

THE REFINED ROACH.....By DICK WALKER.

You are roach fishing, using a maggot on a No. 16 Hook as bait. You have a bite, strike, hook and land a nice roach. The hook has lodged nicely in the top lip of the fish, and comes out without any trouble. The maggot is unmarked, and wriggling. It looks as good as it did when you first put it on. So you cast out again with the same maggot on the hook.

Do you find, as I do, that you then fail to get another bite, more often than not? And get no more, until you put on a fresh maggot?

I don't know what it is about a maggot that has caught a roach, that the other roach don't like; but I'm pretty sure there is something.

I'm not talking about a maggot that has had its inside sucked out, or even one that has had all the wriggle knocked out of it. I'm talking about the maggot that, although the fish has been caught on it, is to all appearances in perfect condition.

It doesn't only apply to maggots, this difficulty in getting a bite on a bait that has already caught a roach. It happens with elderberry and wheat, and I think it quite likely that the only reason I haven't noticed it with other baits, like crust, flake or paste is because these are always lost when you catch a fish.

Anyone who has watched a shoal of roach feeding will know that very often, if one roach takes a particle of food into its mouth and then spits it out again, none of the other fish will touch it. One might think, that the other roach, seeing one of their number try this piece of food and decide it's no good, just don't bother to try it themselves.

But I've seen the first roach in a shoal try and reject a bait, when half the shoal couldn't possibly have seen the bait or the fish that had tried it, because the shoal was coming round a thick bed of bulrushes. Did those roach at the rear end of the shoal argue in their minds that if the bait had been good, the first roach would have seen and swallowed it? Or have the roach the ability to do something to a bait, in their mouths, that tells other roach to leave it alone?

I don't find the same thing happening with fish of other species. I've caught three or four perch, or chub, or dace, on the same worm when I've had only a few worms left. I've often caught several dace on the same maggot. But very seldom does a bait catch more than one roach, especially if the roach are big ones. So nowadays, the only time I try is when I'm experimenting. And when I do, the result is the same nine times out of ten.

Contd.

I am sure that it pays to change the bait when you've caught a roach, however perfect it seems. Not only that; I change the bait if I've had a bite and missed, whether I've touched the fish or not. I believe it increases my chances considerably.

At the weekend, I was fishing for roach, and, having had a bite, left the maggots, which were unmarked, on the hook, and went on fishing. In ten runs down the swim, I didn't have a touch. I changed the maggots, and had a pound roach the very next throw.

One maggot was limp, the other looked okay. I changed the limp one, left the other one on. No more bites came till I again changed the maggots.

GROUND BAITING A ROACH SWIM. by R. Walker.

Anyone who writes a column the length of this one is always at a disadvantage, for there are few angling subjects that can be dealt with adequately in under 1000 words.

That means that I am always obliged to leave more unsaid than there is space for me to say, and the result is that earnest readers write letters beginning, 'Fancy Dick Walker not knowing that...'

A case in point is Dennis Gander's letter in which he says that a mixture of light and heavy groundbait will take small roach downstream, and bring big ones upstream.

This arose out of some very brief remarks I made on the subject of separating small from large roach in a swim, when I said that the biggest fish could often be found at the tail of the swim.

Before discussing the technicalities of the matter I would like Mr Gander to understand that what I have to say about it is not based on guesswork or hearsay, but on quite considerable numbers of big roach caught from a wide variety of waters.

It is certainly true that I have a lot to learn, but there remains a little I have learned already.

What happens when groundbait is introduced into a roach swim depends on a lot of things, including the depth current, nature of bottom, consistency of groundbait, the number and size of fish present, the boundaries of the swim and the fate at which the groundbait is introduced. This last is of great importance.

If you hurl into the head of the swim, large amounts of groundbait, in relation to the amount of fish, and then fish for an hour or two before putting in any more, you may find you have taken some of the small fish away downstream, and brought one or two better fish up.

contd.