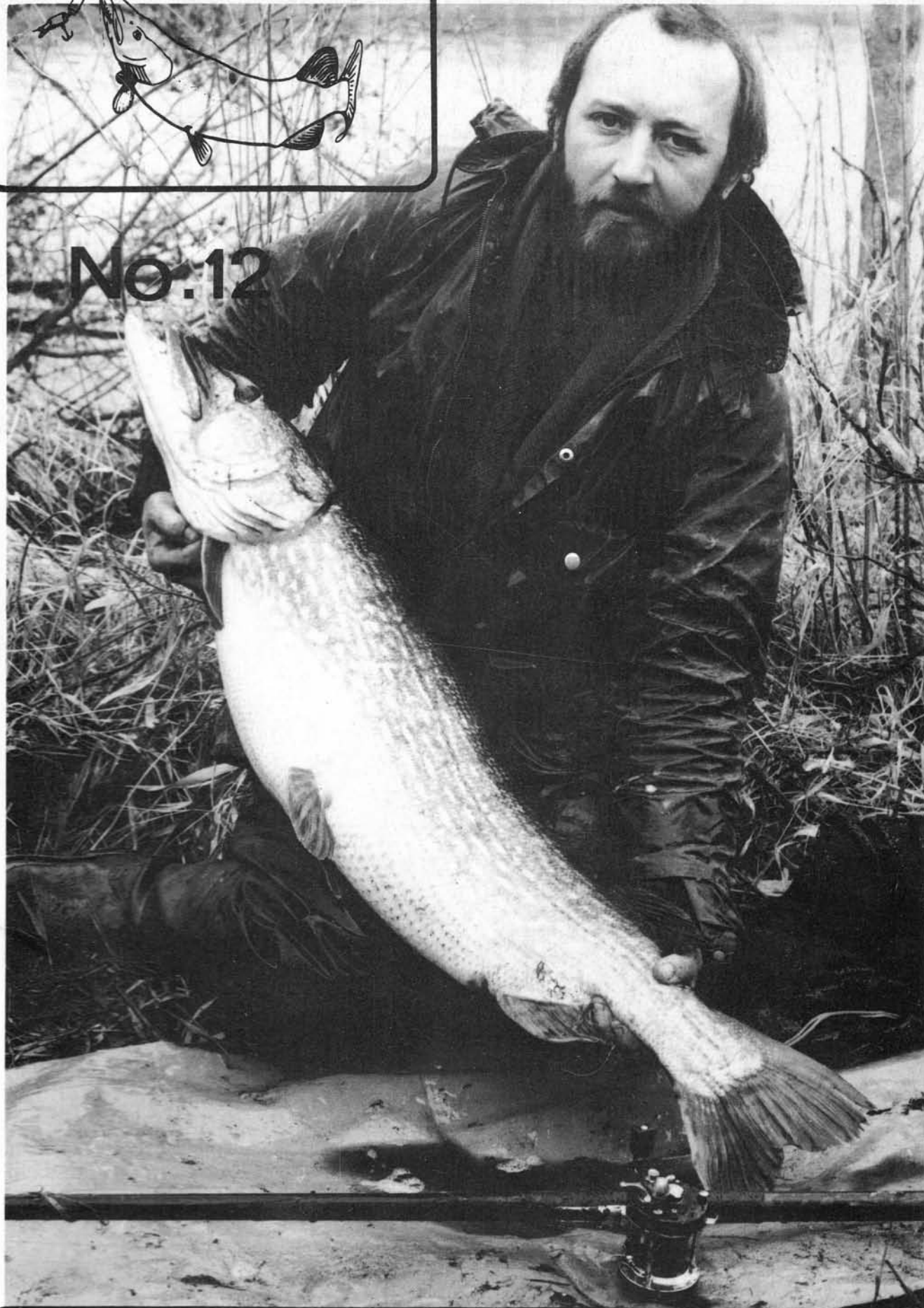


No. 12



PIKE ANGLERS' CLUB

C O N T E N T S

	Page no.
Editorial	1
The danger of pike abuse within P.A.C. by M. Bannister	3
New DB sleeping bag coverall	4
Reviews	5
Piking tackle by P. Green	6
National Anglers' Council coaching courses by P. Armstrong	7
Article from Canada	9
National Anglers' Council	12
A step back into the past by R. Walker ..	15
More on Downriggers by C. Bowman	17
Canal pike by P. Hamilton	19
Blenheim Lake by D. Allen	22
Comments by M. Gay	25
Oldest known Esox by A. Falkner	28
My First 20 lb pike by T. Dilworth	30

* * * * *

COVER

John Watson with his fish of 31 lbs 4 oz, measuring 44 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 23 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. 7.2.81, paternostered roach livebait Norfolk Broads.

OTHER PHOTOGRAPHS

1. George Higgins (Northern Ireland) with fish of 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.
2. Larry Nixon with 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounder from Northern Ireland.
3. Chris Bowmans downrigger (see article) held by his remarkably feminine hands. Who's up on the ceiling Chris?
4. Jim Mathews & Baz Charlesworth (Sheffield) unhooking a low double on the Middlelevel, on a day when all their regions members were present.
5. Gordon Burton with an eight pounder from 22 feet on livebait. We accept that you didn't give it the hump Gord, but who split its dorsal? (Sorry it looks a well mended split.)

E D I T O R I A L

Quite a number of members have asked about the P.A.C.'s predecessor, the old Pike Society, what it was, and what happened to it. We had hoped that Eric Hodgson would write in the magazine about it, and perhaps he will, but in the meantime we can tell you a few basics because it was important at the time and P.A.C. would never have succeeded without the groundwork put in earlier by P.S. officials.

The Pike Society ran from 1972-1977. Its inaugural meeting was on 16th April 1972 at Melton Mowbray. It was a packed meeting and included members of the present P.A.C. committee, Fred Buller, and many other stalwarts of piking. In 1977 the P.S. was taken over by the present P.A.C. and structured quite differently (we'll republish the 1977 circulars, which outline the changes, in a future magazine). Fred Buller was the first P.S. President, the second (we think) being B.R. who was elected in 1975 when Fred's other commitments increased. As far as we can remember only these two were Presidents of P.S. The Secretary throughout was Eric Hodgson, but the Treasurer's position, originally Mike Hill, was later on Peter Tasker. Other committee members were elected, including a scientific secretary.

The membership of the P.S. was always a disappointment. On 1st May 1972 there were 73 members paying £2 p.a. Shortly after that the membership rose (we believe we remember correctly) to just over 100, but by 1973/74 had already dropped to 52. In the final throes, just before P.A.C. started, there were only 15 paid-up members. So it is a story of initial enthusiasm followed by gradual decline (P.A.C., in contrast, has grown differently with the S.M.'s gradually increasing to the present number of around 300 and the RAs gradually to 87 and AMs within two years to 900+ and later to over 1,000).

