

Angler Profile

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THE MAGGOT ATTACK

Lewis Read looks at two different ways of presenting one of the greatest winter baits of all time - MAGGOTS!



The humble maggot offers all coarse anglers an affordable means to aid catching specimen-size fish of many different species. Over the course of the last couple of years the humble 'germs' have enjoyed a real renaissance, thanks to the remarkable catches publicised by anglers such as Rob Maylin, whose evolution of the Mag-Aligner Rig has literally taken a number of high-profile big-fish waters apart.

Many of us would have started our angling fishing for gudgeon and roach with maggots, and know how effective they can be, and understand how best to hook them, as there is definitely a right and a wrong way. It was one of the very first things I was taught as a novice angler, how to hook 'gentle' (as my dad referred to maggots) lightly through the blunt end. By hooking them in this manner he explained that it made sure the maggot lived longer and therefore kept moving. This movement certainly helps to attract feeding fish, as the vibrations are picked up by the fish's highly-tuned senses, such as the lateral line. Anyone who has pleasure-fished with maggots will know what a marked difference putting a fresh maggot on the hook can make to getting bites.

The same rule should be applied to how you mount your maggot on your carp rigs because a bunch of live maggots will always be more attractive to a feeding carp than a bunch of dead skins. So, whether you are hooking baits

conventionally, threading the maggots onto some floss to tie on your rig, or using one of the maggot clips which several companies now sell, take some time and care to make sure your hookbait stays as attractive as possible for as long as possible. Presentation need not be any more complicated than a big closed end swim feeder and half a dozen maggots impaled on a Size 12 hook. However, talking to the team of anglers working at, or sponsored by, Gardner Tackle I find there are two distinct preferences for how to fish the maggots really effectively.

The Mag-Aligner

This rig utilises one of the excellent Enterprise Tackle hard rubber grubs (sold as Mag-Aligner Grubs) which are threaded onto the hooklink and then pushed over the eye of the hook and partly down the shank to create a ruthlessly efficient hooking mechanism. The principle of this mechanism was popularised by angling writer Jim Gibbison, back in the early-'90s when he used a piece of tube to extend the hookshank, through which the hooklink was threaded with a needle so that the hooklink came out of the side wall, just short of the end of the tube. When the line-aligner is set up correctly, so that the point of the hook is in line with the hooklink leaving the tube, then the hook will pivot aggressively at this point, and really ensure an excellent hookhold is created.



LEWIS' TIP
When fishing the Mag-Aligner you need to be using a very small hook. I have found the Mugga in a Size 12 to be the best shape and size for this presentation.



If you don't feel confident tying your own Mag-Aligner just yet, fear not, you can buy them pre-tied from your local tackle shop (minus the live maggots on the hook!).

HOW TO TIE... THE MAG-ALIGNER



1 This rig is simple to master and only requires minimal components for its construction.



2 Cut 11 ins of material and strip away 5 ins of outer coating from the hooklink.



3 Take a sharp sewing needle and pierce it through the top of the rubber grub.



4 Push the needle through the maggot so the point comes out of the bottom ridge.



5 Simply thread the maggot onto the supple braid, as illustrated in this shot.



6 Now attach your Size 12 Mugga hook to the braid with a six-turn Grinner Knot.



7 Slide the maggot back down the rig and into this position over the eye of the hook.



8 Tie a Figure-of-Eight loop in the other end of the rig for use with quick-change clips.



9 Finish the rig by simply nipping three or four live maggots onto the hook.

SPOD SPECIFICS



Spods with large holes in the side are not good for use with wriggling maggots...



...so you will need something with solid walls like this Pocket Rocket to keep them contained whilst casting.

The pure genius of the Mag-Aligner is that it incorporates superb hooking and strong hookholds with such a subtle, camouflaged, and slightly balanced presentation. In fact, if you look at it in the edge it is very easy to understand why it is so good. When fished in conjunction with a PVA bag of maggots, as the PVA dissolves and the maggots explode out of the bag, covering an area of about 12ins across, it is normally impossible to tell the hookbait from the freebies. Now, if you think about how carp tend to eat a cluster of maggots like this, often Hoovering up most of the bag in one great suck, you realise that the hookbait goes in along with all the other contents, thanks to the buoyancy of the Mag-Aligner Grub, and then it's time for that buzzer to shriek.

