

## Why Eels?

After the last Anguilla magazine, both David O'Sullivan and John Davies wrote a piece about why Eels. Steve Dawes said that the team are always looking for articles, so as a new member, I felt that I could write something along the same vein.

So why Eels? It's a question I often get asked and often ask myself!



I have only recently joined the NAC and started specimen Eel fishing but the Eel has fascinated me ever since I started fishing. I remember the first bootlace I caught. It was the fifth fish I ever caught, if I remember rightly, from the local river in 1991. My dad got me into fishing around this time and took me to some of our local venues on our local club book. I kept having really shy bites on the waggler close in and was getting frustrated. I kept saying to my dad that I was going to get this fish, that it wasn't going to beat me! Ten minutes later and I was in. Up came this small Eel but I was terrified of it! My dad was literally falling off his seat box with laughter as my determination quickly turned into fear and I was shouting for him to sort out this wriggling mess as the eel had now been wriggling on the dry mud and looked more like an enormous earthworm!

So how did that fear turn into a fascination? Talking it over with my girlfriend, she thinks it's one of the only things I ever rebelled against! I don't want to go into too much detail but a couple of the Eels my dad caught were rather cruelly treated. When I was young, I didn't know any better but thankfully, as I progressed in fishing, the line was cut close to the Eel's mouth and was released to fight another day.

In about 1993, a small book shop in town had the Beekey series of fishing books in stock and my one and only purchase was Eels by John Sidley. I treasured that book and still do, fascinated by some of the monsters he had. It wasn't till earlier this year that I actually read the book and started Eel fishing and I don't think I would have bar one pivotal moment. While surfing online, I opened up the NAC website and found an article entitled Daytime Eeling by Steve Dawes. Now my fishing time is very limited. I get out on my day off and have between 9.30 and 4.30 to actually fish. My girlfriend works Monday to Friday 9-5 and I work Saturdays but get a day off in the week. After reading over Steve's theories, I actually felt that it was possible for me to catch an Eel without night fishing.

I have the odd better than average bootlace from a local pond and it has been generous to me before with other predators, a 3lb 4oz P.B. Perch and a 15lb 14oz P. B. Pike when the water has never been stocked with them but contains the odd jack. It is also right next to the local canal that connects to the River Parrett, a well know water with the elver fisherman. With several boxes ticked in the 'what to look for in an Eel water' done, it had a lot of potential in my mind!



On the day, the weather was very bright but as the water was fairly coloured, I thought I was in with a chance. Out went one rod on C.D. rigged lobworms and the other rod on a small 'freshly killed' headless perch. The foil indicator on the worm rod was going up and down like a yo yo and when a run finally materialised, the culprit turned out to be one of the many perch the water holds. Soon after though, the free running ledgered dead received a steady run. After a couple of nerve trembling seconds, I shut the bail arm and a solid strike met with heavy resistance. Was it a Pike, Perch, rouge Carp or a target Eel? It wasn't long before a huge Eel was thrashing the still water's surface to foam. The fish was safely landed and thankfully, the hook was showing plenty of shank.



I did my best to calm the Eel down by stroking it as I have heard but not seen before, as you can see from the picture, I wasn't very successful! The mighty fish spun the scales round to 2lb 9oz, a new P.B. and the biggest Eel I had ever seen in the flesh!

Two weeks later, a 4hr session on the same venue produce 6 runs with only one Eel landed but another new P.B. at 2lb 13oz. I have only taken one other Eel this season at 1lb 3oz but the picture is the best yet and I'm very pleased with it.

On meeting Steve at a local venue, he blew me away with a huge Eel he wanted me to take some shots of for him. They made my monsters look like tiny bootlaces but that's a story for him to tell!

I hope you could all relate to something in my article and I hope it is one of the first of many stories that I will be able to share with you, the craziest of specimen fishers, the Eel angler!

