

Tactics Hemp Fishing On Lakes

SOWING THE SEEDS

Hemp and tares are a winning, yet underused, bait combination so we join seed expert **Nick Edwards** at Ferry Meadows Lake to find out how he sets out his stall to catch roach on the pole.



I'll tell you what, if it wasn't for the fact I'm at Ferry Meadows to do a feature for APF I wouldn't have even got my kit out of the car today! It's blowing a gale, looks like it could chuck it down at any moment and the only baits I've got with me are hemp and tares. Having just these baits usually isn't a problem here because the venue is solid with roach, but you'd normally want better conditions before considering the pole, not to mention hemp and tares.

The reason I say this is that presentation with light rigs is all-important when fishing these baits, so a strong wind creating waves on the water is far from ideal. However, it's an experiment that I'm keen to see through; fishing a lake with hemp and tares isn't commonly done and, with good weights of roach from the lake recently, I'm pretty sure that it'll be an exercise that you'll find useful this autumn.

On rivers, hemp and tares is one of the best combinations for catching roach, but on lakes you'll rarely see their use outside of feeding to hold carp on commercials. It's a shame, really, because roach are roach wherever you go and the same theories for flowing venues can be easily applied to stillwaters.

I'm sitting with the wind blowing straight into my face, partly because it allows me to hold the pole better but also because I know this bank holds a better head of fish. With these baits you need a varied head of fish – the smaller fish will feed on the hemp, which in turn will bring in the bigger roach that will really go for tares fished on the hook.

These baits really have come of age once again over the last few years and it's now 'fashionable' to use them. Often, beginners see seed fishing as being hard work, but it's a case of working out where the fish want to feed, feeding them correctly and having the option to catch better quality fish.

I'd go as far as to say that with increased exposure, especially to hemp, lake roach now need little of the weaning on to the bait through careful loose feeding that was once essential. Also, you don't necessarily need to carry back-up baits like maggots and pinkies in order to catch – it seems there's never been a better time to start hemp fishing, as you can virtually catch on the seed from the word go!

It will be difficult today, though, because of the conditions, and it will definitely be hard to tempt those bigger roach into having a go because natural presentation will be hard.



ANGLER PROFILE

NICK EDWARDS

Team: For hire!

Sponsors: None

Pole: Daiwa Tournament Professional 16m

Line: 0.09mm main line to a 6in hooklength of 0.06mm

Float: 0.6g Sensas Katrina

Hook: Size 20 Kamasan B511

Shotting: Spread-out bulk positioned at half depth with three No11 droppers below, the last one just above the hooklength



VENUE FACT FILE



FERRY MEADOWS

Location: Peterborough, Cambridgeshire

Directions: From the M1 Junction 19 take the A14 and then the A605 to Peterborough. At Peterborough get on to the ring road and follow the signs for Orton Waterville. Then pick up the brown information signs for Nene Country Park and, once inside the park, follow the signs for the Watersports Centre. When you reach the car park head to the right and park at the end.

Nick was fishing just to the right of the disabled swims, which can be seen from the car park

Contact: Ken Wade on 01733 565159

Day tickets: Controlled by Peterborough & District Angling Society. Day tickets are £4, season tickets are £20

Bans: None

The Right Bait

Quality bait is vital for catching roach, and although you can buy precooked hempseed and tares, I don't think they're as good as home-cooked bait on the hook. This is because they tend to be brittle and fall apart when hooking. Also, the kernel becomes mushy because it's been soaked for so long, and if you try to hook the bait by pushing the bend of the hook into it (the method I prefer), there's nothing for the hook to grip on. However, it's ideal for feeding.

Cooking seed isn't a case of simply boiling it in a pan and then leaving it – you have to be a bit more of a Jamie Oliver than that! If I'm fishing on a Saturday I'll begin by soaking my hemp on the Wednesday before I go to work and then cook it on the Thursday.

To cook it you need to bring the water to a boil and then leave it simmering. Once the seeds have split you can turn off the heat. I then leave them to soak in the pan for another day, which finishes them off nicely, and they're then ready to use on the Saturday. This sort of preparation might seem a little over the top to some anglers but, if you want the best quality seed, you have to do it.

I actually prepare two types – one lot for feeding and a smaller quantity for using on the hook. The hemp for feeding is Dynamite Baits' uncooked seed, but for the hook I use the much bigger Sensas Giant hemp. Obviously it pays to use a

larger seed on the hook compared to those you're feeding, as they stand out.

I've also got tares to use on the hook as an even larger alternative and with these I'm happy using the precooked Dynamite Baits variety, which are good quality. Some anglers add bicarbonate of soda to their tares when cooking, which dyes them black, but I've never found this has made much of a difference.

