

**Q** I have a great-looking weir pool on my local club water, but I'm not sure how to fish it. Can one of your experts help, please?

Paul Littlewood  
Hometown: Stratford-upon-Avon  
Age: 15  
Favourite species: Chub



**CFA EXPERT**  
Name: Darren Cox  
Sponsor: Garbolino  
Hometown: Stratford-upon-Avon

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Your questions answered

# KEEP OUT OF THE WILD WATER

Words and photos: **Steve Martin**

Garbolino's Darren Cox points you in the right direction to tackle weir-pool eddies.

The large eddy created at the edge of the heavy flow acts as a food trap, which attracts all manner of species looking for an easy meal.

The fast water from the weir meets the main flow coming from Darren's right, to create a fast-flowing current at his feet, which puts extra pressure on his hook-hold when playing fish.

Set the rod tip high to keep the main line out of the fast-flowing water.

**W**eir pools are a wonderland when it comes to the number of species that can be found lurking in the wild, swirling water. Many anglers shy away from them, though, as they see the challenge as a step too far, and places where more tackle is lost than fish caught. However, if they stopped a while longer and took the time to watch the water more closely, they would be able to get a better picture and start to see where the water swings away from the angry water to form slower-flowing eddies, and the discernable crease that forms where the slower water meets the fast flow.

We joined Darren Cox at Lucy's Mill weir on the Warwickshire Avon at Stratford-upon-Avon, where he not only had to contend with the water from the weir coming straight across the river from the far bank, there was also the added flow from the lock and second weir upstream that added to the power of the water that flowed at his feet.

**The dark groundbait was also fishmeal-free, as Darren wanted to catch "every fish in the swim."**

On arrival, Darren set his box up so that he was positioned downstream of the main flow from the weir, just below the large eddy on the far bank that was to be his target area for the session. The quiet water was in stark contrast to the slightly coloured water that raced past him at his feet, which, he pointed out, might cause him a few problems when it came to netting fish. It also didn't help that the days prior to the session had seen some of the heaviest rainfall of the late summer, and it was cold water too.

Setting up his 13ft feeder rod, Darren explained that, by their nature, weir-pool eddies collect a lot of food, as it drops down to the riverbed in the quieter water. It's little wonder then that fish will congregate there in numbers for a feast. He also added that much of the food falls at the edge, where the fast current meets

**IN THE FEEDER**



**1** Always carry a selection to cover different flow rates.



**2** Initially, fill the feeder with plenty of casters...



**3** ... and plug both ends firmly with groundbait.



**4** Fish a particle-laced feed for the rest of the session.



**DARREN'S SWEET RIVER MIX**  
A slightly dark mix is best on the river, with hemp for added fizz. Big particles are added, which will hold fast in the slower flow.

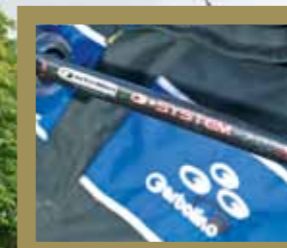
the slow water, so it's a good idea to try and cast a feeder as close to that point as possible. However, it's not plain sailing, as often weir pools are covered with rocks on the riverbed, which have either been exposed by the raging waters or added deliberately by the water authority to prevent erosion.

Before adding a feeder, Darren clipped a 50g weight to his swivel and cast as close to the edge of the pool's flow as he dared. He then placed the rod in a rest and watched the rod tip to see if the lead stayed put, or was dragged off by the flow. After three or four casts he found an area where the weight would settle – around a metre in from the main flow – and a depth that he estimated at around nine to 10 feet. He wasn't finished yet, though, as he then started to drag the weight slowly along the riverbed to ensure he had found a clear bottom to fish over. Only when he was happy that he would avoid the snags did he clip on the open-ended feeder and attach his hook link.

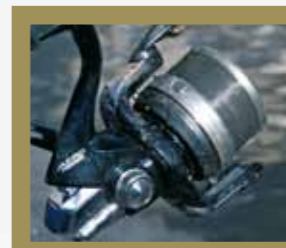
Lucy's Mill weir is well known for its bream, so the coloured water meant that the conditions were ideal to fish for them. It also dictated the groundbait mix that Darren used for the session. His recipe for the day was half a bag of a sweet-smelling feed, to which he added half a bag of a slightly darker mix that contained plenty of hemp particles. This, he explained, would give of plenty of smell and would fizz to create an attractive trail in the flow. The feed was also fishmeal-free, as Darren wanted to catch "every fish in the swim," and if he had used a fishmeal-based feed it would put off some of the smaller species. If small fish 'ragging' his hook bait did →

**TOP TIP** Slowly drag a lead around your swim before you start fishing, to ensure it is clear of snags.

**GEAR FOR THE RIVER**



**1** A powerful rod is needed to cope with the heavy flow.



**2** Darren's line choice is 8lb Shimano Technium mono.



**3** The feeder and swivel are stopped by a tiny bead on a twizzled loop.

Target the eddies at the side of the main flow if you want to get the very best from weir pools.

Overall it was a disappointing session, but Darren did catch eight different species from the river.



pester him he might add a few dampened micro pellets for a quick halibut boost. Then, as he was looking to catch on the bottom, he added two big handfuls of hemp to ensure some bigger particles were left once much of the groundbait had dispersed in the flow.

