

Dropback

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Joint RO
Dave Fish
63 Ashurst Drive
Shepperton
Middx
TW17 0JH
Home Phone
01932 562929
E-mail
DFish66557@aol.com

Joint RO
Neil Depledge
48 Feltham Road
Ashford
Middx
TW15 1DH
Home Phone
01784 243117
E-mail
NDDepl@aol.com

RO's lines

It is now two weeks since I returned from Scotland and the annual Pike trip north of the border. I am typing this in a state of depression, so beware these ramblings, and to add to that state of despair I have spent this weekend in Manchester at the RO's working dinner.

The trip to Scotland was most pleasant, as was the weather. Hopefully you will read about this, if anyone can be bothered, in an article penned by someone else.

I have spent some time looking back over what the 'region' has achieved over the past year, and also looking forward to what we can expect for the next year.

So, what did we do in '97-'98?

As RO I received a couple of calls regarding posters that had appeared in several tackle shops in the Hampshire area relating to a proposed pike cull on the Basingstoke Canal. They were attempting to drum up anglers to fish for the pike and assist in their removal. This is always a bit of a nightmare, as every 'fisher person' for miles becomes a pike angler for a day. I rang and spoke to a tackle shop owner that I know in Hampshire and he confirmed that he had been asked to display the poster but had not in fact put it up. Due to this being some way outside the area that I would consider to be my 'jurisdiction' I contacted the Guildford RO and spoke to him about it. I had previously been to the Basingstoke Canal AGM, a couple of years ago, with the intention of defending the pike from another cull. At that time it was pointless as the test nettings carried out by the NRA proved beyond any doubt that there were far too many small pike in the stretches they had sampled. Fortunately the club at that time had agreed to heed the NRA advice and return all fish over 10lbs. Hopefully again the club will see some sense.

What other things have happened?

In conjunction with Vicarage Angling Club we ran a junior teach-in on their Brooklands Lake. A prolific pike venue that never fails to turn up the goods, and, just in case, we had Jeff along to ensure that the pike played ball. Guess what? They did not. It was a real grueller and only in the dying seconds did Jeff pulled out the tattiest, sickest pike I have ever seen. Unfortunately by then most of the kids had gone home. We will have to give it another go, and hope for more co-operation from the pike.

Once again we have had to move to a new venue, although I think you will all agree it is most suitable. Apart from that the year was fairly uneventful. Boring really!

Looking to the future, I must admit I am running out of ideas and think the time may be drawing close to hand over to someone else.

We have a few guest speakers lined up and a number of other items to keep you occupied. I won't say keep your brains active, as I know from experience you leave them at home when you come to PAC meetings. Well it seems that way sometimes.

I have just been passed the latest issue of 'Dropback' and looking through it the only contributors are Neil, Ron and I. If that doesn't prove my point nothing will. Come on lets see YOU do something for your region!

That's enough drivel from me.

Tight Lines.

Dave

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Thorpe Park

We arrived at about 6-45am and instead of going over the bridge, turning left and heading towards the Thorpe Belle, we went right and walked round to a small bridge. Crossing the bridge I set up on a small point so that I could cover the water on both sides. I set up a paternoster for the margins and a free roving float rig. Before starting to fish, I decided to walk back to the Belle and get some livebaits. I was gone only about 20 minutes but as I returned I could see Bill was landing a fish for my Dad. I hurried round and the fish was weighed and photographed. At about 12lbs it wasn't a bad start. My dad then decided to adopt a different approach and went for a walk round wobbling deadbaits and lure fishing. I put a live trout on the paternoster rig and a large dead skimmer on the float rod.

