



JOHN BAILEY

the thinking angler

NEW
WEEKLY
SERIES

THIS WEEK: why the exertions of angling will be tackled better if you're fitter.

Get fit for fishing



IF YOU march to a swim with this much gear you will soon have arms like a gorilla!

“Leaner is meaner in the fishing world.”

ITUTTERLY infuriates me when people describe angling as a hobby and not a sport. Get real! Fishing is physical.

True, there are mental challenges but think of the timing, co-ordination and total physical control that goes into so many of the things that we do.

Casting. Striking. Playing a fish. Placing boilies with accuracy at over a hundred yards. Controlling a float. Mending the line. Wading. Walking to those distant hotspots

Fishing can be sedentary but a whole lot of it isn't.

I've known thousands of fishermen, some great, and the very best have mostly had a measure of physical fitness because on so many levels fishing is demanding.

There are easy options that catch fish but, in my opinion, the tough angler is the successful angler. Leaner is meaner in the fishing world.

Take John Gilman when he fishes big pike waters with me in the

winter. He is a lure man and he will pack a rucksack, throw over his shoulders a big landing net and he'll be away.

He'll be walking, casting, working the water from dawn into darkness.

I've hardly ever known him not get a 20 and I've photographed over four 30s for him in the last couple of years.

Without this effort, without this dedication, he'd be nowhere.

Take Rob Olsen down on the River Wye. He'll always be there before dawn and, generally, he'll work six or seven miles, down to the bridge, fishing at least 20 swims as he goes.

By midday, he'll be in the pub and somebody will give him a lift back to his car – that is if he doesn't decide to work back up river, fishing even more different areas.

At the Kingfisher Lakes in Norfolk, our most successful angler, probably, is Stuart.

In part, this is because he's not afraid to pack all his gear up once,

twice or even three times in a session and lug it to a different part of the lake if he suspects he's not on the fish.

This takes enormous effort to shift 50-odd kilos three times in 24 hours, but he'll do it.

I've always put effort into my fishing, whether it's walking the meadows along the River Wensum, or anything up to 20-odd miles a day in both Mongolia and Greenland.

Recently, fishing in the Himalayas, a successful day always involved

at least 12 miles of walking, often up scree and down cliffs. If you didn't go the distance, you simply didn't catch the fish.

Obviously, for my job, I've got to be fit. I've got to lug cameras and gear miles, and often when I'm guiding I've got to encourage anglers to follow me, because I can't expect them to go where I can't.

But, for all of us, fitness has obvious advantages. Keep yourself fit and you'll get to the furthest swims, and we all know that's where the fish are most likely to be.

And you can fish more swims, too, because you're not exhausted, because you're willing to move, because you're happy to follow the fish. And even in a mega fight, if you're fit, you'll keep cool and if you keep cool, you'll keep in control.

I'm not being preachy. Yes I'm thinking about your own good, but I'm also thinking of your fishing success.

You don't have to become some gym geek, but you can start by kicking the pie culture.

Walk whenever you can and don't always take the easy option of the car. If you set yourself to achieve 10,000 steps every week, you'll be getting somewhere.

It sounds a lot, but it's not. We're only talking about five or six miles which over 168 hours, believe me, ain't a lot.

When you're fishing you can do press-ups or sit-ups or touch your toes. Don't care what the rest might think, your last laugh will be louder than theirs now, believe me.

Fine, drink your tea, knock back a beer but do keep the water going into your system. Don't dehydrate.

And do you have to smoke? We'd like you to be a richer, fitter *Angler's Mail* reader for decades to come!



Guiding is all about keeping going throughout the day.