What went wrong with the P.S. ? We can never be 100% certain, but what is clear is that some of the mistakes made were recognised by the officers of the time which was why Eric Hodgson invited the present team to take over and try to put things right. Secondly it is clear that the old committee worked very very hard, particularly Eric, and particularly behind the scenes. It probably failed in the following respects : 1) The committee members were too widespread nationally to achieve rapid and regular contact, and frequent meetings on such a basis just weren't possible; 2) the membership were not kept fully and regularly informed by circulars and Bulletins (the P.S. bulletin was little larger than one of our larger circulars and between 1972 and June 1978 we only had 6 on our files. All the documents added together for 5 years only added up to the first P.A.C. year's output; 3) there were no differing categories of membership and we know from talking to many of the serious

pikers of the day that they dropped out because the meetings were inundated with beginners. Without what we now call our S.Ms no pike society can survive : without what we now call our R.Os beginners cannot be adequately catered for.

You can see now why we opted in P.A.C. for a centrally located benevolent dictatorship and why we worked hard to communicate with the membership through increased circulars and magazines (see mag. 9 editorial for a summary of these efforts). Clearly too the S.M., A.M. and Regional Association system (based upon CENTRES by and large) actually works and is fair to each category of membership, whether loner S.M. or newcomer A.M.

It must be clear to you that P.A.C. is a going concern, financially sound, and of gradually and steadily increasing membership and of gradually and steadily increasing strength. We think it is efficiently run, and certainly the books and files could be run by a child of ten. Nevertheless it will, in 1981, need new helmsmen to steer us in new directions; to maintain the input of originality; try out new ideas; and to avoid the pitfalls of a rutted pathway.

The present P.A.C. "committee" will, at some time during 1981, change to being a trouble-shooting team, going places on behalf of P.A.C. and its member R.As to fight battles on behalf of pike and pike fishing, but under no circumstances will they continue to run P.A.C. after 1981. New blood is that important. You now have a good club, grown out of the old and ailing Pike Society, and it is up to you, the membership, to improve it as it now needs improving.

* * * * *

THE DANGER OF PIKE ABUSE WITHIN
P.A.C.

by

Malcolm Bannister

I have just read the issue of P.A.C. mag. no. 11. Dave Phillips' letter was first class. His views just about sum up my feelings on the points raised in his letter. I myself used to get quickly roused when I saw pike mistreated, but I soon found out that the subtle method works better. Anyway now I am a R.O. I can't go around having punch-ups with every pike killer I come across. Joe Congreve's letter on pike matches was very disturbing. He said many anglers could not unhook their pike, gorge baiting was the order of the day, with the emphasis on leaving runs to make sure of hooking the pike. He then went on to say that many of the offending anglers were members of P.A.C. We all know that pike matches can attract the very worst types of pike angler, the person that goes pike fishing perhaps once or twice a year, and gets bitten off or gut hooks nearly every pike he catches. But this should not include anybody who wears a P.A.C. badge. I consider the most important job of the R.O. and his Senior Members is the education of the A.Ms on bite indication, quick striking, unhooking, and pike handling. These points must be shown to the A.Ms as soon as possible. Now that P.A.C. has over 1,000 A.M. members it is possible that we could be doing more harm than good, if the A.Ms are not given quick and good instruction on pike fishing.

ENJOY YOUR PIKE FISHING by

Malcolm Bannister

Being an R.O. of P.A.C. and fishing at a variety of waters round the country, I have noticed over the past few years, an increasing band of pike anglers who unless they catch big doubles 15 lb plus don't seem to enjoy catching pike. One angler I saw after playing a pike for 15 minutes, threw his rod down in disgust when the pike only weighed about 13 lb. This pike angler had caught a handful of double figure pike in his pike fishing career. Living in the North West as I do means I have to travel in search of Big Pike, but I still get maximum enjoyment out of my local waters, even if my chances of catching big pike are very slim indeed.

* * * * *

NEW! - 'DB SLEEPING BAG COVERALL'

Waterproof, with deep inner wader/mud protecting pocket.

Introductory price £16.50 including p & p

The propose of this product is that after the coverall is fitted L/H or R/H onto a bedchair and a sleeping bag/quilt/blankets are fitted into the coverall/inner deep base pocket; one can then get into the sleeping bag/coverall with waders/boots on - the mud/damp going onto inner pocket's waterproof material, not onto the sleeping bag. Also protects bedchair from rain and mud.

SPECIFICATION : Material - 4 oz PU/Sil coated nylon (per sample) 75" long x 28" wide approx. Full length nylon zip with additional base puller ro regulate inner air flow/temp, and to poke feet out at base if required. 2 ft deep, full width inner bag protecting pocket.

Recommendations for use: 1) For anchoring coverall to bedchair use either blanket pins for fully material covered types, or for bedchairs with sprung/corded suspension all round, fit ties at top/bottom and edges with an anchoring button sewn through to inner surface of coverall. (Decide first which side you want to get into/out of bag - L/H or R/H before fitting ties). Make sure zip is kept as straight as possible for easy operation. Proper fitting will ensure bedchair stays dry if used in the open with a broolly covering your upper body-head area; e.g. set up alongside your rods.

2) Open out coverall completely and fit fully open bag/blankers with base end in inner pocket. Use blanket pins, press studs or other suitable fittings to anchor bag into inner coverall pocket and along inner edges of long side zip.

3) Close up coverall/bad with main double tag puller and it is ready for use. Use base puller as in specification details. For prolonged use, air bag daily to avoid build up of internal damp from body condensation. Spray seams/stitching annually with Grangers Nyloproof.

Available only from the maker. Cheques, P/Os, Registered Cash made out to :

D.E. BARNES,
21 NORTHDOWN PARK ROAD,
MARGATE, KENT CT9 2ND
Telephone No. Thanet (0843) 26740

A PERSONAL SERVICE Free advice gladly given on any personal items you may wish to make yourself or subject to viability I can quote a price.

60" wide sample material available by the yard/metre. First grade quality only, any length. Write or phone for up-to-date price.

REVIEW

It is amazing that no one got round to producing one of these before : and typical of Barnes that he did. Everything Dave says in the opening paragraph is true, and if you can't understand his instructions the item itself is easy to fit up. This is a first class product, extremely useful and a very original, neat, and simple idea. Dave Barnes is increasingly producing exactly what the angler wants, to exceedingly high quality and design, and at fair prices.

B.R.

REVIEW : VALLEY DISGORGERS
('phone Marlow 72816)

We received two of these, one largish and presumably intended for pike, and a smaller version suitable for chub etc. They are superbly finished and ingenious, and look rather like a small skeletal gun with a trigger-like hand grip. They have a normal V-ended disgorger against which pulls a spring loaded U-shaped wire. So you loop the U over the line, run the V down to the hook bend, pull the U against the V, push the whole lot down, and the hook comes free. The larger size is a little too short for piking and really only works well with single hooks or one treble. However, if it was a little larger (say 2") then it would certainly be a better tool than the cut-away-plus-V disgorger used by Ray Webb. I'd still settle for good forceps as superior to both. For other fish, however the smaller version could be better than forceps where the hook is well back in a chub or tench. Other anglers may find them better than we did and they are so well made and designed that we'd strongly recommend you to try them rather than take our word.

B.R.

PIKING TACKLE

by Paul Green

The more I read other anglers' points of view about tackle they recommend for piking on Loch Lomond, the more I draw a conclusion that either these anglers just don't realise the strength of their standard piking tackle (such as the usual S/U carp rods with a test curve of 2 - 2½ lbs) or they are afraid to put pressure on the fish by really bending the rod into it. In other words they just don't know how to play a fish.

