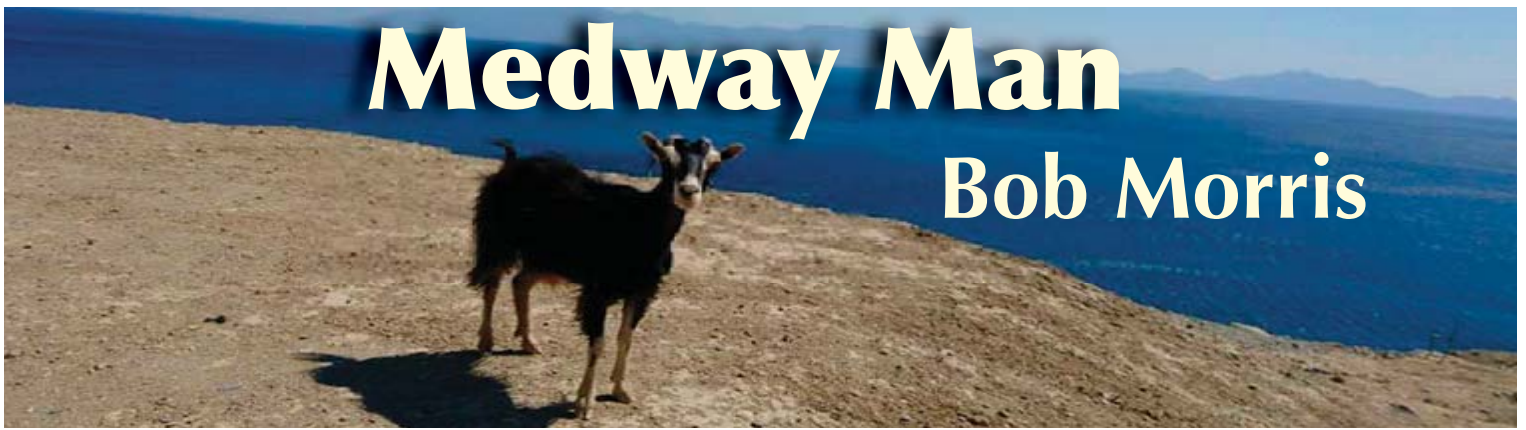


Medway Man

Bob Morris



Due to a variety of circumstances and excuses as explained previously, I have probably done less fishing this last summer than for many years and having just returned from a two week break on the Greek island of Kos I am now trying to get back into the swing of it all and arrange a few trips. I really enjoyed the break, which as usual involved a bit of sunbathing, swimming, and of course, plenty of eating and drinking.

I say that I have not done much fishing but in fact I've managed one or two short sessions with my float rod and trusty pin. One of the frustrations of my relatively successful spring efforts was the lack of tench on the close range float tactics. I have since had one or two from other waters but most of my action has come from margin patrolling carp - which can cause a bit of chaos - particularly where weed, pads and other snags are concerned. I like to use a 12ft rod for my float-fishing and usually it is a barbel rod with a test curve of 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 lb and my centerpin loaded with 12/15lb nylon. In many swims a stronger braided line would be much more effective in preventing a powerful carp from reaching the snags, but some clubs have banned its use - rightly or wrongly, I won't debate the issue here. You would think however that a strong nylon and soft action rod would be capable of stopping a fish in its tracks? Often this is what actually happens, although halting the initial furious rush of a carp is often a challenge. The main problem is usually hooks pulling out when heavy pressure is applied and this is a situation that I have been facing a lot recently, particularly where heavy weed is present - a common thing during these hot summers. Others have told me of having



A tench on the float

experienced similar troubles on the carp front this year. Although I always hate losing fish, I would rather get the hook back than risk being broken up by the carp and leaving the hook and any other tackle trailing - that is why my preference is for stronger lines (nylon or braid) in these situations. Another conclusion that I have come to, which may be rather controversial, is that I don't want to use extra strong hooks. This is for the same reason - if the hook cannot bend or break then you risk the line or trace material snapping, which leaves it in the fish. This is also one of the reasons that I prefer to fish with barbless or squashed barbed hooks - the fish can get rid of them more easily. My preference now is for a hook that will bend open well before any chance of the line breaking - this can easily be tested. The truth is that these days I would rather lose a fish and reel back a straight hook than snap out and worry that I may have left it potentially tethered. I suppose part of my reasoning is that I have caught loads of fish in my angling career and now feel happier risking a loss. I have to qualify all of this by saying that this bendy hook approach is restricted to weedy or snaggy areas and I am happy to use stronger hooks in more open terrain - where ironically they are not needed so much. The other evening the classic incident occurred during a margin float session using the tactics just described. No pads or other snags were anywhere nearby but a thick bed of soft weed ran across in front of me at about 15 yards out. There are two



A good Medway pike

possibilities here, if a fish is bent on going through the weed. First try to stop the fish in its tracks and prevent it getting in at all - my usual approach for other harder snags. Second option ; allow it to go in under heavy pressure and take the chance that it will tire and you can then pull it back through - which can often work. when the first lift occurred on the float, I braced myself for option one - should it turn out to be a carp. It was, I did, and the hook pulled!! It came back slightly bent open. An hour later a repeat performance, but option two was deployed which left me solid in the weed , but with carp very much still attached and extremely angry. After about two minutes of this heavy tug of war the fish started to yield to my constant pressure and came back toward me. Then the hook pulled. 'Oh cruel world' I really thought that I deserved that one. The hook was not bent. A few years back, this loss would have caused me to go into 'piscatorial meltdown' but with my "fish friendly Philosophy" in place I was able to take it in good faith. When bite number three developed about half an hour later, I felt that my luck should change, and guess what, it did, I did not have to use the above options and in spite of a hard scrap I netted the fish after several minutes. It was a Tench of about 6lb - success.



Bob now prefers to get the hook back - even bent!



Bob prefers to margin fish with a float