

The Jumping Bream.

The number 13 is said to be unlucky by some, and many go out of their way to avoid it. Although not particularly superstitious, I must own up to hating ladders, steering clear of black cats and only stepping on cracks in the pavement when absolutely necessary.

I never gave superstition a thought when I arrived at Frank's Pool on Friday the 23rd May 2008 for a relaxing day by the lake. The north easterly wind was not cold but strong enough to make float fishing tricky on both the east and west sides of the pool so I went for the north bank on a relatively sheltered peg 13. I'm not a big lover of wind, although it has to be said that I do appear to get more than my fair share of it. I do not like it in my face even though it may improve catch rates and though it helps with long casts when blowing from behind, it can be very uncomfortable if not embarrassing.

Apart from the wind Frank's was quiet with only one fellow angler trying his luck from peg 17. I could only remember fishing peg 13 once before when I caught a 10-5 Common on boilie and my then best Curcian of 2-4 on corn. I wondered what the day had in store as I set up my carp rod and kept an eye open for surface movement near the island.

As the water was warm I decided to try pellet and sweet corn rather than maggot as the approach had produced better fish in the past and also helped me avoid those small perch that turn up everywhere.

Having seen no evidence of carp, I put my tutti fruity boilie near to the overhanging trees on my left in the same spot that had produced the 10-5 Common last season. With my carp rod tucked neatly out of the way I had maximum flexibility to place my float out directly in front of me, or near the willow on my right. I baited both areas with several generous handfuls of carp pellets, added a few single grains of sweet corn for good measure and set up my float rod without delay. The morning was nearly gone as unfortunately I had spent a lot of it helping an old lady remove an uncooperative petrol cap at the filling station.

Bites were initially slow and I wondered whether I had 'missed the boat' so to speak, with the morning diners, who had perhaps gone for their siesta.

By 2pm I had hooked eight fish the best being a 1-1 Bream which made a gallant effort to pull my float under the willow. Fish were steadily building up in the swim although few pulled my float under sufficiently to allow a catch. Changing to a lighter float improved things and at 2.35pm my rod was bending merrily under the strain of a 2-3 Tench which presumably liked the look of my Green Giant corn. Following the disturbance caused by landing the fish my swim went quiet for a while but bites soon returned with an increase in the feeding rate.

I caught ten nice silver fish on pellet during the afternoon including one impressive and fin perfect Roach weighing in at 10 ounces. At 5pm on the dot, as if by magic, something powerful yanked my float under and bent my light rod almost double. Thinking that this

was a larger Tench, I held my breath and rod tightly as it made a run for the reeds crossing my carp line as it went and setting off the bite alarm. As the bite developed I realized that the fish was not a Tench after all but a Mirror that obviously fancied some monster crab pellet for tea. It gave my rod a fair bit of stick during the next few minutes, but eventually the 5-15 Simmo lay quietly on my mat as I took its picture. As with the others I have seen, this Simmo was short and stout and clearly enjoying its time in Frank's Pool.

I was pleased that my swim soon returned to normal with bites coming at the same frequency as before. There were clearly a large number of fish feeding up in the water as each catapult of maggots provoked a lively reaction as the food hit the surface. I guessed that the fish were probably small Rudd and hoped that their larger cousins were feeding on the lake bed near to my hook bait.

I have noticed in the past that some larger fish, particularly bream, can give delicate bites, preferring to suck the bait first before confidently consuming it. It is for this reason that I try to be patient with such bites in the hope that I might catch a whopper.

My float suddenly sank and as I lifted my rod, I realized that I was in to another good fish. It stayed low in the water at first pulling line off a light clutch and moved away at increasing speed. It suddenly spun round and started to accelerate back towards me slackening the line and moving up in the water at the same time. Thinking that the fish may have escaped I took in line swiftly until the tension told me that the fish was still there. The large bream was not only still there, but to my amazement it shot out of the water towards me clearing the surface by at least 12 inches. Its fins were outstretched like the wings of a plane and the water splashed noisily as it fell back in to the lake.

I have seen pictures of pike tail-walking and watched in awe as various species of carp jump out of the water, but this 'jumping bream' was a first for me. Determined not to lose this aerobic fish I kept my line tight and stayed with it even though my heart was pounding like a jack hammer. The jump must have sapped a lot of energy leaving the big bream tired and easy to pull to the net. My first 'jumping bream' from Frank's weighed 4-5 and the image of this event will be with me for a long time.

This crafty fish had presumably learned that by jumping out of the water it was possible to avoid capture. Although the approach had proved unsuccessful on this occasion it was clearly a clever ploy which had left this particular angler both startled and shell-shocked.

I returned my 'jumping fish' hastily, knowing that bream are less robust than carp and like being pulled out of the water as much as we like being pulled in it. It swam off swiftly without as much as a goodbye, leaving me wiser for the experience.

Jumping bream, what next?

Alan Harvey.
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