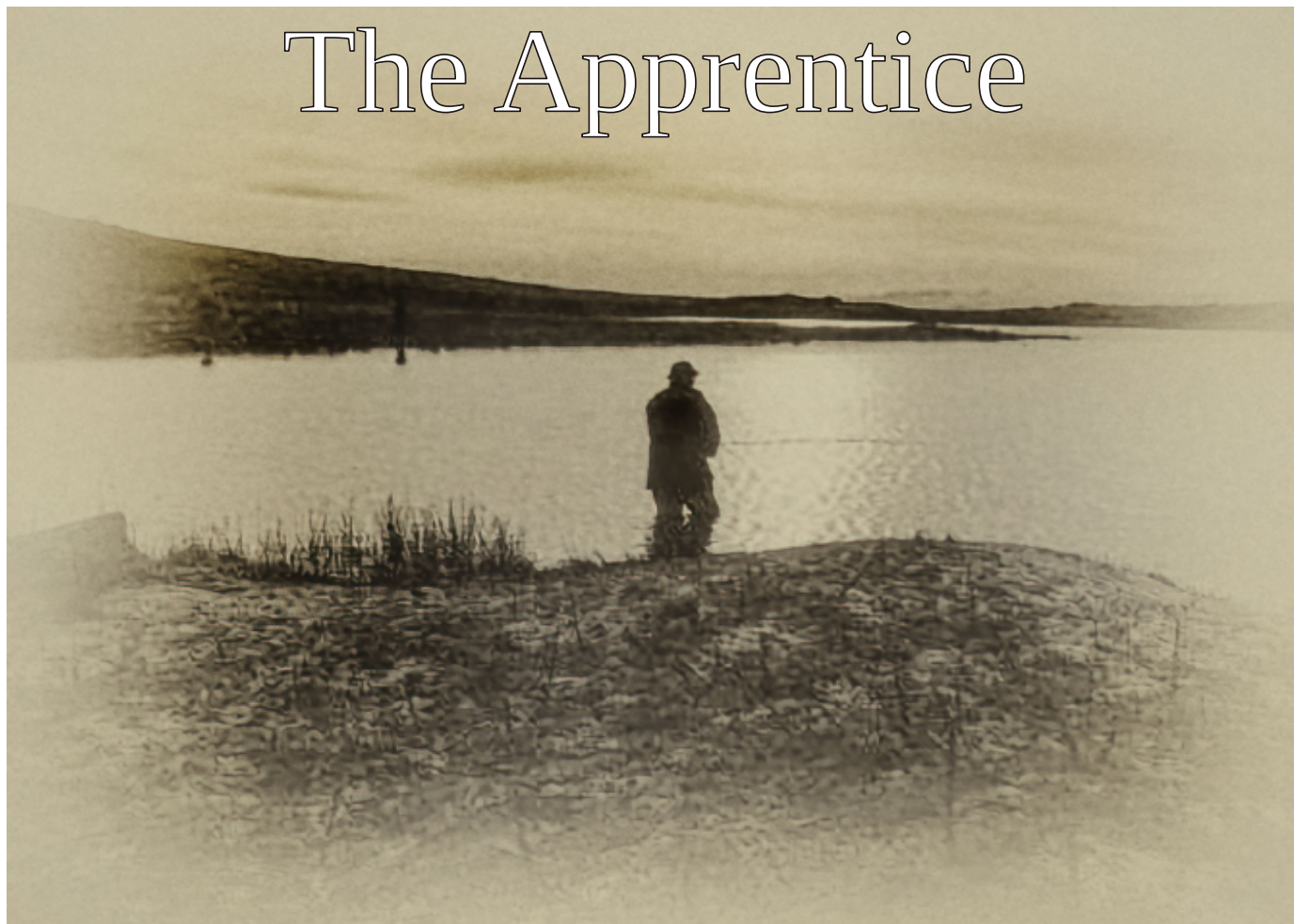


These superb river and loch flies were tied by Wild Fishing Forum member Allan Hutton whose winter tying regime has already started and who is looking forward to next season. Allan consistently produces excellent and very neat flies that put my own untidy efforts to shame.