After about three hours Dad had caught another jack and then the bloke behind me moved, leaving behind him half a herring on the bank. I walked over, picked it up and put it into my bait bucket. I knew there was some weed on the bottom so I set my bait at about 7 to 8 feet deep. As the wind was blowing straight towards me I was able to cast out the bait and drift it back slowly over about 20 minutes. After about an hour of this I made an extra hard effort and cast out as far as I could. Ten minutes later I also cast the paternostered bait further out and as I was adjusting the float I noticed that my drifting float had disappeared. Not knowing how long it had been under I decided to strike straight away but as I felt the rod bend over I was convinced I had only hooked into a jack as it didn't fight at all. However, as it was netted it was obviously a new PB and possibly a twenty.

Bill tried to lift it out of the water and nearly broke his brand new net. On the unhooking mat it looked huge. Hooked cleanly in the scissors, it was quickly unhooked, slipped into the sling and lifted on the scales. The weight including the sling was 21lbs and knowing that the sling weighed exactly 1lb I wanted a second opinion before I could accept that I had caught my first twenty. So I put the fish back into the net and called my Dad round from across the lake. I sat there for five minutes wondering whether the weight was correct or whether it would be an agonising ounce short of the magic figure. Either way it would be a personal best, but a twenty would be very special. My mind was put to rest when Dad arrived and weighed the fish in his sling which does not register on the scales. This time the weight was exactly 20lbs, I started to jump about. I was well happy.

I was on a high for the rest of the day although I didn't catch anything else. That, however, mattered little as this was not only a PB but it was the first fish I had ever caught at Thorpe Park.

Tony Stone

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Even More Boat Bits

And so the game goes on. There seems to be a never-ending list of things to make fishing from a boat easier and safer. Having covered the buying the boat bit and the basic essentials we now move on to the other items that make life a float easier. Some of these items you can make for yourselves.

Rowlocks

The nightmare bit of every boat I have ever hired. I have for many years been trying to find a perfect rowlock. Some years ago I went to Ireland and the boats were fitted with "thole-pins". The oars were mounted on these pins which went through the oar stem and then the top of the pin folded over to prevent the oar sliding off. The oar stayed in place, even when you let go of it and it was almost silent when you were rowing. I have never seen these used in this country or for sale. Eventually I will get someone to make a pair for me. The oars are different also. I have seen two types, the first were square instead of round and the section where the pins went through was slightly thicker. The others were like the traditional round oars with a wooden block attached in the middle, where the pins went through. These appeared to work, but I was concerned that this would be a weak point.

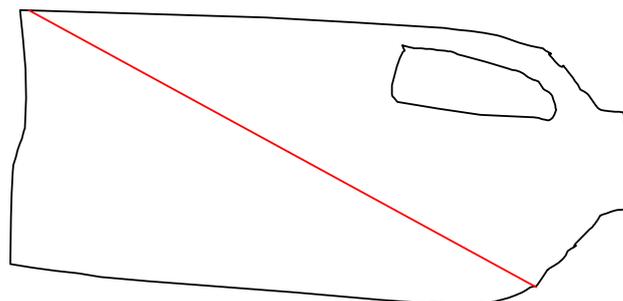
The main thing with traditional oars, and they are essential as you never know when your outboard is going to give up, is that the oar and collars are a snug fit in the rowlock. You can reduce the noise from the rowlocks by putting a felt tap washer between it and the gunwale, or a piece of rubber inner tube.

I have seen rowlocks with holes drilled in each side at the top of the arms and a pin which goes through and fastens across the top of the rowlock, thereby trapping the oar. I have only ever seen these in a small size and have yet to see a set of oars narrow enough to fit in these rowlocks, and the oars would be so thin they would be in danger of snapping.

I have also seen rowlocks that curved slightly over at the top on each side, in this case it may be possible to trap the oar in the rowlock with a cable tie. I have recently purchased a set of rowlocks that actually clamp on to the oar, they are a little small in diameter but by replacing the bolts at the top and bottom of the clamp they can be adapted to fit a larger oar. I purchased these from Bass Pro in the US. I think they may solve the problem and the bonus is they can be quickly removed and fitted to other oars, providing the row lock pin that goes in to the gunwale is ½ inch diameter. This should not be a problem as this is supposed to be the standard size. Will my nightmares be over?

