

## 144.—SEVERAL OPINIONS UPON HOW TO CATCH CARP.

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In response to numerous requests for information as to the best way to catch a few carp at a time, and without draining a pond, I have examined the principal English sporting books, and have extracted what they have to say on this subject. The first item, however, is by an American who understands fishing for carp.

WITH LINE AND HOOK.—“When I fish for carp I have a fifty-foot line done up on a reel with six or seven small hooks on the line, and without any pole. I bait the hooks with stale light bread, which floats on the surface of the water, and the carp come to the top to suck it down. As soon as they feel the hook they start to run and I reel up the line and play with them until I worry them out and land them without further trouble. After catching one in this way they become very wild and timid, and it is a long time before I can get them to show themselves again. I caught only one with an angle-worm.”—OSCAR REID.

SAINT LOUIS, Mo., *August 21, 1883.*

BAITS.—“Carp are esteemed among the richest fresh-water fish we have in the kingdom, and are as cunning as foxes. The angler, therefore, must be ‘wide-awake’ to catch him, and also as patient as a saint. He may, however, fish for him at any time in the day during warm weather. The bait may be either worms or paste. Of worms the bluish marsh or meadow is the best, but a red worm, not too big, will do, or a large gentle; of paste, the best is made of bread and honey, and the spot intended should be well baited beforehand. In a large pond, to draw them together, throw in either grains, or blood mixed with cow-dung, or bran, or any kind of garbage; follow this with some of the small baits you intend to angle with. If you fish for carp with gentles, put on your hook a small piece of scarlet cloth, about the bigness of a pea, soaked with oil of peter (by some called oil of the rock), and keep your gentles for two or three days in a box smeared with honey; and while you are fishing, chew a little bread and throw it in about the place where your float swims. In this way, with due patience, you will prove a match for these crafty fish.”—[From Routledge’s Handbook of Fishing, London, p, 39.]

BAITS.—“Carp are very uncertain. After a shower on a warm, damp evening, is the best time for fishing. A boiled green pea is a capital bait; also ground-bait with boiled potatoes, and bait with half-boiled pieces. You should ground-bait overnight. Anything will do for ground-bait, chickens’ guts, blood, cow-dung, mixed grains, and greaves, mixed with clay. As baits, use paste of all kinds, especially sweet paste, gentles, and red worms.

"A very good way of killing carp is to let the bait sink between the leaves of the water-plants, and gently draw it up and down till you feel a slight nibble, when the line must be loosed until the fish runs away with it. A paste made of common flour and anchovy sauce, with a little water mixed with it to prevent sticking, has been found good.

**THE OLD-BOAT METHOD.**—"Carp may also be thus taken: Take an old boat, and fill it with brush-wood or other loose stuff, taking care to keep it down with large stones. Tie two ropes to the ends of the boat so as to be able to draw it up again when wanted, and then sink it, leaving it there for a month or two, so that the carp may have time to get accustomed to it, when they will take up their abode in the boat. After you have left it in a sufficient time draw it out again by the ropes tied to it for the purpose, and you will find the fish in their hiding places in the brushwood. It is best to put some food in the boat before you lower it."—[From "Facts and useful hints relating to fishing and shooting," by I. E. B. C., London, 1874, page 26.]

**EXPERIENCE.**—"Late in July, 1858, on a hot summer's afternoon, I was barbel-fishing in the eddy off Ham Point, Weybridge, the water being quite 20 feet deep and as clear as glass. I did not so much as touch a barbel, but took with my single rod three magnificent carp, weighing respectively 8, 5, and 4 pounds; ten eels, nine large perch, and one bream; the carp gave quite as much play as trout. These were all taken with the lob-worm, using chopped worms for ground-bait.

**BAIT AND RODS.**—"As a general rule, the red worm will be found the most killing bait, but they will at times prefer a well-scoured marsh-worm or lob. The majority of roach-baits also are used for carp. Use a light stiff rod with fine running tackle and a light float, ascertaining the depth, if possible, the day before, when ground-baiting, as recommended in the preceding chapter, so as to keep out of sight when you commence fishing, and disturb the water as little as you can. Throw in a few chopped worms occasionally while angling, fish on the bottom, and if in a stream strike immediately there is a bite; but if in still water, or a pond, wait a second or two, till the float goes steadily under, and then strike gently, as carp do not take the bait so quickly in dead water as in a stream, where, unless it is taken directly, it is carried away by the current and is gone.