Four exceptionally well tied flies by Wild Fishing Forum member Robert MacDonald-Lewis. I can just imagine sitting a boat drifting across some trout filled loch in Sutherland or Caithness offering any of these to the eager inhabitants.

The Apprentice



Ian Cramman recalls a long absent friend and mentor

It's a number of years now since Tam moved to fish the 'big waters in another place'. Occasionally though when on the water and in reflective mood I still think of him and my early fly fishing apprenticeship.

I grew up around the sea and boats. The old man was a skipper and once a year his firm would organise a fishing day for all the families on one of the boats. That was where I met big bad Tam for the first time. I was a ten-year-old, busy fishing away trying to win the junior competition sweepstakes (worth about a fiver if I remember correctly). I was doing quite well, taking the odd codling or flattie and well ahead of my nearest competition. And Tam? Well Tam was for'ard, toe to toe with one the boat's crew members; drunk, bloodied, belligerent and trying to punch the aforementioned Joe's head clean off.

It was later that day that my old man agreed with a, by now cleaned up, Tam that he would take me off flyfishing some time. Being mad keen on fishing and new to the fly fishing side I readily agreed – I would have gone off with Count Dracula himself if he knew some good waters and had a car! Now this may all seem strange but you've got to remember that this was the same

parent that used to hand me and my younger brother over each summer to the skipper of the boat that was heading off for the longest time the furthest away from port. The fact that our boats were often steaming to the Hebrides full of Royal Marines, SBS or some other bunch of paid killers on manoeuvres illustrates my point. In this I'm reminded of another seafaring parent, Commander Walker, and his famous telegram about his 'sprogs' at the start of the children's book "Swallows and Amazons" - "Better drowned than duffers. If not duffers, won't drown." In fact, the old man's a shrewd judge of character and had known Tam many years. Despite all evidence to the contrary he knew that Tam would reliably return with 'son number one' intact from any such excursion.

So, soon after I started my apprenticeship under the beady and unforgiving gaze of Tam and his inseparable fishing side-kick Jim. Over the next few years (until that whole girls, booze and face full of zits thing started to flare-up) there'd be the occasional terse call which went something along the following lines:-

"Is that you Ian?" "Yes. Hello Tam"

"Right. Fishing Saturday morning. Be outside the house at six." [click of phone being put down]

You were then either there at six on the dot to go to somewhere you hadn't a clue about or you didn't go. When you went on the magical mystery tour it could be as close as a local moorland lochan or river, over to Loch Leven (always a favourite) or some far-away Highland river or Loch.

Being the apprentice around this pair was not the easiest of things as there was little quarter allowed for callow youth or inexperience. I well remember my first trip to 'The Loch'; It had been a slow day but Jim caught a real beauty of a Loch Leven trout mid-morning. It was somewhere between 3 to 4 pounds of the kind of silvery perfection in trout form that only Leven could produce. That made and finished Jim's day and he immediately sat down, set his rod aside, brought a bottle of the good stuff out of his bag and proceeded to get gloriously and quietly drunk – day over! Tam and me had just a fish each and Tam was reasonably happy as his was larger at a pound and a half to mine of just under the pound.

Then, close to the end of the day I hooked something BIG on my bob fly just off one of the smaller islands. This was a seriously large fish and I was playing it for what seemed like an age before I could get it anywhere near the boat. I was sure that it would have beaten Jim's earlier beauty by miles and now Tam wasn't happy. He was always more than a wee bit competitive and the thought of me and Jim going home with a big fish each to his more modest effort was obviously gnawing away at him something chronic! Anyway, the monster was tiring and I finally had it on the surface drawing it towards Tam's waiting net when it gave a final kick and the hook-hold gave way. I ended up with a load of flyline, nylon and flies round my head while the fish slowly (excruciatingly) slipped into the depths just out of net-reach. Nearly thirty years later I still have cold-sweat nightmares about that moment but back then all I could hear was Tam raucous laughter. He laughed until he almost cried and then whistled all the way back to the jetty and all because an 11 year old had lost the fish of a lifetime. No, it wasn't always an easy apprenticeship!

