

LURE-FISHING BASICS

We've had several requests for and suggestions about articles that get right back to basics, articles that will help and encourage youngsters and novices of all ages to successfully take-up the exciting sport of fishing, without breaking the Bank, and which hopefully are also of interest to more experienced anglers as well.

As a direct result of your requests, we have put-together these basic guidelines to hopefully help youngsters and novices and other more experienced lure anglers to greater success and enjoyment.

The good news is that as well as pike, perch and zander, which are gluttons for lures, big specimens of most other species become predators and even cannibals! Yep, small pike and small pike aren't even safe from their own parents' teeth! Big chub are serious predators too and what a pleasure it can be to catch a giant chub of 5 or 6 lb with a jointed minnow plug, the size of chub that you might wait all season to catch with traditional hook baits!



Essential Success

As with all sports and hobbies, some sort of continuing success is needed if it's to maintain any sort of on-going attraction and satisfaction, and this is particularly true of angling. With angling you are competing against a big selection of wily species that, with a few exceptions, are not about to throw themselves on to your hook, so you have to load the advantage in your favour, and that's exactly what we hope to show you how to do in this article.

It's true that anyone can casually chuck a spinner around and hope to catch small perch or a larger pike, but for consistent success, we have some hints and tips that we hope you will find useful.



PIKE -Top of the Predators !

Firstly, pike may seem rather gung-ho and reckless sometimes but they're not stupid, and you're not likely to fool all of them all of the time, just a few of them some of the

time, hopefully! In the UK, pike have held the No.1 position as top fresh-water predator for thousands of years, and this hasn't happened purely by chance.

Pike have evolved with one of the most comprehensive sets of senses for locating their prey! For starters, they are unique in having binocular vision and sighting grooves on their long snouts. This is one of the reasons why pike appear so fierce and aggressive ... it's because they can look you in the eyes with both their eyes simultaneously! So in clear water, these ambushing predators with rows of teeth and the ability to accelerate very rapidly are usually no match for their prey.

As well as having superb eye-sight, pike have rows of other sensory cells along their lateral line and around their mouth. They can very easily detect a water-vole scurrying along the bank and then plopping into the water and even in coloured water they can easily detect the position, speed and direction of prey fish! They can also detect dissolved compounds in the water and even changes in the electrical conductivity of the water. That's why pike are No 1 and that's why it's worth taking a few counter-measures to load the odds a lot more in your favour.

Stealth and Camouflage

If a pike can "hear" a mouse on the bank, an angler must sound like an earthquake, so move quietly and stealthily along if you want to stand any chance of fooling that huge pike; she's heard it all before!

Also, if the water's clear, the chances are that many pike will see you long before you see them, so don't wander along the bank dressed in a brightly-coloured Hawaiian shirt and trousers, silhouetted against the sky-line! Get kitted-out with some camouflaged clothing - it's cheap, hard-wearing and effective and we guarantee that it will transform your spinning success.



How many times have you heard an angler say " This huge pike followed my spinner right up to the bank and then veered away". Well, although it might appear to be casually chasing your lure, first of all the pike will be well aware of your presence and probably the colour of your eyes too, and secondly, if you haven't fooled it into taking your lure by the

time it gets to the bank, the pursuing pike hasn't got many other options other than to veer away!

Compare that situation with one where a camouflaged angler has moved very quietly into the cover of some bank-side bushes or vegetation — if there's a pike or perch, or a big chub, in the vicinity, within one or two careful casts, your spinner or other lure will get grabbed violently before you know it — SUCCESS!

Whenever and wherever safely possible, using waders is another way of improving your lure angling success rate — waders will let you reach parts of your venues with your lures that other non-wading anglers can't reach — and guess where some of those big old wily female pike are? Right!

BASIC SPINNING TACKLE

What basic tackle do you need for successful spinning and all-round lure-fishing fun? Well, later on in this article we have listed a Table of our suggested Basic 15 lures but first you need to decide what type of spinning set-up you think you will like best, either the lure-rod and fixed-spool reel set-up, or a bait-caster rod and multiplier reel.