**PLAYING.**—"When you have hooked a good fish use him gently and patiently, giving him line, winding in and letting out, till he is exhausted. He is an exceedingly strong and artful fish, and will try every possible means to get round a post or stump, or into the weeds, so as to break the line.

**KEEP QUIET.**—"The grand secret in carp-fishing is to keep quiet and fish fine. Some anglers expatiate on the great merits of boiled green peas and pieces of cherries as very taking baits. One writer advises a worm and gentle to be used on the hook at the same time, so as to offer the carp a choice of baits; probably, had he suggested that a green

pea and a cherry be first placed on the hook, it might have been better still; the carp could then have taken vegetables with his dinner and dessert to follow.

**TO CATCH PRUSSIAN CARP.**—"There is another species of this fish, termed the Prussian carp, which seldom reaches a pound in weight; in shape and color it is similar to the ordinary carp, partaking very much of the nature of the goldfish and silver-fish, and like them may be kept, when small, in a globe. They are easily caught in ponds during the summer months with a small red or blood worm; fish very fine, with a No. 10 hook and a very small quill float. It is essential that the bait should cover the entire hook and look fresh and tempting. Fish two or three inches from the bottom."—[From the *Modern Angler*, London, 1883.]

**A GAME FISH.**—"Carp are in season through March and April, and therefore I have advocated the increase of them in the Thames, as they would afford good support when the ordinary Thames fish are out of condition.

**HOW TAKEN.**—"To fish for carp the angler requires to be very quiet and unobtrusive, particularly when they are in ponds. Carp grub for their bait along the bottom, and if the angler keeps quiet and out of sight he may often see them within reach of his rod, rooting along the quiet and shallow water, with their tails or back fins above water. I have often taken them when thus occupied by softly casting my float and tackle out a yard or two ahead of them, in the direction they were traveling, and allowing the bait to lie on the bottom, when I have frequently managed to capture the rover. Carp will take both worms and gentles well at times, but farinaceous baits are more in favor with the carp fishermen of the present day; for if there happens to be a lot of small roach, perch, or eels in the same pond, as there too often is, these will, if worms or gentles be used for ground bait, hasten to the spot and eat up most of it before the carp can find it out; and, added to this, when you begin to fish, the first miserable little eel or perch you take will drive many of the best carp away; and after you have taken two or three, there will hardly be a carp left.

**BAITS.**—"Carp will take a variety of baits, as worms, gentles, wasp grubs, plain and sweet paste, boiled green peas, and potatoes. The last is the best bait that can be used, particularly with big carp; it should be about three parts, or rather more, boiled—rather a waxy sort being chosen—and the best way of baiting with it is to use a small triangle on a single thread of gut, with a small loop to the other end of it, having a good big loop in the line to loop it to. Then take a baiting needle, and, hitching it to the loop of the triangle, draw the gut through the middle of the potato and pull the triangle up so as just to bury the hook points in the potato. Then cut the potato round with a knife neatly till it is about the size of a good-sized gooseberry, and loop it on to the line, the big loop allowing the bait and all to pass through easily. The best way of fishing this bait is with a very light ledger, a small pistol bullet being quite heavy enough. The gut should be rather fine,

but strong and sound, as a big carp is a doughty antagonist, and his first rush is not to be sneezed at. I have been broken in it many a time when I have been at all in difficulties; and carp, as they often run up to 10 pounds or 12 pounds weight, and even larger, and have very powerful fins, want careful managing at first. They are, too, pretty cunning, and will run you into a mass of weeds if they can.

**DISREGARD NIBBLES.**—"Never strike while a carp only nibbles. Wait till he drags the float steadily under, and appears to be going away with it; when, seeing all clear and in order about the line and reel for a rush, you may hit him smartly, and if he is a big one "look out for squalls"; as his mouth is very tough and leathery, you may play him firmly. Get him away as soon as possible from your pitch, so as not to frighten the rest, and land him as far from the pitch as you can. Then come back to the pitch, quietly throw in a handful or two of ground-bait, and follow up with the hook as before, and probably in ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, if the fish are well on, you may see your rush-float "niggle-niggling" again. The best ground bait, of course, for this work is boiled potato.