But he did teach me a lot. He took me river fishing for the first time, showing me how to read a river and the lies. Controlling and fishing from a drifting boat was another of the 'black arts' he indoctrinated me into. Then there were his secret Highland lochans full of big trout which he'd describe in great detail but never name and we

never seemed to get round to fishing! His style of fishing was often rigid and old fashioned yet still amazingly effective; He fished with the same old style traditional patterns year after year and my 'new' style buzzers, nymphs and odd things with foam and deer hair were met with snorts of derision. His river fishing was always wet-fly down and across and distance casting entailed laying the line down on the water between shoots instead of false casts. But he caught fish and plenty of them and seemed to have an intuitive connection with them and the style, depth and speed of retrieve they required on any given day.

Tam had his demons though and I'd sometimes overhear my folks saying that he had gone on another three-day bender, that his missus was going mad with worry not knowing where he was or that he'd turned up somewhere in a real state. These were the times when you didn't go fishing with him much and things clearly weren't so good with Tam. In this too I guess I learned from him – but more in the 'what not to do' kind of way.

After a few years of fishing on and off with Tam and Jim I started to drift away from fishing - like I say with the call of other interests. I did, however, get to fish one more time with him, some years after the 'apprenticeship' and not so long before he passed on. It was mid winter and I was back at home for a short visit. Tam was going spare in the closed season and somehow we decided that a day after stocked rainbows was justified. We had a good day on an Ayrshire water in bright but very cold conditions with the fishing just difficult enough to make it rewarding.

The photo here is from that day and is, I think, the only one I have of Tam. He's fishing into the setting sun wading in the frigid waters while the banks are already starting to frost up, utterly scornful of the water's 'no wading' policy.

It kind of sums him up – he always fished hard from the first minute until the last whatever the conditions. Always uncompromising.

Cheers Tam –I learned a lot.

Ian Cramman's interest in fly fishing started as a child living in Kyle and shows little signs of diminishing some forty years later. Happiest in the hills, tackle in rucksack and heading out to explore a new bit of blue on the map, he tries to get back to the North West Highlands and Islands as often as he can.

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

Fly Culture Magazine

Have you grown weary of the monthly printed fishing magazines? Did you recently pick up a 20 year old copy in your doctor's waiting room and were you shocked to discover that 'Lady Of The Streams' article was broadly the same as the one you read a year past September?

You are not alone.

Now to be fair I still read the printed fishing mags from time to time and they are not bad at all. Yes they do tend to be a bit formulaic and you are paying for a lot of pages of ads (do people still buy from magazine ads in these online days?), but with all the competition now from online content (much of it free) it can't be easy to produce quality material 12 months of the year, so hats off to them.

Back in the 1960s when I was a lad the choice was usually between Rod and Line or Trout and Salmon. T&S was always the more upmarket of the two, mostly salmon orientated and often featured jolly articles recalling halcyon days on The Tweed with nanny, aunt Jemima and Great Uncle Stodger. Thankfully things have moved with the times, but there does still appear to be a certain reluctance to publish articles on wider fly fishing, for example for sea and coarse fish.

Now you may be thinking this is a load of nonsense, but if you are looking for something a bit different it might be worth your while taking a look at Fly Culture.

Fly Culture is a quarterly fly fishing journal produced by Pete Tyjas and his team. I choose to describe it as a journal rather than a magazine because magazines tend to be disposable once read. Like a good book Fly Culture is meant to be kept in your angling library. This publication features articles from a variety of writers on all types and styles of fly fishing. It is printed on heavy gauge paper, is bound like a book, is well illustrated and just has a quality feel to it. You won't want to stick this in the recycling bin after you finish reading it.

Now you won't find Fly Culture in your local newsagents, but you will find it here <https://flyculturemag.com/> where you can purchase either a subscription or single copies at £9 each including shipping. To some £9 may seem a lot, but is it? The other week W.H. Smith relieved me of £9 for a copy of Trout & Salmon and one of Fly Fishing & Fly Tying, so looking at it that way £9 is not overly expensive for a quality quarterly journal.

