

favourite patterns include Cat's Whisker, Black & Green Tadpole and a Goldhead Damsel. In fact I don't see the need to make things any more difficult; you're far better to change lines, retrieve or the area you are fishing than change flies.

Most people automatically assume that small waters with regular stockings are easy places to fish. I accept that for the first hour or so this is usually the case; you are almost guaranteed a fish. But in the clear water and with a number of anglers fishing, the trout very easily get spooked and wise up; especially if they have been stalked, cast at and hooked a number of times. Sport can quickly become very difficult.

Today I have started off by fishing a floating line with a very heavily weighted (tungsten-eyed) Cat's Whisker Tadpole with silver flashabou. Alex Hunt, a Lechlade regular and renown stalker, has been very successful with his Silver Bullet fly - a large heavy flashabou lure. I've adopted the main characteristics of the fly (i.e. weight and flash) but added extra movement in the form of a marabou and flashabou tail. The mix is more mobile than a complete tail of flashabou.

I've chosen this set-up for a number of reasons. Firstly, if I see a fish in the margins and I want to 'stalk' it this super-heavy pattern drops through the water like a stone to the required depth and is easily controlled with the floating line. Because of the weight and long marabou and flashabou tail I can impart movement into the fly that often induces a response from the fish. And because the fly is easily visible (chartreuse body and white and silver tail) I can see when a fish takes it and strike accordingly.

If no fish are holding in the margins you can fish the fly 'blind' equally effectively. I personally believe that this fly is much better than the often preferred stalking bugs such as WAEF (When All Else Fails) etc because it has movement, is easily visible and can be fished blind at long range.

If the fish shy away from large lures when stalking I usually revert to a heavily-weighted Hare's Ear with a fluorescent orange head and small black marabou tail.

I slowly walk along the bank to the first corner of the lake by the three boats. I notice a large fish of 10lb-plus cruising literally along the ledge. It then disappears from view. Thirty seconds later it swims back and seems to be following a set route.

My Polaroids allow me to track its path up to a weeded area and back along the drop-off. I figure that the



Tungsten Cat's Whisker Tadpole

Hook: Size 8 Kamasan B175
Thread: UTC fluo green
Eyes: Medium tungsten dumb-bells painted chartreuse
Tail: 3.5-inch white marabou and silver flashabou
Body: Chartreuse Fritz 15mm

optimum place to hook the fish would be as it turns from the corner and back towards the boats. This will mean that it's heading away from the weed beds, the rope and into the open water.

I literally flick my fly 10 feet from the bank but a good 15 feet in front of the fish - this will give the fly ample time to sink to the correct depth and for me to crouch down in position. I also hope the loud 'plop' of my fly won't disturb the fish or spook it.

Ten seconds later I see the fish leisurely swim along the bank and towards my fly. The pace is constant and my fly just hangs motionless in the water. When the fish is literally just four to five feet away I give the fly a series of very fast short sharp two to three inch strips. This means that the marabou tail is undulating, almost crawling upwards, straight in front of the large rainbow.

Instinctively the trout's speed increases and it's on the fly in an instant. I watch its mouth open then the fly disappear from view - it must have the fly in its mouth but I haven't actually felt a thing. Not taking any chances I strike hard to

"The Cat Tadpole is better than stalking bugs...it has movement, is visible and can be fished blind."

set the hook. Don't just lift into the fish or the rod will absorb the take, you'll feel the fish for a second or two and it will throw the hook.

Unfortunately, rather than swimming into the open water as I had hoped, the fish heads for the weed bed and the ropes. I pile on the side strain but to no avail, I just can't stop it and it's soon dragging me through the weed beds in an attempt to shed the hook. In situations such as these it's important not to panic. Just make the best of the situation, stay focused and be patient.

The fish immediately weeds itself but it gives me the opportunity to take stock of the situation and plan how best to get it out. I know that with a 10lb Rio Fluoroflex leader and a size 8 Kamasan B175 I have some serious 'pulling power', and if I can change the angle and pile on the pressure then I may bully it out.

Sure enough after a few minutes of just piling on constant pressure the fish comes free, covered in weed. Another three long runs follow before the fish becomes reliant upon its weight. Then a slower more laboured fight ensues and I eventually net the fish. We weigh the fish and I'm pleased with my first double of 2013 - a fine stalked rainbow of 12lb 10oz!

Stunning brace

I WATCH as other anglers start to get into fish all round the lake. Bob Forsyth (former Troutmaster winner) is making the most of a boat directly in front of the house. He takes four fish in 90 minutes and it seems that it takes him longer to play fish than actually hook them (he is fishing a Black & Green Nomad on a floating line). His third and fourth fish look particularly impressive and when he returns to the shore we find out that his third fish was a 12lb rainbow and his fourth a brown of 11lb 12oz - a simply stunning brace of fish that any angler would be proud of.

However, after an hour or two the

fish become much more difficult. The water has been disturbed especially round the margins and most fish have moved out into the open water and they won't respond to lures stripped back.

It seems the fish have become wise to fast moving lures pulled back in the gin clear water and as such I decide to vary my tactics slightly by fishing an intermediate line in order to get slightly deeper. And I tone down my flies - Goldhead Damsels or Black Tadpoles being my preference over the Silver Flashabou Cat's Whisker and, rather than a fast or medium retrieve, I simply figure-of-eight the flies back trying to impart as much movement into the fly as possible. If I get a slight tap (usually to the long tail) I speed things up to hopefully induce the take.

I've worked my way around the lake, literally fishing the margins first, then fishing blind out into the open water. I've still only the one fish to show for my

Stalking & 'blind' dual purpose set-up



efforts and it's past 2pm! I reason that the fish are spooked and have probably been pushed to a quieter area of the lake with little fishing pressure.

Walking right round the lake to the far side (past the chicken hut) the water seems to deepen quite considerably here as I watch my fly just disappear into the depths. A fish then rises some 20 yards out and I cast in the general area, I didn't see the shape of the rise so couldn't estimate which direction the fish was travelling in.

I retrieve but get nothing, no follow no pull - nothing. The water is still and lifeless. My first blind cast produces a take on the drop, literally as my fly hits the water. I automatically change lines (back to a floater) the intermediate and heavy fly will soon drop through the top five feet, which is where the fish seem to be holding.

My first cast on



Rob ponders another fly.



Lechlade doubles are lean and fit.