



**TACTICS WASHED-OUT BAIT**  
WITH SHAUN HARRISON

# GIVE 'EM

## SOAKING IT ALL UP

Baits that have been rehydrated appear more natural and allay the carp's suspicions, leading to more action.



# A DRINK

**Shaun Harrison** is a big fan of soaking his baits to give them that washed-out look. Why not treat your boilies to a slurp...

**T**he prolonged cold, dark and often crisp nights of winter, followed by slippery driveways and frozen windscreens, hardly bring on the urge to go carp fishing, do they?

They do to me. I must admit to feeling a relative smugness during the winter, and can easily warm to many memories of winter success over the years.

It is a fact that most of my personal-best carp have fallen to me at this time of year, and I honestly believe this is an opportunity to sort out the bigger fish. Undoubtedly the fish slow up and rest for much longer periods when the water is cold, but the larger ones tend to remain that little bit more active.

If everything is active then all well and good, because every winter carp I catch feels just that bit more important to me than a comparable fish in the summer. Winter carp certainly give me a buzz.

So let's now look at one of the little tricks I employ which can make all the difference between success and failure.

## **Pre-soaking**

Pre-soaking your boilies has several advantages, particularly when the carp's metabolism has been slowed by the cold. Carp are cold-blooded, and as such their energy levels are governed by the temperature of the water. I have written this countless times in the past, but it is so easy to forget. The colder the water, the slower the world is to the carp.

I like to put my free baits

(loose offerings) into water at least 24 hours before I go fishing. I use either the water from the lake I am fishing (take a bottle home with you after each trip) or bottled spring water. In the past I have filled up the bottle from other natural waters but I no longer do this for fear of spreading disease. If damp nets can spread infection, just think what pre-soaked baits could do!

I have found bottled spring water works perfectly well – certainly better than tap water, which is often tainted with various chemicals.

There are seven reasons I like to pre-soak my baits:

## **1. They appear safe and washed-out**

On most pressured waters these days the carp have learnt to associate freshly introduced boilies with danger. Generally, if fresh bait is in the swim, the chances are a baited rig will be there too. It is becoming more and more common for carp to take a couple of days to move on to and start feeding on beds of boilies.

How often do you hear of the angler who moves in after someone else, then proceeds to catch a shedload of fish? It happens a lot.

## **2. They are easier to eat**

I believe the carp prefer to eat washed-out baits regardless of how much pressure they are under. Everything the carp eats in the natural world is to a large extent liquid. The only semi-dry food they consume is our bait.

You will see once you start experimenting with pre-soaking ➔





## TACTICS WASHED-OUT BAIT

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This shows how readily pre-soaked baits release all the natural goodness they contain.

baits just how long the water takes to penetrate the skin and reach the inner core. Obviously, the larger the bait, the longer this process takes. Even after 24 hours submerged in water, most 15mm boilies are still semi-dry in the centre.

Now I can't help but think it can actually become a problem and make the fish feel a little uncomfortable eating too many fresh (dry) boilies. I do like to bring the human analysis into these situations, and the thought of eating dry cream crackers comes to mind.

Certainly, the longer I have soaked baits, the quicker they have appeared to work. It is easy to say that the reason for this is possibly too high a flavour level in the first place. I don't think so. I am sure it is down to the simple fact that the bait is easier to eat.

### 3. They are quicker to digest

If you offer the baits pre-soaked the carp should be able to digest them much more quickly once eaten, and so will come back on the feed that much quicker.

### 4. It helps stop the baits taking on the smell of the surrounding area

This is a massive advantage if you fish waters where the baits come back tainted with the smell of silt, and in some cases weed.

All boilies as purchased have been dried to a degree. This is why, when you wind your rig back in after a spell out in the lake, your bait comes back larger than it was when it was first cast out. Quite simply it is re-absorbing the water around it.



You can see the change in the baits going from fresh (left) to three days old (right).

Now, if the surrounding water is slightly tainted, your bait will be as well, which makes you wonder just how much your bait is standing out to the fish if the first millimetre of skin smells the same as the stuff around it.

By pre-soaking your boilies you have already given them a drink, so to speak, and any flavour that has leached out into the water is naturally seeping back into the bait too. Fire these out when they are already full of liquid and they aren't going to become quite so tainted as fresh baits.

### 5. They fire out further in a catapult

A small added bonus of pre-soaking the baits is that you are then able to catapult them a little further, due to the extra weight they have taken on. The slight downside is that if you soak them completely through to the core they are likely to explode out of a throwing stick.

Since damaging my elbow several years ago I am unable to use a stick, so this has never been an issue to me. I do all my baiting with either a catapult or a spod, but this is something you will need to bear in mind if you are a regular user of a throwing stick.

Simple to do – just add enough water to amply cover your boilies and you're off.



If the water is tainted, your bait will be as well



**SHAUN'S QUICK TIP**

If you want to rehydrate your boilies before you get to the lake, do it with bottled spring water, not water from a garden pond – which carries a real risk of disease.

**PRE-SOAKED BAIT IS EASY FOR CARP TO DIGEST**