So do I have any criticisms? Well yes, only one, and it won't affect everyone. I do find the very small print size a strain on my ageing eyes and this honestly removes a lot of the pleasure of reading for me. The small font combined with a lack of contrast, depending on the background on individual pages can be tiresome and with the age demographic of anglers, here in the UK anyway, I can't believe I'm alone in suffering this. If the font was just a few points bigger it would make all the difference.

So in summary, and print size notwithstanding, I have no hesitation in recommending this excellent publication. Great work from Pete and his team!



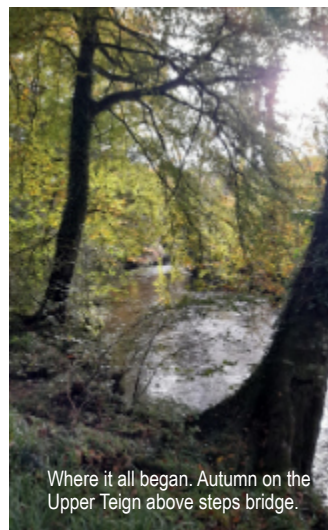
Thread Furled Leaders

Chris Matthews savours “Flyfishing Marmite”

As far as I can tell next season will be my 40th attempt at trying to deceive some wild brown trout from Devon’s rivers with a fly. There is some debate as to whether I started aged 8 or 9 so that anniversary may have already passed but either way those years have taught me that there really are no absolutes in this game. As the saying goes “one man’s meat is another man’s poison” and what may be suited for one river might be totally out of place on another. One thing is certain however, the Trout haven’t read any of the books and they’re not on any forums so we can never get their opinion on the various debates that perpetuate in the fly-fishing community. So having inserted that caveat I’m now going to offer some thoughts on the use of thread furled leaders for dry fly fishing on smallish streams as if I know what the Trout think of them!

When I first started my fly-fishing journey all those years ago the standard procedure for bridging the gap between the end of the fly line and the fly was by needle knotting or even nail knotting some thick sea fishing line onto the end of the fly line, tying a loop in the end of it and then building the leader from there with various thicknesses of mono until you reached the right strength/diameter to accept the fly. There is nothing wrong with this setup and many fine anglers still use this system, but I never enjoyed tying all those blood knots!

I was fortunate that the club where I was a junior member had a well-known angling writer as its chairman and in those pre internet days his contacts in the industry meant that most members looked to him to see what the latest innovations were in the fly-fishing world. Not surprisingly I



copied them and changed my leader setup from the sea fishing line to a piece of level braid, then a tapered braided leader and when these were discontinued a clear floating poly leader. This meant I got used to the idea of having some sort of “junction” between the fly line and the tippet, and I never really used the tapered mono leaders that seem to be the preferred choice these days.

For whatever reason I couldn’t get on with the poly leaders. Perhaps I was unlucky but the ones I tried suffered from excessive memory despite numerous stretching attempts and although advertised as floating they often did the opposite, and any floatant applied was soon washed off the smooth shiny surface. At this point I decided to look around for another solution and stumbled upon furled leaders made from fly-tying thread. These were advertised as having minimal memory which “gives a smooth transfer of energy to your tippet”, resulting in improved presentation and better drag free drifts (some claim they help with micro drag, but this is very hard to quantify). Best of all you could make them yourself with a basic jig and a drill. Why not give it a try I thought?

So, with a length of plywood and a cut up broom handle I knocked the jig together and started experimenting with different tapers and leader lengths and the joys of shorb loops (fiddly little buggers) until I had something that resembled those shown online and I was ready to try them on the river.



To say the leaders were a revelation would be an understatement, they turned the fly over beautifully and did indeed fold with the current



reducing drag. Provided you treated them with floatant before fishing they would float for the entire session and the extra mass added by the paste type floatant helped the leader to punch through the wind and produced far less water spray than the poly leaders. As they were cheap and relatively easy to make I started carrying a few different setups of furled leaders for different



methods (cut pieces of swimming pool noodle make cheap and easy cast carriers) now if I wanted to say change to duo fishing from nymphing or from dry fly to streamer, I just changed the entire leader with the flies attached. Unlike the old hollow tapered leaders these are a solid construction, meaning they absorb the floatant better and actually improve the more you treat them. On some of the little moorland streams I fish you have to be quick on the draw when setting the hook especially in the faster

water, a leader that rides high allowing a fast pick up helps to improve the hook up rate, sometimes.

