

Snake LAKES...

How To Keep Catching!

England international **Lee Kerry** reveals the tactics that will keep you catching for a full session on snake lakes at this tricky time of year!

There's no denying that snake lakes are some of the most difficult venues to tackle at this time of year. A typical one is anything from 11 to 14 metres wide and if the fish aren't in an aggressive feeding mood, they can be incredibly tricky to crack. You often find that the fish become increasingly difficult to catch as the session progresses. However, with a tailored attack, there are ways to keep catching for a full session.

You join me at Aston Park Fisheries, near Sheffield, where I'm lifting the lid on these tactics to help you master winter snake lakes!

VITAL DECISIONS

There are several key decisions that you need to make when arriving at your swim. The most important is where to fish. At this time of year I feed three swims to begin with. The first one is my bread-and-butter line; an area of the peg where I think I can feed a small amount of bait and get bites to begin



Neatly hooked fish like this show that you've got the feeding perfect!



Butt's Lake at Aston Park has plenty of chunky mirrors that are well worth targeting to boost your weight!

with. I'm choosing to fish this in three feet of water, around a foot off the far bank at 13 metres. However, I'm positioning this swim slightly to my left.

I've positioned this swim here because I feel that the majority of the fish will live to my right in the wider bay, with lots of cover from the far-bank sedges. However, by starting to the left I should be able to catch any mug fish that want to feed in the early stages, before I move towards the right as the session progresses and hopefully keep catching.

The second is my big-fish swim. There are sometimes bonus carp to be had on snake lakes, although these are often very wise and difficult to catch in winter. I like to target them in the deepest water down the central track. Rather than fishing straight in front, though, I fish as far away from myself as possible. These clever fish shy away from any disturbance, so by feeding this swim at 13 metres, or sometimes even longer, there's a lot more chance of them settling.

The third is what I class as my bagging swim. Occasionally you will have a red-letter day, when the fish break all the laws and feed well when you don't expect them to. For this reason, I always feed a very positive swim. This is usually at close range and loose fed by hand. This allows me to be positive and also very quick if the fish do arrive.

THE MENU

Baits couldn't be simpler, or much cheaper! On the main swim, in three feet of water, maggots and micro pellets bring very consistent results. It pays to be very cautious how you feed them, though. Always err on the side of caution to begin with! I'll kick-start the swim by feeding around 30 micro pellets with six maggots in a Cad Pot with a sprinkle lid. Using the right pole-mounted pot with a sprinkle lid can make a big difference in winter, because the last thing you want is to spill any bait particles in an area of the swim where you don't want to fish.

For my bonus-fish swim I simply feed 10 grains of corn with my large pole pot. I'll do this every 30 minutes for the first 90 minutes of a session and give these bigger fish a >>>

After an initial munch, the fish in snake lakes often back away from anglers. However, Lee has learnt how to cope with this to keep catching!

ANGLER FILE

LEE KERRY
Age: 32
Lives: Leeds
Sponsors: Preston Innovations, Sonubaits
Pole: Preston Innovations One XS

VENUE FILE

ASTON PARK FISHERIES
Location: Aston Way, Sheffield S26 5EP
Day tickets: £6, concessions £5
Contact: 07743 845737
Web: www.astonparkfisheries.co.uk

chance to settle. The reason I only feed corn is because I can be confident that smaller fish won't eat it. It's highly visible and very selective in winter. If I drop on this swim I want it to produce bonus fish. Be mindful that you might not get a bite here until the final hour, but keep feeding! When you snare one it will be well worth the wait!

My close 'bagging' line is nearly always fed with maggots. These attract all kinds of fish, from small roach and other silvers, to big carp. Generally, I'll throw in 20 maggots every five minutes. A good sign on this swim is a run of early silver fish. If you catch these, the chances are that the F1s and carp will turn up later. Again, it's essential that you keep feeding!



THE LIGHT WAY

I first feed my bonus-fish swim with 10 grains of corn and then throw my first lot of maggots on my 5m swim. However, I start by fishing on my main swim across, accurately sprinkling in my feed in line with a light-coloured sedge on the far bank.

After a minute or so I get my first indication, before hooking the first fish on my double-maggot hook bait – a pristine little mirror carp of around 1lb. Interestingly, I'm fishing a very light No6 elastic. This is a big edge at this time of year, especially when you're fishing in shallow water like this.