I'm happy to use them in their original dark red/brown colour. Incidentally, once you're on the bank, keep all your seeds covered in water to prevent them from drying out, even in the winter.

Feeding is the area that's hardest to get right when fishing the seed. You have to get it spot on to reach those roach competing for the bait. A question I'm often asked by anglers is, "How do you know when to cup in the feed and how do you know when loose feeding will be best?" The answer is quite simple really: if my target weight is low (like on a canal, for example, where a few pounds will do) I'll always pot in the feed to keep those fish that are present in one area, making sure the hook bait is in the right spot every time. If I'm on for a big weight then loose feeding is definitely the way to go, making sure there's always bait falling through the water column. The fish will be in more of a frenzy, and just plonking in the rig while catapulting feed will usually see a bite every time.

Conditions today really do make me

cautious, so potting in some feed and following this up with loose-fed hemp is the best option. I've also fed about 30 tares at the start.

Another question I'm often asked is whether or not it's possible to fish baits like hemp on more than one line? To be honest, it's not something I like to do, simply because it's hard enough to keep the fish feeding on one spot, never mind two! You always need to be on top of your hemp swim where feeding is concerned, and if you fish two lines you'll have two hemp swims that aren't being fed correctly. It's definitely best to have just one hemp swim that is being fed correctly.

Generally, all silver fish will respond to hemp, both on the hook and as a feed.

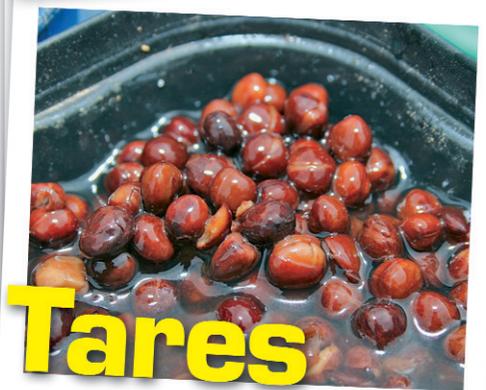
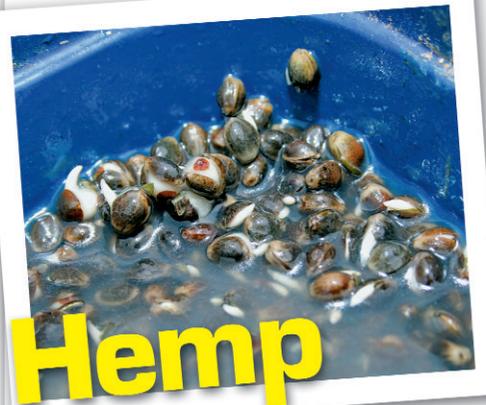


Spot The Difference

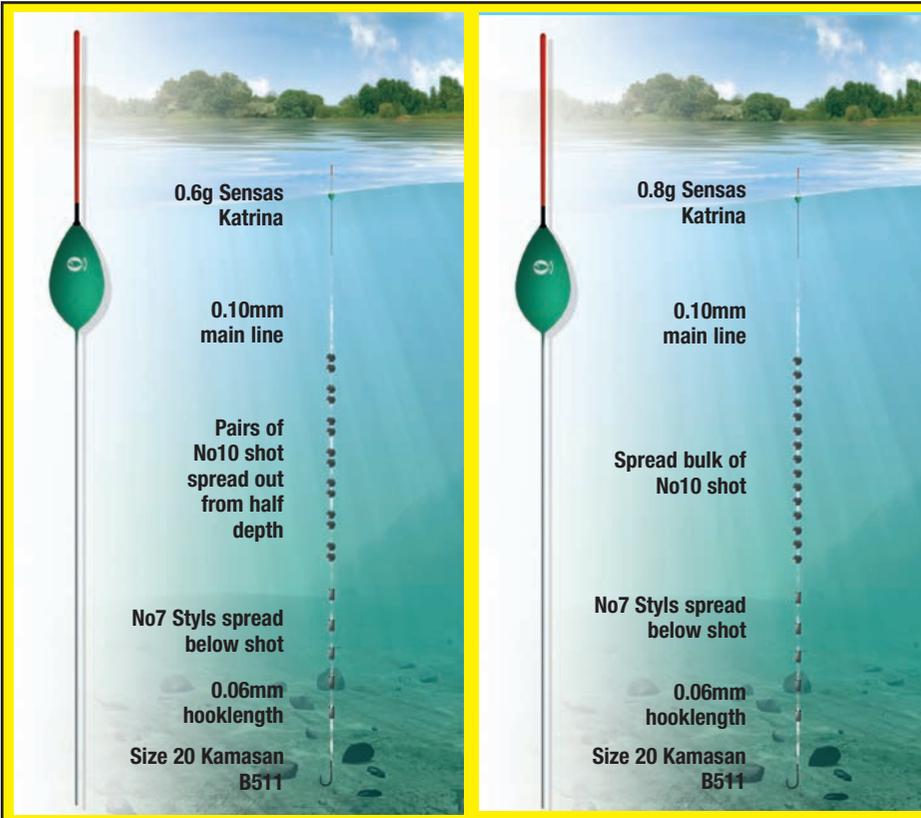
Fishing seeds is one thing but actually knowing the difference between them is another. However, you can easily tell what is a grain of hemp and what is a tare.

