

TACTICS

Packed with expert advice from top anglers to catch you more



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Ring the changes to keep silvers coming

Dave Williams shows how a busy approach can lead to you building a bustling net of roach and skimmers in no time at all

Words & Photography Tony Grigorjevs

MOST commercials are packed with silverfish that have been pretty much out of bounds throughout the summer.

They'll have been chomping at the bit to feed, but the sheer greed of the much bigger and bolshier carp leads to them being muscled away from any food that takes their fancy.

It's all change right now, though, with the mirrors and commons starting to sulk, allowing the roach and skimmers the perfect opportunity to get stuck in.

Fooling lots of them is by no means easy, though, and while a few bites are pretty much guaranteed, the mega hauls that we all dream of take a little work to put together.

Commercial fishery enthusiast Dave Williams packs away his carp gear at this time of year, uninterested at the idea of catching an odd fish.

He much prefers to remain busy, rotating a series of elements to make sure the bites never cease.

"Roach and skimmers will feed throughout the year and we've now reached the stage where you can get stuck into them without getting plagued by carp," explains Dave.

"They can be incredibly skittish, though, and it's essential that you remain one step ahead to prevent dry spells constantly cropping up."

Kicking off

Roach and skimmers are often targeted in the same session, but you need to consider how they prefer to feed before getting down to business.

Skimmers will linger on or close to the bottom, grazing over any bait that accumulates on the deck.

Roach will also do the same for a period, but they are much more inclined to rise in the water column to pick off bait that is falling before their shoal mates beat them to it.

"I want all of the fish concentrated on the deck for as long as possible and several balls of groundbait laced with loosefeed is the way to achieve that. ▶



Introduce six big balls of groundbait and a few casters via a cup at the start of the session



“Firing in a dozen casters every 30 seconds will keep the fish close to the surface. Do it less often and the fish will constantly drift up and down”

“It gives you confidence that almost every fish in your peg is close to your hookbait, making waits between bites very short.

“Six large balls are cupped in, and it’s then a matter of fishing that out until bites stop and making the catapult redundant for a period.

“Fall into the trap of firing freebies over the top and you’ll have fish off the deck in no time at all.”

Dave uses an even blend of Spotted Fin Dark Roach Super Blend, Lake Super Blend and Crushed Hemp. This creates a dark, sticky mix that will bind and stick together until it crashes down on the deck.

If the action slows, a small nugget of groundbait is added, but there will come a time when that doesn’t quite cut the mustard.

Feeding switch

No matter how hard you try to keep roach on the deck for the duration of a session, it rarely happens. They always find a reason to come shallow and quite what that is at times is something of a mystery!

Skimmers will also become cagey after a period of pressure, backing away and refusing to play ball.

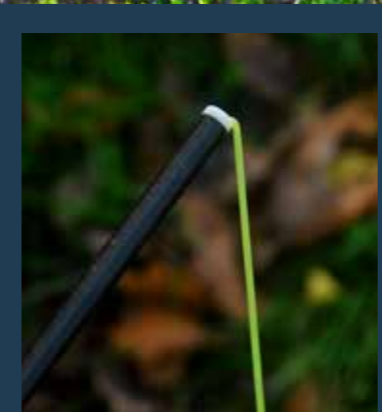
It’s at this stage – which is often around an hour into the session - that the catapult comes into play, with a regular trickle of bait designed to draw the roach as shallow as possible.

“No matter how cold it gets, roach can always be relied upon to feed shallow.

“Today, I’m at Chester Lakes on Eccleston



Maggots, casters and hemp complement the groundbait that is introduced



TOP TIP

Soft pole elastic is key to landing every silverfish that you hook. It will get ripped out a split second after striking if it is set too tight, and Dave installs it so that it just about creeps back into the end of his top kit once any tension from the rig is removed. Use a grade 6-8 hollow when fishing for a mix of quality roach and skimmers, dropping down to a solid five for a smaller stamp of fish or on days when bites are at a premium



Frequently feed casters with a catapult once the roach come shallow



Dave’s groundbait creates a dark, sticky mix that is bursting with silverfish attractants

and it’s 9ft deep on the long pole line.

