

31.02 for James



Who says that wobbling only produces small pike?

Whilst this is generally true with the majority of pike being caught on the wobble being around the 4lb mark and up to low double figures in size; every now and then a whopper just can't resist a perfectly worked wobbled dead-bait imitating their natural prey of a wounded or dying fish?

This 31.02 fish from BPS member James Gilchrist, who made it through to 1st reserve place for this years British Pike Squad at his very first attempt; perfectly shows what a great method wobbling is.

Read James' story below and overleaf.....

Debating on where to go and what method to use was my just my first quandary. Next was to either spend the day fishing dead-baits on the float, or my own and all my other British Pike Squad mates preferred method of fishing wobbled dead-baits.

A chance phone call from close friend Andy Waller, who is also a member of the BPS provided the answer. He'd fished a coarse match on the Sunday and there had been some huge pike present grabbing pound plus roach from the hooks as they were reeling them in. A Pike fisherman's dream but a match mans nightmare. So the decision was made for me, it had to be the River Wye at Hereford on the Wye.

So with a personal best of 15 pounds, I was aiming to try and better this before the season ended in just two weeks time. A feat that I was sure was on the cards if everything that Andy had told me was correct.

Andy was heading for the venue again to fish a mid-week match, so I arranged to meet him there and fish a section of the river not being used. By the time I arrived at the river bank, Andy had already drawn his peg and was steadily catching Dace and Roach from the off. As we chatted he struck into another roach which was heading for the net when disaster; a large pike took the roach right at the net.

Quickly saying my goodbye's to Andy, I rushed down to the end of the match section and quickly set up my rod. My wobbling rig consisted of two size 6 treble hooks on a wire trace with a small amount of shot to get the 4 inch roach bait down quickly in the flow. Casting to the middle of the river and gently twitching the back towards me, I expected a hit straight away and was not disappointed. However at just 5 pounds it was not the leviathan that I had come to do battle with.

Being a spate river. the colour from the snow and rains had quickly dispersed and the river was running gin clear. I could see right down to the bottom a third of the way across and could clearly see all the bait fish scurrying past.

At about midday having had no further success, I sat down and decided that a change of tactic was required. Reaching into my bait bag I took out two small sprats and mounted them in tandem. Flicking them out, I watched them flutter enticingly through the current towards me. It was then that I noticed this large shape following them, I twitched and varied the speed of the retrieve, none of which seemed to make the shape pounce. I could clearly see that this was the fish that I had come for, and with an pounding heart I prayed for the pike to pounce. As the baits came within 10 yards of the bank I decided to go for broke and let them sink to the river bed, and with that the pike tilted its head downwards and sucked both baits up. Due to the clarity of the water, I could clearly see that the pike had taken the baited hooks inside it's large mouth, striking swiftly and surely I set the hooks home - and then all hell broke loose.

15 arm aching minutes later the fish was still making slow, deliberate runs to the centre and far bank of the river, having stripped 30 to 40 yards of braid from my reel four times, each time I had managed to slowly bring the fish towards me before it powerfully turned away from me. But finally the surges were slower, and I felt that I was finally in control of the battle. As I edged the fish towards the net and over the rim and into the mesh, another heart stopping moment as I lifted the net and watched the the hooks fall out but she was mine! Trying to lift the pike out of the water was another problem. At first I thought the net had snagged on the bottom, but as I gained a better hold on the net, I was stunned to realize that it was just the weight of the fish; and what a weight! Heaving the net and the pike firmly ensconced within the depth of the net I hoisted the fish up out of the water and on to the safety of the unhooking mat.

Still shaking from the battle, I quickly realized that this was for me the fish of a lifetime. My father who was only a short distance away, was quickly by my side and after weighing, photographing and admiring, it was time to slip her back to the waters she had come from. The greatest moment for me was to see her swim strongly away back into the depths, gills flaring with annoyance at having being caught.

Her displeasure was my delight. After deducting the weight of the landing net, the true enormity of what had occurred hit me. At 31.02 this was truly a river monster, one which had grown fat on a natural diet and had obliterated my previous Personal Best. My thanks go to Andy who had tipped me off on the potential of the Wye. I still have a grin fixed in place, and a memory that will forever be etched in my thoughts. Thinking back on the occasion I wonder as to what is the real potential for this river, and if I will ever see the likes of a fish like that again. I Hope so.....



James Gilchrist