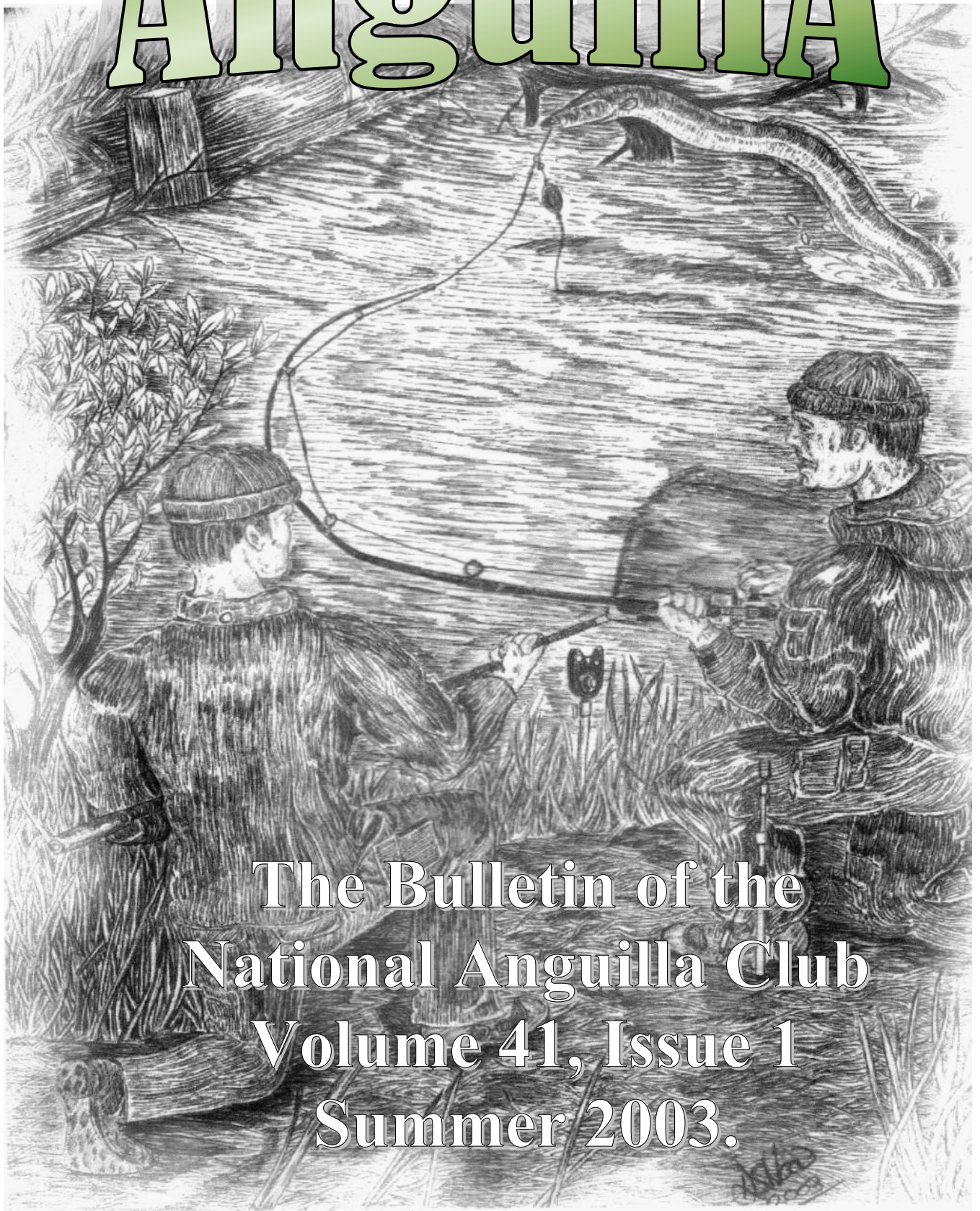




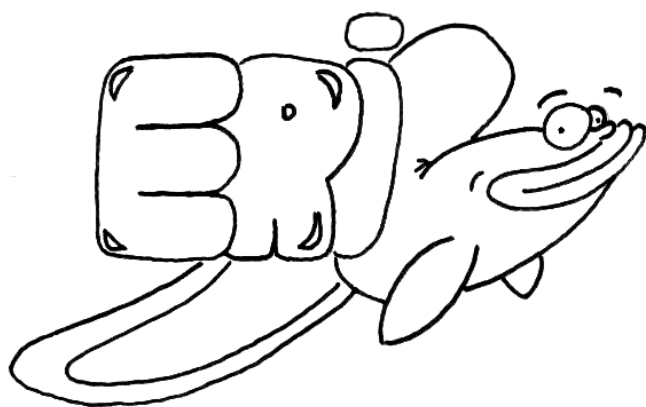
# "Anguilla"



The Bulletin of the  
National Anguilla Club  
Volume 41, Issue 1  
Summer 2003.

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" I believe this is Yours"



# "Team Talk"

*By Barry McConnell (aka Only The Lonely).*

I've been volunteered to write the team talk for this latest issue of ANGUILLA. I am working with the Bulletin Production Team, which consists of Jimmy Jolley as editor and printer, Damian Wood is our line drawing artist and I do the proof reading. Jimmy does nearly everything for the magazine. He works with great enthusiasm and I really don't know how we would manage without him. I would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to Jimmy from us all.

Firstly lets get the pleading for magazine fodder over with. The magazine thrives on articles. It is always interesting to hear what sort of a season other members have had. Any humorous incidents, failed missions, red-letter days, new methods, different approaches, theories, venues and regions. We all have such different ways, which makes the magazine such an interesting read as this information is conveyed in it. How has your season been? Any photographs, articles or letters. Any poems, fictional stories or anything else of interest to our members? Send any material for the next ANGUILLA to Jimmy Jolley, 23 Abingdon Drive, Platt Bridge, Wigan, Lancs, WN2 5JQ. Or you can e-mail it as a word document to [jimmy@fotoart.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:jimmy@fotoart.freeserve.co.uk)

One contributor that I find highly entertaining is "The Mole". Who is the Mole? I don't know. Jimmy knows but he won't divulge any clues to me. I saw an opportunity to find out when we were choosing the best articles for the Steve Mahoney Trophy and my first nomination was "The Mole". I even offered to present the trophy to him but Jimmy was having none of it and remains sworn to secrecy.

At this year's AGM Steve Richardson stepped down from the position of General Secretary after 9 years at the job. Since I joined the club in 1997 Steve has been the main man – well organised and strong in the political arena. His commitment to the NAC has been so strong that he has often given far more to the club than lesser mortals would be able to cope with. I know that I couldn't do it, I'm too selfish, too busy fishing to spare so much time to NAC duties. Steve has had to deal with one or two issues that have not been at all pleasant. Incidents that some of us would have ignored, given in to or acted rather too abruptly. At all times he has acted to uphold the reputation of the NAC and its members. Maximum respect Steve you're a star, if there is any sort of ladder in this eel fishing circuit I look up it at you as you are way up top.

Tony Jolley takes over as General Secretary. Filling the shoes of Steve Richardson seemed a daunting task and Tony was a bit apprehensive about taking on the task and a full confidence vote from the committee was needed to spur him on. Thanks Tony, I'm

sure you are worthy of the job with your knowledge and enthusiasm for eel angling and conservation. I can remember when Tony was Social Officer and he talked (and talked and talked) me in to doing my first slide show. I lacked confidence and would never have done it without Tony's backing. Now, three slide shows later, I would have no problem doing another. We need volunteers to do a slide show at the winter social. I would be willing to help any volunteers sort it out. Here at the NAC we even have a facility for turning your ordinary photographs into slides so you don't need to worry if you have photos but no slides – the team can sort it.

I get quite a few phone calls from NAC members who are generally a friendly bunch that can talk for hours on end about eel fishing matters, such is the passion of our common interest that brought us all together - catching big eels. In all the many nights I have fished for eels I have only ever bumped into one other angler actually fishing for eels. If it wasn't for the NAC I would be out there on my own. It's good to be part of the team and to have met so many eel anglers to mull over matters with. Long live the NAC.

*Editor's Footnote by Jimmy Jolley.*

*I would just like to echo Barry's words regarding Steve Richardson....the man is a STAR...I remember a time, even before I joined the National Anguilla Club when I first came into contact with Steve. His enthusiasm was contagious, how could I refuse any request Steve made...I used to do all the front covers for the club magazine that Steve edited at the time.....he even proposed me for Honorary Membership so that I could feel "part of the team" ...(It was his idea to call the club bulletin "Anguilla"...Steve "rescued" the club bulletin at a time when things were desperate.....although Steve insists that he actually "high-jacked" the club magazine and as long as I'm editor that name will remain).. It's because of Steve that I'm now so involved with the N.A.C, firstly as part of Steve's original magazine production team, then as Records Officer and at the moment Membership Secretary, Magazine Editor & Internet Officer.*

*He has given so, so much to the National Anguilla Club that it would take up the whole of this "Team Talk" just to list his achievements. I sincerely hope that sometime, in the not too distant future that Steve may return to an active role within the committee structure of the N.A.C. In a way, I feel sorry for the newer members of the club who haven't had the opportunity to experience the man's enthusiasm, integrity, sincerity and down right bull-headedness when it comes to matters regarding the National Anguilla Club....So I'll just say a big thank you to our out-going General Secretary, Steve "Dances-with-eels" Richardson, and welcome our new Gen' Sec' Anthony Jolley whom I am sure can step into Steve's shoes and do an equally excellent job.....Thank You Steve*

So don't forget.....if you have anything that you think would be of interest to the rest of the membership such as tackle reviews, articles, photo's, red letter days or utter disasters, then send

them in to me Jimmy Jolley at:-

23, Abingdon Drive,  
Platt Bridge,  
Wigan.  
WN2 5JQ

Or if you have e-mail facility's send to

[jimmy@fotoart.freeseve.co.uk](mailto:jimmy@fotoart.freeseve.co.uk)

# "Today's the day....."

*By Martin "Eelsnapper" Dorman.*

*Today is the first day, of the rest of our Eeling lives.....  
And no more can we sing 'Radar Love'.*

Welcome .....to a very promising 2003. The year has only just started and already I am daydreaming of the, not so distant, warm summer nights; when we can all get out on the bank and await the 'witching' hour and the adrenaline race of a one-toner !

I had both a hectic Christmas and I have a very disjointed lifestyle. I left the U.K. in early January; to work and not for Tax purposes you understand ! I have only just today, the first of February, had chance to read the latest, most excellent, instalment of 'Anguilla'; Winter 2002. The range and variety of articles was incredible and for me it really stands out. The rather low amount of contributors (myself included) in no way detracted from the inspirational and thought provoking qualities of this excellent read. The Editorial Team are to be congratulated on another success in the face of apathy !

Like Steve Ricketts, I also will lament the passing of the 'Radars' or 'The Quarry' as us 'Locals' used to call it; you may recall if you've ever been sad enough to finish one of my articles. I first fished it in the late Seventies, when I was a spotty youth, but that was when Muttley caught massive Rudd up to a few ounces below the British Record and I was happy enough to catch large Perch, but also Tench up to a pound or so off the British Record – still not tapping the potential ! Not too bad for a couple of lads on pushbikes (8 mile ride) and tackle Isaac Walton would have taken the mickey out of !

In those days there used to be only a dozen or so of us 'yoofs' basically Perch –bashing with the occasional grown-up specialist turning up, secreting themselves in the bushes on the opposite bank of the bay we used to fish. We never cared or gave thought to what they were catching and why they were there. Then one day, my fishing pal, Muttley (not his real name folks), caught a couple of nice Rudd followed by a 2 lb+ Eel at about midday ! We'd never seen let alone caught an Eel that big so we decided to put in some night sessions – if our parents would let us !

Luckily our folks trusted us (the fools) and we soon found that you could be almost guaranteed three Eels of between 2 and 3lbs, usually around Midnight. This was the very early Eighties by now and as the decade progressed the Eel 'Year Class', for that's what it essentially was, grew to 3lb+ . On the odd occasions when not distracted by Girlfriends or Cider, we would still get together for a weekend session as the decade wore on. The gravel pit was dug around the Second World War and has giant concrete 'Listening Ears', like satellite dishes; built to hear German aeroplanes coming across the English Channel.

By the "roaring" Nineties, the pit had been partially re-opened for working and although there was some worry about vandalism, we were still allowed to fish as we knew many of the people working there.

After starting Families off, we dusted down the rods when the coast was clear, and tried the quarry again. By now the average size was upper 'threes' and we had all discovered the joy of Carbon Rods and Bite Alarms. One memorable session we went through a Storm and I had six threes in a night with no 'boots'. By the mid – Nineties I was the only one fishing it apart from the ..... 'invaders' ..... after the nuisance Carp up to about 20 lbs but since proved to be 40 lbs+ !! All lovely hard fighting commons.

It was about this time that us 'locals' would often be turfed-off even though ownership of the pit was changed regularly and no one really knew whether anyone had the right to kick us off. By this time the 'Year Class' was just over 4 lbs now; but getting more difficult to catch. Unbeknown to me the balloon had gone up and the specialist world-and-their-wife were fishing the place – well a select few anyway and a few famous ones at that. Some of my ignorance can be traced to the fact that I had moved to Norfolk. Apparently RMC had taken the place over, as the gravel working finished, started to take the Lake's Carp population out by Electricker-fishing or something. Apart from the expected smattering of sixes and sevens there were also a couple of Eels that most of us would quite welcome..... 10 lbs and 12 lbs 8 oz !!!!!

Anyway it's all academic now and in the realms of what 'might have been'. At least Steve got to sample some of it's delights; now the 'Year Class' is up to the 5 lb mark !

Knowing the local scene, I can confidently see the scene for 'The Quarry' circa Summer 2003. There will be the same three dog-walkers taking their pets around to crap over the lovely plants, there will be no one fishing and, on a 'rush' day there might be two couples enjoying a wander around the place. It's a huge pit (now two), just behind a caravan site on the sea front with no facilities, no signage and barbed wire fences – should really draw the punters away from the Beach and amusement arcade !! What a waste. Now that really is a tragedy and something to sadden any angler.

Anyone who knows the real stories behind The Quarry's potential, Eels being a major but not whole part, will mourn the loss of one of the UK's best natural (i.e. un-stocked) fisheries.

In these situations I think you have to remember the good times and dream of what could have been .....

Unfortunately, I had to leave the U.K. and come back to work just a tantalising couple of days before Steve's Nichols Lake Fish-in. Bummer.

But there is always another time – this lake only has to be shared with water-sports folk (no, not that kind of water-sports). Being on the coast like 'The Quarry' there is no reason why Nichols Lake should not hold a British Record, if you think about it the Eels caught already are bigger than 'The Radars' ..... think I'll end up changing my address to 'A Dodgy Bivvy, Nichols' Lake, .....

But this Summer, I am pencilled in for being home from May to September, as long as I can keep that chunk of land called Africa between me and The Middle East in case that lot kicks off again. It has a habit of doing this when I am in that region and it's where we normally trade out of ( see Iran /Iraq 'Tanker Wars', Invasion of Kuwait, Gulf War and Romanian Revolution etc. etc.!). The Season is all ahead of us; for those who want it, work for it and put the hours in on the Bank.

What I wouldn't give, at the minute, to be able to chuck my rods in the car and go Fishing now – even if I had to break the ice and get through a blizzard to do it ! It's exactly the same with the club- if you don't put anything in you won't get any rewards. Look at Chris Siddall's 21 days – we *could* all have times like that. Just think back to those rare occasions when you actually have a good night's Eeling and then, don't bother for another week or two – by which time conditions have changed and you have lost the moment. No one said Eeling is going to be a fish-a-chuck; it is hard work with scant rewards in the way of fish. If you are that fed up try a bit of Carping R & R (aka the 'wussies' angling) and after your twentieth twenty you'll soon be craving a hard won three pound Eel from the mysterious depths .....



