



Lowering a unique flat lead into the margins. They certainly give the carp something to think about!

# THE ULTIMATE **CARP** TRAP

Innovative big-fish angler **CHRIS FELTON** has developed a lead to nail the wariest carp. He reveals all right here.



Covering these flat leads with hemp will actually result in fish feeding off the top of them!



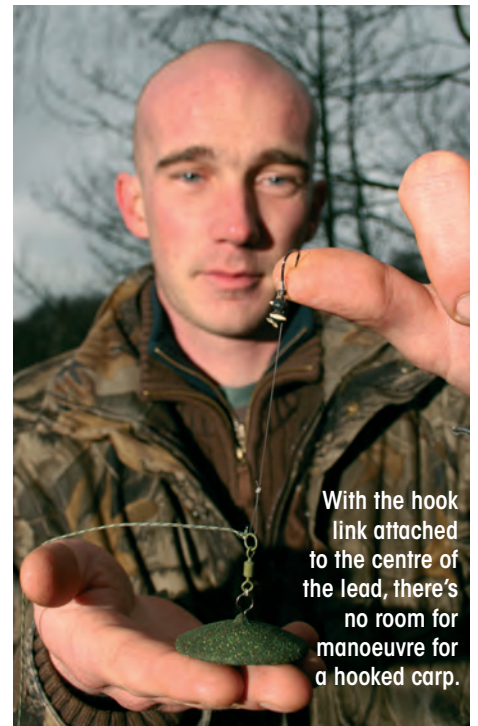
**T**hese leads were conceived as a result of my experiences at Fox Pool in Staines, where a lot of my angling was done in the edge. I first became aware of just how often the fish were getting away with it when a fish called Lumpy made a mockery of my carefully laid trap. I found her mooching around an area called The Ruin, where the water is four feet deep and crystal clear. I managed to sneak a bit of bait out when the fish had left to follow a circuit that it was making around a couple of weed beds. I'd popped a few grains of hemp down there and Lumpy scoffed them as soon as she came back in. After a few more circuits and a few more mouthfuls of hemp I felt that things were prime for a bite.

I laid my trap as carefully as I could but it was clear that Lumpy knew something had changed. She clearly knew that there was a rig down there but she happily fed around the spot before departing without coming close to being hooked.

This pattern repeated itself eight or so times and, despite trying different presentations, I couldn't hook her. I tried a 3oz inline lead on the spot but it looked so unnatural on the fine gravel. No matter what I did, the profile of the lead was all wrong. I eventually tripped Lumpy up by fining the presentation right down to a couple of grains of artificial hemp on the hair. One grain looked ridiculous against the size 8 hook but two just popped up off the D rig nicely. As she pricked herself I saw her eyes roll and she gave the characteristic flick of the gills to try to spit the rig out. When this failed she did a very quick canoe roll on the spot, upon which the lead popped out and the rig fell into a very disappointing heap. The fish corrected herself and swam off leaving me none the wiser. I fear that this happens pretty much on a daily basis out in the pond on places like the Car Park Lake. Those fish are 40lb or

50lb. They aren't just feeding once a year, they're simply slipping up once a year. Just think of all the unexplained single bleeps that you get, they could easily be fish 'doing' you in this manner.

To combat this situation I needed a lead that would guarantee better penetration immediately. From the moment a fish sucks in the bait there needs to be enough weight to pull the hook in as far as the barb on initial impact. It wasn't so much the weight of the leads that I was using that was the problem; it was more that their shape wasn't allowing me to take advantage of that weight. If you try to pull a ball-shaped lead up through the water there's very little water resistance but if you flatten



With the hook link attached to the centre of the lead, there's no room for manoeuvre for a hooked carp.



Just look at the low profile of the lead – most unobtrusive.





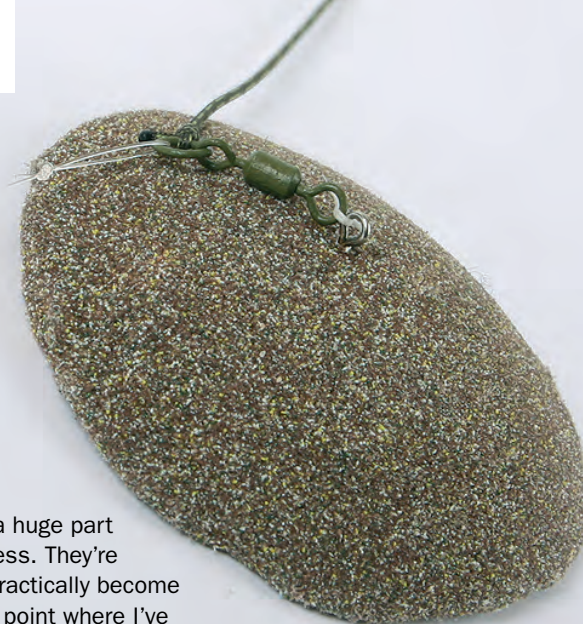
that ball off you'll find that there's a lot more. All of a sudden you have to pull the equivalent of 10 tons of water on top of the flattened lead. The flatter the lead, the better really. If you're fishing over softer, silty bottom then you even get suction when the lead is lifted out of the soft stuff.