Bailers

An essential in any boat is a way of getting the water out, you will be amazed at how quickly the boat fills up when it is raining, then there are all the other times when you kick the bait bucket over. Most importantly of all it can double as a specimen bottle. Preventing the precarious act of trying to either kneel on the gunwales or stand up and piss over the side. Difficult at the best of times (Unless you're built like Ron) and damn right dangerous if its windy. A bailer is easy to make. All you need is a 4 or 6 pint, or the metric equivalent, plastic milk carton and a craft knife. Having first washed the carton out you then lie the carton on its side and cut diagonally across the carton and around one side of the bottom and then across the base of the neck. If you have done it right you have now got two bailers. (See diagram below) The angled line is where you cut, not forgetting to do both sides and the top and bottom.



You can use any type of plastic container really, as long as it is not too small. You might need to get rid of a lot of water in a hurry, especially if you managed to hole your boat. Also its nice to have the pot overflow when you're having a piss, all adds to the flavour of the sausages I suppose.

Unhooking Mats

This is another essential item for the boat, many of you will have mats that you use on the bank and these can be used in a boat. I prefer to use something different in my own boats. Although if in a hire boat I use my bank unhooking mat, which also doubles as a seat cushion, thereby preventing boaters bum. More about this condition later.

The unhooking mat that I use in my larger boat is a full size gym mat which is about 6'X4", I bought this at a car boot sale for £2. It is ideal as an unhooking mat; it has a waterproof cover, which is also very strong. It is about 2" thick and not only serves its purpose for unhooking but also covers almost the whole floor area and acts as sound proofing. It is unfortunate that I did not buy the other two mats that the bloke was selling, I could have cut them down to fit the smaller boat and also the cuddy area on the larger boat.

There are other ways of padding the bottom of the boat for unhooking and soundproofing. I have seen boats with the entire inside lined with carpet underlay, the foam type, this having been stuck to the floor with glue. I think the idea of the foam underlay is good, but I would not stick it down. The reasons for this are that it can then be removed for drying purposes and eventually it will need replacing and if stuck will be difficult to peel off. It's hard enough to get off the floor in the lounge after a few years, without it being stuck down. If you cut the underlay so that it only goes halfway up the side of the boat, it will stay in place without folding back on itself. The other alternative is carpet, short pile carpet is best and again its best just to lay it in the boat having cut it so that it only goes half up the sides of the boat. I can assure you it is best to have whatever you use as removable, If you don't believe me, come and have a sniff of my boat after its week in Scotland. (It's even worse after being left for a week in the sun).

Oddments of carpet can be bought cheaply from carpet stores, and then you have a selection of colours and patterns. I have bought carpets from car boot sales for as little as 50 pence, and also used old carpet from my own house and off cuts of the new carpets.

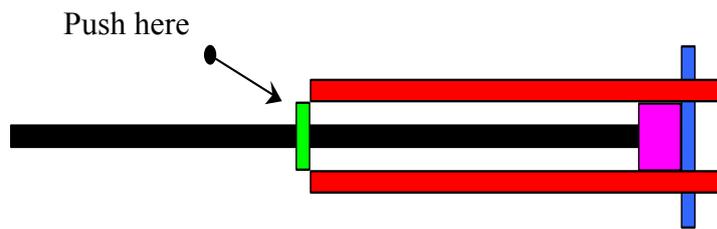
There are other things that can be used, I have seen boats lined with towelling material, expensive, but flash. You can use anything as long as it protects the pike from damage when in the boat.

Landing Nets

I have now developed my hand landing techniques to almost perfection and rarely use a landing net from a boat. But I always carry one. Whether lure fishing or bait fishing, once the pike has come to the surface I quickly decide as to whether the fish is sizeable and justifies weighing and photographing. If it is not, I will hand land the fish, but not remove it from the water, I will then unhook the fish at the side of the boat. Holding it until it has recovered and can swim away strongly, is particularly important in the summer. If on having got hold of the fish at the side of the boat it is found that the hook hold is in an awkward position. It is no problem to lift the fish into the boat, on to the unhooking mat, and unhook it in a more controlled environment.

