

## Testing Times

Being a firm believer in local knowledge is invaluable. I joined Chas at Les Vaux for a week's fishing with him, after absorbing the latest lake details from him. His recent exploits at the beginning of season suggested that a radical hooking pattern set up on the ever popular "Ronnie" rig was proving its worth in a very unconventional configuration.

If you have read the advanced claw rig information by Chas on this site it would seem that you take a small 12mm pop up and set it right back on the shank of the hook so the hook point is almost touching the bottom the lake bed. (Similar to a swimmer rig)

Well, this new arrangement seems a little alien as you may think the hook point, not being immediately made available for hooking the fish, might present a situation where missed bites might be a regular occurrence, but this did not turn out to be the result. I played around with this concept of Chas's advanced claw rig all week and the results were quite amazing. All my rods went out in various modes of this rig as I tried supple hook link material, stiff fluorocarbon booms, long shank hooks, curve shank patterns, krank x hooks etc. Getting the rig right to my personal satisfaction was the main testing for the week and after only 2 days it became clear my preferred rig was a 7" fluorocarbon stiff boom connected to a quick change size 11 swivel, with Krank x hook size 4 or 6, using a bait screw to mount the pop up on, with 1 bait stop to position the pop up precisely where I wanted it.

Matching the pop up size to hook size I found to be irrelevant! Can you imagine a size 4 krank hook with a 12mm pop up? Weird, but it made no difference to the catch rate. Think about it - carp eyes are on an angle downwards, a carp moving above and towards this bait would not see the curve of a hook shape as it is suspended upright.

Trimming the pop up a little to obtain the critically balanced effect was a key part of the set up as I wanted the hook to be upright, but cranked right over like a claw, with the hook point just grazing the bottom of the lake. To get this set up I found every pop up had differing buoyancy even out of the same pot so a little testing in a bucket or the margin was required before casting out. When you consider the mechanics of a bottom bait rig that is presented with the hook flat on the bottom, possibly with a boilie 10-25 mm away on a hair rig, lying on any silt and you are relying on the hook to turn, then this presentation may not be as alien as you first think, coupled with the incredible power of a carp "sucking in" a bait. This rig works really well! The hook is already set to pierce the bottom lip and the pop up provides the hooking point with neutral buoyancy allowing the weight of the lead to do its work. All of my 23 fish in the 6 days I fished were centre of bottom lip or in the scissors of the mouth.

The other area I wanted to explore in this week at Vaux was colour of pop up. Does it make a difference? Well, Chas mentioned when he fished a few weeks ago he could not go wrong on a washed out pink colour. However, the clarity of the water had changed since then, as there had been some heavy downpours and local flooding etc, which had washed out a lot of silt, along with a murky tint to the water, and so when I arrived the water clarity was very clear. I could see a good metre down in the edges and in the shallow area.

Well, I decided to hedge my bets and tried white, pink, yellow, purple, fluoro orange in no particular flavour. Over a couple of days again it became apparent that fluoro orange was the colour doing the business that week. Whether the colour had an effect I cannot be sure as most of carp came out during the night, but as Chas pointed out that carp can detect shades of contrast, so maybe the brightness of the orange played its part and there was a full moon for most of the week giving almost daylight conditions as there was not a cloud in the sky most nights. Surprisingly, the angler's favourite yellow was not working that week.

All I used with the pop ups was a lot of boilie crumb as my main flavour attractor. As with a lot of angler-pressured lakes in France, where bait is always available and carp do not need to compete for food, the "pile in the boilies" approach has not been producing the results for me, so I prefer to crumb up my boilies and use the minimal approach rather than offer a pile of boilies and reduce my odds of a pick up. but as they say "each to their own".



Unlike the "Ronnie rig", if you take the bottom edge of the photo as the lake bed, you can see how aggressive the hook is "clawed over". The hook point is just touching bottom. Trim the pop up to achieve this critical balance. If required.

Well done Chas this one works a treat!