I have managed to get to one 'Fish – In' and narrowly missed two others at the last minute. I went to Elvington, the first time the N.A.C. fished it, fished a brilliant new water, caught my Personal Best Eel (and Carp at that time) met the 'gang' (no doubt annoyed a few !) and generally had a great time. I slept about two hours the whole weekend and wouldn't have swapped a minute of it ! This just would not have happened if I had sat at Home on my backside. It's the same with the Club Meetings and the Magazine; you'll only enjoy it if you put a bit of effort in ! It's always the club stalwarts doing the 'biz', whilst the rest of us sit on the sidelines. If more members don't become more active in the Club, then it will fizzle out. We couldn't save 'The Quarry' for Eel Anglers, and if the present trend continues, we'll lose one of the oldest (if not *'the'* oldest) Single Species Fishing Clubs in the U.K. as well.

I will not even be in the U.K. for March's AGM or the Winter Social; so I've already pencilled in the AGM 2004 ! Steve tells me the Nichols Lake 'Fish –In' is on the weekend of 24<sup>th</sup> May and hopefully I will be home for that. Just hope it does not clash with any possible Elvington escapades this year.

Looking at the Ad., for the club gear, I can heartily recommend the polo T-shirts as I got one of the largest size, and was shocked how such a good quality garment could be sold at such a low price. I can wear mine to all but the poshest functions (investitures and being knighted etc. ). As most people expect to pay £20 ~ £30 for a good T-Shirt these days, whilst I'm more of a £5.99 for a three pack (easy tiger !) from Millets myself, then how much more of a bargain can you get ?

Then there is 'The Mole', what poisonous unearthly ramblings are these ? At least the person responsible should come out from behind the cowardly false name they have adopted. Perhaps a committee member has finally cracked, in the face of dwindling attendances ? The clues and innuendo (no, not the Italian wotsit !) are fairly straightforward and I feel the need for a fifth book to cover my own fishing foibles !

How dare they hide behind a 'nom de plume', I would certainly never do that.....

The Scientific Reports were excellent, if only I could remember those Latin insect names from Biology ! Most of it is already common knowledge, to any of us with observational powers and a 'bit' of time between bites during our "hectic", "frenzied" and "exhilarating" sessions. We all know that the best biting time is the early hours of darkness and peaking at midnight – see Michael's graph on page 52 for proof if needed. We all know that a rise in temperature can be good news and that Eels mouth shape is an interesting, if minor, evolutionary trait that can affect feeding. We also know Eels are more active at night and Full Moons are not so hot..... normally !

Also, that nice Mr Ricketts aside, it has now been explained why the 'Northerners' (North of the River Medway!) catch bigger Eels – it's because it's a higher latitude than 'dahn sarf' and so the Eels have to be larger in order to stand a better chance of reaching the Sargasso Sea.

Bugged if I knew about the 4-isopropyl-7-methylcyclohexathiazole though; must have missed the obvious tell-tale signs for that one ! Still I am sure Nutrabaits do it in a dumb-bell shape!

I want a pink plastic Gun like the man in the magazine, Daddy !

Looks like an excellent idea actually; although I'll probably seriously injure myself with it somehow. Perhaps Peter can give us details of where to obtain these 'weapons' or are they wholesale from Saddam ?

I think I would still prefer to wait for Steve's book, instead of the other one reviewed, as the only Life Cycles I am interested in are the human type !

And so onto the controversial article.....

I can see why many people take it the wrong way (easy tiger !), but there is nothing wrong with it if you read it properly, completely and think about it. Too many people read into it what they want or what they think it says and go off on one (picking up their Pink Gun on the way !). As we all know, put your Eels back further away from where you are fishing. There used to be an old saying on the Marsh, where I came from, that you should never put an Eel back in your swim as the others will sense even the slightest bit of blood from the hook mark, and will not bite anymore. There's no smoke etc. As the

article says we tend to keep Eels in a sack until morning anyway, more out of an 'instinct' to keep a caught one away from the rest – as most of us are pragmatic enough not to really hope for multiple catches ! The article is good for debate, technically right, but obviously the suggestions are not to be acted upon !! I think we can credit the membership with enough common sense to tell the difference.

It's not often I'm inspired to try new rigs; ask Jimmy who, took pity on me at Elvington and showed me a running paternoster leger with that "new" silicon tubing stuff ! But the article on the SFR rig will be one I will be copying, after a couple of years of popping up worms with air, as it is in the same ball park. I am not a great fan of livebaiting as it always seems, to me, hypocritical to "drown" a carp in Klin-ik and then impale a small roach on a hook as bait. I realise everyone has their boundaries and the coarse deadbaits I use, that I buy in ready frozen packs, are probably blast frozen whilst semi-conscious. But also, after years of thinking shrink tube was just crap silicon tubing that would not straighten properly, I can see how the Withy Pool Rig would work. If I could just explain myself a little here, I tend to rip packing off things first, stuff them in the ol' ruckie and then wonder what they are when I get on the bank !

#### Mini Tackle Review :

Talking of Rucksacks, I have found one at last that is strong enough to carry all my gear without the straps busting under the weight of all the gear I seem to need (enough lead weights for Southern England etc.). The JVC Combi rucksack is just under £ 50 and has a detachable carryall – half the price of the Nash stacksacks of this world. Perhaps it has something to do with JVC making the chairs and Beds that are more suitable for 'larger' folk that their gear is so tough ?

Bolt rigs for Eels, sounds good to me; I'll be able to get me 4-isopropyl-7-methylcyclohexathiazole out after all ! Seriously it sounds good to me. After a few years of trying to use those really lightweight hangers (easy tiger – I won't tell you again), that the tension of 12 and 15 lb BS line pulls up all the time, I am looking forward to fishing 'Lock-Up' style. Trimming a deadbait – simple but could well be an edge.

What with THREE excellent suggestions to avoid deep –hooking, over two articles, that's enough ammo (back to that pink Gun again) for me at least, for the next couple of seasons (well if I'm honest more like 10 years; by the time I manage to make the rigs up properly).

I will be getting one of the Eeling videos, if not both, as they will be great to watch when spending "quality time" at home ! I went to the South Island, of Kiwi, once, but only saw the inside of a Maori Bar (we are exempt you see) and a disgruntled Mission Chaplin as several of us tried to chat up his daughter. Anyway, there's just as big here, in 'The Quarry', if we were still allowed to fish it.

I did actually send in my Catch Return; I caught so few I was able to give them names, but I must have sent it from deepest abroad somewhere, and it must have been intercepted by B.E.A.C. terrorists or something. My excuse for a bad season was that I did go away in May 2002; just as the fun was starting.

One of the newer Scientific findings reported, was one of those you recognise as being something you always knew; but never put into words. The one about Drought being a good trigger to get old Anguilla going makes a lot of sense. Scientifically it could be the effect of a lower water table, the water changing clarity / make-up, temperatures rising in lower water levels, less 'head pressure' of the water on an Eel (already Eels have been proven to be extra receptive to electrical and magnetic forces) or just that 'they know you know'. I always remember fishing the Dykes (easy Tiger) of Romney Marsh as a kid and the best days were during prolonged dry spells of lovely long hot days and I am not donning rose tinted specs here either. Not like the two days we get between downpours these days ! There were few rain showers through those summer holidays and when they did come it would be like a Mediterranean storm – come to think of it that is good Eeling weather too ! Most days, the boots (I suppose biggest was just over a pound) would go off the feed by 0800 and if you got two more bites before 1900 you were doing well. During the really dry spells, when the water levels were well down and the Cattle-Drinks were

treacherous mud –zones between the grass banks and the water, you could still be catching 11b 8 oz + Eels in the blazing midday sun. Granted there were not many bigger Eels in those dykes, but we used to hook the odd 3lb+ monster (in a six foot ditch sometimes !) and they all show similar basic behaviours don't they.

So, what's old Eelsnapper got planned for Summer, I hear the ones among you on pro-plus say ? Well I have given up on my club lakes for serious Eel fishing and they are merely Carp R & R now. But, having the reputation, on the local ½ acre club lake, as the 'sad-git-who-fishes-for-Eels-and-never-catches-any', does have it's advantages ..... !

Last Autumn, whilst at the said club lake, a chap smartly dressed strolls up and says “ ‘are you the chap who fishes for Eels’ ” to me. I said I was, expecting something surreal or violent to happen, but he went on to explain that he used to be in a 13 member SYNDICATE (ears most definitely pricked up) that has not been able to fish a NEARBY PRIVATE ESTATE LAKE for a couple of years due to insufficient numbers. It was a typical Norfolk Lake, apparently, with the usual masses of medium/largish Tench, Bream, Rudd, Carp & Crucians. But this chap wanted to take someone who knew a bit about Eels (sshh you in the back row, don't be so cheeky) as he was interested in fishing seriously for them after being pestered in the DAYTIME by several OVER FOUR POUNDS !! I am to contact him as soon as I get back to see if there's enough people (only need 12 or more) and to see if it's 'game on' this year. It's £75, which although it sounds a lot, is quite paltry for a syndicate, so I hear ? He will be the second person I ring from the airport ! Perhaps even the first ?

It just goes to show you that you should never give up and that as one door closes another opens. Just like the N.A.C. it needs effort and work to keep it going.

So I am fired up yet again, before the Christmas Decorations are barely packed away, about an under-fished syndicate estate lake in the heart of Norfolk. I wonder where I put that 4-isopropyl-7-metylcyclohexathiazole .....

Keep on, keepin' on.  
*The 'Snapper.*

P.S. Is this enough, Jimmy, can I stop writing now; my arm aches (altogether now ..... easy tiger).

# Nickols under assault once again!

*(A report on the Southern Fish-in.)*

*By Steve Ricketts.*

Well here we go again. The Club's greatest and most experienced Anguilla hunters (Ha Ha) strung their rods, tied down their bivvies and donned foul weather gear for this years fish-in to sunny ole Kent. Would the fishing gods be kind and grant us fine weather? Like hell, the usual wind, rain and cold descends on this place like a cloud of flies on a hot turd whenever I'm due to fish, so why on earth should an organised fish-in be treated any different. The thought of a dozen eel anglers converging on Kent had Michael Fish shitting himself but in the end it didn't turn out as bad as expected. Friday and Friday night it was windy and wet (just like the missus) Saturday the wind died and shock, horror the sun came out. Saturday night the lake was becalmed but boy did it piss down, yet around 12 o'clock that night good old Nick Duffy whipped out the best eel of the weekend. A well-deserved fish, congratulations mate. Sunday was warm with a light breeze and a few storm clouds broiled overhead during the afternoon. Sunday night the temperature dropped from 18 degrees to 2 and that's bloody cold

after a warm days fishing. So that's the condition that faced our intrepid band of eel anglers pitched up in the Rose Garden of England.

The Rose Garden of England eh? Whoever thought of that name needs his white stick breaking and his dog shooting. Rose Garden my arse, err hum while we're on the subject of dogs someone blew out the fish-in cos he had to look after his little doggy woggies while the missus was away. Take a grip man, stick 'em in a kennel for the weekend, along with the missus if she complains and come fishing. My old lady never stops me going so long as I ask permission, take her out before, and after the trip, and cough up spending money due to my absence. oh she's a lovely girl really (guess whose standing behind me?). Well that's the first member scaddled, who next for the hit list? Chris Siddall for bathing with his captures and for sending only half of his body to the fish-in, Nick Rose for dropping fishing for his mummy's birthday, or Graham Wilkes promising to swap a life of women & booze to catch an eel, any eel! Or even me for being called an eel specialist in one of the weekly rags for catching a shed full of boots, half of which belonged to Steve Pitts. So who knows what's gonna happen next, sex, drugs, murder, read on.

Back to the fishing and lets see who did turn up. Pete Shefford was first on the scene hoping to repeat his success of last year and break his PB again. Nick Duffy and Graham Wilkes were next followed later by Chris Siddall. All these lads had arrived a day or two early. In fact I think Graham needed the extra day to ensure he did catch something and to expose his new Trakker Armadillo to the lovely Kent weather. Barry McConnell and Pete Drabble, alias the Lone Ranger and Tonto turned up on the Friday along with Paul Smith who made the trip down from Watford minus his coat. Steve from Surrey, a new member and virgin night fisherman. John Davis and his young lad followed that evening by Steve Cotton. Nick Rose, oops I forgot he never made it. Joking aside for the minute I must say a word of thanks here to Nick, he supplied me with 3 T-shirts with the NAC logo on that I presented to the bailiff's kids. Yes, arse kissing if you like but I can know fish areas no man has gone before (sounds a bit trekkie that) and use the ultimate tackle barrow, Cheers Nick, much appreciated. 12 eelers had made it, the Dirty Dozen for want of a better handle, so now all we needed was the fish.

I'd done one of my usual tricks and came down in advance. On the Wednesday to be precise and had set up not far from where I fished on the last fish-in. First time back in this section of water since last year but reports from the carpers said this was one of the hotspots for those big wrigglers. Several very good fish had come from around an area I had been pre-baiting over a period of months, not to me I hasten to add but to those damn carpers again. Although I would not be fishing this swim on the fish-in as its out of bounds to non members, it's in the general vicinity so considering the unfavourable conditions on arrival I thought my chances of catching a good fish from around here may be substantially improved. I had also tried to improve the chances in several other swims by giving them a pre-bait on the Wednesday before the lads turned up (to no avail as it turned out).

I bivvied up on the back bay point, facing into the gentle 35mph breeze and hoped this was the right choice. My eeling this year hasn't being going to well, a long run of cold weather and rain has seen water temperatures struggle to reach 14 degrees. A long way off what we needed for Nickols to fish to its full potential. Harboursing fears that this year may not live up to expectations, I chucked four rods out baited with deads and worms and kept my fingers crossed that someone would catch a whacker. Wednesday night over and all I'd caught was boots, nothing even remotely near the 3lb mark. This was worrying, if I couldn't whip out a biggie from my own water then who could (don't say a word Nick or I'll tell everyone what your missus was up to with her best friend).

A breakfast of sausage, egg & bacon was interrupted by the sound of the bailiff's tractor approaching, the new Nickols tackle barrow as it's now known. Strolling down the path, Pete Shefford arrived and was duly made welcome. After a short chat he set out his tackle in the same swim Nick Rose fished last year. Tucked behind a bank of reeds he was reasonably sheltered from the elements. Something he would need not having a full bivvie choosing rather to rough it under a brolly. Around 3 that afternoon the phone rang, Nick & Graham were at the gate. This meant the weekends booze shipment had arrived. Setting up in the comfy swim next to mine it wasn't long before the hiss of the first tinny being opened came to my ears and Graham's shout went up as he hit into his first boot of the session. So the crack started. Piss taking ensued about Graham's little wriggler, then Nick caught one. While the boot bashing had commenced another member had arrived. Chris Siddall appeared from behind a blade of grass to everyone's astonished gasps. Having lost over 4 stone, quit drinking and junk

food we will have to debate whether this healthy life style will still qualify Chris as an ultra-cult eel fisherman. But then maybe we won't need to, judging by his catch return for the session the eels had already passed sentence and hence forth decided to avoid his baits.

Night drew in and everyone awaited the evening feeding spell. Runs ensued and runs were missed, those that were hit turned out to be nothing but boots, bream and rudd. Most people then changed all their baits to deads in order to get some kip and possibly wrinkle out a better fish. Alas this didn't transpire and Friday morning dawned wet and windy with little to show for the night's fishing.

Doing my ordained duty as organiser, a walk round was called for to ascertain the actual results. Nick and Graham, my neighbours had taken nothing more than scraper 2s at the most. Paul Shefford was next and arriving in his swim, my first impression was he'd been nuked in the night by the Yanks with a stray smart bomb meant for Iraq. Buckets and bits of kit were scattered all around his broly and underneath a sleeping bag, a tackle box perched on top, snored Pete. In the interests of hygiene I'd come back later. Onwards then to Chris who had fared no better in the fishing department but by raising his arms above his head could now achieve a perfect impression of a John Roberts rod rest.

