



Springtime Lake Fishing

Pole v Swimfeeder

Pat Mills and Trevor Burgess

Introduction

Spring is a season of change, particularly with regard to the feeding behaviors of our most common fish species. Typically, most fish will spend the winter, as well as the early part of Spring, in the deeper water of lakes and ponds (see [Catching in the Cold](#)), as frigid nights, often coupled with bitter winds, significantly chill the surface and shallows during this time. As a consequence, intrepid bank anglers often need only cast their baits and/or lures further from shore during the cooler months in order to ensure they are presenting a bait within the vicinity of their chosen quarry. In contrast, the arrival of Spring heralds the onset of longer days and milder temperatures. Thus, during the springtime period lakes and ponds will 'turn over', with the surface layers and margins warming significantly during the day. This effect occurs because the day time air temperature surpasses the water temperature; while, during sunny periods, direct sunlight will also significantly augment this process. As a consequence, fish will migrate from cooler deeper water to warmer shallow water at this time; while also, because of their now increased metabolisms, will begin to feed more avidly. This is truly a great time to be at the water for bank anglers, as the fish now have increased appetites and can be found within easy casting distance of the shore! Indeed, my personal favorite time of year to fish is in May (the *pre-spawn* period), as most fish have entered the margins by this time and are feeding well.

Given the facts discussed above, it should come as no real surprise to anglers that early springtime represents a transitional period with regard to the location and feeding behavior of most species. Recall that if the water remains cold, the fish will be found far from shore; while, conversely, under relatively warmer conditions the fish will venture into shallower water. Indeed, during this time it is not uncommon for the fish to 'commute' between deep and shallow water during the course of a single day; occupying deeper water during the cooler morning and evening periods, while spending the warmer midday period in shallower water. With these facts in mind, members of the JJC Anglers Club, namely Trevor Burgess and Pat Mills, tackled the challenge presented by early springtime conditions during a trip to Volkening Lake, Schaumburg, IL in early April 2008. A pair of distinctly different methods were employed on the day, with Trev targeting fish in shallower water, ~9 yards from shore, using a pole based approach; while Pat utilized a dedicated long range swimfeeder based attack to target fish at greater than ~30 yards out into the lake. Would the swimfeeder, a method that epitomizes long range / cold water fishing, best the pole, a technique more closely linked with milder

conditions / short range fishing? Read on to see which method prevailed in the great 'Pole v Swimfeeder' battle!

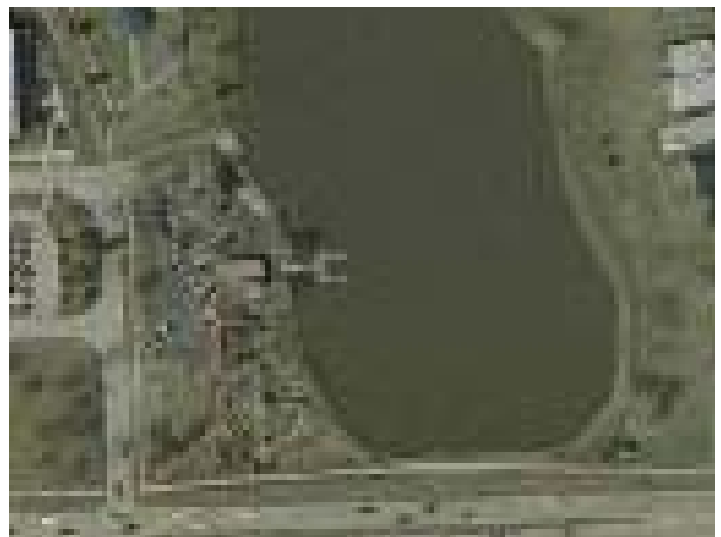
Pat's Notes

Lake Volkening, situated in Schaumburg, IL, is typical of many suburban Park District waters. The lake has been designed principally for recreational use, including paddle boating, so is quite shallow - the average depth being around 2 feet. A direct consequence of this limited depth is that the lake has become home to vast numbers of small carp and bullhead – the reason being that these are the only common species capable of surviving both hot summers and cold winters within such an environment. Briefly, at the height of summer shallow water will become overheated and oxygen starved; while in the depths of winter surface ice will penetrate to nearly the full depth of the water! Due to the prolific head of hungry carp and bullhead, Volkening makes for a great early season bank fishing destination and, consequently, makes a great choice for our pole v feeder battle!

