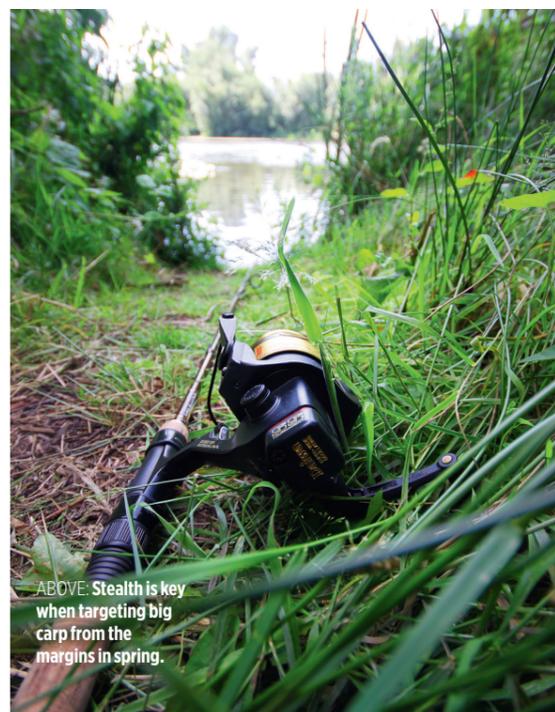


AMBUSH THEM IN THE EDGE!

At this time of year carp begin to leave their winter holding areas and investigate the edges of lakes. Gardner Tackle's Ian Lewis reveals his approach for targeting these margin marauders...



ABOVE: Stealth is key when targeting big carp from the margins in spring.

THE excitement of close-quarters fishing is hard to beat.

Watching a big carp cruise along the margin, towards your hookbait, can be heart-in-the-mouth stuff.

The pulse quickens as every lazy flick of the fish's tail inches it closer to the carefully-laid trap. It's such an exciting and effective way of targeting big spring carp, yet, on any given day, the majority of anglers on most lakes up and down the country will be fishing out into the middle of the pond.

For much of the year, that may well be the best place to target, especially in the colder months when the fish are torpid in their behaviour and stick to deep-water areas.

The whole shooting match changes, however, as the seasons progress and the fish begin migrating to the margins of lakes in search of food. At this 'change-over time', rather than fishing blind out in the middle for the whole session, it pays to reel in the main barrage of rods, grab a stalking set-up and a landing net and go in search of 'in the edge' opportunities.

One man who follows this dictum to the letter each spring and summer is Ian Lewis.

He is well-versed in the subtleties of catching big carp from the margins, and has a few tricks up his sleeve to maximise his 'stalking strike rate'.

Ian's plan of attack begins with using a rig that is perfectly designed for the high-octane, hit-and-hold action that

targeting big carp from the margins offers.

"I use 2oz-3oz inline leads, set up drop-off style. When the fish picks up the bait and the hooks are set, the lead soon ejects, the fish comes up through the weed and you're in direct contact with it. With more traditional set-ups where the lead remains attached, the fish can use it as a pivot point for ejecting the hook," said Ian.

"Above the lead I use a short length of lead-free CamFlex leader, which is perfect for draping over holes in the weed. Depending on the spot, I also put

BELOW: Ian nicks a small bag of loosefeed on to the hook before each cast.



small pieces of putty up the mainline.

"If I'm fishing really close in, these will be every 12 inches, but if I'm fishing over and down a slope I'll separate them a bit more and use a heavier bit of putty to pin it all down. I also have a really slack line so it can follow the contours of the lakebed."

On the hook Ian uses a 10mm or 12mm pop-up boilie, attached to a small swivel which runs along a hair-rigged loop on the shank of a wide gape hook attached to a short coated braid hooklink.

"The rig has good anti-tangle properties, and the pattern of hooks I favour - Talon Tips - have beaked points so won't blunt on the gravel. With the swivel included, the bait has 360-degree movement, and by putting a small piece of putty where the covering of the coated braid is broken, a hinge is formed so that when the fish tries to exhale the bait, the hook

How to set up an inline drop-off...

1



Start by splicing a ring swivel on to the end of a short leadcore leader, or a lead-free substitute leader.

2



Thread a tail rubber down the length of the leader, with the wide end facing towards the swivel.

3



Now insert the swivel into the recess on an inline lead in the 2oz to 3oz range, so that it fits snugly.

4



Finally, pull the tail rubber down the leader and over the hard plastic insert of the inline lead.

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TACTICS

falls down into the bottom lip. Plus, if you do get 'done', because you've got a buoyant bait it will kick away with the stiffness of the coated braid and reset itself," he added.

Aside from using a rig well designed for the situation, observation and concealment are paramount in these close-quarter situations, says Ian.

"I want the fish to enter the swim and come across the bait before they encounter my line, or are aware of my presence. Quite often, before I place a trap, I'll watch where a fish comes into a swim, and also where it exits, and then plan from what angle I'm going to approach it."

"Ideally, you want to conceal the line, and even the lead. Often, I try to get the lead to land on the crease between the gravel and the silt - it will blend in far better on a dark background - and to present the hookbait just on the edge of the gravel. In clear water conditions polarised glasses allow you to do this with great accuracy - it's almost like placing it by hand.

"If you can tuck yourself away and observe the fish and how they feed, you'll learn loads, and when you get proficient at it you can single out individual fish. Quite often you'll see a big one of, say, 30lb-plus swimming around with a 'bodyguard' of around 10lb, which will go into the baited area first. When this happens, I often fish my rig just 'off the spot', and the smaller fish will drift in and go crazy over the loosefeed. The big one will hang back, come across my little trap and take the hookbait with no fear, as it thinks the area is safe."

In some situations, Ian goes to even greater lengths to conceal his rig, as he explained.

"Sometimes I wrap a big bunch of Canadian pondweed around the lead. The leader on the drop-off system goes over the lead so it holds it in place. On the lakebed it flares open slightly so all you've got is a clump of weed, a piece of the brown

leader, a bit of pellet and your hookbait on display, and it looks far more natural. When the fish are ravenous and competing it's perhaps irrelevant, but when you've got a single fish that's really cautious, it's another percentage point in your favour.

"With this type of fishing the period from hooking the fish to landing it can be quite fraught and the battle can be over in no time at all - it's almost hook and hold at times.

"With the lead coming off they hit the surface and it's surprising how often you can scoop them up quite quickly!"

READ STEP-BY-STEP GUIDES TO THE BEST RIGS, ONLY AT CARPFEED.COM

RIGHT: Taking camouflage to the next level... with the help of a bunch of pondweed!
BELOW: Ian with a margin-caught spring stunner!



"When you become proficient at it, you can single out individual fish"