Having fished Lomond on a number of occasions - the first was with the founder of the original Pike Society, Eric Hodgson, and in fact the first fish I caught there was a double of twelve pounds. I wasn't, and I don't think I ever will be, over-impressed with the fighting qualities of these fish. Because, in Lough Allen the wild Irish pike are equally as strong, if not stronger, than the Lomond fish.

So what? you may say (especially Gordon Burton and Maurice Titcombe). Well having fished Lough Allen and caught a fair number of good pike on standard 1 ¾ lb - 2½ lb T.C. piking tackle I have never had any real problems with controlling fish, for one simple reason. I really bend the rod into fish to let them know that something more than the herring, trout, perch or spoon is pulling it around. In other words, by keeping the line - 11 lb - 13 lb sylcast - really tight and direct into the fish. I can certainly say that you will lose a lot more fish by playing them too gently than by playing them with a lot of pressure on them.

This I learnt on the Cork Blackwater where over the past eight years I have caught more than four hundred salmon on tackle from 9 ft trout flyrods (salmon to 21 lb on this outfit), 9 ft spinning rod, and rods I use for my piking to name a few. But back to Lough Allen. Well, one of the most successful anglers on the Lough is fellow N. Ireland Pike Society member and S.M. of the P.A.C. Roy Smith who, having fished, L. Allen for the past ten years or so and has taken something in the region of 30 twenties, plus one of 31½, uses an eight and a half foot Milbro spinning rod, and like myself, has never really had any serious problems with the fish, hence the reason why I am so amazed at the standard of tackle that some of our fellow senior members recommend!

Maybe if Maurice or Gordon would try to realise how easy it is to put almost as much pressure on a fish by using a good S/U rod (my favourite piking rod is still an "Olivers" 10 ft S/U job) as it is with the Abu 484s or 464s that Maurice recommends, he'll enjoy fishing a lot more.

One last point as regards Lomond. It is undoubtedly a highly over-rated water. It just hasn't produced the fish that one might expect from a water that is so often talked about. L. Allen produced seven thirty pounders in 1979 with a twenty to nearly every member of the N.I. Pike Society who visited the Lough. My first day's piking of the 79-80 piking season produced four fish to my rod going 11, 15, 15½, 22½. All falling to trout and herring deadbaits.

So, as this game of ours is all for the fun and sport of it, maybe if some "nervous" anglers would realise what every standard piking rod is capable of doing, certainly enough to subdue any freshwater fish that swims in the British Isles, maybe they would enjoy their sport a lot more.

Editors: We do wonder if the very pleasing results on Lomond just recently have resulted from more anglers (including Scots) returning pike to the water. This may just give them the chance to grow up a little as their growth rate suggests they should.

* * * * *

National Anglers Council Coaching Courses

by Paul Armstrong

I recently attended one of these courses in Lancashire and would strongly recommend that if the chance arises, as many members as possible try to get on one.

The courses last for a weekend, are usually residential, and facilities and meals are superb. The course shows you the correct way to teach a group any method of angling. In our case with various teach-ins happening in all R.As it is a must.

The course is not easy. I would not kid anybody it was. A quick run down on what happens is as follows :- Friday night everyone meets and has a good drink, whilst getting to know one another. On Saturday, the whole day is spent in class receiving instruction on the various teaching methods and aids. Saturday night the students have to prepare a twenty minute lecture for the Sunday, and this is the crux of the matter. To get a pass the student has

to give a twenty minute lecture to his fellow students, instructors and two assessors, and believe me it can be rather nerve racking. But each person should know his own capabilities, so it is entirely up to the individual.

Anyone requiring information write to :

Peter Tombleson,
National Anglers Council
5 Cowgate
Peterborough
PE1 1LR

Editors: Peter Tombleson is an old friend of many of us and we are sure he would welcome a personal letter and would seek to dispel any disquiet or reticence members may have.

* * * * *



ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM
DEPARTMENT OF ICHTHYOLOGY
AND HERPETOLOGY

100 Queen's Park
TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA M5S 2C6
Telephone (416) 978-8526
Cables: ROMA-Toronto

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON THE PIKE
ESOX LUCIUS LINNAEUS

This department has long been a centre for work on species in the suborder Esocoidei. An outgrowth of this work is a comprehensive file of reprints, and a larger file of references on those species. There has been an increasing number of requests for access to that file. A recognition that the references accumulated over 20 years should be made available to others.

As a result a start was made on a series of annotated bibliographies. Two of these are available now (from Publications Services ROM) as follows:

Crossman, E.J. and G.E. Lewis. 1973. An annotated bibliography of the chain pickerel, Esox niger (Osteichthyes: Salmoniformes) Roy. Ont. Mus., Life Sci. Pubn., 81 pp.

Crossman, E.J. and C.D. Goodchild. 1978. An annotated bibliography of the muskellunge, Esox masquinongy (Osteichthyes: Salmoniformes). Roy. Ont. Mus., Life Sci. Misc. Pubn., 131 pp.

The present project is the most ambitious of all. A bibliography for the pike. Dr. J.M. Casselman of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and a Research Associate of this department, is participating in this one.

Presently we have a file of 200 - 300 reprints and an index of approximately 2000 + references.

We seek your help in making this bibliography as useful as possible. It is to include both scientific and popular articles and to cover the world distribution.

We request your help by asking that you send

1. Reprints or photocopies of papers and articles on Esox lucius.
2. Complete references to articles on Esox lucius.
3. Knowledge of individuals or organizations who might be able to help as above, or by supplying library listings, computer listings, etc.
4. References to articles containing extensive numbers of references to this species or to partial bibliographies on E. lucius.

We are prepared to cope with the duplication which will result in this way. Sadly the file is too large to be typed for sending to potential participants. We are aware that if we could send the complete file participants could of course check it and then return only references we did not already have, thus saving themselves time.

Dr. E.J. Crossman
Curator

Dr. J.M. Casselman
Research Associate

MUSKIE FISHING

ST. LAWRENCE RIVER
THOUSAND ISLANDS
NEW YORK

-1890-



PRESERVE THIS GREAT RESOURCE

"Release Me!" is not only a contemporary song popularized by one Engelbert Humperdink; it is the plaintive plea of all non-trophy sized *Esox Masquinongies* (Muskellonge, to you) who would like to dream of realizing their own potentials and destinies by becoming trophy-size themselves some day.

The Cape Vincent Chamber of Commerce sponsors the MUSKIE RELEASE PROGRAM in our area to help ensure this sport for the increasing number of Muskie fishermen in this generation and the next.



GATEWAY TO THE BLACK BASS AND MUSKIE FISHING GROUNDS

(Excerpts from "Summer Tours" - 1891 - published by Rome, Watertown and Ogdensburg Railroad Co., Lessee)

Julian Ralph says "If all mankind could be made conversant with the attractions of a summer vacation at Cape Vincent, the place would become a great city. The fishing in the vicinity of Cape Vincent and Carleton Island is very good and of easy access, the fishing boats and guides being among the best in the Thousand Islands region."

When the fisherman launches his boat at the public launching ramp, he is on the fishing waters - no 4 mile trip to reach the Bass and Muskie waters.

The sparkling blue waters of Lake Ontario provide the finest Small Mouth Black Bass fishing in our nation. Fish with river shiners, crabs or worms, cast or troll with artificial lures and hook a 2-4 pound Black Bass.

