

DDAS JUNIORS BASIC GUIDE TO RIVER FISHING



A guide to fishing on Rivers currently on the DDAS venue list

WARNING

Carbon Fibre is extremely good at conducting electricity.

Do not fish near High Voltage Electricity lines, particularly in the rain.

Cattle fences will probably make you jump and be midly uncomfortable.

But the real threat is Lightning.

**If you are out fishing and a storm brews up,
Please, pack up and go home.**

So much fishing equipment is now made from carbon that you may be at risk from serious injury or worse.

Pack away and live to fish another day.

River Fishing

In the days before commercial fisheries, man made lakes and even canals, Rivers provided sport and indeed food for many people. Other than natural lakes, the sea was the only other place that you could go fishing.

You will hear more senior anglers filling ears with stories of huge weights of Bream, and Roach you could use as a cricket bat.

Sadly, our beautiful rivers have been in decline in recent years. You could easily pin the blame on a number of reasons for this apparent downturn in form. Poor management, pollution, outside predation and the rise of modern commercial fisheries, have all taken the focus away from our rivers

DDAS, like many clubs around the country, owes its very existence to fishing on rivers and they remain a vital part of the clubs portfolio of venues.

Rivers are seen by many to be the purest method of catching fish. Many species like Dace, Minnows and Grayling, are only found in rivers. These species are usually born naturally in the river and nurtured rather than stocked by Humans. Wild fish are much harder to catch until you learn the ways of the river.

It is arguably a tougher sport too, and the slightly elevated attitude of river anglers is probably justified. No steady trundle along purpose made pathways for your river angler, oh no. These hardy warriors launch their attack over ploughed fields, styles and fences, miles away from the car. Different tackle is definitely the order of the day and a much lighter tackle load is needed, to get across the fields through which the rivers cut their path. Maybe why so many of the pampered commercial anglers shy away from rivers.

Rivers have a natural beauty all of their own and you are mostly fishing for proper wild fish and not over fed pets.

In this book we will be showing you how to approach the sections of our own rivers that are currently on our club book and guide you on what you will need to fish them.

SAFETY FIRST

The mood of a river changes through the year. From a gentle, peaceful, quiet place in summer. To and angry, raging, deadly animal in the winter. But it can be both within just a few days at any time of year. In times of heavy rainfall, a river can rise to dangerous levels in just a few hours and usually without warning. It doesn't have to be raining where you are to cause a rise in water levels. Rivers will carry water along way and extra care needs to be taken when you are planning your trip. Weather forecasts are an essential to know what the river is going to do even a number days before you plan to go fishing.



When fishing a river, many anglers prefer the use of waders to cross more shallow stretches. This poses an extreme danger if you are not careful. Even seasoned anglers can get into life threatening situations if they get over confident.

Clear thinking is one of the only things that will keep you alive should the unthinkable happen. If you do fall in a river, particularly one with a strong current, there are a few things you would do well to remember.

- **Stay calm and do not panic** - Easier said than done of course, especially if the water is cold. You are likely to go into shock and thrashing around in panic will use up energy that you may need later on.
- If you using chest waders, wear a wading belt. A wading belt will slow down the water trying to fill your waders. Lie on your back, try to relax and lift your feet and you should be able to float.
- **Do not fight the river** - Go with the flow, use your feet to push away from rocks or obstacles until you make your way towards a place where you can get out safely.

- **Do not grab at trees or branches** - Objects like these can form *Strainers* under the water. Submerged branches *catch* debris in the current and hold it there. Stuff goes in. But only water comes out.
- **Wear an inflatable vest** - It goes without saying that you will stand a better chance of survival by wearing one.
- **Shout for help!** - If you are fishing with others or know there is someone close by, make sure they KNOW that you are in need of help.
- **Take a full change of clothes and a towel** - You may be able to get out of the water, but you will not be out of danger. *Exposure* and/or *Hypothermia* is a real risk. You **must** get dry and into dry clothes as quickly as you can.

If you wade a lot, you are going to have a trip or fall at some point. If you use a stick or even your landing net handle to steady yourself and check for rocks, deeper spots, tree roots, etc.

Stay calm. Feet up. Get out. Get dry.

MODERATELY USEFUL TIP #1 -

Neoprene waders have tiny air pockets built into them that will help you to float if you should fall in.

Other dangers come from undercut river banks caused by *Erosion*. The water gouges out the soil, making the ground unstable and dangerous to stand on.



Above, shows an eroded bank that has collapsed into the water. It isn't as dangerous now, but you wouldn't have known it was dangerous if you had not known what to look for and, if it had given way while you were standing on it, you could have ended up in the river.

- Look for cracks in the ground and avoid those areas.
- Be particularly careful on the outside of bends.

A river bank with steep sides is more likely to be deeper close in.

A slippery steep bank means you could end up, quite literally, in deep water.

RODS AND REELS

The rods and reels used for rivers are fairly similar to those used in other types of fishing. For beginners or younger, smaller anglers, a 12ft (3.6 metre) rod is fine to start with. As you gain experience and grow physically, rods of 14 and 15ft (3.9 to 4.2 metre) are common for fishing on rivers. Reels will be the same as you use for a waggler float in the 3000 size. Nice and light for holding for long periods of time.

The angler allows the float to run down the river in the *current* to the waiting hungry fish. This process is called *Trotting*.

The current may vary in speed in different areas of the river and even in the stretch of river in your swim. Underwater obstacles will affect the speed of the current in many different ways, speeding up and slowing down the water and all of this will effect your float and bait too.

Your line may be dragged across the river and be pulled off the course or *line* that you want it to *trot* down. A longer rod will enable you to have the rod tip more behind the float as it goes down the river and it will allow you to *pick the line up* much more easily. Picking the line up or *mending the line* makes the float travel down the river much straighter and more naturally. You may have to mend the line several time in one trot.

The diagram below a situation where the red float

(Fig 1) has been dragged off line by the current, the wind or both. Trotting down the river unmended, the float has ended up off course and away from the feed zone. You may still catch fish, but you want to be in the feed zone where all the hungry fish are munching on your feed.

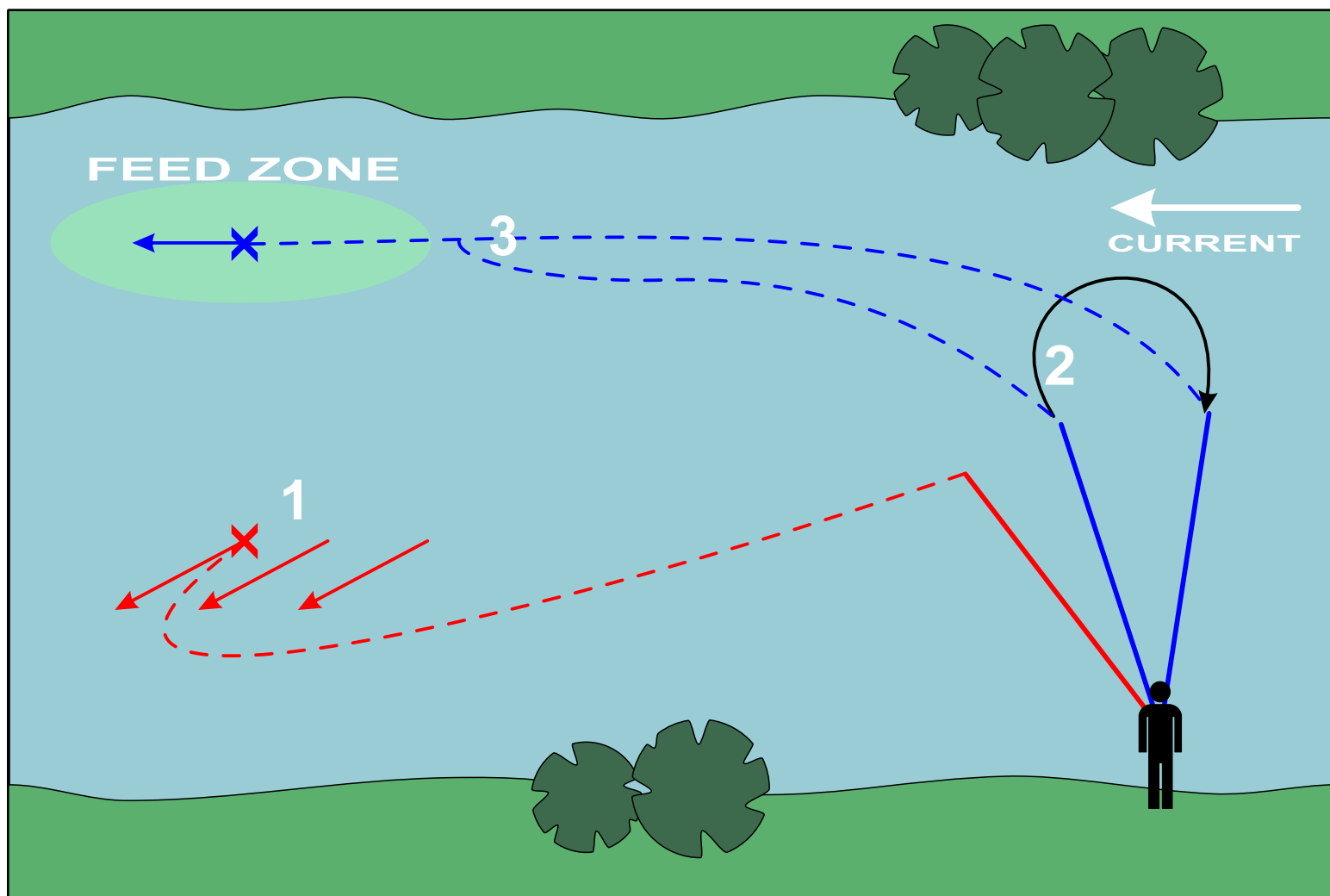
In Fig. 2, the line has started to drift off line and will eventually drag the float with it. The angler will need to lift the line off of the water, without moving the float and sweep the rod over to reposition the line back behind the float, and back in control.