**HAVE SEVERAL "SPOTS."**—"If fishing a pond, always bait two, or even three, spots if you can; so that when the fish are rather alarmed at one, you can rest it and go to another, casting in a few handfuls of bait before you leave, to draw them back again. Always fish from the shore, too, if you can, as carp are shy of a boat, and any motion of the water easily alarms them. In fishing with the ledger in a stream you would discard the float, and fish as for barbel, by the feel. In this case, when you feel a nibble, you must yield some inches of line and wait for the tug that announces a bite. This is held to be, by experienced carp-fishers, the best and most killing method of carp fishing, particularly for big fish. The great thing is to let the bait and line rest on the bottom for a foot or two. In this way the carp sees neither the line nor the hook, as he cannot fail to do if he is curious in float-fishing when the depth is exactly plumbed and the bait only just touches the bottom.

**OTHER BAITS.**—"I have heard a haricot bean, or even a small broad bean, well boiled, spoken of as a capital bait, but I never tried it. It seems, however, a very likely bait. I have no doubt, too, that a lump of pearl barley, such as we use for roach, would be a good bait, using half a dozen corns; and it would be a nice bait to ground-bait with.

**FLOATS, &c.**—"In float-fishing use as light a float as you can, and have the shots or sinker as far from the hook as you conveniently can; and here, too, if you can do it, I always find that if 4 inches or 5 inches of the hook-gut rests on the bottom it pays best. A worm or other bait only just touching the bottom, with a row of shot 6 inches or 8 inches above it, is very likely to challenge the attention of the carp, who at once sees something he is not accustomed to, and becomes suspicious. To show how different it is when the line rests on the bottom, I once took a 7-pound carp on an eel line with a coarse string snood and worm

bait. Carp always nibble a good deal at the bait before they take it, and will often nibble off the tail of the worm, or suck off your paste and leave the hook showing without taking the hook at all. In using paste I prefer sweet paste, made up with honey or brown sugar, to plain, and I have heard of paste made of pound cake being greatly affected by the carp. Poor old Bill Kemp, now with the majority, a capital old carp-fisher at Teddington, used to put on a lump of this as big as a large gooseberry, and fish it with ledger tackle; and he used to take a great many finé carp."—[From "Angling," by Francis Francis, London, 1883, p. 48.]

"Professor Owen, who is a great adept in the art of carp-fishing in ponds, has been kind enough to give me the result of his experience. His practice may be formulated thus:

"1. The summer months are the only time of the year for carp-fishing, and the best period of the day is between sunrise and about 7 o'clock, after which time they usually leave off biting.

"2. The best bait is a brandling.

"3. He has, however, found the following paste a by no means bad substitute; soft herring-roe worked up with bread-crumbs and wool.

"4. He uses the ordinary bottom fishing-tackle with a light float, and fishes about half a foot off the bottom.

"My own experience concurs almost entirely with that of Professor Owen, except as regards paste and bait, with which I never had any sport. I used formerly to use a plain bread-crumbs paste, but later experience has convinced me that it was a mistake, and that a well-scoured brandling is the best bait both for carp and tench all the year round.

"In open waters, however, I employ it in a somewhat different way to that adopted by Professor Owen, placing the shot at about 2 feet from the bait and allowing the latter to rest, with about 6 inches of the line, on the bottom. The hook for this purpose should be a No. 7, and the collar of fine round picked gut, stained. The float should be a light porcupine quill, and it will commonly be found expedient to use a reel, as the carp is remarkably powerful, and without this precaution the first rush of a heavy fish is very likely to carry away the tackle. A few broken worms, thrown in from time to time, are the best ground bait; or whole worms, if the place is to be baited beforehand, in which case the depth also should be very accurately plumbed, so as to avoid any disturbance in the water when the angler comes to fish. Having thrown in the bait, it is the best plan to lay down the rod until there is a bite, and not to strike until the float goes under or—the more common result—moves steadily away.

"In very weedy places this mode of fishing is not practicable, and then the best plan is to fish about mid-water, dropping the bait noiselessly in wherever a tempting-looking opening in the weeds presents itself." [From the "Modern Practical Angler," by Cholmondely-Pennell.]