After arriving at the lake at around 9:00 am, we made a decision to fish from the eastern (windward) bank directly across the lake from the parking lot and boat dock (pic. 1 -4). Even though this bank is rarely fished (most anglers tend to fish close to the boat dock situated on the Lakes western bank), it was chosen for our 'battle' for several reasons. Firstly, the fact that the wind was blowing in to this side of the lake would enhance the cooling of the shallow water close to shore (while the air temp was still cool), thus favoring Pat's long range approach early in the session. Conversely, as the session progressed it was assumed this effect would likely taper off, as the air temperature rose, thereby favoring Trev's short range pole tactics. In essence, we were hoping to witness the fish 'commuting' between deep and shallow water, as discussed above, as conditions improved through the day. Secondly, we'd heard anecdotal evidence (albeit from some time ago) that Volkening's eastern bank was essentially devoid of fish – an assertion we were looking forward to testing!



Pic.1: Satellite image of Volkening Lake. Spots (P, T), on the eastern (windward) bank, were fished.



Pic.2: Tighter overhead shot of the selected fishing (P, T) and casting locations (X_p , X_t)



Pic.3: Close up view of Pat's fishing location and casting distance (x_p)



Pic.4: Close up view of Trev's fishing location and casting distance (x_t)



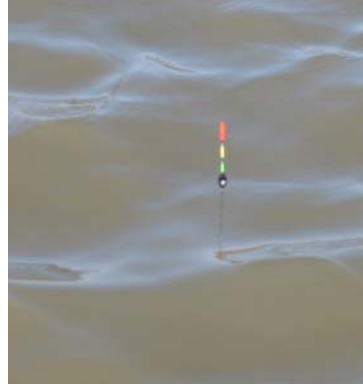
Pic.5: View of the far bank – the outlet pipe makes for a perfect marker!

Upon arriving at our chosen spots (pics. 1-4) we quickly began the process of assembling our respective rigs. Fortunately, even though the lake is ringed by a busy running/bike path, there is a ~ 30 ft strip of grass that separates the path from the waters edge. This is good news for bank anglers, as poles can be freely shipped back and/or heavy 'feeders cast out without having to worry about snagging a passing rollerblader! Additionally, the swims selected were directly opposite storm drain, located on the opposing bank, which subsequently made for a great far bank marker (pic. 5).

In common with most good bank anglers, Trev began the session by 'plumbing up'. Not only does this procedure allow for an accurate determination of the waters depth, but also permits for subtle underwater features, such as shelves, ridges or depressions, to be accurately located. As shown in pics. 6-9, the rig is set to the approximate depth and a dedicated plummet, or other heavy weight, attached to the hook. The rig is then lowered into the fishing area while keeping a tight line between plummet and pole tip (pic. 6). If the rig is set at greater than full depth the float will remain proud of the water when the plummet touches bottom (pic. 7) – in such a case the float should be pushed further towards the hook and the process repeated. If the rig is set too shallow (pic 8), the float will sink out of view as the plummet touches bottom – in this case the float should be pushed further away from the hook. When the float is correctly positioned to the exact depth only ~ 1" or less of the float tip should be visible (pic. 9). By testing the depth at various locations around the intended fishing area the nature of the underwater topography can quickly be established – in this way the location of likely fish holding features, such as, for example, the base of the marginal shelf, can be identified and later targeted by the angler. Trev's 'plumb up' revealed no real surprises – as is typical for such manmade waters, the margins rapidly give way to a flat, featureless bottom covered by ~ 2 ft of water.



Pic.6: Plumbing the depth on the pole line – lower the plummet and keep a tight line with the pole tip.