Fig 3. shows the result of the mend, with everything nice and straight with the float heading toward the feed zone, ready to catch fish.

Wind direction will play a big part in how your tackle behaves in the water. No wind is best, but that is rarely the case.

An upstream wind will be a big help to you because it helps keep your line straight and under control. A downstream wind, however, is precisely the opposite, blowing your float down the river and sending your line everywhere that you don't want it to be. It's just a case of mend, mend, and mend again.

You will not be alone in your frustration. Many a deep sigh has been breathed by some very talented anglers when faced with a nasty downstream wind...



Reels for the river are pretty much the same as you would use for any other method of float fishing. You can fish perfectly well with your usual reels, just make sure that the ones you using are in the 3000 range or under. You will be holding your rod for long periods of time, pretty much all day. Larger reels will be heavier to hold and will certainly not make for a comfortable days fishing. For years I favoured closed faced reels (left) for nearly all of my fishing. But they really felt at home on running water. They are so small and light, you can hold them all day with no problem. They are less prone to tangles on windy days.



Centre pin reels (right) are worth a quick mention. They are quite tricky to use at first, particularly for young anglers new to the sport.

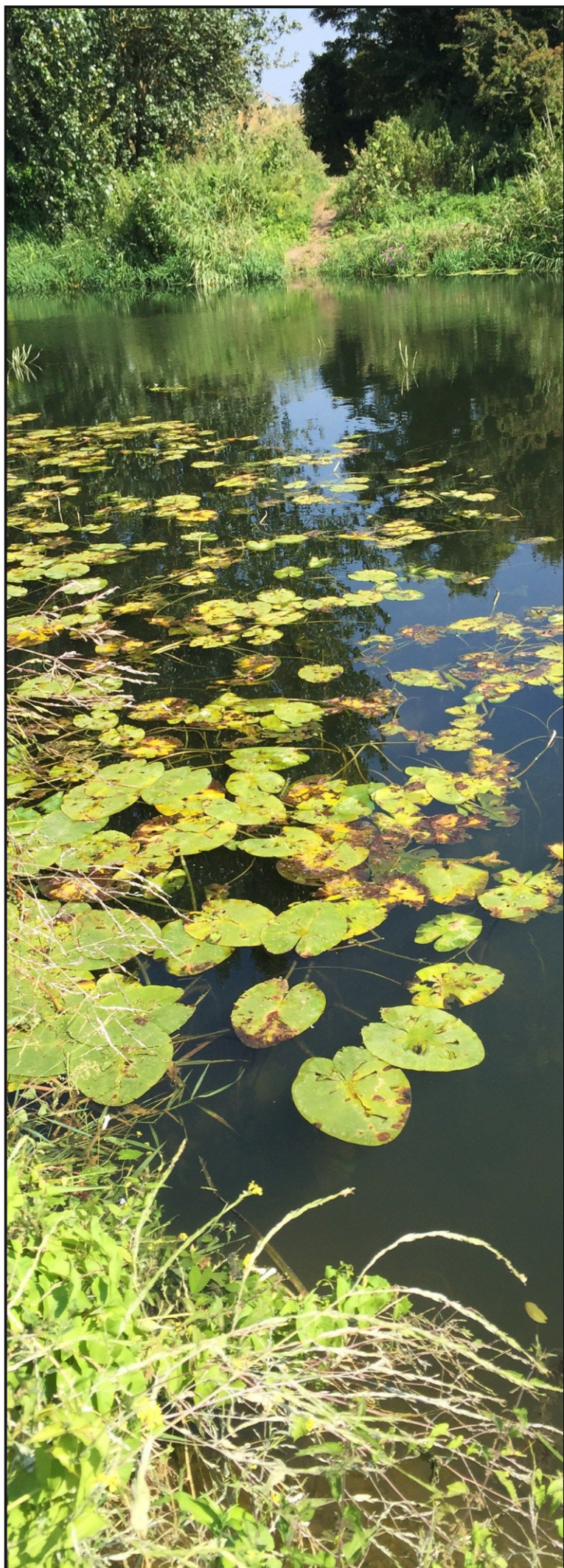
Centre Pin reels have very smooth ball bearings and no gears or any other working parts. There is a ratchet that stops the reel from running out of control and puts a semi lock on the spool. The spool is so smooth that the float pulling on the line in the current can slowly pull line from the reel and can be controlled by light pressure from your thumb on the rim of the spool. Sounds easy so far, but the hardest thing you have to master is casting.

Basically speaking, if you want to cast more than two or three rod lengths across a river, then you might be better off using a normal, fixed spool reel. This is where longer rods come into their own. a 14 or 15ft rod will help you to *trot off the end of the rod tip* much further out than if you had a shorter rod.

Casting with a centre pin reel goes something like this.

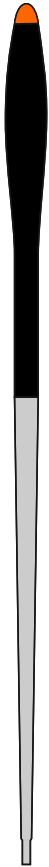
- Using two fingers, take the line from either side of the butt ring on the rod and pull out two large loops.
- Now, either swing the float out under arm and release the loops of line, or for a bit more power, cast sideways and do the same. There is a way of spinning the spool with your thumb to gain more distance on the cast but, I tried it a few times and ended up in a proper mess. So I wouldn't recommend it.

To start with, just drop the float in off the rod tip and let it trot down naturally.



FLOATS

There are so many river floats for us to get confused with. But here are four floats that you will need to have in your tackle box for DDAS rivers.



STICK FLOAT -

A streamlined float traditionally made from balsawood and *Lignum Cane*. Today, balsawood is still used as well as high density foam for the top part of the float. The bottom part is, again, still made from cane and/or plastic.

No bristle or insert, just a very visible painted dome shaped top. The heavier base balances out the buoyant top, making a very nicely balanced float indeed.

Notice that there are no eyes to thread the line through. The float is instead attached to the line with rubber or silicone bands. This is known as *Top and Bottom style*. Shouldered sticks have a thicker body with a pronounced step or *shoulder* for deeper or faster swims when more weight is needed.



AVON STYLE FLOAT -

Used in faster currents, the Avon float has a much flatter body, a longer, thicker tip and sturdy wire stem. Like the stick float, *Avons* are attached top and bottom with rubber or silicone bands.

The rounder body shape will help to keep the float steady in faster water. Without it, the float would rise out of the water like a tail walking Dolphin when you hold it back.

The wire or sometimes alloy stem will help to keep the float stable in swirling, turbulent currents.

A wide variety of sizes are available, from a few **No.4** shots right up to 8 or even 10 grams.



BOLOGNAISE or BOLO FLOAT - Bolos floats look a bit like Pole floats on steroids.

