

Tim Paisley's INTERNATIONAL CARPER

ISSUE 114 April 2013



GIANT WATERS

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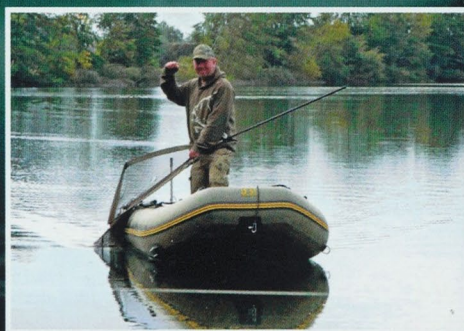
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Big Water Adventures

MAX NOLLERT

"Carp hunting is surely not the most important thing in life, but for many people it is the most beautiful!"

For me, autumn has always been the very best time to fish for carp. A time when the storms so prevalent at this time of year see us huddling behind, or sometimes in, inadequate shelters on the giant waters of Europe. For me it is carp fishing in its purest and most exciting form. Everyone has their favourite sessions, memories of success and failure, sometimes exhausted

and starving, or even with massive expectations for the next trip. I still return home to my little village on the banks of the River Moselle, full of hope.

In the last year, I have been fishing four times, with each session lasting between 4-8 days. I wanted to concentrate on one water, which I had only visited once, about 10 years ago. Each trip was done with two anglers,

who had never seen the water before, and I was in my element revealing the lake's secrets. In the following piece I want to retell the tales of our adventures. So here's a quick breakdown of the events and facts before I go into more detail of my time on the water.

Overall, we spent 20 days on the lake, which is an impressive 1,100ha. We blanked for 10 days of this time

but caught during periods of six days and four days, although unfortunately we experienced several losses. It was heaven and hell all in one rollercoaster ride of emotions. The lake is full of snags and obstacles of all descriptions, all of which are covered in mussels, more than I've ever seen on any other water. This was fishing in the extreme, and without using subfloats and breakaway rigs with rocks instead of leads, we wouldn't have managed to bank any of the fish we hooked.

The result for all this effort was just seven fish, weighing 5kg, 17.5kg, 21kg, 22kg, 22.2kg, 24kg and 25.5kg – but there's more to the story than you can

possibly imagine. I had to change my style of fishing drastically, so much so, in fact, it was like learning all over again. It's an art learning how to lower a rig with a breakaway rock attached into 7-8m of water without it tangling. These rigs were often left in place for between 36-48 hours so they needed to be spot on so the angler had no doubts. The mussels were so severe that we even had to add long lengths of rig tube to our leaders. Everything on the lakebed was coated in these line-cutting menaces, it was ridiculous and necessitated the use of these tactics! I learnt that a hook with a straight point, such as the Hayabusa European Boilie Hook I preferred

using, was not so ideal for these carp. The fish had very hard-mouths, which seemed to turn hookpoints, but a swap to hooks with an inturned point seemed to solve the problem, with Fox, and Carp 'R' Us ATS hooks appearing to be more than enough for the job.

Three of the five 40s I actually banked after the line had been cut. "How did that happen?" I hear you say. Well, let me explain.

Thanks to my anchor, which I used like a grappling hook, I managed to catch my trailing line, then I quickly knotted the two ends back together. Thankfully, the carp gods smiled, and I was able to continue the fight and land my prize, a

24kg common, which was damn lucky...!

My autumn campaign came to an end on a sunny day towards the end of November. While packing up I managed to land a fish of 25.5kg – oh, how I love this time of year.

Next I want to go into more details about the sessions, in an effort to explain my thoughts and emotions.

Trip 1: 20th-25th September, with René Rex

It was the end of September when René and I arrived at the Big Lake, and we were pleased to see from the height on the slipway that the water level was still high. We jumped in the boats and, using our echo sounders, searched several kilometres of water before settling on an area of tree stumps just off a large reedbed. The 260 iBoat is large enough to fish from, while the smaller 160 is ideal for transporting tackle.

With the rods out by the afternoon everything was looking good and we had a good feeling about the area. Cool, foggy weather had settled in and after a couple of days we decided to try a different area, choosing a spot that was substantially deeper than the previous one. We made sure we recorded each spot with the GPS, which allows us to return to productive spots year after year, which is a real advantage.

The next day we had visitors! Thousands of spiders worked their magic around our tents during the night and transformed the area, covering it with shimmering nets. No centimetre was left out apart from directly around our brollies. Did they feel the temperature of our bodies and keep their distance because of this? Because of the morning dew, the webs were fantastically impressive.

The following day was cloudless and scorching hot, not the autumn weather we'd hoped for, instead it was summer holiday weather! Two catfish, about 1.4m in length, created some brief excitement, but no sign of any carp. Then a sailboat with a deep keel, ploughed through our lines, cutting us off and leaving us with no line. New Visible Touch was spooled-up and the show went on, but unfortunately that was the last of the action.

As we packed up we spoke excitedly about a return when the weather became more carpy. For the first visit we were happy with the results and couldn't wait to make some new plans and return.



- 1 The debut session for us on the new lake.
- 2 We positioned ourselves in front of the reedbed and used our boats as fishing platforms.
- 3 René prepared the bait for the new swim maybe a deeper area would be productive?
- 4 One of two consolation catfish!
- 5 After the sailboat attack we needed new line!
- 6 The early-morning fog promised a sunny, hot day again – we drove home.

Trip 2: 4th-12th October, with Thorsten Feil
Back home I'd been studying the weather intently, and 250 miles away things were beginning to happen. A big storm was heading in from the west, bringing with it the long awaited autumn weather. I knew exactly where I wanted to be when the forecast change arrived.

As I set up on the point, the clouds gathered in the distance, and I pondered the fact that my timing couldn't have been better. Thorsten was due to arrive the following day.

