

# Big Stick

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Fish just love to live with the security of good protection and cover, so they like weed beds and snags and they especially like a roof over their heads! So it is some sort of immutable angling law that the swims that are the most difficult to fish are the ones with most fish in them ! The

swim in the photograph is one of these: it's full of fish, Roach, Dace and Chub, but they all live under the raft of floating weed and in amongst the tangle of fallen branches on the far bank. A big bag of fish can still be caught but it's technically difficult and you need exactly the right

system and exactly the right float for the job.

During the hours of daylight, the resident fish will only feed right under cover where you can't reach them or at best just on the outside edge of the raft of weed and just along the crease between the



main current and the slack water immediately behind. Even to get them feeding on this outside edge, you have to loose feed something like maggot or hemp and caster accurately for quite a long period just in order to get them to take a bait in the slightly more exposed position on the outside edge of their home.

The best results come from catapulting the loose feed in at regular intervals without putting a float through. I have, on a couple of occasions, fed this swim for an hour before making the first cast. It takes some self control not to actually fish but it's the system which produces the best results.

Even after you have spent a full hour loose feeding, you still have to put the hookbait through really close to that raft of floating weed, if possible with the float actually touching it, certainly 6" to 8" (15cm to 20cm) out is too far and you will only catch maybe 4lb of smaller fish. Tight in against the weed it's a 30lb swim.

The problem is, it's just out of reach for the pole and you can't fish a straight leger or feeder close enough or accurately enough and anyway a static bait does not seem to work very well. The best method is to trot a float through and by casting into the gap upstream of the raft of floating weed, you can pull the float back into position and work it downstream right along the outside edge with the float actually touching the weed.

Of course the float control involved is not easy, especially as the current is faster in the middle of the river. This means you cannot lay very much line on the water, otherwise that

faster current will sweep the line downstream, pulling the float straight back out away from the raft of weed. To overcome the problem you need to stand up to gain as much height as possible, use a long rod 14ft (4.2m) with a low diameter, lightweight reel line (0.12mm) and hold everything up in the air. If you're a strong, physical sort with good arm strength, a rod of 15ft or longer can be a real advantage.

At the same time, you need a big float which will hold over on the far side against the weed and not be pulled back out of position by the weight of line being held up in the air above the water. On these difficult, far bank swims you don't have to be afraid to use a big float; an ordinary Stick Float is too light and you need to use something like a Big Stick which carries a lot more shot. Big Sticks have the same non-buoyant stem used on the smaller Stick floats but have a much larger balsa body with a streamlined shoulder.

The clear plastic stem is just slightly heavier than water with the critical density of 1.2 SG. When combined with a light grade balsa body, the heavy stem produces a beautifully balanced float that adopts exactly the right attitude in the water and tends to follow the angle of the monofilament, tilting up as you hold back and falling in a controlled arc as you let go and run the float through. With the difficulties in this swim, the largest of the range which takes 3.5grams 7½ BB was used and provided almost perfect line control and bait presentation.



**Big sticks have the same non buoyant stem as stick floats. This acts like a keel providing stability and balance**



## Holding back

Unfortunately, this is one of those doubly difficult swims where, in order to get bites regularly, you not only have to fish tight to the raft of weed but you also need to slow the bait down. You cannot just let the float tackle run through at full speed, you have to try to slow it down a bit by “holding back” slightly. The problem is that it’s almost impossible to both slow the bait down by “holding back” and to keep the float tight against the raft of weed. The more you hold back when fishing across the river, the more you tend to pull the float towards you and away from the feature. The best you can do is to slow down the float’s progress for a short period of time, that means a short distance of about 1 metre, maybe 1.5metres if you are lucky and the wind is favourable. Of course, the run along the edge of the raft of weed and the crease along the area of slack water below it extends to a length of about 5metres, so you have to accept that you can only present the bait perfectly over a short section of the swim. All you have to do now is choose which section and that is simply a matter of trial and error.

Recognise that if you try slowing the float down at the top end of the swim, it will be too far out from the weed when you reach the bottom end. But as you trot through again and again you eventu-

ally discover a perfect fish catching spot where most of the bites occur. That’s the place to hold back and slow the bait down, making sure you are getting perfect bait presentation.