Bolo floats really come in to their own when it comes to really fast or very deep rivers. But our very own Frome is a classic river in which the Bolo float feels very much at home.

Bolo floats even have their own rods, although you don't NEED a Bolo rod, they are telescopic rods that can reach 6, 7 or 8 metres for trotting down in fast rivers.

A sensitive bristle, a wide shouldered body and strong wire or alloy stem, all makes these floats very stable in even the most turbulent waters. Fixed Top and Bottom only.



STRAIGHT, INSERT or BODIED WAGGLERS -

We can use Wagglers on slow deep stretches of water like the Stour at Hanford Farm.

A 1.5 or 2 gram (2 or 3AA) are perfect for this type of approach.

If you find your fish are sitting off the bottom and you want to use a Wagglers, you could use an Inserted Wagglers for extra sensitivity.

For fishing on or near the bottom, go for a Straight Wagglers like the one here.

Bodied Wagglers can be used for very slow and deep stretches of river or when you have a strong downstream wind.

How you set up the shots on a river rig is probably more important and has more effect on your bait than most other types of fishing. In the beginning, you should only really think about two shotting patterns to keep it simple.

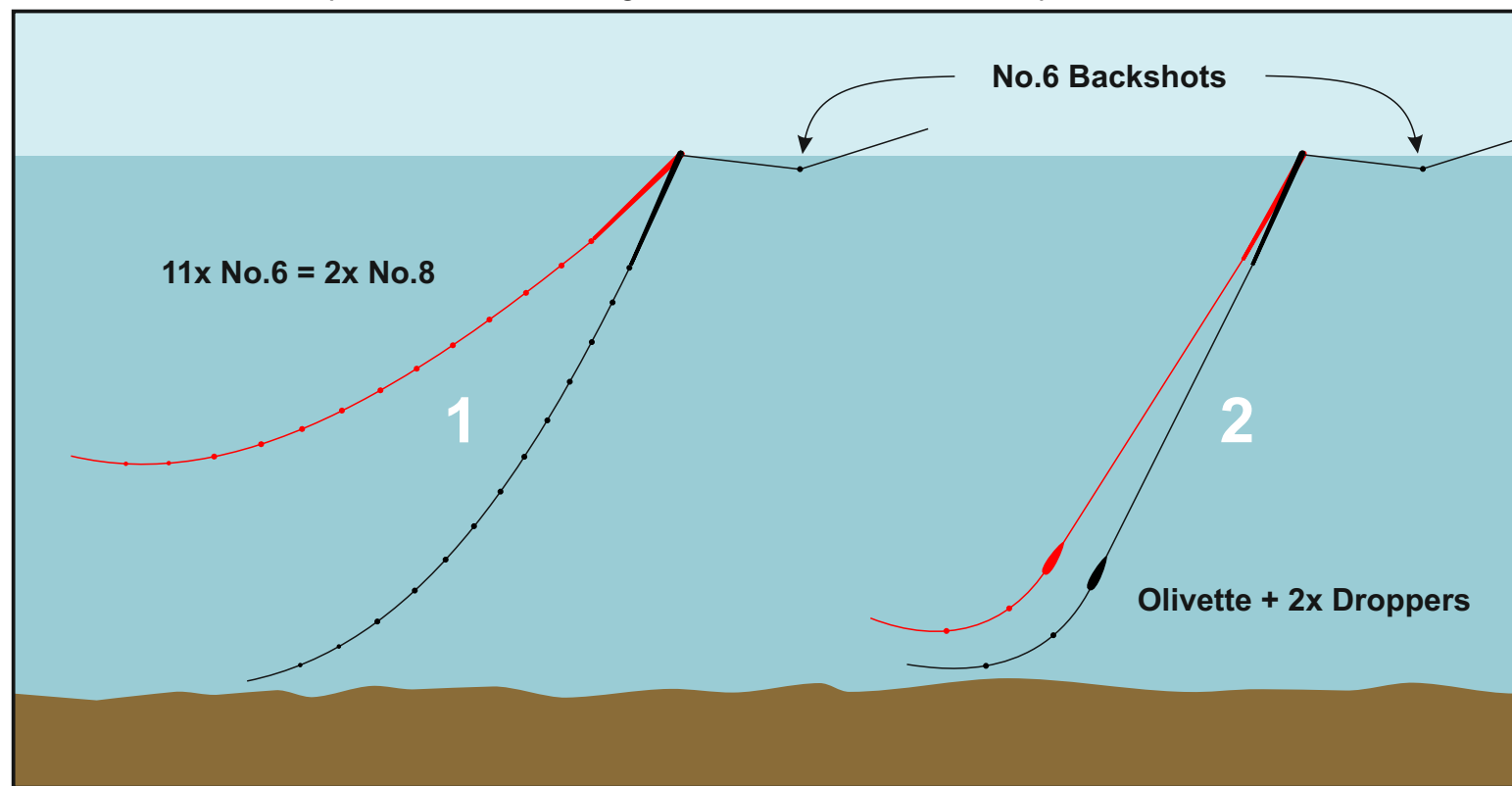
SHIRT BUTTON STYLE SHOTTING PATTERN -

Fig 1. shows the most traditional shotting pattern for a stick float. The float in the diagram is based on a **6x no.4** Stick float. The idea is to break the shot sizes down into smaller shots so it is easier to spread them out down the line. **6x No.4 = 12x No.6**. For my own fishing, I would break the shots down further by having one of the **No.6** shots as **2x No.8**. So the complete rig is **11x No.6** and **2x No.8**.

If you are going to set up this kind of rig at home, then set the float at around 8ft (2.4m) deep, because that is approximately the depth of a lot of the swims on the Stour. I will space the shots properly once I have plumbed the depth. If you are making the rig on the river bank, then plumb the depth before you fix any shot on to the line.

The red part of the diagram below shows how your rig and shots will behave once they are held back against the current of the river. The bait will be lifted much higher, the longer (*harder*) you hold it back. Holding the rig back in this way, you can search your swim thoroughly to see where the fish are in the river. If I had to shallow up, I would move the shots up and group some underneath the float. If the fish were really shallow, I would consider attaching a smaller float and taking some of the shots off the line completely. If they moved deeper I would have to do the reverse.

Or have two rods set up. One shallow and light, the other heavier and deep.



BULK AND DROPPERS -

There will be occasions when you will need to fish a bait near to or even on the bottom. Species like Bream or Barbel, also smaller species like Gudgeon like feed on or close to the river bed. Other species like Roach and Dace can be caught at almost any depth, depending on where they feel most comfortable. There can usually be *nuisance fish* like Bleak or Minnows hanging around, so you may want to get your bait down quickly to larger fish waiting deeper down and quickly through the fish that you don't want to catch. (If you start catching too many Minnows, try shallowing up until you get Roach or Dace).

A *Bulk and Droppers* set up is the one to reach for. The *bulk* can be either a number of grouped split shots or an Olivette lead. Olivettes are streamlined and will reduce the drag on the rig more than if you were to use shots. The *weight down* style of an Olivette also stops the rig and bait from rising anywhere near as much as it would with a spread out shotting pattern.

This is the pattern that will work better in faster flows with Bolo floats.

On both examples you will notice the use of a *backshot*. A Backshot is a small **No.8** or **No.6** shot positioned about 30 cm above the float. This stops your float from being pulled too far out of position when you mend the line. It simply *Bobs* and stays where you need it to. You may mistake this for a bite at first, but after a while, you will get used to how your float behaves.

Another thing worth pointing out is that both rigs are fished over depth. If you fish your rigs at dead depth, when you hold the float back the rig will rise further off the bottom than you might want it to.

Plumb the depth to get it exact, then simply add 6" (15cm) to the depth as a starting point.

THE STRAIGHT WAGGLER -

(Right) is a thick highly visible float. Because the thicker tip is more buoyant than an Inserted tip, it can be used to fish close to or even on the river bed.

Of course, you need a river that has a clean, snag free area to be able to do this.

Dragging a bait in this way can help to slow the bait down to make it act more naturally, as if it is just tumbling along the bottom.

If you tried to do this with an Inserted Wagglers, it would just keep getting dragged under and be quite useless.