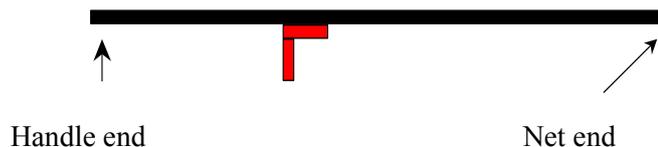
The landing net that I carry in my boat is an older version of the "Fastnet". Even this has been slightly modified in that about 2 foot was cut off the handle. This is a landing net of the triangular type. The arms run through a guide at the top of the pole and the base of the arms are attached to the centre pole. To put the net up you just push the arms up the pole and the arms automatically spread and lock at the base (where the spreader block would normally be). The mesh of the net is large, but not knotted. I find this better in the boat, it does not bring so much water aboard with the fish, and

also it is not so awkward to handle in flowing water.



It is possible to use just the net and arms of an ordinary large triangular specimen net to just scoop the fish up. This method is only possible if there are two of you in the boat, unless you learnt the old army trick. (How do you hold the rod and the net)? I have also seen triangular nets in use, which have had the pole cut down or if of the screw in type a strong bank rest is used as the handle. All these methods are adequate and cheaper than buying a purpose designed net. There are a couple of tips that I have learnt.

Fill the handle of the net with either cork or polystyrene so that it floats, if you drop it over the side. If you are fishing alone it is worth fitting an "L" bracket to the handle, this enables you to rest the handle on the gunwale without the net sliding over the side. The "L" bracket on my net pole is easily removable; it is held in place by a wide strip of cycle inner tube, like a very strong elastic band. The actual bracket is made from a squashed and bent section of ½ inch copper pipe.

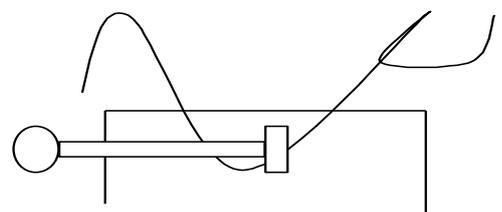


It is also now possible to buy specialist boat nets, these are large round nets with large heavy mesh. I personally prefer a triangular net because they are collapsible where as round nets are fixed. Space in the boat is always at a premium.

Boat Rod Rests

The easiest and simplest boat rest is the gunwale of the boat; the rod is laid across both gunwales. A simple and fairly easy method but unfortunately it takes up a lot of room. The next simple method that I have seen used effectively is a length of cord tied around the seat or other fixed object in the boat with a loop just big enough at the other end to go over the rod butt. The length of the cord has to be set so that when the rod is rested on the gunwale and the cord are allowed to take the tension the rod points slightly upwards.

We now move on to other methods, lengths of notched car fan belt attached to the gunwale to prevent the rods sliding along, ordinary rod rests clamped to the gunwale, the list is endless. I will now move on to the purpose built boat rod rest. There are a number of models available commercially some are fixed rests and some are fully adjustable. The Tackle Shop markets both a fixed and adjustable design. There is also another company that markets a state of the art aluminium fully adjustable model; this retails at about £40, expensive. Some years ago I had some made up by a Blacksmith in Chertsey. I bought some plain G clamps from a hard ware shop, these were not the cast type, but were a flat length of steel about ½ inch in width that had been bent to an elongated 'U' shape with a simple screw mechanism at the end of the 'U'. To the top of this I had the blacksmith weld a curved length of steel rod, one end of which had been curved down and the other end curved up. The distance between the two ends was about 12 inches. See diagram :



The finished items were then painted with Hammerite paint and plastic tubing was cut over each curved end to protect the rods. To protect the boat I then cut a length of cycle inner tube that was pushed over the flat end of the 'g' clamp and another piece of inner tube was cut and placed over the end of the crew head. This design worked perfectly well until there was a swell on the water, the problem then was that the rod tips would constantly dip into the water. So we developed the mark 2, this time the front loop of the rest was set slightly higher than the rear one and this worked perfectly. I still use these rests today, although a few have been lost over the years. The only problem with these is that due to the way the clamp works, if the gunwale sides are not vertical or as near as, the grip is less than perfect and they can spring off; this is how you lose them. The other disadvantage is that they are not adjustable. It would be a fairly simple job to build one that was. These clamps cost about £6 each to make that includes the purchase of the 'G' clamp.

