

A Red Letter Day



I am one of the lucky one's, for fishing regularly on the fens provides many occasions when you come upon a red letter day.

Decisions on which is the best comes with its own quandaries. Is it the biggest fish you have ever caught? At 28.08 this would probably be at the top of most peoples thoughts, but for me at the time did not really mean a lot to me as I'd only been pike fishing for about 6 months.

Is it the most twenties I have caught in one day? I suppose that three in one day could

classify as the day, but no! The day in question takes into account many considerations, so here goes:

About four years ago a local water was declared dead (by myself). Why ? The water in question was without doubt in my mind the best Pike water bar none in the fens, if not the East of England; as it had the previous year produced my first ever twenty from this water. It had also produced on another special day 17 doubles in one session and on another day my biggest ever Zander at 12.10. It had also produced heartache the following season of seeing not a single flash of life. The water lilies of which were numerous the previous year, the fingerling fish, the bugs and clarity of the water were all but sent to the minds archives.

Due to circumstances which I will not go into, salt water had got into the system and in my eyes had destroyed years of water bio-diversity in just one day.

Over the following three years of testing the water with static dead-baits and wobbled baits, I had not even managed one bite! The only place possible to contact even a jack pike was at the source, very close to the inlet on the River Ouse.

However not to be deterred, a few of us kept on trying. Hoping beyond hope that one day the gods would be with us and the recovery would start to show; even one single fish would give us that simple glimpse of hope. Little was I to know that this one day would go with such a bang.

It was an overcast day just after the start to the new season when I decided once again to try my luck. On nearing the water I noticed that the water lilies were back, albeit in fewer numbers. Was this the first hopeful sign of the recovery hoped for? On closer checking of the water, I saw signs of small fry darting in and out of the weed, a second sign.

Armed with three large packs of smelt and a single wobbling rod, the time looked right but would the pike be present, as the smaller fish were. There was only one way to find out.

On flicking out a small smelt across to the far bed of Lilies, I let the bait slowly fall to the bed of the river; but before it could even touch bottom it was hit with some ferocity as a pike grabbed the bait. Allowing for the time it takes for a pike to turn the fish I set the hooks and the first fish for three years was soon gracing my landing net. At three pounds this lifted my spirits, but was this to be a one off. No.

From the very same area I had another three in quick succession, averaging 4 pounds apiece. What a start. Working my way up-stream over the next half hour provided nothing more, so I decided to head back towards to where I had started from. Back a my original staring point, I managed another 6 fish with the smallest at 2 pounds and the largest being a 7; all scrapped like

mad.

Over the next three and a half hours, I worked my way slowly downstream managing a bewildering total of 39 fish until I had completely run out of Smelt. In all I had covered a total of around 750 yards.

Various texts and calls had been made and received from others in the BPS to let them know the good news about the water. Looking through my bag and all I could find was a small Mepps spinner. With a new aim of trying to catch 51 pike (my age at the time). By the time I had reached the car park, I'd achieved this with exactly 51 pike! Talk about feeling ecstatic.

To sum it all up, I had caught 51 pike from two pounds in weight, 8 fish between 8 and 10 pounds, with 3 doubles to 14 pounds on just 3 packs of smelt (16 fish in each pack) and 1 small Mepps spinner. All in just 6 hours of fishing. Now that's what I call a Red Letter day! Most of the fish were caught from near to the lilies which had been missing for years.

Since this occasion, I have fished it on quite a few occasions, capturing quite a few doubles in the process. I've also ventured right to the uppermost reaches of the river and had fish from there too, so it looks as if the river is back with a bang.

Now all I'm hoping for is that nothing else happens to the water over the next few years, hopefully that will see a few of the doubles packing on pounds; and nature re-defining it's levels; returning the water to the point it all went wrong. Fingers and Toes are all crossed.

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