As Friday rolled on a few more members turned up. Steve from Surrey (sorry can't remember that second name). A new member who had never night fished before and was as keen as you can get, set up in the mega cosy corner swim nearest the cars. Steve is the sort of angler we need to go out of our way to encourage if the Club is to continue and not become just a widespread gang of select anglers. Don't worry Steve next time you'll be abused just like everyone else so that you can really feel at home, I promise. Next appearing on the scene was Barry McConnell & Pete Drabble. Barry's first act was to try and flog everyone fishing books and me not being used to high-pressure sales techniques at my bivvie door was soon £112 lighter. He's now forwarded my name to double-glazing and debt management companies for a small fee. Paul Smith arrived walking round shivering having forgotten his coat in his enthusiasm to get to the lake. And that's Friday's contingent of wretched looking specimen hunters.

Friday morning I had a blistering run on a ruddy great dead bait that I'd chucked out in the hope of discouraging these poxy boots from taking my baits. It worked; a 3lb 1oz fish slapped its way into the net. Not a big fish by Nickols standards but an improvement on what I had been catching. Things were looking up. And not just for me. Not long after setting out his stall Barry's curtain hook bite indicator leaped up and the strike met a good fish, 4lb 7oz to be exact. A better start I don't think he could have wished for. And I was greatly relieved that at least one good fish had graced the net of an eel angler for as I said the conditions were not ideal for a successful trip. Barry's fish had taken off-bottom lobs, a method and bait that can be used at the moment due to a lot of the lake's bream population having rampant sex in the shallow bays at the back of the lake. (I said I'd mention sex). Runs continued for Barry and the rest of our motley crew but most were still smallish fish. By Saturday morning Barry McConnell had landed 15 fish, his best the 4-7. Chris Siddall had two the best 1lb 4oz. Graham Wilkes had somehow caught 5 boots in amongst 10 tinny's and a bloody good kip. Pete Shefford had whipped out a 2lb 10oz fish and two boots. John Davis had four boots on Saturday morning, all in daylight. Nick Duffy had five 1lb plus fish. Crawley Steve had six small-uns from cozy corner. Pete Drabble managed to catch err arrr several fish but he's not too sure. Paul Smith a 1 and a 2lb fish and yours truly had sneaked out another 3lber and four snootys to end what some would regard as a successful nights fishing as no one had blanked. By Nickols standards we were still a long way off. In fact the highlight of Friday night was fish and chips delivered to my swim by Nick Duffy. In truth it was steak & kidney pie and very gratefully received it was too.

Saturday continued along the same theme, odd fish coming out but still small. A few members tried a move of swim as the wind had abated. Nick and me moved to along by the fishing hut. The egg and bacon sandwiches and fresh tea supplied by Derek the bailiff had nothing to do with this decision. But that treatment may well influence future swim choice. Pete Davis in the meantime was having some fun on ledgered worms and deads. Those pesky Nickols perch had homed in and Pete was knocking them out to around the 3lb mark, plus the odd boot. Steve Cotton had also moved and was now fishing the point in front of the boat club. One of my favourite swims but a grueller if the wind picks up, as it's totally exposed on three sides.

So the day continued, a few boots, bream and perch in amongst the intermittent cloud bursts but still the lake's monsters remained elusive. As the day rolled on the rain became more frequent, becoming

a continuous drizzle by nightfall. By 11pm I had changed all my baits to deads to avoid the bootlace invasion I had been suffering whilst using worm. A possible mistake I think. Sometime around 12 midnight Nick shouted that he had hooked a descent fish. Begrudgingly I vacated my nice dry bivvie and stepped out into the rain just in time to see Nick do a major silly walk along the bank as the eel went ballistic in the shallows. Grabbing the net, first attempt and she was ours. Peering between the folds I thought maybe a big three possibly a scraper four. So I was more than pleasantly surprised when the eel pulled the scales round to 4lb 11oz. A worm caught four, something I haven't achieved yet from this place not always having the patience to persevere with a bait that suffers the attention of every coarse fish in the lake. As I said, my mistake I think. That was the highlight for Saturday night. Again many fish were caught, nearly all small but that's just the way it goes in this game. Sometime around 8am cars started to collect around the fishing hut so Nick decided this was the time to have a photo shoot and get some pics of his 4. This done, a beaming Nick released the fish back into the lake safe in the knowledge that he'd got a trophy at last. The smile didn't last long, the bailiff offered his apologies to Nick for not having caught a decent fish having travelled so far for one. The bailiff here has a different perspective on what's a good fish having seen so many whackers. His son (4 years old) has had a 6 plusser.

Sunday was a lovely day. Hot sunshine, light wind. Can't be Kent can it? Well it was, we even had thunder and lightning towards late afternoon. This obviously meant confidence was high for another good fish or two coming out. So after the evening's curry takeaway everyone was ready for action. The lake was flat calm, an eerie stillness settled over the water. The lonely cry of a far of lapwing, the marsh frogs croaked in the reeds, the strangled cry of Graham Wilkes echoed across the lake "does anyone want a ddddrink" the only noise. A golden glow lit up the horizon, the sun setting, no, it was Graham blowing up Nick Coleman's cooker. The night wore on without any more incidents, runs were slow as the temperature plummeted but still boots harried the baits, albeit in less numbers then the previous nights. Sunday night belonged to Steve Cotton, catching a 3 first light from the Point. And that was this year's trip over. A success, yes but not as good as I would have liked then there's always next year.

#### Results

S.Ricketts - 22 Eels, biggest 3lb 1oz & 3lb 3oz

B.McConnell – 24 Eels, Biggest 4lb 7oz

P.Drabble - Eels, Biggest

C.Siddall – 5 eels, Biggest 2lb

P.Shefford – 2 Eels, Biggest 2lb 10oz

J.Davies – 7 Eels, Biggest 2lb

N.Duffy – 10 Eels, Biggest 4lb 11oz

G. Wilkes – 9 Eels, Biggest 2lb

S. Cotton – 5 Eels, Biggest 2lb 10oz

Steve. 6 Eels, Biggest 2lb

P.Smith – 6 Eels, Biggest 2lb

# N.A.C Members Profile.

By

**Peter Waterfield**

**NAC MEMBERS NAME..... *Peter Waterfield.***

**STATUS.....*Married.***

**WHEN DID YOU FIRST START EEL FISHING.....1998.**

**REASONS FOR JOINING THE NAC....** *I just pike fished through the winter and needed something to do during the summer months.*

**FIRST EEL EVER CAUGHT....***Match angling on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal.*

**PERSONAL BEST EEL TO DATE.....** *No Comment!!!!!!....( 2lb – 08ozs).*

**BEST REMEMBERED EEL SESSION.....***When all the planning came together on the Leeds & Liverpool November 30<sup>th</sup> when I had the 2lb – 08ozs eel.*

**WHICH MONTHS DO YOU FISH FOR EELS .....***From frogs spawning to zander season.*

**FAVOURITE VENUE...***Northwest canals and old mill lodges.*

**ANY PARTICULAR BAIT PREFERENCES AND REASONS FOR THIS....** *I like using live baits, however, the run to fish ratio could be better. I prefer Tommy Ruffe section and worms over a pint of dead feeders.*

**FAVOURITE ITEM OF TACKLE....** *Nash Titan, Delkim's and Robert's butt grips.*

**OTHER SPECIES THAT YOU FISH FOR...***Zander and pike.*

**OF ALL THE SPECIES YOU HAVE CAUGHT, WHICH ONE IS YOUR FAVOURITE AND WHY....** *I am very impressed with zander but this might just be the “honeymoon” period and after a few blank sessions my new “best friends” could be eels again.*

**ARE YOU INVOLVED IN ANY OTHER ANGLING ORGANISATIONS....** *Z.A.C & P.A.C.*

**ANY OTHER INTERESTS OUTSIDE ANGLING...***Walking, local history, nature & tropical fish.*

**DIS-LIKES IN ANGLING....***Netting 3's – 4's – and 5's for other people ....(only joking Damian). Birds that sound just like my Delkim's . Photographs of carp anglers climbing trees and marker float set-ups in the angling press.*

**HOW COULD THE NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB BE IMPROVED.....***All members should “pull together” in the right direction. I don't like members advocating using eels as bait, however, I'm not an hypocrite so I can't really argue the point, I just don't write articles about it in the national angling magazines.*

**AMBITIONS, IN ANGLING TERMS....***To make my living from angling yet still enjoy angling as much as I do now. To give help and aid conservation as much as possible.*



*Peter with the first deliberately fished for eel taken while on holiday..(editors comment...All Peter needs is a knotted handkerchief & a pair of glasses and he'd look like someone from the Monty Python Team.)*

**DO YOU HAVE ANY ANGLING HEROES OR HAS ANYONE INFLUENCED YOUR CAREER TO DATE....** *My Dad, Granddad and just about all the N.A.C & P.A.C members in the Northwest.*

**DO YOU THINK THAT THE EXISTING RECORD OF 11lb-2oz WILL BE BROKEN IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IF SO, WHAT TYPE OF VENUE DO YOU THINK IT WILL BE AND WILL IT BE TO AN EEL ANGLER OR AN ANGLER FISHING FOR ANOTHER SPECIES....***I think the eel record will fall in the next few years to a commercial fishery, all it needs is for a farmer or land owner with a lake or pond containing one or two really large eels that where "introduced" either naturally or other wise in the 1980's to open it up as a carp fishery and you've got over 20 years of trout pellets and all sorts of carp goodies going in, plus all the small "bite" sized carp to grow fat on.*

# Tackle Review #1.

*Eagle "CUDA128" Fish-finding & Depth Sounding Sonar's  
By Les Corsie.*

I've had my eyes on these for a few years now, having watched the boys on Wraysbury use them so I promised to treat myself one day. That day arrived when I was on holiday with my daughter in the Orkneys visiting family. I had asked my dad to take me to the local boat stores to see if I could acquire another life belt for the fish farm back home.

They had just taken a delivery of the new range of fish finders I think there are about ten sonar's in the range. They start with the smallest and cheapest which is the one I bought and run right up to the top of the range which would probably be used by a commercial fisherman.

Anyway, as I said, I bought the cheapie which cost £118.00, but requires a 12 volt car battery, they also sell the Cuda 128 portable which requires 8D alkaline batteries but unfortunately I was quoted £185 for this model which was a little bit steep for my needs.

I said earlier that I had talked to some of the anglers on Wraysbury. The one thing they all agreed on was that they never relied on them to actually find fish but solely as a feature finder. When I bought it I hoped it would save me some time by not having to stick my head in a bucket and look through the murky depths.

My first outing was with my son Scott as he is more adapt with computer type things than me. When we arrived at Wraysbury I decided to set up in a swim I knew well?

I strapped the transducer on, connected the two terminals and switched it on. Bingo, all's well, so we jumped in and set sail. What happens next is that



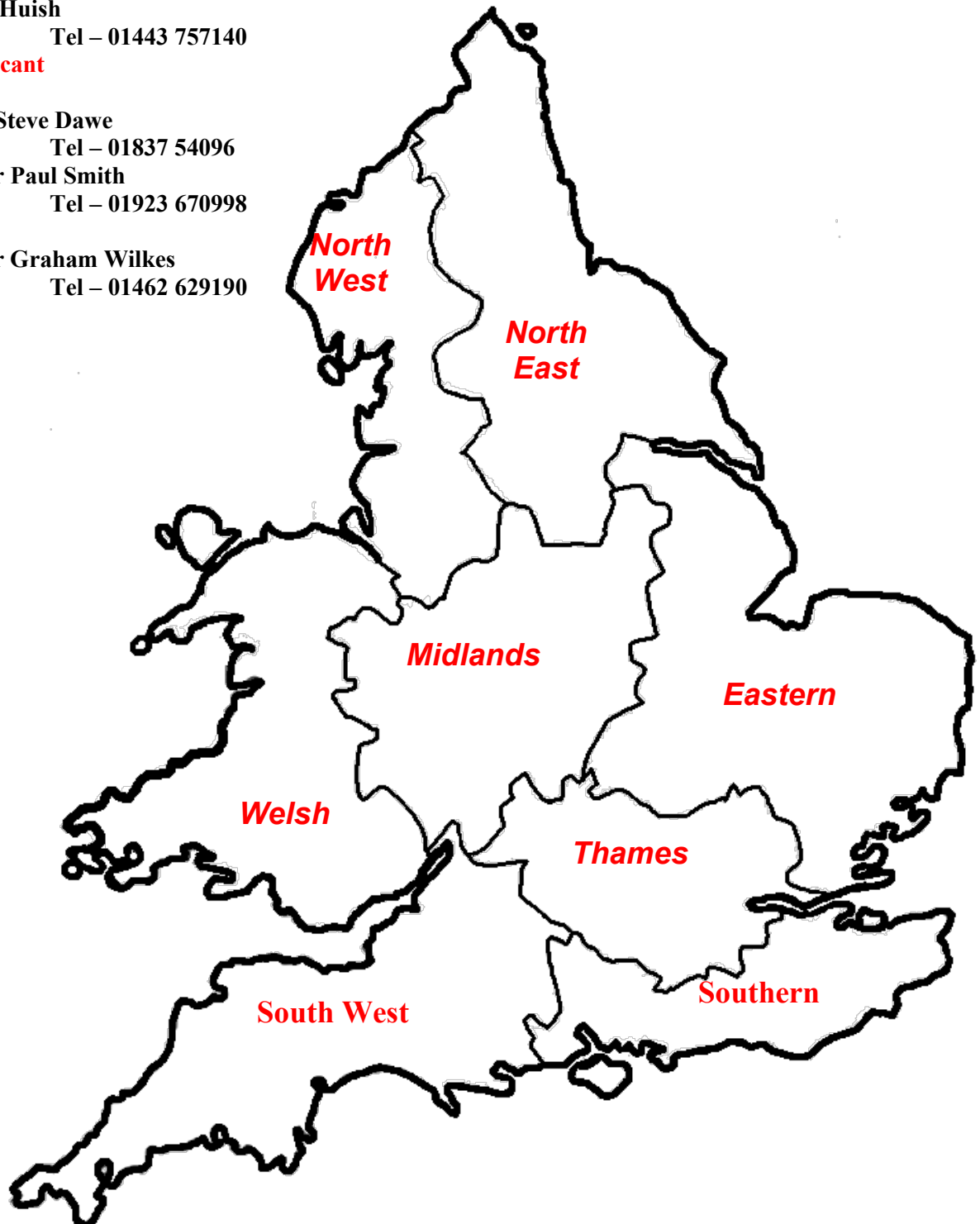
*The Eagle "CUDA 128" fishfinder & depth sounding sonar.*





# Regional Map & Organisers

- North West:-** Mr Peter Waterfield  
Tel – 01942 746374
- North East:-** Mr Mark Handley Wood  
Tel – 0113 2581709
- Midlands:-** Mr Nick Rose  
Tel – 0121 3736082
- Wales:-** Mr Kevin Huish  
Tel – 01443 757140
- Southern:-** Vacant
- South West:-** Mr Steve Dawe  
Tel – 01837 54096
- Thames:-** Mr Paul Smith  
Tel – 01923 670998
- Eastern:-** Mr Graham Wilkes  
Tel – 01462 629190



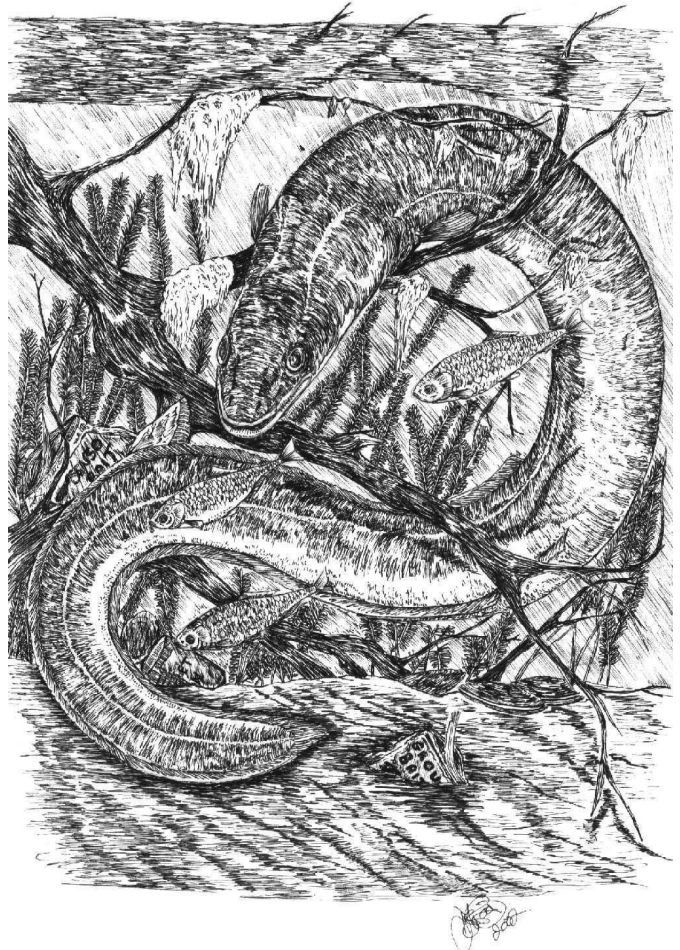
# Quest for Big Canal Eels

## Quest for Big Canal Eels

By Damian “The Burglar” Wood.