For the Muskie "fanatic", use the trolling techniques with monel or monofilament line and varied plugs or spoons.

The visiting Mid-West fisherman will find the weed beds and rock shoals are there to be plugged for the mighty fresh water "King of the River".

Good luck, good fishing and we know you will return!

Courtesy of
THE CAPE VINCENT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
member



NATIONAL ANGLERS' COUNCIL

FISHMONGERS' HALL,
LONDON, EC4R 9EL

TELEPHONE : 01-626 3531

Please reply to :
C. Landells



ALL COMMUNICATIONS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO
THE SECRETARY

5, COWGATE,
PETERBOROUGH,

PE1 1LR

TELEPHONE : PETERBOROUGH (0733) 54084

CHARLES LANDELLS
29 LOOE GARDENS
BARKINGSIDE
ILFORD
TEL: 01-551 0477

12th February 1981

P.A.C. ANGLING INSTRUCTION

Dear Barrie,

I read the last issue of the magazine with great interest and came to the conclusion that with so many members keen to see the protection and well being of pike that many of them may well be interested in becoming qualified N.A.C. Instructors ?

With the 'teach-ins' already being held I would like to see the members become involved in the N.A.C. scheme. It is not necessary for any potential instructor to teach all aspects of angling. Should they be specialist pike anglers then that is the area in which they could pass on their knowledge. The assessment course held by the N.A.C. accept that the angler should know the subject he wishes to teach and they are aimed at teaching the art of teaching using visual aids and other skills.

Should any members of the P.A.C. be interested in becoming involved I would be pleased to give further details of the scheme.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Landells

Education & Development Officer
Greater London & South East.

B. Rickards, Esq.,
Pike Anglers Club.

NAC/A.ED. 1

NATIONAL ANGLERS' COUNCIL

APPLICATION FOR ANGLING INSTRUCTOR

IN SEA _____ COARSE _____ GAME _____

FULL NAME _____ AGE _____

FULL ADDRESS _____ TEL. NO. (HOME) _____

_____ TEL. NO. (WORK) _____

_____ OWN TRANSPORT _____

OCCUPATION _____ SELF EMPLOYED _____

ANGLING EXPERIENCE (Brief details) _____

ANGLING ADMINISTRATION EXPERIENCE _____

CLUB/ORGANISATION _____ POSITION HELD _____ DATE _____

CLUB/ORGANISATION _____ POSITION HELD _____ DATE _____

CLUB/ORGANISATION _____ POSITION HELD _____ DATE _____

TEACHING/INSTRUCTING EXPERIENCE (Any subject) _____

AVAILABILITY - DAYTIME - MON ___ : TUES ___ : WED ___ : THURS ___ : FRI ___ : SAT ___ : SUN ___ :
 (Please tick) - EVENING - MON ___ : TUES ___ : WED ___ : THURS ___ : FRI ___ : SAT ___ : SUN ___ :

ALSO FREQUENCY WEEKLY ___ : MONTHLY ___ : BI-MONTHLY ___ : OCCASIONALLY ___ :

WHERE DO YOU SEE THE NEED FOR INSTRUCTION IN YOUR LOCALITY? _____

A STEP BACK INTO THE PAST

by Richard Walker

When I was a small boy, the repeated advice I had from my grandfather when a pike took a live or dead bait was this : "Never you offer to strike a pike, my boy, till that's had it for ten minutes - by your watch!"

This is very sound advice. We read a lot about the pros and cons of different kind of end tackle for pike, and how it is necessary to have very sharp hooks to penetrate the pike's bony mouth; but you can forget all that if you follow grandfather's advice, because almost any fair-sized hook will secure a safe hold. So when you get a run, give the fish plenty of time to "pouch" as the Victorians put it.

There is a fringe benefit; you don't need to strike and thus risk breaking your line or even your rod. All you have to do, once the bait has been well and truly swallowed, is wind in.

I know this procedure has been criticised on the grounds that the hooks are difficult to remove and that **pain** may be caused to the pike in the process. In fact, the hooks can be removed without the pike feeling any pain whatever, once the proper procedure has been learned and practiced.

The main implement needed is a 38 oz baseball bat. Its use should be learned by practising with a sandbag, or the neighbour's Alsatian. If you use a sandbag, make a mark on it to act as a target. With the Alsatian, the point of aim is equidistant between the ears.

Raise the bat to the vertical, then let it drift slowly back another forty-five degrees. Now swing it over and down, as fast as possible, in such a manner that at the moment it strikes the aiming-point, both your feet leave the ground.

Once you have acquired the requisite accuracy and timing, you can apply it to pike, with which the point of aim is one corner of an equilateral triangle whose other two corners are at the centres of the pike's eyes. After administering this effective anaesthetic, removal of the hooks will cause the pike no pain whatever.

Nor is this difficult. A quick slash with a sharp knife along the belly, or along one side if the fish is destined for a glass case, and the pike's guts are revealed. Two more small cuts, and they are detached and can be removed complete, the trace, of course being detached from the line and drawn back through the throat of the fish.

If large hooks are in use, several of their points will usually be found protruding from the mass of pike guts. If so, no rebaiting will be necessary; simply re-attach the trace to the end of the line and cast out again. Pike guts are as good a bait for another pike, or perhaps a big eel, as you could wish. Consequently, the whole business is economical; you only need one fish for bait, to serve for a whole day's pike fishing. Once that has been taken, each pike you catch supplied bait for the next.

Some will argue that this involves killing every pike, but they overlook the killing it saves. No longer is it necessary to sacrifice a bait-fish for every pike, as is necessary when every pike is released alive.

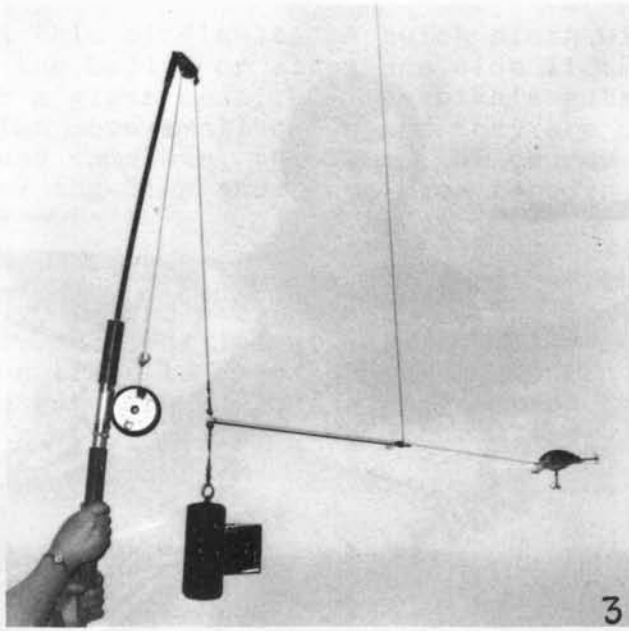
There is also criticism, on the grounds that even small pike, that might grow into big ones if released, have to be killed. This is true; but one must take into account all the small fish that are not necessary as baits, which are consequently left to grow into specimen fish. In addition to the potential specimen fish thus saved, we can add many, many more which each pike, if not caught and killed, would have eaten.

