

My fishing journal

Where: Nether Wallop, Hampshire

Date: 15 April 2025

Weather: sunny with some cloud (fishy weather!)

Topography (what the ground is like): an in-line fishing lake (where the Wallop brook runs into the top of the lake and then out at the bottom)

Who: six 13 year olds who had all done some sort of fishing before but not necessarily fly-fishing

What: a one-day trout fly-fishing course for 12-15 year olds to learn

about casting, tying flies, river life and catching fish

Catch: five rainbow trout

Host: Simon Cooper who lives at Nether Wallop Mill and organises fishing courses for kids and families at the lake (as well as all sorts of other fishing at fishingbreaks.co.uk). He also writes books - I'd definitely recommend his book *The Otters' Tale*, especially if you're interested in learning about life on the river. I've loved reading it. Steve was our instructor for the day



Eva, 13



We put our rods together - it's important to make sure you have the pieces in the right order - and then threaded the line through the eyes on the rod



Every week the lake is stocked with 25 rainbow trout. They weigh about 2lb each and are about two years old

TOP TIP: Always carry the rod pointing backwards and always wear glasses

Learning how to tie a fly: (this means making a fly, not tying it to the line!) How cool to tie a fly that you can catch a fish with



Steve got us all casting with wool on the end of our lines. The aim is to be as accurate as possible and land the wool inside the hoop

FIELD DICTIONARY

Bobbins

A fly-tying tool used for holding thread



River life. This bit was fascinating. Steve took a sample of the gravel from the brook and sorted through it so we could see exactly what insects were in the water. This can help you understand what the trout are feeding on

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Everyone spread out around the lake. I looked for a place where I thought the fish might be lurking. At first the boys chose the other side

About the day

It was a great day full of interesting things to learn - and best of all we caught fish that we could then eat for supper. It was my first big trout. I've only ever caught small wild brownies on a Scottish loch before. I cooked mine as Steve recommended - with lemon and garlic butter. It was delicious. Simon talked to us at lunchtime about the chalkstream and all the wildlife on the river. He also gave us copies of his books and I've loved reading *The Otters' Tale*. There is so much to learn about life on the river

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER
Strike! This is when you lift up the rod tip to make sure you hook the fish, otherwise you might lose it



Fish on! After about five minutes I felt a lurch on the rod and I had a fish



Ben catches the next fish, which he keeps for tea, too. It's his first ever trout



Again! This time I netted the fish myself. It's like a giant game of tug of war but I landed it safely

“If you are not going to kill and eat your fish then keep it in the water and release it”



Xan caught two trout as well. He's a keen fly-fisher and did an excellent job of keeping his rod raised as he landed the fish



The one that got away: Tom hooked a fish but it managed to make a break for freedom



The top team: Jonty, Seb, Xan, me, Tom and Ben. I'm super keen to come on the three-day course this summer (see What's On, page 34, for details)