

BLOODWORM ON THE RIVER

River ace **Wayne Swinscoe** demonstrates the awesome catching power of bloodworm for a net of quality river fish.



Wayne Swinscoe is one of the most highly respected match anglers in the country and has won almost all there is to win on his beloved rivers. He is an absolute master at catching fish on flowing water and a great believer in keeping things simple, but getting the all-important feeding and presentation right.

We met up with the Nottingham ace fresh after another successful weekend competing in the Evesham Festival, where this year he managed to come third overall on the Wychavon Championship. Catching roach and bream on the pole with bloodworm was the key, so we have brought him back to the Warwickshire Avon to see how he does it. This is your chance to follow him through a session with one of the most effective fish catching baits known to man.



ANGLER FILE

Name: **Wayne Swinscoe**

Lives: **Nottingham**

About Wayne: **A river legend!**

WHY BLOODWORM?

Bloodworm and joker are often seen as quite controversial baits, but there is no doubting their ability to attract and catch fish. These tiny aquatic larvae are the closest thing to a natural food source as you can get. All fish love the stuff and if you've never tried fishing with it you'll be pleasantly surprised just how simple it can be.

There are usually two weekends a year leading up to the Evesham Festival when these baits are allowed on this river, plus the three-day festival itself, and it always leads to

more bites and an increase in match weights. Rivers like this one tend to be really clear and sluggish in the summer, so it's a very useful trigger to help spur reluctant fish into feeding. It's far from just a small-fish bait, too, as today's session will hopefully prove.

I have actually come to a stretch of the river called Wilmott's Meadow, just outside Evesham, to show you just what's possible. Hopefully I can dispel some myths and show you just how easy it is to fish with this brilliant fish catcher. ▶

TOP TIPS



Wayne typically looks for a small and lively bloodworm for the hook.



A correctly hooked bloodworm. What fish could possibly resist this?



Pinkies are a useful change bait, but not essential.



Wayne is a big fan of the size 20 and 18 Drennan Ultra Fine Pole hooks for bloodworm fishing.



No4 and No5 Kamasan elastics are fitted through a full top two of his Acolyte Carp pole.



A Polemaster Winder Bung allows Wayne to alter the tension of his elastic during the session.

THE BAIT MENU

I generally aim to feed quite a large quantity of bait at the start and then fish over the top of it for as long as possible before topping up. The initial feed could last two, three or more hours but the fish will ultimately tell you when the swim needs a top up.

The usual ploy is to throw in an initial bombardment of groundbait containing a tiny amount of joker. This is to create plenty of commotion and draw fish in over a reasonable bed of bait. I then accurately cup in several joker-rich balls over the top. These contain much more feed precisely where I want them. I then know I am running my float directly over the most concentrated area.

The groundbait is needed to carry the tiny joker quickly down to the bottom where it can work its magic. Today I am using a bag of Bait-Tech Pro Natural Dark with some Pro Natural Extra to help make it stickier. I also add a bag of Terre de Riviere or molehill soil. This is really important as it helps to add weight to the mix so that it gets down quickly in the flow before breaking up. This is all mixed together on the damp side to create quite a 'claggy' mix. I deliberately don't want it to cloud too much on the way down, as that tends to bring in much smaller fish as well as nuisance predators.

Today I have mixed enough to make eight large orange-sized balls, which will be thrown in at the start.

My richer balls and topping up mix

contain much more soil as well as some damp leam, which helps it bind together into a dense ball that can hold a lot of bait. On a difficult day I would probably only pot in two or three of these balls at the start. However, as I really want to get some quality fish today I have decided to cup in five or six balls. This ensures I have a good bed of bait on the bottom and won't have to top up too soon. Bigger fish are very wary and can often shy away from balls being fed on their heads, so I want to hold off from cupping in any more feed for as long as possible today.

In this respect, bloodworm and joker fishing is much simpler than using baits like maggots and casters, which need to be regularly fed to attract and hold the fish. All you do is feed an initial amount and then keep running a hook bait over the top. I haven't even got a catapult on my side tray today!

WHERE TO FEED?

Spend some time looking at the river before deciding exactly where to fish. You ideally want to target the main flow of the river which will be more oxygenated and should hopefully

hold more silverfish such as roach and dace. A distance of between 11 and 13 metres out is ideal. This is a really comfortable range to fish and control a pole rig successfully.

A heavy plummet is also essential to get a true depth reading.

You must search down the peg to

see if it gets deeper or shallower. You ideally want a nice and flat, snag-free run where it is the same depth all the way downstream.

I always feed at least a couple of yards downstream of where I am sat. The shallower and pacier the river the further downstream this will be. You must ensure your float can settle and be properly working in the swim before it runs over the feed area. Another reason is because fish like roach will sometimes sit above the feed, so you need to ensure you can get your pole rig working to capitalise on this behaviour. By feeding and fishing downstream of where you are sat I also feel you are less likely to spook wary fish in clear water.

I am only feeding a single swim today. This is quite normal with bloodworm fishing on a river. In match conditions I might also have a couple of other areas on standby to fish with other baits or methods, but as long as I am getting bites I have no problem fishing a single bloodworm swim for the entire duration. With a flowing river there are lots of permutations I can try over the top of one swim to keep me busy for the entire session.

