



Angler Profile

Lewis Read

Age: 37

Hometown: Yateley, Hampshire

Occupation: Marketing manager for Gardner Tackle

UK PB: 47lb 12oz



THE FINE LINE

Thinking angler **Lewis Read** shows you how fining down the approach in winter can help to achieve more cold water bites.



Across all forms of fishing it is a readily accepted hard and fast rule that the less obvious the tackle used when trying to catch a fish, the more bites it will produce. To match anglers this can mean gossamer-fine lines and tiny hooks when presenting small baits like a single maggot or pinkie. The finer the line and the less weight and bulk a hook adds to the bait being presented, the more natural the bait will behave. If the fish think the hookbait is just like the free offerings in the area then they are very likely to eat it – bingo!

drop down the breaking strain of lines, hooklinks, and hook sizes. The reduced hours in the day also means that most waters become clearer. Even on busy prolific waters that have large stocks of fish the water may become much clearer because the stocks of all species feed less vigorously and for shorter periods. These feeding periods often occur in the middle of the day, and this in itself dictates that the fish are likely to be able to see anglers' tackle that much easier. Those big hooks, baits and thick lines stand out like a sore thumb, when earlier in the year they were not nearly as big an issue. Is it any wonder that refining bait and tackle is such a big step towards catching more regularly when fishing for cold water carp?

Why Do We Need to Fine-down?

The same rule also applies to the larger carp we angle for. The baits may not be as tiny as a single pinkie, but the carp often feed for comparatively shorter periods so we want to make the most of every chance we get. Add into the equation that the carp you're trying to tempt have possibly been fished for all summer and autumn, and may have even been banked on several occasions over that time, and then you have another compelling reason to fine-down your tackle.

With carp we still have to balance the strength of our tackle against the awesome power of the fish we want to catch. After all, it is not an acceptable practice to fish with the tackle so fined-down that the carp take an obscenely long time to land once hooked, but there is still a huge amount of scope when angling in open water to fine-tune the tackle so it is far less conspicuous. Over the autumn, as the water cools down and nights get longer, underwater weedbeds thin out dramatically (and in many cases disappear totally), which means anglers

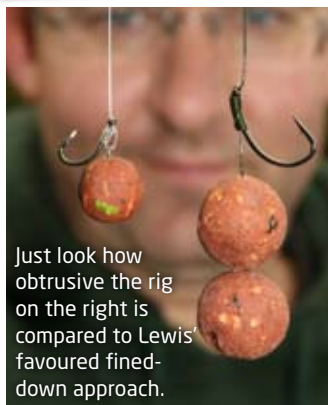
Smaller Baits

Effective terminal arrangements are all about balance, and smaller hooks are best married with smaller baits. It is definitely a case of 'chicken and egg' as to why the smaller baits work best in cold water, but there can be no denying that smaller baits often really produce the goods in the winter. But is it the smaller bait, or the smaller hooks and lines? Well, as with everything in the wonderful world of carp, when you scrutinise the whys and wherefores you find that it is most likely a combination of factors. The small baits enable anglers to fish balanced fine terminal tackle, but it also takes longer for the fish to eat enough to get filled up, so it encourages more feeding activity.

Remember that carp don't need much food in the cold, as the water temperature governs the rate at which their metabolism works. So, if they have to work a little bit harder or feed a little bit longer to have their fill, then the likelihood is that the chances of getting a bite are greatly increased by keeping them feeding in the swim for longer. Another big benefit of going smaller on the bait size is that the surface area is massively increased in relation to the volume of bait being applied, which in turn means the attractors that stimulate the fish in the area to eat are released from the bait more efficiently.

Lighter Leads

Location is never more important than in the winter, but what has that got to do with fining down? Well imagine the scenario – you have found some active carp in front of an unoccupied swim and want to stealthily flick out a couple of baits into the area. If you have reduced your main line strength you won't need such heavy leads to reach the fish in the swim. This means you can cast single hookbaits or small PVA bags into areas without the resonating thump of a 3 or 4oz lump of lead attached to it. The sound that a small lead makes is tiny in comparison (even more so if you feather it just before it hits the water) to standard heavy leads, and as long as you don't make repeated casts you may be surprised at the lack of reaction the plop of the leads causes. The carp more often than not stay in the area, and that means you are still in with a great chance of a bite.



Just look how obtrusive the rig on the right is compared to Lewis' favoured fined-down approach.



Small baits have lots of advantages at this time of year.

"Even on busy prolific waters that have large stocks of fish the water may become much clearer because the stocks of all species feed less vigorously and for shorter periods"



Scaling down the lead size will give you an edge.

Baiting Strategy

With the small boilies, a few can be pinged out near hookbaits without creating a lot of disturbance if you want freebies in the swim (yet another benefit for the small baits!). Baiting is tricky, and it's hard to talk about winter fishing without touching on it, but I would advise that more is less, and if you want to regularly feed the carp in your venue it is probably better to trickle bait in little and often when not fishing in order to keep them active.