As the title suggests these leaders aren’t for everyone, if you’re fishing a large river, casting twenty-five yards with twenty-foot mono leaders for ultra-spooky trout then they’re probably not for you. But for smallish streams where a ten-yard cast is a long throw and most of the time you hardly have any fly line outside the rod tip, a thread furled leader ticks all the boxes. They may seem expensive if you aren’t going to “roll your own” but remember they will last all season, even several seasons if you look after them, you just add your chosen tippet material and then replace it as required. Some people see them as merely an extension of the fly line and believe they frighten the fish; I have to say I have never found this to be the case. Because they fold and flow with the current, I think the fish treat them like they would a piece of weed or some natural piece of flotsam. As the leaders are opaque, they don’t reflect light like the thick butt of a tapered mono leader which might alert the fish, certainly I have caught plenty of trout following a botched cast when the leader and the fly ended up almost touching each other. The jig is adjustable, so you

change the length or taper of the leader by moving the pegs around, and there are plenty of “taper calculators” online to copy, but I have to say I have pretty much settled on the five-foot three step design that I started with. The shorter three-foot options which naturally have a more severe taper don’t have the same anti-drag advantages in my humble opinion and the five-foot version is perfectly manageable on even the really

small streams that I fish. It’s one of the things I love about these thread furled leaders, they allow me to cast into the tightest of spots with hardly any line out and still get enough drift on the fly to be successful. You can change the thread size (I use 10/0 and 12/0 unwaxed in light grey and olive) for different applications or add a fluorescent tip or butt for nymphing. You could also use the jig for making up some mono furled leaders for downstream wet fly or experiment with fluorocarbon or some of the new nano



threads? There are lots of possibilities, and it gives you another closed season hobby to set beside your winter fly tying.

Unfortunately, I was unable to find the web site I first used to copy the jig from. It may have been Rod Dibble or Jim Williams both of which made thread furred leaders back in the day, but my system seems a bit more “Heath Robinson” compared to them. There are lots of different methods and ideas as to the best construction process, but even my early ones which weren’t the best, still performed well enough on the river. Just remember that you must, must, must treat the leader with a paste floatant before fishing, over the years I’ve handed out quite a few of my home-made jobs to other anglers but had some mixed feedback, any problems have always boiled down to the fact that the leaders were used straight out of the packet and soon became waterlogged and unusable.

So, there we are, some general thoughts on the use of thread furred leaders in fly fishing, some anglers love them, others hate them, fly fishing “Marmite”, like so many other things in angling, but definitely worth a try if you haven’t used one before, “what’s the worst that could happen”. No wait that’s not Marmite it’s Dr Pepper, oh well you get the idea.

Chris Matthews grew up fishing the Upper River Teign in Devon, England, being fortunate enough to live just 4 miles from Fingle Bridge at the centre of the fishery.

