

Mark guides a surface-caught, mid-twenty to the waiting net.

PART TWO

TACTICS FOR A TWENTY

Following on from last month, **Mark Cole** shows you how to use your floater tackle to maximum effect. Read on and you too could catch a twenty off the top.



ANGLER FILE

MARK COLE

Age: 33

Nickname: None

UK PB: 44lb

Sponsors: Korum and Sonubaits

FLOATER FISHING MASTERCLASS

The tackle that you use for surface fishing will help you catch but this can be bought or borrowed from a friend. Watercraft and the tactics to use this tackle to maximum effect are not so easy to come by and can only really be refined by getting out there and fishing. However, within these pages I'll outline a number of tactics that have worked for me over the years and at the very least give you a starting point.

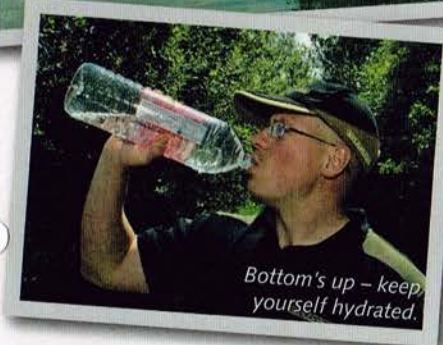
First off, there are a number of essential items that you should never go surface fishing without, over and above the tackle detailed in last month's piece of course. You should take two loaves of bread for each swan on the lake and feed them up at the start of the session. It's possible to feed off ducks, seagulls,



Keep gear to a minimum and stay mobile.



Feed the swans before your session and they should leave you alone.



Bottom's up – keep yourself hydrated.

moorhens and the like with your mixers, but swans seem to have a bottomless stomach and will happily devour every mixer you have and still come back for more. Generally, you'll find two swans per lake, so four loaves will do you. Keep them fed throughout the day and they won't bother you at all.

You can't surface fish without polarising glasses. You'll be fishing on a bright, sunny day and these will cut down the glare from the surface and allow you to find the fish. A peaked cap will shield your eyes from the sun, again helping with the fish finding, and protect your head from the sun. Take plenty of water and keep yourself hydrated throughout the day. Don't get

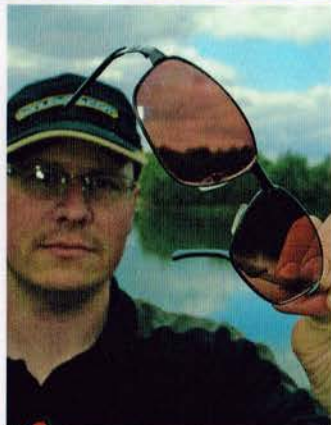
into the habit that I used to where you become fixated on the fishing and end up sunburnt and seriously dehydrated. It's always a help to carry a couple of catapults, baiting needles and a few extra essential items because it'll make them easier to find in a hurry. Typically, once you get the carp feeding you turn into a gibbering wreck and will rush everything, so you don't want to add to this panic.

Believe it or not, every lake can be susceptible to a floater approach and I've not found one type of lake to be better than another. The best lake that you can fish is one where nobody fishes on the surface. The second somebody says: "They don't have floaters on here mate," get down the shop and buy yourself a bag of mixers. If you're new to surface fishing then go to a heavily stocked water, as you

THE ESSENTIALS – FORGET THESE AT YOUR PERIL



ITEM 1 Take two loaves of bread for each swan and feed them before your session.



ITEM 2 Polarising glasses will cut down surface glare, allowing you to spot the carp easier.



ITEM 3 A peaked cap will also help reduce glare and will keep the sun off your head.



ITEM 4 Always take spares of important items such as catapult elastics.

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You'll find the fish easily enough, but getting them to feed will be a real struggle. A light ripple will cool things down slightly, but still keep them in the upper layers and is perfect floater conditions. Also, you can fish on the back of the wind and drift your feed across the surface, which is far easier than fishing when it's flat calm or fishing into the wind. A ripple also helps disguise your rig a little.

Throughout summer the best time for catching off the top can be early morning, and especially late afternoon/evening, which can be frustrating because this is when you want to get your rods sorted for the night and settle down. If I'm set up and fishing I'll keep an eye on the water. As soon as I feel that I have a better chance off the top than on the bottom, I'll get new rigs tied up and the lines marked for the night ahead. Sometimes this is 8am, so I can make the most of the day/evening's surface fishing and not have to rush to get sorted before dark. On calm, hot days your best chances by far will

Mark locates
some surface cruisers.
Game on!



Play your fish
carefully, especially
when using braided
main line.

THE ULTIMATE FLOATER HAIR RIG



STEP 1 Pass the end of your mono hook link through the front of the eye.



STEP 2 Use a grinner knot (see page 218) to tie a latex bait band to the mono.



STEP 3 Whip down the hook to trap the band. Note the turns after the band.



STEP 4 Pass the mono through the back of the eye to secure the whipping.



STEP 5 This is what you're left with. Note how tight the band is to the hook.



STEP 6 The band makes the ideal hair for surface baits.

be early morning and late evening because they'll spend the bulk of the day basking. You can even keep them feeding into darkness.

The first task for a floater session is to find the carp. I'll walk round and round the lake until I find them. If I can't find them I'll locate them by process of elimination, because I know where they're not.

