

THIS MONTH: BOOK A LOCAL GUIDE

Words: Peter Cockwill
Pictures: Peter Gathercole

Guiding LIGHT

Peter Cockwill highlights the benefits of booking a local guide to put you on the fish »

If visiting a water you've not fished before, it pays to book a guide.

GOING to see a fishery that's long been on my 'go to' list is such a pleasurable part of my life.

It's been a long run today. A pre-dawn start in Surrey and then six different stretches of motorway makes for a weary Pete but this is a very worthwhile journey.

Loynton Hall Trout Fishery in Staffordshire has established an enviable reputation as an excellent value, catch-and-release location, and has an incredible history of producing amazing numbers of double-figure rainbows.

Arriving around 9am I have to say that it's a genuine thrill to finally see the three, beautifully-crafted lakes and by now I'm well ready for breakfast in the super smart café overlooking the site. It's a great way to start, and also a perfect way to keep an eye on the water for signs of any fish activity.

The idea was that there would be no pressure on me to break the 10lb barrier today, even though our esteemed editor had never missed an opportunity to slip into his emails that he caught his first double here.

Okay Russell, I do admit that 18lb 8oz is one magnificent fish, but size isn't everything and today's visit has an altogether different perspective on the sometimes-complex world of flyfishing.

The need for a guide

When seeing a fishery for the first time I almost always like to use a mix of long-time experience and a sort of sixth sense to work out how to get a result on the day. I absolutely love the challenge but today feels very different.

You see, it's long been my belief that a good guide is your very best investment to short-circuit your



Loynton's points are definite hotspots.

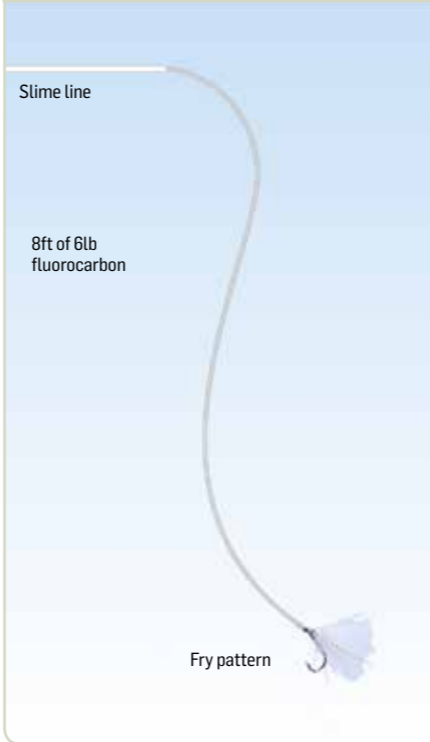
way to success, both in terms of technique and location.

Time and again it's made all the difference to me, even when I think I know best, and with the help of Loynton's regular instructor, Steve Yeomans, I'm in line for some seriously good guiding today.

Steve has been a qualified instructor for 15 years and works full time at a job he clearly loves, so instead of working things out for myself I want to make the most of his specific local knowledge and also talk with him about our joint experiences.

We hit it off immediately and have many laughs throughout the day, but it's his intimate knowledge of each lake, which is so fascinating.

Peter's single fry pattern set-up



Knowledge of the lakes

Steve tells me that parts of each lake go down to as much as 25 feet and that features include tight marginal shelves, ridges and drop-offs which make for a fascinating fishery.

On this somewhat dull day with a light ripple I would never have suspected some of the features without having had them explained.

Very few rises don't help for fish location



A weighted nymph proved the downfall of this Loynton rainbow.

"...it's long been my belief that a good guide is your very best investment to short-circuit your way to success, both in terms of technique and location."

either but then it's unlikely that you see much of a hatch in December, plus there's a front coming through which often switches off activity.

But, with the wind having been in the same direction for a few days the logical place to go is the downwind corner of each lake. First off though it's a walk around all the lakes because I like to know the layout of a fishery and then I can constantly keep an eye on what's happening. >>

The stamp of fish you can expect from this Staffordshire water.



Peter carefully removes a fly from his catch.



Success brings joy to both angler and guide.

