

SACK UP ON SILVERS!

Steve Barraclough has been catching huge weights of silvers on commercial fisheries while the carp have been spawning. Here's how he does it.

Carp spawning must be one of the most frustrating things in fishing, especially match fishing. The sudden temperature changes this year has led to the carp becoming spawn-bound and has made fishing around the country's commercial fisheries quite poor because the carp stocks simply refuse to feed.

Of course, there are still matches being held at these waters and with the fishing being rather suspect, many anglers are blaming bad draws and conditions for poor results. Frenzee's Steve Barraclough has been using this to his advantage and has been recording huge silver-fish weights of up to 100lb at several Yorkshire venues. How does he go about this? We caught up with him at Lakeside Fishery at Ranskill for a lesson in sacking up with silvers! Over to Steve...

I love my summer fishing, it means that my carp fishing head goes on and any thoughts of catching silvers are put to the back of my mind until winter. However, this year has been different and after becoming hugely frustrated with trying to catch carp that were simply not interested in feeding, on a poor draw I decided to try to catch the silvers and just have a day's fishing. I was hardly geared up for it, having only meat with me, but I went on to amass a huge 100lb net of ide and skimmers to finish second in the match!

I have since refined my rigs and bait and gone on to frame in several matches from pegs that are simply devoid of carp. It may not be the match-winning method, because there will always be an angler sat on a pile of carp, but I am nearly guaranteed to frame by targeting the 'forgotten' fish.

But which venues are good for this approach? Well, most well-established commercials have huge, untapped stocks of silver fish that have thrived on neglect. Venues such as White Acres, Hallcroft and Woodland View, to name just three, have massive numbers of silvers in their lakes and these are the perfect choice.

Of course, there are other venues, such as here, that have had their stocks added to by the introduction of ide. This Scandinavian species has been a revelation in this country and in venues where they are stocked huge weights are possible. Ideally, the three target fish are ide, skimmers and quality roach. They need to be of a good stamp, too, if you are going to do a weight and any venue that holds a good stock of silvers over the 8oz mark will be good for my approach.

ANGLER FILE

Steve Barraclough

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VENUE FILE

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Constant loose feeding of casters brought the fish right up in the water which helped Steve amass a big weight quickly.



The new Frenzee FS3 floats were Steve's choice for fishing on the drop, while the FP400 is used for shallow work.



Quality skimmers are one of the main targets, although you normally have to fish a bit deeper for them.



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Steve's caster feed also included a tiny amount of chopped worms.

Light hollow elastics are the best choice for catching big weights of silvers.



BAIT

As I mentioned earlier, my first attempts at building big weights of silvers were when I was fishing with meat. This is a great bait choice for skimmers and if the venue has a large head of them, meat would be my number-one choice. Here, however, there are far too many quality roach and ide that I simply cannot ignore!

For this reason I use casters... with a twist. You do need a few pints of bait to fish a match here but I would rarely use more than four pints. If I brought them and the carp did feed, then I would dump them in down the edge for a few late margin munters, so they will never go to waste. The twist is that I add the tiniest amount of chopped worm to my mix, literally a handful in four pints

of casters. This gives me another hook-bait option but, more importantly, creates an oily slick that hangs in the water, helping draw fish in from far and wide. This mix is never fed through a Kinder pot and I simply loose feed everything.

Hook baits are kept simple and I stick to single or double caster or a worm head. These three baits catch me every size of fish, which is crucial when building a weight. The worm head is the best bait for days when you get lots of small roach attacking the bait as it is slightly more robust and withstands the hammering.

RIGS

For this method to work you need to set up at least three rigs to cover a few depths. Constantly loose feeding casters

guarantees lots of fish in the peg and feeding. However, they feed at varying heights throughout the day and keeping in touch with them is vital. For example, ide and roach will come very shallow and you can catch them within inches of the surface, whereas skimmers seem to prefer being lower in the water. I'm faced with a peg that is roughly six feet deep, so I've set up four rigs to cover the depths nicely. My first is set to fish at dead depth.

My float choice is from the new FS range from Frenzee; beautifully finished silver-fish floats that Andy Neal and I have been designing for quite some time. To say that we are proud of them would be an understatement!

For the deck rig I choose a 0.3g FS3, which has a carbon stem, rugby-ball body

and fine plastic bristle. This is ideal for this style of fishing because it is sensitive but allows me to fish on the drop because you can hang on to it and keep a tight line. I shot this rig with strung-out No11s to achieve a nice, slow fall of the hook bait. My 4ft and 3ft rigs use the same float, but they are obviously shallower. Again a strung shooting pattern works best but if I were catching a lot more skimmers then I would try and work out at what depth they are feeding and bulk my shot more.

My fourth rig is set at 18 inches and uses a 0.15g FP400 dibber-style float. This is ideal for fishing very shallow because it cocks quickly and holds up a large hook bait, yet still has some sensitivity, which is important when targeting silvers. This is shotted with strung-out No11s again but if tiny fish were plaguing me I would bulk the shot to get it through them.

All of the rigs are made up on a new prototype line from Frenzee and I like 0.15mm main line. The strong main line is used so that I can move my float and shot around a lot and it won't damage it in any way. For hooklengths I stick to 0.11mm. Again I might get more bites fishing finer but I am looking at catching large numbers of fish, so reliability is a must. All my rigs feature size 16 PR 32 hooks and I combine these to a light prototype hollow elastic that is around a No6 grade. This is essential because ide have a tendency to flap around when hooked and are notorious for shedding the hook, so a light elastic helps keep it in place.

THE SESSION

I have sat on Peg 15, which isn't actually the best area but it should highlight how

effective my approach is. I have kicked off with half a pot of my caster mix and then cast a Method feeder to the island just in case a few carp are lurking. It also gives my peg time to settle, which is important because you don't want to catch the first fish that comes into your peg.

After a 30-minute spell on the feeder it becomes clear that it isn't one of those carp days and I choose to just get my head down. I have given myself two hours to see what weight can be achieved in a short space of time.

I start on the deck rig and I'm immediately catching small roach and the occasional ide on the drop but can't help but feel that I will be better off fishing shallow. I go out with the 3ft rig and start catching quality ide straightaway. I try deeper for skimmers but it's a very bright day and I don't think they will be easy to come by!

This seems to be the case and by fishing the shallowest two rigs and feeding about 30 casters regularly, I soon have the ide queuing up! They average over 1lb so it's easy to build a big weight when catching them regularly. The best presentation is to lay the rig in and hang onto the float. Nine times out of 10 the elastic shoots out of the pole tip. This is also a good reason for the light elastic because heavier elastic would bump too many fish off.

I have elected to fish at a comfortable 11 metres, which, in my opinion, is perfect. Anglers think it is quicker to fish closer and feed by hand but I always find that the better fish sit slightly further

out and you receive much more confident bites.

The two hours soon fly by and I call the session to a close. There has been a distinct lack of skimmers but the quality roach and ide have more than made up for them. I have amassed about 50lb of silvers and also managed a bonus 8lb carp. So, as you can see, the silvers are a worthy target and by either combining them with your standard carp tactics or going down an all-out silverfish attack, you could be adding vital pounds to your keepnet and, more importantly, winning more matches!

Another quality haul of silvers. Don't ignore them any more!