It's all about mechanics. Standard leads are prone to what I call a seesaw effect, tipping onto one end as they are picked up. This means that the full weight of the lead isn't felt until it leaves the lake bed. Those moments before the full weight is felt could be enough for the hook to drop out – a risk that I'm not willing to take on a rock-hard venue. The only way to take advantage of the anti-seesaw properties of the flat lead was to place the attachment point right in the centre. There would be no point having it on the side or coming off a second swivel because this would simply add another pivot point.

Once I had a workable lead I carried out tests. I used a banana (with skin on) to represent the carp's mouth. I nicked the hook in and lifted the new lead setup off the ground by two inches. I then repeated this with a standard setup. The difference was incredible. The new setup nailed the hook in past the barb, whereas the normal arrangement did practically nothing in comparison. With that, it was off to the Anchor factory where I'd had a few different leads made for me already. I told them what I wanted and we literally bashed one out in 20 minutes. It wasn't easy to get a swivel attachment in a lead that's

so thin but that's a huge part of the lead's success. They're so thin that they practically become the bottom, to the point where I've actually had Car Park fish feeding off the surface of the lead itself.

It almost goes without saying that you need to lose these leads on the take. You don't want 9oz of flat lead hanging around as you play a carp; it's a recipe for disaster. Losing a lead for each fish might sound a bit pricey but the bulk of my fishing is done on fairly hard waters, so I only tend to take one or two leads each session! Usually I concentrate my efforts on spots in the edge, so I can scoop the ejected leads up with the landing net once I've dealt with the fish anyway. I use a really simple method to tie the lead on – just an overhand loop with some dental floss does the trick. I don't use 3lb mono or suchlike because there are knots that will jam a bit and I want the lead to slip very smoothly, hence the waxed floss. This helps ensure that the lead drops each and every time, as soon as the fish shakes its head. By the



**Above:** Chris uses his flat leads in combination with fluorocarbon hook link and artificial hemp.

**Below:** Tying the leads onto the hook-link swivel with dental floss helps drop them on the take.



## HOW DO YOU MAKE THE FLAT LEAD CASTABLE?



**1** Well, first you pop the lead into a tied-off section of PVA-mesh tubing.



**2** Fill the mesh tubing with freebies. Chris has used 10mm boilies in this case.



**3** Tie off the top of the bag. It's not aerodynamic but it does cast okay!



time the lead drops off the hook point will be well past the barb, so if you lose the fish beyond that stage it won't be to a hook-pull.

These leads aren't ideal for casting, which is a bit of an odd thing to say about a fishing lead. They're for a different function entirely, but the smaller versions can be cast with a PVA-bag setup. Of course, if you have a bait boat then the leads can be taken out to spots at range but you have to attach a PVA bag full of soluble foam to parachute the lead down slowly, rather than letting it drop, which risks tangling the rig or having the lead drop away from the spot. So, they're primarily for edge fishing and I like to be able to see exactly what I'm placing them on.

If you watch fish feeding on or near a clear spot you might notice that they don't feed on the clearest part. They often prefer to feed in the silt just off the spot, presumably because they've been caught before on the clearest bits. So, I take a selection of leads with different coloured coatings so that I can closely match the lake bed, for my own confidence as much as anything. I like to place the lead and rig on the edge of a clear spot as a rule, because if there is going to be any debris, sticks or leaves on the spot then it'll be in that area and I can use it to help disguise the setup. If there's a little bit of your leadcore that's not quite sitting right then you might get away with it on the edge of the spot but you certainly won't on the middle of the clear area.

I tend to change the baiting over my rigs depending on the time that I have. If I only have a few hours I'll just drop in the tiniest pinch of hemp. If I see fish visit a spot and I have a couple of nights in front of me I'll go in pretty heavy; perhaps 2kg of hemp. Hemp comes into its own on venues like the Car Park because the fish like it but they never get caught on it. Therefore, if I can get my two plastic grains into their mouths they're done for with this lead system. I completely cover the lead with hemp; it simply becomes the lake bed.

Although I designed the leads for use over a hard bottom, I have caught from weed. One such capture was Gums from Frimley Pit Three. I'd seen a group of fish close in in front of the Double Boards swim, moving over weed. I lowered a lead in with a pop-up straight off the top, which was foamed to prevent tangles. As the lead settled into the weed it made its own little clear spot, with a single bait just sitting popped up off it. It looked like a tiny spot that had been made by fish, the sort of spot that you'd never have hit with a lead! The same is possible with silty areas. If you can lower the lead softly, they won't want to push down into the sediment – they sit on top like a tiny clean spot among the silt.

I'll always use these leads when I can. I can't believe that people don't give it more thought; if carp can do us in the edge, they certainly can out in the lake. Using a setup like this is my way of evening the odds.



Attaching a PVA bag full of soluble foam allows the bag to be dropped from a boat.



This seesaw effect means that normal leads cannot compete!



Pearly Tail from the Car Park was trapped on Chris' flat leads.