You can buy the very expensive ones that I mentioned earlier which are fully adjustable in every plain and also the clamp is pivotal as well. This enables them to be clamped to an angled surface. But I think the cost is over the top, plus you need 4 and I would rather spend that sort of money on other things.

I am now using a completely different design. This is called a 'Roberts' adjustable rest. It is a tube, which the rod is slid into and then a locking collar is twisted around to hold the rod in. The tube is mounted on an adjustable stem, which fits into a knurled holder attached to the gunwale. It is fully adjustable in every plain and securely holds the rod even when trolling in rough weather. The other good thing about these is that you can buy additional mounts enabling a number of boats to be fitted with them. Unfortunately these were imported from the US and I have not seen them offered for sale in the UK.

That's more than enough for this article. Watch out for the next instalment.

Dave Fish

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Clean Fishing

In the last edition of Dropback Neil raised the issue of cleanliness on the bank and the dreaded Salmonella bug. The transference of this and any other bug, from bait to hand to mouth is obviously avoided at all times. I can give testament to this as in January of this year I was struck down by this God-awful bug. Ten days of the worst illness I have ever suffered bar none. Twice I was admitted to hospital as an emergency patient, delirious and kept in isolation from other patients.

But I digress. I wrote this article to tell you about a product I found for keeping my hands clean. I discovered 'Clean Touch' whilst looking for an antiseptic hand wash in Tesco's. 'Clean Touch' is an anti-bacterial hand gel that claims to kill 99% of germs within 15 seconds. The ingredients of the gel are water, denatured ethyl alcohol, Glycerine, Carbomer and Lemon fragrance. Requiring no water or towels, it costs £3-99 for 250 ml and £1-99 for a smaller 60 ml bottle. You use a thumbnail sized amount and rub your hands together until they are dry. It takes about 15 secs and leaves your hands smelling of lemons.

I have used 'Clean Touch' for about a month now and I am impressed enough to keep using it. If the claims on the packaging are true then you cannot afford to miss this chance of keeping those deadly bugs at bay. Safe fishing!

Darren Stone

Loch Ken with Hairbugs and Hercules.

I have just spent a week in May at Loch Ken with the lads from Walton-on-Thames PAC. Everything was first class and there was even some pike fishing to be had.

Organised by Dave Fish, it all went faultlessly. The Walton PAC army moved out and arrived exactly at the predicted time without mishap. My only moan was the weather. It was perfect for family outings, 71-73OC and only a light breeze. I would have preferred dull with the occasional shower. The water clarity was about 8 feet with a slight clouding from movement, after all this really a river.

My first sortie was a couple of hours after arriving. Fishing under an old railway bridge, my 7" fly was hit by a pike of about 7 lbs that fought like mad. Just beyond the bridge was a large cabbage patch about 40 yds long and 10 yds wide. It shouted 'Pike'. Walking over I cast out and had nothing for two hours solid casting. I later found out that the braid brigade had already attacked the swim and the cabbage had been cut from its roots about 18" under the surface. I did see a nice shoal of roach move out from under cover, but that was all I saw until Tuesday.

Moving along the bank I waded out about 60 ft to find the drop off and had several niggling taps to the Hairbug. I found that a million small unidentifiable fish were following the fly. I enjoyed the afternoon bombarding the deeps with big sinking plugs but again nothing. After dinner I joined Ron and Dave out in their boat although I am not really a boat angler.

