

Approaching a new water

Many anglers fancy having a go on a new water. Maybe they have caught their target(s) from their current venue and want to move on, maybe they fancy a change of scenery, or maybe they want to make the step up to a harder water with some bigger fish to go at. Here are my general ideas on approaching a new water.



First, picking the right water may sound obvious, but if you have spent the last five years fishing a heavily stocked, one-acre, muddy farm pond, don't choose a large, low stocked, tap water clear, hard as nails, windswept pit 250 miles from home in the middle of winter. It will break your mind and you will probably just go back to the farm pond – or flog all your gear! Look to start now in late summer/early autumn, or wait until springtime.

Get out of your comfort zone and improve as an angler by

learning and developing new techniques, but don't go too far from that zone to start with. So many people new to angling go straight into carp angling and they want to bank a forty within five minutes! The angling apprenticeship of catching small silver fish to start with and then progressing seems to have disappeared forever, which is a shame because there is so much to be gained from it. Progressing in carp waters is no different.

Research

When the right water has been

chosen research is the next thing, though research will possibly be required to help you pick the water in the first place. Do your best not to go in cold; what I mean by that is gain as much information about the venue as possible. The more you know, the better decisions you will make, inevitably putting more fish on the bank. Things to start with are the magazines – *Carp-Talk*

catch reports, internet, forums, TV and DVDs.

The best research, though, is at the venue itself. Any bailiff worth his salt will always point you in the right direction, and then there's talking to anglers on the bank as well as spending as much time at the lake as possible, although this is not always an option with day to



Take all rubbish home with you – it makes it so much nicer for the next angler in the swim



Plenty of bait, but go easy to start with



Hemp, crushed boilies and Mainline Bloodworm and Cell Pellets make a spod and stick mix



Research it with Carp-Talk



Linear Fisheries Manor Farm Lake

water

my ass off while I'm there than drive home with regrets.

Don't kill it!

With the swim picked don't kill it dead by thrashing the water into a jacuzzi with marker floats and spods flying all over the shop. Not only will the swim be totally spooked, but also the bloke next door will be jumping and won't be so inclined to pass on juicy info! I rarely use a marker these days preferring a few casts with just a lead in conjunction with a braided main line. Once I find an area, I clip up, mark it and pace it out. The same goes for bait; go easy to start and build the swim. Remember the saying "once it's in you can't take it out". Start by fishing for one at a time.

Tackle and bait

As with picking the right water, preparation is key to having the right kit with you. You would feel somewhat miffed if you were watching carp popping their heads out at 120 yards but you only have 2 3/4lb rods and small Baitrunners loaded with 15lb fluorocarbon line! It's essential to be able to cast to the fish.

Everyone has their favourite rigs. I like to use different rigs on at least two of the rods and when (and if) one starts to produce the other rod or rods are swapped over. Don't think that you need some sort of masterpiece when approaching a new water. A simple safe rig with a sharp hook will catch any carp on its day. I nearly always boilie fish, and my favourite rig is a stiff hinge rig on lead clips with a short lead-cored leader. I have total confidence in it and the components I use to make it. It never tangles, it fishes over any

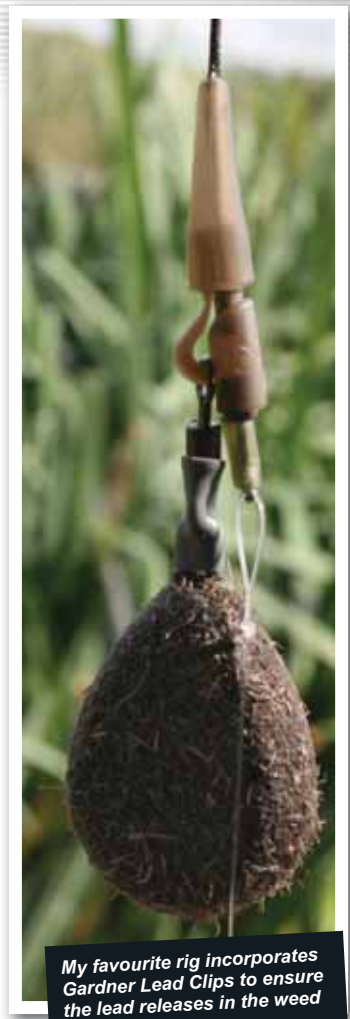
bottom and it converts pick-ups to fish hooked far more often than most other rigs (in my opinion). If a rig works for you, stick with it. It is good to try new things but don't change things for the hell of it. If you are going to make a change, do it for a reason.

