

CARPING



VISIT 14 (August 12): Cooler, only 80 degrees F! Winds light westerly. Promising conditions, but at sunrise there was nothing in the outlet, the gravel patch or the causeway! With nothing else to do I baited the gravel patch and waited. One or two double figure fish cruised through the general area but showed no interest. Then small groups appeared, but they didn't stop either. I got the impression they were "spooky," for they veered away if I tossed in free baits within their "earshot."

I fished whenever carp came near, but got absolutely nothing. About 8:30, or soon after, I looked at the outlet, and with one or

two fish hanging around I shifted the tackle. Almost as soon as I baited about six fish appeared, clearly interested, and I fished with renewed enthusiasm. The ripple was now breaking up the view of the fish, and I could no longer tell how many were there, or how big. A 14.4 broke my duck, followed 30 minutes later by an 18-pounder.

In another 15 minutes I was into another fish which took the rod into a better curve as it ran off for about 30 yards, struck deep and fought very powerfully. After maybe 30 minutes of this I got it close enough to see, and confirmed my feeling that

9 1/2 WEEKS...

105 doubles... 19 20s... 3 over 30lb...



Small carp caught during the visit. The fish was about 10 pounds and was a good specimen.



Martin Gay

CONCLUDES HIS
ZOOLOGICAL
FIELD WORK
WITH A
SOMEWHAT
SAD
SMILE.



Far left: Martin ended his season with this superb fish, which we also pictured in November. It was 35" long, 27.5" in girth and weighed in at 34lb 4oz.

Left: A nice bonus! This 24.4 came along soon after the 35.4.

Below: Did you guess right when we showed a similar picture of this fish in November? It was 33" long, 30.5" in girth, and it was Martin's second biggest common at 35lb 4oz.

it was a good "twenty." Under the rod top it still fought doggedly, but when tackle pressure caused it to roll its full depth became obvious. It was a real barrel!

It took 15 minutes of arm aching to get it into the net, and a struggle up the bank. It was the bulkiest fish I had ever caught, and I found it difficult to judge the weight although it was clearly 30lb plus - 33" long, with a girth of 30.5" it weighed 35.4, the second-biggest carp I had ever caught. Magnificent!

After a few very careful pictures I lowered this tub back into the water and watched it waddle away. I could have packed up then, but there was no rush. I stayed on for a 16, a lovely fish of 24.4 and finally a 15.8. It was approaching midday, and I left.

VISIT 15 (August 12): I was back at 5 p.m. on a beautifully hot afternoon with a few puffy clouds - just the sort of weather I do like. The fish appeared to, also! There was a sizeable group at the outlet, including one of the biggest I'd seen. I was kneeling at a point where the water deepens off, and this fish was directly below me. I would give it 40lbs.

I hadn't been fishing long, however, when this group began to disperse. Noticeable they were drifting away to the left, and my baiting did nothing to stop them. I did manage two fish by 7.30 p.m., by which time just about all the group had disappeared. They had left in such a determined manner it clearly had nothing to do with my presence, but their whereabouts was worth investigating!

I gathered up the tackle and set off along the bank. Keeping an eye on the water ahead of me I noticed a number of fish rolling in a relatively small area. Not knowing what to expect I was nevertheless surprised at how shallow the water was in this

area. Whilst I got my bits and pieces together fish continued to move just left of where I was sitting. I fired some bait and cast into no more than a foot of water where the fish were still rolling. Some filamentous weed was growing, and presumably there were shrimps for the carp to feed on.

As it was approaching dusk I fished just one rod, catching three good fish weighing 16.12, 11.8 and 15.12. As it got dark I packed and headed home.



VISIT 16 (August 13): Had been some light rain, weather fresher, early morning almost autumnal: Arrived at the outlet at 9 a.m. with two or three hours to spare. Few fish showing anywhere, but by casting around I caught three carp and lost one very good fish, briefly seen before the line parted on a snag - irritating, to say the least.

