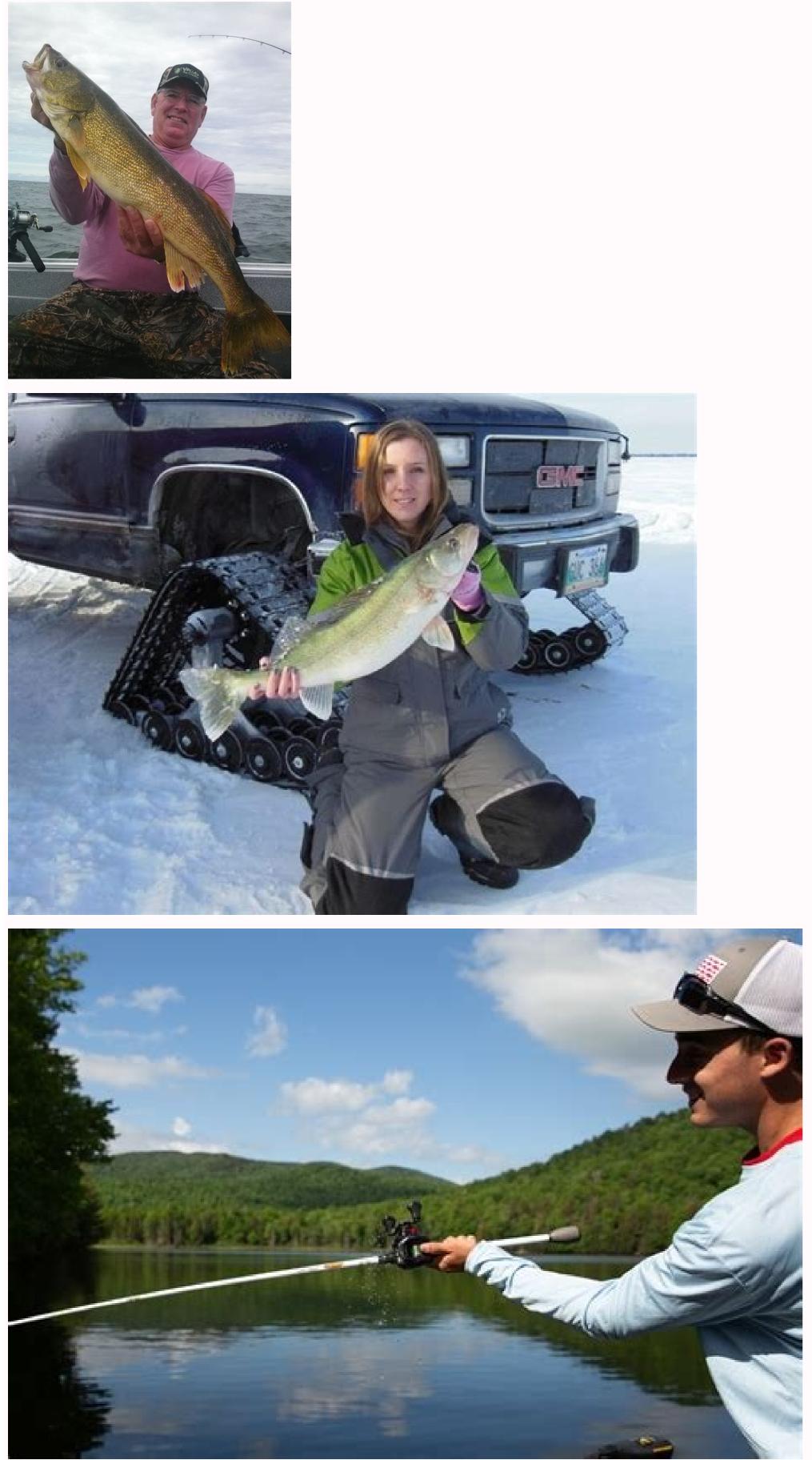
**Carsington water fishing report** 

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During January this year, I have caught several trout using dry flies, as they've been clearly feeding on the top and this method seemed to be the order of the day. The most important thing to bear in mind when choosing a method/fly is to consider the conditions on the venue on the day, ignoring most, if not all perceived wisdom. In this blog post, we will discuss why you should always consider your location, the time of day, the weather and what the fish are doing on the day. Stop, Look and Listen When arriving at a venue, the first thing I do is stop and watch the water for a while. Not long, maybe 10 minutes or so. This gives me time to observe what's going on in the water are they rising? If their entire head is visible above the water, then the trout are taking insect life off the surface of the water, so maybe a dry like a Walker's Sedge or an Adam's Dry Fly might be a good choice, as they sit right on top of the water. If the trout are topping, but only their mouths are visible, it's likely that they're taking sub-surface insects. In this case, something like a Booby Hopper might be a good choice or even a CDC Shuttlecock. These are going to tempt the surface film feeders as they sit just below the surface in huge lunges, they're almost certainly chasing fry, so early season, I'd recommend a Pearl Hotspot Cormorant or a March Brown (for the traditionalist), as these will nicely emulate pin fry. Later in the year, around Autumn, bigger fry lures should be used as the trout will have moved on to them, particularly in the larger reservoirs, like Rutland and Pitsford. Something like an Olive Barred Mini Snake or a Weed Fly could be used. Olive Weed Fly (Snake) Location When it comes to choosing the right fly, your location is one of the most important factors to consider. Different areas will have different types of aquatic life, and as a result, you'll need to use different flies depending on where you are fishing. For example, if you're fishing in a stream that has lots of small trout, you'll want to use a fly that is small and resembles a natural insect, like a klinkhammer. On the other hand, if you're fishing in a river or still water that has large trout, you'll want to use a fly that is big and flashy, like a dog nobbler or a Blue Flash Damsel. Gold Head Flash Damsel. Gold Head Flash Damsel. Gold Head Flash Damsel scaled Of course, this isn't a hard and fast rule and you should certainly try smaller lures on bigger waters, as the fish may be feeding on them and not interested in big lumps of fur and feather. It's a case of trying everything but trying them in an order that suits your location. Time of Day Another important factor to consider when choosing a fly is the time of day. In general, flies that are used during the daytime should be bright and colourful, while flies that are used at night should be darker in colour. This is because fish can see colours better during the day, and they rely more on their senses of smell and touch at night. Using darker flies also applies when fishing deep waters on or near the bottom. At those depths, the light available is going to be very low and the trout can really only see darker colours, so a black or dark olive lure should be used. Weather plays a huge part in the selection of method and fly. Generally, overcast days are better than flat calm. This is because the trout will feel more secure in these conditions as they can't see them. In ideal, overcast conditions, the trout will likely be higher up in the water and a floating or midge tip line can be selected with some confidence. Flat calm or sunny days, can push the fish down in the water, so consider a DI3 or DI5 to get down to them. There is a theory that trout sink down lower in the water when it's sunny as the daphnia on which they feed will do the same, so the trout are actually just following the food, rather than making a conscious choice. Whatever the reason, the majority of the time sunny and flat calm means you should fish lower down and overcast and with a ripple, means you should fish higher up. Checking the weather in advance can give you a huge advantage in selecting which tackle to take with you. I heartily recommend the Met Office website and app. The information given there seems to be the most accurate you can get in my experience. Conclusion I've only touched the surface of this subject, but hopefully, I've given you food for thought. Of course, trout being trout, there's a good chance you can ignore the above information as they often do exactly the opposite of what you'd expect. However, personally, I'd follow the above approach first and experiment if that didn't work. Tight Lines ! Ellerdine Lakes Trout Fishery is in Shropshire, near Telford and is known as one of the best fisheries in the country. I'd never been and so I was pleased to be invited to visit Ellerdine by my good friend Paul Hawkins. Paul had been to