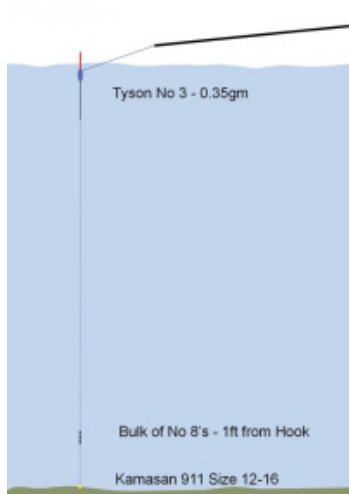
Pic.7: Float set too deep – the float needs to slide down more towards the hook.



Pic.8: Float set to shallow – the float needs to slide up more away from the hook.



Pic.9: Float set ‘just right’, with ~ 1’ of tip showing – the bait will now sit just over depth, perfect!



Pic.10: Basic Pole rig diagram.



Pic.11: Trev’s pole rig. Note the longer than normal tip, great for spotting subtle lift bites.

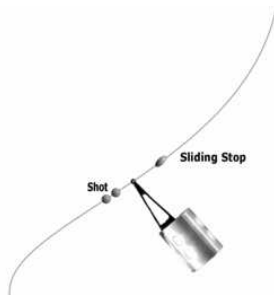


Pic.12: Ready to go – ship out in line with a far bank marker each time for total accuracy.

When fishing for traditional bottom feeding species, such as carp and catfish, it’s important that the hook bait be presented on, or as close to, the lake bed as possible. Thus, once the full depth of water has been established through ‘plumbing up’, it is important not to stray to far from this benchmark (pic. 9). A diagram illustrating the basic ‘full depth’ pole rig, typically employed with such an approach, is shown in pic. 10. Simply, a bulk of shot needed to balance the float is grouped ~ 6” from the hook, with the hook itself *just* touching the bottom. While similar in many respects to this basic rig, Trev’s setup featured a longer tip float, as well as the addition of several smaller shot between the bulk and the hook (pic 11.). In this way, timid ‘lift bites’ (where fish suck the bait off the bottom without moving away) result in the disturbance of this shot; with a corresponding ‘lift’ being registered at the float tip. One final rig modification Trev made on the day was to fish slightly over depth, meaning the last inch or two of line above the hook was intentionally allowed drag on the bottom. This is a neat trick, typically

employed under non-ideal conditions, as this anchoring effect will off-set any tow experienced at the float due to wind and/or surface chop. With his rig now perfectly balanced, Trev only needed to ship his pole out ~ 30 feet in the direction of a far bank marker, in this case the storm drain outfall, in order to ensure both perfect distance and direction with regard the placement of his rig (pic. 12.). In many ways these practices epitomize the relative advantages of pole fishing – the ability to consistently fish a delicate, well balanced rig at a fixed distance and direction from the bank.

In contrast to Trev’s short range approach, Pat’s rod ‘n reel based swimfeeder method allowed for fishing to be conducted at a much greater range than the pole. The enhanced fishing distance that accompanies the use of a swimfeeder is, of course, due to the fact that the rig may be cast out using a rod and line. The rig is, in essence, very similar to a standard sinker rig, with the only real difference being that a swimfeeder is used in place of the lead (pic. 13). The swimfeeders themselves typically comprise a perforated metal or plastic tube (pic. 14), in which all manor of attractive ground bait (chum) of other fish attractors may be crammed before casting. The depth of water being fishing, as well as the time of year (water temperature), determines swimfeeder selection, with ‘cage’ models (pic. 14a) being first choice when the water is of 3 ft or less in depth (the more open design allows them to empty more quickly); while more traditional groundbait feeders (pic. 14c), which empty more slowly, are used in deeper and/or flowing water. Smaller bait capacity models are used during cool water conditions, with larger examples the preferred choice for warmer conditions. The ‘method’ feeder (pic. 14b) is something of a specialized approach and, typically, is only employed during warm water conditions when larger fish are feeding very positively – see [Big River Fishing: The Swimfeeder](#) for more details.



Pic.13: Basic Rig diagram. The feeder is simply a perforated plastic tube that holds groundbait (chum).



Pic.14: Possible feeder selection. The cage feeder (a) is best for water of 3 ft or less.