This article is based upon joint observations and experiences fishing canals for specimen eels over the last seven years. The areas or aspects that will be covered are about how I and my fishing buddy Jimmy have developed a more defined approach in the locations and understanding of canal eel behaviour the hard way, mainly concentrated on one particular canal and it’s inhabitants for the past six seasons.

So what makes one canal produce more big eels and another that produces only small eels and lots of them? This is a question that is very difficult to answer, probably almost impossible at his moment in time. There are many different ways of eliminating one canal, or area of a canal from another, for example, looking at maps of canals, choosing specific area’s and doing some ‘recky’ trips, having a good look before actually fishing is always a good way to find the canals that may produce the calibre of fish you are looking for, i.e. eels over 3lb, no matter which method is used this can be only achieved by fishing the said water to get a accurate picture followed up with research, and an existing reputation that it may already have.



Possible locations or areas to look for are canals which split into two sections like a ‘B’ road off the main canal that joins on to another canal system, or onto the same canal further on down the line. Closed off sections of canals are also a good place to start, depending on how long ago they became disused. Studying how that particular chosen canal, or stretch is fed i.e. via a river, a feeder inlet or other access points, and if the access point is still useable by an eel or not, they both have advantages or disadvantages depending on how you look at in. You have to see canals in two ways, either in some cases they are inter-linked to other water sources, and in the same respect they could also can be classed as land locked still-waters it depends on how you perceive them.

This could depend on development of the surrounding area and what that particular canals purpose was, it’s not always the case that the furthest place from the main source is the ideal area. The eel could come in from another possible source, probably from a different canal that it may link on to, miles away from were you intend to fish, which may already have a reputation of producing big eels either by being caught, or being found dead. Neglected areas of a canal, possibly due to their inaccessibility either for anglers or narrow boats, are good areas to try. It could be an important factor in choosing a canal, or canal stretch, with big eel potential. Like most specimen fishing research and homework play a big role in catching any big fish of any species.

If you catch a lot of small eels straight away then move on, this doesn't necessarily mean there are no big eels there, it just means that that it will take along time to whittle through them, thus cutting you chances down. If on the other hand you sit there and blank from up to a season or more then you could be in the right place, may be? Nothing is for certain in this game, you could drop on lucky, it does happen. The only hundred percent way of knowing you have found the right canal is by catching one. I'm sorry to be the one to burst your bubble, it is not easy to catch large eels especially by design. The majority of the eels that appear in the weekly's are mainly caught by accident, unless they are members of The National Anguilla Club, or the Eel study Group, with a small percentage of non-club or society eel specialist anglers, so don't get the impression this eeling larks a "doddle", because it isn't, so get this out your head straight away them it is easy to come to terms with the blanks.



*A 4lb 08oz eel taken in the wettest and the hardest rainy night ever, this eel came in a period when the rain stopped for about thirty minutes and was taken 5 feet from the near margin.*

It's very difficult to be consistent fishing for any specimen species, no matter how long you have been fishing for them, you have to constantly work at it. Specimen eel fishing could be classed as "fishing for ghosts"! The eel is a species that you can't see, you don't know if the water you have decided to concentrate on contains an eel of any description, only until one is actually put on the bank. With the added choice to vacate at any given time with out notice, the odds are stacked against you from the start. You have to realise that there are no physical barriers keeping eels in one given area of the canal at any one time, leaving hundreds of yards of canal completely devoid of

any eels at any given time, so be prepared to search out and find, in some cases sitting out night after night month after month, for a run. A bought the t-shirt, worn it and using it for dusters spring to mind!



*This 4lb 09oz eel came straight after a thunderstorm had stopped. And put up an immense fight, the first time I have experienced line being taken off a super tightened clutch. After picking a roach head up, fished in the near marginal slope about 4 feet from the banking beside an overhanging tree.*

It can take a long time, it's very rarely going to be instant or consistent. Mental preparation is a big factor when tackling canals for a very low population of very large eels. It also makes life a lot easier if you have a fishing partner, one for the company, second you can bounce ideas off one another, or to give each other assistance when a fish is on, you can't describe the immense power a big eel can give you until you taste it first hand, and finally for your own personal safety, especially fishing in the more unsociable areas. Unfortunately for my fishing partner Jimmy he drew the short straw and ended up with me! If it wasn't for him I wouldn't have caught the eels I have, even though we fish for the team result.

When I go out, I tend to have the attitude of the session being a blank, and if nothing

happen, you expected it any way, and if a run happens then it's a bonus, it may sound a negative way to

fish, but it works for me, you seem to work harder, theorising and developing methods, it keeps you sharp. If you are catching all the time you tend to get complacent, and lazy. Believe me not even a lot of harden time eel members tackle canals, with the same determination as they do with still waters, this is due to their soul destroying effect they can possess. They may be only twenty feet wide, but they can be twenty miles long or further between locks.

The next problem you come across after you have chosen your area of canal is “ How do I locate a very low population of eels in such a vast amount of water, what do I look for?” I haven’t got all the answers, all I can do is provide a few hints from my personal experiences fishing canals.

Talking to the regular match men can give some indication of it’s potential, but something you have to take into consideration, is that these anglers don’t carry scales, so always ask if the said eel was weighed properly and your second question should be did it go back! As every thing weighs “*about two pounds*” to them, for example if they say, “ *It was about 6lb*”, then you can at least deduct about two pounds off this weight at least, but it is still a good eel from a canal, or a still water for that matter, so always take what they say with a pinch of salt so to speak. Keeping an eye on the pegs that do well in matches, this can give you some idea on places to fish that could be more productive than others areas that tend to hold fish, especially on those daunting ‘Baron’ areas of the canal.

If on the other hand, they turn round and tell you that as far as they know they have never seen an eel, or have no knowledge of any one catching any, this is also good sign. This doesn’t necessarily mean no one is fishing for eels there, the eel angler is a nocturnal creature, who arrives and disappears before he is seen, more elusive and mysterious as the quarry he is after. If by any chance you do come across someone fishing for eels on the canal, (With an interest as proper eel anglers have a code of courtesy conduct and returning their intended quarry alive!), give them some courtesy, as you would expect yourself and go further on down the stretch, and try again to fish that particular stretch at a later date. When you are fishing canals for a low population of eels and the blanks start mounting then you can understand the reasons why. It is all confusing at first but patterns start to materialise after the ground work has been put in, believe me and the location of potential productive areas increase your run rate once you figure it out and change your ideas about how eels behaviour is usually perceived.

#### Snags and Feature Location:

There are so many features I couldn’t possibly mention them all, so I’m going to mention a few other likely areas to try. The usual features that do get mentioned are lock gates, bends, reeds, turning or mooring basins, or narrow to wide stretches, aqua-ducts and bridges, but one thing I will say about bridges that usually the depth of the canal goes deeper not just under the bridge it’s self, but also leading onto it on both sides like a slope in the baths if they are regularly used that is, so I don’t need to go into them, in too much detail, as its all been probably written about before.

#### The boat channel:

Canals can vary from tree line banking , to completely ‘Baron’ stretches of canal with not an overhanging tree in sight, with in some cases having dramatic changes of features and scenery within a small distance of one another. Every canal is different and has its own problems to overcome, so they have to be approach individually.



*Fishing areas that have produced in the past will always produce again, even up to seven days later, there is a reason that it produce in the first place and always worth a revisit, time and time again with breaks in between. This one weighed in at 5lb 01oz.*

A good way to surmise where to fish is to split the stretch of canal into sections, it could be from bridge to bridge, or a noticeable landmark, no matter how far the distance is, for example if the stretch of canal is roughly a mile between two bridges, a good idea is to divide it off in two hundred yard sections, treating them like small ponds, it doesn't seem as daunting, the same way in fact that you would fish a large expanse of water by a grid section plan. Within every section a basic plan of snags and water-depths should be noted mainly to finding the position of the 'boat channel' and likely areas to place your baits.

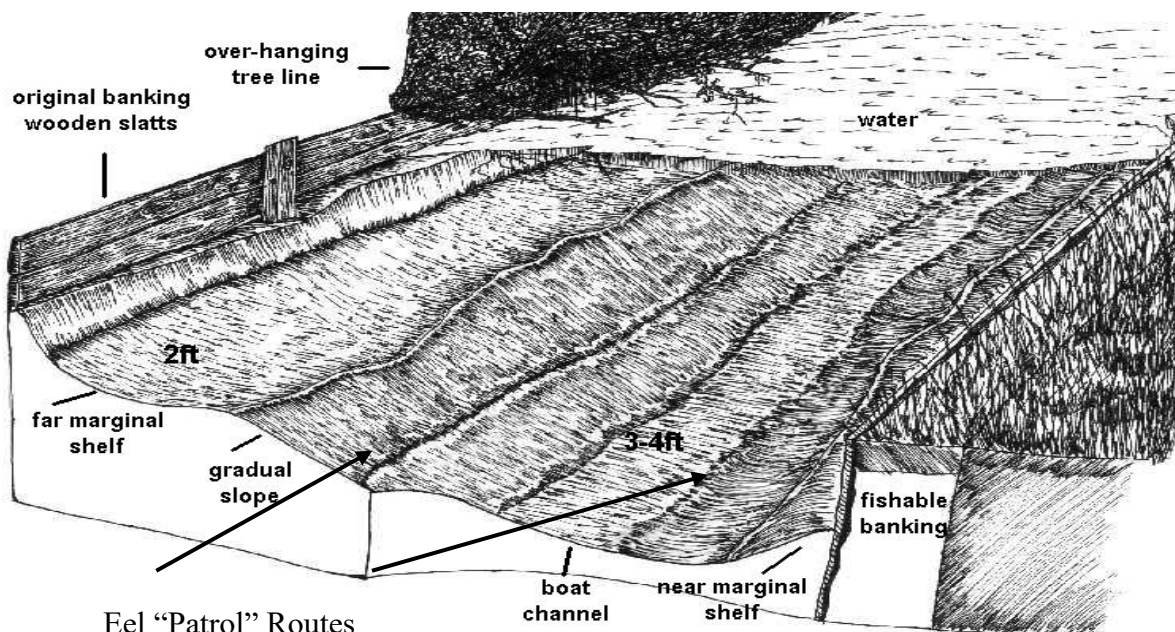
The boat channel can vary from stretch to stretch changing from running on the far side to your near side depending on the bank side vegetation, or if there is a bend or even a surface seen snag, that the narrow boats have to manoeuvre around, its not always the case that the boat channel is bang on in the centre of the canal. This is a prime area to place your baits as the eel uses the slopes of the channel on its search for food. So knowing exactly where these slopes, or drop offs into the channel, are very important.



*A picture of a typical tree-line section of the canal, this can change the behaviour of the eel as they don't need to move far for food, they have over-head cover for the prey fish and due the anglers they receive a barrage of free offering on a regularized basis this is when the eel can become more territorially bases until the food has depleted or moved on.*

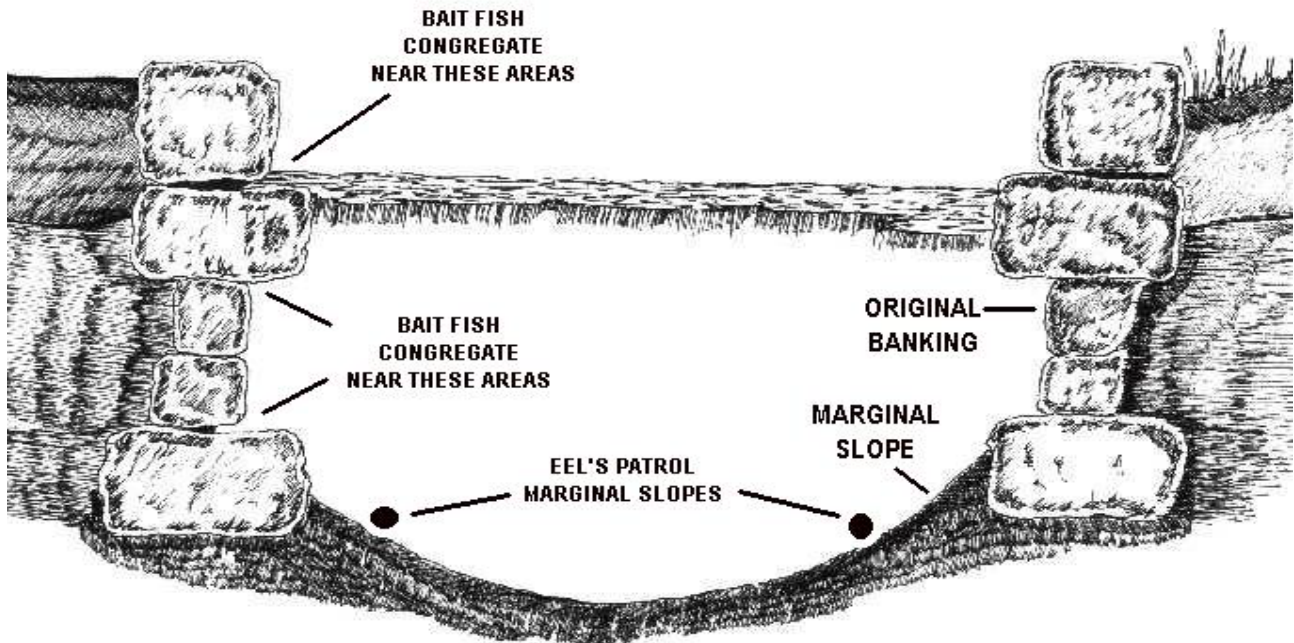
As you can see from the diagram, with the over hanging trees on the far side, the narrow boats have to manoeuvre themselves closer to the near banking to avoid the trees. Due to this action on behalf of the boat the far side, has a shelf that is very shallow, gradually sloping in the channel. This shelf can come out a long way past the trees depending on how wide that particular area of canal is. So in this scenario the boat channel is closer to your banking, than at first glance.

Fig 1: A typical tree-lined canal stretch:



When it comes to your near margin, depending how deep it is, the slope could be that little bit further out than first anticipated, meaning the bait fish are not as close to the near bank as with a deep 'baron' stretch of canal. These slopes are areas where eels seem to 'patrol', probably ambushing prey that wonder over the edge of the slope, or were maggots and other food offering, from the match men in the day time tend to gather. Attracting prey fish to hold up in these areas as darkness falls, making them an ideal place to present a bait for a passing eel.