Ellerdine three times recently and had given nothing but good reports of his experiences there, so I was keen to give it a go. An early start got me there at 8:00am and I was immediately impressed with the place. There are a total of 5 lakes, each stocked with fish ranging from 2-10lb+ Meadow Lake One nice touch was that one of the lakes is exclusively for under 14s and I'm assuming this is heavily stocked to encourage youngsters to take up the sport. I've not seen this before and I thought it was an excellent idea. In reality, the lakes all seemed to be well stocked and not just with the standard rainbow and brown trout. The managers at Ellerdine have taken the initiative to stock rainbows, browns, blues, tigers, sparctics and char and this gives the angler a unique experience in my view. On arrival, I was given a friendly greeted by Jason, who was running the venue on the day. On hearing it was my first time at Ellerdine, Jason kindly explained everything about the lakes, where to fish, what tactics to use etc. First impressions are so important these days and Jason certainly made a real effort to welcome me. I chose the £25 two fish ticket, but could have fished for a very reasonable £20 on a sporting ticket. The fishing lodge itself is guite a large building with a comfortable seating area with a log burner and a well-stocked shop. Add to this the ability to order freshly cooked food to be ready at a time that suits you, it was an excellent set-up. Ellerdine Fishery Shop Food ordered and more fly tying gear purchased than I really should have done, I was ready to fish. I'd been told to fish under the willow tree on Marsh lake as there had been some big catches on eggs and apps bloodworms under a bung there recently. However, I'd driven past Meadow lake on the way in and could see numerous rises on there, so chose to begin at the top of the left bay (as you look at it from the lodge) with the suggested egg and apps combination, although not under a bung, just straight lined. Despite a lot of movement on the lake, nothing was interested in what I was offering and it looked like the trout were starting to chase fry, so I switched to a Rainbow Body Black Zonker on the point with a slow figure of eight retrieve. The difference was immediate as a 2lb rainbow quickly snaffled the zonker on the drop. Rainbow Black Zonker This method worked well for a while with 2 more rainbows coming to the net and a couple lost (Ellerdine is a barbless or debarbed hook venue only) until the fish moved off. Given this, I thought I'd try the Marsh lake and found it a little tricky with no pulls at all. After half an hour, I returned to Meadow lake and tried buzzers under a bung with an Andy Hutson Pink Apps Bloodworm on the point. Andy Hutson Pink Apps This was clearly more to their taste and I was rewarded with a lovely 4lb spartic on a size 10 Grey Boy Buzzer. This was followed 2 minutes later with a 3lb spartic on the pink apps. Grev Boy Buzzer 4 Pound Spartic Trout This led to some frantic sport with 2 more landed and 3 lost. On two occasions, a large tiger trout grabbed my bung on the retrieve and swam off with it before letting it go at the bottom. I regretted not using a hooked bung at that point ! The time I'd ordered food for duly arrived and driven by hunger and the smell of bacon, I returned to the lodge for a cracking full English breakfast cooked by Jason, coming in at only £5.50. I'd also purchased the all-day, free refill tea/coffee offer for £1, which was a welcome alternative to lugging a flask around all day. Jason was also on hand to offer further advice and we headed off again to Meadow lake. By this time the wind had dropped to

nothing and the fish seemed to have switched off a little. We tried a few tactics unsuccessfully and decided to move to Cranymoor Lake On Cranymoor, the fry chasers were certainly in evidence, with crashing takes happening all over. I decided to switch to a single fly and put a Black Fritz on the point, still on a floater. I cast it out and let the fly sink for 10-15 seconds before using a slow figure of eight retrieve. The marabou tail of the black fritz gives it real movement in the water and resembles a tail swishing back and forth, especially on a slow retrieve. This with the extra flash in the tail combines to make it a deadly fly when the trout are on the fry. The next hour was fantastic as fish after fish launched themselves at the black fritz. It was almost a pull a cast, even when I changed lakes onto Lakemoor. I ended up giving black fritz flies to several other anglers near me as they all wanted to know what I was glad I had quite a few with me ! Black Fritz The day ended with me eatching 14, losing 5 and being snapped twice. A fantastic day by any reckoning. Overall, Ellerdine has everything, friendly staff, good facilities, great food and above all 5 well-stocked lakes with a range of breeds of hard fighting trout. I wholeheartedly recommend anyone to visit for a fantastic experience. Ellerdine Lodge can be contacted on Facebook or via