

Pics: Jon Bones

ANGLER FILE



JOHN
ELMER

AGE: 35

NICKNAME: The
Bushwhacker

UK PB: 42lb

SPONSORS: Gardner
Tackle and Poacher Baits

KEEPIN' IT REAL

Tying up a fresh rig for an assault on a well-stocked water. These tactics differ from those used on my syndicate waters and, although the changes are subtle, they are really important.

In a brand-new series, noted big-fish anglers reveal how they approach waters that us lesser mortals face on a regular basis. First up it's **JOHN ELMER**...

Whether targeting doubles in your local water or setting your stall out for a specific target fish, the foundations to success are the same. It's a cliché, but you get out of this game what you put into it. The difference is that much of the work that goes into fishing hard waters is done prior to or in between sessions, learning about the venue and the carp you're trying to catch, baiting up and priming areas or just spending time walking the banks. The work that goes into catching on well-stocked waters, however, is done on the session itself, the only exception being if it's a water that you can visit regularly and bait up.

TOP TIP



TAKE A FEW TIGERS

One bait that's done the business time and time again is tiger nuts. These have produced bites on all manner of waters, so I don't leave home without a small bag of hook baits. Check the rules to make sure that they're allowed before using them.

There is always a bite to be had on runs waters, so if you're not catching then you need to be proactive. I'll leave a bait in position for 40 minutes maximum without a bite before trying something else, be that a different bait, casting to another area or whatever.

For this reason it's often beneficial to travel light. If you see a fish in a different area of the lake, or simply can't get a bite from the swim that you're in, then it's time to move. Only taking the kit that you need not only makes this easier, but you will be more inclined to move when needed because it isn't such a big task. A small chair, rucksack, cool bag, rods and an unhooking mat are all that John takes. Nevertheless, a barrow is employed to make staying mobile even easier.

Concentrating on one specific water for a certain fish, or group of fish, means that this water is where you spend all of your time. That target water/fish occupies your thoughts every minute of every day, and for each spare minute you have



to be out on the bank there's only one place you want to be. This is not the case on easier venues, you're free to flit from one water to the next, depending on where will offer the best chance of boosting your chances before you even set foot on the bank. Take today for example. It's currently the end of February and the water is extremely cold, but there are sunny spells and surprisingly warm temperatures forecast, at least for the morning. The carp in shallow waters will respond to this change far quicker than those in a deeper water, so I would select a venue accordingly.

Similarly, if you turn up at a water and it's packed, or you hear about a water that's producing a lot of fish, then go elsewhere. ■

A small PVA bag is attached to the rig prior to casting – a great method on any water.

Successful anglers, especially those that catch a lot of big carp, always have a special rig, the latest bait or a secret that you're not let in on right? Wrong.

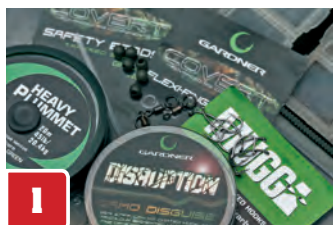
The longer you fish for carp, the more set in your ways you become. People complicate their fishing and read too much into things at times. I've always tried to keep my fishing, certainly my rigs, as simple as possible and the more you fish and catch on a certain rig the more your confidence in that presentation grows.



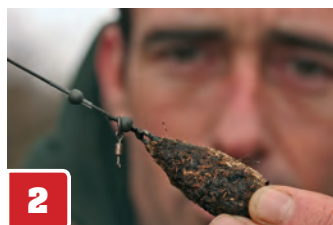
I have three that cover all of my fishing, a bottom-bait rig, the hinged stiff rig and a chod. I have absolute confidence in these and between them they cover all situations, so I don't see the need to change.

Although I use this same bottom-bait rig on my target waters as I do on runs waters, I scale down the hook size from an 8 to a 10 and the hook bait down to 12mm. Other than that, the rig remains identical.

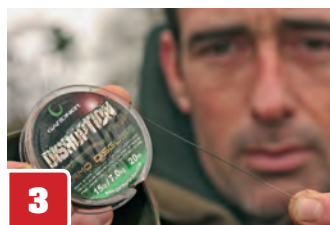
STEP-BY-STEP TIE A BOTTOM-BAIT RIG THAT WILL WORK EVERYWHERE



These are the components that you'll need. Note that they're all dark, drab colours.