Wednesday found me fishing a small deep bay, dropping the bug out over some sparse weed. I had two small pike follow but neither made a grab. Still, seeing is believing, so I moved back to the bridge and immediately had a fish hit my surface bug but it didn't hang on. Dinnertime with Chef Fish was followed by a lift over the Loch to spend two more hours of blanking. However, all this casting had now got my fly casting arm properly tuned.

I moved to a bigger bay a bit farther round and had two tiny jacks of about a pound each. At the end of the bay I found a nice platform in about a foot of water. As I looked back across the bay to my right there was only about 2 ft of water whereas to my left it dropped away into the deeps. After about half an hour of casting the lure stopped and I immediately thought I was in the weed. I started to pull the line by hand only to realise that something was moving towards the centre of the water in a leisurely fashion. I quickly released the line and as it tightened carefully struck into the fish. What a laugh, my 9 weight rod bent from about 18" above the handle as line continued to spool out. Decision time, the backing line knot appeared (I only have about 150 ft of line in total) so I held the fly line in my hand and pointed the rod. After a good stretch the 16lbs link parted and I breathed a sigh of relief. If I ever get there again it will be with a 12 weight rod and about 100 yds of backing. That evening in Dave's boat I tried ultra fast retrieves with a surface lure, no success but you have to keep trying.

Friday found me at another bay with a jumble of rocks on the shoreline. Here I had some nice follows on the hairbug, but no takes. I moved back to the cabbages but still no action. Amazing! Another move found me back at the bridge where I was nearly mown down by a Hercules aircraft, flying just 60 ft or so above the surface of the Loch. I now understand why you don't see many 11 metre poles up here.

At the end of the day there was not much to show on the bank but as I said earlier I had been forewarned and I would do it again anytime, but with a bit more power in the fly department.

Cec White

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Filmtips

- 1 Don't let film lie around in a warm place, such as a radiator or on the dashboard of your car, the heat can affect the emulsion. Always keep your film in a dry, cool place away from direct light. Some types of professional film must be kept chilled until just before loading, always consult the instructions. When loading film into your camera always avoid loading in direct sunlight as this can cause flare on the first few frames.
- 2 Use colour negative film if you want to have prints made from your photographs. Prints are easy to display and extra copies are cheap.
- 3 Use reversal film if you want colour slides. You will need either a hand viewer or a slide projector but results are usually much better, definition is sharper, colours brighter. Prints can be made from slides but are more expensive than normal prints.
- 4 Use a film rated below 100 ISO if you want really fine detail with minimum grain. Generally the ambient light will have to be quite bright for this film.
- 5 Use a medium film between 100 and 200 ISO if you will encounter various lighting conditions, or will be leaving the film in your camera a month or more.
- 6 Use fast film rated at 400 ISO for poor, dull, unpredictable conditions. These films are much more sensitive to light and slight miscalculations in exposure are less critical than with slower films. One disadvantage of fast films occurs when you make prints larger than 10" by 8". Large prints can show lots of grain, which can affect the quality of the image.
- 7 Having decided which brand of film you like, stick to it. The difference in colour reproduction between brands is very apparent when you see them together, especially when comparing slide films.
- 8 Try to anticipate the light conditions you will encounter and choose your film accordingly, especially if your camera doesn't allow you to change film mid-roll.
- 9 Have colour film processed as soon as possible. If you leave it more than a month, the dyes may fade.
- 10 Don't be afraid to complain to your processor about poor quality prints when they are plainly not your fault. Any reputable firm will make a new set of prints for you at no extra cost. If you suspect the processor is at fault, arm yourself with a second opinion from an experienced photographer and, with this backup, approach the lab.
- 11 One off or limited offer deals, offering 'free film' with processing should be avoided because this film may simply be old stock lying in the company's stockroom. Often you may not even know what brand it is. You are better off sticking to known companies, who provide film with processing, as their high turnover ensures fresh film.

