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Crafty Carp

CATCH MORE COLD-WATER CARP!

Seasoned winter carp angler
Shaun Harrison reveals the
edges you need NOW!



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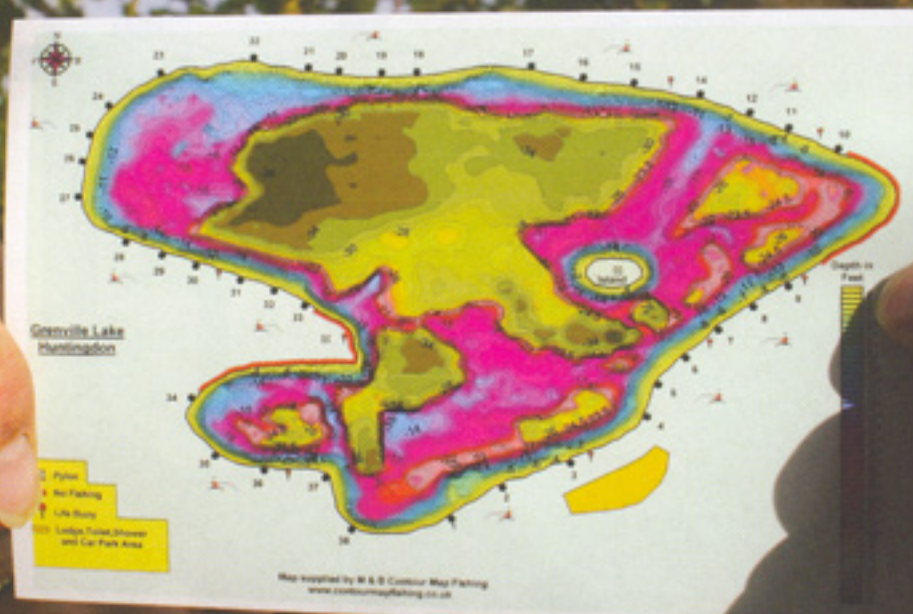
THOUSANDS OF POUNDS' WORTH OF CARP FISHING HOLIDAYS TO BE WON!

NO.2 Deep Lakes

Let's stick to typical UK water depths because these are the venues most of us will be targeting. Most of the waters I have fished over the years have ranged from a few inches deep to around 15ft or so. Personally, I class UK waters as deep waters once they go over 20ft. Deep waters will usually fish well – indeed, very well – up to around January time, depending on the weather that particular year. The deeper waters take much longer to become

affected by the dropping temperatures of autumn running into winter. I generally find that as the first few frosts hit, the carp simply drop down into slightly deeper water and continue to feed but still move back to the shallows on bright, calm days (bright days usually follow a frosty night). However, towards the end of winter, moving into spring, I have always found that deep waters take much longer to kick back into life.

Deep lakes will generally fish very well at this time of year.



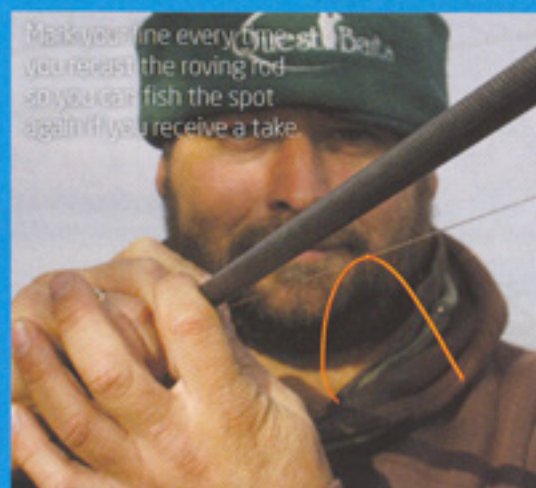
NO.3 Shallow water

Shallow waters are my favourites for consistent winter success, and often the shallowest parts of these waters are the most productive. All the old fishermen's tales of the fish hiding in the deep holes during the winter period are often so far removed from the truth. During the brighter days the carp will seek out the shallower water, which warms up the quickest, particularly if these areas are adjacent to reeds or overhanging trees and act as little suntraps. Take note of the angle of the sun when choosing a shallow swim. The warmest rays will be from midday onwards. Look for areas that receive the midday and afternoon sun and avoid the areas in the shade. Just like us, the carp enjoy the feel of the warm sun.

