

FISHERY MANAGEMENT:

AUTUMN LOCATION

CHRIS CURRIE offers some advice on finding your quarry in lakes when autumn arrives.

The heat of summer is starting to fade, and what a summer we have had! The 30°C plus temperatures have wreaked havoc across the UK, with many fisheries shutting through the worst of the weather due to low dissolved oxygen levels, and the extreme heat taking its toll on some older residents.

This can be a stressful time for a carp, and something we should all consider when chasing our beloved quarry. All too frequently on my travels I witness fish being kept in retainers too long, and a distinct lack of care being taken to look after our quarry by treating wounds for future generations.

At this time of the year the fish almost go on a disappearing act on most fisheries, when the water begins to cool and the leaves begin to tumble, peppering the path and giving that unmistakable crunch with their burgundies and browns, to my mind offering the colour that epitomises autumn around the venue.

The key to locating your quarry in these tough times is to be vigilant and go that extra mile to spend as much time as possible on this 'prep' work as it can really help you to pinpoint where they will spend their winter. Should you be inclined to angle, short sessions through the cold snap of winter could be very productive.

The wind is a key asset at this time of the year; consider that the big southwesterly wind usually brings with it a warm edge and any water with a new SW wind pushing across it will be slightly warmer, offering the fish some comfort from the colder temperatures that a north or east wind will usually bring.

The wind not only brings

Silted lake beds can cause oxygen levels to drop and need to be controlled – not always easy!



warmth from a south or westerly direction, but the strength of wind usually causes the surface to ripple, and on the end of these winds you will tend to find a better saturation of oxygen and a collection of natural food that the fish will look to exploit. The only observation

I would reference though, is the later the big southwest wind in the winter, the less productive or enticing to the fish it will be.

By this I mean the warm south or westerly winds in October will be better than the same winds in January, and I feel this is for two

reasons. Firstly, the fish have tended to slow their metabolism by January so are less inclined to follow, and secondly – and I feel quite significantly – the collection of leaf matter from the vicinity of the lake blown there from the early big south or westerly winds in autumn is now subsequently sunk and at a point of decomposition.

This can be a major driver of low oxygen levels on the lake bed in this area, which I feel is a deterrent for the fish to follow these winds later in the winter. In deep lakes where high temperatures cause the lake volume to divide into several layers the deepest layer is often unable to exchange oxygen

A little lake surrounded by trees is a recipe for lots of silt.





Finding and prepping spots in autumn can be well worthwhile

Leaf litter will eventually break down to form silt



This is why many fishery managers will apply calcium carbonate (chalk) for water treatment of silt on lake beds. Silt is the decomposed organic material on the lake bed, such as leaves, and it causes the water to be acidic. Chalk is alkaline, and so balances the pH in the water levels. On the pH scale, used to tell if a solution is

acidic or alkaline, neutral pH is 7, pH 0 to 6 is acidic, while a pH of 8 to 14 is alkaline. Silted lake beds support less vegetation and so can be lower in oxygen levels than more balanced waters. By decreasing the acidity of the water, bacteria that breaks down the silt is encouraged, so by careful management of the water's pH balance, the

silt will be broken down. The calcium carbonate should be applied as evenly as possible over the lake surface. It will turn to a milky consistency on contact with the water, and slowly sinks to the bottom of the lake.

Calcium carbonate improves the water quality and leads to the improved conditions for the lake stock. Chalk is applied in spring and a second dressing in autumn. Generally, a dressing of 1,000kg is used per surface acre of silted lake bed in spring and 800kg per surface acre in autumn. This is a guide only and its application is best monitored with a pH meter and applied by a trained professional.

The subtle movement of decomposed leaves can disturb sediment gases, leaving frothy patches of bubbles on the surface, this being a telltale sign of groups of fish packed into an area.

I spend most of my time looking, watching the lake from a good vantage point in the autumn or, if it's safe to do so, get up trees to get better angles. Take note of the weather conditions and how the fish behave on certain weather fronts. If they like new winds on your particular pit this would be the first place to investigate. Keeping notes and building a picture

with the atmosphere and the oxygen supply is exhausted as it is used in decomposition processes. These low oxygen levels lead to a release of phosphorus from the sediments.

Dead organisms and faeces on the lake bed are subject to decomposition by microbes (bugs). After phosphorus in the organic matter is broken down to forms that are accessible to plants through the process of mineralisation, this leads to an increase in the phosphorus stock in sediment, where it will stay, provided the top of the lake sediments remain oxygenated, providing a cap that prevents free (not bound to iron and aluminium oxides) phosphorus from escaping from deeper lake sediments.

Much phosphorus is free in the lower layers because of low oxygen levels there.

You should always be watching the water while you're fishing.



The process of applying chalk begins.



Trees always provide good vantage points for fish spotting.



Keep an eye on the island margins.

of their routines will make location a lot easier each time you visit.

I always check quiet areas; spots that get overlooked, and even if no fish show there, by looking either from a tree or donning waders it's often clear to see that they frequently visit such spots.

I try and glean as much information about the topography of the lake bed. If the fish show in an area one morning, as soon as the fish have moved off I'll have a lead around and see what is out there before reconvening the hunt. Once I have found a few areas I will take a note of the conditions and will prep the area for the next time those conditions are due.

For instance, if fish are showing round an island margin bush in October on a westerly wind with the sun beating down and warm temperatures, and conditions were predicted to be the same for the next trip, I will prep it with some bait a few days before.

The mix I have used to great success through the pressured time of autumn is small, fine, food particles. The idea is to give them lots of small food items, such as crumb, crushed nuts/particles and plenty of liquid.

The powder cloud is really attractive to all fish and it

will remain until something passes, stirring the bottom up. With small food items it takes a lot for it to be eaten, and in turn residue amounts can be left lodged in the sediment, but once cleared the spot will be cleaned back to substrate, as I've seen so many times while watching a spot develop. This form of baiting is best done little and often and is surprisingly successful on large pits where fish don't visit areas for weeks at a time and the bait used is able to sit on the bottom without rotting in such low water temperatures. Keep those eyes peeled and investigate any little signs. ☺



... but don't forget the near margins.



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