HOOK BAITS

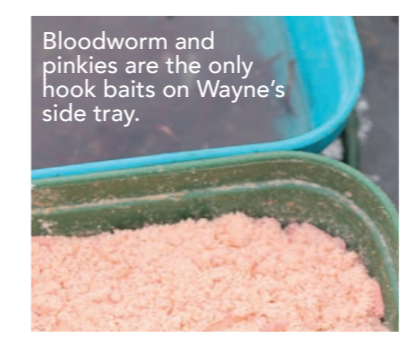
One or two bloodworm on the hook are my number one options. I also have some pinkies as a change hook bait, which skimmers, dace and chublets are particularly partial to. A bloodworm and pinkie cocktail can also be good at times.

Maggots and casters could also work well over the top, but there's really no need to confuse things. Quality fish will often take a single bloodworm more readily than anything else. ▶

Eight balls containing a small amount of joker are thrown in at the start.



Richer balls are accurately potted in.



Bloodworm and pinkies are the only hook baits on Wayne's side tray.



Wayne's initial feed.

THREE RIGS

This is one area where I pay particular attention to, as I like to have three rigs set up to alternate between. Today they are 0.75g, 1.25g and 2g. This gives me both light and heavy options to allow me to alter the way the float travels down the swim. If things are hard and I am encountering mostly roach then I expect the lightest rig will be best, edged through at the same speed or slightly slower than the natural current. This will be typically fished just touching bottom to three or four inches off bottom.

If quality fish are being encountered then my heaviest rig will often come into play. I will typically set this rig five or six inches overdepth and edge a slightly bigger hook bait through the swim at half the speed of the current.

Three rigs – one light, one medium and one heavy – give me lots of options and I fully expect to be alternating between them all throughout a session.



Three rigs and a cupping kit are set up.

TACKLING UP

My three rigs are all on 0.10mm or 0.12mm main line which corresponds to the top three (4.4m) of my Acolyte Carp pole. The swim is about 7ft (2.2m) so that gives me enough line above the float to be able to run the rig downstream several metres. With bloodworm you typically get most of your bites directly over where you have fed. If I was fishing with loose fed baits, however, I would use a much longer length of line above the float (equivalent to my top four sections) so I could cover much more water as the feed travels further downstream.

Each rig is shotted with an olivette around 2ft from the hook and three equally spread dropper shot. The 2g rig has No8 droppers, the 1.25g rig has smaller No10 droppers and the 0.75g rig has even smaller No11 droppers. Again this gives me a bit more scope.

Elastic is Kamasan No5 on the heavier rig and Kamasan No4 on the lighter two setups. You generally want a heavier elastic when striking through heavy loads in deeper water. These are all through a long top two kit and set fairly firm, again to help set the hook in deep water.

I am using Drennan Ultra Fine Pole hooks in a size 18 to 0.075mm Supplex Fluorocarbon on the two lightest rigs. A slightly sturdier size 18 Red Roach to 0.09mm Supplex Fluorocarbon is on the 2g rig. Even with a single bait it is often surprising how big a hook you can get away with on venues that haven't seen much bloodworm before.



Wayne was in his element catching fish after fish on the Avon.

THE SESSION

After throwing in my eight balls and then potting in several feed-rich balls I fully expect a bite immediately. That is very very common with this style of feeding. Today, however that hasn't been the case. I have one small roach on my fourth run through and then nothing. I am sure that my feeding isn't the problem. Experience tells me that there is another reason the fish are not immediately on the scene. This usually means pike or, hopefully, quality fish like bream are in the area.

Sure enough, after a very slow 45 minutes I latch into a 1lb skimmer. Three runs down later with a single bloodworm on my lightest rig just tripping the bottom and I hook something much more substantial. It's a good bream and after a spirited fight I slip the net under a very welcome 4lb slab!

I then have a nice run of plump roach before the swim goes quiet again. I know there's enough feed still in the swim, so I still don't want to top up just yet. Where there's one bream there are always more. Sure enough, I catch two in two drops that are around 2lb and 3lb apiece. Again, a single bloodworm on a lighter rig is still the best.

A few more roach and perch follow and then a few meddlesome bleak start intercepting the hook bait on the way down, so I make sure not to plop the rig in too loud until they've gone.

I am still refraining from topping up and my patience is

rewarded with my best fish of the day, which must be close to 5lb.

By now the sun is out in force and that spells the end of the bream action. There are still roach to be caught, however, and so I now decide to cup in two more balls and see how the fish respond. Five minutes after topping up the fish return and it gives me another good 45-minute flurry of fish before it's time to pack away.

It's been a great session and a really simple one, too. One big feed at the start has allowed me to run a hook bait over the top without risking the potential of unsettling the fish with more bait.

I have tried lots of rig, depth and hook bait permutations, but a single bloodworm on my two lightest rigs has been best today, even for the bream. This probably goes against what many people would expect, as we often assume holding back a heavy rig with a multiple hook bait is always better for big fish. Instead, the number one tactic has been a single bloodworm fished at pace under a light rig. So, if I had only just set one heavy pole rig up I might never have fooled those bonus bream. It proves you should always have a few rigs to experiment with. Every day is different and that's why I love targeting rivers like this so much! ■

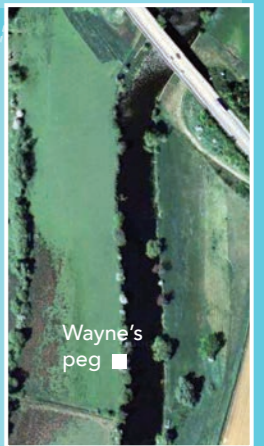


Another bream for the river master!

VENUE FILE

RIVER AVON
Wilmott's Meadow
near Evesham
Worcestershire
England

Day tickets available from
The Bait Box, Evesham,
WR11 4EJ
Tel: (+44) 1386 442955



Wayne's peg



The fruits of a brilliant river session.