Shallow lakes take less time to warm up and can be very productive in the depths of winter when the sun is shining.

NO.4 Roving a Rod

This is very much a favourite winter tactic of mine. I always have one or two rods fishing on recognised spots over bait, but another rod will be used purely as a rover. This rod will usually have a brightly-coloured bait attached and is often a pop-up or a Snowman setup. I will keep this rod active throughout the day, casting to different areas trying to induce a take. I keep the lead a little smaller on this rod, only ever going larger than 1½oz if I can't reach the areas I want to fish. Try to get into the habit of tying a marker on each time you cast so that if a take materialises you can duplicate the situation. I use fine pole elastic for this purpose as it can be pulled off the line without causing damage. If I don't know the water at all I will often fish two rods roving. Look at the swim and imagine it as a clock face. Start with one rod out at 12 o'clock and one out at 10 o'clock. After half an hour cast the 10 o'clock rod to 11 o'clock, and then, half an hour later, cast the 12 o'clock rod to 1 o'clock, and so on. It's amazing how quickly you can find carp this way.



Shaun likes to use a smaller lead on his roving rod in order to keep disturbance to a minimum.

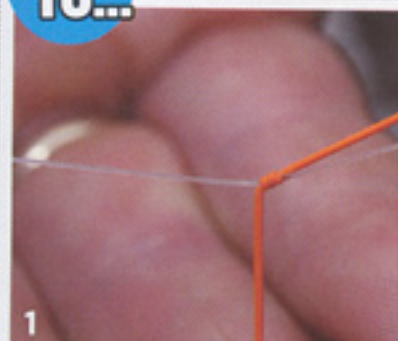
NO.5 Balance the Bobbins

So many anglers have their favourite bobbins and use the same ones come what may. It is absolutely essential to balance the weight of your bobbin to the rest of your tackle in order to show up every tiny indication. At all times of the year I am constantly looking for line bites to indicate if I am casting too far. This is doubly important when roving the rods around, as previously described. If, when fishing around the clock face, you don't pick up any indication at all, you will probably need to cast further, or move swims. If you can register a couple of line bites then you know you are casting too far. Always fish with a drop on the bobbins and use the smallest bobbin you can get away with, one which isn't constantly dragging up to the rod top through undertow. People who see me fishing will often have a bit of a smile and pass comment on my bobbins – they are miniature, home-made 'Shaun the Sheep' ones, but I do have four different sets in different sizes, and all accept screw-in add-on weights. Any movement you can detect could be the thing that leads to a lot of captures. Help your bobbins to help you.

"Always fish with a drop on the bobbins and use the smallest bobbin you can get away with, one which isn't constantly dragging up to the rod top through undertow"



It's important to balance your bobbins and fish for line bites in the winter; this will help you locate where the carp are shoaled up.

HOW TO... STOP THOSE FALSE BLEEPS

1 Start by tying a normal marker knot on your line above the bite alarm.



2 Take one of the tag ends and tie a second marker knot on the line.



3 Now simply stretch the pole elastic between the two knots, as illustrated.



4 Let go of the elastic and a spring-loaded loop will be created in your line.

NO.6 Stop Those False Bleeps

On some of the larger waters we simply have to use large, heavy bobbins to counteract the wind and undertow. One really frustrating thing with this is you can suffer a lot of false bleeps, which often results in anglers locking everything up and clipping up to help prevent the false bleeps. This is fine, but a lot of proper indications can go by unnoticed in this situation. I have developed a method that works surprisingly well, and I haven't seen anyone else do this, or even heard anyone mention it. Tie a fine pole elastic marker knot on your line a foot or so in front of the alarm. Now, with one of the loose ends, tie another marker knot so you are left with the same piece of pole rubber attached to the line with two separate knots. Stretch the elastic between the knots and let go, and you will see you have created a loop in your line – a spring-loaded loop. This will negate most of the false bleeps but will still show a tiny pull as well as a dropback. Remember – you read it here first!