Pic.15: Pat’s Rig: similar to the basic set up, but swivel used to prevent twisting. A hook link of choice is attached later.



Pic.16: Always cast to the same spot – this is sometimes difficult in open water, so a marker and clip are used.



Pic.17: After casting to the required distance mark the line with permanent ink. Distance can then be reset if forced to unclip.



Pic.18: Reel in one turn and trap the line behind the line clip. This fixes the casting distance.



Pic.19: If big fish are expected, use an elastic band to make a 'safety clip' – it will pop off the spool if a fish takes line.

Due to the depth of water being fishing (~2.5 feet at 30 yards), as well as the cool water conditions (the water temp was 48 °F at the commencement of fishing), a small cage feeder was selected to start the session. The initial rig used was similar in almost all respects to the basic set up (pic. 14); although a small swivel was used in place of the stop shot in order to reduce line twist (pic. 15). Another advantage of incorporating a swivel into the rig is that hooklengths can be swapped out very quickly (they are simply tied to the swivel), a real bonus if a hook becomes blunted or the leader damaged.

The effectiveness of the swimfeeders can, in part, be traced to the method's consistency with respect to the control of direction and distance being fished. Although a little harder to achieve than the pole, due to casting a much further distance and the increased effect of wind over such ranges, it is possible, with some practice, to land the 'feeder rig in *essentially* the same location every cast. This goal can be achieved through casting to a far bank marker and 'clipping up' – as illustrated in pics. 16 – 19. Simply, the 'feeder is cast, with a smooth steady push forward of the rod, in the direction of a far bank marker – in this case a storm drain outfall (pic. 16). By keeping the rod on the same vertical plane when performing an overhead cast, good directionality can easily be achieved. The real trick here is to keep the cast smooth, with everything – marker, rod and rig, all kept in a straight line. Once the feeder has touched down at the desired distance, several options are available to the angler in order to maintain a fixed casting distance through the session. Perhaps the simplest option is to mark the line, with either a permanent ink and/or a sliding knot, at the distance being fished (pic 17) – in this way the angler will always have a visual reference point with regard to maintaining a fixed casting distance. However, a far better option is to combine marking the line with the use of a line clip. To fish 'clipped up', simply wind one more turn of line onto the spool past the ink mark and/or sliding knot, then loop the reel line under the spool's line clip (pic. 18). The goal on every cast is to gently 'hit the clip' – the result being that the rig will always travel the same fixed distance. One disadvantage of using the line clip is that if a larger fish takes too much line, the angler must unclip before the line is broken or the fish lost. If larger specimens are expected, then a safety clip is recommended (pic. 19). Simply, a robust elastic band (the type used by supermarkets to keep bunches of broccoli together works well!) is placed over the spool's skirt after the desired casting distance has been

established. In this way, the band will simply ‘pop off’ the spool if a larger fish takes line. If forced to unclip for any reason, the correct casting distance can easily be reestablished by casting out; reeling back to the ink mark / knot and then clipping once more. Since Lake Volkening is known to contain large numbers of fish that, in turn, rarely exceed 2 pounds in weight, a fixed line clip (pic. 18) made for the most appropriate choice on the day.

Having established a fixed fishing distance and direction, the swimfeeder angler’s objective is to then regularly cast the rig, featuring a baited hook and a loaded ‘feeder, to the chosen spot. This process will, in turn, attract fish to area and, hopefully, illicit a competitive feeding response among them. Indeed, if done correctly such a ‘little and often’ feeding strategy can literally have the fish lining up, with a bite per cast being both the ultimate goal and, often, consequence! While this strategy seems quite straight forward, there are a number of additional details that must also be taken into account when utilizing this technique. Specifically, the choice and set up of the rig; the selection and mounting of hook bait(s); the selection and preparation of groundbait (chum) used to fill the ‘feeder; the way in which the rig is cast / fished and, finally, the correct set up required for optimal bite detection, must all be carefully considered. These factors are discussed in more detail below, and are further illustrated in pics. 20-37.