RECOMMENDED FLY PATTERNS

Weighted Seal's Fur Damsel

Hook: Size 10 longshank
Thread: Olive
Tail: Olive marabou
Rib: Fine, gold wire
Body: Olive seal's fur
Hackle: Olive cock hackle
Head: 3mm gold bead



Pearly Fry

Hook: Size 8-12 comp heavy black nickel
Thread: Veevus 12/0 white
Underbody: White thread, front quarter coloured with red marker pen
Body: Strip of HD Galaxy Vinyl, ice sparkle and given a coat of Bug Bond
Wing: Fry grey marabou overlaid with a single strip of opal Lateral Scale tinsel
Head: Built up thread, coated with Bug Bond. Make eye with a black marker pen



Black Taddy

Hook: Size 10-12 comp heavyweight
Thread: Danville's 6/0 Flymaster back
Rib: Silver tinsel
Weight (opt'l): Lead wire
Tail: Black marabou
Body: Black chenille
Head: Peacock Ice Dub



Roach fry shoals

Steve tells me that the lakes hold good stocks of roach, which the rainbows predate on. He explains that there can be short spells of feeding activity followed by quiet periods as the fry feeders digest their take, whereas, when they are on insects, the feeding period is much longer.

It's long been a puzzle to me as to why trout will often simply choose to ignore a freely-available food source such as coarse fish – and gradually get thinner and thinner. And yet on some waters, such as here at Loynton, they'll readily eat them. It's more a feature on the smaller waters and if there is a factor it seems to be the size of the lakes. On lakes of five-acres and larger the fish may well be fry feeders but

“There's stacks of fly-life at Loynton, including a mayfly hatch, and as our day wears on we see more and more fish showing to a hatch of small buzzers.”

not on waters of a couple acres or less.

This past year or two I have nevertheless seen a number of fisheries where the trout will indeed eat the coarse fish on even such small pools as a quarter acre, so I truly don't know what the deciding factor is. Of course, it's even more of a puzzle in that where the

trout most certainly don't eat the fry they nevertheless readily chase and take a fry pattern – bit of a worry that one!

Crayfish alter feeding habits

In latter years there has been a definite change in the feeding habits of stillwater (and indeed river) trout and this is entirely due to the presence of crayfish. There's crayfish in Loynton and Steve tells me that the bigger fish get into the habit of cruising the deep drop-offs searching for the crays and of course it only needs one or two of them to make a full belly so why would the fish then go looking for little bugs?

That said, there's also stacks of fly-life at Loynton, including a mayfly hatch, and as our day wears on we see more and more fish

A guide can share knowledge regarding fly selection too.



showing to what is a hatch of small buzzers.

This was to be one of those days when my own fishing was more about talking tactics with Steve rather than getting on with things and with Peter Gathercole swinging his camera ominously it's time to get active.

Tackle set-ups

My cunning plan here is to give Peter Gathercole my slime line, eight feet of level 6lb fluorocarbon and single fry pattern outfit while I use the floater and concentrate. Needless to say, it doesn't take long for Peter to clock a fish with a small, white-based fry pattern.

I then set up my 15-foot tapered leader (tapering down to 7lb) with silver ring and then four feet of 6lb fluorocarbon and a Black Tadpole on point. At the mini ring there's a four-inch dropper with a small Black Nymph attached. The latter, snatched out of Steve's box because it looked real tasty, starts to get the occasional pull.

I try a few places around the lakes and settle on a windy corner where a few fish are showing and switch to a weighted seal's fur Damsel to act as an anchor fly in the drift and then both flies work quite quickly to get some pictures. The fish sure do fight here and it's as well that Steve's a bit of a dab hand with the net because one of them is making a bit of a monkey of me.

All too soon it's time to leave because another long run is necessary – I'm doing a talk in Northampton for the club where the legendary Bob Church is president.

Would I go back to Loynton? Emphatically yes! It's a great venue, beautifully kept and very fairly run with quality stock.

Would I book another session with Steve? Without a doubt, and next time it will be a river session to dig a little deeper into his pool of knowledge. The time with him more than confirms my views that time spent with a good instructor/guide is worth every penny. It's true too that I have been teaching and guiding for some 30 years and get a real kick out of showing my love of flyfishing to like-minded people and can see that this will be filling more of my time in the future.



Loynton factfile

ADDRESS Loynton Trout Fisheries, nr Norbury, Staffordshire ST20 0QA (The Fishery and Cafe entrance is via the driveway immediately off the A519).
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WEB www.loyntontroutfisheries.co.uk
SEASON Open all year, closed December 25
DESCRIPTION Look up Steve Yeomans on Midlands Fly Fishing where he has an excellent site or call him on 07901 744869. He has access to the Derbyshire Wye as well as many stillwaters and is a true all-rounder.

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A regular angler releases a fish in the proper way.



Peter exploits the windward corner of one of the lakes.