When you hook a fish it swims straight out of the swim with minimal disturbance.

Because the fish can't go powering off into the middle of lakes, they tend to simply plod around in the central track. You can then apply a little extra pressure using a Pulla Kit if you feel the need. I definitely feel like I land more fish by using these mega-light elastics. Another advantage is that you can fish super-light. I'm using a 0.09mm fluorocarbon hooklength.

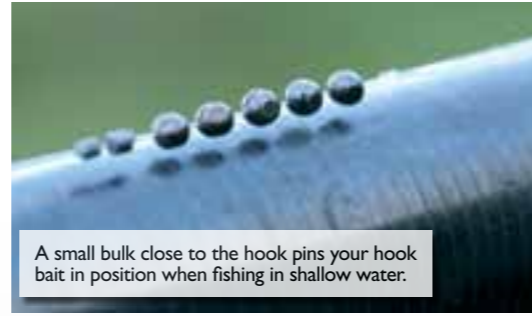
My rig is also very simple, consisting of a 4x14 float on 0.13mm Relfo Power main line. Shotting is a bulk of No9 shot just above my 6in hooklength. This is positive and stable, meaning I can accurately place and hold my hook bait in the tight feed area. Again, this small point is essential in winter. If you're only having an occasional fish move over the feed, you need to maximise your chances of catching it by presenting your hook bait right where it's feeding.

BRANCHING OUT

I've enjoyed a great early run of fish, which have instantly homed in on my feed. However, after an hour bites quickly subside. This is exactly what I expected to happen but I'm certain that I'll be able to keep fish coming by starting new swims further to the right, where I believe the fish will naturally be hiding out.



Keep your bait tray simple, and focus on finding the fish!

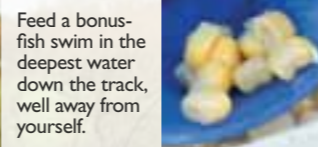


A small bulk close to the hook pins your hook bait in position when fishing in shallow water.

