

PIKE SCENE

Seasonal advice from predator experts

WEEKLY PREDATOR SERIES

THIS WEEK: Big water specialist Andy Black reveals how he used a new bait to boat a PB 30-pounder!

Come to mummy!

IF YOU want to catch a 30 lb pike, you need to fish waters with 30 lb pike in them. It sounds simple, but in reality a 30 lb pike is a very rare fish, they are often quoted as 'ten-year' fish, in that most anglers (who fish the right waters) are lucky if they get one for every ten years fishing for them!

So obviously if you want to bag a pike this big you need to find a water that has a lot of them in, to up your chances, and that's where trout reservoirs come into play.

These waters offer the pike an abundance of natural food in often un-pressured environments, so the predators grow big quickly.

They really are the future of pike angling in this country, as they aren't so susceptible to otter predation or fish theft as other venues, due to their size, also there are

wardens or rangers on these waters all the time to look after the fish.

And it was on exactly this type of venue - Somerset's Chew Valley Lake - that I had the luxury of fishing this autumn on a stormy winter day.

I had fished the previous day too, but had blanked spectacularly, when other anglers around me had caught a few big fish. Even my boat partner had managed to get in on the action with a brace of 20-pounders. But that's how it goes on these waters, your floats may only be a few yards apart, but one will catch and the other won't.



ANDY BLACK with his new PB 31 lb 4 oz pike taken on a sandeel mummy.

Sneaky new bait

I WAS confident that day two would be different though, I'd noted the spot we were fishing the previous day and dropped a few baits in, so hopefully there would be a big fish or two sat there eating them - ready for my return.

I also had a sneaky new bait and presentation I had been trying out - sandeel.

The problem with sandeels is that they are quite a small dense bait, which means that they are quite hard for a pike to pick up from the bottom.

The way I had decided to rig them to get around this problem, was to use a bundle of baits, with a balsa float in between.

It's quite simple really; get two large frozen large sandeels and whip them together with some bait elastic, then add a balsa stick and whip on another sandeel over the top.

The idea was to create a nice semi-buoyant bait that was big enough to attract a 'big girl'.



My sneaky new bait - sandeel, but with a difference.

Gales forecast

THE forecast was for a wet and windy day, with gale force winds turning up later. And it was a relief when the warden allowed the boats to go out in the first place, albeit with a caveat that boat anglers had to be in at 3 pm should the wind blow and conditions become unsafe.

Five minutes later, we were off, and were part of a small armada heading for the same area that produced the fish the previous day.

Soon the boat was anchored over the GPS point that we wanted, and I'd quickly set up both my rods with float leger rigs and cast them to the small ridge that I knew was there, a feature that hopefully the pike would be patrolling.

The rain started to blow in, and I was in the process of putting my waterproofs on when I glanced to the left and saw my float tilt up, I quickly did the zip up and picked the rod up just in time as the ratchet on my multiplier reel start screaming.

The bait had only been in the water for ten minutes, and those sandeels must still have been like ice popsicles in the cold water, but for some reason a pike seemed to want them.

Terrifying tailwalk

I WOUND down and bent into what was on the end, and it really didn't do that much.

She just swam gently to the side of the boat - making me think that it was a small



Would there be a big girl patrolling 'my' spot?

'It's downright terrifying to see a '30-plusser' literally dancing on the water'

fish and not a whacker at all.

Then everything changed as it glided up to the surface, had one look at us and started tail walking - the length of the boat! And she was a big fish.

Now we all know pike tail-walk, but it's unnerving seeing a 20 lb fish doing it, and it's downright terrifying to see a 30-plusser literally dancing on the water.

It really doesn't look like they are actually built for it for starters, plus it's often during 'the gill-flaring fandango' that your hooks can get thrown out.

Luckily I managed to dip the rod in time and give the fish some slack as it landed, and the hooks stayed in!

It's amazing how you change your playing style when you see a big fish doing this, you have to play them gently, if you give them too much stick and bring them

to the surface you run the risk of a repeat performance!

This pike really wasn't playing the game, she hung there slightly sub-surface, annoyingly, just out of netting range.

I was trying to gently pull her towards the boat, but could see that she was in the mood to tail-walk again.

It was nerve wracking - for every inch closer to the net she waddled closer to the surface, and then all of a sudden jumped out again, landing back with the splash of a killer whale, before boring down deep towards the anchor rope.

By this time it has started pouring with rain, and the wind had got up to Biblical proportions, making the task of keeping her away from the anchor rope even harder...

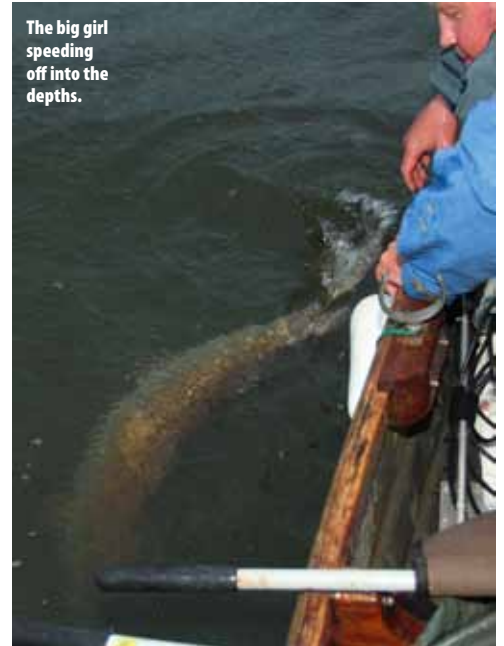


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Pike spawn - we quickly unhooked and returned her.



The big girl speeding off into the depths.

What a relief

JUST as I managed to get her back to the boat she started to jump again, but this time, straight into the waiting net!

The relief was immense, and knowing she was safe in the net being held by my boat partner Paul

Garner, I quickly got the sladle and the unhooking gear ready.

As soon as she was lifted into the net you could see that there was spawn coming out of her, so not wanting to mess about with the fish I simply cut the points of the hooks off which were nicely in the scissors, got everything out of the way, and put her

into sling for weighing.

At 31 lb 4 oz she was a massive fish, and a new personal best for me. After, a few quick photos she was back in her watery home, and as I held her over the side of the boat she rather ungracefully splashed me one more time in the face as she sped off into the depths!

HOW TO MAKE A SANDEEL MUMMY



1 Firstly take two large sandeels, and some bait elastic and lightly bind them together with several wraps.



2 Then add a balsa pop-up stick, fixed to a short length of wire so it can't be bitten off. This needs to be held between the two sandeels with a couple more wraps of bait elastic.



3 I like to chop the head off the third sandeel and then cut it into two halves, as shown, to release lots of scent into the water.



4 I then lay the two halves along the balsa stick, and use the bait elastic to lash the whole package together to create my 'mummy'.



5 I then trim the rest of the heads off for even more flavour leakage and then hook the mummy onto my rig as shown. One hook goes in around the tail root and the other further up. The wire from the balsa stick is then clipped around the trace so you don't lose it.

PIKE SCENE returns in the next issue of Angler's Mail magazine – on sale from Tuesday, December 31.