



MAGGOT-Mulch Mayhem!

Ian Giddins reveals his devastating tactics for cool-water commercial success.



The response was instant down the edge!



Balanced gear is a must when expecting a variety of fish.



Try feeding heavily in the margins later in the day.

ANGLER FILE

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VENUE FILE

WOODSIDE FISHERY
 Location: Cleobury Mortimer, South Shropshire, DY14 0BU
 Day tickets: £6; concessions £5
 Contact: 01299 270565
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You can't beat coming away from the bank with the satisfying feeling that you've learnt a new method. Last winter I experienced a particularly difficult session at the well-known Midlands commercial, Tunnel Barn Farm. The entire match line-up was struggling. With nothing to lose, I decided to experiment and feed chopped-up maggots. After finely mincing them with my worm scissors, I dripped in the scent-ridden slop and several minutes later found myself attached to a big F1! I went on to catch all kinds of species and had bites for the remainder of the day. However, before I'd fed the mush I was adamant that there were no fish in the peg; something about it triggered them to feed. Since that day I've called the slop 'maggot mulch'.

On a chilly autumn morning, I have brought you to Woodside Fishery in south Shropshire to show you this great tactic!

SLOPPY SUCCESS

After discovering maggot mulch, I've tried it at several venues with devastating effect. When the cool weather creeps upon us, the metabolism of fish slows. With the water becoming clearer you need to trick them onto the hook with something special.

On one match last year I drew a favoured end peg on Larford's Match Lake. There was a hard frost on the morning and after two biteless hours I decided to cup chopped maggots into three feet of water on my left-hand margin. After 15 minutes I was shocked to get a bite and went on to win the match with 130lb! I'd not had a bite on pellets, or the various other baits I tried, but again the magical mulch pulled it out of the bag.

WHY MAGGOTS?

There is no doubt that maggots are a great cold-water bait. If you feed them whole, they

sink to the bottom slowly in an attractive manner. However, chopping them releases all the attractive juices and amino acids from within, enhancing their effectiveness even further. When cupped in, the maggot mulch creates an eclectic mix of scents and tiny food morsels to attract and hold fish in the swim. I also believe that the mulch creates an area of flavour within the silt, encouraging fish to home in and investigate the zone time and time again.

MARGIN MAGIC

I've caught fish in water as shallow as 14 inches in winter, when they often sit in warmer layers around margin or island shelves. In these scenarios I like to feed via a small pole-mounted pot. The fish are already present and it's simply a case of catching their attention and attracting them to a desired area. In nearly all circumstances I feed maggot mulch in conjunction with groundbait, offering a base of attraction for fish to feed over without filling them up. My choice is XPD groundbait from Bag 'em Matchbaits; a dark blend of crushed expander pellets.

Feeding a small globule of maggot mulch with a nugget of groundbait is ideal. The slop makes a lingering cloud in the water, while the groundbait offers a target area to focus fish on the deck. Once these shallow-water swimmers have died after catching a few fish, you can feed a large pot of bait for feeding fish to settle over later in the session.

I have a lovely margin to my left, with a small flat area beside the adjacent staging in around 18 inches of water – perfect!

OTHER OPTIONS

This swim is typical of many fisheries, with an island well beyond pole reach and lots of open water in front. In these situations, you never know where the fish will be. I'm much



Fish on the long line were noticeably bigger during the middle part of the session.

The mulch held fish on the open-water swim for an hour without topping-up!



All the fish at Woodside were in great condition and loved Ian's maggot mulch!

more confident in feeding more bait here and will kick off with a third of a pot of mulch and a decent-sized ball of groundbait. This allows me to create plenty of attraction that will last a long time without introducing any 'filling' bait. I can happily feed this swim at the start without worrying that all my bait has been mopped up.

I've opted to fish a comfortable 13 metres, although on harder days I definitely feel that fishing further out can be an advantage. This is especially the case if there are other anglers around the lake in match conditions.

THINKING TACKLE

As I begin to fine-tune my feeding to suit winter conditions, I always look to balance my tackle accordingly. You can catch all kinds of species on maggots and while some people see the small fish as a hindrance, I use them to my advantage. I've narrowly clinched victory by just a few pounds made up of extra silver fish on several matches.

I've assembled just two rigs. Both are made on fairly thick, 0.16mm Genesis Extreme line. This prevents tangles, is durable and enables me to step up the hooklength diameter if needed. I'm starting on a 0.12mm trace to a size 16 Kamasan B510 hook. Matched with yellow Maver Retro Dual Core elastic, I can land a real variety of species and build

a decent weight. My favourite maggot float is the Maver Elite Series 5, which is a stable, round-bodied pattern that has a visible but sensitive bristle. I have opted for a 4x12 for the margin, with a slightly heavier 4x14 for open water.

Ten fish hit the net from my margin swim, before bites dry up after 50 minutes.

STARTING POINT

Numerous anglers believe that margin fish are only caught late in the day. I've had plenty of success by actually starting down the edge, particularly in winter. The fish are less active and tend to gather in areas and stay there, despite the time of day or bankside activity.

I learnt this when dobbling for fish, which entails searching the peg with a rig without feeding. You will often catch in the most unexpected area of your swim. Carp in particular will sit in the margins during the early part of a session, after gathering around the edge of the lake during the night.

I've fed both swims to begin with, accurately feeding some mulch and a ball of groundbait at 13 metres in front before

starting down the edge. I always sprinkle a few whole maggots into the mush, too, as hook-bait tasters.