Pic.20: Bait Prep – micro feed pellets are great attractors that don’t fill the fish.



Pic.21: Cover in lake water or flavored water brought from home



Pic.22: Soak for a few minutes....



Pic.23: Drain off the excess liquid....



Pic.24: The finished product! The final feed pellets should be moist, not



Pic.25: Bait tray with maggots and larger hook pellets.

too hard or 'mushy'.



Pic.26: Attach the hook length and then the bait – this time triple maggot.



Pic.27: Drag the empty feeder through the feed pellets



Pic.28: Apply light pressure to fix the pellets in place before casting



Pic.29: The finished article – once the feeder is cast out the pellets will empty from the feeder.



Pic.30: Casting the loaded feeder – a nice smooth push forward of the rod while aimed at the far bank marker. This ensures good directionality.



Pic.31: Let the rod 'tug' forward as the line hits the clip – this ensures the feeder doesn't 'bounce back' and the same distance is cast every time.



Pic.32: The line is sunk and the rod positioned low at ~ 45° to the feeder, with the line then gently tightened.



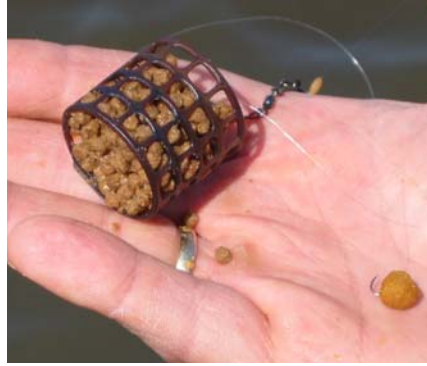
Pic.33: A slight bow is imparted to the tip – a steady pull or 'drop back' indicates a take.



Pic.34: Pat's first fish - a small catfish, taken within a few minutes of casting out.



Pic.35: Carp quickly pushed out the smaller bullheads and fed well early in the day.



Pic.36: Larger pellets were also tried as hook baits, in this case side hooked to promote pricking.



Pic.37: This carp fell to a double maggot bait, as almost all the fish caught during the session did.

While a standard groundbait (chum) is most often used in conjunction swimfeeder (see Big River Fishing: The Swimfeeder) the cold water conditions encountered necessitated that a ‘less filling’ / low feed attractant be used on the day. Thus, micro feed pellets made for the most appropriate choice (pic 20). These little gems make for a fantastic cool water attractant, as they are small (~1–2 mm diameter) and absorb liquid flavors well – a combination of properties that renders them both less filling and highly attractive to the fish. ‘Micros’ are simply prepared by covering them in flavored water (pic. 21); letting them soak for several minutes (pic. 22); and then draining off the excess liquid (pic. 23). The finished pellets (pic. 24) should be moist, not hard or ‘mushy’. As alluded to above, an additional advantage of using pellets is that their attractiveness can be boosted by adding some form of flavoring to the liquid they are soaked in. The possible choices are vast, although we’ve found that savory flavors seem to work best in the early Spring and late Fall, with sweet additives working best during the warmer months. While pretty much any hook bait can be used in conjunction with ‘micros’, larger pellets make for an obvious choice; while maggots and other live baits can make for a great ‘get out of jail free’ bait under the very coldest of conditions (pic. 25). Hook bait pellets up to 11 mm or more in diameter can be prepared in a similar way to the ‘micros’, although a longer soak time is needed – preferably overnight for larger sizes. Various types of pellets, as well as an assortment of concentrated bait flavors, may be purchased through a number of specialist carp fishing stores, such as Big Carp Tackle or Wacker Baits.

Preparing a swimfeeder rig for fishing is a straightforward process (pics. 26 -29). First, a leader is attached to the swivel. The length of leader used depends somewhat on the style of fishing practiced, although with a self-hooking ‘bolt’ rig, such as this, it pays to keep this length of line between the ‘feeder and hook relatively short – in this case about 12” (pic 26a). A small silicon sleeve of around 3” in length is also threaded onto the leader before it is tied in to the swivel (pic. 26b) – this boom ensures the leader does not tangle with the ‘feeder when it is cast out. The swimfeeder is locked in place by a float stop or small split shot positioned on the main line immediately above the terminal tackle (pic.