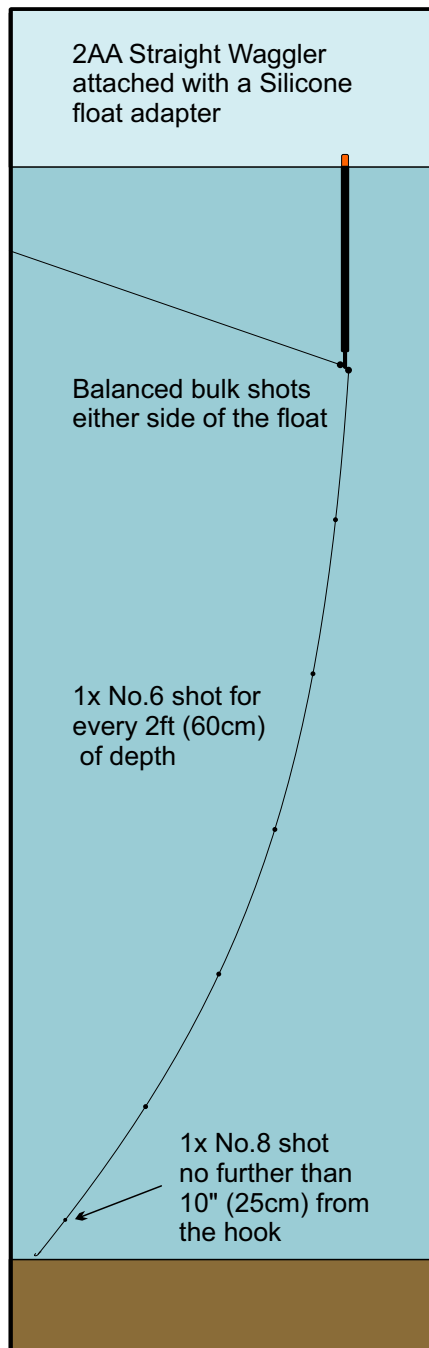
Bait choice is important for dragging a bait too.

If you used maggots or worms with an exposed hook point, it would snag the bottom. If you use a bait like Casters or Hemp where the hook is buried, you are much less likely to hook up on anything that you shouldn't.

The diagram shows the float with nearly all the weights bulked up underneath, with some **No.6** droppers spaced equally down the line.

How many droppers will you need?
A good *Rule of thumb* (A Rule of Thumb is an unwritten rule that will give you a good idea of where to start, but may not be the case for every situation) is to place a **No.6** shot for every 2ft (60cm) of depth.

I like to make sure that I have at least one **No.8** shot no further than 10" (25cm) from the hook as a *tell tale* shot, the shot that will first transmit the bite to your float.



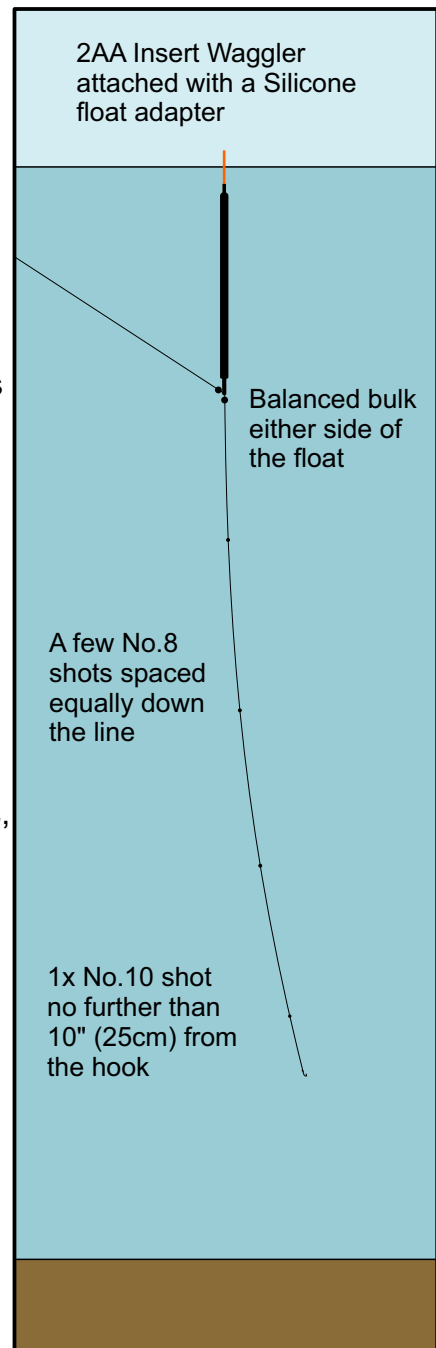
THE INSERT WAGGLER -

The Insert Wagglers is much more sensitive and better suited to fishing both shallow and down to 2ft (60cm) off of the bottom. Fishing away from any potential snags like this means that you can use a more sensitive float and get more of an advantage over the fish.

You can get away with having fewer shots down the line too.

Instead of **No.6** shots, I will use **No.8** shots instead. With that vital shot close to the hook being a **No.10** instead of a **No.8**.

You can reduce your hook size too, if you wish. I would drop from 16 or 18, down to a 20. Depending on the size of fish I am catching and the bait I am using.



FEEDING & FISHING

Throughout this book, we have used the phrase *Holding back* quite a few times. What do we mean by holding back and why do we do it?

Rivers have a lot of turbulence under the surface of the water. Rocks, weed, tree branches, all cause their own *disturbances* in the current. These will show as swirls, ripples, creases and folds on the surface, but much more is going on below. All this turbulence makes food particles dance and tumble around. Fish constantly move and dart about, chasing food and competing with their shoal mates, as well as swimming against the flow of the river.

They use lots of energy doing all of this. If the fish can find an easy meal that it doesn't have to work for, is a little bit of energy saved.

By slowing the float down so it is slower than that current, the bait has a better chance of being seen by the fish and it will have an even better chance of being eaten.

Also, every time you hold the float back, the bait rises. It will fall again when you release the float.

This random movement of the bait will attract fish and increase the chances of it being taken.

Now, it would be much easier if the fish would follow the rules of fishing, but they do tend to write the rules instead. No two days are the same and the mood of the fish may even change during the session. The anglers job is to work out these changes, something that will be easier with experience.



FEEDING -

It is probably fair to assume that there will be fish in your swim right from the start. But, once you have caught a few, the rest may get *spooked* off and back off your feed or even leave your swim. What do you do then?

You can wait patiently for them to come back or you can *make* something happen by feeding.

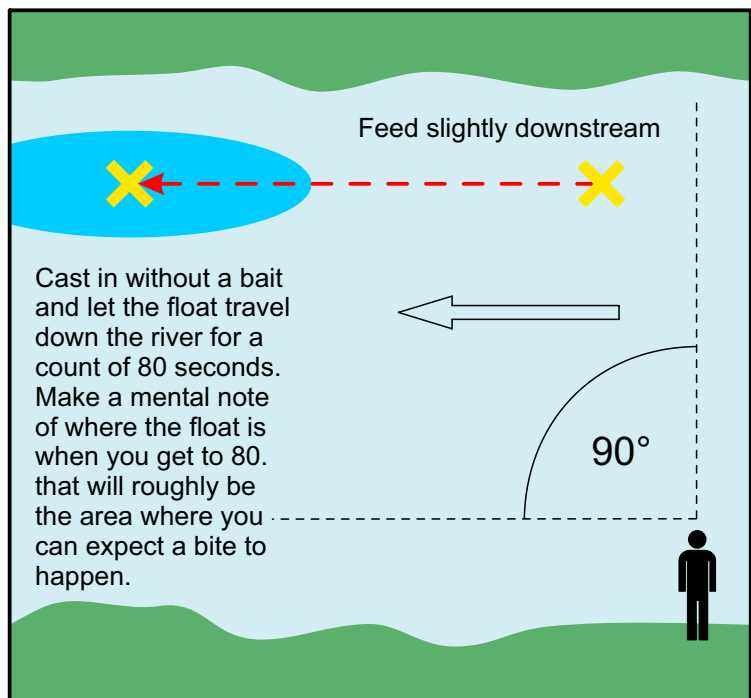
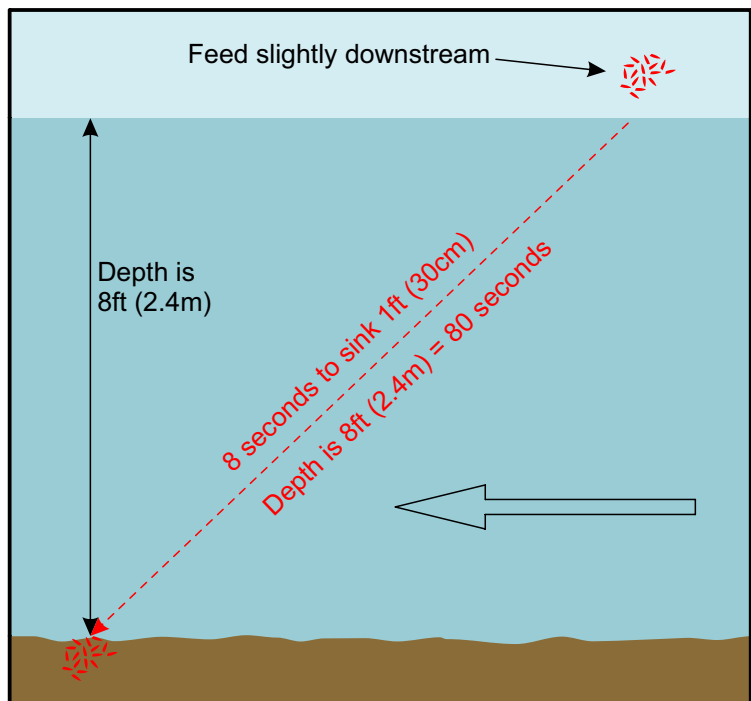
In a lake, you can assume that where you drop your bait is going to be, more or less, where it will land. It might get moved around by wind, undertow or fish, but it will be roughly where you want it to be.