their website I rarely take a trout home these days as I have a few in the freezer, but on the odd occasion that I do, I sometimes find them packed to the gills with snails. This can happen at any point in the season and can be found in fish caught on the top or deep down. There seems to be no pattern to it. there are actually over 5000 species of freshwater snail across the world. However, only 30 or so species live in the UK, ranging from the likes of the tiny Dwarf Pond Snail (Lymnaea stagnalis) or Great Ramshorn (Planorbarius corneus). Trout will munch on any of these but may struggle with a fully grown Great Ramshorn, as they can grow up to 3 cm in diameter. Great Ramshorn Snail Despite the staggering number of species, the life cycles of all freshwater snails are fairly similar. They lay their eggs out of the water, and the juvenile snails go back into the water after they hatch. Snails can lay eggs multiple times a year, sometimes as often as once or more each month. Depending on the species, there can be anywhere from 5 to 200 or even 600 eggs in a single bunch. The eggs typically hatch after 1 to 5 weeks. Once again, this depends on the species. It also depends on environmental factors, such as how warm or cold it is. A juvenile freshwater snail looks almost exactly like a very small adult. In some cases, their shell may be less curly, but in general, they look almost exactly like a very small adult. In some cases, their shell may be less curly here as they patrol the rocks and weed beds of their natural habitat. Often hoovering up vast numbers of them on one go. The question is, of course, what do we use to catch them if they're feeding on snails? It's worth noting that freshwater snails will be in two distinct places, either sat on vegetation grazing on the plant life or drifting on the current between patches of vegetation as they simply let go and let the water take them to a new feeding ground once the old one is depleted. This gives us two states that the snail can be in, on the bottom and floating foam snails, there are a couple of approaches. If the fish are on the top, I'd use one of our floating foam snails These have been explicitly designed to emulate a snail caught in the top film of the water and can be fished as you would a dry. Often as a single fly on a floating line and fished visually. Floating Snail Another approach for floating snails below the surface is to use a washing line with a buoyant fly on the point, such as a FAB with a couple of our wet snails on the droppers. The point fly keeps them that little bit higher in the water and can convince the trout that the snail is drifting to fresh pastures. Wet Snails or even a Coch-Y-Bonddu on the droppers. This can be fished very deep on a di7 and very slowly twiddled. Remember that the snails don't normally move much on the bottom and only really move with any speed on the current, so leaving it static or simply letting it drift in the current are equally valid approaches. Short Shank Green Montana Coch-Y-Bonddu Wet Fly I was lucky enough to get a chance to fish Toft Newton again this week. A warm, sunny day with a slight NW breeze greeted me and it was clearly going to be a day for dries. As always, I spent a few minutes watching them. There's were not it was pleased to see that there were plenty rising, but surprised to see that there were not it was clearly going to be a day for dries. As always, I spent a few minutes watching them. There's were not it was pleased to see that there were not it was pleased to see that the bank anglers weren't catching them. still quite a bit of weed near the banks, so I'd booked a boat for the day. I was, in fact, the only boat out. It's very easy to book both a boat and fishing ticket on the Toft website (see below) and I really don't know why all of the waters in the country don't know w book a boat etc. I didn't head out far, as the fish were lying no more than 30 yards out. I kept my distance from the bank anglers and started on a size 12 CDC Shuttle Cock from our exclusive Andy Huston range on a floating line. CDC Shuttle Cock from our exclusive Andy Huston range on a floating line. slow figure of eight retrieve, but I couldn't tempt a take. Often trout will swirl at a dry fly trying to sink it before taking it, so I wondered if they were preferring to feed slightly below the surface. Therefore, I switched to a washing line with a Candy FAB on the point with a Scruffy Diawl Bach on the bottom dropper and my personal favourite in the Andy Hutson range, the Red Holo Black Psuedo on the top dropper. I fished this on a very, very slow figure of eight retrieve and I was rewarded with a nice little brownie on the Psuedo. Small Brownie I spent the next few hours struggling to find fish, using various methods without any great success. I had around 5 fish to buzzers, snakes, humongoused with a nice little brownie on the Psuedo. etc, but nothing consistent. Around 2pm I took the boat back in and went to speak to Andy, in particular about the situation with the trout