



CATCH CARP ON THE FLOAT

Using a float can be a great tactic for tackling pressured carp. **PHIL KINGSBURY** explains how he has used it to bank fish to over 50lb.



Using a Polaris float allows for really accurate baiting, in this case with PVA bags of maggots.



Phil sends the float up to 30 yards out with an underarm lob.

first tried using Polaris sliding leger floats to try and keep the line away from margin-feeding carp. On pressured day-ticket lakes the carp can often be found in the edge, especially in the early morning and evening. If you are using a normal setup with your line running along the bottom, these carp are easily spooked out of the area if they hit your line. The depressions and gullies on the lake bed prevent the line from lying tight to the bottom, even when back-leaded.

With a float, all the line is kept well out of the way as it runs inches under the surface, meaning that the carp can swim about freely. The only line that they come into contact with is that running vertically from lead to float. In my opinion, they are less wary of this. How many times have you had your marker rod on a known hotspot and had fish visiting the spot while you are baiting? This vertical line is far more natural to the carp, more like the weed that they come across under the water.

The only drawback with Polaris floats is that range is limited. I have found that you can only really use them effectively with an underarm cast. If you cast overarm, the float can slide too far up the line. If you are fishing in eight feet of water and the float slides up 15 feet, it will give you a diagonal line lay, which is not what you want. With the underarm cast the float tends to stay put until the lead hits the bottom. You can then slacken off the line and the float will rise to the surface. In reality, you are limited to a range of around 30 yards.



All these floats will work but the thinner ones slide more easily on the main line.

I prefer to use this float setup in conjunction with a leader and a flying back lead. Leadcore is banned on the venue I'm fishing, so I have been using Gardner Mirage fluorocarbon in 18lb or 20lb as a leader. This has worked really well.

It is electrifying watching the float, taking me back to when I was a nipper. When you see the float knock you know that there are carp in the vicinity. Often, the fish give themselves away by bubbling in the area. The bites tend to be pretty savage – one-toners with the rod almost leaving the rests.

Once in situ, the float gives you a good reference for accurate baiting. If I am using the float during the summer months I always try and bait at least a metre behind it. That way you are baiting over the rig and not where the line is going down. In the colder winter months I just use a PVA bag.

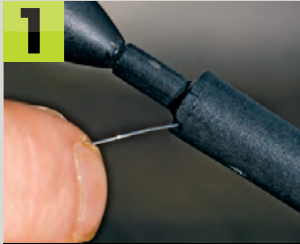
If you are fishing a weedy lake you can really use the float to your

advantage, especially where there is a lot of Canadian pondweed or the elephant grass that flourishes in Horton Church Lake. By casting into a hole in the weed, the vertical line is disguised and is completely spook-free, to my mind.

There are various types of floats available. I have caught fish using the short, stumpy floats but I prefer the longer ones because they seem to slide up the line more easily. The maximum breaking-strain line that you can practically use is 12lb, but most of my fish have come using 10lb Gardner Hydroflo main line. It is important that the line has a super-smooth finish to allow the float to slide up freely.

When fishing the float you are better off using a soft-actioned rod. I have a pair of old Shimano Twin Power rods in 2.25lb test curve and these are ideal. They have been well used over the years so have a lovely through action, which suits this type of close-in work.

HOW TO SET UP A POLARIS FLOAT SYSTEM



1 Thread the main line through the larger hole in the base of the float.



2 Slide on a flying backlead. This needs to be heavy enough to sink the float.



3 Then tie an overhand loop in the end of the main line to tie the leader to.



4 Mould a small blob of putty around the knot to stop the backlead sliding down.



5 Use a 5ft fluorocarbon leader. Phil chooses 18lb or 20lb Gardner Mirage.



6 An overhand loop in the leader allows you to attach the main line, loop to loop.



7 Phil attaches his swivel with a super-strong marlin knot. First tie a granny knot.



8 Don't tighten it down yet. Slide a quick-change swivel onto the tag.



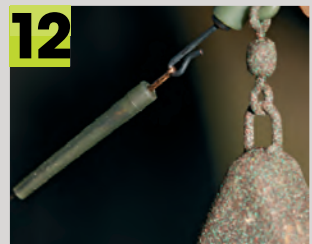
9 Pass the tag twice through the open loop and carefully tighten the knot down.



10 Thread a lead clip and a tail rubber onto the fluorocarbon leader.



11 Now you can join the leader and main line, loop-to-loop style.



12 Attach a light lead and your rig and you are ready to catch on the float.

If you are using floats on both rods then try and space the rods apart. Single sticks are ideal for this. Remember, the line sits just beneath the surface, making the second rod a hazard if you're playing a fish. If they are on either side of the swim you will have more room to manoeuvre.

This certainly isn't simply a small-fish method, either. The warier carp, which are often the bigger ones, will definitely check out an area for lines before they have a good feed on a baited spot. When they fail to discover any line on the bottom and drop their guard, then there's a good chance that they will pick up the bait.

Certainly my most memorable capture on the float was the big 'un from Menards Fishery in West Sussex, the first time that I really used it. It was a Friday morning and I was only down for the day. I turned up at 7am and had a walk round the lake and found a few fish fizzing in Peg 3. Nobody had caught anything, so I figured that the float was



After casting Phil slowly pays line off to allow the float to surface.

my best option. As I was setting up, a fish head and shouldered, so I was rubbing my hands. After I had cast both rods out and baited, one on the Polaris and one with a standard setup, I sat down to wait. I was getting loads of feeding activity over my standard setup and I was sure that I was going to get a take on that rod. I noticed out of the corner of my eye that the float had disappeared and at that moment the rod nearly left the rests! I leant into what felt like a really good fish. It came to the surface, where I saw that it was a big mirror, before it woke up and tore

off. Bearing in mind that I was using 10lb line and soft rods, the fight was a bit hairy.

It took about 20 minutes to subdue the carp but when I slipped the net under it I knew that I had something a bit special. At 50lb 2oz it was a PB, and to think that I had only used that method for the first time that day. The first bite came as a bit of a shock but after that first fish I had the confidence that I needed to use the float on both rods. Since then the Polaris method has also accounted for the second biggest in the lake, and the prettiest,

along with many other good carp. Initially, I got a few funny looks from the other anglers around the lake when they saw how I was fishing but when I turned up the week after banking the big 'un, quite a few people had obviously decided to give it a try and there were floats all over the place!



Buttons, the largest of the Menards residents at over 50lb, was the first to fall to Phil's float setup.