As a general rule, the most successful hook sizes I have seen anglers using with this method have been relatively small Size 10s and 12s – and straight-pointed to help the rig prick the fish's mouth as quickly as possible. My own preference is to use the Size 12 Mugga because this hook is small and viciously sharp, and the shape of the pattern means it has fantastic strength for its size – and I really think the curved shank enhances the natural hooking potential of the Mag-Aligner arrangement.

Whatever hook you choose, don't be tempted to stick loads of maggots on the hook! The rig only needs three or four maggots to perform effectively, and the more you put on, the more obvious the bunch will look on the bottom.

The best hooklink materials are definitely the soft and supple ones as they allow the light hookbait to turn more quickly and gain a purchase that's more effective with a small, light hookbait. It is worth bearing in mind that the effectiveness of the Mag-Aligner Rig may be impaired if there is any weed on the bottom over which

it has been cast. The small hooks the rig needs to function are not generally suited to pulling big fish out of thick weedbeds, and the maggots moving on the hook itself have the tendency to bury the hook in the weed, either making it hard for the carp to locate, or even worse, snaring the hook and stopping the fish from being able to suck in the hook whilst feeding.

The Medusa

The second type of popular maggot presentation is the Medusa Rig. This is basically a description for any rig where a number of maggots are first threaded, using a sewing needle, onto dental floss or light line, and then tied onto the Hair so that the maggots form a ball of bait. This creates a more conventional-sized hookbait, and is particularly useful when you are fishing over a choddy lakebed and in weed where the Mag-Aligner is less effective. One angler who has used this type of rig with a huge amount of success is my mate and Crafty regular, Dave Benton. I was curious as

to why he preferred the Medusa-style presentations, and he explained that he prefers it to the Mag-Aligner simply because it is more of a target and heavier, his thinking being that when the carp are feeding hard on the maggots they really dig into a bigger bed and he wants a bait

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that won't waft around with the water displaced by hard-feeding big fish. Whether this is the case or not I am not entirely sure, but I know several other good anglers who seem to catch a lot of big fish from a variety of carp lakes on Medusa Rigs.

My favoured Medusa Rig is simplicity itself and was shown to me by Nigel 'Monki' Hodgson. A standard Hair Rig is tied, using a Knotless-Knotted hook with a piece of fake Enterprise Corn being held in position by a small rig ring on the Hair. I thread around 10 maggots onto a piece of dental floss, which is then tied onto the ring. This means the hookbait sits gently on the lakebed with the maggots wafting just above the plastic corn. Simple, yes – but who said the best rigs had to be complicated! The rig ring is incorporated just to make tying on the maggots easier. The larger hookbait means that larger hooks can be used without compromising the balance of the rig, which is an extremely important consideration when fishing for big fish near weed, snags, or severe topographical features.

If you normally trap the Hair onto the bend of the hook, or use shrink tubing to create a bent hook effect, then you can apply your favoured



This stunner fell foul of the Mag-Aligner tactics outlined in this feature.



HOW TO TIE... LEWIS' FAVOURED MEDUSA RIG



1 You will require the above components in order to tie Lewis' Medusa Rig.



2 Start by threading a single grain of fake corn onto 5ins of exposed braid.



3 Now tie a small rig ring onto the end of the braid section above the wide section of corn.



4 Slide the grain of corn back down the rig until it sits flush against the ring.



5 Attach an Incizor hook with a Knotless Knot. (Note Lewis' preferred length of Hair)



6 Tie a Figure-of-Eight loop in the other end of the hooklink for use with quick-change clips.



7 Next, thread approximately 10 maggots onto a fine sewing needle, as shown here.



8 Simply transfer the maggots onto a 6ins length of dental floss material.



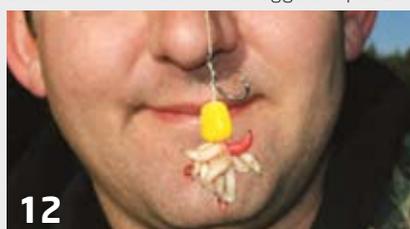
9 Thread one of the tag ends of floss through the rig ring, as illustrated in the picture above.