NO.7 Scaling Down and Blending In

It is often possible to scale down the tackle used during the winter. Many of the weedbeds and lily beds, which are in abundance during the summer, are all but gone during the winter, and suddenly you don't necessarily need 15lb line to land the carp. As the carp start to slow down during the winter months (they are cold-blooded so their metabolism is very much governed by water temperature – it just takes them longer to do things than it did in the summer) the clarity of the water suddenly improves. Take note of this and try to ensure that your tackle blends in, even more than you do in the summer when the fish are often rushing around and are much less aware of your gear, thus slipping up and making mistakes. Take advantage of some of the fluorocarbon lines around. There isn't any need to spool up with them completely if the water allows leaders. Simply attach fluorocarbon leaders to the end of your main lines to hide those last few feet of line near the rig. I would rather have a quality 20lb fluorocarbon leader attached to the end of my line than scale down the main line to 8lb or whatever. A good quality fluorocarbon will melt into its surroundings and, more importantly, anchor itself to the bottom contours.



Fluorocarbon line and leaders can increase concealment in winter when the water is crystal-clear.

NO.8 Presoaked Baits

This is a favourite trick of mine and came about as an extension to the air-drying and rehydration of boilies which I like to do. Simply place the baits in lake or bottled water for 24 hours before baiting up. This opens up the pores of the boilie and makes it look, and feel, safer to the fish. I am convinced that the carp prefer to eat presoaked baits rather than freshly introduced, relatively dry baits – particularly so during the winter. You also have the added bonus of the baits becoming a little heavier for easier catapult work.

"I am convinced that the carp prefer to eat presoaked baits rather than freshly introduced, relatively dry baits – particularly so during the winter"

Presoaked baits will catapult out further because they are heavier!



HOW TO MAKE...

SHAUN'S PASTE-WRAPPED HOOKBAITS



1 Start by trimming away the outer skin of a boilie so it looks like this.



2 Pierce your baiting needle through the side of the bait and thread it onto your Hair.



3 The next step is to take a big enough chunk of paste to cover your hookbait.



4 Shaun then simply covers his 'cored' boilie in his chosen paste, like so.



5 The whole bait should be evenly covered and the paste moulded into a spherical shape.



6 The finished hookbait should look like this and is full of attraction which the carp can't resist!

NO.9 Paste and Chopped Baits

Paste has so many uses and is by far the best way of spreading subtle food attractors without the need to overdose the flavour levels. Similarly, chopped boilies will release far more attraction than a full boilie. I like to combine the two. Put a boilie on the Hair in the conventional manner then, using scissors, trim bits off, leaving the part where the Hair enters and leaves the bait intact. Next, I like to mould a bit of paste around this 'apple core bait'. I don't know of many winter carp that will turn up their noses at this subtle, but highly effective, method.



