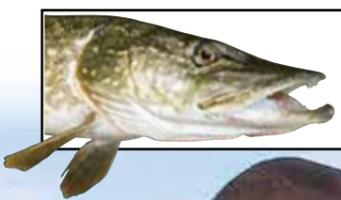


**NEW
PREDATOR
SERIES**

PIKER'S DIARY

THIS WEEK: Midlands specialist Andy Black recounts a pike session on Rutland Reservoir

ROD-BENDING trout reservoir action at Rutland.



Superfly guy

TOP TIPS

IT'S important to have a selection of flies available as sometimes they will gobble anything up, and other days they may need more persuading. Generally, though, I prefer, and will start with, bright flashy flies to grab the pike's attentions. Other days, however, more realistic presentations are needed, and this is where your natural fish patterns come in to play. Don't make the mistake of fishing flies that are too big, 4 to 6 inches is all that I use.



I often start with bright flashy flies.

A big old girl in the fish-friendly Sladle.



25 lb 4 oz of plastic pike.



My last cast reward tipped the scales at 19 lb 8 oz.



THE trout water pike season is often referred to as the 'Plastic Pike Season' because you just 'pay your money and wind in 40-pounders' - oh if only that were true! I'm a trout water regular and today I'm fishing Rutland Water - a water that's been kind to me in the past, giving me my PB at 29 lb 14 oz. However, it is often regarded by many as the hardest of all the trout waters, rarely giving up its secrets. I'm a lure fisherman at heart, but a pike angler foremost, and I realise that there are many tactics to catch pike, from static deadbaiting to jerkbaiting. All work to some extent on Rutland Water, but I have decided to fly fish for them today. Often when fishing trout waters you are fishing for fish that are already full, so you need to make them sit up and notice to grab your fly. Today I am using a bright green fly that I tied myself. My boat partner once said, 'it looks like you're trying to drown Orville,' while I was casting it out.

Rutland is a massive water, and much of it doesn't get fished by pike anglers, but there are several notable spots where people congregate, rightly or wrongly, and it's one of these spots I am heading for today. Known as 'pike alley' it's a good area to fish, but like everywhere there are hotspots within the hotspot. Today it's quite foggy and I expect the fish to be in around 15 to 18 ft of water and, after the 30-minute boat trip to the area, I begin by looking around for this depth of water and seeing if I can spot any baitfish on the fish-finder. I find a nice spot and anchor up on a small ledge, and have a few casts around the boat. I am using a fast sinking line to get my fly down to the bottom, where I think the pike will be lying. It's still very misty and flat calm and, after doing a full 360 degree circuit of the boat, with one small double to show for it, I decide on one last cast before moving to a different spot in deeper water. As the fly hits the water I count it down, 1, 2, 3...

24, 25 so I'm fishing the correct depth. Then I start a slow and steady retrieve. After the first couple of pulls the line shoots from my hand and I am attached to a pike. The fish powers off on a tight line and comes straight to the surface and jumps out. Wow, it looks big and as it crashes on the water it sounds like a hippo has belly flopped. I keep a tight line to the fish and it's going mental, zooming around the boat. Quickly the fish is tiring and soon she is ready for the net and I put her in the Sladle for weighing. At just over 25 lb it's my best of the season so far and I'm chuffed. It's time for some tea before I move to another piece of water to see if I can catch some more pike. I fish hard all day without another hint of a fish. Sometimes that's the way it goes, but I have one more spot to try on the way back. I only have time for a few casts, and manage one more fish just as the sun is setting, which weighs in just short of 20 lb. That'll do for me!