10 Tie an overhand knot between the two tag ends of floss to secure the maggots in place.



11 Pull the knot down tight and tie another two knots to further secure the maggots.



12 Trim away the remaining tag ends and your lovely Medusa Rig is now complete!

tweaks to the rig. When the fish are on the maggots and feeding hard, you know you are going to get bites, after that the fine-tuning of the hooking arrangement is more to do with personal confidence than making a huge difference to the number of bites. I rarely suffer hookpulls because I feel that the slight balancing and aggressive feeding ensure the hookbait is eaten confidently, meaning few hookholds are on the extremities of the carp's lips.

Lead Arrangement and PVA

Whichever rig I choose to present my maggots with, I tend to use the same lead arrangement for 90% of my maggot fishing, creating a Helicopter-type arrangement using an in-line lead held in position by a Size 8 flexi-ring swivel onto which you tie the PVA bags of freebies. On many waters where leadcores are not welcome, this means the hooklink can be mounted on a smaller Size 12 flexi-ring running on the lead insert and held in place by the lead's tail rubber. Not only does this arrangement ensure that the insert takes the strain from a hard-fighting fish and protects the line running through it, but also means you are keeping the end tackle as uncluttered as possible, and less obvious. Quick changes of the hooklinks are facilitated as normal by incorporating a small Covert Easi-Clip, or, as is my preference, a Q-ring.

“When tying up the PVA bag it is well worth leaving a few inches of PVA above the overhand knot as a means of tying it to the swivel”

When tying up the PVA bag it is well worth leaving a few inches of PVA above the overhand knot as a means of tying it to the swivel. This creates a much stronger connection and means you can really give your cast a good whack without fear of the bag and the hookbait parting company, either during flight or when they hit the water. It's worth nicking the hook carefully through a couple of strands on the PVA as this both stops the hooklink tangling, and also means that you know your hookbait is in an attractive and very visual pile of freebies when the PVA dissolves. Imagine this – a big fish moves over a big PVA bag's worth of maggots, and whilst sucking up a load it gets hooked. The fish is going to cough out all the bait in its mouth as it tries to eject the hook, or bolts away. All it has done is spread the bait about a little bit, which can only help to build up the swim, especially if you are getting regular action and topping up the area with more bags of maggot on every cast. Action can often escalate when fish activity in the baited area increases as the bags are sucked up, fish hooked, and they spread the bait out more and more. Magic!

LEWIS' TIP



To attach a PVA bag, leave around 3-4ins of PVA above the knot and attach this tag end of PVA to the ring swivel with an overhand knot. Carefully nick the hook into the side of the mesh bag which will prevent a tangle when casting. Make sure the swivel underneath the lead is dry before you try tying the PVA bag to it. This can be done by placing the tackle amongst the maggots in maize, which will absorb any excess moisture.

Free Bait

Of course you can supplement the process by spodding out freebies into the area, and to do this there is nothing better than a Pocket Rocket. These small spods create little disturbance, and are perfect for maggots because they are constructed without loads of big holes, which would otherwise let the maggots escape during spodding.

Sometimes in good feeding conditions it is hard (impossible almost) to overfeed with the maggots when you are fishing a water

with a high stock of hungry fish. In this scenario, unless you are lucky enough to have money to burn, or own a maggot farm, it may be necessary to supplement the loose feed with some other particle. Personally, I prefer white maggots for most of my carp fishing, so I have found it is very effective to bulk up the loose feed in the swim with pale particles such as groats, wheat, and barley. These roughly mimic the maggot, and as long as the maggot is being put

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in little and often there is no detrimental effect to the catch rate – just a little less pain to the delicate wallet region!

Another way of making the maggots go further is to freeze any you have left at the end of a session rather than chucking them in the edge. If you take them to the lake and use them quickly you will find the carp don't mind eating the

maggots when they are fresh out of the freezer. Be careful though, as they go off very quickly and you will find the feeding response to dead maggots dramatically reduces as they get older. As a spodded

supplement to the live maggots being fired out in the PVA bags with the hookbaits, they are definitely well worth considering.

Very few venues will not respond to a concerted maggot attack, and either of these rigs will successfully catch fish on almost any venue in the country. All you have to do is find the fish and present them these appetising bags of protein in the appropriate manner, and you too can enjoy some great angling with a great all-round bait. **CC**

The maggot attack can certainly be very productive at this time of year!