I do something that the majority of anglers disagree with. Most will find a group of fish and feed until the carp are taking confidently, which I do too if I find a static group that need to be induced into feeding, generally on a very-hot day. If, however, I find a group that are moving around the lake then I will try and nick one off the front of the group by flicking a single hook bait into their path. So long as you can work out the path that the fish are following, and they'll usually follow the same patrol route around the lake or a

FLOATER FISHING MASTERCLASS MARK COLE

would if you'd just started carp fishing, and fish for loads and loads of bites. Practise feeding, controlling the rig as it hits the water, drawing the controller back, see what you can get away with and what the carp will and will not tolerate. Once you've honed your skills and built up your confidence you can move onto lighter-stocked waters and target bigger carp.

People just don't understand how productive surface fishing can

be. They'll sit behind motionless rods rather than having a walk around and finding the fish. When you find the fish in summer, they'll invariably be up in the water sunning themselves and gagging for a floater. Those anglers who simply sit in their swim will miss out on a fantastic opportunity.

From past experience, and friends' experiences, I start carrying my floater gear from as early as March, but I leave the gear in the car until it's needed.

At this time of year the carp can be up and just under the surface as soon as the

sun hits the water. As long as you have your gear you can take advantage of it. As a rule of thumb, as soon as you see fish on the surface, or feeding near to the surface, they can be caught on mixers. Ideally, you want a nice, warm day with a light ripple on the surface. If it's flat calm and red hot then you can struggle.



Keep the mixers going in on a little and often basis.



A 26lb carp for the TC camera.



Proof that surface fishing is a big carp tactic.

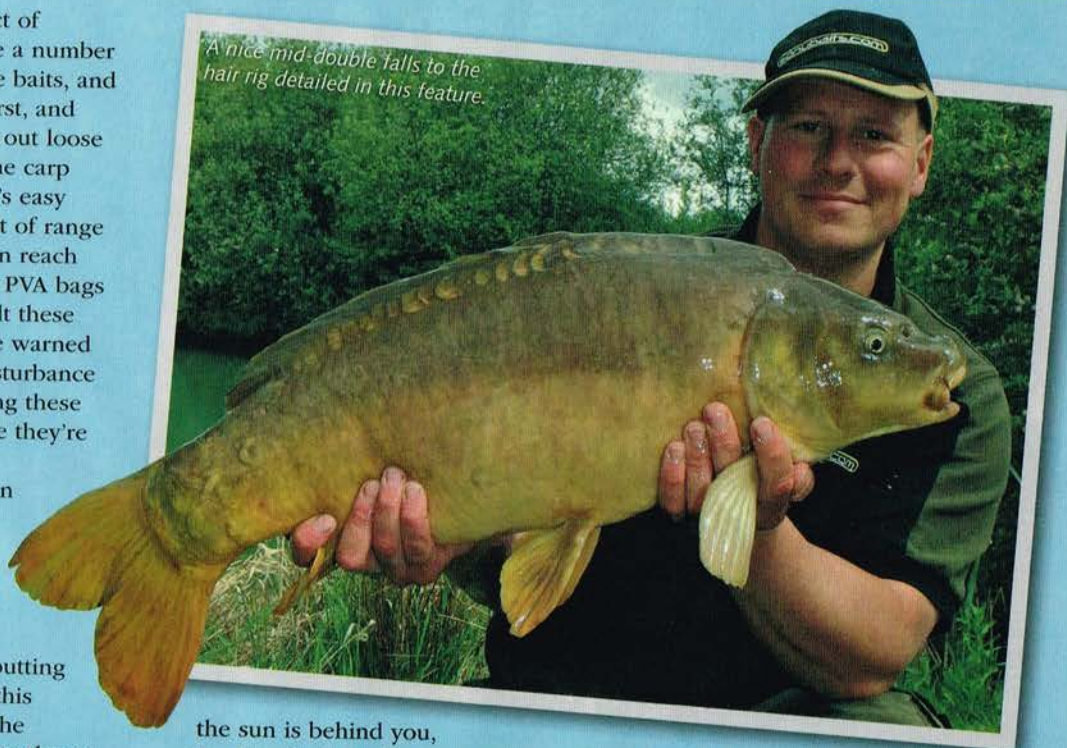
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Backtracking to the subject of feeding once more, there are a number of ways you can feed surface baits, and each one has its uses. The first, and most common is catapulting out loose mixers. This is great when the carp are at close range because it's easy and quick. If the carp are out of range for loose mixers then you can reach them by tying golf-ball-sized PVA bags of mixers, as you can catapult these further than loose mixers. Be warned though, these make more disturbance and carp won't tolerate having these fired directly on top of where they're feeding.

If the carp are at range then you can spod mixers, but you need to shake the spod to get them all to come out. Ideally, you can give the spod a shake just before it hits the surface by putting your hand on the spool, but this takes a little practise. By far the easiest way to feed mixers is to throw bait into the margins, either by hand or a bait spoon, and let it drift out on the wind. This is quiet and effortless, but obviously you need to be fishing on the end of the wind and you need to feed continuously.

Finally, there are a few simple things that you can do to boost your chances. The first is staying off the skyline by staying low and using any bankside cover to conceal your approach. If

A nice mid-double falls to the hair rig detailed in this feature.



the sun is behind you, standing in the swim can cause your shadow to be cast across the water. Stand to the side of the swim with some bankside vegetation behind you so that no unnatural shadows are being cast. Camouflaged clothing does

make a difference if you're fishing at close range, or at least wear dull-coloured clothing. You're fishing for carp at close range that are in the surface layers so you are going to be visible to them, unless you take steps to avoid it. Noise is another big no-no. Stay quiet, keep your footfalls as light as possible and avoid walking across gravel paths and swims.

Hopefully I've given you a few things to think about and a couple of tactics to try out the next time you find carp on the surface.

However, as I said at the start, the only real way to get to grips with floater fishing is to get out there and do it. Good luck!



Set up well back from the water's edge.