For beginners, we would strongly recommend that you start-out with a basic spinning rod, balanced with a fixed-spool reel, and most suited to the local venues that you're likely to fish most frequently. If you're likely to be fishing on venues with weeds and reeds in the margins, a 9 ft lure-rod is a good choice of length.

If, on the other hand, you're fishing canals or from a boat, a shorter rod of 7 ft or even less will do. Most importantly, your rod should match the weight range of the lures you plan to cast. A rod with a casting weight range of 10 to 30 gm or 15 to 50 gm is a good starting-point (our apologies for mixing metric and Imperial units!)

There are plenty of good, value-for-money fixed-spool reels available these days. To minimise casting fatigue and maximise casting accuracy, you need to make sure that when your reel is mounted on the rod, that the set-up balances quite nicely when you hold it with one hand at the reel fitting or just in front — long and massively tip-heavy lure-rods are bad news as you'll soon find out if you try to use your pike bait fishing rods for lure fishing !

These days many lure-fishing enthusiasts use braided main-lines these days because braids have many characteristics

that are fortunately very suited to this style of fishing e.g. low stretch and high strength-to-diameter ratio They do have their quirks though and if you're just starting-out spinning, we recommend sticking with a good tough-but-supple mono for the moment — Daiwa Sensor is a good basic monofil line that won't break the Bank! It's got to be one of the best value-for-money lines around. For your spinning with lures weighing say between 10 and 55 gm (1/2 and 2 oz), 15 or 20 lb BS line will do fine — use 30 lb BS if you're fishing snaggy waters.

Of course, you'll need a good wire trace to withstand those rows of sharp pike teeth. Once again, bearing in mind the cost, Drennan's original 7-Strand or their newer Soft-Strand are good choices for starters; 15 lb BS is quite adequate for normal every-day use but use 20 or 30 lb for snaggy waters. There are several other good brands of wire available including nylon- or Kevlar-coated ones, It's just a matter of personal choice. Then, all you need to make some nice strong and inexpensive traces are some crimps, swivels and lure-links. But which spinners and lures to use?



SUCCESSFUL SPINNERS AND OTHER LURES

Spinning and lure-fishing encompass a vast range of lure sizes, types and weights, from miniature ultra-light-weight lures, weighing a few grams at most, at one end of the scale, to massive 15 cm (6 inch) jerk-baits weighing 170 gm (6 oz) or more.



To get the most fun and success from your lure fishing, it's a good idea to build-up a selection of lures that will enable you to tackle almost any venue, situation or depth. In the following Table, we have listed some of our suggestions for lures to cope with most situations:

We have tubulated details of some of the most effective types of lures. For example, a surface plug with its "weed-less" up-turned single hook can be dragged across lily beds in the warm summer months (often with explosive results!) while spinners, minnow plugs and other lures suit all-year-

round mid-water fishing, and heavier and weed-less spoons are best for deeper, cold- water conditions — these are only very broad guidelines of course!

DEPTH	BUOYANCY	LURE TYPE
Surface	Floating Plug	Weedless
Surface	Floating Plug	Crawler
Top-water	Floating Plug	Propellor
Top-water	Shallow Diving Plug	Jointed minnow
Mid-water	Floating Diving Plug	Alphabet
Mid-water	Floating Diving Plug	Jointed minnow
Mid-water	Floating Diving Plug	Jointed minnow
Top & Mid-water	Suspending Plug	Minnow

The sizes and weights of most of the lures in the Table are within the optimal range that we have suggested i.e. 10 to 50 gm. The claimed casting weight ranges of spinning rods can be quite misleading though, because the type of main line used has a major effect especially as far as lighter-weight lures are concerned. The good news is that if and when you migrate from monofilament to braided main-line (as you probably will, in due course), you will find that your lure weight range and casting distances will increase. Also, another little piece of advice: try using a line lubricant whether you're using mono or braid!



