

**SNOOTY** addicts of catching wild trout on the 'dry fly' would flinch at the prospect of using coloured fluff like this. But Andy Black says the fishy-looking patterns are just the job for pike at Chew, and indeed a wide variety of waters.



**ANDREW BLACK** shows how he fishes for...

# Big summer pike on the fly

**CHEW VALLEY** has become THE place to go for some big winter pike – but few coarse anglers know what happens the rest of the time. So your authoritative *Angler's Mail* has had a special visit for our new-look Action Replay.

Bristol Water's famous day ticket venue is a vast but scenic water reservoir in Somerset that also operates as a trout fishery. When full, it's a staggering 1,200 acres in size... hardly your average pike lake. But this is no ordinary fishery.

Special pike sessions which allow lure and deadbait fishing are run each autumn and winter, with last winter's top fish being Andy Charmer's 40 lb 8 oz predator. That special fish, and a stack of 20s and 30s, hide what else can be enjoyed at Chew.

In May last year Mike Green tempted a 40 lb 8 oz pike

when deliberately FLY fishing for the species! There are big perch to be had too.

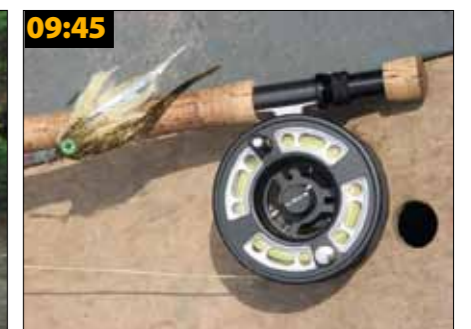
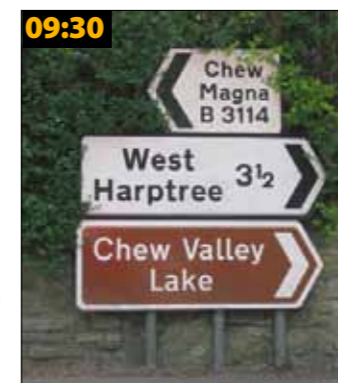
It's no wonder serious pikers have made this place a Mecca. All places for 2010 bank and boat pike fishing at Chew were quickly reserved back in the first week of January, when they came up for grabs. But fly fishing goes on right now, through the summer, and is open to all.

One fan of the fly is predator all-rounder Andy Black. The 33-year-old civil servant knows Chew can offer him some special sport and he travels all the way from Leicester in the East Midlands. That's a round trip of over 280 miles, and some anglers travel even further!

We joined Andy for an early summer session to see how he does it, and give all *Mail* readers a special insight.

**Angler's Mail RATING:** it's a hot sunny day but Andy is confident his big flies will deliver.

**09:30** It's quite a trek for Andy to get to Chew, but the boats don't go out until 10am. 'I arrive in plenty of time to have a quick look at the water, before deciding where to fish,' he explained. 'The weather is bright and sunny today, with a light east wind, not normally the best conditions for pike, but the water has a nice brown tinge to it and plenty of fish have been caught recently, so my confidence is quite high.'



**09:45** Due to the late start, there is plenty of time to set up.

'It is important to use the correct tackle when targeting these very big pike,' said Andy.

'I use a 10/11 weight Fox Predator Elite pike fly rod, coupled with a large Greys GTXi reel. It's important not to go under gunned, and get the fish landed quickly and safely.

'Chew has the possibility to throw up some very big fish, and it's responsible to go with the correct tackle. Today I am going to use an intermediate line that sinks around 1.5 inches per second, to get the fly down

quickly in the bright light. I use an 8 ft fluorocarbon leader of 30 lb then a 12 in. wire trace.'

**10:15** Andy uses his GPS to find spots where he's caught pike before, then his echo sounder to target the correct feature.

'I choose a good drift line where the wind will push me over spots I have marked previously,' said Andy.

'There is a gradual drop off in fairly shallow water from 7 ft with a lot of weed to 12 ft that is quite clear.



Hopefully this will hold some fish. A lot of people think pike will be holding in the weed, but it is more likely they will be just on the edges, waiting to ambush any fish that comes along.'

**continued over**

### Andy's vital PIKE KIT



**Echo sounder and GPS** - the sounder finds features, weedbeds and fish in big open reservoirs like Chew. The GPS electronically logs all the interesting spots you find - it's like permanently having marker floats out.



**Sladle** - Andy really rates this. It's like a sling that mounts across the boat. The pike is contained and has no chance of thrashing around on the bottom of the boat or slipping off an unhooking mat in choppy conditions. It also acts as a weigh sling, so no messing about moving the fish from one thing to another.



**Drogue** - used for slowing the boat down on a drift and keeping the boat positioned in the wind. 'I didn't need to use it this time, but it always comes with me in the boat,' said Andy.







