



JOHN BAILEY the thinking angler

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RUDD - your one stop guide!

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But you know all this. I'm not going to patronise you with Crabtree stuff, but rather chat about how we can make rudd a part of your fishing life perhaps?

To do this, it seems to me, you've got to find your rudd, understand your rudd and then catch your rudd! And, of these, probably finding them is arguably the hardest job of all.

It wasn't when I was a kid! When I was growing up in the north, a lot of the Cheshire meres held them in profusion, and when I came down east, the estate lakes were crammed with them.

Since then, in most places, it's been

a slow story of decline. Over-stocking with carp. Bad 20th Century farming practices. The physical loss of waters. Over-predation, especially from cormorants. One way or another, the rudd has been the big loser.

But of course, there is hope. Broadland in East Anglia is still a great Mecca, especially the more you can get off the beaten track.

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And, of course, you only have to

read the *Angler's Mail* to realise big rudd still come from gravel pits dotted the entire country over, if you're lucky enough to have access.

But let's spread our wings a bit. We know Ireland has had all manner of problems in the last ten to 15 years, but it's not long since I was on Lough Conn and found some really serious rudd on its small, sister lake Lough Cullin.

Holland, of course, has traditionally held huge stocks of monumental rudd and it still does. I'm in touch with one or two Dutch anglers who assure me there is serious rudd fishing around Amsterdam itself, so what a lad's week you and your mates could have by hopping on a ferry!

If you look where Slovenia, Austria and Croatia all meet, you're looking at some serious rudd territory there.

In fact, I'm meaning to go over early autumn to give it a proper recce. As ever, I'll report back.

If you're really serious, though, and you have some money to spare, I'd look at the deltas of the Ural and Volga rivers. It's here that I've seen the biggest rudd of my own life. In the crystal lagoons of these wondrous marshlands, I saw rudd of a size that I've never forgotten. And one day I know I will have to return.

As far as understanding the rudd goes, here are my golden rules.

Rudd are perhaps the most tightly-shoaling fish that we have in this country. As they get older and the shoal members die away, this habit loses its intensity, but 1 lb-plus fish still shoal as tightly and compactly as a flock of starlings.

Rudd feed more freely up and down the water column than any of our other coarse species. You can find them almost anywhere at any given moment. They are fish almost uniquely designed to profit from any happening food source.

Rudd feed hard dusk through to dawn because this is the period that sees the bulk of fly and insect activity. However, rudd will also feed during the day if you can find them and if you don't spook them. In the daylight hours, look for rudd wherever there is protective cover. Tree margins are very important, but more so are deep reed beds where they will vanish during the daylight hours.

I hope you don't think I've gone on too much about locating rudd but it's this that is the big issue. Catching them isn't too difficult, providing you don't spook them.

They're jittery beyond compare so don't try to get too close, don't make a noise and watch your vibration send out. This is crucial.

One of the more 'modern' ways of catching rudd is with float rod, four pound line straight through, waggler and slowly-sinking maggot or caster. Keep catapulting loose feed around the float and, hopefully, you will soon get a shoal interested.

Shot carefully so the bait falls slowly, down the water column and you are likely to pick rudd up at any stage in its descent. The same method can be used with mashed bread as ground bait and flake on the hook.

If the fish aren't in open water, you will be stalking them around the margins, and this is where floating

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baits come into their own.

Crust is absolutely adored by rudd and I don't think there is anywhere you can't get them off the top in the right circumstances. I use pieces around an inch square on a size 6 or 8 hook. If you dunk this, you will find that it casts at least 20 to 30 yards.

Don't hurry the strike. It takes a while for even a big rudd to get crust into its mouth, so wait until the line slithers away.

If you are stalking rudd, especially in the reed beds, a freelined worm can drive them crazy.

Of course, you can fish traditionally at night with feeders, buzzers and beds of bait laid down to intercept the shoals. This is probably as efficient (and as boring) as rudd fishing gets.

I've probably caught 200 2 lb-plus rudd, and I guess at least sixty percent of them have come fishing this way so I'm not really in a position to preach!

And in truth, I don't really care. A rudd by sunlight, moonlight or torchlight is still a sight that makes me realise why I'm a fisherman.



PROVING John's point about the part of the world where there are still big rudd, here's Cromer, Norfolk-based 19-year-old James Champkin, with a 2 lb 8 oz rudd caught last week from a Fenland drain that he travelled 90 miles to... and 90 back. It was caught on trotted, floating breadflake. James has enjoyed a "gap year" before going to university and to search out some PBs, managing perch to 3 lb 5 oz, double-figure bream to 13 lb 7 oz, chub to 6 lb 4 oz, and floater-caught carp to low 20s. But he rates this rudd as the pinnacle!

JOHN'S TOP RUDD TIPS

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2 SUPER FLY. The nymph and the fly rod really work with rudd close-in when the water is clear. This isn't just angling writer talk. Splash the nymph in and you will attract their attention instantly.

3 BOTTLE FOR BATTLE. Beware of the fight. A rudd is a far tougher, more robust fighter than the roach. Be prepared for hard head banging runs of at least five or ten yards. Don't go too light.

4 SIZE WISE. A reality check. Don't always expect two and three-pounders like you've seen a lot of in *Angler's Mail* this summer. Any rudd of 1 lb is a fabulous feather in your cap.



Rudd on the fly sounds like fun - we'll have to get an expert out to show this method!

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