Main Line and Leaders

As with all angling, there are big advantages in using thinner diameter main lines that are far less obtrusive to carp than a thick line. Bear in mind that it is essential to still fish safely for the target carp. However, in open water situations there is no doubt that this change can make a huge difference to the carp in recognising they are being angled for, and if anglers are able to fool the fish into thinking they're not there by camouflaging all the tackle, then that is a BIG step in the right direction. In some circumstances you cannot go too fine; if fishing for really big carp near decaying weedbeds or snags (both favourite winter haunts) the chances are you will need the security of strong line to be able to cope with a fish boring hard for these underwater obstacles.

The finer diameter lines are also useful for long-range fishing. When coupled with long fluorocarbon leaders such as Gardner Mirage in 18lb+ breaking strain, anglers can create a very covert arrangement that carp are less likely to be aware of. If long-range fishing isn't necessary then I would recommend trying shorter Mirage leaders as an alternative to leadcore, which can stand out a mile in some specific circumstances, such as when it is coming off the top of a bar or running across a very clean lakebed. Sometimes seemingly small tweaks can be the difference between success and failure! The final decision on how fine to go is yours, and none of the angling writers can offer hard and fast rules – it all depends on the size of the carp and the nature of the lake you are fishing. However, as

Big Boilies - Big baits will make a big splash!



Small Boilies - Smaller baits such as 10mms will cause less disturbance as they hit the surface.



Where possible, and when it is safe to do so, fining down the main line increases the chances of fooling those wary winter carp.

a general guideline I will offer some guidance on tackle suited to open water fishing where there aren't loads of dead trees or banks of weed left over from the summer. The size of the target fish you

are aiming to hook and land is probably less important than being familiar with the tackle being used and your ability to play the carp to the bank successfully when using it.

Hooks

Hooks as small as Size 10 and even 12 can be used with total confidence for carp on normal carp rods. Use past experience to help you choose the hooks you rely on for your winter campaign. For instance, I often use the Size 12 Mugga hooks and Size 10 Incizors when Zig fishing in the warm months, so I know I have patterns to hand that are both super-sharp and man enough to cope with big carp. Between these two different patterns I am able to tie up almost all the rigs I employ in the winter.

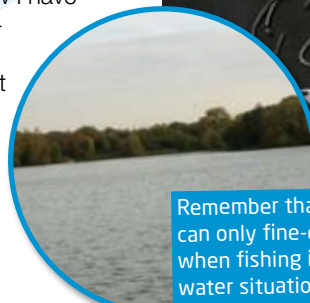
If you use the same logic then you should have complete confidence that this key item of tackle will be up to the job.



Slack lines are a must!



Small hooks go hand in hand with small baits.



Remember that you can only fine-down when fishing in open water situations.

Hooklinks

Try to choose a hooklink that blends seamlessly with the lakebed. Fluorocarbon can be a great advantage through the winter because it will virtually disappear, but don't discount nylon hooklinks, as they also offer very subtle options on presentation. I would suggest that both these are great for fishing baits like boilies and stack arrangements of maize – both of which are fairly substantial and weighty. The inherent stiffness does not severely affect the natural behaviour

The little-and-often baiting approach is favoured by Lewis in winter.

If you are fishing near snags then you need to ensure your tackle is strong enough to deal with it.

HOW TO... TIE LEWIS' FINE WINTER RIG



1 Above are all the components that Lewis uses to tie his favoured rig.



2 Cut 12ins of Mirage and attach one end to a hook with a Knotless Knot.



3 Now slide one of the small ring links onto what is essentially the Hair, like so.



4 Bring the Hair back through the back of the eye and trim, leaving 1 cm of excess.



5 Carefully melt the end of the tag with a lighter, as illustrated above.



6 Use the end of the lighter to blob the melted end and a D should be created, like this



7 Lewis then attaches a small rubber bait band to the ring loop-to-loop style.



8 The next step is to secure your chosen 10mm hookbait onto the bait band.



9 Lewis' fined-down rig is now complete and ready to get those winter bites.



Finer diameter hooklinks also score well in winter.

of the hookbait the same as it would with really lightweight small baits such as maggots or sweetcorn. There are also some incredibly thin, strong braided and skinned hooklinks that are supplied in colours that will blend in very well with the chosen venue's lakebed. These ultra-supple braids are always my first choice for fishing maggots, whether Mag-Aligner-style or on a Medusa Rig, and also my first choice when fishing a balanced bit of sweetcorn. Remember the match anglers I mentioned at the start? Bet they wouldn't catch much if they stuck a few maggots on the end of a brutally stiff hooklink!

Conclusion

Whether you choose to fish with a bright, highly-coloured single hookbait, or a small bag of chops and maggots, or maybe even an aromatic sliver of 'Rami (yes, try to save some for the fish!), the chances are that anglers fishing with a finer setup will catch more frequently than those who carry on doing the same thing as they did in the winter. If you are happy with your results without changing your approach then crack on, but if you are aiming to maximise the fun you have and the carp you catch, then maybe it's time to have a rummage in the old tackle box and dig out a few bits to fine-down your rigs. You never know, the next bite could be a winter whacker! **CC**

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Winter success as a direct result of fining down everything.