Fig 2: A typical stretch of 'Baron' canal:



With 'baron' stretches of canal, the boat channel is usually straight forward running straight in the centre, only will the channel deviate if the boat has to change course to travel through bends, take note on how narrow boats travel along these type of stretches, this will give you some idea where it is. As you can see from the diagram there is a number of shelves where the canal banking has been re-enforced and built up over the years, this is mainly down to subsidence of the surrounding area. This is usually indicated by the surrounding land being lower than the canal, this appears in areas that have played a part in coal mining, which the canals were originally built for over two hundred years ago, for the industrial revolution, to transport their goods all over the country. It pays dividends to look at the land around the canal as some times these areas are open to the elements, which can change the behaviour and movements of the prey fish and in unison the eels.

These can vary depending on where the canal is situated, in industrial or run down areas, snags can vary from steel girders, factory waste, to stolen bikes that just get thrown into the canal, these type of snags I would class as permanent. Which attract small fish like bees to honey and always a good place to present a bait near too. John Sidley says in his book, that you should look to the eel as you would a conger eel lying in the wrecks waiting for a bait fish to come within grabbing distance, but it doesn't necessarily mean that every snag has an eel in it as they can be both feeding and holding areas due to the wind direction to or from the feature also including the tow or draw of the canal and which way it is travelling. This takes time to learn, it seems that water craft is a dying art, or because we are fishing for eels and the fact that we are fishing at night then it doesn't matter?

Trees that have fallen into the water are also good places to fish, but I prefer to fish slightly away from these areas, hoping to pick an eel up either on its way in or out of these type of snags. The other types of snags are floating debris, such as trees that have been thrown in.

These type of snags I would class as 'Temporary', taking some time to settle, and are instant bait fish attractors. They also collect everything else that gets thrown into the canal like bags, leaves, and dead fish in cases, giving overhead cover to prey fish, but due to the boat traffic, and depending on how busy it is, these 'Temporary' snags tend to get dislodged moving up and down the canal stretch, or luckily water-logged and becoming a 'permanent' feature, so utilise these types of snags before this happens. This tends to happen around trees branches that enter the water, or on bends and even protruding banking, which I call 'flotsam and jetsam', these type of snags or areas, can be a real winner on a 'Baron' stretch of canal.

Another feature to look for is anything out the norm on the canal, on some canals I have fished interesting features like old bridges, with the bridgework entering the canal are good spots, or protruding edges of the canal wall that have no apparent use at all, that can trap flotsam and jetsam are also worth a try.

Also the nature of the bottom and the water clarity can be beneficial, not all canals have soft silt bottoms this can change along the varied length of the same canal the consistency of the silt can be important on all accounts for the eels benefit and for our benefit as far as presentation goes. Some canals have weed growth along the bottom and gaps in between them are good places to present a bait as there is a reason there is no weed there usually down to other species looking for blood-worm and other crustaceans in the silt, but in my experience in the carp scene this area will produce at a later date and are visited by a varied species as the amount of silt a carp through up a lot of food is left on the top of the silt where small fish move in and reap the rewards and in theory the predators wont be far behind.



*A typical "baron" stretch, they are more open to the elements and this effects the behaviour of the eel and it's food as wind direction can make them move around a lot more than in a sheltered tree-lined stretch of canal, if there are any small trees spread about like in this picture, are a target for fish to hide under, making them an ideal place to present a bait too.*

You will also find out that the bottom is never uni-formal and any out the normal slopes holes are also good places to try, this can be achieved in various ways by conventional plumbing, or something I do, was use the landing net handle and prod the margins and get a mental picture of what it was like as far as depth and the nature of the bottom from soft-silt to gravel patches where you would swish gudgeon, you also find out that the bait fish are not spread out, but held-up in small pockets here and there.

The clarity of the water can be a advantage or a disadvantage, one you can see the bottom, but have to keep out of site or quite when first light appears or the colouration of the water can make some baits more effective than others. Due to floating silt that can settle and mask the sent of a bait when fishing on the bottom and can put them off the feed.

Dead Spots:

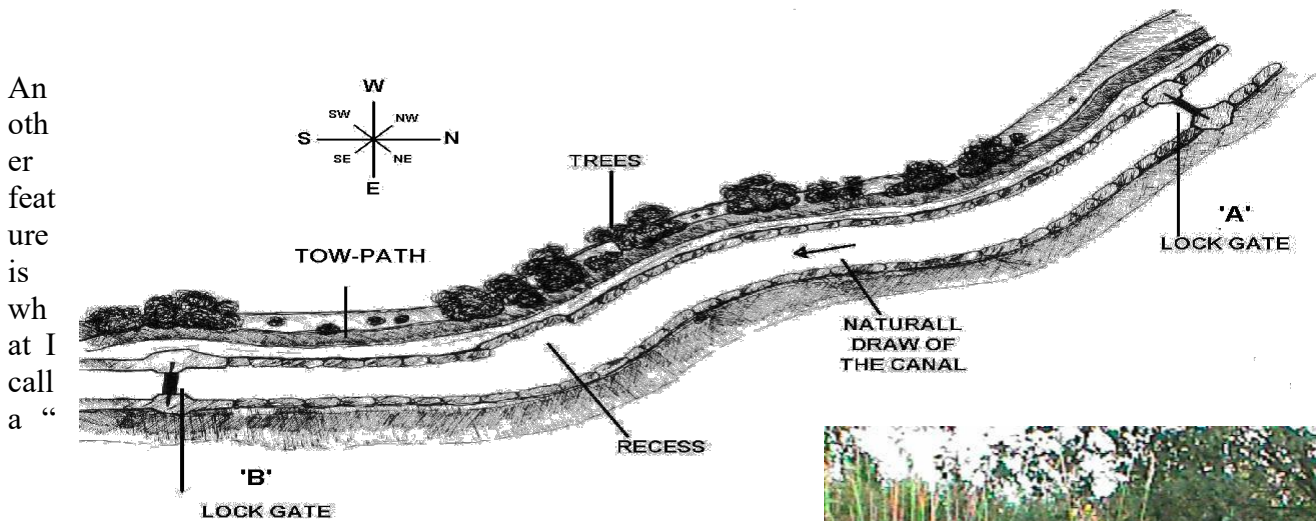
Another good feature to look for are 'Dead Spots', which can coincide with 'Flotsam and Jetsam'. This is mainly down to a combination of the 'Draw' of a canal, the surrounding area, wind direction and the stretch of the canal itself. It's a lot harder to explain than to actually spot!



Firstly what is a ‘Draw’ or “Tow””? The way canals are built the locks always step down, so the natural assumption is that canals flow down stream all the time. This is correct, but not entirely true as a canal can act both like a river and a still water, but this can change direction, depending on which lock is opened or if both locks are shut.

IF the other end of the canal is opened the force of water creates undertow upstream as it bounces back from the other lock gate, if there is a bend somewhere on the canal, or protruding banking , even if the wind is blowing down stream as well, you can see a flat spot, were the water seems motionless. This area also is signified by the debris that gathers on the surface and surface ripple around it, these areas attract eels in search of dead fish that get blown and settle, these areas and a good place to try, they can be as little as a couple of feet to over hundred yards in length and the time limit can vary depending on the wind direction and the draw of the canal. I have caught quite a few runs and good eels from this type of feature.

FIG 3: A Typical canal stretch :



Recess ” I don’t know exactly what they are for, but they mainly appear on straight lengths of canal. They are just long enough to fit a narrow boat into and only about a metre wide, possibly for the boats to pull into to let on coming boat past? As they were a lot bigger in those days to transport more coal as they are today mainly for pleasure cruises, or even a loading bay as in those days

One place or ideal location that people rate are over-head pylons, as for the match men they are very productive and do congregate fish, but I have fished these areas on many occasions and it has produced very little as runs go, but before and after this feature I have caught eels on numerous occasions. My only idea why beside being in the wrong place at the wrong time is the static electrical atmosphere around them, must confuse the eel and hides the electrical signals a prey fish gives off when it is using the lateral line to detect its prey maybe?



*marginal slope.*

**Canal eel behaviour and theories about eels in general:**

Big canal eels behave differently from their smaller brethren. Small canal eels move in small packs of half a dozen fish or more, feeding together in search of food. This has been proven on many occasions and not by me alone. When you are fishing heavily populated areas of canal, using three rods positioned in various areas, cutting the canal off, first your furthest rod from you goes first, then your nearest then you last rod and if you are fishing with a partner his does the same, straight after one another as the eels move through the swim, on where it goes quite for about an hour then the process starts again in the opposite direction working back to you, as the eels move back through the swim, this goes on until they totally leave the area. Big canal eels I would class as 'Rogue' predators, but have the same thing in common with their smaller brethren, they are not 'territorial' as such, not permanently anyway, but they will move around in smaller packs at times maybe in pairs, but won't feed directly next to each other, this could be down to over-lapping territorial "patrol routes" or of a rogue fish moving through the area, but they will tolerate each others presence to a degree, this has been proven on many occasions on the canal with multiple runs on different rods spread up to fifty yards apart minutes after each other.

There are two different types of 'territorial' eels, one being permanent the other temporary. Big canal eels are the latter this is because its food supply is never in the same spot for long and the eel has to move with the food supply, this can vary depending on the abundance of food in close proximity of its temporary lair and the particular stretch of canal. Very similar to lions on a prairie following the herds of wilder beasts from place to place. On tree line areas of canal, or very snaggy areas, they don't have to move far to obtain food as the over hanging trees, or snags provide cover for its prey and receive more attention from match anglers. Due to this reason, in these situation the eel could be classed as 'territorial'.

But on 'baron' stretches of canal they move more a field as the canal is more open to the elements of wind direction and the lack of overhead cover for its prey, possibly lying up after a feed for a few days, until they move again following the prey fish. The more they move the easier they are to locate, I personally prefer fishing 'baron' stretches for this reason as they seem to be more active and productive.

This behaviour is typical of a 'Rogue' predator as they only stay in one area until the food supply runs out, or they are caught. Take for example you have a stretch of canal roughly about 200 yards long and within this stretch there are five eels spread out over its distance and we will call them eel A to E for arguments sake, if there is no food in A to C are they going to stay there until it comes to them, or are they going to go to D and E's area where the food is at that present time? It makes common sense and also means that eels move around more than what you think and don't necessarily behave like conger in the wreck as believed.

This theory has been proven by a research survey done by The Natural Environment Research Council, where they radio tagged seven eels in a river, with their own individual signal and followed their movements for twelve months. They found out that eels showed restricted manoeuvrability, only travelling 40 metres in any one direction when in a feeding mode, except when it changed residences, bearing in mind these were small eels requiring 'X' amount of food to sustain themselves for a given period, as eels don't necessarily feed every day probably more like every three to four days in Summer.

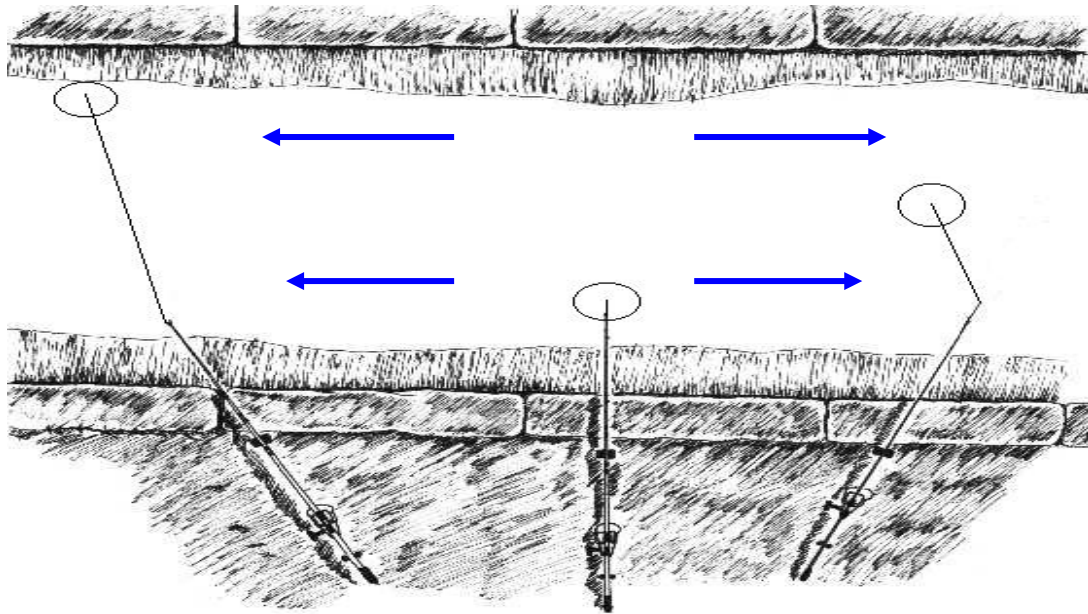


*My best canal eel to date taken 2hrs after day light and fought like something I can't describe and weighed an impressive 6lb 01oz which came from a "baron" stretch.*

A larger eel could have a larger feeding area and this could also mean that, if the eel has a place of origin and travels only in a 40m area they must have 'patrol routes' to get back to it's place of origin. A concept some eel anglers can't come to terms with? And a theory I think also appears in the 'Still Water' eel behaviour. I think it is about time that we started to believe that eels have "patrol routes", and their feeding pattern can be timed because of this, I have had too many coincidences to believe anything different. The reasons behind this theory are as follows, which has changed my whole ideas and concepts about eels across the board.

As I have already mentioned the slopes and drop – offs into the boat channel, these slopes are frequently used by eels as ' Patrol Routes' , this was found out when me and my fishing partner Jimmy started to use three rods each as shown in Fig 4 :

**FIG 4: Cutting off the "Patrol Routes"...**



Fishing this way we could cut off the canal between us using baits opposite to one another on every rod, we found out that roughly 90% of our runs came from rods 'A' and 'B' with rod 'C' receiving very little response or not at all. This was over a space of two years fishing a certain canal and in both our results, even fishing identical rigs and baits came up with the same conclusion, making us lean towards the idea that eels do have ' Patrol Routes' and can be used by more than one eel at the same time.



**An Eel of 5lb - 08ozs**

This goes against the grain of big eels supposedly being a 'Solitary' fish but me and my partner have experience runs on different rods at the same time not a great distance apart, but enough to

suggest that there were more than one eel there at that present time. In one incident I was returning a 4lb plus eel as my other rod went, if the solitary theory was correct then I had already taken the resident eel from that area and shouldn't have had another run so soon. It was definitely not a pike as I have fished this particular canal for six years and yet to catch one, using fish baits, worms and livey's, fishing all

*A big canal queen taken from a recess point as mentioned. On this stretch there are two of these about 300 yards apart and both have been very productive, fishing the far marginal shelf.*

hours of the night and creeping into day light hours. You can only come to your own conclusions to that. The other factor is, that these areas had more activity of prey fish and an obvious place to get a run.

Only in abnormal conditions, or a high activity of prey fish in a concentrated pocket, for example on one incident the council had been cutting the trees and thrown them into the canal and still produces runs year after year. You would get more than one run between six rods in a short session in this area, as for weather conditions they went very active either down to adverse humid conditions before, and after a storm, or heavy wind and rain. Another coincidence was the feeding time and runs could be almost set by your watch, one particular canal we fished, keeping to short session of 4 hrs, fishing at regular intervals mid week, in the height of summer when it was going dark at

23:30 hrs, fishing between this time and 02:30 hrs, runs regularly always came at 00:30hrs on the dot, no matter where you went, once the time got to about 01:30 the chances of getting a run were very slim. After 02:30 hrs it would go quiet until first light about 03:30 hrs where you may get another run even some times when you had already caught. Some of

my biggest eels have come out up to 2hrs after day light, in a blazing morning sun, with my best eel being 6lb 01oz, even though most of my fishing is done at night. The feeding time would change as soon as the clocks went back and the nights became longer and dawn never seems to materialise. The main reason I don't fish in the day time for the eels, even though they do produce in the daytime, is down to the constant boat traffic or in case someone sees me, unfortunately some of the canals in the North are under the continual threat of night lining, putting the fish I have a massive amount of respect for in danger.



