The ONLY publication DEDICATED to anglers in the SOUTH EAST

FRESHWATER INFORMER

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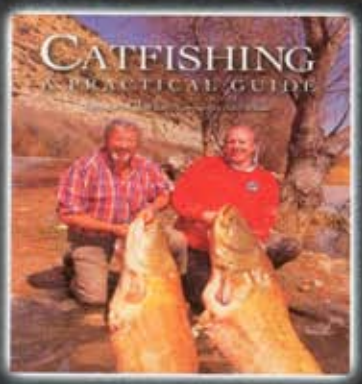


Simon Clarke on Spring catfishing and his new book, Catfishing: a

Neil Wayte targets the finicky zander of Old Bury Hill Fishery

Second part of James Harrisons Spod guide. He gives you the tricks

All the latest regional news and catch reports from the

Zander Fishing

By Neil Wayte

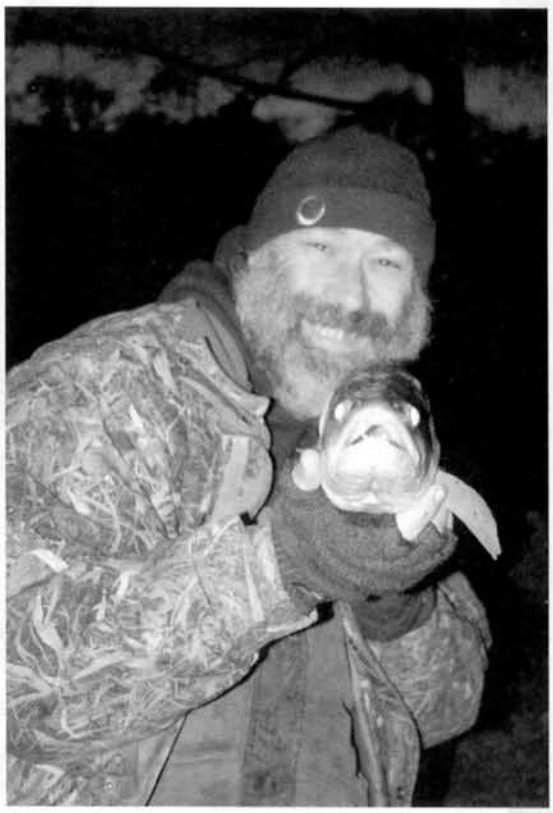
Years ago the zander was the scourge of the waterways and the doom mongers said they would eat all of the silver fish in the venues. Culls were organised and zander were killed in the thousands. Fortunately things have calmed down and the predictions of gloom and doom have not proved to be true.

Even though the zander is not native to our shores nature has found a balance and things have settled down.

Initially the main population of zander were in the midlands and the fens but they are now slowly spreading into the Freshwater Informer region. There are populations in both the Thames and the Lea and both venues are now producing double figure fish. Those with local information are catching fish but for most of us travelling to these venues it will be hit and miss. Fortunately we have a venue in our area that gives all of us the chance of targeting these fantastic looking fish. In the main lake at Bury Hill near Dorking there is a thriving population of zander and not only that lurking in the depths of the lake there are some true monsters. Just recently a fish of 14lb featured in the national angling press and venue owner David de Vere believes that a fish of over 16lb is present and could be caught by some lucky angler.

Even though they are savage looking predators zander can be very finicky feeders and despite the fact that some do get caught on strong pike tackle you need to refine your tackle to get the best from zander. There is no need for 3lb test curve pike rods and strong barbel rods of 1 3/4lb to 2lb test curves are far better to enjoy zander fishing. Rods of this size will be strong enough to cast out small fish baits and will allow you to enjoy playing zander, with bigger rods you will just winch them in. Main lines of 12lb breaking strain are strong enough and a medium sized fixed spool reel will cope.

The area we need to pay most attention to is the end tackle or rigs. Once again there is no need for overly strong wire traces and a breaking strain of 12lb will be fine. If you can find a supple variety such as Drennan 12lb Pike Wire or Middy's Pike System 15lb stainless they will be fine. Also with these two variety's you will find that you can twist or knot the traces rather than use crimp your traces. For my zander fishing I use just two types of traces, one is used for whole fish baits and the other is used for fishing fish heads. When I'm using whole fish baits which are usually small roach or bream I use a size 8 barbless treble



and a barbless size 6 Insizor. The treble is fixed on the bottom of the trace and the single is placed above it held in position by a couple of twists of the trace so that I can adjust the distance between the two hooks. To mount the bait all you do it put the single through the top lip of the bait fish and the treble goes into the flank.

As I mentioned earlier zander can be very finicky feeders and will often drop baits mounted as above so most of my fishing is done using just a single size 6 Insizor on the end of the trace. Small baits can then just be hooked through the top lip. Even then you may experience short sharp lifts of the bobbin that stop abruptly, this is the zander picking up the baits and then dropping them very quickly.
The best way to remedy this is to just cut the head off the bait fish and mount that on the single hook.