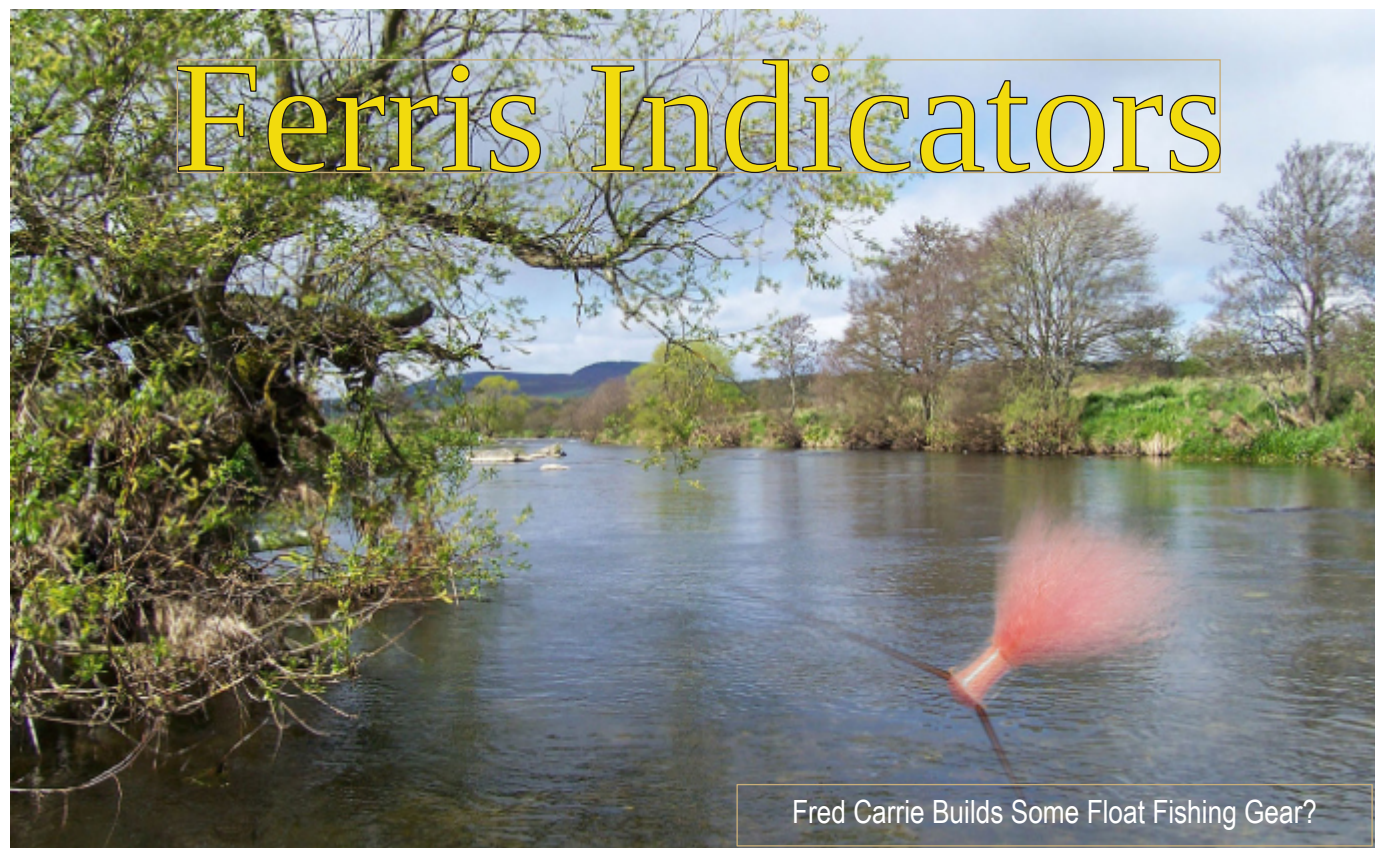
Chris now lives in a small village on the outskirts of Crediton in the heart of the county. This gives him access to the seven rivers controlled by the Crediton fly fishing club in one direction and the moorland streams of Dartmoor, including the Teign, Dart and Okement, in the other.

Over the years Chris has fished rivers and lakes for coarse fish, reservoirs and small still waters for rainbows and browns and has enjoyed sea fishing from shore and boat. He is happy with all these different aspects of angling but in the end is always drawn back to fly fishing rivers for wild brown trout.

Chris runs an excellent, laid back Youtube channel where you can share his fishing days. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyO4pLVBKLA2bKE9gc6O-LQ>



In The Gorge
Photo: Fred Carrie



“No Wullie, fly fishing using an indicator is not just float fishing”! “Float fishing is completely different; the bait is suspended and hangs below the float; if you are fly fishing with an indicator that does not happen”! “Now do you understand the difference”?

“Whit about static buzzer fishin’ then”?

“Eh, well Wullie can I get back to you on that one”?