Tie up a helicopter rig. This is the presentation that I use for the majority of my fishing.



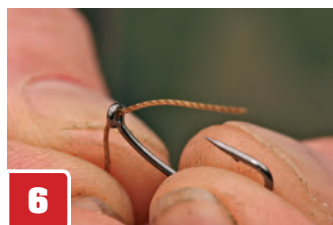
Take 12 inches of coated braid. This is the one I've been using of late – it's due in the shops soon.



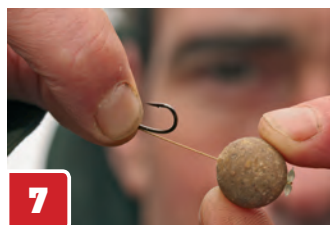
Strip the outer coating from the last five inches of the coated braid to expose the supple inner.



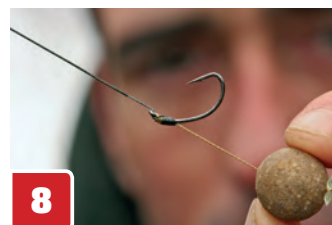
Tie a small loop in the exposed braid. Thread your hook bait on and secure it with a bait stop.



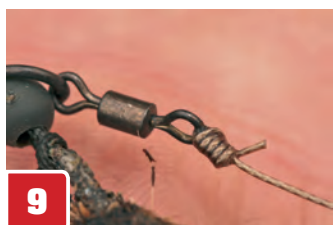
Pass the other end of the hook link through the back of the eye of a size 8 Gardner Mugga hook.



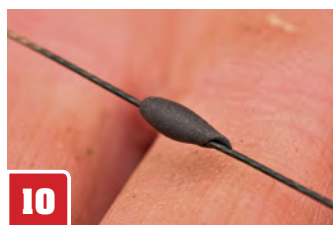
Set the length of the hair. I favour a long one when using boilies to allow the bait to move freely.



Next, you need to tie the hook in place using a knotless knot (see page 178).



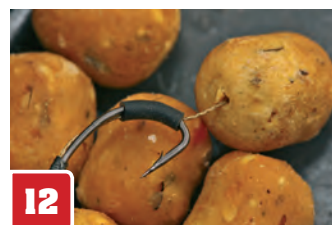
Attach the hook link to the swivel on the helicopter setup using a grinner knot (see page 178).



Mould a small blob of rig putty around the hook link, halfway down its length.



Here's the finished rig. It's simple, but works on all manner of venues for carp of all sizes.



For odd-shaped baits I use silicone tubing on the shank so that the hair sits below the point.

There's a trend to camouflage your end tackle these days. I don't go down the whole camouflage route, matching the colour of the components to the lake bed, but I do try to keep my end tackle dull so that it's inconspicuous. In the past, when using light-coloured hook-link materials, I have taken to rubbing mud into them or colouring them with a permanent marker to dull them down. This is as far as I go really. I do think that a lot of the products on the market are there more to catch the angler than the carp, so I wouldn't lose any sleep over what to use. As long as it works for you and is dull in colour then stick with it – that's the philosophy that has served me well over the years.

The subject of rig camouflage can be extended all the way from your rig to your rod tip by ensuring that everything is pinned out of harm's way. I always place a bit of putty on my hook

Whether targeting small carp, or larger specimens like this one, the foundations of carp fishing remain the same.



My home-made, lightweight bobbins coupled with...

link to do just this, use leadcore leaders wherever allowed and a small, home-made back lead with a slack line to keep everything on the bottom.



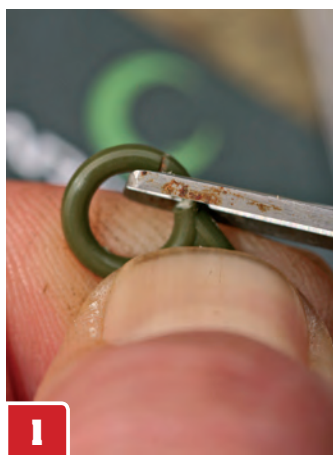
... a slack line allows my main line to sink out of harm's way.