It is possible to float fish your dead baits but I much prefer to use a simple running ledger rig set up. Try to cut the resistance down to a minimum by using a large bore ledger bead such as a John Roberts ledger bead. This is put on the main line above a rubber bead to protect the knot and then attached to the swivel on the end of the wire trace. My traces are made up roughly 18 inches long. All this is anchored to the bottom with a bomb of 1 1/2oz. The reason for a weight of this size is two fold, firstly it will give you the weight to cast the bait out and secondly it is heavy

more resistance which will probably cause it to drop the bait.

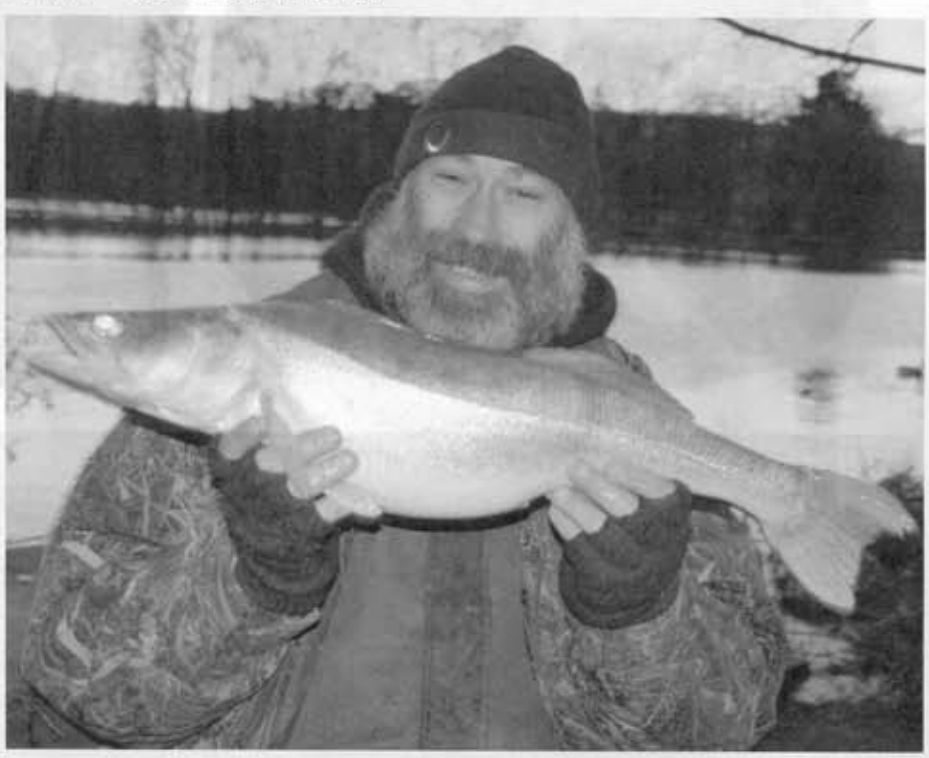
For bite indication I like to use both buzzers and a bobbin. This gives you both audible and visual warning of a bite. My bobbins are the very light clear Gardner Bugs which are fished using 30cm chains. I like to use single bank sticks for each rod that are 2 foot long because that gives me the ability to point the rods directly in the direction of the bait which once again cuts down resistance and I can fish the bobbins on long drops so that a taking zander has a couple of foot of slack line to draw tight before it feels any resistance from the line being taken.

If it's not to windy then I like to clip my line into line clips positioned directly above the reels and to leave the bail arm open so that line can be taken freely once it has come out of the line clip. If however it is windy and the line is being blown off the open spool I will then fish off the bait runner but with the bait runner set at it's lightest setting so there is very little resistance to a fish taking line.

Bites are signalled by steady lifts of the bobbin and I always strike as soon as the bobbin is pulled up tight. I never leave the fish to run because I'm always worried about deep hooking a zander and would much rather miss the odd take rather than deep hook a fish.

Even though zander are savage looking predators they are very fragile and will not tolerate rough handling or deep hooking so please treat them with respect.

The best conditions for zander seem to those mild over cast days that we often get in winter but in truth it is possible to catch them in most conditions. If the light levels are low during the day because of cloud cover they can feed happily through the day. If it's been bright then expect action in the evening as the light levels start to drop.

You can if you prefer pick your swim and cast out and sit back and wait for a bite but I much prefer to work a swim to try to get a take. Start by cast out as far as you can and leave the bait in position for 20 minutes or so and then wind it back 6 foot or so. Repeat this all the way back to the bank so that you are covering a lot of water. I use two rods all of the time and by working a fan like pattern I recast at a different angle each time I have twitched the bait back to the bank.

If you think of the water in front of your swim as half of a clock face then cast the left hand rod out at 10 o'clock and the right hand rod 2 o'clock, when you have twitched the baits back close to the bank recast each one at 11 o'clock and 1 o'clock respectively and then finally both out towards 12 o'clock.
If this pattern fails to produce a take then move swims and repeat it again. By doing this you will cover a lot of water during the day a and greatly increase your chances of catching.