*A 4lb 15 oz eel taken from the same spot that has produced quite a few runs and eels in the past and where Jimmy lost an eel two weeks previously. Sorry to remind you mate. The question is, was it the same eel?*



*A dawn caught 5lb 03oz eel taken from the near shelf margin on the reputed "uni-rig" fishing a 4" live roach.*

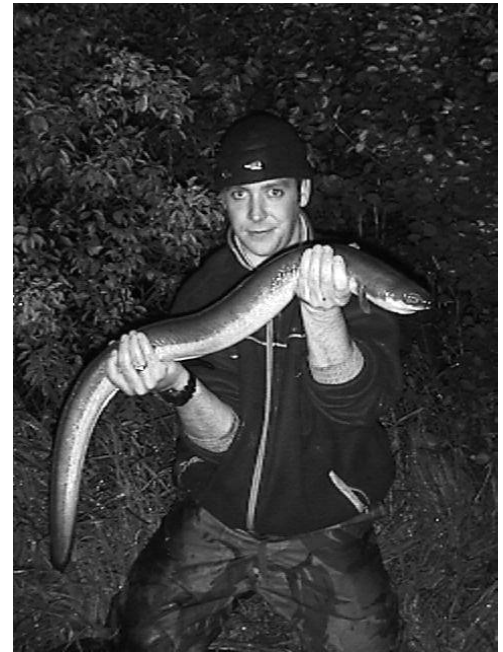
Fishing in this way of frequent short sessions, and the method of cutting the canal off, we learnt a lot about the eels behaviour and productive areas in a short space of time. At some point patterns emerge once you have caught an eel or two, areas that have produced an eel will always produce again. At some point once you have caught a few eels from different areas you could fish them on a 'Rota' system to give them time to rest and also for a new eel to move in, but you should not ignore trying new areas in-between, until you have enough places to go at. It takes a long time to collate enough data to get 'regular' takes even though you can't exactly predict when they will happen every time you go out, as the fact is that the eel may have already fed before you got to fishing the right area once located, visiting the same spot about 3 days later and the chances of getting a take is quite surprising too coincidental to ignore. Fishing 50 yards from the initial run if missed has also worked on many occasions in the past.

We also found that the most productive time of the year on the canals was between the ends of March to mid June, after June the fishing got extremely hard due to the boom in natural food and increasing amount of matches held every week end, which in our eyes was the worst time to fish the canal and could take

up to a fortnight after a match before you were into runs again. With the takes picking up again in run per session ratio in mid September.

This year I have fished for eels later than I normally do up until the beginning of November, due to canals having variant depths along there lengths this is something that still needs to be investigated that is, if they feed all the way through the winter in an average depth of four feet, and finding out when the right time to go is and the right area to fish. Do they hold up in pockets, does the same spots that produce in the Summer months, produce the goods in the winter? How long do they feed at this time of year, or the period of time between feeds. This is still a grey area and in time will be, just the normal as more development on theories through trail and error will over come the myths about the eel.

Another theory that I strongly believe when it comes to eels is association with baits and presentation and associating baits with the amount of resistance on the initial pick-up no matter what happens after. This I have gone over before in the "Pressurizing Eels" articles. Do I need to go over it again or do I need to elaborate my own ideas on why I think this, there is a lot of between the line factors from those articles that will explain the reasons I fish the way I do today, if you read them again carefully, then reflect on the new series of articles that are on the way about my own thoughts of eels.



*A 4lb 06oz eel, taken when the conditions where very windy and heavy rain and came within a lull in the weather*



*A picture of a 4lb 05oz eels head, they have very small heads compared to the rest of the eels body, this one measured 36" long and had a girth of 8¼ " girth*

Are you prepared to accept that it does or may happen and rigs, presentation and the resistance from the clip and baits have to be change to keep the run ratio up when they deplete, well if you don't it is at your loss, because it will happen if you don't, but you would never realise it flirting from one water to the another, when the runs die down following the same old theories about eels, when they are caught they leave the water straight away, or they all die after capture, just because they have the ability to leave a water doesn't necessarily mean they do leave the water, it is very hard to do it in canals, as for death rates and basically this is caused by deep-hooking, then we have to change completely how we fish for eels and our ideals about eels in general.

All they can do is move from one part of the canal to the other and technically and the reality of it is that you could be fishing for eels that have either been caught before, or have been made wary when the run has been missed.

Going back to the table I did for "The Resistance Movement" I will dissect it and back it with other conclusions and theories why I believe this happens more than you are prepared to believe, if it

appears in canals, then it must appear in still waters ten fold and will go over the aspects about association with baits, presentation by the resistance and how to utilise these factors to release new life from an already fished water, or for a new water and waters that have been left to rest.

In these scenarios alone there a few mistakes we sometimes unconsciously do that makes us believe that the eels have already left the building so to speak, because we have left the water for a period of time

and gone back in with the same method, bait and rig, when this should be changed and changed again when they start to get wary of the bait via the resistance. But this will have to wait for now.

I hope that I have given you some tips that will help you understand canals a bit better. You never know, there could be such a canal near to where you live that could produce some good eels and maybe give you the chance to discover and reveal some secrets about eels and your fishing ideals that they have given to both me and Jimmy and we are continuously turning the pages of the book about eels and their behaviour even to this day.

With respect the “Burglar”

# The Chairman's Bit

*By Nick Rose.*

Yes and it is only a bit as things have been very quiet this season (I am not complaining). I have not heard of many big eels to our members, but Mr. McConnell has had yet another 5lber.

As for myself things have been dismal. I have suffered some major problems with my van and also I have now got a trapped nerve in my back, which is affecting my leg. I used to joke about the chairman's disease with Kevin but it would seem I am suffering with the same luck as well. As you may know from the minutes I intend standing down from the chair this coming AGM, hopefully my luck will change and people will start talking to me again, only joking, its been a privilege standing as chairman for the NAC.

I have just returned from the fish/in at Emberton and enjoyed it immensely; I actually broke a couple of ducks over the weekend with my first eel of the season and my first Eel from Emberton. It must be at least 30 trips over the years to achieve this eel from the venue so I left with a smile on my face. You will gather from that statement that I have not been catching much and you would be right. But please remember at the end of the season I will send in my catch reports regardless of my abysmal season so please do the same, an empty catch report is better than none at all and even if you have not been out for eels much, don't worry, its not a criteria of membership that you have to do loads of sessions.

Also don't forget if you have caught an exceptional Eel then send in the Photos and the club witnesses if available to our records officer and you may be up for a trophy in November. Also I need the photos for the club album not just monster fish but different members faces on the prints other than the usual mob.

I hope you all have a successful second half to the season and I look forward to seeing you at the winter social, I heard a rumour that Mr. Wilkes (The Jockey) is going to attempt a slide show, half an hour with pictures of waters and views with no eels will be great (Sorry Graham) but if any one out there wants to give it a try then speak to Chris Siddall, I am sure he can fit you in as well.

Nick Rose.

# Social Scene

**June 2003**

**By  
Chris Siddall.**

Dear Member

This is a brief note to let you know what is going on in the club.

By the time you read this we should have enjoyed the second fish-in of the season at Emberton. Hopefully it was as good as the first one in Kent where eels up to 4lb 11oz were caught.

There is still one more fish-in to come on the Bridgewater Canal near Manchester on July 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>. For details contact Peter Waterfield.

After this the next big event for members is the Winter Social Meeting, which is due to be held on November 9<sup>th</sup> (Remembrance Sunday) at 11am. The venue will be The Queens Hotel in Long Eaton as usual. Anyone needing directions let me know.

As the name implies this is a social event so please try to attend. There will be the award of trophies for the season plus slide shows and raffle. It is also a good chance to meet members and get up to date with how the season has gone.

On the subject of slide shows anyone who feels they could help out with these, again please let me know.

Can all members who have trophies from last year please make sure they are returned before the meeting.

Plans are already in place for the fish-ins for next year. We will once again hold the southern one at Nickols Quarry in Kent but there will be a change of date to Friday the 10<sup>th</sup> of September.

The Midland fish in will be on the Linford Lakes complex near Milton Keynes and the dates for this have to be arranged. If anyone has any suggestions for the Northern one for next year please let me know.

So that's where we are and I hope to see you at the next fish-in or the winter social.

Best wishes

Chris Siddall



# "It's a Fine Line"

By "The Mole"

Well here we are after all the trials and tribulations of getting your tackle together and learning your trade via the videos and books suggested in the previous articles, you make your way to the bank. In true specimen hunting style you have your 4 rods made up in your super size rod holdall ready for action and on arrival at your chosen swim you remove them and start erecting your rod pod.

The guy in the tackle shop demonstrated how easy it was to do and you follow his instructions to the letter. Low and behold there it stands a masterpiece of modern stainless steel art, you then dismantle it and start again in an attempt to make it look like the guys in the next swim. After about an hour of frantic screwing and un screwing of the arms and legs the kindly sole from the next swim comes over and knocks it up in 10 seconds for you.

At this point your high sense of anticipation and confidence is just a little dented but you carry on with that same urgency of an hour ago. Your rods are taken out and you piece them together in the right order, what is the right order you say to yourself, well its not the order you used, as all the rods are interlaced by line, leads, swivels, and hooks which have all joined up in one large ball. You spend the next hour cutting all the rigs off and re-rigging your rods. Your confidence is low as by now the guy in the next swim has cracked open a 24 pack and invited the rest of lads on the lake round for some entertainment.

At this point you notice some movement in the lake, you search out your shades and crawl to the waters edge. YES the rumours were true the Eels in this lake do move around in the daytime and confidence hits the heights of 3 hours ago.

The lads in the spectators gallery are a little bemused as to what you are looking at and ask what you have spotted as they may have to return to their rods and cast over to your swim. A huge cheer erupts when you tell them you spotted your chosen quarry "The Eel" and relief all round for the spectators.

Back to the rods and a frantic rush to get at least one rod set up and bait to the feeding eels in the margins. You try to think calmly and clearly as to how the line has managed to get off the spool and wind itself in a tight oily bunch round the reel spindle. No ideas but you dismantle the reel and remove it.

After half an hour searching for the nuts and washers in the grass you abandon that rod and try one of the others (who needs four rods when you can see the eels).

You thread the line through the rings and then pick up the reel which has fallen off the rod, a quick look and yes the eels are still feeding in your swim and yes the line has got off the spool and is in an oily bunch behind the reel again. This time you keep the nuts and washers in your mouth and reassemble the reel. After you successfully thread the line through the rings you place the rod against the tree and enjoy the re-affirmation of the laws of gravity. How can anything as light as nylon line actually fall back through all those rings.



Finally you thread the line and take no chances and lay the rod down. You tread on it and panic when one of the eels speeds off out of the swim due to the broken rod tip springing into the water, No need to worry the others stay put.

The third rod emerges and a ripple of applause emits from the gallery as the now huge crowd witness a successful rod and rig building and with all the previous lessons learnt you are now on a roll. It starts to rain and the umbrellas go up in the gallery.

You tie on a hook but which of the four knots you have picked up from the books do you use. The Figure of four Knot, commonly known as the figure of eight not but you cannot remember the last line in the book, hence the amended title. The Four Turned Blood Knot, you can tie it but only with rope so far.

The Double Slip Loop, commonly know as the single slip loop but you prefer to make sure and tie it twice.

Or the Underhand Granny, the most common knot in angling, every angler has his own version. You plump for the Granny ( your own top secret version )

It is now nearly dark and the crowds have dispersed apart from some die-hards who are now on the strong cider and look to be there all night. You can now bait up.

You then swish for bait having forgot to bring that roach you spent all day Saturday catching. The now drunk carp lad gets the hump when you swish through his swim even though he has not cast out due to inebriation and after bathing your eye in the now fast cooling lake you prepare to cast out one of the two roach you swished.

After removing the rig from the tree you cast again and finally set your new Delkim's up with a bobbin swinging gently under the rod. Well done you have arrived.

Now you start thinking about that other rod and while you are piecing it together the bobbin hits the butt and line streams off. At this point your heart is doing 3000 beats per minute from a standing start, the blood has rushed to your head and you are what seems like in slow motion rushing across the bank towards your prize. A dog walker gets in the way, is impaled on your chest as you race to the rod, the dog gets upset and imbeds its teeth in your groin, in the brief second that you hesitate with the pain, the dog walker falls to the ground and your way is clear, you pick up the rod and strike.

After you have engaged the bail arm you strike again with much gusto and a lead followed very closely by a size No 2 hook hits you in the eye, the one your neighbouring angler missed when teaching you not to swish in his swim. Yet another lesson learnt, never strike hard when you are fishing in the margins.

The hook is removed from your ear and the dog from your groin by the walker, who is quite pleasant really and administers first aid to the bleeding ear and then a gentle massage to your groin. You get a little uncomfortable with this though as he seems to talk in quite a high pitched voice. You now bathe your hand in the now freezing water after punching the dog walker's lights out and again remove the dog from your groin.

After you have recast the rod and used up the other bait you need some more. Not wanting to annoy your now asleep fellow anglers, a worm hunt is called for.

It is raining and conditions should be ideal for worms but the temps have dropped so its hard going, but wait, there is the answer a big black slug, that will do and you grab it with glee, its warm though and you realize the dog has struck again.

Finally you get out a bank stick and dig a hole to get your worms and success you have a couple. You cast out and settle down with your last tinny as the spectators from earlier had drunk the rest. You put up your broolly and slump into your bed chair.

Off goes the first rod again and you leap up ready to give it a gentle strike this time, your foot drops in the worm hole and you fall forward dropping the nut on the rods butt and as you gracefully swallow dive into the lake you intercept the lead and hook on its way out of the water. Your lucks in, the lead hits the same eye and the hook miraculously penetrates the same hole in your ear thus minimum damage is done, could this be your luck changing?

It must be as your gumboots have numerous small fish in them which will make good baits for the whole night and you forget about the now freezing weather and your wet cloths as you have a succession of runs, which you miss in your now traditional way.

After falling in twice more, impaling yet another hook in your ear, it gets light and you fall asleep exhausted.

At around 9:30am you awake and start packing in. That worm rod which has not bleeped all night because you did not turn on the alarm has about four turns of nylon remaining on the spool and as you wind back in the other 300 yds you feel a strange movement on the rod tip. YES an eel surfaces a yard out and you net it at the eighth attempt watched by the assembled crowds again, who have been hair-of-the-dogging it since 7am. Great entertainment is had by all as you weigh your 8oz prize and then photograph it with your new time-lapse camera. Here ends your first night session and you return home triumphant.

Don't worry about the wife she will come round. Just gently force the locked door so as not to wake the neighbour's and slide into bed. Its only the first night out you have had and soon when you are doing at least 3 nights a week she will realize how much she loves you and misses you and she will be waiting for your return, eager to hear of your exploits during the night with a full breakfast awaiting your return.

In the next episode of "It's a Fine Line" we will follow your fortunes for the rest of the season.

Please note in this latest chapter due to numerous complaints no names have been mentioned or intimated. But I repeat that any similarity to any other person or written article or any offence taken my answer is the usual B\*\*\*\*\*S.

PS Not really its just that I have no shit to stir so if you have some then pass it on to Jimmy and I can expose it next time.

