

The Art of Wobbling



This is by no means a definitive account of river Pike fishing, but more my own personal take for the roving pike angler with particular emphasis on the use of a wobbled dead-bait (aka sink and draw).

Travelling light is the order of the day while roving a river bank. This mobile approach has to be one of the most exciting and versatile ways of catching Pike, so let us address the basics that are essential for a successful day on the wobble.

Rods My preference is for one of around 10 or 11ft and occasions a 12ft rod with a test curve of around 2.25lb. My choice is always

based on the river that I intend to fish. A rough rule of thumb is the bigger the river, the longer the rod that is required. Again there are other factors that I consider when choosing my rod, such as the features that I will encounter (such as trees and reeds) and the quality of the banks that I will be roving along. A longer rod will be required when you have near-side reeds and obstructions.

Reels Choice of reel is very much personal, but I like to use some of the smaller Shimano Stradic reels (4000 series) with the fighting drag at the rear. Having tested several reels in the past, I can confidently say that every single ounce saved on your choice of reel makes a huge difference at the end of a long session of continuous roving and casting!

Line Braided lines are a must for the modern day roving Pike angler. My opinions are most certainly based on the welfare of our Pike, as I do not see any excuse for using mono on our rivers while wobbling. If we think a quality super braid is expensive then we have to take a closer look at how we use it. We can certainly buy a 300 metre spool of line for about £20 and if we load just 100 metres on our spools then we will be getting the most economical use of the braid. In my experience a 100 metres of braid is sufficient on all rivers and should last a few months (and for the occasional angler maybe a full season). Therefore cost should not be the issue. I digress, a braided line of between 30lb (13.5kg) and 50lb (22 ¾ kg) will suffice; and of course the use of a wire trace is mandatory.

Clothing Your choice has to be dependant on the season and conditions of the day, and with due consideration of the many variations of the river banks we may encounter while roving. A Fly fishing waistcoat with lots of pockets and storage is a must for travelling light. Also, it would be ideal if the waistcoat has a D ring at the back for clipping your net. *(A soft collar band will help spread the load across your shoulders, and stop the load cutting into you).* Suitable boots and chest waders are advantageous and come into their own when conditions for wading are good, or if poor banks are to be fished.

Vital Accessories I consider the following items to be essential for a good days roving and for diligent care of the Pike. A collapsible net that is stowed on your D ring at the rear of your fly vest. My first choice of net is the QED Huntsman that used to be sold by Harris Sportsmail and is used by most of the British Pike Squad. However this net is no longer available, but there are loads of other nets from tackle companies that fold neatly out of the way - with extendable handles and clips to attach neatly to your waistcoat. A couple of pairs of long forceps secured to the front of the waistcoat like the predator range that Fox and E.T. manufacture, along with a pair of side cutters. Polarized glasses are another must have item and wearing them for stalking Pike is one of the most exciting aspects of wobbling; as most of the takes can be seen. It is a magical experience each and every time you see the Pike follow your bait and then strike!

A suitable unhooking mat which can be clipped onto one of your spare 'D rings' or a length of heavy duty bubble wrap stored in the back of your waistcoat. A waterproof bum bag which is big enough to hold your frozen dead-baits. A large rig bin containing several made up traces (see info below). Scales, weigh sling and camera just in case!

Finally it has to be a couple of Mars bars and a bottle of water..... oh and a small first aid kit with plasters because at some point and at some time you will feel the point of a treble hook!



Rig Setup The rig setup is a very simple and straightforward affair. (see rig image below) This setup is versatile and very uncomplicated to use, the trace is 18" to 20" long and has a breaking strain of 30lb with a 50lb breaking strain swivel at the top which is connected to a snap link swivel on the braid. The dead-bait - be it Smelt or Roach, is hooked as shown in the image below head first, rather than tails first as with legering.

The use of an SSG shot is simply a means of controlling how the dead-bait is worked in the water and compensates such factors of the depth and speed of the flow of water. In some cases it is not used at all - usually shallow water or

water with little of no flow, or when weed may be a problem.

Tactics Ok, we have covered the basics, now let us look at our approach to a successful day on the wobble. Stealth and observation have to be the focus as we approach the water. We start by casting to the margins at our sides in case an fish are present under our feet. (We don't want to scare them away by our presence) then we cast out in a fan shape to cover the water in front and to the side of us. If we do not get a take, then we move on to the next swim that's available. I should mention at this point that if we get a pike to strike and it misses the bait, or if we fail to connect then do not move! Just flick out the dead-bait again and work it in the same area of the strike. I would spend a few minutes trying to get the fish to take it again and you will be surprised just how many times you actually land the fish.

Q, How do we know we have had a take?

A, You will get a tap on the end of your rod, sometimes you'll get a full blown rap that pulls the rod tip around; but this is rare. Usually you will feel just a gentle pluck. (*This is where braid is essential. With virtually no stretch, you will feel takes where if you were using mono would not be felt*). When you feel this tap at your rod tip - we have a few options on when to set the hooks. My own personal choice is to strike straight away, but on the occasions when I see the Pike strike (and I can see the placement of the bait in the Pikes mouth) then I may make a judgment on waiting fo.

r

For that moment when I am sure the trebles are firmly in the Pike's mouth before Striking. However, I would recommend that all beginners strike immediately they feel that initial take. This will help prevent the risk of deep-hooking a pike, which for a beginner can be a daunting experience. (See the article on Unhooking Pike). This method of Pike fishing can also be used on virtually any water with great effect. The clearer the water quality, the better that this method will fish.

Whilst this method produces a great many of the smaller specimens (due t these usually being the first to pounce on your baits) it can also produce some cracking fish; as James Gilchrist's 31.02 shows (See Article for details) and also my photo of the 17 lb pike on the first page of this article.

I would consider a good day on the wobble to produce several fish, and don't be surprised to get into double figures - so take plenty of bait with you! All in all, it is a superb way of catching Pike. Perhaps it's not for the lazy angler, who may much prefer to sit behind a pair of matching rods all day long; but for those who are prepared to spend up to 8 hours roving a venue wobbling dead-baits; then you may find yourself a little worn out - but having had a day to remember. The effort is almost always worth it.

The more you practice this fine art, the more you will get out of it. Using this method I have caught Pike to 18 pounds, Zander over 11 pounds, Perch over 2 pounds, Chub close to 5 pounds and even a 4 pound Salmon.

Many thanks

Peter Timmis