refusing the dries I had on. Andy advised me to go for a Yellow CDC Owl. I told him I'd tried this, but he suggested going down to a size 16. I'd only tried down to a size 12 and so I changed to a 16 as suggested. The result was incredible. Yellow CDC Owl As soon as the fly hit the water I had a huge take. I was so surprised, I struck too hard, missed it completely and tangled my leader into a birds nest. Why does this always happen when you find the fish and the method to catch them? A new 15ft 6lb leader fitted onto my floating line with the same CDC Owl on the point and I was off again. Thankfully, the fish hadn't deserted me and I was soon into fish after fish. To be honest, it got a bit embarrassing, as every time the fly hit the water, it was taken by a hungry trout. After about 15 fish, I moved off to try the fly elsewhere on the reservoir. One problem I did have was that every time a fish took the fly the CDC was too wet to float and it would sink like a stone, even with the use of floatant. I found the best way to dry the fly and restore it to maximum floatation was to use the rubber bank trick. This is described brilliantly in this video: Moving down the South bank of the reservoir to the point where the life belt is held on the bank. I started again with the CDC Owl. This spot is a particular hot spot because there's a large hidden outcrop of concrete jutting out into the water here and the trout like to lie alongside it and watch for food passing over it. True to form, the fly worked again and I came in around 5pm with a total of over 30 fish to the net, all of which were returned unharmed. It's amazing to think that going from a size 12 to a size 16 would have such a monumental effect on the fishing, but thanks to the sage advice of Andy Hutson, I had a cracking day at Toft. The Toft Newton online booking options can be found here Well, it's been a while since we posted a new blog entry and this is due to many reasons. Busy, busy Firstly, we've been extremely busy ! The past few months our existing loyal customers and many brand new customers and ma next morning. We've actually been very successful at achieving this too, as we've taken on new staff and streamlined our processes. This has led to some great feedback from our customers, which shows us we're getting it right time and time again. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank all our customers for their continued support. We really appreciate your custom. Shiny New Website We've also been busy creating a shiny new website and I'm pleased to say that you're looking at it now ! Among the many improvements we've made to the site is a brand new search facility which displays matching categories and products as you type them in, so you can easily and quickly see the item you're interested in without typing anything else. Try it, it's fun ! We've also taken brand new close up photos of most of our flies and this makes it very easy to see every detail, giving you peace of mind that our products continue to be of the very highest quality. Here's a few examples: Machair Claret Weighted Pheasant Tail Nymph Black CDC F Fly The website design is much easier to use now, with simple click and buy options from the home screen. Simply select the options you require, such as hook size and barbed/barbless and click add to basket and that's it. On our old website, you needed to visit the individual product page each time and now you don't need to. Of course, if you do want to visit the product page, just click on the product image or name and it'll take you there. . If you'd like to see any other changes to the website, please let us know via the Contact Us page New Product Range We've also been busy tying brand new patterns for the store. These innovative patterns are already proving deadly on the water as we've been trying them out ourselves at various waters across the country, including Draycote, Toft and Pennine. A couple of examples of these include : Olive Shipmans White Foam Rainbow Black Zonker To see all the new range, select "Latest Products" from the home menu or simply click here Toft Newton is fast becoming a big favourite amongst the UK fly fishing community and rightly so with reports of big bags and huge fish being caught daily at the venue. This was not always the case and under previous ownership, Toft's reputation suffered badly with minimal stocking and poor customer relations. However, with new ownership and the appointment of Andy Hutson to the role of Fishery Manager, and poor customer relations. clear change has taken place. There is little doubt that huge credit is due to the owners and Andy for turning this venue around to become one of the top fisheries in the country. Andy Hutson Photo Credit : David Edwards Photography Weekly stocking of large numbers of good quality brown and rainbow trout has turned the venue in to somewhere to catch fish rather than hope to catch. Red Butt Black Quill Buzzer The Andy Hutson Collection Andy has introduced initiatives like Free Tuition Mondays