Unless you are a new visitor to the planet (Welcome if you are), you will know that rivers move. Fast or slow, from one place to another, ending up at another river (Tributary) or at the sea.

This presents us with a couple of problems. Where do you feed and where will it end up?

We are going to have to use maths again. Roughly speaking, a maggot will sink 1ft (30cm) in 8 seconds. When you use a plummet to find how deep the river is, you can begin to understand where you need to feed to get your bait where you want it and where you can expect a bite to happen. It is good practice to feed slightly downstream for where you are fishing. Fish like Chub, Roach and Dace, will naturally follow the stream of feed coming into the river to where it is being introduced.

Competition between the fish will drive them further up the feed column to get to the food first. It has been known for clever anglers in matches to steal fish from the angler below them using this method.



FEEDERS

There are plenty of swims on our rivers where a swimfeeder will work particularly well. There are even occasions when a feeder will out score a float with the right conditions.

The section in the our course book that covers feeders, mentioned the *Block End Feeder*, sometimes called a maggot feeder because, most of the time, it will be used with maggots.

You can use other feeders on rivers. If Bream are your target on slower moving rivers, then an Open Ended Feeder will probably be the one to choose. But I would bet that the Block End Feeder is the most common.



One of the biggest and r answer is, how long should the hooklink be? There isn't really a solid answer, but there are certain things that we can look towards to give us a clue of where to start.

When the water is warmer and the fish are more active, you might get away with a much shorter hooklink.

Remember what we were saying about the fish following the feed to where the loose feed is being introduced? Well fishing the feeder is no different. Fish will start picking up the food particles and follow the steady stream of feed to the feeder itself. You might get away with a hooklink of just 6" (15cm).

But in the colder months, longer hooklinks are used because the fish are more reluctant to move as far. It is a simple case of the fish coming to the bait when it's warm and the bait going to the fish when it's colder.

2ft (60cm) is a sensible starting length, but don't be surprised to use them as long as 3, 4 or 5 feet long (90cm, 1.2 or 1.5 metres).

The fish will often tell you how they are feeding, and what adjustments you may need to make to your tackle to help you improve your catch rate.

Throughout your fishing session, make a mental note of where the fish are hooked as you catch them.

If the fish are lightly hooked in the lips, or you lose a couple of fish when you swing them or at the net, then the hooklink is probably too short.

If you find that you are having to use your disgorgers a lot more than you should, then your hooklink is probably too long.

You may also have to change your hooklinks as the day goes on. To begin with you may find that you get bites as soon as the feeder hits the bottom. But, the fish may back away from the feeder in just the same way as they would if you were using a Waggler or a Pole, only this time they will have moved downstream instead.

You can put longer hooklinks on to try to catch them up, but if you don't do something about reducing your feed, you may never get them back. Put a smaller feeder on so they have less to chase, forcing them back up to the feeder.

The size and weight of your feeder will depend largely on where you are fishing and the condition of the river.

Small and medium sized feeders with weights of around 20 to 40 grams should cover most situations.

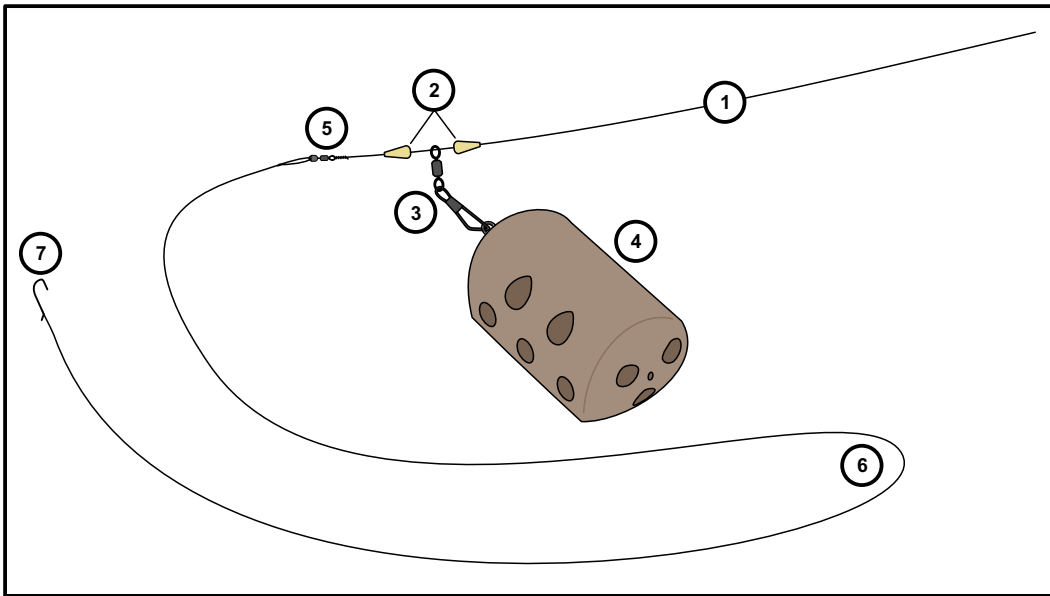
MODERATELY USEFUL TIP #2 -

Always bait your hook BEFORE you fill your feeder. If you're using maggots, the feeder will empty before you even get it in the water.

MODERATELY USEFUL TIP #3 -

To help you get your feeders the right weight for the conditions you find yourself in. The Drennan Vary Weight Feeders are designed so that you can slide different sized weights in and out without having to change your feeder (that will be vital for some set ups as we will see shortly). They also come in two different weights, light and heavy. If you buy both in small and medium, you will have 18 different variations of feeder but only have to carry 4.... Remember when we were talking about saving carrying weight?





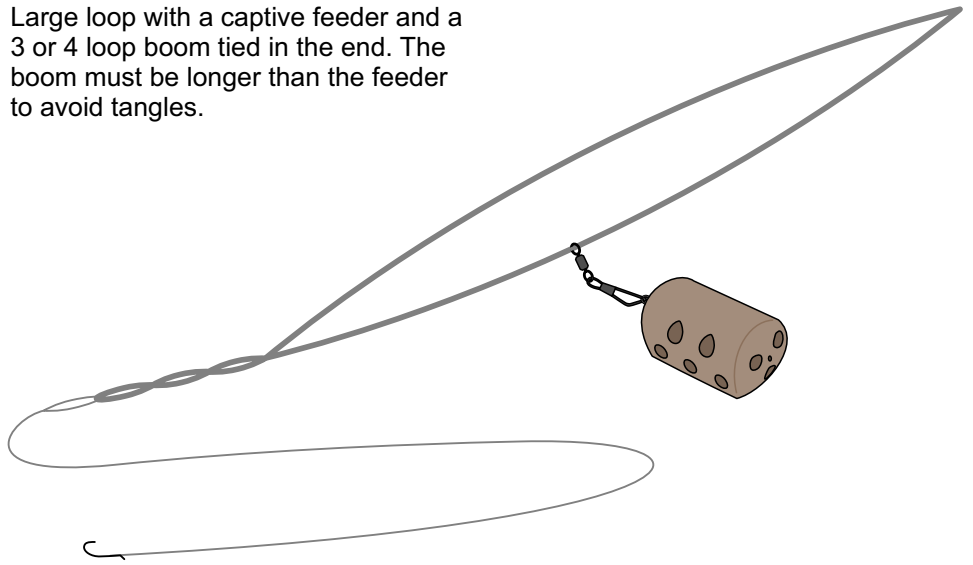
1. 6lb main line
2. Drennan Big Grippa stops
3. Quick Link Swivel
4. Drennan Vary Weight feeder
5. Micro Quick Release swivel
6. 2ft/60cm 4lb hooklink
7. Size 16/14 barbless hook

The feeder loop set up looks complicated to create, but once you have done it a few times, it's fairly straight forward.