Even this is not the end of the story. Everyone knows that the size to which fish grow is dependent upon the share of the available food supply that each fish can eat. By killing all the pike that are caught, the survivors will obtain a greater share of the food and thus reach greater size. It is these bigger fish that the dedicated pike-fisher seeks and which please him most when he catches them.

It is not suggested that dead pike, other than those that will occupy glass cases, should be wasted. Their flesh makes excellent fish-cakes, or can be boiled for cat food, or given to impecunious members of the working classes, or impoverished pensioners.

One other advantage of allowing pike to pouch the bait is that it avoids risk to the angler, a convincing counter to those who claim that it is cruel to the pike. All too often, angler's hands are cut, perforated and lacerated in attempts to remove sharp hooks from mouths full of even sharper teeth. Such pain and suffering to anglers can easily be avoided if care is taken to ensure, not only that the hooks are not in the mouths of pike, but also that the pike does not thrash about while they are being removed.







sub log on the end of the snatching leader.

It's over a year since Slim and I wrote our articles for the mag. Since then we've done a fair bit of plug fishing. In his article in mag. no. 7 Slim said he had failed completely with all but the smallest of deep divers. We have now sorted this out and now fish confidently with a variety of deep divers of all sizes. We can confidently troll plugs down to depths of 15 feet without the aid of downriggers. Over that depth we use downriggers. We have also improved our downrigger gear a bit since I wrote my article. After using downriggers for a while we realised you didn't need such long downrigger arms, after all the originals were 4½ feet long. Our train of thought had been the further apart the lures the less the chance of them tangling with each other. In fact this happened rarely and only when making tight turns in the boat with two lures fishing at the same depth. I also had a bit of trouble with my plug rod bouncing out of the rests described in my article, and into the water, in choppy conditions, which isn't very desirable. Anyway for our new downrigger gear (see photo) I still use basically the same terminal tackle but for downrigger arms I now use the butt sections of two old 6' solid glass spinning rods with a small free running pulley wheel fitted to the end to make winding those heavy weights up a bit easier. When in action the butt section is placed in a boat rod rest (Slim and I use the Shakespeare type) and your plug rod is placed in another rest behind the downrigger. Another thing we have improved on slightly is the downrigger weights. I now use vaned weights made from beer or soft drink cans filled with concrete. Just get a can, cut the top off, make vertical slit in one side and push in your vane a sheet of tin, copper, plastic, anything would do. Now half fill the can with concrete, add a bit of bent wire and fill up with concrete, making sure enough of the wire is above the concrete to attach your link swivel to, a standard beer can filled with concrete weighs about 2 lbs.

* * * * *

CANAL PIKE

by

Paul Hamilton

In my part of the country the main piking activities centre round the Exeter Ship Canal, which although retaining the word ship in its title, is now almost obsolete as far as large ocean-going vessels are concerned. Its deep placid waters now being given over mainly to fishing. Being one of the oldest canals in the country (indeed, it is reputed to be the oldest), it has had plenty of time to develop into a good fishery and this it has done, despite the constant meddling of the local angling club whose sole aim it would seem is to pack as many three inch roach into the water as possible!

In fact, there is a huge head of small fish present anyway and this of course bodes well for the pike, some of which over the years have grown to a large size, the biggest reported being a 27 lb fish caught some fifteen years ago. Since then there has, as far as I know, been no fish over twenty pounds caught, although a lot have come out to within a few ounces of that magical figure. A lot of these fish have been caught since I started fishing the canal some five years ago, thankfully several by me and I've got to know the water fairly well, there being a lot of interesting facts I have learned which may be of help to others who have similar waters on their lists. Despite learning a lot, there is a lot of things that remain mysteriously unanswered and may get the old brain ticking over, as they have with mine on rather more occasions than is good for me!

The stretch controlled by our club is below a set of locks and is about four miles long. Throughout this the one real hotspot is strangely enough right at the end of the canal where it enters the Exe Estuary and this is naturally enough the busiest part of the canal for a lot of the time, with a fleet of small craft moored safely away from the winter storms along one bank. Of course, anxious owners spend countless hours, mostly at weekends whilst we are fishing, on board their pride and joys tarding them up and generally making a racket. Despite this, I have found that the pike lay under the boats or at least nearby and often whilst being runless in open water, as soon as a bait is cast near a boat, away will shoot the float. Presumably the shadows under the boats enable the pike to lurk without being spotted by passing fish, this giving the pike a better chance of making a quick, clean kill than in the open, virtually weedless water away from the boats.

Despite the boats adding an even hotter area to this already hot spot, fish are still to be found away from them and indeed the larger fish seem to inhabit the central area of the canal, in the slightly deeper water. The interesting thing is that bring your baits back more than half way across the canal and the chances of a run are almost nil. I should mention that you cannot often fish from the boat mooring bank and therefore baits have to be cast from the other bank, a distance of some forty yards. This bank is fairly busy with walkers, runners, bikers and what have you and I believe that this disturbance keeps the pike at a distance. If a heavy footed boater comes along and starts work anywhere near your baits, a move is the only answer as the pike will not put up with what must be thunderous noises coming from above.

One of the most interesting and frustrating things about this particular part of the canal is that the fish seem to gather there around October/November time and thereafter completely disappear. Sport can be really good during these two months and if the weather is mild, it sometimes extends into December. It does seem that this time of year is generally very good for pike, but on most waters the fishing does not totally die after this period as it does here. The most popular theory for their disappearance is that the pike move to another part of the canal and I subscribe to this, knowing as I do that the roach, bream and other bait fish do migrate, for lack of a better word, up the canal during the winter and by the end of the season there are often massed ranks of them near the locks I mentioned earlier. Pike will follow the feed fish, so it's a good chance that some of the fish that occupied the end of the canal during the early part of the winter will end up by the locks by March, but surely not all of them, yet our boat area seems completely and utterly pikeless for the latter part of the winter.

The obvious thing to do is to roam the canal in an effort to try and find these wandering pike, but try as I may I haven't been able to pin them down. Perhaps I will catch a couple of pike in a day, one of which may be a good fish, but come back again next day and nothing will be caught. A friend of mine did catch two doubles in a day from one area, but again, several consecutive sessions produced nothing. Not knowing any other long stretches of pike holding waters, either rivers or canals, I don't know whether these travelling pike are a peculiarity of this water or whether it happens on others. I've been told or read of a fish being caught in different swims great distances apart, but if these fish are constantly on the move or not I don't know.

Still, enough of the problems of location and on to methods and baits, which are really quite basic, but still worth running through. Being a canal, long

casting is not a necessity but I still prefer to use fairly heavy and medium/fast taper rods to ensure efficient hooking and besides, these canal pike of ours fight like tigers and I find that a stiffish rod subdues them quite nicely. I usually match these rods with ten pound line coupled to a fourteen pound trace wire and use a small sliding balsa float fished slightly overdepth with deadbait. With livebait I grease the line to allow the wind to drift the bait around, thus covering a lot of ground. In fact I sometimes use this method with deadbaits, air injected with a couple of swan shots anchoring them down. I've found this to be killing at times, especially when there is a lot of water movement, as there often is in canals, which must make the bait wobble around simulating a sick fish.