Happy Snappin'

Darren Stone

Penfold the Pike

by Dai Ghoty

It was mid February when Penfold first saw the light of day as a tiny pike fry. Her mother, a grand patriarch, a huge pike of some 45lbs, had laid her eggs in the back of the shallow weedy, reed-lined bay earlier in the month. She had been escorted to the bay by a number of smaller suitors, as she had done for so many years before. For a number of these unfortunate male pike this was to be their last trip to the spawning bay, the big female pike was always ravenously hungry after the rigours of spawning, and these smaller brethren went some way to appeasing this hunger. She had learnt at a young age the benefits of cannibalism, as would some of her offspring. Having completed her spawning she left the bay and moved to the deeper water to await the arrival of other spawning fish, pike, perch, roach and anything else edible that happened to pass by.

Penfold stayed deep in the weed bed at the centre of the bay away from any danger, although she did not at this stage understand what these were. Instinct alone was her guide. After a few days she began to get a pain inside her body, the yolk sac, her food supply was spent. Instinct again guided her and she began to feed on the tiny water fleas, grubs and snails that were in abundance in the weed bed where she was hiding. She began to grow and as she did she became more and more aware of her surroundings. She sensed tiny movements in the water, these at first confused her, and then one day she saw another tiny pike fry in the weed bed. When she looked more closely she noticed more and more of these tiny fish. She watched them moving around in the weed around her.

Then early one morning one of the tiny fry came very close. The tiny fry was slightly above her and she struck out grasping it across the body, how dare it come into her space. The tiny fry wriggled for all its worth, but to no avail. Soon its movements became more and more weak and when Penfold sensed the time was right she turned the tiny pike headfirst and swallowed it whole.

Over the next few days she became aware of other much larger movements in her environment, then she saw them, huge silver coloured fish with red and orange fins and others with silver and black stripes down the sides of their bodies. She cowered down in the weeds, pushing her self back into the deepest darkest part away from these huge fish. From this hiding place she watched as these huge fish bumped and cavorted in the bay. She noticed small round translucent objects dropping down through the water, some of these settled on the weed just above her head and when she thought it was safe she nosed up towards them. She pushed one with the tip of her snout; the strange thing stuck to her nose. She thrashed about a little, mindful of attracting the attentions of the other fish in the bay. Still the item remained stuck to her nose. She moved down closer to the bottom of the bay, a shadow swept over her, she turned slightly and saw one of the striped fish swimming purposely towards her. She dived quickly down and saw a dark opening at the bottom amongst the weed. She swam straight in, it was dark and she could not see. She stopped and allowed her other senses to probe the darkness, there did not appear to be any danger here. She carefully turned and moved back towards the light at the entrance; unbeknown to her she was now inside a discarded Fosters tin. She looked out and there was the huge striped fish stationed just outside, but unable to get at her. She remained concealed until eventually the other fish moved away.

She now returned to the task of removing the item from the end of her nose. Once this was achieved she ate it and found it most pleasant. She moved forward and gingerly peered out of her new-found hiding place. Using all her senses she looked for signs of danger sensing none she moved out and up into the weed bed above. As she carefully moved through the weed she noticed an abundance of the small round objects similar to the one that had stuck to her snout. She gorged her self on these until

she could eat no more and slowly sank back down returning to her new-found hiding place. This new home was ideal, from here she could look up through the weed bed towards the light, everything above her being silhouetted. Penfold stayed in the tin observing her environment, constantly learning. She noticed that after a time the light at the top, above the weed bed, would fade and disappear. Sometimes to be replaced with a weaker light and then later still the light would return. On one of these darker times, she sensed then saw a long black creature with a pointed nose slither past the opening of her hiding place. She moved forward to peer out, as she did she came snout to snout with the eel. She turned and fled swimming straight into the bottom of the tin, stunned, she remained there in the dark. The eel could not get into the tin and so she was safe.