A further look at Darren's setup for the session revealed that he had clipped on quite a heavy feeder. He explained that he wanted to use more weight than he would normally need, as he would be casting quite close to the flow. And, as it was not a critically balanced setup, he would be looking for the tip to pull round when a fish took the bait. He added that he could not fish with a lighter feeder and a bow in the line due to the heavy flow at his feet, which would quickly pull the feeder away from the eddy. If a barbel or carp did find the bait there would be a chance that he would get a drop-back bite, but it was unlikely.

### Before the extra water arrived Darren hooked and landed a surprise tench.

The fast-flowing water also created another problem, as it was key that as much of the main line was kept out of the water as possible – again to stop the feeder being dragged away. To achieve this, Darren had set his feeder arm so that the rod tip sat high in the air, to keep as much line as possible off the water until it entered the slacker water.

The heavy, nearside flow also posed another problem, as once a fish was hooked Darren would have no option but to play the fish across the flow, which, along with the weight of the fish, would put extra pressure on a light hook link and small hook. To help counter this he attached a 30in 0.18mm Garbo Line hooklength, to which he had tied a size 14 Drennan Wide Gape hook.

This may have seemed a bit severe, but as Darren would be fishing big baits for bigger specimens, he wanted the extra security the 'overgunned' tackle would give.

Bream fishing can be a waiting game, as a shoal often takes time to find the feed, so to 'set the trap' Darren started the session with eight or nine quick casts with the feeder full of casters and plugged with groundbait, as he wanted to get some feed down with some big particles. Once the initial feed was down he switched to a more groundbait-based feed, to which he had added some corn, chopped worms and casters to keep the big-particle theme.

He explained that it was important to get a bed of feed down in the early stages, as he

**Why not feed with fishmeal groundbaits?**



Some river species shy away from fishmeal, so leave it out for a mixed catch.

expected the flow to wash much of it away to produce the flavour trail he wanted to create. He would recast every five minutes in the first hour and after that he'd leave the rig out for up to 15 minutes, unless he struck into a fish. It was all a case of getting the balance right, he said, as he needed to keep the feed going in but at the same time he wanted his hook bait to be fishing as long as possible.

#### THE SESSION

The day turned out to be one of mixed fortunes for Darren, which wasn't helped by the increased flow and rise in water level as the rain from the previous day made its way downstream. This extra cold water would certainly have affected the fish, as they are not happy when the water temperature changes rapidly. Also, the fresh water increased the spread of the fast water at his feet. Initially it was only flowing through a third of the river's width, but after two hours the fast flow had started to spread almost halfway across, as the level rose. Not only did this affect the fish, it also dictated where Darren could cast, as the way the eddy flowed also changed.

Before the extra water arrived Darren hooked and landed a surprise tench of around 4lb. This was then followed by a much bigger fish, which Darren never saw. One of the features of weir pools is they draw loads of rubbish downstream, and as Darren was just starting to tame the fish in the heavy current a large branch snagged the line, which added to the already massive strain on his gear. He continued to play the fish as the branch slid closer to his feeder until the hook pulled, much to his disappointment. Either the close proximity of the branch had spooked the fish or the extra weight close to the feeder just put too much pressure on the hook-hold.

Soon after this the bites slowed with the increased water. Against his better judgement, Darren scaled down in hook size, hook-link strength and bait size. This worked to a degree, as he started to catch smaller fish, plus a perch around the 1lb mark and a reasonable eel. The issue with the lighter gear was there was always a chance that if he latched on to a bigger fish the pressure on the line and hook might result in a break or hook-pull.

And such was the case as after the next good fish, which Darren said felt like a bream, was guided into the heavy current, the pressure was too much for the hook to hold.

This was turning into a day of frustration, so it was back on to the heavier gear and, as he switched, Darren pointed out that not for the first time that day his hook link had been chafed as it passed over unseen rocks. It was an issue that came back to haunt him, as a few casts later he was into a big bream, which, as it came to the surface, looked all of 6lb. This

#### BIG BAITS



**1** A worm's head, tipped with a dead red maggot.



**2** Double casters make for a crunchy morsel.



**3** Three dead red maggots stand out in coloured water.



**4** Bream have a weakness when it comes to lobworms.



**5** Add a couple of dead reds for an even bigger offering.



**6** A heavy grain of corn sits well on the riverbed.

would have made the perfect end to a difficult day, but luck eluded Darren again – as soon as the fish bolted into the fast flow, something gave, and it was crystal clear just what had happened when he reeled in. The hook link had again rubbed on rocks, and had given way under the excess pressure.

Live features do not always go to plan, as conditions can go often against the angler. The bream Darren was targeting live in the eddy

formed by Lucy's Mill weir and they had made an appearance only a few days earlier. However, the weather of the previous few days and the effects it had on the river made even the best swims difficult.

On another day, Darren's tactics would have bagged him plenty of fish. He did, however, bag eight different species during the session, which shows just what you can catch from weir-pool eddies. **FISHING**



This 4lb-plus tench was a surprise catch from the eddy's quiet waters.

Send your coarse fishing question to us at [myanglingquestion@dhp.co.uk](mailto:myanglingquestion@dhp.co.uk)