



Gardner has made its name in the world of Carp fishing but the various fishermen that work here like to try their hands at many different species and without a doubt our products cover a wide spectrum of angling situations. So when one of our longest standing employees, Paul Maltby, mentioned that he was going to have a go at the big Perch residing in a local carp puddle, we knew it wouldn't be long before Martin Lewis, another Perch enthusiast, tagged along to fish alongside him, pick up a few tips and report back with the results.

Now for someone that has worked for Gardner

for twenty years, Paul does not get out on the bank side much so we were hoping that this rare opportunity would prove fruitful. I knew the lake we were going to fish as I had done many sessions carping there for fun with light gear (when I need to have my fix of putting a carp in the net after some ball breaking syndicates) but I'd had no experience of the perch fishing we were to enjoy there. As is often the case, this type of Carp water sees a lot of pressure but next to no-one realises the potential of the other specimens that can reside in these places unmolested as everyone chases the carp alone.

I met Paul on the bank at first light as the low light levels prompt the Perch into feeding. This is important; first or last light are often prime times for catching Perch as they really are quite intolerant of bright light and it often curbs their activities. Looking at the lake in question though our luck was in. The lake, having being dug in an area of clay, was very coloured due to the bout of wet weather leading up to our venture and the Carp that grub around in high numbers all year round.

"This heavy colouration could work in our favour as the light would not penetrate as much, hopefully leading to prolonged feeding spells."

Perch are sight feeders predominantly, but here they would have lived their life from the egg in coloured water so would be quite used to it. We



both chose to start the day using two rods with lobworm on one and a livebait on the other. Both methods are standard big Perch tactics and we were keen to see what was best on the day. Livebaits should be first choice in most circumstances as the bigger Perch really are true predators but please check they are allowed to be used on your water or seek special permission from the owner as we did. Do not despair if livebaits are not allowed, lobworms are successful over chopped worm and maggots too.

Apparently there was a good spot out in front of where I chose to fish, which in fairness was simply next to Paul for a social chinwag as this was the first time we had fished together! The hotspot was a dead tree sticking out of the lake like a mini sunken island about 30 yards out from the bank. As livebaits do not lend themselves to be cast any distance we both decided that this was where our ledgered



lobworm baits were going. Lobworms are fragile and also do not cast any distance well, but using the lightest tackle needed to reach the spot and John Roberts Bait Savers on barbless hooks, the worms were prevented from being smashed off when hitting the water.

We both used light Avon rods and samples of the new 5lb (2.3kg) hydroFLO mainline on both our rods. Our rigs, however, differed in how we chose to present our lobworms. Paul opted to suspend his baits off the bottom to waft in front of any marauding perch by using a standard running lead but with the light lead attached to a stiff boom that had a large corkball ball at the top next to the run ring to ensure it always stood up off the bottom away from any detritus that may prevent the rig being free running so offering no resistance to a taking Perch. He chose to make his worms buoyant too by adding some red Zig

Rig Foam to the hook. This foam is very dense and buoyant for its size and very hardy so can be used all day without loss of performance. I used a very basic setup which was simply a running paternoster rig with three swanshot and a hooklength of around two feet. We both used size 6 Incizor Hooks as these have a slightly longer shank than some, enabling the worms to be threaded on with security.

"We both used the 5lb lines straight through as there are no Pike present which means that wire traces can be dispensed of; an absolute asset when perching as it leads to far more finesse, another reason why Carp puddles make such good venues."

I mounted the swan shot on a weaker 4lb (1.8kg) hydroFLO link so if they got snagged for any reason I would simply lose the weak link and not lose direct contact with the Perch.

Paul was soon into Perch on the lobworms whilst we were setting up another Avon rod for livebaiting. He was the first to land one over 2lb (0.9kg) after losing a couple on the way in. I managed a couple of smaller ones - about a pound and a half - but the fact that Paul had suspended his worms definitely made a difference as he was getting far more runs than I was! This had me borrowing a syringe from

his tackle box to inject my worms so they too hovered above the bottom in the hope that I could keep up with him!

Both our worm rods were set up on two sticks using a bite alarm for indication. Perch are extremely intolerant of resistance at times so these were set on high rests and long drops with a very lightweight hanger. The hangers were made from Polyballs with Free Flow Line Clips attached to Power Gum links and were left hovering above the ground and the long drop and minimal weight made for confident takes met with a sweeping strike at range.

We both set up livebait rods having winkled out some small Roach and Gudgeon on light



float tackle that were kept in a spare landing net suspended in the margins. Again we both set these up slightly differently as who knows what works best unless various methods are tried? Paul set his up using the 5lb (2.3kg) hydroFLO straight through but chose to fix his float and bait in one position as the margin he was fishing enabled him to do so. However I chose to fish

my livebait further out at the bottom of the marginal slope and the depth of water

meant that I had to use a sliding float that came to rest on a stop knot, basically like scaled down Pike fishing. Paul tied a light lead on and set a pellet float to depth.

The hooklength was tied to a swivel and this was held in place at any depth he required by a float stop either side. He chose to tail hook his livebaits as this can be very successful with small baits as the Perch engulf them head first.

My livebait set up was a running rig set up like the ledgering rig but with a float bite indicator that would

cause the bait to remain up in the water. I used the 5lb (2.3kg) hydroFLO straight through again, but tied a loz (28g) bomb onto a link to the run ring of around two feet (60cm). Two granny knots were tied into the link to ensure it broke far easier than my mainline or hooklink if the lead got snagged for any reason. My hooklink was around a foot (30cm) long. This ensured that the bait could not reach the bottom where it would undoubtedly sulk instead of swimming around in a passing Perch's vision. The float was set to depth easily as like plumbing a swim on light float gear, the lead took the float straight under if set too shallow! Unlike Paul, I lip hooked my livebaits as I was planning to leave them out for a while and then release them after a period, unharmed as they tire.

"We scaled down the hooks to size 8 Incisors as these are fine in the wire (so do not unbalance the livebait) but very strong. They are straight eyed, straight pointed, straight shanked and therefore, basically straightforward!"

Paul's bait was fished in a classic 'Mr Crabtree' spot next to an overhanging marginal tree and his float was soon disappearing in the blink of an eye. Unfortunately the bites, though seemingly very positive, were missed time and time again and the couple of fish hooked came adrift as Paul had to clamp down hard to prevent the perch making it into the jungle of branches. Every bite missed meant a new bait as they were stripped from the hook which made for an extremely

frustrating time! Every now and then I too would experience a flurry of activity as the Perch were obviously patrolling around the base of the marginal slope but I was far luckier as I only lost a couple. By using the running float set up I was able to drop the rod tip when the float went under letting the perch have line so no resistance was felt. The strike was then met with resistance. It is worth noting that every Perch was hooked in the scissors even though they have a habit of gulping baits straight down leading to deep hooking. This was proof that they were quite fussy and the fact that the set up I was using on the day happened to be the one that was fruitful with that extra time to give a little slack.

Both methods are well worth exploring as either can have its day and be the difference between a few fish or a bumper day. Paul continued to get runs on his worm rod, but mine stayed motionless so fair's fair! The whole day was spent fishing into freezing cold high winds with a little rain and a violent hailstorm thrown in for good measure, but despite this we had Perch up to 2lb 15oz (2.7kg) and a very entertaining day! All of us at Gardner have since had a go with lots of Perch caught up to nearly 4lb; Carl in the warehouse netting a personal best of 3lb 11oz (1.7kg). Next time you fancy something different, try a bit of Perch fishing on a Carp puddle.