Livebaits catch far more fish in comparison with dead, but the average size is less, the numerous jacks making short work of live fish, although if you stick at it for long enough and retain any small pike caught in a keepnet, it eventually gives the better fish a chance to intercept the bait before the greedy jacks. Deadbaits fished hard on the bottom don't seem to attract the small pike and when a run occurs with a deadbait it's a good chance that a big pike has found the bait. Although deadbaiting can be very boring between runs, the fact that it produces bigger fish on this water makes it worth the effort and when the long awaited run does come and the excitement mounts, all the waiting is forgotten. The last two winters have produced less fish to deadbaits and this may be because anglers stick religiously to mackerel and herrings. I believe that the pike have become wary of these baits and I think that big freshwater baits may liven things up. Although I haven't fished extensively with freshwater baits, I have tried dace on occasions and these have caught pike, whilst the sea fish have produced nothing. The best livebaits I have used have also been dace and I have found them very hardy, lasting a long time even after several casts.

The best times seem to vary and no obvious pattern can be determined, although I must admit that I really enjoy fishing the early mornings before the water becomes crowded. This can be a good time, but more often than not the pike come along just when you are expecting it least. One thing that a lot of people moan and groan about when they see one approaching is an occasional large boat which sometimes passes through the canal, but when I see one coming, I welcome it with open arms. I've lost count of the number of times I have sat on the bank completely fishless until a boat has ploughed along stirring up the water in its wake and also stirring up the pike! Having been buffeted into wakefulness, the pike often go on a mad feeding spree, taking anything and everything in their path, sometimes continuing like this for several hours, sometimes for only half an hour. However long it is, its a time to take advantage of and a large haul can often be built up.

The weather has a great effect on this, for the most, completely exposed water and as with a lot of fishing, the mild, cloudy days with south westerly winds offer the best chance. Having said that, however, I have had fish in all conditions ranging from warm windless sunshine to screaming gale driven rain. Still, I am always more confident in cloudy, windy weather and besides, it keeps other people at home leaving more bank space for me! Fog and mist for some reason unknown to me completely kills the fishing and a freezing fog; something that is quite common along our coastline, makes it doubly worse, although once this is cleared by wind or sunshine, the pike, as if pleased to be able to see again, do sometimes become very active.

Well, that has given a brief account of canal pike fishing as I find it and although I have little choice but to fish this water, I am not complaining as it is a very interesting place and also holds some nice pike. They are not too easy to catch, but this of course is what fishing is all about. Canals can sometimes be overlooked when it comes to pike fishing, but they really are worth investigating.

* * * * *

BLENHEIM LAKE

by Dave Allen

Blenheim Palace is, perhaps, one of best known stately homes in England, but among pike anglers the name conjures up not visions of well-laid out gardens and scenic walks but a picture of a huge expanse of water fringed with lilies and reeds - ideal piking country.

The palace itself was designed by Sir John Vanbrugh nearly 300 years ago and was given to the Duke of Marlborough by Queen Anne after his victory at Blenheim. The lake was added at a later date, around 1764, when Capability Brown was employed by the 4th Duke to design a new layout for the gardens complete with fountains and waterfalls. Today the gardens must bear little resemblance to the original ones, having been redesigned and replanted many times, but the lake remains much as it always has done.

My first piking trip to Blenheim was in November 1976, when, as a result of having heard so many stories about the large and numerous fish in the lake, myself and five other friends decided to book some boats and see what the fishing was like for ourselves. What a day that turned out to be! We arrived at the gatehouse about half an hour before the gates were due to open and found ourselves first in the queue. We sat in the cars, in darkness, waiting in eager anticipation for the gates to be opened, each of us dreaming about the monsters which we were sure to catch that day. At last the gates opened and in convoy we drove in. Out of the window we could see the Queen pool, shrouded in mist as daylight began to break. Parking the cars in front of the palace we quickly unloaded and set off for the boathouse, nearly tripping over our rod holdalls in our mad rush down the curving gravel pathway. After what seemed like about a 10 mile walk because of the amount of tackle and livebait we were carrying we at last reached the boathouse and collapsed into our 3 allotted boats. However expectation soon overcame exhaustion and we rowed out having decided that each boat should start off by fishing one of the 3 extremities of the lake - the dam end, the Grand bridge end, and the side arm.

Having sorted out that there would be a 50p pool for the best fish and also where we were (for the mist seemed to be coming down even thicker) we rowed on down the lake. Graham, my partner tackled up while I rowed and we then swapped positions, each of us setting up 2 rods, 1 for float-fishing and 1 for spinning and plugging. We quietly (as far as is possible with concrete-filled paint tins complete with about 20 ft of heavy chain!) let down the anchors and cast out a couple of lively livebaits and commenced spinning both of us waiting for the floats to disappear as one of the reputedly large pike of the lake grabbed the livebait. After several run-less hours we decided that we were in one of the less productive spots and moved further along the lake. After several more run-less hours and several more moves we anchored in the most pikiest looking spot we could find and attached to the snap-tackle the biggest and best livebait we had. Overboard they went, our old enthusiasm returning as the floats bobbed up and down sending large ripples across the lake. Again we waited and waited and enthusiasm having waned once more, I put down my spinning rod, lay down in the bottom of the boat, and let my livebait drift in to within about 3 ft of the boat. By this time I was sure that either the stories I had heard were not entirely true or we had picked a bad day and the pike were not interested in feeding when suddenly my float bobbed harder than usual and then slid away under the surface. For a couple of seconds my eyes didn't believe what they had seen but the thought of winning £2.50 soon brought me back to my senses and I was into what I thought was a good fish. After a couple of minutes the fish was played out and was in the net and all thoughts of winning any money vanished as I saw the size of it - still it weighed about 5 lbs and that was better than nothing.

My last visit to the lake was probably my worst and I have learned my lesson from it. On this occasion there were only 4 of us. Conditions seemed ideal - overcast, slightly windy, not too warm and not too cold, but we just could not seem to find the fish and we spent the best part of the day looking for them. With about 1½ hrs of daylight left we decided to fish a spot which we hadn't fished for a long time and which had never produced any fish before. We arrived at the spot to find the pike going absolutely mad, leaping out of the water all around the boat. Baits were hastily cast out and it wasn't long before the first fish was in the boat. This one went 12 lb - not a bad start. Several more runs quickly followed to my 3 colleagues and one fish even managed to pick up a livebait belonging to Graham and a deadbait belonging to Martin (who were in the other boat) at the same time producing a spectacular fight in which we weren't sure if it was just the tackle which was tangled or if the fish had actually taken both baits. A couple of fish were then taken on spinner and all too soon it was time to pack up. I had one run which came just as I was packing up one of my rods, nearly pulling my rod in and which I still managed to miss, while my 3 colleagues had had about 70 lb of pike between them. My mistake had been to use a larger bait in the hope of picking up a larger fish when the pike were obviously pre-occupied with small fry (which they promptly spewed up into the boat as we were unhooking them). All of my friends had used fairly small baits and had caught fish, while I forgetting past experienced with large baits had caught nothing. Lesson learned!

* * * * *

C O M M E N T S

by Martin Gay

The latter part of Steve Tolan's letter concerning the growth of summer pike in P.A.C. magazine no. 9 made quizzical reading if only because it shows that you can read whatever you like into statistics. Steve cites two fish (Nos. 1 & 2) which weighed 2 lb 2 oz and 2 lb 15 oz more when captured a second time after approximately 6 weeks and 7 weeks respectively. He then mentions a further 4 fish (one being no. 1 above) all of which show a reduction in weight by between 15 oz and 4 lb 8 oz when captured the second time in all cases after a full summer of feeding. He reckons in his area there isn't a case of summer pike NOT putting on weight very fast in the summer!?