- Thread your feeder onto the line and tie a large, 2.5ft loop (75cm) with feeder inside.
- Then tie three or four smaller loops in the end of the big one.
- The last loop you tie will be the one to which your hooklink is attached to.

Remember to wet your knots before you tighten them and try to keep them the same size.

Large loop with a captive feeder and a 3 or 4 loop boom tied in the end. The boom must be longer than the feeder to avoid tangles.



FEEDER FISHING IN RUNNING WATER -

If you are fishing a feeder on a lake, you would tighten the line and the tip up to the feeder because there is no pressure on the line.

Do that on a river and you would dislodge it and be chasing it downstream. You could fish a heavier feeder, but you will lose sensitivity. So what weight do you need?

Firstly the river will give away clues as to how you need to set up your feeder and which weight of tip to use.

The picture on the right shows a good position for a feeder rod. Having the rod pointing skywards in this way, helps to keep the line out of the current. The more line you can keep out of the water, the less pressure there will be on the feeder and it will stay where you want it to.

Positioning your rod like this will mean that your rod will behave in a different way to how you usually expect it to.



QUIVER TIPS -

Newer anglers should not concern themselves too much with how heavy their quiver tip is. However, my recommendation for a river would be to fit a lighter tip to cope with slower rivers and a heavier tip for those with a faster flow. You will know if your tip isn't the right size because, it will be pulled round too far if it's too light and you will miss bites if it's too heavy.

MODERATELY USEFUL TIP #3 -

Remember, you are looking to actually hit the bites. When the fish pulls hard, strike. They may be very delicate plucks on the line. You're not waiting for the rod to jump in the water like you would for Carp.

WORKING OUT THE WEIGHT-

Before you start fishing, take a little time to work out the right weight for your feeder.

- Start with a 1oz/30g feeder.
- Cast it out empty and without a hooklink.
- Let it hit the bottom and close your bail arm, but don't tighten up to it. Let the flow pull the tip round with rod on its rest.
- If the feeder is easily dislodged, then it is too light.
- If you find the feeder holds the bottom and is hard to move if you reel a little line in, it is too heavy.
- If the feeder holds bottoms and is dislodged with only a little effort from the reel, then it is about right

Add or subtract weights (Vary Feeder) or try differently weighted feeders until you find the balance.

The reason we use an empty feeder is because, the feeder will hold bottom easily when it is full, but the weight is reduced as the bait comes out and you don't want the feeder coming adrift when it gets lighter.

FISHING THE BOW -

Now you have the correct tip in and your feeder set up and nicely balanced, now we can think about the *bow in the line*.

Fishing a bow in the line will help to anchor the feeder without having to add loads of weight to get it to hold the bottom. More weight + Low sensitivity and a big splash = No fish.

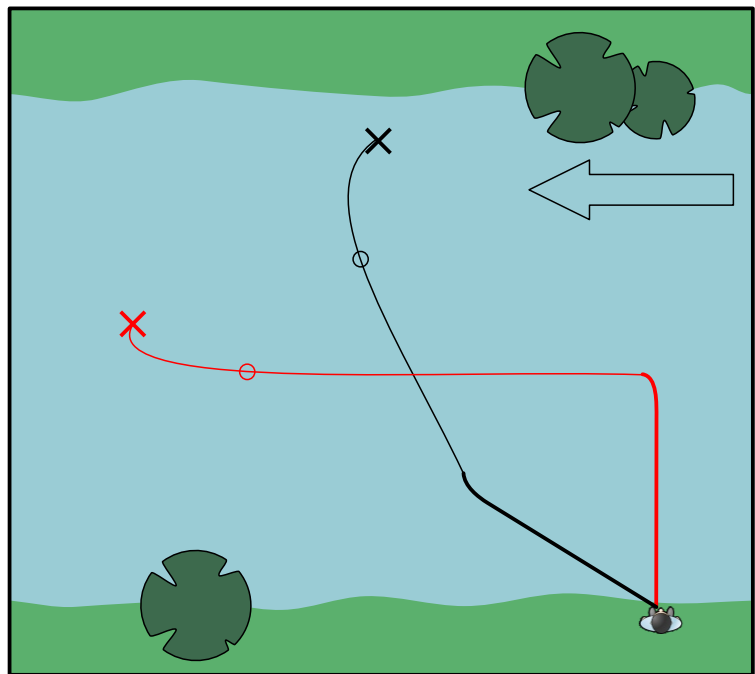
But how much line should you use?

When you are testing the weight of your feeder, do a few *test strikes*.

You should be able to move the **rod tip** about 1 metre before the feeder moves.

The time between picking up your rod and the feeder being dislodged is spent picking up the bow in the line, or the slack line.

When you've worked all this out you will be ready to attach a hooklink and get fishing....FINALLY!



The diagram above shows how the position of your rod will depend on where in the river you are fishing.

The black rod has the feeder fishing more in front of the angler and only slightly downstream.. The rod is also point more downstream at an angle of around 45°.

The red rod is fishing further downstream and more towards the anglers bank. The rod is positioned more in front of him.

I would love to tell you where the change between one and the other comes, but to be honest, I have no idea. You will just have to see which one feels right to you on the day.

On both the black and the red rods, you will notice a small ring on the line. The ring is there to indicate where the line enters the water to show how much of the line is clear of the water.

Wind will play a big part on the angle of your rod and how much line is out of the water.

On really windy days, you may have no choice other than to fish closer to your bank as the wind makes it harder to fish further out.

This is something that you either accept, move to a more sheltered swim or try to pick your days better with the weather forecast.



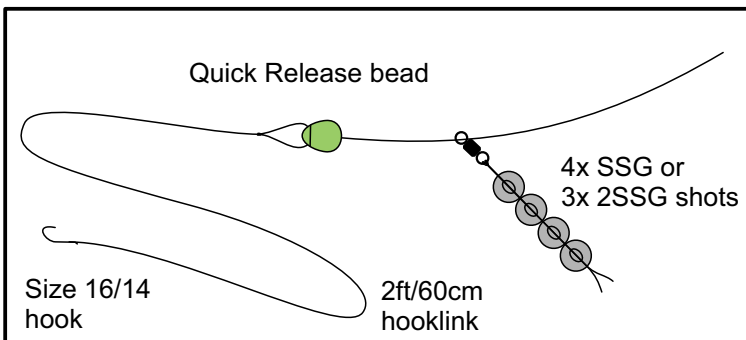
LEDGERING ON RIVERS -

I remember fondly the time I spent on rivers when I was a junior angler, ledgering a worm for big Roach, Perch, Chub and even Pike.

I caught the most valuable fish ever on a piece of ledgered worm. A 1" (2.5cm) *Bullhead* that got me second in the match on the river Tame in Oxfordshire and won me £30....

The first ledger rig is easy to set up.

- Trim off a 6" (15cm) length of 3lb line and tie a swivel to it in the same manner as you would with a hooklink, loop to loop style.
- Attach 3 or 4 **SSG** or **2SSG** shots. if the shots become snagged or tangled, the shots just slip off the bottom and the rig is released.
- Thread the 5lb mailine through the swivel and tie on a feeder bead and attach a hooklink.