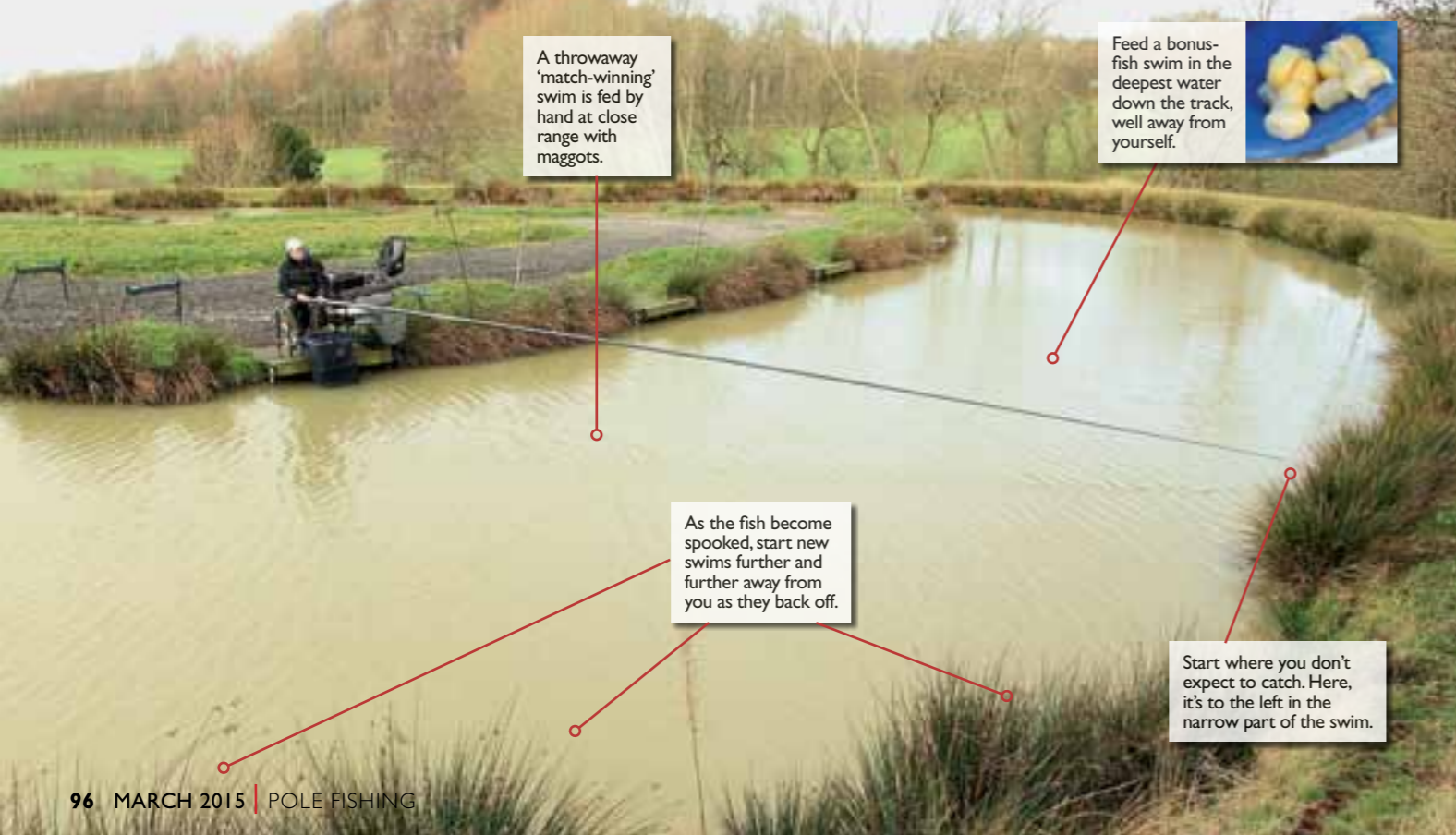


Light No6 Preston Slip elastic ensures you land everything you hook on commercials!

Slipping on a plummet, I'm finding another area to fish in this same depth of water but this time slightly to my right. Again I have picked a far-bank marker to line up against, and actually rattled in 30 micro pellets and another six maggots in my chosen area while I have still got the plummet attached.



Feed a bonus-fish swim in the deepest water down the track, well away from yourself.



A throwaway 'match-winning' swim is fed by hand at close range with maggots.

As the fish become spooked, start new swims further and further away from you as they back off.

Start where you don't expect to catch. Here, it's to the left in the narrow part of the swim.



F1s tend to hang out in the widest areas on snake lakes, where there's far-bank cover.



A hard-earned catch thanks to a simple, but strategic, snake-lake attack!

For the next hour I enjoy another good run of small carp, catching an odd F1 among them in this new swim. Slowly but surely, however, bites dry up. All the time, I've been feeding my maggot swim by hand and my bonus-fish swim with corn. Before creating a new swim even further to the right, I'm having a quick look on these lines.

Following a brief try short with maggots, it soon becomes obvious that it's too cold for this positively fed swim to come good. However, when I try the corn swim I get several indications, before hooking what feels like a bigger fish. With bigger carp in mind, I'm using a little heavier gear on this line

– a No8 Dura Hollow elastic and a 0.11mm hooklength. The culprit is a beautiful fully scaled mirror of around 3lb. No more bites are forthcoming but I'm still feeding this swim with 10 grains of corn in a big pot because there's a chance of stealing another bonus fish later.

THE FINAL HOP

Shipping back across, it's obvious that the fish have moved again. To try and keep them coming for the final part of the session, I've added my dolly butt and started a new swim even further to my right, but in the same depth of water that I've been catching. This is an area that looks really fishy – a wider part of the lake with an abundance of far-bank cover.

Tapping in the same micro pellet and maggot feed, I'm into a fish instantly, which supports the fact that



Start by feeding small amounts of maggots and micro pellets with a sprinkle Cad Pot.

I thought the fish would be here already. A good run of small carp from this area of the swim keeps me occupied for the final hour, before I can't resist having another sneaky look on the corn swim! In the final 10 minutes I manage two chunkier mirrors before we call it a day.

Even in the coldest conditions, there are always ways of keeping bites coming. On some days you'll simply catch from the initial area that you feed for a full session. I enjoyed a great early run of fish from my starting swim. However, if bites do dry up, don't be afraid of searching for fish by opening up new swims in more favourable-looking areas. And remember, there's always a chance of that bonus fish on the secret corn swim. Give my tactics a try on a snake lake near you, you're sure to reap the rewards! ■



Lee starts off by fishing areas where he doesn't expect the fish to live, before moving to the more favourable areas of the swim later.