# Record Officer's Report.

## October 2002 to June 2003 By Michael Brettle

Well I am sorry to say that this report will not be long, as I have only had a hand full of returns sent to me. Five to be precise. First up is **Steve Pitts**, his first eel of the season fall to him on the 5<sup>th</sup> October and weighed in at **4 lb 04 oz** taken at long range on live bait at a lake he likes to call "lake H".



Then on the 11<sup>th</sup> October, he landed a **4 lb 06 oz** again from lake H. October saw a few more trips but Steve returned empty handed. It was not until November the 9<sup>th</sup> that Steve landed his next two eel. These weighed in at **2 lb 04 oz** and **1 lb 02 oz** respectively. Gudgeon was Steve's bait of chose this time round as he fished lake H. He then caught two more in November on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> weighing in at **2 lb 09 oz** and **2 lb 01 oz**. December saw Steve fishing lake H again. He caught one eel on the 7<sup>th</sup> falling to roach and it weight **1 lb 10 oz**. January and February saw Steve go on a number of trips but only to return empty handed. Then on March 21<sup>st</sup> Steve netted a **2 lb 05 oz** eel from a new water Camb's pit. In April Steve landed three more eels from Camb's pit. They were **1 lb 12 oz**, **2 lb 08 oz** and **2 lb 09 oz**. A change of water saw Steve move on to Kent

water, were in a space of four day he landed eleven eels. 1 lb 08 oz, 2 lb, 1 lb 08 oz, 2 lb 04 oz, 2 lb 13 oz, 2 lb 02 oz, 2 lb07 oz, 2 lb 08 oz, 2 lb 02 oz, 1 lb 06 oz, and 1 lb 09oz. Next up is **Stephen Cotton** who gave it a few evening in march following some good weather and was reworded with an eel of 2 lb 12 oz. Next is **Damian Wood** who caught a 5 lb 02 oz eel back in October on worm from the Leeds & Liverpool. **Jason Morgan** is next up. Despite going on several trips and all his best efforts, he has only come back with two eels. Both caught on the 29<sup>th</sup> March and fell to roach on the running ledger. They were 2 lb 11 oz and 3 lb 11oz. Finally it **Pete Nunn** who, despite moving house and changing jobs found time to himself to go fishing but was unable to find the eels. Better luck next time Pete. And as for me. Well, I have not had time to go fishing what with the fire strikes and being on a course. I have not had a lot of time to do the things that I love. Well the course should be over soon and the fishing can start all over again. One more thing before I go and that is I will be on the move again at the end of the course (July) so I would ask you to send your returns to Jason Morgan who will forward them on to me once I have my new address. Jason's address is: -

Thank you to every one who sent in their returns. If any one would like a catch return form please let me know and I will send one to you. Tight lines to you all and I hope I have more to write about in the winter mag.

# Quest for the Longfin Eel.

(NAC in New Zealand.)  
By Barry McConnell

The islands of New Zealand are home to the largest freshwater eels in the world. This is a statement which a friend of mine made on his return from a holiday there. His stories of monster eels seemed beyond belief We knew that Mark Andrews (ex National Anguilla Club member) had done some pioneering for big eels on the North Island and caught eels to 13lb- 14oz but **these** stories told of even bigger eels than that - 20, 30 even 40 lb. This inspired Pete Drabble and myself to plan a trip to the South Island to see just how big these eels really do grow too and try to catch one ourselves.

There are two types of eel to be found running up the rivers of New Zealand. The Long-fin eel grows to a much greater size than the Short-fin, and it is the Long-fin that we are after. No one can explain why these eels grow to such a massive size. The largest biologically confirmed eel weighed 50 ½ lbs and was almost 6 ft long. Nowadays biologists claim that the eels weigh nearer 45 lb. The Lone-fin is the top predator in New Zealand rivers. It is mainly a flesh eater and they eat not only live food, but will readily strip a dead carcass. A few years ago there was a motoring accident in the Nelson region. A young man drove his car into the river and was injured. He woke up in hospital the next day, after being anaesthetised to find he had a leg missing. It had been eaten away by eels as he lay unconscious with blood oozing from his leg injuries.

Stones we have heard about huge eels in New Zealand often relate to them being present in large numbers. Unfortunately such stores are out of date and, though there are still some big eels around they aren't in such numbers as there were 30 years ago. On the internet I learnt that the main reason for the decline of the Long-fin is loss of habitat which has had a far more damaging effect on eel stocks than has the impact of commercial eeling. Although Long-fin eels can weigh as much as 20 kilos, they are slow to develop and will take 30 - 100 years to reach this size. The people of New Zealand have been slow to "develop" too. Only in the last 30 years have they gone about land drainage and creek straightening. Suddenly overnight, the habitat of the Long-fin eel was vastly reduced. The straightening of creeks took out undercut banks, deep holes and waterside vegetation on which the eels depend on for their survival. This resulted in great numbers of hungry eels swimming up and down the creeks looking for food. Hungry eels are easy to catch - very easy. So came the commercial netters of the 1980's. They took tons of eels which were so very easy to catch.

The government has now realised that the eel "harvest" is a crop which needs to be managed at sustainable levels. Commercially, the eel fishery is very important. It has an annual total catch in New Zealand of approximately 1500 tonnes and an export value of 10 million dollars. Stocks are now protected by the Eel Management Plan which relies on a quota system to provide future stocks of eels for commercial "harvesting". Unfortunately this system takes eels before they have chance to grow to any size. The result is that most waters in New Zealand now have large numbers of small eels making up the biomass. However, there are designated areas where eels are protected so that large breeding females can grow to maturity then complete their migration to breed in the Pacific. The commercial people aren't allowed to fish in these areas but we were, so long as we returned all the eels we caught.



*Barry holding one of Lake Paringa's monster Longfin Eels weighing 11lb – 04oz.*

We fished two different lakes in these eel conservation zones. They both had naturally balanced

stocks of eels with 10% of eels being large females over 4 kilos. This was proven by our catches, with one in ten eels going over 4 kilos, which is how all the waters must have been 30 years ago and still would be if left alone by commercial fishermen.

The first "un-tampered" water we fished was Lake Paringa where we camped on the shores. Here, Pete devised a method to single out the bigger eels from the masses of smaller ones. Using a massive bait attracts the attentions of many smaller eels which cannot swallow such a large bait. They grab a hold of the bait and spin around to loosen and tear a mouthful off. By holding the rod and trapping the line between finger and thumb, Pete was able to touch leger, thus he was able to feel what was going on. He would shake the smaller eels off. When a big eel turns up the line would rip out of his fingers



*Pete with his 12lb – 03oz Lake Paringa Eel.*

as the eel gets the whole bait in its mouth and swims off. Runs kept on non-stop during the hours of darkness and we landed loads of eel, with the best weighing 11:04, 11:12, 12:03 and 12:12.



*A view of beautiful Lake Paringa on the south Island of New Zealand.*

In the Nelson region we fished another water where the eel stocks have been left alone to find a natural balance. The rivers in this area have been fished out by the commercial people and all the many eels we caught from these rivers were under 4lb. But the lakes which feed the rivers are in a National Park where the eels are protected. We fished one night on Lake Rotoroa, catching loads of eels - 7's, 8's, 9's and although we caught nothing over 11lb - 05oz that night, this was only due to the smaller eels getting

to the bail first. This place has serious potential for a monster eel.

The biggest eels we caught were from "prison waters" on the upper Waitaki system. This comprises of a series of rivers, hydro canals, dams, huge lakes and their tributaries. There is more water to go at here than in the English Lake District. The whole system is in effect a giant eel prison because fish-passes were un-thought of when the dams were built and the population of eels has been landlocked for many years now. The lowest dam of the Waitaki system was completed in 1954, leaving the eels effectively cut off from their seaward migration. I suppose a few big eels may pass the dam, and some elvers may wriggle around the dam daring times of extremely high rainfall when water floods over weirs and dam spill-ways but all in all, eels are scarce around here. New conservation measures are now being implemented which may affect and sizes of eels in the future. Elvers are caught at the bottom of the dam, then transplanted higher up the system. Big eels over 4 kilos are then trapped above the dam and released below so they may get back to the sea.

We caught eels from two lakes here - Lake Benmore and Lake Alexandrina. Eel runs were so hard to come by that I managed to blank out on Benmore for a whole week. Each evening we filled a giant swim feeder kind of contraption with a mix of eggs, cat food, fish, offal, blood, guts and anything else we could get hold of. Various road kills and dead fish were wrapped up in chicken mesh. These were then tied to the end of a cord and thrown in; we didn't want to "feed off" the eels, just attract them. A bucketful of eggs and blood was then thrown in the margins. Our ground baiting activities set up a massive oily slick trailing out over the vast acreage like an oil spillage. The Freshwater Eel has the greatest sense of smell of any freshwater fish, in fact, the Great White Shark is the only fish with a greater sense of smell, and we all know how well they respond to the smell from rubby-dubby. This extensive baiting up exercise was necessary due to the vast acreage and low eel population of these lakes where, despite such extensive baiting up each evening we rarely got more than one eel run a night. We probably wouldn't have caught a single eel without baiting up. It was worth all the effort too because these were the biggest eels we caught. Pete managed eels of 15:10 and 14:00 from Benmore- On Alexandrina he caught three doubles 16:03, 15: 10 and 12:04 while I managed to land a 15:04.



*Pete's 14lb Benmore Longfin Eel.*

The scenery on these hydro takes is spectacular with Mount Cook and the Southern Alps as a back-drop. The lakes are fed by glacial melt water which accounts for the bright blue azure colour. The brighter the sun : the brighter blue the lake glows. It really does look awesome - the bright blue surface reflecting the snow capped peaks and glaciers. I never thought I would end up fishing for eels in a glacier and there we were. The contrasting climates and landscapes on the South Island lends to an interesting and varied trip as one minute, you can be, in an alpine area with snow capped mountains and massive glaciers, then not too many miles further on you can be in the sub-tropical with impenetrable evergreen forests and giant ferns. The Alps form a ridge along the middle of the island which acts as a barrier trapping the warmer, damper air coming from the west between the mountain ridge and the sea. Hence the climate on the west coast is sub-tropical in great to the alpine mountainous regions and the drier land to the east.



*Pete with a Longfin Eel of 15lb – 10oz from Alexandrina.*

It was great fun exploring the many different trout rivers for eels as we travelled round the island. We tried many of these on our travels, such as Pomahaka River, Bullocks Creek, Punakatki River, Kakapo Creek, Atbara Creek, Waikia Plver and Anguilla Stream. However, the average size of eels was only 2 or 3 lb due to effects of over fishing. You could invariably stalk eels in the crystal clear water. Or were they stalking us? On some rivers eels would come and look at Pete and myself on the bank to see if we were edible.

Unfortunately these eels are so obvious, that over the years, nets have been placed under every road bridge and today it is necessary to hike off to where the netsmen haven't been to find some

older, larger eels. We did just this on the River Nile where we literally walked up the river for a couple of days; we walked up the river-bed because the sub-tropical bush, which grew to the edge of the river, was impenetrable. We managed a few doubles from the more remote, almost inaccessible, areas. No great angling skill is needed here as the eels show no fear of man. They are easily spotted in the crystal clear water and will come to the edge, right to your feet, even pop their head out of the water to take a bait.

Another river we caught doubles from is Kennington creek near Invercargill where oversize eels are returned by the local processing factory. Laws within the Eel Management Plan state that all eels over 4 kilos must be returned alive. We caught 9's and a 10 from here, but nothing of the size that factory owner reckoned we would.

The largest eels we saw were in an aquarium called Hokitika Waterworld where the hoarding outside claims these are the biggest eels in the world. These eels really were 40 or 50lb maybe much more its hard to say. Proof enough that this size of eel is no myth. We have them on video being stroked and tickled by a diver during the daily, hand-feeding display put on for tourists. At times these giant eels seem bigger than the diver. Later I was to learn that at the eels at Hokibka Waterworld were over size eels taken from local creeks. These eels were supplied by an eel processing plant in Hokitika (which shut down two years ago). Apparently they handled lots and lots of oversize eels which were all returned to Lake Mahinapua, so that may be worth a go.

One place reputed to hold monster eels is Matura where slaughter-house washings swirl into the river. This Is the most horrific place to fish. The river is already coloured and stinking of industrial effluent before it plunges through a series of water-falls in a rocky gorge around which a massive slaughter-house has been built. The smell of death lingers here where the river is topped up with vile coloured slaughter-house discharges. The current is strong, It was so strong when we fished there for an afternoon, it felt like the River Severn in full flood and I found it hard to hold bottom with my biggest leger. Pete succeeded by touch ledgering using a huge rock wrapped in a stocking with which he was able to just hold bottom. Lift his rod tip and the current would move the rock downriver, thus he was able to search the swim and catch a 5 lb, 9 lb and a 12 lb eel as I sat moaning about the situation.

Incidentally, this “stone in a stocking” leger is very useful over snaggy ground. My 2oz and 3 oz legers were washed into rock crevices where they stuck tight, meanwhile Pete's flat rock was bouncing over the very same crevices without jamming as often. When one did get stuck he merely pulled the stocking free from the rock with a firm strike, since the stocking was tied on with a knot which can be pulled out if the need be. He soon plucked another rock from the ground, tied a quick knot and was fishing again within a minute. Once again I was out fished by a very worthy fishing partner.

Most of our bait was collected, or scraped up, from the road as we filled our road-kill bucket on route. Various road-kill birds and other delights such as fillet of hare, rabbit's leg, possum meat, liver, heart and other bits. Then there was the trip to the butchers – lamb offcuts with cows and pigs hearts and lungs. Sometimes we used cleaner, more user friendly baits such as chopped ham with pork from a tin, dead trout, bullheads, squid and monkfish.

People we met on the way advised us to use rotten eggs, rotten or burnt meat and fresh blood to attract eels. Victor Thompson, owner of the eel processing factory at Invercargill is an expert on eels. He told us this is rubbish about rotten meat and assured us that fresh bait is necessary. Also he confirmed that eels will home in on burnt or singed meat faster than fresh, something to do with drawing the concentrated meat scent into the water. I'm licking my lips now thinking of that barbecue smell that gets drawn out of the meat - seems it works on us as well as the eels. Fresh blood and freshly killed animals laid in the margins were also highly recommended to draw the eels in (this is pretty obvious when you consider the road accident near Nelson). Apparently the best attractor of all is eggs, fresh not rotten. Something to do with the albumen is a very effective eel attractant even under large dilutions such as the massive hydro lakes we baited with eggs. Victor's favourite bait are pau pau shellfish guts which he supplied us with. We used these successfully in Kennington Creek near his factory but the smell followed us for days after. It really was stronger and more lingering than the smell of sardines or mackerel.



Obviously fairly sturdy tackle is needed. I used 28 lb line, very strong hooks and telescopic rods which are actually designed for sea fishing out of a boat. I had no difficulty landing eels on these rods which are small enough to go in a rucksack for ease of travel. Unfortunately each rod sustained a broken tip section due to mistreatment - I stood on one and actually ended up using a couple of oddly shortened stumps for rods during the last fortnight. We camped and roughed it for 40 days and 40 nights during which nearly every item of clothing, camping or fishing tackle broke as it got a severe testing on a tough trip. I was glad that we only needed basic tackle for basic ledgering with no need to sacrifice anything fancy, specialist or over expensive.

Its free to fish for eels in New Zealand. No one fishes for them with rod and line so there is no need to buy a fish and game licence. I found this hard to believe so I phoned to speak to an official. He confirmed that eels are not regarded as a sports fish - so we don't need to buy a licence - but we must return any trout we accidentally catch. These

islands boast the biggest trout in the world and it was surprising how many big trout we caught at night on baits such as rabbit and possum meat. During daylight these predatory trout hunt mainly by sight but once its dark rely more on their sense of smell. They certainly homed in on our rubby-dubby style baiting each night.