On any venue you'll get fish that are more clued-up than the others and will enter a swim with caution. These fish will try to suss things out before eating the bait and they can, and often do, go many months between captures.

If you can set your traps with these carp in mind, then not



STEP-BY-STEP MAKE YOUR OWN BACK LEADS



1

Take a plastic run ring with a large bore and cut through the side of it, like this.



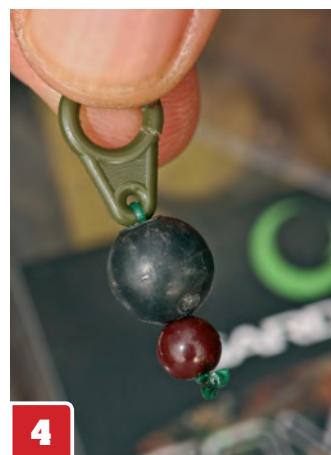
2

Pass a length of Powergum through the small hole in the bottom of the run ring.



3

Thread a drilled bullet, usually used for pike fishing, and a small, hard bead onto the Powergum.



4

Tie two overhand knots in the Powergum just below the bead and trim off the tag ends.

only do you stand a chance of catching them, but you'll give yourself the best chance of catching the slightly less clued-up carp too.

Murky water reduces visibility dramatically, so the carp rely heavily on touch to navigate and find food.

Pinning the line down with my little back leads has helped me catch on some of the difficult waters, so wherever I can I will use this tactic. It's no good using them on weedy waters because it just drags the line into the weed, but they are ideal for clear venues with a relatively flat lake bed, which is the typical make-up of the bottom in commercial, well-stocked venues. It's more of an advantage on lakes with murky water because it prevents the carp from bumping into the line and spooking. In clear water the carp can often see lines and are able to avoid them, so it's not so much of a problem. Murky water reduces visibility dramatically, so the carp in these waters rely heavily on touch to navigate and find food. Bumping into a foreign object, therefore, such as an angler's line, gives them cause to panic. What's more, well-stocked venues are often murky because of the number of fish they contain and the disturbance/water movement that they create.

In lakes that receive a lot of pressure,

especially small waters, the fish are always on guard, looking for signs of danger because they are used to being fished for. Along with camouflaging

your rigs and pinning your lines down keep bankside disturbance to a minimum and set up back from the water's edge. Doing all you can to not alert them to your presence tips the scales in your favour a little bit more.

Let's take a look at bait now. Again, it's not rocket science, but the baits that I take on a session, and use, differ depending on the venue that I visit. On a target water I'll often keep introducing bait throughout the session and stick to that predominantly for feed and hook baits.

On a runs water, though, I'll take a variety of baits to keep my options open. You'll find micro pellets, hi-attract pop-ups, boilies and particles in my bag on a well-stocked water and I'll chop and change hook baits and feed until I start to catch. As I said earlier, I'll wait a maximum of 40 minutes before trying something different, so this gives me the opportunity to cover most bases over the course of a session with regard to rigs, baits and areas of the lake. This may sound like a long time between recasts but this, potentially, equates to 12 casts per rod in an eight-hour session. That's quite a few and gives you an idea of just how proactive you should be.

Remember that we all head out to catch carp; whether we go to an ultra-hard syndicate lake or a runs water the aim is the same. Don't overcomplicate things; work at your fishing, especially when you are struggling for a bite, and success will come your way. **TC**



A small back lead on weed-free venues can be a big advantage.

REMEMBER THIS...

John's key tactical changes for visiting a well-stocked water:

1: Stick with the same rigs, but scale them down slightly.

I have three that I'm confident with and these cover all of my fishing. However, I will scale down my hook size and hook bait.

2: Carry a selection of baits.

It's often necessary to chop and change baits to get a bite, so carry a few options.

3: Recast regularly, at least every 40 minutes.

There's always a bite to be had on well-stocked waters, so if you haven't received any action within 40 minutes of casting, recast to a different area.

4: Stay mobile.

Don't take a mountain of gear with you because a move of swim is often needed. Sometimes a few moves in a day are necessary.

5: Choose a water where there's a good chance of catching.

Select a venue that is likely to produce a few bites depending on that day's weather conditions, recent form and so on.