where he gives his time to help improve people's casting or fly presentation and he can always be relied upon to impart knowledge that will change your day at Toft for the better. Red Holo Brown Muskin The Andy Hutson Collection It is very common to see Andy Hutson fishing on the bank at Toft and absolutely bag up very quickly, even when others might be struggling. I discussed this with Andy and he said that he was catching on his own fly designs. I'm delighted to say that Andy agreed to exclusively share his collection with Trout Flies Direct, with a view to offering them for sale on the site. We readily agreed and and we have used those designs to tie identical versions of them and these are now fully approved by Andy and available on the site. CDC Shuttle Cock The Andy Hutson Collection To see the collection click on the "Andy Hutson Collection" button on the home page of the site to see each individual fly or click HERE to buy the entire collection in one. It's that time of year when buzzers and dries are being used throughout the country to great effect. Early evening dries are also producing some great and exhilarating fishing. When fish are taking buzzers and dries, which one do you use to maximise your catch ? The answer could be both ! There are two main methods of doing this, the New Zealand (or Klink 'n' Dink) and the suspended dropper. The New Zealand (or Klink 'n' Dink) and the suspended dropper. hence the name) as an indicator, like a bung, but also has a dropper below it. The dropper is tied directly to the dry fly and this gives a dry fly can then be watched for a potential take on the surface but also seen as a bung as it will suddenly shoot under the water if the dropper is taken. The dropper can be attached in one of two ways : Added Ring/Eye An added ring can be attached to the dry fly. This is the most secure way to do it, but does add an obstruction to the hook which may, potentially, interfere with hooking the fish. In addition, this unnatural addition may make the fish more wary of the dry fly. Direct Attachment The dropper can be tied directly to the curve of the hook on a dry fly using a uni knot or similar. This eliminates the issue of unnatural presentation of the dry fly, but may slip off the dry fly hook under pressure from a fish. How long you set the dropper depends entirely on where you 're fishing, where you choose to fish, but experiment with different length droppers until you find the fish. The Suspended Droppers until you find the fish are feeding and where you choose to fish, but experiment with different length droppers until you find the fish. Method An alternative to the New Zealand method is to suspend your dropper(s) between a point fly and your fly line. This is similar in some ways to the washing line, but the point fly (usually a FAB or a booby on a washing line) is replaced with a dry fly. This gives the dry fly method on the top of the water, but allows you to suspend (or hang) your droppers just below the surface in between the point fly and the fly line. Obviously, this approach would work best with a floating fly line and an especially buoyant one would really help, as this will support the weight of the dropper flies and reduce the strain on the dry fly on the point. The time to use this is when the fish are on or just below the surface, as the dry fly will attract the trout and the droppers will be right in front of them at their depth. Everything else is very similar to the droppers pulling it below the surface. You should, of course, keep an eye on the fly line too, as a take on the droppers could pull towards the point fly and not give a clear indication of a bite. A shooting fly line is an obvious sign you have a fish on. These are unusual methods and can, on their day, catch when nothing else is working. I wouldn't necessarily recommend you starting with either of these methods, but keep them in your back pocket for when you're struggling These simple, yet clever, methods can be the difference between a blank and a good day. Although Foremark is only half an hours drive away from me, for some reason I've not fished it for 10 years or so. I'm not sure why, but I guess it doesn't get much attention compared to the better known waters like Rutland and Draycote. I'm a member of the some reason I've not fished it for 10 years or so. I'm not sure why, but I guess it doesn't get much attention compared to the better known waters like Rutland and Draycote. I'm a member of the some reason I've not fished it for 10 years or so. I'm not sure why, but I guess it doesn't get much attention compared to the better known waters like Rutland and Draycote. I'm a member of the some reason I've not fished it for 10 years or so. I'm not sure why, but I guess it doesn't get much attention compared to the better known waters like Rutland and Draycote. I'm a member of the some reason I've not fished it for 10 years or so. I'm not sure why, but I guess it doesn't get much attention compared to the better known waters like Rutland and