26c) – this will cause the ‘bolt’ effect when a fish picks up the hook bait, as the fish will immediately feel the weight of the swimfeeder. The hook bait of choice, in this case a red ‘n white (‘Manchester United’) maggot combination, is then attached (pic. 26d). By mounting the maggots so that the hook point remains exposed, the ‘bolt’ effect of the rig is enhanced, as any fish taking the hook bait will also be pricked by the hook when it feels the resistance of the swimfeeder. The ‘feeder is then loaded by dragging it through the feed pellets (pic. 27); and then lightly compressing the pellets by simultaneously pinching the feeder both ends (pic.28). Once loaded in this way (pic. 29), the pellets will remain within the swimfeeder upon casting, only to ‘burst’ out soon after it touches down on the lake bed.

As illustrated above (pic. 16), the rig is cast towards a far bank marker, with the distance fished being regulated by the line clip (pics. 17 – 19). When casting a loaded swimfeeder rig (pics. 30 – 33), its imperative to not to jerk the rod on the cast, as the feed can often be dislodged - typically falling on to the angler! Thus, it’s important to select a swimfeeder that possesses enough weight to be ‘smoothly’ cast the required distance (pic. 30) – a standard 1 oz model, as used during the session, will typically cast 30+ yards with ease. As the rig nears the point of splashdown, hold the rod lightly in a vertical position and then let it ‘tug’ forward as the feeder hits the line clip (pic. 31). In this way, the rig will not ‘bounce back’ when the clip is reached, as it otherwise would if the clip were hit with a greater degree of force. As soon as the rig has touched down on the lake bed, the rod tip is briefly submerged while any slack line is taken up (pic. 32) - this process sinks the line. Bites are most easily be detected through positioning the rod at an angle $\geq 45^\circ$ relative to casting direction, and then imparting a slight bow into the rod tip (pic. 33). Takes are typically registered as a firm steady pull around, or the tip dropping back – both indications are symptomatic of a hooked fish, either swimming away from or towards the angler, respectively. Rapid ‘jabs’ or swirling motions seen at the tip should not be struck, as they are indicative of fish in the vicinity of the rig brushing against the line (‘line bites’) or the affects of wind and/or tow. The choice of rod used is important, with a dedicated swimfeeder rod of 11 ft or longer being preferred. The advantage of using a relatively long rod is that such models cast a great deal further than the shorter 6 – 9 ft rods more closely associated with boat angling. In addition, bite detection is significantly enhanced through the use of a quiver tip. Most swimfeeder rods are supplied with a selection of interchangeable quiver tip sections which, in turn, are of between one and three feet in length; possessing test curves in the 1 - 5 oz range. When fishing with a ‘tip’ rod it’s important to select a quiver tip that, when correctly set with a slight bow (pic. 33), *just* counteracts the effects of the waters natural tow (lakes) or flow (rivers). If too heavy a tip is selected it will present too much resistance to a taking fish; while too light a tip will be pulled out of position by the effect of flow and/or tow, making bite detection more difficult. As a general rule of thumb, a 1 oz tip is typically used when fishing lakes; a 2 oz tip is most often selected for larger and/or deeper lakes more prone to significant tow; while tips in the 3 – 5 oz range are used when fishing rivers of increasing size and/or current. For the session a 12 ½ foot swimfeeder rod with a 1 oz test curve quiver tip was used.

