

Margin fishing and stalking have always been a big passion of mine, even from the early days in my carp fishing career. I would often use paste baits to outwit my quarry, only being able to fish a few yards from the bank. This was more due to the soft bait really, but this close range carp fishing has always stayed in my blood.

These days the difference I see between myself and some other anglers I speak to on my travels is that I set out to fish the margins with 100% commitment (if the conditions and the location's right). Some seem to use a marginal spot for somewhere to sling their third rod along with a handful of bait; a bit of a waste really as more carp swim under your rod tips than you might think. With the margin being the largest feature of the lake (if you don't count the lake bed), it's no surprise it's one of the carp's favourite patrol routes.

There's a lot to take into consideration when targeting a margin monster. Stealth and patience will be needed by the bucket load, along with a few timed-served tricks for good measure. Think about these factors and the odds can really be put in your favour, and help to get you well and truly stinking of wet carp by the end of the day!

Lead systems

Before I take you through one of my recent margin sessions, I think I best touch on the end tackle components I use, along with the main lines which help me tame the marginal carp. One of the most overlooked items of carp gear I see on the shelves in tackle shops is the



One of my favourite stalked carp of the year

lead system. Most become a slave to what they have used for years, but each one really does have a different job and will make the carp act in a different way when hooked, not to mention help you land your prize.

Growing up with silt up to my waist while fishing the Shropshire meres as a lad, I settled on a 2oz lead for most of my silt angling. I found it worked well for me in the closer range silty waters and, being a lot less weight than most use around the county, it turned into an edge in itself.

A standard lead clip is one item I use, like most out there really. This is coupled with 12 inches of Covert Tungsten Tubing. The reason I favour tubing is if I am faced with marginal pads or weed, the lead will eject but, more importantly, the tubing will stay with the weed or where the carp enters pads, protecting the line from shells or sharp objects as the line passes through at a runaway pace! If the tail rubber is put on lightly the carp will eject the lead on the take, and

more often than not stop and chill, thinking it's got rid of the rig. This gives us those vital seconds to get to the rod if fishing near a snag of some sort. A chod rig will give the same sort of effect as well, but for a margin trap in clear water a simple bottom bait rig is always more effective and less obvious to the carp.

One of my favourite lead systems for margin work is a simple inline lead – there's less to see and it always has the carp bolting from the margins – but only if it's a near-s snag-free water/swim. A very exciting setup to use. Slightly different in its make-up, I like to use Gardner's 45lb Camflex Leadfree in muddy silt for the low-viz leader in this case. It's very strong but, being very minimal, ideal for clear-water margin monster hunting! As you can see these are very simple but they both have their plus points in my close range angling. Well worth considering in all angling really.

The rig is also simple: a size 6 Covert Mugger tied blow-back style

Lead systems I use for margin monsters – each has its own job



Covert Mugger – need I say more?



CREEPING UP ON A MARGIN MONSTER

Nick likes it up close and personal...



Keeping an eye out for ghostly shadows

A stunning margin water


Simple but more than effective

with seven inches of supple 20lb Trickster. Simplicity itself, but it works well and has landed every margin monster I've hooked this year!

The main line I use has to be very reliable and strong, not to mention very abrasion resistant. Mirage fluorocarbon is deployed if I want to pin the main line tight to the lakebed, and GT80+ comes into its own if I need to lay the line over pads or silkweed. That said if there are sharp ledges which become a problem, I have sometimes found the slightly less dense GT80+ gives me a better line lay than very dense fluorocarbon, so choose your main line carefully to suit the water you intend to fish!

Creeping around

Due to a long journey, I arrived at the lake mid-morning. A hot yet breezy day was forecast. After pinpointing the carp in main areas of the lake, I set about checking out the margins. The west bank is



Feeding before
the take came
- all 37lb 2oz
of her!

Stalked 37lb
2oz margin
monster!

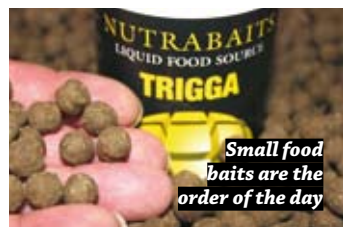


GT80+ comes into its own
if I need to lay the line over
pads or silk weed

MONSTER!

always a good bet on any lake, as it gets the morning sun beaming down and warming the shallows quickly, and acts as a bit of a suntrap for most of the day! Sneaking in and out of a few swims, I set about creating a quiet swim of my own. With my bivvy set well back from the water's edge, I tried to make out that I wasn't there – to the carp anyway!

Keeping my rod tips well back from the water's edge, I set about placing a couple of traps for the coming night/next morning (unless they rattled off before then of course). A simple trail coming away from an overhanging bush was the



Small food
baits are the
order of the day



Does what
it says on
the tin!

first and the other was a small bed of chops set up in a little deeper water halfway down the marginal shelf out to the right (with a flat pear lead and chops everything stayed put on the slope). Looking into the bush as the day rolled by I could see the odd carp ghost through. It was amazing to see; one second a light lake bed, the next a dark shadow appeared from nowhere.

Soon a bleep came from my receiver, before the sound left the air it was joined with the back-up chorus ringing from the clutch on my reel. Skipping down the bank to a bent length of carbon, I was pleased to see it had kited out into open water. Rod tip pounding and line hissing from the spool, I soon gained control. After a spirited battle an upset mirror rolled into my net. A few quick pictures, and

the rod was again flicked out to the spot with another small trail of bait added (feeding to my bites) and I was ready for the next bite.

Morning came and, with other marginal spots baited around the pool from the day before, it was easy to see the areas the carp came to. Some ate breakfast and left without paying! With a stiff, cool breeze all night, it was no wonder the carp had stayed a little deeper that morning. Looking down into the bush I saw a shadow ghost through, a little deeper and just off my baited line. It was only 5am so I thought I would give the sun a little more time to work its magic and hopefully warm the shallows a little more, bringing the carp to my rig.

Two hours later I watched with amazement as three carp came in and out of the spot, the largest feeding and moving very slowly compared to the others, being regularly overtaken by them as they did a fast lap in and out of my spot. It makes sense why the larger carp don't come out so often, with the racers snatching at everything that's not nailed down! Thirty minutes later it was very noticeable that they seemed to patrol two feet away from my rig. Waiting for the right moment, I decided to make an adjustment to the position of my

rig; a slight lift and a drop, just two feet further out. Five minutes later and with no carp appearing, I really thought I messed it up big time, but as I sat crouched down in the brambles, a large dark shadow appeared from out of the gloom. Within seconds it swam straight at my rig, flashing at the hookbait. In something of a trance watching the action, I was somewhat surprised as the short rod in my hand pulled round violently and the spool started to hiss! Powering off down the margin, she had no intention of stopping at all. Luckily for me she decided to go deep and continued to bolt out into the lake. The fish kited up and down the lake and I would gain 30 yards only to lose another 40 yards seconds later! The battle continued for 15 minutes and I held my breath at every roll as it neared the net. After a few gulps of air it decided to slow slightly and then it was mine, spitting water as it drifted into my net!

It was a truly awesome battle that I won't forget in a hurry, and at 37lb 2oz it was a big old margin monster to boot! I've had some stunning margin carp this year, and to be able watch the carp take the hookbaits and how they act on the baited spot, you can't help but learn. Give it a go – it's addictive!