The first night passed without a bite, not even a catfish. The wind was getting stronger and stronger as Thorsten arrived in the afternoon, and we were looking forward to the next few days. We were well prepared with bait, and even though no other anglers fished the lake, we expected to bait heavily. Unfortunately, the boilies and pellets brought by Thorsten were already softened because the buckets had got wet at home. He set up camp, secure in the knowledge that as soon as the wind started to rattle the ribs of the brolly the fish would definitely be on the feed. The coffee, as always, tasted good, thanks to a tiny shot of Baileys.

Everything seemed spot on to spur the carp into action; the weather was ideal, with wind and rain, but we were still to catch a carp. It couldn't be long now.

We stood right next to the rods in the storm, waiting for the first bite. Luckily, we had the CombiCarpos pods with us because we wouldn't have stood a chance with banksticks in the rocky terrain. We made everything extra wind and waveproof, and a 7.5kg mushroom-anchor and a Fender Expander Kit helped to hold the boat away from the shore – a great thing! The boats were dancing in the waves.

It was lunchtime the following day and the long awaited bite was well overdue, surely it would come soon? Thorsten heard a few bleeps through the storm and then it was silent for the next 10 minutes. Suddenly, we noticed the rod top knocking, just like a bream bite, and Thorsten struck.

"In he comes", Thorsten screamed into the storm.

We got to film the battle, which was fantastic, and were surprised

when a large fish showed itself in the edge. She weighed exactly 20kg. Bravo Thorsten, what a start!

The Osmotic Spice Boilie was soft before it went out and had been on the spot for two full days. In spite of this, Thorsten believed that his bait was still on the Hair. Why the carp had hardly fought the whole 180m to the bank was a mystery, could it have possibly been due to the unseasonably hot weather prior to the trip? Also, why did the first bite come three days after the change in the weather? Had it taken that long for the oxygen content to rise and for the carp to become less lethargic? With greater motivation we redid all the rods, using the GPS to guide us to exactly the same spots.

Even with the gale-force winds battering us, it was no problem to deal with it and fish effectively, and it was made all the easier because we had the right tackle. It came as no surprise when, 24 hours later, Thorsten struck again with a 22kg fish, from the same spot

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as the previous capture, a carp that once again decided not to fight.

The change in weather was finally making itself felt and the water temperature was 15.9°C

and changing fast. Surely, the fish should feed even harder?

Thorsten had to drive home the next day and as he started to ferry his gear back to the slipway he was hit by a torrential rainstorm. He was used to getting wet, after falling head first into the lake the previous morning, but the memories of big carp would keep him warm on the way home.

I was left alone on Spider Island now that Thorston had gone, so sought shelter from the rain in my bivvy. There was a distinct atmosphere, a magical moment; anything was possible now, the big fish were surely on the feed. The rigs had been placed exactly and held firm by massive anchoring weights to combat the conditions. Time to wait. That afternoon Dylan Porte came for a short visit. He had never fished here before, because Lac du Der was his home! To pass the time I showed him how the Liquid-Powder-Paste, my hookbait for the next few days, worked.

I changed all the rods in the afternoon



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7 First French big one for Thorsten.

INSET A bream-like bite and fight, but it wasn't.

8 Thorsten does battle with a carp in the teeth of a gale.

9 My first fish weighed 22.2kg – wonderful.

10 One of two big fish on the last night at 22kg.

11 After the night, almost everything was upside down

12 The joy was enormous – my birthday carp of 24kg.

and Dylan returned to Chanty, but I would never have guessed what would happen in the next few hours.

That night I was almost continuously in action and I slept not a single minute. Bites came thick and fast, and unfortunately I lost several fish, either because of hookpulls or because the line was shredded on the mussel-encrusted rocks. Would I ever experience another night like this?

As dawn finally arrived I was a happy man because I had a 22kg mirror and a 24kg common secured safely in a couple of the carp sacks. I also had a catfish of 1.80m that I hooked at the height of the storm and which I had to play from the bank. After a few pictures I returned him – he was never coming off, he was so well hooked

Good Luck, Bad Luck, More Luck...

I was halfway out towards what was as yet an unseen big fish, when the line suddenly cut, thanks to a mussel-covered weedbed. I hadn't got my little rescue anchor to hand, so plunged the rod tip below the surface and used the engine to push me forward. As I lifted the rod I could see my Visible Touch braid wrapped round an eye, and with no time to think, I quickly threaded it backwards through the rings and tied the two ends together and continued the battle. Now the big common was ready for a photo. Just how lucky had I been to land this beast, the hook had opened out, but thankfully caught

hold again and the fish had fought like a demon. Now they have woken up!

I had rarely experienced conditions as extreme as last night, pleasure and pain so closely connected whilst battling the elements. I'd lost three fish in the last 12 hours, and all for different reasons. An additional downside was that it took well over an hour to get a rig back in place because of the ferocity of the storm. The big ones were eating, and a sleepless night was worth it, as were the kilometres of rowing in my inflatable iBoat. I can't express the thoughts and emotions that filled me after last night. As a carphunter you can live 100 years without experiencing something like this. It is currently 3:3 between me and the carp – a damn tight game!

I was just getting the self-take equipment ready for some pictures, when a chance visit from Thomas Blazek and Jarda was a real bonus. The pictures were made so much easier and I'd got my beautiful memories of this exceptional trip. Despite a very successful night, as regards the number of bites, I decided to change my strategy that afternoon. In fact, I decided on a change of swim in an attempt to get closer to the feeding area and the carp.

With a lull in the storm, I grabbed my chance, and was just repositioning the rods when the storm once more returned with a vengeance. My confidence was sky-high, I could smell the carp, big ones too!!! To be continued in the next issue... **IC**