TRICKY BUSINESS!

I have tapped my initial ball of maggot slop and a small ball of groundbait in and have instantly received an indication. As I imagine the feed settling on the bottom, I lift the hook bait several inches before lowering it back down. The float instantly dips but, disappointingly, a 4oz perch is the culprit. This then urges me to feed again on the next drop-in.

This time I lower the rig in and before I have time to tap the feed in, the float dips and my elastic is out. I quickly turn the pot over to feed but the clever culprit decides to dash under the platform and wraps me around the wooden stanchion!

With the fish still on, I decide to jump off my box, take off my top kit and actually thread it under the platform leg to release the fish. Trundling back to my box, the fish is still on and I'm soon netting a 3lb common – now that's a slice of luck!

I'm rather worried that the disturbance from me leaning over the platform will have spooked them but next put-in I hook another stockie carp, which proves my point that the fish live in this shallow water!

TASTY TIPPLES

Another area of my approach where I feel that I can gain an edge is with hook baits. At the end of the day, this is what the fish must choose to eat for you to catch them, so it is of vital importance! My favourite year-round bait is three red maggots. This may seem like a big hook bait, especially for winter use. However, when you consider that most anglers will happily use two pieces of hair-rigged corn it puts things into perspective. This stands out among the scents and fine particles and acts as a target bait for any bigger fish to pick out.

The second hook bait that I favour is a chopped maggot. This mimics the feed and is totally different from any other hook baits that the fish are used to seeing. For some reason, a very successful hook bait is a chopped red maggot and a whole one. Simply hook two maggots and snip the end off one. On the hardest of winter days, this little trick can be the difference between bites and no bites!

TIME TO CHANGE

Ten fish hit the net from my margin swim before bites dry up after 50 minutes. I'm convinced that they were simply sat in the shallow water basking. With the sun breaking

IAN'S MAGGOT-MULCH TIPS

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| <p>A Always add a few whole maggots to the chop mix.</p> | <p>B Cut the lid open in a container for escapes!</p> | <p>C Cap the mix with loose groundbait for the margins.</p> | <p>D Feed larger, hard balls on deeper open-water swims.</p> | <p>E Dripping in small amounts of the mulch is deadly.</p> | <p>F Nuggets of groundbait offer extra attraction.</p> |
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through, I fancy catching some here later in the day as well. With this in mind, I'm feeding half a pot of chopped maggots and capping the rest off with loose groundbait. Now it's time to try the open-water swim.

Baiting up with my chopped-maggot hook bait I'm into fish straightaway. The first two are decent skimmers, before I hook something that powers towards some large lily roots to my left! The light gear proves more than adequate and I'm soon scooping a lean 6lb common into the net. Considering I fed this swim over an hour ago, you can see just how effective the combination of mulch and groundbait is for holding fish in the area. Several roach soon follow before an F1 and even a tench takes a liking to my hook bait! I manage to get bites for an hour without re-feeding here and catch five species in this time. That's why maggots are so good!

POSITIVE PLOY

The fishing is much better than I expected after a cold night and as bites dry up I'm choosing to feed regularly with a pole-mounted pot. A mix of the mulch with a few maggots and a small, hard nugget of groundbait is enough to maintain interest and over the next half-hour the swim gets stronger. In fact, the response to feed is so good, I've decided to feed another pot of chopped maggots with a ball of groundbait. This seems to settle the fish better and some potbellied mirrors to 5lb put in an appearance. With a cold easterly wind blowing towards me, I can't believe how good the fishing is. When feeding regular amounts like this, you often find that fish take the bait as it settles. If I don't have a bite within 20 seconds, I'm lifting the rig eight inches or so before dropping it again. Keeping the bait moving and resetting in this key area certainly induces bites.

MARGIN MADNESS

After a quiet spell on the open-water swim, I notice a large plume of colour right over my margin. It's a sure sign of fish feeding over

the bait that I potted in earlier and I've got to have a look. After seeing how well the fish responded to feed in open water, I've clipped on a pole pot and tapped in the usual blob of mulch with a nugget of groundbait. Lowering in the hook bait, I get several indications before striking into a powerful fish that is foul hooked. Unfortunately, it steams off through the lily-pad roots and breaks my hooklength. Still, it's a sign of big fish moving in!

I'm going to really attack the swim and introduce another large pot of chopped maggots and loose groundbait. I've stepped up to a 0.16mm hooklength and size 16 MT6 hook.

FLYING FINISH

The decision has certainly worked, with a dozen carp hitting the net in the final 40 minutes. Some cute little mirrors have made for a nice change, while two 5lb commons both had failed attempts to snag me under the platform again!

Today has demonstrated how effective chopped maggots can be. Even I was surprised at how frenzied the fish have become and I feel I've introduced a lot of bait for the time of year. However, when you think that most of the feed is made up of juices and fine particles, with a little fine groundbait on the bottom, it's actually very hard to overfeed a swim. The combination of maximum attraction with minimum feed is deadly at this time of year, so give the magic maggot mulch a try!




Part of Ian's cracking catch, all thanks to the maggot mulch!




Chopped maggots appeal to all kinds of species.

HOOK-BAIT TRICKS




A

Three red maggots are a year-round winning bait.



B

Try chopping off the end of a maggot.



C

This releases all the juices, just like the feed!