11:15



11:45

**11:15** Andy's had a few drifts over some likely-looking spots. There are plenty of small fish showing on the echo sounder, that he suspects to be roach hiding amongst the weedbeds.

After a few casts he feels a solid bang on the line and strikes by pulling the line hard towards himself (fly rods by their nature are quite soft in the tip, if you strike like you would normally, the rod cushions it all, and you won't set the hook very well). It's only a small fish, but fights hard and is soon ready to be landed.

'I do not use a net unless it is necessary, so quickly chin fish like this out and unhook them,' notes Andy.

He takes the boat back and starts the same drift again. 'I am using a brown fly with a bit of sparkle that should look like one of the roach in the swim,' he adds.

A few more casts, just as his offering drifts over the spot where the first fish struck he gets another solid take...

'Unfortunately, I got a bit too excited and missed it. This is a good start though,' he commented.

**11:45** Suddenly there is a larger hit, Andy "strikes" hard and connects with an obviously bigger fish, and this one doesn't feel like a jack. He likes to play fish on the reel if possible, but struggles to wind the slack line back on the reel as he plays this fish. The clutch starts screaming and a nice pike proceeds to dive under the boat, and Andy struggles to keep the line away from the engine.

**11:50** Andy manages to get the fish, the boat and himself under control, and nets a nice pike around 18 lb. This one has really swallowed the 5 in. fly, and the hook has twisted in during the fight.

The pike goes straight into the Sladle while he gets his bolt croppers out to cut the hook, wrecking his catching fly!

'Flies are cheap as chips, even if they do take time to tie up, but, pike are priceless,' notes Andy. A quick photo and the pike is returned safely to the water.



11:50

**13:00** 'I will always cut the hooks and get the pike back quickly and safely, rather than mess the fish around pulling and pushing with forceps,' said Andy.

'If you cut the hook point, once the fly or lure is taken out, it is quite easy to remove the points with pliers - don't leave them in there,' he stressed.

The fishing went dead in the previous swim after all the disturbance from the pike, so Andy moves to another spot. The sun has gone in and the wind picked up, which he reckons could help.

**14:00** After a few casts Andy has another small pike. Upon unhooking it he finds that it already has a pike fly in its mouth. He unhooks this as well and discovers someone had been using fluorocarbon as a trace, and the pike had bitten through it just past the knot. 'Always use wire for pike!' warned Andy.

**17:00** With a few clouds coming over and the wind picking up, making it feel quite a bit colder, Andy decides to change fly colour to something brighter.



13:00



14:00



17:00

After a rummage around in his fly box he finds a bright pink and white fly that he tied up a while ago, and, much to the amusement of his boat partner, puts it on.

'Sometimes it's worth trying something that is "out of the box".'

'I suspect there are pike in the area I am fishing, and I bet they have never seen a bright pink fly before,' he suggests.

## TICKET information

**Chew Valley** is run by Bristol Water. Summer fly fishing day tickets cost £32.50 per person (two people per boat). It's best to book in advance, as it can get quite busy. If you want to pike fish with traditional deadbaits and lures, you'll have to wait until the 2011 autumn and winter dates are announced... then be very quick! For bookings, contact Chew's tackle shop on 01275 332339 or visit the official website [www.chewvalleyfishing.co.uk](http://www.chewvalleyfishing.co.uk)



## THE END RESULT

The change to a new colour makes the difference first cast - a large pike grabs what Andy's boat partner has affectionately called "Barbie". After a spirited fight, the fish is ready for the net. It's just over 20 lb. Quickly in the sladle, it's unhooked, a quick photo taken and back it goes. 'With the bright sunshine and warm temperatures I felt like it would be a struggle to get a bite from a bigger fish today, especially in the bright and clear conditions. In the end I managed a few nice pike, so it's not been a bad day at all,' concludes Andy.

## Andy's summer PIKE TIPS



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**1. PRACTICE SAFE SUN.** It can get very hot on a boat all day, and there is no shade out in the middle of a big water. You often see new anglers get terribly sunburnt on returning to the jetty. So take plenty of suncream, a hat and drink lots of water. The sun will reflect off the water so good sunglasses are essential. **2. LEARN TO CAST.** I was lucky in that I was taught how to cast at a young age by my dad. If you are new to fly fishing, it's not as simple as picking a pike fly rod up and wafting it in the air. Get some lessons; it will help in the long run, and you will present the fly better! There are casting instructors around the country, so pop into your local trout fishery lodge and ask. **3. ALWAYS USE A WIRE TRACE.** There is a trend to use heavy fluorocarbon line as a trace material for pike, but it's not worth using it. **4. MANY COLOURS.** Pike flies come in all shapes and sizes. Carry a mixture; some days they want bright flashy flies, and on others, or if the fish have been pressured, more natural-looking flies may be a better choice.