Surely we are looking at little more than the difference in weight of a pike with a full stomach and an empty one, perhaps some with a little bit extra for spawn although in a couple of the cases Steve mentions the extra weight does seem a bit more than I would have expected spawn to have accounted for.

I would find it difficult to accept that pike would increase in weight (or 'size' if you want to differentiate) less in the summer than in the winter even taking into account the additional food they would need to eat to make up for the extra energy burned by greater activity in the warmer water. It is surely reasonable to look for genuine weight increases (that is growth) at the end of the summer (Sept-Oct) after a season of good feeding than at the beginning, or during, the summer ?

Summer pike are usually solid, very fit fish which I feel, portray their truest weight for that year. The extra bulk of winter fish can be put down to some spawn carrying (in appropriate cases of course!) and developing, and possibly to summer muscle turning fatty through a more general lethargy and (?) winter insulation.

I agree entirely with Steve about the individuality of the spots and markings on pike, this being something I recognised in 1969 and used as part of my case when arguing the Whitehall pike farce a few years back (1976). However small the markings may be, as far as it is possible to tell they are quite unique to each fish when taken as a whole.

This business of killing pike, or for that matter killing fish in general - morally its much the same. Over the years it has been said, (amongst others by Fred J. Taylor, and now it seems by Peter Stone) by some anglers that they retain the "right" to kill occasional pike as and when they see fit. What I would like to know is, what or who gives this "right" that is being claimed to take any life. I've never been given any "right" to kill any creature and for the life of me I do not accept anyone else has the "right". I use livebaits and have done so for at least the past 18 years, and I know full well that a number of these will die. It is regrettable (and hardly defensible in truth) that they will die and it is something with which I have had to come to terms. I don't like doing it but neither do I take it as my "right" to do it - in fact it is now actually getting to me for a number of reasons and to be absolutely honest if livebaiting was banned in law I wouldn't complain. But as I see it, live-baiting is a means to an end - though that doesn't necessarily excuse it. Killing a pike or a specimen sized fish of any species is not a means to any end.

It is also interesting to note that the staunchest advocates of "... it is my right to ..." are also those who use gaffs. And three gentlemen that I know of have each killed their respective largest pike - amongst others.

Can someone please tell me why it is that one or two of the anglers who, in recent seasons, have largely, or totally, stopped livebaiting, are now claiming that they catch just as many pike on deadbaits as they did when they used also livebaits. Yet during the 'livebaiting period' they caught few pike on deadbaits. I wonder just how good their memories are; though one thing I do know - I can remember!

Finally, does anyone honestly believe the claims of the angling weekly newspapers when they reckon to come down against pike killing? Do they not just pay lip-service to the growing lobby of pike conservationists. Its all very well claiming to support us but the fact remains that they still publish photos of dead pike and what is far more to the point, they pay the blokes who killed the pike and submitted the picture! If that isn't encouraging him I don't know what is. It doesn't need me to point out to them how to get round this one.

I believe the angling weekly newspapers have a great deal to answer for over the past few years, in fact since the time they ceased to be proper angling publications and started this nauseating sensation-seeking, vaguely fishing version of the SUN. But without the circulation.

Editors : The killing would still go on even if the newspapers didn't print the photographs, and we wouldn't know about it. We have talked at length with A.T. and A.M. and both are adamant that they are opposed to killing pike, yet have a reporting job to do. A.M. have, in fact, recently refused to use stories and photographs where the pike have been killed and have even informed us of the worst cases so that we can chase them up ourselves. Perhaps this is the answer.

* * * * *

OLDEST KNOWN ESOX

by

Andrew Falkner

A scientific paper published recently in the Canadian Journal of Earth Sciences reveals the discovery of fossil pike in Western Canada twice as old as previously known. The extremely well preserved remains of these ancient fish have been used to describe a new species of pike :

Esox tiemani sp. nov.

(sp. nov. means new species)

The fossil pike were found in rocks given an age of 62 million years. Lets try and imagine how long this was. If we consider the time scale in terms of distance an object about a yard from you could be made equivalent to the gap between the present day and the birth of Christ (i.e. more than 2000 years). Now on this scale the time gap between the present day and the time when Esox tiemani lived would be about 19 miles.

Esox tiemani was an elongate, narrow-snouted pike. The best fossil revealed a fish which was 13" long with a head length of 3½" and a body depth of 1½". This fish contained a partially digested fish in its gut. The fish which produced the fossil was, considering it was long and thin in comparison to E. lucius about half a pound in weight.

The fossils were discovered in the rocks of the Paskapoo Formation of Alberta. These are fine-grained, mollusc-rich claystones, shales and marls. 3m above the fossil horizon occurs a plant-bearing volcanic ash radiometrically dated at 62 million years old. From the information above we can construct an environment in which E. tiemani lived. The pike probably swam in large, shallow lakes with muddy bottoms. The climate was warm and volcanoes were present within the region. Six other groups of fish were present in these waters some of which must have been prey for the pike. These include cyprinoids, relatives of the carp family. Around the shores of the lakes mammals were rapidly evolving filling niches only recently vacated by the dinosaurs.

The oldest previously known pike was Esox papyraceus found in coal-like rocks in Germany. The fish swam in swamps some 30 million years ago. Also found in Germany are fossils of the pike Esox lepidotus

which lived 20 million years ago. The earliest fossil pike to be found in Britain lived about 1½ million years ago. This species, the familiar Esox lucius, is found in the Cromer Forest Beds of Norfolk. The oldest known pike in Britain then lived in lakes in a forest area in an interglacial period before another ice sheet was to cover most of Britain.

The discovery of a new species of pike in rocks 60 million years old raises a number of interesting questions. It was previously believed that the pike spread to North America from Eurasia (Europe and Asia) via a land connection in what is today the Bering Sea. The discovery of fossil pike in Canada 30 my older than any found in Eurasia casts doubts on this hypothesis. It is more likely that pike spread from Canada into Asia via the Bering land connection and reached Europe by spreading across Asia in a manner comparable to the spread of Zander in the Fens today. (Eds: one hopes not quite the same way!)

It was also assumed the E. lucius was a very advanced members of the pike family; the "latest model" so to speak. However, the fossil pike E. tiemani is more similar to E. lucius than other fossil pike species from Eurasia. This suggests that E. lucius is an ancestral form.

So what general conclusions can we draw from this new discovery to muse over while we wait for a run or as we watch a recent capture swim back into the depths? Well first of all, fish very similar to the pike we fish for were swimming in rivers and lakes 60 million years ago. It is also probable that Esox lucius is a very primitive and probably the most successful member of the pike family.

P.S. When discussing the relative merits of the pike with the non-converted why not drop in the fact that the pike family have been around for the past 60 my and for that reason alone they should be preserved.

References :

Oldest known Esox (Pisces: Esocidae), part of a new Paleocene teleost fauna from western Canada. Wilson, M.V.H. Can. J. Earth Sci., 17, 307-312 (1980).