Shakespeare's Big "S" plug

BIG "ALPHABET" PLUGS

Some anglers say that lures are like jokes i.e. the old ones are the best, and there's a lot of truth in that! For example, the so-called Big Alphabet plugs have been around for decades, ever since Cotton Cordell developed their Big "O", followed much later by Shakespeare's Big "S"; these Big Alphabet plugs are just as successful today as they ever were — it's the skills of the angler that counts for most!

The Creek Chub Pike is another all-time classic that you must have in your lure-box. It's a floating, diving, wiggling, jointed minnow that has more predators to its credit than most other lures.

Suspending lures are very effective especially for zander and, fortunately, mass-produced versions are now readily.



Hooks and Things

Sadly, the main down-side to mass-produced lures is the poor quality hooks with which some of them are fitted — too large, massive barbs, too blunt, too heavy, too weak and so on! It's a shame and a pain that after paying for a new lure, as often as not, you have to replace the original hook(s) immediately with one(s) that are sharper, lighter-weight, stronger and have smaller whisker barbs. What price fish care though? Eagle Claw are as good basic choice of replacement hooks but as you progress up the lure-fishing ladder, you may want try Drennan, Kamasan, Gamakatsu, Ashima and Partridge. They may not be cheap, but they are very good — what price the most important point of contact with your quarry?! Need we say more!

Fish Care and Essential Accessories

Finally, and most importantly, it's vital to take great care of all pike and other predators. Pike may look tough but out of water they are very sensitive, so please handle them with great care when you're netting and unhooking them. Never put them down on rough dry ground or hold them against your dry clothing for a photo! All fish have a vital protective coating of slime so please take great care not to damage it. Always use a large frame and soft, anti-tangle mesh — we like LureNet's nets best!

If you have to handle fish, always wet your hands first. For small pike, wet grass or weed is OK if you haven't got an unhooking mat. Whenever and wherever possible, we recommend unhooking fish without taking them out of the water, giant specimens excepted of course!



Also, although forceps will usually be sufficient when you're unhooking smallish pike, zander or perch, it's really much better to use a pair of rough strong, long-nosed pliers. An equally strong pair of side-cutters (wire-cutters) is another essential accessory for cutting hooks free if necessary.

COST !

We have been asked to write about the actual cost of lure-fishing tackle and we reckon that compared with other techniques, it just has to be one of the most cost-effective and fish-effective methods there is ! After all, there are very few species that won't grab a lure at one time or another, and pike, perch, zander and chub and trout are always ready for a tussle.

If you shop around, you'll be able to get a perfectly adequate lure-rod and fixed-spool reel set-up for less than £100. If you use a monofilament main line and good quality trace wire, swivels and links, that's not going to cost more than £15. Of course there's the unavoidable cost of the essential pliers, landing-net and perhaps and un-hooking mat too.

As far as your collection of lures is concerned, there's no need to buy everything at once: build-up your collection slowly and that spreads the cost. Looking at the list of suggested lures that we've included in the Table above, you won't be far out if you allow an average of say £5 each. This means that for around £80 you'll have the very best basic selection. You can purchase lures direct from our store on at www.fishing-lures.co.uk

Venues & Clubs

Pike, perch and other predatory species are so widespread that's its beyond the scope and space of this article to comprehensively cover even a fraction of these predators' locations. Your local Tackle Shop and Fishing Club are sure to be able to help, and once you've found that spinning and lure-fishing is to your liking, you may wish to consider joining the Lure Anglers' Society and/or the Pike Anglers Club for more help and information.

Suffice it to say that if you can't find any pike to grab your spinners, ask around, because someone will soon tell you where a "huge" pike snatched a fish from the end of their line. And don't forget those perch, zander and chub and trout !

Although it's virtually impossible guarantee anything, especially when it comes to angling, we are as sure as we can be that if you follow our suggestions, hints and pieces of advice that you will speed your way to spinning success !