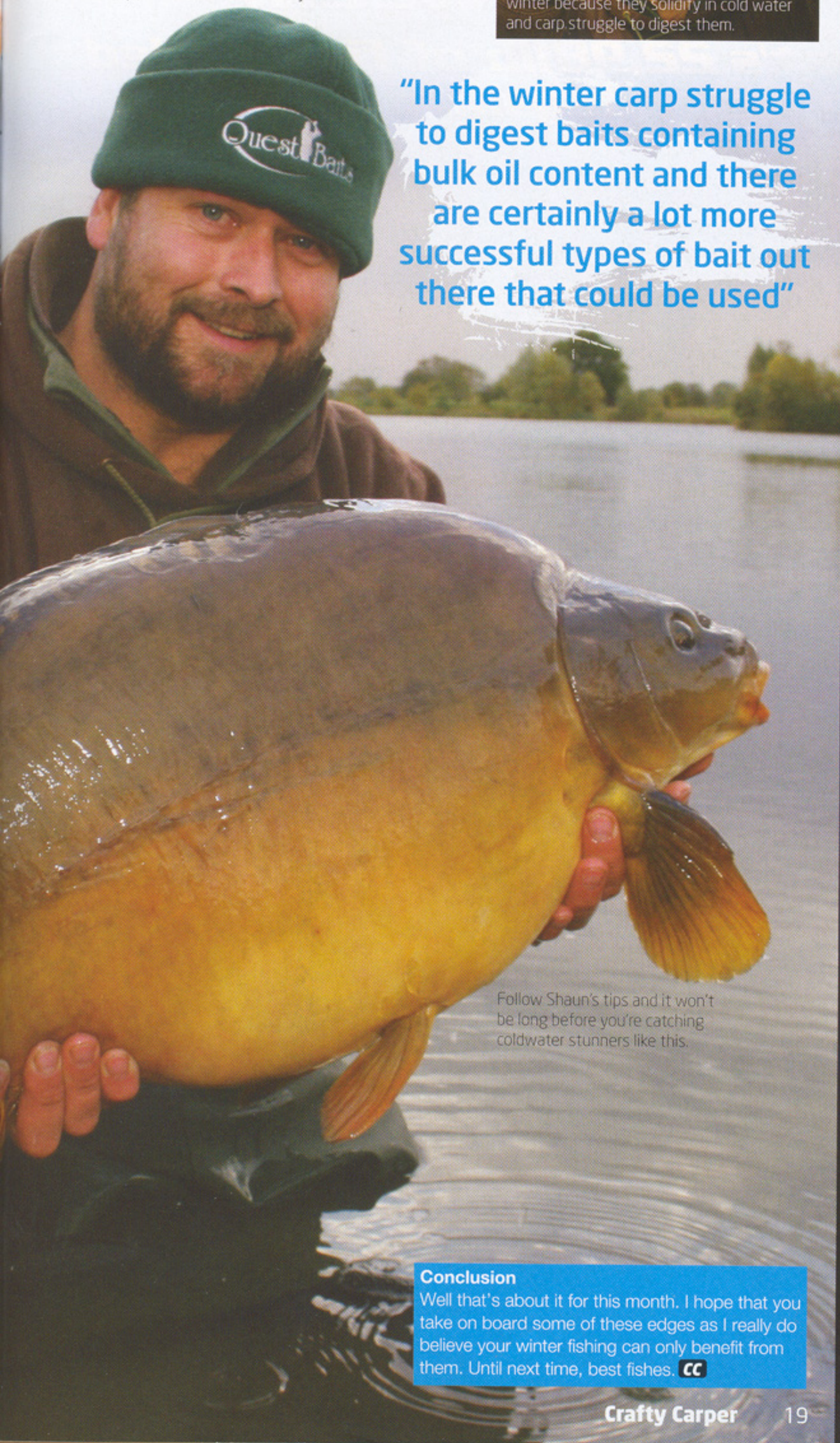
NO.10 Avoid Oil and Fat

Avoid all baits with a high oil/fat content. In the winter carp struggle to digest baits containing bulk oil content and there are certainly a lot more successful types of bait out there that could be used. Oils and fats solidify in cold water, thus trapping most of the attraction the bait may have inside. Do yourself, and the carp, a favour – avoid fatty baits.



Shaun believes oils should be avoided in winter because they solidify in cold water and carp struggle to digest them.

"In the winter carp struggle to digest baits containing bulk oil content and there are certainly a lot more successful types of bait out there that could be used"



Follow Shaun's tips and it won't be long before you're catching coldwater stunners like this.

Conclusion

Well that's about it for this month. I hope that you take on board some of these edges as I really do believe your winter fishing can only benefit from them. Until next time, best fishes. **CC**