And so these arguments rage on. Everyone has their own idea about what is and what is not fly fishing. For me fly fishing involves fly casting, so even although I sometimes do it and catch lots of fish with it, French Nymphing is not fly fishing. But hell, that’s just my take on it; does it even matter? I don’t think it does. As long as you are fishing within the rules of the water you are on then got for it!

But anyway – Ferris Indicators are sometimes called New Zealand strike indicators and without wishing to start another argument I’m not sure why this is. These very clever little indicators, consisting of a tuft of wool and a few millimetres of PVC tubing, were, as far as I am aware, invented by Rudi Ferris a fishing guide from the USA. The idea like all the best ideas, is simple and Rudi Ferris used the plastic ink tubing from used Biro’s (there are better alternatives).

Now before we go any further I want to make it perfectly clear I have nothing against New Zealand. Far from it. NZ is my absolute favourite place on the planet. I love it, have a few good mates there and were it not for the current global ‘difficulties’ I might be fishing there right now instead of sitting here typing this whilst looking out of the window at a Scottish snow storm. NZ is like Scotland on steroids. Everything there is bigger and better : the mountains, the trout, the beer, the rugby players and the weightlifters.

We have always called them Ferris Indicators and Ferris Indicators they will remain.

The indicators are light weight, infinitely adjustable and will not kink your leader. The only down side is they are fiddly to fit unless you have a tool to do the job. There is a commercially available tool marketed as a New Zealand Strike Indicator Tool that sells for about £20 GB. It comes with a few tufts of Merino wool and some spare tubing. The tool is tiny, weighs just a few ounces, can be clipped to a zinger on your fly vest and works great.

Now you may want to buy one of these kits, but if not read on and I’ll show you how to quickly make your own. In fact if you are going to make one, once you get set up and have all the bits and pieces handy, you might as well make a ½ dozen and use them as gifts for fly fishing friends!

The first 4 images show the tool and how to use it. Left to right:



1. The tool.
2. Insert the leader in the slot and slide a piece of tubing onto the captured leader.
3. Form a loop, remove the tool, insert a tuft of yarn.
4. Pull the leader ends or work the tuning into place.

That’s it, add a touch of floatant and you are ready to fish.

To remove the indicator: open the loop, remove and save the yarn, hook the tool back into the vacant loop, slide the tubing back onto the tool, Simple.

Now if you want to drive yourself nuts try doing all that without the tool.

The next image shows what you need to make up the indicator tools.



Some heavy nylon – in this case 15lb Maxima

A packet of number 18 Millward Tapestry Needles. (6 for about £1.50)

