

EXCLUSIVE STORY: THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY CATCH IN GAME-FISHING

TROUT & SALMON

THE VOICE OF GAME-FISHING SINCE 1955

WIN
HARDY
CASCAPIEDIA
SALMON REELS
WORTH £999

THE BEAST OF BODMIN

Big brownies on a stunning moorland reservoir

TUSSLE ON THE TAY

Hair-raising sport on the famous Cathedral Stream

"Fishing for salmon is bonkers"

Interview with TV's Matthew Wright

SOME LIKE IT HOT

The thinking angler's approach to catching trout in a drought

TROUTING IN TRIANGLES

Where to find fish in a river

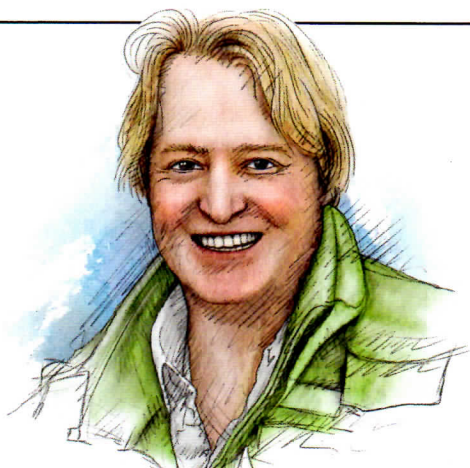
AVOID A BLANK

Have you got the mindset to beat tough salmon conditions?

FABULOUS NEW FLIES FOR SUMMER TROUT

SEPT 2018 £3.90 ON SALE JULY 26 - AUGUST 22





CHALK TALK

From dawn to dark

Simon Cooper invites you to take on the ultimate chalkstream challenge

IF YOU EVER FELT INCLINED TO TACKLE a Macnab on the chalkstreams, September is undoubtedly the month to do it. The salmon are running. The sea-trout are regular commuters between ocean and river. Grayling are back to their prime after post-spawning torpor. Brown trout are in an autumnal feeding frenzy. The original Macnab in the John Buchan tale was to poach a salmon and stag undetected, though more recently it has been legitimised into a brace of grouse, plus a salmon and stag. But I think our game-fish four are challenge enough without resorting to field or air.

Where and when should you start? Well, bearing in mind you have 24 hours, let us say dawn and grayling. They are most active just after sunrise when they head for shallow gravel, using their noses to riddle the stones for sleepy-eyed shrimps. That shouldn't be too hard, should it?

By breakfast, on to the brown trout. The shortening days are a trigger to them: eat now or waste away through the winter. If we are being purists, then a Cinnamon Sedge or something similar is a filling offering. If we are going to the dark side, Sawyer's Pheasant Tail will induce most nymphing fish.

By 10am, you are halfway. What next: salmon or sea-trout? By my reasoning our Atlantic arrival was always going to be the toughest so let's focus on that, holding the darkness in reserve for the sea-trout. You could, of course, do the wet-fly salmon thing, down and across, fishing a likely pool. But really you need a network of eagle-eyed keepers to give you the call. Our chalkstream salmon are creatures of great habit, occupying the same holding spots, often tiny and shallow, year after year. They are surprisingly willing and unsophisticated; I would not tie on anything other than a bead-head Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear, which has worked for me by accident and on purpose. Light tackle. A confined river. Late-summer weedbeds. A chalkstream salmon is quite the challenge to land, let alone hook.

So, finally, to the sea-trout. Here you need local knowledge above skill. The best sea-trout spots on the chalkstreams are known to a very few. Your prime window of opportunity is short. Those minutes in the gloaming when dusk turns to dark, the phosphorescence of the fly (any traditional sea-trout pattern will do) lighting up the river as it cuts across the current. All sea-trout takes are electric. If it completes your Macnab in double-quick time, it is infinitely more so. If not, you have the comfort of another eight hours to complete the task and I promise, with three in the bag, so to speak, you will not leave until the new dawn calls time.

Hatching this month

The finest entomological tip I was ever given pointed me in the direction of spiders' webs: there is nothing better than insect corpses to tell you what has been hatching. In the month of Keats' "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" these dew-laden traps are an open book.

The flies this month are traditional: Kite's Imperial mimics the dark olive. Tups Indispensable the pale watery. The Caperer, with its distinctive yellow belly band that suggests an egg sac, is a favourite sedge pattern. Nymphs are popular with fish and fishers with the trio of the PVC Nymph, Pheasant Tail and Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear always standing you in good stead.

But mostly, let Mother Nature be your guide, especially when staying late.

The keeper's fly

Born into a South Yorkshire mining village, then a teenage apprentice motor mechanic, Garry Allen did not take a usual route to becoming a river keeper. His interest in shooting led him to forsake the greasy rag for a sporting estate in Northumberland, which in turn led him south to Berkshire in the early 1990s and his current job at the Benham Estate, which has about six miles of the River Kennet, carriers and side streams.

Though Gary loves his shooting he beseeches his regulars not to lay down the rod in favour of the gun too early - don't ignore September, he says, with its proliferation of different hatches and greedy fish feeding up ahead of winter. He was on the horns of a dilemma when I pushed him for his favoured fly: Daddies, Sedges and Klinkhamers all get a consideration but, in the end, it was the everyday Parachute Adams that got the nod.

It is, he says sagely, the fly that "represents nothing in particular but everything as well", especially to those fish that don't exactly rise, but snake and twist just below the surface, tail and dorsal fin most evident. It is good to keep it simple sometimes. **T&S**

Parachute Adams.



■ Simon Cooper is managing director of Fishing Breaks, the chalkstream fishing specialists (fishingbreaks.co.uk). He is the author of two books: *Life of a Chalkstream* and *The Otters' Tale*.