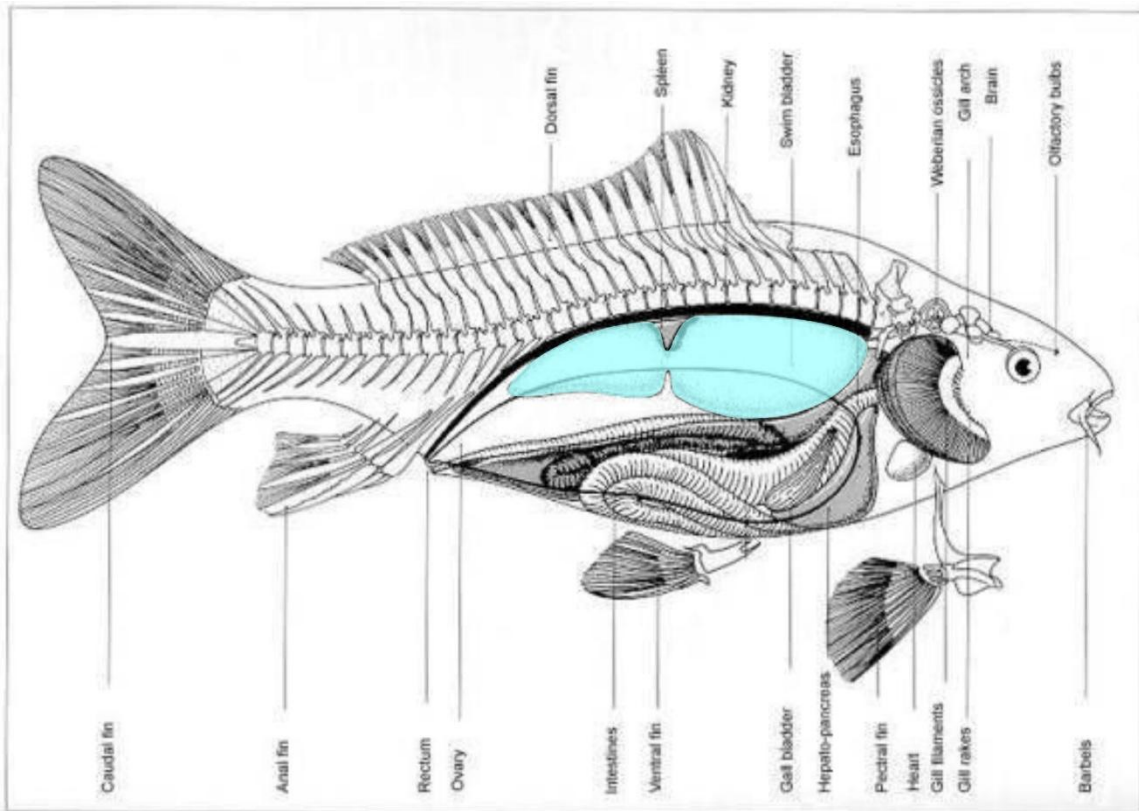


During many of the DDAS junior sessions, you will often hear the term 'Air Pressure' being banded around. But what is it, what does it mean, and how does it affect your fishing?

What is it?

Air pressure, or Barometric Pressure, is a measure of the weight of the air or atmosphere. In high pressure conditions, the air weighs more. In low pressure conditions, the air weighs less.

Naturally this affects the water and everything living in it. Fish, in particular, are very sensitive to atmospheric conditions, and it changes how, when, and where they feed.



All bony fish like coarse fish have a 'Swim Bladder' shown here in blue. The Swim Bladder helps the fish to remain bouyant when swimming. It allows them to maintain a certain depth and also acts as a sound detection chamber (Resonation Chamber) to detect and 'feel' sound. Something I did not know until writing this!

In water, the deeper you go, the more pressure you will feel on your body. A fish will feel the same thing only from the inside. If the air pressure is high, the weight of the air is heavy on the water. This will make a fish will feel very uncomfortable inside as the Swim Bladder feels the pressure. The best place a fish can be is closer to the surface where the pressure of the air on the water is less. The trouble with being on the surface is fish can be very vulnerable to predators if they sit on the surface, unless they are too big to be eaten (by most things). So they will sit a little deeper to be safe, but not too deep to be too uncomfortable. Anglers would call this 'sitting off the bottom'.

In low pressure conditions the air is lighter. The pressure on the water is less so the fish feel more comfortable inside and will feed happily on the bottom where there is usually a lot more food.



Things to look out for...

In the early hours or in the late evening, often can see more bubbles and signs of feeding activity on the water. The air pressure is mostly lower at dawn and dusk. This is why a lot of large fish and fish in general are caught at night or in the early or late hours of the day. Anglers will often refer to this time as 'the witching hours'.



Observant anglers may also notice the sudden appearance of weed where before there was none. This is because the air pressure has risen suddenly and plants are able to drink in the sunshine. If the plants are doing this, then so will the fish. Even keepnets and line will be more difficult to sink in high pressures.

It is the same in reverse too, when the weeds suddenly disappear into the depths. The

air pressure has dropped and fish will be feeding on the bottom. Feeding fish will also be signalled by patches of bubbles suddenly appearing on the surface. Be warned, this could also be natural gases from the bottom of the lake that can now escape in low pressure.

I personally had a prime example of air pressure in action at Mangerton Mill. It was cold but sunny, and I had caught only 9 Carp before 12-noon and had seen very few fish on the surface. Within five minutes, it was as if someone had flicked a switch as dozens of Carp rose to the surface. By 4pm my tally was up to 55 Carp. The air pressure had risen with a change of wind direction and they were feeding on the surface where it was warmer making them much easier to catch.



Today, we do not need odd looking clocks hanging in the hallway to give us Barometric pressures. Modern Apps on mobile devices provide us with information at our finger tips.

But how do you read air pressure, and what is high or low?

You do not need to know this but air pressure is measured in 'Millibars' (Mb). That will probably mean as much to you as it does to me. But the most important thing to know is a normal or 'neutral' air pressure is 1013mb which is basically the pressure of the air measured at sea level. Anything above or below that number is either high or low pressure.

Some of you will remember a terrible match at Whitemoor last year. The air pressure that day 1043mb, the highest reading I can ever remember seeing. Not much was caught because the fish probably felt terrible.

Recently (at the time of writing) the air pressure was 994mb. Some of the new Bream

came out of Luckfield because the air pressure was so low that they just had to feed and some were caught.

Knowing your air pressures can help you decide how plan your fishing sessions.

Floating, shallow, or slow sinking baits for when the air pressure is high.

deeper rigs, baits closer to the bottom, or a feeder for when the air pressure is low.

Watch out for signs that the pressure has changed and adapt your methods to match it.

It's not perfect science, but knowledge is power when you are trying to catch a fish that has more knowledge than you about the weather you are both experiencing.

Juniors Sec...