Draycote. I'm a member of the some reason I've not fished it for 10 years or so. I'm not sure why, but I guess it doesn't get much attention compared to the better known waters like Rutland and Draycote. I'm a member of the some reason I've not fished it for 10 years or so. I'm not sure why, but I guess it doesn't get much attention compared to the better known waters like Rutland and Draycote. I'm a member of the some reason I've not fished it for 10 years or so. I'm not sure why, but I guess it doesn't get much attention compared to the better known waters like Rutland and Draycote. I'm a member of the some reason I've not fished it for 10 years or so. I'm not sure why, but I guess it doesn't get much attention compared to the some reason I've not fished it for 10 years or some reason I've not fished it for 10 years or some reason I've not fished it for 10 years or some reason I've not fished it for 10 years or some reason I've not fished Derbyshire County Angling Club and this enables me to fish Foremark ten times per season completely free, so I decided to return to give it a go. This was also an opportunity to try out some of the flies from our new range we're about to launch (more on this soon!). Foremark is a barbless only water and this was perfect, as our new selection is entirely barbless. I'd heard rumours of big catches on buzzers recently with a good head of resident fish, including good sized brownies, so my intention was to try that method. Arriving at the site, I was greeted by a a helpful chap in the office called Alistair, who explained everything about the water, where I should try and what tactics to use, etc. He mentioned that the recent heavy rains had pushed the water level up and that the fish generally head for deeper water in that scenario. This wasn't great news, given that I was bank fishing, so I decided to start with lures. Looking out from the car park, the boat pontoon juts out straight in from of you and unusually, fishermen are allowed to fish from the pontoon. Unfortunately, there was already two anglers on the pontoon meant that I couldn't join them. Instead I set up on the bank to the right of the pontoon meant that I couldn't join them. Instead I set up on the bank to the right of the pontoon and began to cast out on a floating line with a Gold & Black Humungous on the point and a Sweetcorn FAB on the top dropper of a fifteen foot long leader. Gold & Black Humungous That area of the bank is relatively shallow and as such, I waded out in my wellingtons to just below half way up them. This was the point where I realised that my boots leak.... Giving up on a bad job, I looked around and noticed fish moving to the left of the pontoon. I moved my gear down and continued with the same set up. Despite fish topping around me, there was no interest in the flies, so I presumed that they were a little further down. I switched to a DI 3 and used the same flies again. I immediately had a pull and missed it, but cast out again and hooked a good fighting fit 3 1/2lb rainbow on the Gold and Black Humungous. Three or four casts later, and I was in to another rainbow on the FAB hitting the net at just over 4lb. By this time, one angler had left the pontoon and gone home and the other had joined me on the bank. I could see that the fish were moving a little further out now, so I switched to on to the pontoon. I was correctly stopped from doing this by Alistair, who insisted I wear a life jacket on the pontoons and he supplied one straight away. Great safety awareness and great service. A young man called Geraint had also moved it's way free of the barbless hook right at the net. The fish were clearly here for the taking. However, with the wind rapidly changing direction and strength, it became difficult to ascertain the correct method and the fish turned off for a good while. I eventually opted for a DI3 with two boobies, a McKaye Booby on the dropper and a White Fritz Cat Booby on the dropper and a slow retrieve and was suddenly in to something very special indeed. McKaye Booby I was trying out a Guideline Reach 7/8wt 11ft Switch fly Rod and it was a big brown, but after a good fight, a cracking 6lb rainbow hit the surface. Alistair and Geraint had seen the action and came over to watch and Geraint helpfully netted it for me. It was an absolutely cracking fish and I was delighted to catch it on the Fritz Cat Booby. The wind eventually dropped and the trout started topping more freely and I switched to a Black Booby Hopper on the point with a Black Standard Thoraxed Buzzer on the dropper. It took two casts to get a take on the buzzer, but as is often the case, the trout chose the exact moment to take as I was pouring a coffee and I missed it. Geraint was now getting takes, some of which were on the Gold & Black Humungous I'd given him, so things were going well for everyone. I packed up soon afterwards leaving Geraint on the pontoon still fishing, I hope he caught after I'd left. The fishing was great from a quality, if not quantity, point of view and I was very