“That’s a lot of water to explore, and I don’t let them spread throughout it or it’ll lead to increased wait times for a bite.

“Firing in a dozen casters every 30s will get the fish close to the surface. Do it less frequently and the shoal will constantly drift up and down, making them tough to locate.

“Lift and drop your rig in straight after you have done this, so that your hookbait blends in with the loosefeed.

“Stick to that routine and they’ll be constantly getting fed, giving them no reason

to go back down in the water column.”

Dave will set his rig to 2-3ft to start with. If indications suddenly cease, up the loosefeed a little to bring the fish slightly shallower. On the flip side, ease off a little, cutting down to just half a dozen casters each time for a short period so they drop a fraction deeper.

Don’t forget that a proportion of the casters will reach the deck, keeping the skimmers occupied. The lack of commotion on the deck will lead to them coming back on to the feed and picking up your deep rig every now and then will keep a steady run of them coming. ▶



Skimmers tend to stay on the deck throughout the day

Winning rigs

Two rigs are set up to cover both scenarios and they have several differences.

Dave's set-up to attack the deck incorporates a 0.8g DT Floats Tear which has a rugby ball-shaped body designed to keep the rig still. This is shotted with an olivette set 2ft from the hook, with several droppers below.

His shallow set-up is much cuter, with a 0.2g float with a carbon stem shotted with No10s strung out down the line to help the hookbait fall at a natural pace all the way until its resting point.

Both of them are made up of 0.14mm mainline to a 0.10mm hooklength and a size 20 hook. Elastic is a grade 6-8 hollow that is soft enough to prevent bumping fish, while also preventing quality roach from racing around frantically.

Despite reasonably warm conditions on the day that Dave met up with IYCF, the night before had been cold.

"Carp don't like such a big swing of temperatures in a short space of time, so I expect the silvers will be able to get in on the action straightaway."

The platter of groundbait was cupped in at 13m before Dave nicked on a single maggot and lowered it down to the deck.

Bubbles started to appear within minutes and a 3oz roach was the first culprit to go into the net. Having his float dotted to a pimple was proving vital, with each and every bite showing as a very subtle indication.

As expected, he ticked over at a good pace in the first hour, with roach and the odd skimmer to 1lb banked. The sport eventually started to wane after 90 minutes, though, with longer waits between bites and several indications that were impossible to hit almost certainly liners from fish that had departed the deck.

"I'm happy with that start – to catch for 90 minutes over those initial six balls is a result, but I think the roach have come shallow and I now need to get them concentrated where I want them."

It was far from instant, but the rain of loosefeed eventually brought about bites with the rig set 2.5ft deep.

"I could chase them up and down, but that leads to confusion as to what the best depth is and less fish end up in the net.

"It's much better to stick to your guns and work out just how much bait you need to feed to get the fish where you want them."

Small roach were the first to fall, with the stamp improving as Dave rigidly stuck to his feeding plans.



Rugby ball-shaped floats aid rig stability when trying to pin a hookbait to the bottom



Start the session with a single maggot hookbait, with casters on hand as a back up



Dave's tactics helped him amass over 30lb at Chester Lakes

The occasional look down on the deck produced skimmers in ones and twos, with a 4lb chunk the best of the day.

Quiet spells were kept to a bare minimum during the four hours on the bank, with two pints of casters and half a pint each of maggots and hemp that went in the groundbait proving enough bait to put together around 30lb of roach and skimmers.

"Silverfish will show on even the coldest days, but you need to understand how these fickle feeders are behaving to keep them coming.

"Constantly read the situation, react to what you are seeing, and the bites will keep on coming."

IYCF

Dave' tackle:

POLE: Matrix MTX3

ELASTIC: Grade 6-8 hollow

MAINLINE: Preston Innovations Accupower 0.14mm

FLOAT: DT F1 Carbon/Silvers 0.2g (shallow)/DT Floats Tear Drop 0.8g

HOOK: Preston Innovations SFL-B Size 20 pretied to 6in of 0.10mm line