

Don't ignore the silt!

Three hookbaits fished at various depths, and all three in the silt



Silt! Who would want to put a hookbait in that? Well I would, for one simple reason: it is often full of bloodworms!

In the Silt!

I would rather present a bait in this stuff than over gravel any day – it's where the bloodworm live!

Bloodworms are not worms *per se*, but larvae that live and feed in among the silt in our waters, and as we all know, carp absolutely love them!

Carp get plenty of benefit from gorging on bloodworms as they contain haemoglobin (as do we in our blood), a substance which takes oxygen around the body and releases it to the vital areas. Bloodworms are not high in protein or fats but do contain amino acids. This is how I understand it anyway,

and it's why carp want to eat them so much. Bloodworms tend to appear around March and continue in batches every two to four weeks throughout the summer, turning into midges. It's a fine matchman's bait, but not used a great deal.

Most anglers love to fish over hard gravel and will actively search out these spots. Obviously, the carp will feed over gravel, as they will any other type of bottom, but if there is silt or I find a silt spot around an area that's

predominantly another type of bottom, then my hookbait will always go in the silt. It's no secret that the carp love to feed in the silt, but obviously some lakes don't have any and if your venue is full of weed and gravel for example, then obviously this is all you can fish to.

On one particular reservoir years ago we used to drop our hookbaits on the far margin after casting the 80 yards over from the opposite bank, and then using chest waders to walk the hookbait

in from the far side. We would actually stand on the lead and hookbait to push them both into the silt. This was devised after watching the carp sticking their heads right in the silt, feeding hard on the bloodworm. The takes we received using this method were awesome, but it did take some bottle to try it in the first place, I can tell you! If it was thick, sludgy silt I don't think it would have worked as the hook may not have been able to make it to the fish's mouth.



Test your lead clip set-up by holding the lead and pulling the hooklink



The lead should come away easily and the swivel shouldn't pull free from the clip – keep it simple and safe

“Rigs and bait can be adjusted to suit the silt you have in front of you”

need to take on a full test curve to extract a lead from the silt after a cast to one part of the lake, and when winding in the lead would sometimes come back with bloodworms all over it. Confidence was high when that happened. The reservoir had mainly a silt bottom, around 70%, with pockets of bloodworm dotted around the silt. It also had masses of swan mussels, weed and gravel areas, too, as well as the islands – a carp angler's paradise. However, it was never a case of find the silt and catch, as the fish could feed over any of these areas, but if I managed to find a bloodworm bed in a silt area, it was definitely the place to be.

There are different types of silt and most would agree the rotten smelling stuff is not the place to fish, but I've found over the years that there is as much bloodworm in this type of silt as the firmer shallower variety, and I have caught when fishing in the horrible stuff. If fish are showing over a rotten smelling silt area then the strongest smelling bait you have would be the best option, preferably not a fishmeal, though, as fishmeal baits in my experience take on the smell of the silt much quicker than other types of hookbait.

Silt rigs

Rigs and bait can be adjusted to suit the silt you have in front of you. My local venue is also predominantly silt, but it's shallower, firmer silt and has far less bloodworm than the aforementioned reservoir. In my local, bottom baits and pop-ups all work as well as each other and the key is finding small features on the bottom that attract the fish to feed in the area as well as looking for natural feeding spots. An old tyre half sunk into the silt at the Salamander Lake was always good to drop a hookbait next to.

The chod rig is the newest version of the original silt/helicopter rig. When fishing over deeper silt a chopper would be the most effective presentation with the top bead set far enough up the line or leader to allow the lead to plunge into the silt, but not drag the hooklink in with it. When fishing over the shallower, firmer silt, say two to three inches deep, then I

would be as happy with a lead clip set-up as with a chopper. For me, the Gardner lead clips work perfectly, releasing the lead when they are supposed to, and can be set to release on the take or if the tail rubber is pushed on fully and the lead were to snag it takes hardly any pressure and the lead is off. They work perfectly with a size 8 Flexi Ring or Kwik Loc Swivel.

Hooklinks

A green or lighter coloured hooklink will show up on a dark silt bottom. At night this does not matter but if you want to keep your rig as well presented as possible and have a better chance of a take during daylight (bearing in mind there are only around six or seven hours of darkness at the moment) then a nice dark hooklink would be best. Drop a rig on some silt in a margin area where you can see it. This will

give you a good idea of how it looks in a fishing situation.

Subterfuge is a superb material for fishing over any type of bottom, but if you are a coated hooklink fan then two that I quite like for fishing over silt are Disruption and Slyskin, both in camo brown colour and 15lb breaking strain. Both these hooklinks are extremely easy to use and very supple as coated braids go. The Disruption changes colour from a dark brown to a lighter brown thus breaking up the outline as it sits along the bottom. This one could be fished over any type of bottom and I particularly like it when there are dead leaves and other debris on the lake bed. The Slyskin is a constant dark chocolate brown colour and I prefer this when fishing further out into the lake where the bottom could be constant clean silt, much the same depth and colour throughout.



If Carlsberg did bait...

My favoured deep silt presentation
Below: My preferred hooklinks for fishing over the brown stuff



There was around six inches to the gravel underneath and we pushed the leads down to the gravel and the hookbaits around three inches down into the silt.

Finding silt

In order to find silt when casting a marker set-up you are looking for a smooth motion on the rod tip, and the easier the lead comes back across the bottom the shallower/firmer the silt is. On the same reservoir years back, the rod would

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Baits

We all used fishmeal baits back then. The odd birdfood or protein was about during the colder months but generally fishmeals were the be all and end all of everyone's fishing. When hookbaits were retrieved and sniffed the only thing I could smell on mine was silt. After two casts with a fresh hookbait the fishmeal smell had gone and the silt had taken over. I'm going back the best part of 20 years here and can only wish the Cell was around then. The Cell, not being a fishmeal, would have held its own against the strong smelling silt, but that's not the best bit! With it being a pale biscuit colour it really stands out without being too blatant on the bottom. It immediately looks like washed-out bait that has been out on the lake bed for days.

When using bottom baits I like air-dried dumbbell hookbaits which have been soaking in Cell bait dip for months. If I am going down the buoyant route then an alternative hookbait such as an over-flavoured Blackcurrant or Scopex pop-up in white is my choice, usually fished on a chod or multi-rig depending on how slack I can get my lines.

Spod mixes work well over a silt bottom. When I use a spod mix over silt I do it two ways. Either I use a dark mix such as hemp and groundbait but for a visual aspect I

add either a few bright bottom baits or half a tin of corn. Secondly, I go the whole hog and put in a load of sweetcorn or maize for the full visual attraction. All my particles are prepared and supplied by Kent Particles; it always comes delivered fresh to my door, which suits me perfectly.

Spodding on to the silt



Fishing in or around a silt spot, especially if it contains bloodworm, and perhaps making a few simple tweaks to your end tackle and bait to maximise presentation is well worth a try. Don't ignore the silt!

Above: A bright spod mix for sight attraction



A silt feeder taken on the lead clip set-up