I couple the rig with my favourite Blackcurrant and Scopex pop-ups fished over Cell free offerings. I've caught so many fish using this method I have total confidence in it and am happy to use it as a starter anywhere.

Theory into practice

I chose to do a session recently on Linear Fisheries Manor Farm Lake. I chose Linear because of the choice it provides; loads of top lakes with the chance of some decent looking carp. I chose Manor specifically because of the history surrounding the Lake and the carp that reside there. It's 14 acres with all parts well within my casting range if required, and it holds some cracking carp. It's a nice shape, and the swims well laid out with plenty of features including weed and shallow bars. It's also a four-hour drive from my home so another reason for picking Linear in general is that had Manor been rammed out there was plenty of scope to fish another lake like Hardwick or Hunts Corner for example, both of which will see me on in the future.

After working a set of late shifts I slept for around four hours then made the drive up from Cornwall. I went for a look around and had a chat with some of the other anglers, all of whom were friendly and forthcoming with information. The weather was due a west-southwest wind and rain, which I



My favourite rig incorporates Gardner Lead Clips to ensure the lead releases in the weed

had been told was perfect for the Lake. I chose to set up in swim 3 on the road bank, which has open water in front with an area of reeds

day commitments or the distance between home and the lake. Most people are always up for a yap with fellow anglers. I would say word-of-mouth communication between anglers puts more fish on the bank than any other type of research, so don't be put off talking to people. Some of the best friendships have started this way.

Swim choice

Walk the lake, look for signs and likely areas. You may get lucky and see a few, but without doubt the best time to visit the lake is first light. Carp can be found during the day, but when fish are found at first light this will likely be a feeding area, which will almost definitely be different to the daytime comfort zones. Once in a swim it's a case of watching the water. While fishing, setting an alarm for 2-3am, having a brew and a listen for a while is also a good way to find the fish, as they often show at night. If you're not too far from home a little baiting up is advisable. I hate moving as much as anyone but if a move is required then just grit your teeth and do it. I would rather work



A lovely one to start with at 23lb 2oz

Approaching a new water



Look after your fish

to the left which is in front of a no-fishing zone. It looked great with the wind pushing in and a real likely looking area, although nothing showed while I was looking.

I set up and found a small area of light weed surrounded by slightly heavier weed around 90 yards from the bank. This would be the left-hand rod spot and the other two rods were placed a similar distance over a clear area between weedbeds. I found the spots using a lead only and then pacing out for the distance. By feeling the lead down I was able to judge the depth without dragging a float through the swim.

I had also found out that the going method was solid bags of pellet fished over spod mixes of mainly hemp and corn. I decided to use my stiff hinge rig over mixed-size Cell boilies on the left-hander and went with balanced bottom baits/PVA bags on the other rods with a little spod mix from Kent Particles as well as a scattering of Cell boilies.

I had just got the rods out when this year's British Young Carp Angling Champion Jake Taylor dropped his gear next door in swim

4, then his friend Aaron Savin set up in swim 2. These lads know Linear very well and were a good source of information to me; not only for the current session but for future trips, too. They were both very interested in my type of angling and I was more than happy to show them how I go about my business. What I did glean from them was a solid PVA bag masterclass because these two really are masters at it. Jake was long-range fishing and Aaron casting short range to a far margin. It was good to see youngsters with such good angling ability – certainly better than I had at their age! I had a real good laugh with them and



All three rods were changed to the stiff hinge rig

I'm sure I'll be fishing with them in the future.

The only thing I would say is that their dress sense needs sorting. They insisted on walking around with their arses hanging out their trousers and their underwear on display! Fashion? What is going on? Youngsters these days!

After a quiet first night I had a take on the left-hand rod around 1pm the following day. It was in the middle of an absolute monsoon and I was soaked to the skin, but very happy as I had a lovely dark common in the bottom of the net. The other rods were then switched to stiff hinge rigs. Usually anglers won't fish a pop-up over spod mix,

but since it worked well for me on Horseshoe I was confident it would work here, too – and it did! I landed a further two carp on the second and final night.

Summary

Be confident without overdoing the bait. Use tried and trusted tactics to start with but keep an open mind and be prepared to change things if and when you need to. Make informed decisions and try and put as much as possible in your favour. Always respect the lake and the surroundings, look after the carp and abide by the lake rules. Work hard, but most of all enjoy the challenge.