happy with the session and the performance of the new flies. I'm looking forward to putting the entire collection on the site very soon. I'd like to end by saying that the whole experience at Foremark as greatly enhanced by the friendly and knowledgeable presence of Alistair. He runs the place with his Dad and clearly has a real passion for the sport. I would urge anyone to visit Foremark for a friendly, helpful welcome in beautiful surroundings with some quality fishing. I was hoping to be able to write this article after triumphantly winning the 16th May Sierra Pairs heat at Blithfield, but it was not to be. Regular readers will know that I fish Blithfield a lot and have recently been lucky enough to fish it four times in two weeks. On three of these occasions I've fished alone. With boat partners and once I fished alone. With boat partners and once I fished alone. With boat partners we managed 40+, 50+ and 47 to the boat, on my own, I landed 21 and lost many more. Given this, both my and my boat partner Paul's hopes were high. The Scierra Pairs runs heats all over the country and the top 2 or 3, depending on venue, go through to the final at Rutland on the 19th April Eyebrook Reservoir - Sunday 11th April Chew Valley - Sunday 25th April Toft Newton - Sunday 25th April Toft Newton - Sunday 9th May Blithfield Reservoir - Sunday 16th May Blithfield Reservoir - Sunday 16th May Blithfield Reservoir - Sunday 9th May Blithfield Reservoir - Sunday 16th May Blithfield Reservoir - Sunday 16th May Blithfield Reservoir - Sunday 16th May Blithfield Reservoir - Sunday 9th May Blithfield Reservoir - Sunday 16th May Blithfield Reservoir - Sunday 9th May Blithfield Reservoir - Sunday 16th May Blithfield Reservoir - Sunday 9th May Blithfield Reservoir - Sunday 16th May Blithfield Reservoir - Sunday 9th May Blithfield Reservoir - Sunday 16th May Blithfield Reserv Water - Sunday 30th May Harelaw Trout Fishery - Saturday 5th & Sunday 6th June Wimbleball - Saturday 5th & Sunday 18th July Draycote Water - Sunday 18th July Draycote Water - Sunday 18th July Clencorse Rsv- Sunday 18th June Sweethope Loch - Sunday 18th July Draycote Water - Sunday 18th July Clencorse Rsv- Sunday 18th June Sweethope Loch - Sunday 18th July Draycote Water - Sunday 18th July Clencorse Rsv- Sunday 18th July Draycote Water - Sunday 18th July Clencorse Rsv- Sunda competition was to catch and kill 10 fish and return to the boat lodge as soon as possible. A weight time bonus of 8 oz would then be added for each 15 minutes left of the competition, which was a little chaotic with one boat still setting up when the whistle blew, but we were off. from previous visits that the fish were close to the bank and mostly on the North shore and it appeared that most of the other boats knew that too as a large flotilla headed straight for the Concrete Bowl area. We didn't want to get involved in the scrum for the Bowl and thought that the presence of so many boats would put the fish off feeding, so instead headed just around the corner to a point between the boat lodge and Ten Acre Bay. We knew there had been a recent stockies, but with the time bonus. we thought we might be able to bag up quickly and get back in to a hefty weight bonus Only one other boat had the same idea and after 20 minutes of no pulls between either boat we both moved on. Paul and I trying and failing to find fish on the South Shore. With the armada of boats still in the Concrete Bowl, we decided to try the dam wall, a favourite spot in the Autumn and Winter and we hoped the Spring too. Again, this tactic failed us, with no fish taking. There were a fair few of fish topping and a switch to dries looked like a good choice, but again they weren't allowed to anchor according to the competition rules, so we repeated a drift past the sailing club on the North shore a few times, picking up one or two fish on each pass, mainly on Ally McCoist and Hot Head Cats Whiskers. Sadly, before we reached our ten fish, the sailing boats came out on to the water and as per fishery rules, we had to move off and head further down the North Shore. There was a lot of bank anglers on the North shore, so we had to keep well away from them, meaning that we couldn't drift too close. The bankies were catching regularly though so we kept as close as we could not be said for all of the competition boats though and one in particular moved far too close to one bank angler on several occasions and got a deserved telling off from the bankie. The same boat (you know who you are and I wont embarrass you by naming you) also powered straight through our drift on one occasion, so a few lessons in boat etiquette wouldn't go amiss there... I was still on lures and ripping them on a DI3 and getting good success with regular takes and Paul was also doing well on 3 buzzers and a FAB under a bung. Several lost fish later, mainly caused by trying to rush them in to the boat, we finally hit our total of ten fish and headed in to return at 1:15pm, giving us a 7lb 8/16oz time bonus. Unfortunately, when we