Hemp is black or dark brown with a shell that splits when soaked, revealing a small, soft, white shoot. Basically, it looks like a small, crunchy snail at first glance, a likeness many anglers believe is the reason why hemp is so good at catching fish. Hemp is also very oily, so when you feed hemp you'll see a slick on the surface. This is very attractive to fish.

Tares, on the other hand, are much larger than standard hemp (you can get giant hemp that looks about the same size) and are much softer looking, having a deep-brown colour. If you overcook them (ready-prepared, tinned tares are good for first-timers) the skin becomes loose and will peel off, and the tares will be very soft and crush easily. This is an ideal bait for large roach that often hang off the edge of the feeding area.



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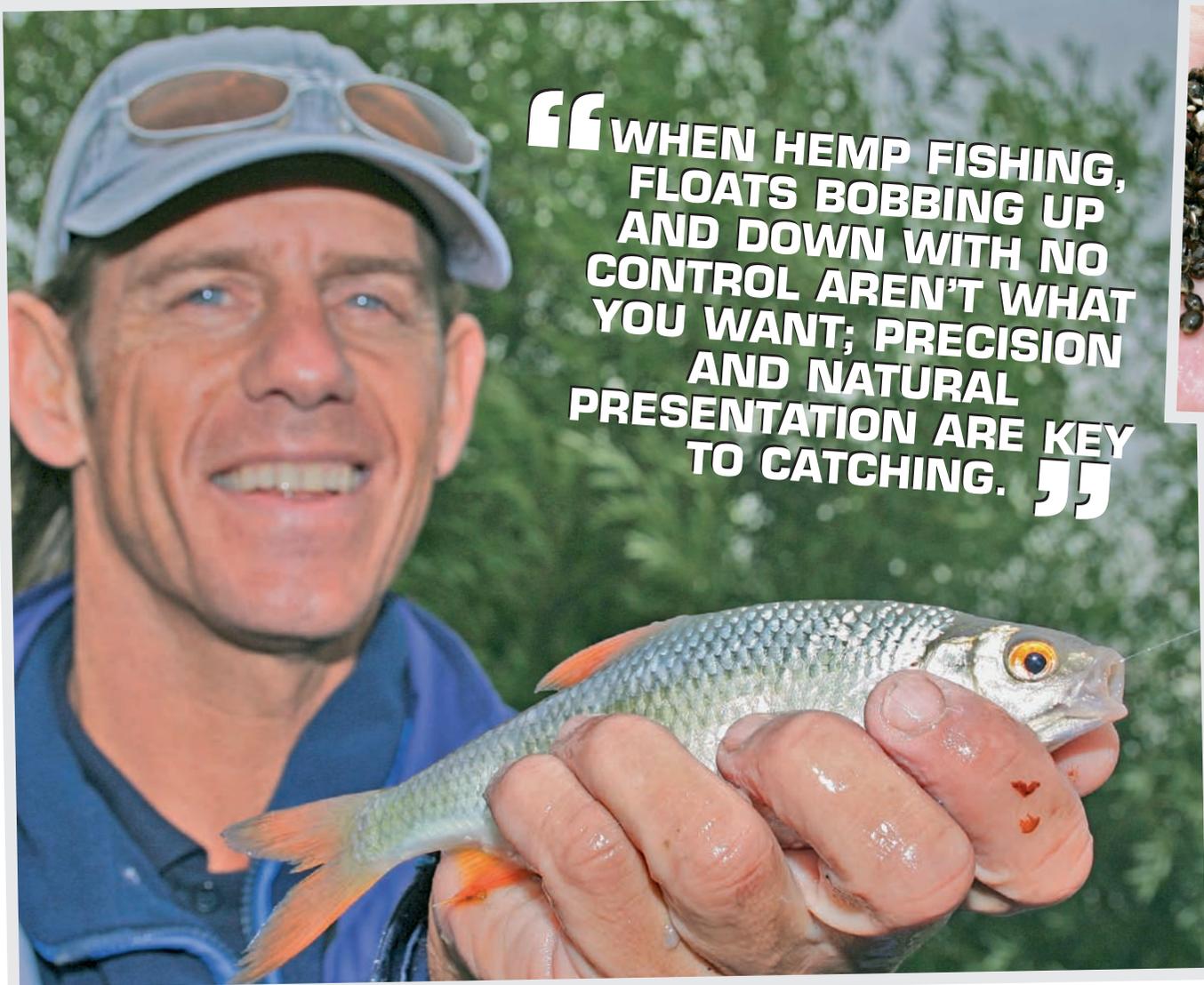