The session

Pat started the session by depositing several ‘feeder loads of ‘micros’ on the chosen line – this procedure quickly established a chummed area that, in turn, began to attract fish. The baited / loaded rig was then cast to the fishing area every 10 – 15 minutes in order to ‘build’ the swim through constant little and often feeding. Top tip: Regular, consistently accurate casting is very important; as the goal is to introduce a small highly attractive bed of feed within the vicinity of the hook bait. The first cast of the session with a baited hook resulted in a (missed!) take, with the second cast producing a bullhead (pic. 34.). Sport was quite hectic early on, with carp quickly ‘bumping’ the bullheads from the feeding area (pic. 35). Various baits were tried, including savory and sweet flavored 6 mm pellets (pic. 36), although a double maggot bait easily outscored all others on the day – this didn’t really come as a surprise, as fish tend to preferentially target maggots and/or worm live baits under cold water conditions. Top tip: A neat ‘feeder fisher’s trick, which was employed many times on the day, was to reel the rig back by ~ 1 foot a few minutes after casting, if no immediate indications were seen at the tip. This process helped both empty the swimfeeder of its contents *and* pull the hook bait back into the pile of chum just created – deadly! A steady stream of carp and bullheads were caught in the first hour of fishing (while the water was still cool); although fish became increasingly more difficult to catch as the day wore on. Indeed, it was noticeable that once the water temperature passed the 50 °F mark (at around 12:00 noon), carp were increasingly seen ‘boshing’ on the surface at around 20 – 40 feet from shore. It was evident that the fish were feeding quite avidly on insects being blown towards the windward bank at this time, with this activity continuing through until the end of the session. As a consequence, action on the feeder line tapered off, with only a few small bullheads being caught between 1:00 and 3:00 pm.



Pic.38: Trev’s soaked feed pellets – these commercially available samples have a nice green color!



Pic.39: Filling the cupping kit with an initial helping of feed pellets



Pic.40: Pushing the cupping kit out to nine meters.



Pic.41: Depositing the feed on line and *exactly* at the right distance – talk about accuracy!



Pic.42: Small top ups were introduced every put in (while fishing) via a small pot attached to the pole tip.



Pic.43: Time and again the rig and feed were introduced to the same tight feeding area. Note the far bank marker.



Pic.44: Trev's first fish! While sport was slower to start, this bullhead was caught after just a few minutes.



Pic.45: After an hour or so of fishing carp began to show more regularly for Trev.



Pic.46: Towards mid afternoon Trev really hit his rhythm and was catching a carp nearly every put in!

Trev started his session by preparing some soaked micro feed pellets, with a few larger samples mixed in (pic. 38). An initial helping of this feed was then introduced to his chosen swim, at ~ 9 m from shore, via a pole cup. In common with most pole anglers, Trev's pole cup is, in turn, attached to the end of a dedicated spare top section of pole (known as a cupping kit). The process of 'cupping' then simply involves filling the cup with feed (pic. 39); shipping out in the direction of the far bank marker to the desired distance (pic. 40); and then tipping the cup's contents into the swim (pic. 41). Cupping in feed creates a very tightly chummed area, to which the fish are attracted. Additionally, before each put in, Trev also place a pinch of his feed pellet mixture in a small pot (pole pot) attached directly to his pole (pic. 42). In this way, a little and often feeding approach was employed by simply 'tapping out' this feed directly over his rig immediately after it had been shipped out (pic. 43). Top tip: lifting and slowly dropping the rig ('jigging'), just after a sample of feed has been introduced via the pole pot, often elicits an immediate take, as fish are drawn to the 'cloud' of micros, within which the hook bait is now also slowly sinking – truly lethal! While sport was slow to start, with just a few stray bullheads being caught early in the session (pic. 44), the fishing picked up markedly around noon. The arrival of larger fish into Trev's swim was heralded by the appearance

of patches of bubbles around his float – the carp were clearly ‘grubbing’ around on the bottom, no doubt stimulated to feed by the ongoing ‘little and often’ introduction of feed pellets via the pole pot. Predictably, Trev’s float soon slid away, with his first carp of the day subsequently finding its way to his waiting net (pic. 45). Through continued regular feeding Trev was able to skillfully ‘build’ the swim and was rewarded with some hectic sport between the hours of 1:00 – 3:00 pm, with a fish a cast being caught for during the majority of this time (pic. 46). The vast majority of Trev’s fish fell to maggot baits, with pellet and corn only proving effective for the ever ravenous bullheads.



Pic.47: Trev easily bested Pat on the day with an impressive final catch of ~38 pounds of carp bullhead and few assorted sunfish - mostly caught between 12:00 noon and 3:00 pm.