A tube of Super Glue

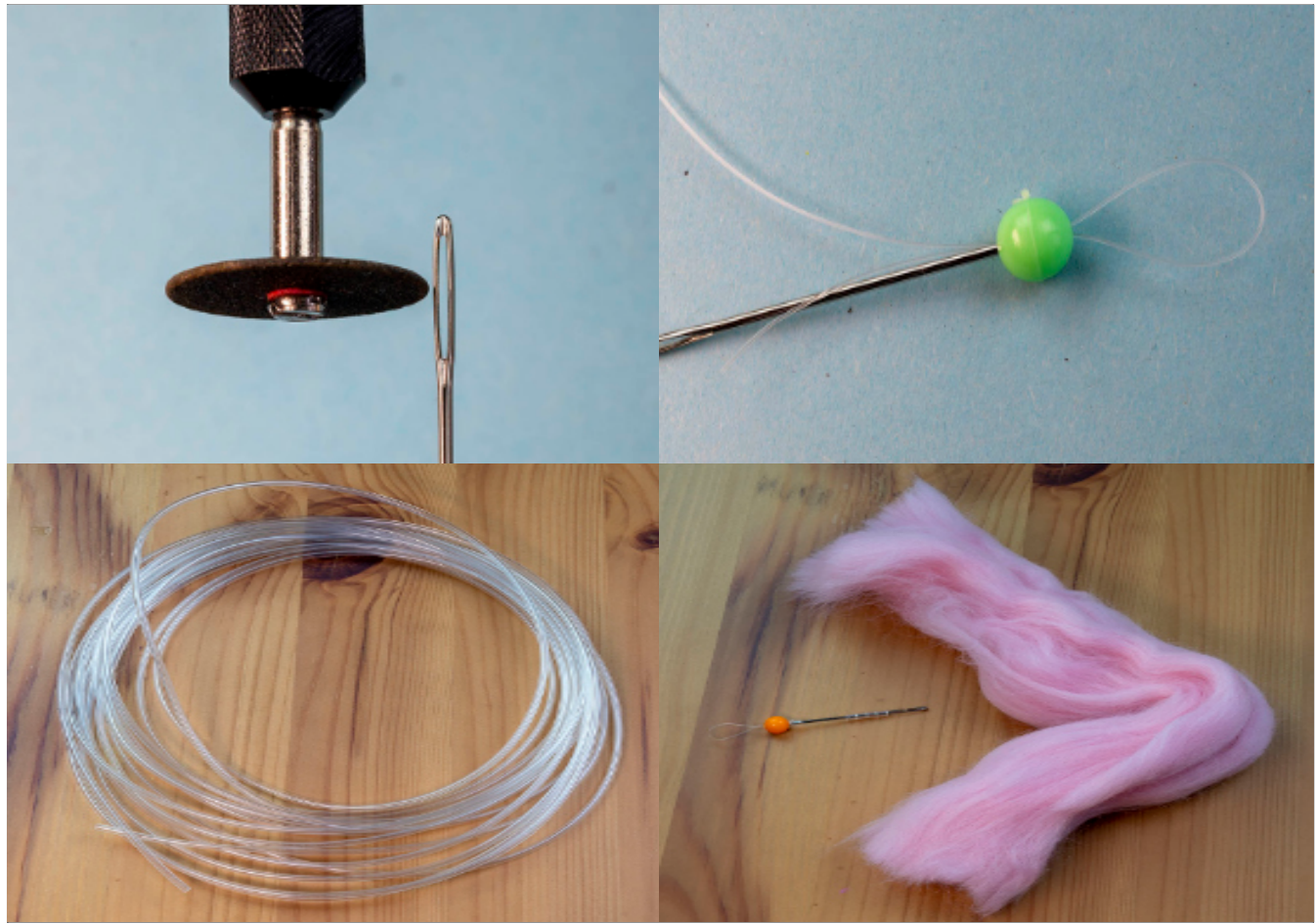
Some 8mm sea fishing beads (they cost pennies)

Construction is as follows:

Cut a slot in the eye of the needle as shown. I use a Dremel. A junior hacksaw would be fine. No matter what you use be sure to remove any sharp edges left with a needle file or a scrap of fine sandpaper. If you skip this de-burring step you might cut your leader. Don't skip it.

Insert a loop of nylon through the bead, push the sharpest end of the needle into the hole in the other end of the bead, it will lock-in the nylon loop. Then drop a spot of super glue into the hole. Be careful you don't skewer yourself or glue your fingers to the bead. Wear eye protection throughout these processes, especially if using a Demel.

You will need some suitable PVC tubing. The exact size is not critical but it has to stay on the tool without falling off when cut into short lengths. I'm using 1.5mm bore, 3mm outside diameter. Avoid



bigger sizes. Loads on eBay. Cut ½ dozen 4mm lengths of tubing and slide them on.

That's it, clip it onto your fly vest and you are ready to go.

What about yarn? You can use anything that is fine fibred, I use Merino wool because it's got a very fine fibre and is dense. That's about £1.50's worth in the image and could keep an entire fly fishing club going for 20 years. Widley available on eBay in all the colours of the rainbow and more. Search for "Merino Wool Roving".

So I hope you found that useful, knock up a few, go fishing and if you see Wullie please tell him you are not float fishing!

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.



"I'm really struggling to see my Ferris indicator in this light!"

Photo: F. Carrie



So that's it for the second 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 more 'magazine-like' facing page layout in this issue has allowed the use of larger images that can be printed across two facing pages. I 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!



Spring Creek
Photo: F. Carrie