Rigs

Rig-wise you need to fish as light as the conditions will allow while still being able to present the bait correctly. I'd normally fish 0.2g or 0.3g in this type of swim, which is seven feet deep at eight metres. Today, though, with this howling wind, I've got to fish much heavier, and 0.6g (hemp) and 0.8g (tares) rigs are the minimum I can use. It's much heavier than I'd like but if I fished any lighter the rig would be blown all over the place.

I'm using bulks of shot spread out on both my rigs rather than an olivette, and there's a good reason for this. Strong winds like this create an undertow on stillwaters and the strung-out bulk helps me to pick this up. Today, although the wind is blowing straight into my face, I've got an undertow going from left to right. By picking this up it helps to improve my presentation, making everything look more natural.

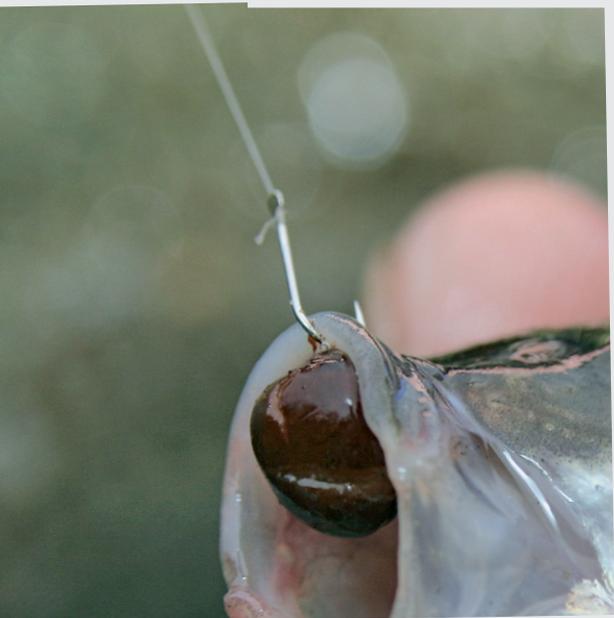
Floats for these conditions need to be quite bulky and I like pear-shaped ones. I quite like the Sensas Katrina because it



The Session

actually has two bristles that can be interchanged to improve visibility. I'm using the thicker of the two today, but if conditions were more favourable I would simply pull off the thick bristle to leave the thinner tip underneath visible – brilliant!

For terminal tackle I'm using a size 20 Kamasan B511 (the best hemp hook around, in my opinion) on 0.06mm hooklengths. With such fine tackle, fine elastic is a must. I'm using a Middy 2/3 on my 0.6g rig and Middy 2/4 on my 0.8g rig. I use light elastics for most of my fishing, so many of you may be surprised to hear that I cut my tips right back so I can fit a large-bore internal bush. The elastic works so much better when you do this and because of that I never have to use any lubricant. I find that water does the job for me, and I'd much rather lose a few inches of my pole to get the elastic working correctly, than have a pole that's a few inches longer with elastic that constantly sticks inside the pole.



If this had been a standard match hemp would never have been on my agenda. However, today's experiment has really paid off and, with magazine editors breathing down my neck despite the weather, it's been fun to find out just how far you can push hemp on a venue that isn't normally associated with seed fishing.

When hemp fishing, floats bobbing up and down with no control aren't what you want; precision and natural presentation are key to catching. To enforce this point, and because of the rough conditions which have helped the spread-out bulk pick up the tow, I've fished tares more today because the extra weight helps keep the rig in check and looking natural.

I've had a fair few skimmers and hybrids today, which has

also been a big surprise, but keeping the fish coming at every put-in has been hard. I suppose playing it safe with the amount of feed introduced can be detrimental and, in the end, I've had to feed nearly triple my original estimate through the catapult. This clearly improved my catch rate – it doubled!

Fishing hemp is not quite a science, but there are key points regarding presentation that have to be remembered. Fishing it on lakes is not far removed from the traditional approach on rivers and canals, and as long as species such as roach and skimmers are present, it'd be a shame to overlook this highly effective – and fun – way of catching this autumn.