Pic.48: Pat’s final catch of ~8 pounds of carp and bullhead - mostly caught between 10:00 am and 12:00 noon. The feeder was clearly no match for the pole this time!



Pic.49: Post script – Trev won a JJCAC match Group event, using a similar approach at Volkening, two weeks after this feature was undertaken.

Wrap Up

In many ways, the results of the session epitomized early Springtime fishing. Trev’s final catch of greater than 38 pounds (pic. 47) was caught close to shore, from the windward bank, as water temperatures crept into the low 50s. In contrast, Pat’s long range swimfeeder based approach yielded reasonable numbers of fish early in the session (pic. 48), while the water was at or below 50°F. We had, in essence, witnessed the fish commuting from cool to warm water as conditions improved through the day. Indeed, both of us developed something a ‘Farmers tan’ – true testament to the sunny conditions experienced later in the day! The clear lesson learnt from the session was that fish can, and indeed *will*, move quickly into warmer water, and begin to feed more avidly, when its temperature reaches ~50 °F; with such affects truly noticeable when the water reaches 54°F or greater. Once fish are feeding well, they will most often locate to the windward side on and lake or pond, as the water’s motion will wash terrestrial insects and most other food items towards this bank. We certainly noticed this during the session, with carp regularly ‘boshing’ on the surface in front of us from noon onwards. Thus, the old adage of ‘when the weather is fine, fish the wind into your face’ certainly rang true.

In terms of the tactics employed during the session, the pole and swimfeeder techniques used are, in turn, commonly recognized as being the most efficient means of fishing at short and long range, respectively. Why is this? Simply, each approach, although quite different in practice, is similar with regard to the achieving the bank angler's most fundamental objective – being able to consistently present a hook bait in close proximity to an attractive offering of chum. Indeed, a fitting statement would be that this philosophy underpins most every effective bank fishing strategy. With regard to pole fishing, this objective is easily achieved the use of a pole cup mounted to the tip of the pole which, in turn, allows for pin point feeding. Consequently, the chummed area created, within which the fish are concentrated, most often only encompasses the area the size of a dinner plate! In many ways, the accuracy of pole cups/ pots epitomizes the chief advantage of pole fishing – the ability to introduce a small amount of feed into a very tight fishing area, over which the rig is consistently placed. The swimfeeder achieves the same desired objective, although at much greater range. By employing the ‘trick’ of reeling the rig back a foot or so a few minutes after casting, the angler's bait is then drawn onto a pile of chum left by the emptied ‘feeder – job done! However, in contrast to the pole, it is not possible to cast to *exactly* the same spot every time with a rod and reel; with the result being that the feeder will introduce many small pockets of feed over the same general area, typically (for a proficient caster) about the size of a dinner table, rather than within a single, much tighter, area. Thus, as a consequence, it is not as easy to ‘concentrate’ fish with a swimfeeder in the same way it is with the pole. The take home message here is clear – the pole will most often beat the ‘feeder on days when the fish are within its range, as clearly demonstrated on the day we fished (pics. 47-48).

Post Script

Two weeks after this feature was put together, the JJCAC Match Group organized a competitive bank fishing event at Volkening Lake. The conditions were much more favorable for pole fishing, with the water and air temperatures, at the start of fishing, recorded at 61°F and 73°F, respectively. Consequently, each competitor fished the pole, with the fish taking all manner of baits, including maggots, corn, pellets and groundbait. Trev won the day, utilizing a similar approach to that detailed above, with close to 17 pounds of mostly carp (pic. 49).

Feature Facts

Venue: Volkening Lake, Schaumburg, IL

Date: April 4th, 2008

Conditions: The first ‘proper’ day of Spring! Air temp began the day at 58 °F, climbing to 62 °F by mid afternoon. Water temps began at 48 °F, rising to 54 °F by mid afternoon. Winds were out of the west at 10 – 15 mph, with mostly sunny skies. Water clarity was ‘turbid’.

Anglers: Trevor Burgess and Pat Mills

Photographers: Trevor Burgess and Pat Mills

Other Resources: Schaumburg Park District, Benwick Sports , BCT, Wacker Baits