* * * * *

MY FIRST 20 lb PIKE ?

by Tony Dilworth

The morning was as near perfect as one could wish for; for a February. A slight wind from the south just managed to get through the trees and ripple the surface. In the distance and in the far off realms of the "not able to fish area" moorhens and coots dived and bobbed around the overhanging branches of trees and bushes. The drop-off indicator hung motionless on the damp filled air. One end attached firmly to the rod rest and the other end lightly holding the line in readiness for a hungry pike. The fishing time was approaching the two hour mark when, in an instant, the indicator was no longer lightly holding the line

The scene is a small L-shaped pool in the heart of Warwickshire, with (as I was later to find out) more club rules as to where not to fish than there were telling me where I could. Hundreds and hundreds of don'ts and don'ts and don'ts and all of which, if did, automatically got me expulsified. Anyway the lake is pleasantly situated in a small wood, which in turn is set in a part of the county which is as remote as one could ever get in Warwickshire. Aaah!! what a lovely setting

The pool had been by-passed for years; in cars and in talking; but now as the price of petrol was steadily rising towards the £5 p.g. mark it became increasingly more important to find somewhere a little nearer home than the Fens. Was this pool going to be the answer ? A couple of looks round; ask questions; and investigate visits were planned; and these helped me to get a fairly good picture in my mind of just where the pike may be lying up in ambush. By chatting to one or two anglers who were fishing whilst I was looking around, it became quickly apparent that the local inhabitants were by numbers present : Roach, Perch, and Pike (Tench followed the pike, but what's a tench ?). Carp brought up the rear with some "well over 20" or so I was told. This, I was assured, was a very close estimate to the true populace of the pool; "cause they netted it last year, didn't they?". Well I wasn't going to argue.

So pike were present but my fears were to be realised on my second investigative trip to the pool. Unfortunately, due to the pool being a fairly shallow and also not very big one and with it having a very large population of pike for its size, the size of the pike was very much on the small side. This was proved by a demonstration of how to catch them by three youngsters who in a little over an

hour took about 10 pike between them, and none went over the 3 lb mark. The majority of these fish were taken by one young lad using a spinner, and on landing them all with a net, he skillfully unhooked them and placed them straight back into the pool. I walked up to the youngster and commented on his unhooking and the putting of the pike back alive, mentioning a name which I was sure he would know as he was so careful about putting the pike back. "Who the f..... hell's Don Sydney?" said this no more than 12 year old lad (Never mind Ben John).

The same, no more than 12 year old lad, proved to be quite a character, and it quickly became apparent that he knew a fair bit about the pike populace of the pool. He had never heard of the P.A.C. but seemed interested in its activities, but unfortunately even a £1 for an associate membership was a bit beyond his means at the moment (Eds: not necessary as he's under 15!)

As said earlier, the pool was an L of a shape, and one would think by the way the local anglers fished it only held fish in one particular corner. The corner nearest the car park. (Who said they're brummies). This young lad had different ideas though. "That's the best area over there mate". "Trouble is you can't fish from the nearest bank to it: private area reserved for picnickers. So its a matter of fishing from here and lumping it." This what could be described as the "not able to fish area" was at one end of the pool and could quite easily be reached with a cast of 60-70 yards. I showed interest and asked more. Any decent fish in here do you know? Oh yeah! One, well over 20 I'd say. Really?? Definitely! Trouble is it frequents the area of the pool opposite the private bank. Rea-l-ly?? I've seen it once, over there! (pointing to some overhanging trees and bush branches about 70 yds from where we were standing). Came up after one of the ducks!

Visions of plastic ducks being twitched across the surface were now beginning to fill my head. Quack! Twitch! Quack! Twitch. Twitch!!! Quack! Quack! BANG!

Having been fairly impressed and I suppose taken in by the story which had been told by this young lad, I was keen and raring to go. Unfortunately, it came as some surprise for me to find out that I actually had to pay to fish this particular water (what with mortgages, gas bills, phone bills etc. etc. would I cope I asked myself?). So I paid the money to the man, and started to set out my plans which would hopefully enable me to catch my first 20 lb pike.

Saturday arrived, and I was on to the bank just before daybreak. I managed to encamp on the side which would give me the shortest casting distance to the area opposite the private bank. The area supposedly where the large pike and a lot of others were inhabiting. The range was a comfortable 60 yards which left about another 30 - 40 yds before the other bank and the overhanging bushes and trees.

Sprat, $\frac{1}{2}$ mackerel and brown trout deadbait were cast into the area, and I sat down to wait, and wait, and wait. At the end of the day's fishing I had taken one pike on a spinner. Its weight? 1 lb 10 oz.

For the next 3 weekends on the trot, I fished another water owned by the same club, which reputedly held pike of over 20 lb. This was a very large reservoir, and seemed more likely to hold a twenty than the small pool. Anyway I didn't catch anything, but I did come away with some more information on the large pike of the small pool. On my third visit to the reservoir I actually met up with two more pike anglers. Of the two, one was very keen on piking and he was quick to bring out a photo of a nice pike of 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb, which he assured me was taken by him from the reservoir last season. The bait was roach livebait, one which unfortunately was not on my prescribed menu for the pike that day. (I am now looking for a water where I can catch roach livebait!!). We continued to chat about the reservoir, and as time went by our wishful thinking was transferred to the small pool. The saga which follows is absolutely true, or so I was assured by the two anglers to whom I was now chatting. The incident happened earlier on in the season. As the club allows piking all year round they were at the small pool one summer night doing a bit of spinning. On hearing a lot of scuffling and noise coming from the "not able to fish area", they looked over and noticed a moorhen with $\frac{1}{2}$ dozen very small chicks rushing from the bankside reeds and moving with some alarm over to the other side and the shelter of the overhanging trees and bushes. The distance they had to travel was about 80 yds and by the time mother and chicks had reached the shelter of the branches 3 of the youngsters had not made it. "They were taken by the big pike" one said "There's no doubt about it". "One second they were there, then in a swirl and in the minimum of fuss they were gone". Were they pulling my leg,. I'll give it a try next week I thought. Maybe they're not!

I arrived early and set up one rod with a huge sprat attached, and another with float and maggot in the hope of catching some livebait. The sprat was cast out into the area opposite the private bank and the indicator set on the line. I sat down and tried to catch a few roach. About an hour later I looked over to my rod for the tenth time in a minute and noticed the indicator being jerked backwards and forwards on the line. My thoughts were that a pike was settling down for a meal instead of running, so I moved over to the rod, closed down the bale arm, tightened up and struck - Nothing!! I reeled in what was to be only half a sprat. The head half had been completely gnawed away. Now many of you reading will no doubt think, so! what's strange about that?? Well fellow piker, as the sprat had been mounted on a

single hook wire trace and the hook was sticking up through the eye socket, it certainly made me wonder.

Anyway, another sprat was threaded onto the wire trace and cast out.

.....The fishing time was approaching the two hour mark when, in an instant, the indicator was no longer lightly holding the line. The take was very fast and the line was being taken from the spool at a speed I had never encountered before. This must be it! I had convinced myself this was my first twenty.

I closed the bale arm and watched the line quickly lift out of the water and tighten up to the as yet unseen bait taker. I looked up across the pool and saw what was now nearly 100 yds away :

A Coot with what looked very much like a sprat hanging out of one side of its beak, being hotly pursued by two others ????????????

The End.

* * * * *