As the days passed the water warmed and Penfold found she was constantly hungry. She continued to feed on other small pike in the bay, but their numbers were becoming depleted. Other of her brethren had started to feed on their brothers and sisters. The fish eggs that she had discovered also now appeared to have disappeared. This was strange to her as the eggs seemed to disappear during the times of the darkness. She had sensed lots of movement in the bay during these times but had only seen the one long black eel.

Her continued hunger drove her to move around the bay searching for food. She discovered small round crunchy objects on the weed and reed stems. These she was able to squash with her jaws before swallowing. She had also found a long wriggley thing, like a small eel in amongst the rush stems at the side of the bay.

She had also discovered a new phenomenon, a shadow had passed over her and she had looked up and seen a black oval shape on the top of the water, hanging down from this were two long things with four smaller long things on each end. These things had wiggled and she had moved up in the water to investigate this potential food source. Suddenly she found herself looking into the eye of a strange creature with a black and white head, she dived to the bottom and shelter. She looked up and saw this strange creature come down towards the bottom into the weed, grasp a piece of weed and go back to the top of the water. This was Penfold's introduction to a coot.

Over the next few days the water became warmer and warmer and the light above the water became brighter. She continued her forays for food and each day found new food sources. She discovered other small fish in the bay hiding in the weeds, but there attempts to escape rarely succeeded, she was very fast over short distances. She learned to hide up in the weeded areas where the sun warmed her back and the shadows cast by the surface ripples concealed her position. She had seen another much larger pike doing this, a few days previously, and then watched as it had darted out and grabbed one of the large striped fish as it swam by. Turning the fish and swallowing it head first before returning to its lie in the reeds.

Penfold had noticed a number of other small pike hidden up amongst the weeds, one of which was in the weed under an overhanging tree just to her left. Whilst looking in this direction she saw a blue flash above the water and then a splash, there was a flurry of bubbles under the tree and she saw a small blue creature rising towards the surface. Clamped in the jaws of this creature was the small pike, frantically wriggling. Penfold made a decision never to bask beneath a tree, and so her awareness of her environment grew.

Each day was a new adventure, she had seen the kingfisher at work and knew this was a threat to her, she had met the coot and decided it was no threat, and that if she grew big enough she would be a threat to it.

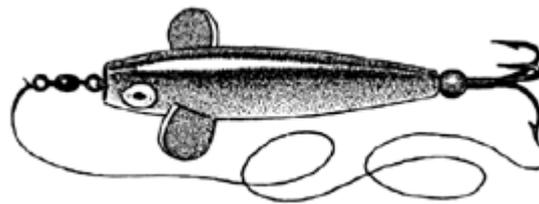
As the days wore on the water temperature continued to rise and the water became clearer, she gained further insights into the world above the water. On one occasion she had been stalking small roach fry at the back of the bay in amongst the reeds. She had heard a number of splashes but assumed them to be the smaller fish leaping from the water to escape her lunges. As she lay in amongst the

reeds digesting yet another mouthful, the light from above suddenly disappeared. She looked up but could only see darkness, yet a short distance away in each direction there was light again. She slowly sank down to the bottom, but here the water did not have much depth. Suddenly there was a splash directly above her and she felt a burning sensation in her left side towards her tail. She shot forward and down towards the deeper water in the centre of the bay, and the shelter of her tin. On reaching this sanctuary she rested, the pain in her side was still there and she could not see along her side. If she could have, she would have seen a vertical graze about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long. This would be a scar she would carry for the rest of her life, a reminder of her near miss with the heron. Another lesson learnt.

Penfold spent each new day searching her aquatic environment, her life seemed to be a constant search for food and she tried to eat almost anything she came across.

That's all for this episode keep reading.

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Region 15 News Dates for your diary

- September 14th - Monthly meeting
- September 26th - Piking '98, UMIST, Manchester
- October 12th - Monthly meeting - PAC subs due
- October 17th - 31st PAC access to Wakefield Country Park
- November 1st - PAC/Harris Angling Lure match - Bluebell Lakes
- November 9th - Monthly meeting
- December 14th - Quiz night