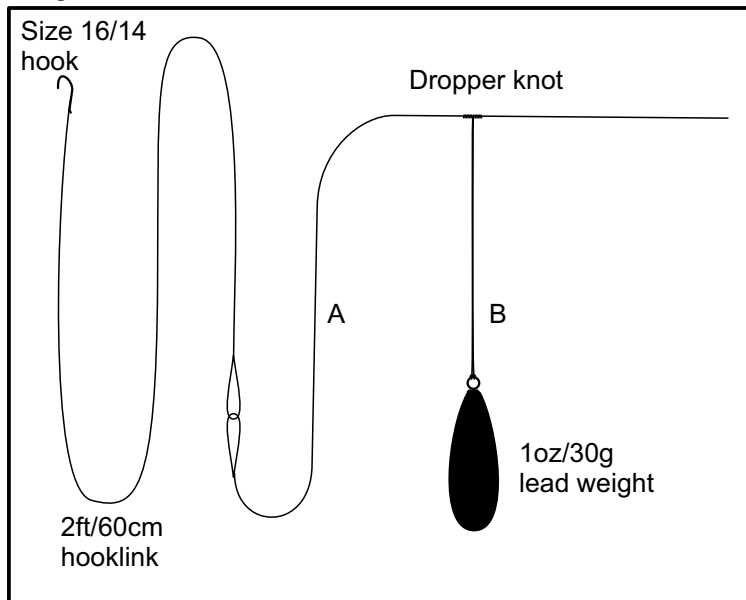
THE PATERNOSTER RIG -

The Paternoster rig is used when you think there may be debris on the river bed. The link or boom will lift your bait off of the bottom and allow it to *waft* gently in the flow, attracting fish to have a nibble.

You could simply tie a large 6" (15cm) loop with a Figure of Eight loop knot, or you can have a go at trickier knots the *Dropper knot* and the *Surgeons Dropper knot*.

When I tie a Dropper knot, I leave enough line (A) below the knot so that I can tie a small Figure of Eight loop knot to attach my hooklink to and still keep it longer than the length of the boom loop (B) I tied.

Keeping this section longer will help to reduce tangles.



BAIT DROPPERS -

Largely forgotten in modern fishing but still worth while having one in your tackle box if you're going to fish on the river.

A very traditional device that introduces bait right at the bottom and avoids nuisance fish and stops the bait from being washed too far downstream.



- The Dropper is fixed to the line by threading the hook through the eye or ring at the top and down the back to a block of foam, rubber or cork.
- Push the hook into the soft block.
- Open the door at the front of the dropper and put the required amount of bait inside.
- Close the door and pull the weighted latch down so it holds the door closed.
- Lower or swing the baited dropper into the water until it reaches the bottom. (If you are use a dropper with a Pole, makes sure it lands hard.)
- The Dropper will land on the weight, pushing the latch rod up and the door will swing open in the current, depositing the bait into the river.

MODERATELY USEFUL TIP #3 -

Be careful if you are using a light hook length with a bait dropper. If the Dropper is too heavy, the hooklink with snap and you'll lose your Dropper. Make sure it is strong enough to take the weight.



BAIT

Ok so, which bait is the most popular bait on rivers?
If you guessed, Maggots, give yourself a point...



Our favourite wriggly friends are a firm favourite with the fish too. Red, white or bronze are the usual menu for a river angler. It doesn't really matter which you use, but we all have our favourites. Mr Chubs favourite is a nice fat bronze maggot. Maggots are a year round bait and everything will eat them.



Casters will always pick out the better fish on the right day. There aren't many Roach that can resist a nice crunchy Caster. Very often used together with Hemp, a very traditional combination and very effective they are too. Make sure they are not too dark, otherwise they won't sink properly or even float, taking all your fish downstream with them.



Hemp can be loose fed and/or used on the hook. If you do use it on the hook, choose a grain that is open with plenty of the white inside showing. Try to hook the white bit only. It's fiddley, but worth it if they are eating lots of it. Bare in mind that Hemp will sink faster than Maggots or Casters. Fish love Hemp and you should always have some with you.



Tares are another bait that used to need a lot preparation at home, but today it comes ready cooked and big Roach love them. Tares are a pea sized grain seed and one of the more over looked baits in modern fishing, but one that has earned it's place in any river anglers bait bag. If the fish are feeding on hemp, a Tare will help sort out the bigger specimens.



If you are fishing on one of the DDAS stretches of the Stour, you simply must have some Pinkies with you. White, red or fluoro Pinkies are a superb bait on our rivers, but fluoros are a firm favourite all year round. Don't be fooled by their size either, I have seen some very large fish caught on these little Pinkies. Fluoro Pinkies work best in the winter.



Worms are a must have bait for rivers. Chub, Perch and even Pike love a juicy worm. Earthworms, Lobworms or Dendrobaenas from a shop will do nicely. Use them chopped up and introduced with a bait dropper just off of the near shelf for better Perch. Ledgered worms for Chub fished near bushes might just lure one out.



POLE FISHING

I absolutely love fishing a Pole on rivers. You can be so accurate and work a bait in so many different ways.

It can be quite difficult though, with some steep banks to deal with, or the amount of tackle that you need with you to fish with one.

I tend to fish quite a long pole too. Poles are quite demanding on a lake. They can be quite physical to use on a river, especially if you have a steep bank behind you.



The River Stour can be quite deep in places and you have to use much longer rigs than you normally would. Longer rigs means longer Top Kits and, of course, copping kit. All sounds expensive right?

There are ways around it if you don't have longer Top Kits, but it does get fiddley, you will wonder why you bothered.

Longer Top Kits are more difficult to manage, particularly when you have a larger fish to land.

The *River Frome* (Pronounced Froom) is not as deep as the Stour, but it flows a lot faster. Everything happens much quicker and is more intense. For many of the pegs you will need *Flat floats* for many of the pegs.

Touch the surface of the water in a fast river, and you will be facing downstream quicker than you thought possible. especially if you don not have the strength to pick it up again. I am of course exaggerating, but it is difficult to lift a Pole out of a fast current if you're not careful.

But it's not all doom and gloom, you can catch fish on a short pole or a whip at close range. Let's look at a few Pole floats.

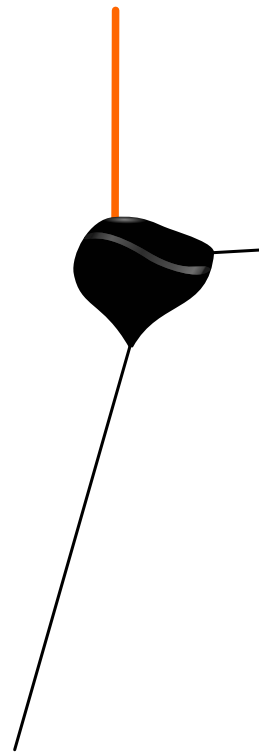
The floats themselves may differ in looks from those we use on a river, but the shotting patterns are the same.

Shirt button style shotting and Bulk shotting patterns are both used for the Pole. Maybe slightly lighter for use with a whip rig.

For slow moving, fairly calm water close in, a *Pencil float* (above) is the perfect float for fishing to hand with a whip. To hand means the length of the line is the same as the length of the whip. I would favour a float of between 0.5g to 1.5g, depending on the depth.

Right, is a typical river Pole float that I personally favour for my own river fishing. A long, visible, sensitive bristle. A rounded pear shaped body to stop the float from rising up when it is held back in the flow. A long wire or carbon stem. You can use carbon in slower currents, but wire will give you better stability in a more turbulent river. 0.75g for fishing to hand or for fishing at mid depth, right up to 2 or 3 grams for when the river is a little *heavy* with flood water after rain.

I will use these floats mainly with a bulk shot set up or with an Olivette.



THE FLAT FLOAT -

The flat float. Not a joke or a wind up. these things are real. You won't find anything as weird looking as these floats anywhere.

Highly engineered to sit nicely in the fast flowing and DEEP rivers in Europe with huge floats taking 50g of weight, they work here in the UK too, of course.

Designed to be held back HARD against the flow, they ride the fastest currents very well. Weights for our DDAS rivers are between 4 and 8 grams. Mad looking floats with some very serious capability.



There is one area where a Pole simply won't be beaten, Accuracy. Providing the Pole can reach and you're strong enough to hold it, a Pole can feed and fish with pin point accuracy cast, after cast, after cast. A *Cupping Kit* on a Pole has become a weapon in it's own right. Sometimes it can look clumsy but, in the right hands, it is deadly. Yes you could throw your groundbait in and there are some anglers that do. But you have to be well practised to get it anywhere near as close as a cupping kit can.