VISIT 17 (August 13): Returned at 3.30 and nothing happened for well over an hour. Then, in just 50 minutes, I caught three carp. More were showing than in the morning, but were mostly not interested in feeding. My last fish of the day had been my 101st double of the season and my 106th carp. I half-expected to feel something "special" at achieving this number, but didn't. A lot of fish had merged in the mind; I had effectively forgotten a lot of them. Clearly some of the bigger fish had made an impression, and some of the battles had been memorable, to say the least. It was tempting, when I left in late afternoon, to call it a day. I wanted to do some barbel fishing, and zander were in my autumn plans.

I really did not know, as I drove home, whether I would go again, yet something was nagging in the back of my mind. I did make one more visit, something I shall always be grateful for...

■ CARPING

◀ **VISIT 18 (August 14):** Some sun; nice breeze: Some of my trips had been spur of the moment jobs, for which I always kept some tackle ready. I usually planned my starting times, but not often when I finished. Many of the mid-week visits were of short duration, and perhaps the only problem with this approach is that it takes longer to sort out patterns of behaviour. Details which may normally look you in the face don't seem quite so obvious. One matter which had become evident, though, was that under certain conditions fish gathering at the outlet in any numbers was more likely later in the day.

I like early starts, but was concluding that late morning could be just as productive. Unfortunately it wasn't always convenient to be there then. To test the theory on what proved to be the last visit I began at 10 a.m. A quick look at the gravel patch revealed only a few fish, swimming along well out. Had they been feeding I would have been drawn to fish there, which I hadn't actually planned. With some slight relief I went along to the outlet, but here only a couple of fish were showing. I baited, and waited.

Slowly more fish entered the area, some staying to feed, others keeping going. There were not that many in the feeding group, but a rippled surface prevented accurate assessment. The first carp came at about 10.45, at 16lb, followed by a 16.4, an 11.10 and a 15.8 soon after 11 a.m.

This was a lovely bit of fishing, and I could have happily gone at that point. But despite these captures several more fish had gathered, so I kept going, but nothing further happened in the next hour. At about 12.20, though, I got another take and struck what felt like a fairly small fish. There was a wriggling as it felt the hook and then it made off right. I followed, trying to get directly above it, and had no sooner done so when it turned left, running out into the lake on the most powerful run I have

ever experienced.

In an almost continuous run, with the mere hint of a pause at one point, that fish put 80 yards between us. It didn't go at blistering speed, but fast, and with tremendous power. It was obviously no low double, but beyond that I could not say. What followed, however, confirmed that it was at least a big 20-pounder.

It stopped at 80 yards, and hung solidly, very slowly moving left in a wide arc. I could wind down and haul, gaining a bit of line, but then the fish would go solid for a while and refuse to budge. Over the period it was scribing this arc I retrieved quite a bit of line, and by hauling and heaving I did get the fish near the surface about 30 yards or so to my left, and a similar distance out from the bank.

There was a mighty swirl before it went deeper, and I had the long slog of getting it back to the surface and into the waiting net. My first glimpse of the fish came when it was 5 to 8 yards from the bank, as it swam from left to right in front of me. I "knew" now what I had already guessed. It was over 30lb - a long common, very heavily built.

After a spell swimming back and forth, some boring away and some yielding of line, I got the beast into the net and onto grass. The memory of the 35-pounder was still fresh in my mind, and this fish was clearly longer. I quietly thought it might make about 41, but it somehow didn't feel heavy enough. At 35" in length and 27.5" in girth it was my third heaviest fish ever, at 34.4.

This beautiful carp had given me unquestionably the finest, strongest, longest-running fight of any that I had ever caught. It is one I will not forget for a long time, if at all, and was a fitting end, for the time being, to some marvellous fishing. That one fish made me realise that I had now done all I wanted. There had been 110 carp (nearly all commons), 105 of which were over 10lb, 19 over 20lb, three of them thirties. Total weight: 1,775lb 4oz. □

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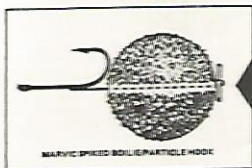


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