arrived back, we'd been beaten in by nine other boats and it was clear we weren't going to gualify. Our combined bags totalled 16lb 13/16oz giving us a total of 24lb 5/16oz with the time bonus. The match had started at around 9:45 and the first team back, Mark Dixon & Mike Harrison were not as heavy as others, leaving them just outside gualification in fourth place. We ended up with a respectable, if disappointing, 8th place and we were pleased to see our old friend Yousaf Dar and his boat partner Rick Ruff taking 1st place. fish, but we tried something else and took a gamble instead, which didn't work. We lost a lot of fish trying to get them to the net too quickly. Normally, we play fish generally a tricky process. In our attempts to get fish in to reach the ten fish target, we lost a lot of them. This cost us a good 2 hours or 4lbs of time bonus. We killed the first ten fish to take and, again with hindsight, we should have returned these and kept fishing for bigger fish. We didn't switch tactics quick enough or accurately enough. When one of us is catching and the other angler should change to exactly what the first angler is doing. Same line, same flies, same leader and dropper length, same retrieve. We didn't do this, we tried something different to see if it worked. We should have both been on what we knew worked. So we had lessons learned and a little disappointment at not qualifying, but we also had another good day's fishing at Blithfield and a well organised, friendly competition, which was enjoyed by all. The full results of the heat are shown below. After another great day at Blithfield recently, with 47 fish to the boat, it was clear that the fishing there was on fire. I was interested to note how our catch returns matched others on the water at the same time, to see how we were doing. So I took a sneak peak at the catch returns posted by the day's anglers. We were the last 3 trips to Blithfield had given us 40+, 50+ and 40+ to the boat, I was expecting some bumper scores on the cards. However, I was very surprised to see returns, especially given our own success. I raised this with Claire, the super friendly organiser of the boat and bank tickets (among many other things) and asked her why she thought this might be. Claire's said that she felt that the number of flies and methods we'd tried had enabled us to find the magic combination to push our catches up. I've thought about this guite as lot, as both my regular boat partner and I have been accused of spending too much time out of the water changing flies and hence not actively covering fish. However, our successes seem to fly (no pun intended) in the face of this theory. Whenever I change a fly, I put the old one in a sealed plastic box I've dedicated to used flies. This stops them passing any moisture they still hold on to other flies which are nicely dry in my boxes. When I get home (usually the next day, as I'm lazy) I take all the flies out and air dry them before returning them to their correct boxes. To investigate the extent of my chopping and changing during the last fishing trip I counted the flies in the "wet" box showing just how many I'd tried throughout the day. The results were a surprising 47 flies ! Admittedly, some were just changed due to the voracious teeth of trout damaging them or, in the case of boobies, they'd lost their full buoyancy, but the majority were different flies. This really brought it home to me that changing often is sometimes a good thing. On a water like Blithfield, with a huge head of fish, changing will mean a catch of 10, rather than 2. Changing often when fishing on a more challenging water might be the difference between a good day and a blank. There's no guarantee that the flies and tactics that worked on a water yesterday will work today, so keep trying different types, colours and bouyancy flies until you find what they want. It's not just changing flies of course, changing fl difficult circumstances, it's worth using the speed of the boat in the wind to your advantage. The best way to do this is to put on a sinking line, like a di5 or di7, with two boobies or one on the point and a FAB on the top dropper and simply let them drift behind the boat. The drifting of the boat in the wind will pull the flies through the water at a good rate and the sinking lines will hold the flies down to the bottom of the water, with the boobies pulling the leader up just above the weed beds. This is often where the larger fish lie, so hold on to your rod ! If simply drifting doesn't work, let the drift pull your full line out and then strip or roly roly it back in. The speed of the retrieve, added to the speed of the boat will tempt even the most stubborn trout. The point I'm trying to get over in this article is that if you're not catching or you're catching very few, even when you've moved around the water, don't be afraid to switch things around. Changing flies, fly lines, and retrieves can all help improve your catch returns.

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