It is definitely quicker to introduce your groundbait by throwing it, but a cupping kit has a second advantage. The splash caused by a tennis ball sized lump of groundbait will attract fish, but also attract predators too. Your days fishing will be a very short one if you attract a couple of Pike into your swim. A cupping kit will gently slip the groundbait in, nice and quietly. So you may have a little longer to catch some fish before predators become interested. In the end, they surely will.

GROUNDBAIT -

Now we have decided on how to get the groundbait into the river, which groundbait do we choose? There is no *right* or *wrong* groundbait, but I can recommend a couple of mixes to you. After that, it's all up to you...

I will always go for a cereal groundbait because wild river fish just don't see fishmeal baits anywhere near as much as commercial fish do.

I also prefer dark groundbait mixes. Our rivers are full of predators and the little silverfish won't risk being seen over a bed of light coloured bait. It would be like wearing a luminous jumper, in the dark, on a firing range.



On the left is a *River groundbait*. It has a very unique smell and is full of natural *Binders* to hold the groundbait together until it reaches the bottom. I will mix this together with a *attractor groundbait* (Right), in this case, *Black Roach*.

I will measure the two groundbaits as follows;

- I will mix these two groundbaits together at ratio of 50/50 if the river conditions are normal.
- If the weather is really cold, I will run the Roach mix through a flour sieve first, to get the big lumps of hemp out because I feel it could over feed the fish. I will not sieve the River mix.
- If the river is carrying some extra rain water, I will add some *Grey or brown Leam* (handful). Leam is a very finely ground clay powder that adds some binding to the mix, as well as some extra weight to get the mix down faster. You don't need much.
- If the river is carrying a lot of extra water, I will add some *Mole Hill soil*. Take a spade and bucket and gather some mole hills from a field close to a river (It doesn't matter which river). I will riddle the soil to get all the stones and lumps out, then leave it out to air dry on a blanket or towel in the shed for a couple of days. I will sieve it again when it's completely dry. Mole hill soil adds A LOT of weight to the mix to get it to the bottom and make it stay there in fast water. 2 pints max.
- I don't want my groundbait to be active or *fizz*. so I will mix it the night before so it has absorbed the water thoroughly and is *inert*. This means it will lay flat on the bottom and will not throw bit and pieces up into the current and away downstream, taking the fish with it.

MODERATELY USEFUL TIP #4 -

Be aware of *active* groundbaits in rivers. They will fizz and give off lots of particles off into the water. Great for attracting fish in lakes, but fatal in rivers. All the bits will be carried off downstream, taking the fish with them.

TIPS & ACCESSORIES

By now we have established that, to go fishing on the river, we need some changes to our normal tackle.

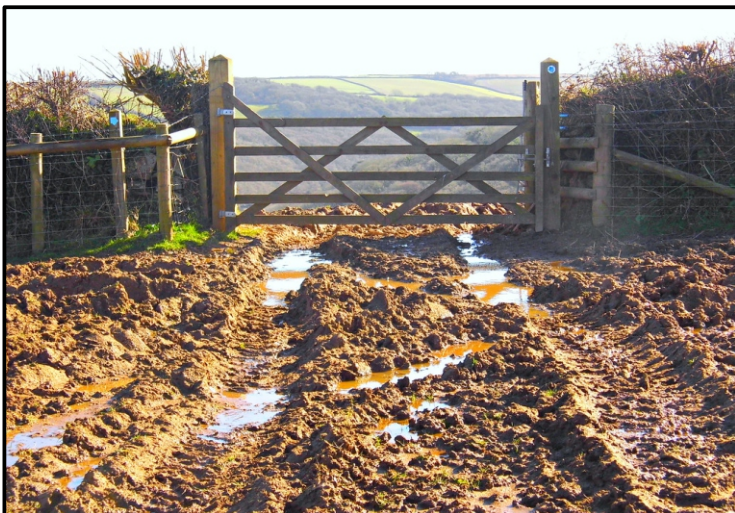


INFLATABLE LIFE JACKET -

Rivers are dangerous places to be around, especially if you are not a strong swimmer. Wearing winter clothes, boots or waders can be a hindrance at best, and can weigh heavy if you fall in. A life vest has only one job to do and, it might in the way, you may look 'silly' but, unless you are a competent swimmer, **IT WILL SAVE YOUR LIFE** should you fall in. Don't be one of those that wish they had put one on, sometimes you don't get the chance to regret it.

For a start, take only what you need and travel as light as you can. Very few rivers have nice paths to walk on, or nice car parks close to the river to park in. That means only one thing. You're going to have to walk.

Across (around the edge of) fields, along farm tracks, and there is mud, oh the mud.....



Even if you can push a trolley, take out ALL of the tackle that you think you are not going to need. I even take layers out of my seat box that I won't need in order to make it lighter. I did take a drill and a whisk to mix groundbait once. That won't happen again on the river I can assure you.



If you are going to use a seat box or a chair, a feeder arm will be useful. Your regular feeder arm that you use on lakes will do. An arm with a brace like the one pictured is better for stability. However, a long bank stick or storm pole will do if you want to travel ultra light.



Aluminium platforms are not strictly necessary and they can be expensive. But if you are planning to do a lot of fishing on rivers, it may be something worth investing in. On a steep bank, they do offer a level surface from which to fish. They can be handy if you have to wade out into shallow areas. Some also convert into wheelbarrows to transport your tackle, no need for an extra trolley and more weight saved.

You may find yourself standing for a lot of the time when you're fishing on a river. So you need somewhere to store your bait. A *Bait Apron* is one option. The match style apron will hold pints of bait and will have pockets to store a few vital accessories like weights, hooklinks, disgorgers and scissors.



If you don't want to wear a big apron, then a pouch might be a better option. Mainly designed for Carp fishing and boilies, but can easily be used for maggots, casters. Either one will go a long way to making life easier for you.





If you are new to fishing, then the best place to start river fishing would probably be on the river Stour.

It is a much easier water to fish, using less technical methods.

One of our DDAS Junior coaching assistants and experienced river angler, Jon Bass, writes;

“In the summertime, a 4BB Avon style float is a good way to start. Fixed top and bottom, with a bulk shot and one or two small dropper shots to keep it simple.

If you have a strong, downstream wind, it is probably better to use a waggler float, either straight or bodied, about 2AA in size. On occasions, a stick float will be your best option.

The Stour tends to be deep and slow. So get confident in catching river fish first and practice mending your line, and learn how to use the flow, before using the more challenging stick float.

Single or double maggots on a size 18 hook will catch you Roach, Dace, Gudgeon, Perch and Chublets down the middle of the river.

You may also find a light catapult useful too.”



The river Frome is much more challenging to fish. Not as deep as the Stour, but much faster with different species to catch. The Frome is more seasonal and is mainly a winter venue because of fishing rights.

Jon writes;

“The Frome is much more challenging for the beginner, with a variety of depths, faster currents, turbulence and weed etc.

All of which can make it difficult to cope with.

A deep slack bend is probably the best place for you to start. Then you can work your way onto faster and shallower stretches

A heavier 3AA Avon float will enable you to easily cast under arm, easy depth adjustment and line mending.

You can use a quiver tip with a light feeder or ledger set up. Both are easier to use, but the fishing may be slower and you will need patience.”

Although it may be easier for Juniors to start on the Stour before trying the Frome. In either case make sure that you stay safe

SUMMARY



I have made a big deal about how careful you need to be around rivers. I felt I had to make you aware of the dangers. But they are not a death trap and you will have some great fishing days. Just be self aware and be safe.

Although rivers have been in decline for many years, the warnings have been heard and things are starting to change. Hopefully, in the near future, the health of our rivers and river species will be back where they should be once more.

There is a purity to fishing a river. Different methods and tackle make it feel special, especially if you don't fish them that often.

You will probably find solitude too. Unlike a lake or commercial fishery, you won't have to go far to be alone. With hundreds of metres of river bank to explore and every swim being different from it's neighbour, any swim could hold different species of fish.

Rivers are the very essence of our club. DDAS was born from river fishing and, without it, the club wouldn't be what it is.

Go and enjoy the challenge of catching wild fish.

You will be a better angler for the experience.