So how big do eels grow in New Zealand. Certainly 50lb, maybe 60 lb as seen at Hokitika. Eels of this size are thin on the ground these days and a lot of time may be needed to catch one. Lets consider the difficulty of catching an eel over 5 lb from the UK. Not an easy task and a lot of time may pass before one is caught, let alone a 6, 7 or 8. So too in New Zealand, a 20 lb eel is a major task let alone a 30, 40 or even a 50lb. Such monster eels do exist, we just ran out of lime on our trip. Plenty of waters were explored and a lot was learnt about Longfin eels, much of which I have tried to pass on in this article and the two videos of our trip.

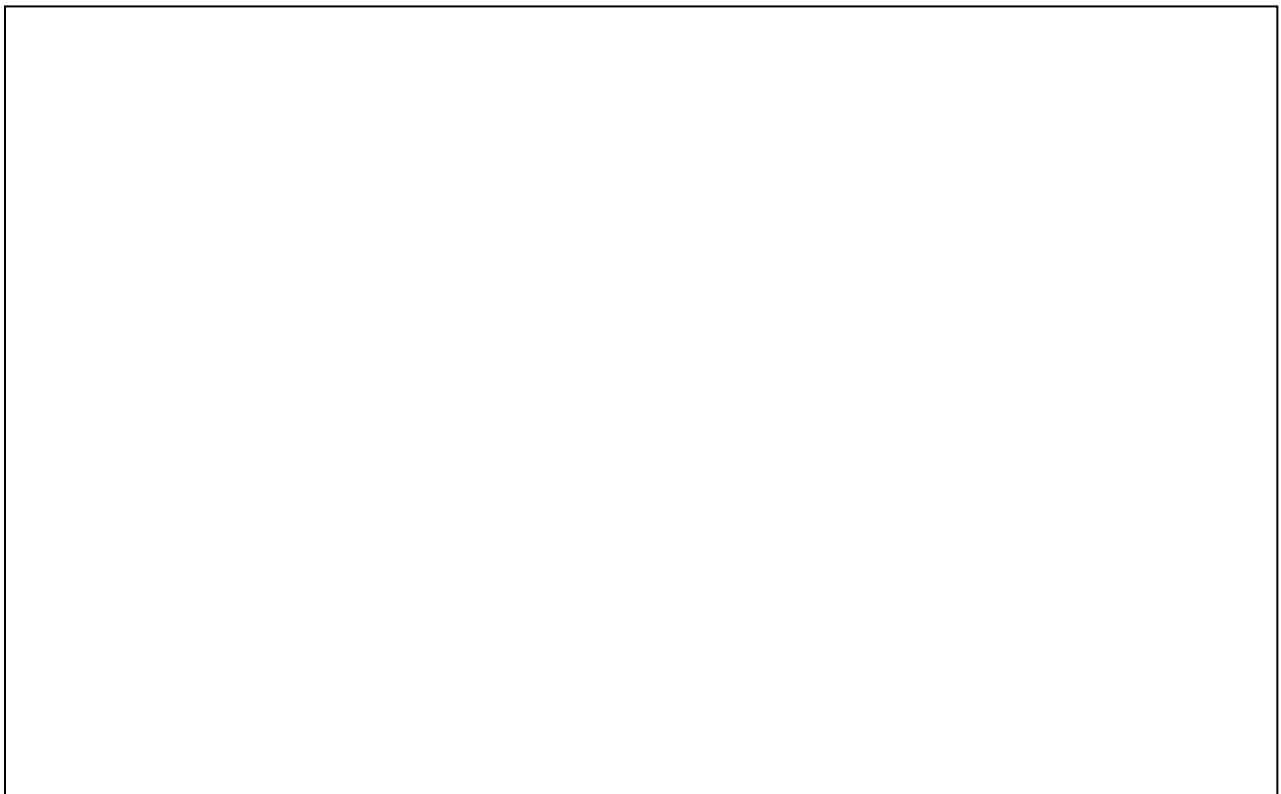
I've had a few enquiries from NAC members with regards to going on a trip to New Zealand. Perhaps things will develop until a full posse of members are going which would make for the fish-in of all fish-ins. For those of you that are thinking of going I will give you a few more pointers to help you in the right direction. Firstly be carefull of venue selection as a lot of time may be wasted on waters with no eels. We wasted a lot of time on waters infested with crayfish before it dawned on us that there were no eels in these waters to keep the numbers of crayfish down. Remember most waters have been commercially fished and will only hold smaller eels. For bigger eels you need to go where they have been left alone such as eel conservation zones and remote parts of west coast creeks. Our biggest eels came from hydro lakes in the upper Waitaki system. The commercial fishermen are allowed here but they don't bother because all the eels are too big for taking - all over 4 kilos.

**Videos still available for sale : Quest for the Longfin Eels of New Zealand.**

**PART 1: 'Heaven and Hell' £7.99 & £1.00 p&p.**

**PART 2 "Summer in February' £7.99 & £1.00 p&p**

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# Can fish feel pain?

This is a question that has troubled anglers and animal rights activists alike in recent years. Research by a team of scientists from the Roslin Institute and the University of Edinburgh to be published in a forthcoming

Proceedings B, a learned journal published by the Royal Society, appears to provide the answer: “yes”.

This is the first conclusive evidence indicating pain perception in fish. It has previously been established that birds and mammals are capable of experiencing pain. This study was undertaken on rainbow trout and demonstrates that not only are there nervous system receptors in the head of the fish that respond to damaging stimuli, but that application of short-acting noxious substances produce profound behavioural and physiological changes in the fish over a prolonged period comparable to those observed in higher mammals. This indicates, the researchers believe, that fish can perceive pain.

## **Nervous reaction**

The presence of nociceptors - receptors that respond preferentially to tissue damaging stimuli - in the rainbow trout was determined using electrophysiological recordings. Neural activity was recorded in prepared, anaesthetised fish whilst mechanical, thermal and chemical stimuli were applied to the head, “We found 58 receptors located on the face and head of the rainbow trout that responded to at least one of the stimuli,” says Dr Lynne Sneddon who led the research at the Roslin Institute and is now working at the University of Liverpool. “22 of these could be classified as nociceptors in that they responded to mechanical pressure and were stimulated when heated above 40°C. Of these, 18 receptors also responded to chemical stimulation and can be defined as polymodal nociceptors.”

The polymodal nociceptors found in the trout are the first to be found in fish and have similar properties to those found in amphibians, birds and mammals including humans. “Receptor diameter, thermal thresholds and mechanical responses were found to be similar to those measured in higher vertebrate groups,” explains Dr. Sneddon. “However mechanical thresholds were lower than those found in, for example, human skin. This may be due to the more easily damaged nature of fish skin, The threshold for mechanical stimulation appears to be similar to that for mammalian eye nociceptors.

## **Nociception not enough**

However the demonstration of nociception, the detection of noxious, tissue damaging stimuli, in any animal is not enough to prove pain perception. Nociception may sometimes be accompanied by a reflex reaction such as withdrawal. To demonstrate pain perception it is necessary to show that the animal's behaviour is adversely affected by a potentially painful experience and these behavioural changes are not simple reflex responses. Therefore the behavioural response to stimuli in fish was also studied. Bee venom or acetic acid was injected in the lips of some trout, whilst other fish were injected with saline solution or merely handled to form control groups. All fish had previously been conditioned to feed at a feeding ring in their tank where they were collected for handling and/or injection.

“Anomalous behaviours were exhibited by trout subjected to bee venom and acetic acid,” says Dr. Sneddon. “Fish demonstrated “rocking” motion, strikingly similar to the kind of motion seen in stressed higher vertebrates like mammals, and the trout injected with acetic acid were also observed to rub their lips onto the gravel in their tank and on the tank walls. These do not appear to be reflex responses,”

The acid and bee venom injected fish also took almost three times longer to resume feeding activity compared to the saline and handling control groups. The time to resume feeding did not decrease in experiments with fish conditioned to feed on “softer” food.

## **Hook line and sinker**

“Our research demonstrates nociception and suggests that noxious stimulation in the rainbow trout has adverse behavioural and physiological effects. This fulfils the criteria for animal pain,” concludes Dr. Sneddon. “Previous work on fish has looked at the elasmobranch family, such as stingrays, and primitive vertebrates like the lamprey. These studies did not conclusively show the presence of nociceptors. We believe that our study is the first work with fish of the teleost family and the results may represent an evolutionary divergence between the teleost and elasmobranch lineages.”

The full title of this paper is: Do fish have nociceptors: evidence for the evolution of a vertebrate sensory system by Dr, Lynne U. Sneddon, Dr, Victoria A. Braithwaite and Dr. Michael J. Gentle. The full paper was published via the FirstCite website on 30 April 2003 and will be part of Proceedings of the Royal

Society. Biological Sciences - Vol. 270, No. 1520 to be published in June this year. Contact for further information for more details on this paper, including how to obtain a full copy of the paper and contact details for the paper's author, Dr. Lynne Sneddon, please contact: Tim Reynolds on Tel :- +44.(0),7711.942974 or +32.(0).2@.3226 or email.. [tim.reynolds@absw.org.uk](mailto:tim.reynolds@absw.org.uk) or [timjreynolds@email.msn.com](mailto:timjreynolds@email.msn.com).

Source: the Royal Society Proceedings B. (The Royal Society is an independent academy promoting the natural and applied sciences.) Their address is: The Royal Society Publications, The Royal Society, 6 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AG. Website:

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**The following information was brought to EFTTA's attention by Dr Bruno Broughton and Jan Kappel, a well-known fish biologist and scientific advisor to the National Angling Alliance (NAA) and EAA/EFTTA Lobbyist, are both unconvinced by claims that fish can feel pain. Bruno believes that fish do not have brain's to feel pain!**

It has been calculated that there are approximately 3.8 million anglers aged 12 and over in Great Britain - about 9% of this section of the population. More than 50 per cent are aged 34 or younger (National market research commissioned by the Environment Agency in 2001). Some 20 per cent of anglers are female - although many merely accompany men - and the research also reveals that angling appeals to all social classes.

Anglers do not cause riots or public disorder. There is no country in the world where angling is banned. There are at least 23 million anglers in EU countries, and in Finland more than 50% of the population fish.

Anglers are the only group with any long-term record of fighting water pollution. In the UK the Anglers' Conservation Association - formerly the Anglers' Co-operative Association (ACA) - which takes legal action against polluters, is more than 50 years old. Its unrivalled achievements have yielded millions of pounds in fines and damages, as well as vitally important injunctions to prevent further pollution incidents.

The economic value of freshwater angling has been calculated at approximately £3.3 billion per annum for England and Wales alone. Every angler aged 12 or over must purchase a rod license before he or she can go fishing in England and Wales. This revenue raises some £13.4 million for the Environment Agency's fisheries protection and improvement work. It has been estimated that more than 26,000 jobs and job equivalents depend on angling and related industries in the UK.

Extensive research shows that angling's main appeal is relaxation or "getting away from it all"; catching fish is of less importance (although it is obvious that anglers would not fish if they caught nothing!). The therapeutic effect of angling is well known, and it is often recommended as the ideal antidote to the stress of modern life.

Angling is an ideal and extremely popular sport for the elderly and for disadvantaged people - the disabled and "special needs" children, for example.

### **The Medway Report**

The Medway Panel was initiated by the RSPCA in 1979, and its findings (The Medway Report) were published in 1980. The report did not prove that fish feel pain. On balance - because of the contribution of one person (Professor Kelly) - the report simply gave fish the benefit of the doubt... hardly great science.

Prof. Kelly was later cross-examined on his evidence. This centred on the presence of two pain-related chemicals, "substance P" (a peptide which is thought to help transmit pain in man) and "enkephalin" (an opiate which blocks substance P). The mere presence of these substances in trout was said to be important and was associated with pain. When questioned further, Prof. Kelly admitted that he had used the word "pain" very loosely to describe the stimulus perceived by an animal when its tissues are damaged.

In contrast to the CAA assertion, a more recent RSPCA report, in 1994 did not find that... "the evidence given strongly confirmed that fish can suffer pain," In fact, the report stated: "We do not know, and perhaps never will know whether animals (including fish) experience pain exactly as it is understood by adult humans."

The so-called “emotional centre” of the brain of animals, the cerebral cortex, is very small and primitive in fish, and the associated neocortex (which registers pain in man) is absent. In contrast, these parts of the forebrain are huge in mammals.

Scientists acknowledge that fish could not survive on a day-to-day basis if they experienced pain: most fish eat sharp objects (e.g. crabs, molluscs, spined fish) that cause lacerations to their mouths. If this caused pain, they would never eat!

The only other research which CAA quotes concerns certain experiments carried out in Utrecht. These relate to the behavioural response of fish (mostly carp) which, the researchers suggest, give off “spit gas” (bubbles) when they experience “fear” The quasi-scientists claim that fear = pain, without any evidence whatsoever.

Even so, this published research concluded that “... the pain caused to a hooked fish, if any,..” is at the most basic level, Some researchers drew parallels with what a human being would experience from an injection with a hypodermic syringe, others with the sensation of being prodded on the arm.

Fish pull away from the angler when hooked - hardly the action of animals which are experiencing pain (c.f. a bull with a ring in its nose will move towards the direction of the pull). A fish which seizes a bait but which is not hooked (e.g. a pike with a bait across its jaws) fights in exactly the same way as one which is hooked.

Note the repeated captures of fish by anglers, often with the next cast. Whatever the fish felt when it was hooked originally could hardly be important if it “forgot” the experience almost immediately.

### **National Angling Alliance**

A team of scientists from the Roslin Institute and the University of Edinburgh are claiming that as a consequence of their recent research, they have demonstrated that fish can perceive pain. This follows work performed on live rainbow trout in which the fish were injected with poisons, after which their physiology and behaviour were monitored.

Their surprising conclusions published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society - were based on the discovery around the fishes' mouths of so-called nociceptors, special sensory cells that can detect noxious stimuli. In subsequent experiments, injections into the lips with bee venom and acetic acid caused the fish to cease feeding for three hours, and their respiratory rate was also elevated for this period. That these findings demonstrate that fish can feel pain is in direct contrast to the recent work of Professor James D Rose of the University of Wyoming in the USA, who stated in the Reviews of Fisheries Science that fish do not possess the necessary and specific region of the brain - the neocortex - to enable them to feel pain or, indeed, fear.

Dr Bruno Broughton, a well-known fish biologist and scientific advisor to the National Angling Alliance (NAA), is unconvinced by claims that fish can feel pain.

“I doubt that it will come as much of a shock to anglers to learn that fish have an elaborate system of sensory cells around their mouths. Nor is it a surprise that, when their lips are injected with poisons, fish respond and behave abnormally...fish literally have not brains!”

The National Angling Alliance (NAA) believes the fact that fish are not capable of feeling pain because apart from scientific arguments, common sense dictates that a fish with a hook set into its mouth would not fight against such pain, nor would it feed on diets which included spiny-finned fish, molluscs and the like.

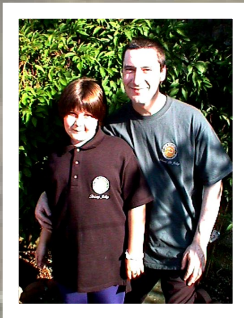
Speaking on behalf of the NAA, Paul Knight - also the Director of the Salmon & Trout Association - commented: “We do not accept that fish feel pain, but the wider issue of fish welfare is a subject that good anglers take seriously.” For more information please contact the National Angler’s Alliance (NAA) at Fishmongers' Chambers, 110 Upper Thames Street, London EC4R 3TW. Tel: +44,207.283.5838; Fax: +44.207.626.5137; email: [hq@natangler.org.uk](mailto:hq@natangler.org.uk).

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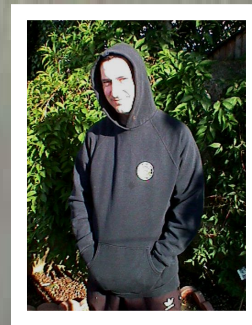


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