

# Perch Lures, Ullswater's Perch - And Life In General

by 'Footy'

**Andy Horwood describes himself as being a bit philosophical since work has taken over his life in recent years. However, this 'rambling article' where he looks back over years gone by and then right up to his current day's fishing is still very much a quality read.**

When you're a kid you are told; "these are the best years of your life". Trouble was with no easy access to transport and limited cash from a paper-round, angling was limited to catching minnows and sticklebacks in the shallow and once badly polluted Bristol Frome. Sure there were some good fish on the higher reaches but these belonged to a 'dead man's shoes' club who were less than teenager friendly.

Only in my mid teens did I find a spot with lots of gudgeon, and some good roach, brownies and perch over the pound. I even caught a dace there once, showing the water quality was improving. Trouble was without waders the only access was to hop over the corner of someone's garden, so access had to be performed subtly and quickly.

In my later teens armed with newly purchased waders I accessed below the spot - walking up stream from the opposite bank and had an amazing evening taking 30 odd roach to nearly 2lb, some good sized perch, and half a ton of gudgeon from a pool no larger than the 6 yard box on a football pitch surrounded by shallows.



Otherwise trips were limited to Bitterwell Lake (was ever the word 'lake' misplaced as it is just a pond) or cadging a lift off my Dad on his way to work to be dropped off at the Bristol Avon or River Chew. Bitterwell Lake was a hard venue to fish, and a few deep hooked perch was usually the best I could do.

Not helped by a kid's lack of attention. I'd wander off to annoy my brother only to return to my rod to find the float under and a deep hooked perch attached. I am not proud of those days, and I'm sorry to say I did the same trick on the Avon.

My most memorable day was trotting for dace and gudgeon on the Chew. Those fish weren't biting so I amused myself catching minnows. However, some great perch (including my first over a pound) suddenly replaced the minnows. No, it is fair to say my childhood days of fishing were not great. Let's face it; in those early days I had the time but not the money or the transport.

In my early 20's I discovered carp fishing and on a limited scale, fishing a few local waters in and around Plymouth, I was successful. I still rate my best carp catch an 8lb wild carp taken from a small pond on the edge of Dartmoor, no bigger than 1/4 of an acre.



*Wild Common Carp*

Those wild carp were pound for pound the best carp I ever caught. Why fishery owners don't make dedicated wild carp waters for match anglers I don't know. Instead waters are stocked with F1 freaks or carp that soon grow too big. I'll return to the freaks later.

The only other fish in that pond were a few rudd and a billion stunted perch. I would whip out the stunted perch while waiting for the late evening, the only time the carp would feed. I liked those wee perch where a 4oz was a monster. Living in the South West, I had the time, I had some money and I had transport. The location however, was better for carp and of course great sea fishing. The perch were off the angling menu!

In my late 20's, after moving to Leeds, I discovered lure angling. This was after going on a lure fishing trip to Lake Nasser. The constant activity that this type of fishing demands matches my restless soul - very prevalent by this age as I drove hard to establish my career qualification. Grabbing a rod and a few lures matched the brevity of free time I had.

I thought that this extra hard work would be rewarded with a better income in the future. That was of course a misapprehension of the reality of life. Yes, it did increase my opportunities, but for opportunities to pay off, much work and effort is necessary and to this day, if not more today than then.

I'm sure so many Perchfishers members have so much of their lives dominated by work and life commitments. This is why we should all be grateful to the committee we have. Time is precious. So now I had the location, some money (rapidly spent on lures), transport, but little time!

However, with the decreasing time to go fishing, I have developed a deeper wisdom. It makes me consider even more the futilities of life; that drive for riches that are little more than fools gold; the desire to impress friends and relatives with your success is in the end, pointless. When you find something special; hold on to it. Chances are it will be something you have not paid a penny for.

I feel a bit like a voyeur of angling. I seem to think, read and write more about angling than actually doing it. But at least with lure angling you can grab a rod and go. Yesterday for example, by much surprise, I suddenly found myself ahead of my paperwork and venturing out I caught 9 perch on *Salmo Hornets* with 3 of them going over 1lb 8oz, with a best of 1lb 12oz. A little treat in a desert of work! Free anything is very precious.



*A Free Moment Perch Takes A Salmo Hornet*

What am I saying here? Well it seems cheeky being a member of a specimen perch group to make the following remark, but I've lost the drive to catch big perch. We quite rightly celebrate the success of our members, the numbers of specimens they catch and their size - all magnificent I agree. But the average perch-fisher seems different to, may I say, the average pike angler.

Last autumn we fished the fens and with three exceptions the predator anglers down there were rude, aggressive and generally unpleasant. The roach and bream anglers were fine. One except to the nasty pike anglers was Mick Brown, who we met out in his boat. If you have never met the man, then you have missed meeting a true gent. He is also catching some very nice perch by the way.

What I need from my fishing today, whatever type that might be, is good company, lots of action regardless of size, and if possible a nice location. Of course I fell in love with Sweden for this reason. I go there because it is beautiful and the lure fishing action is non-stop. I have found a few neglected commercial ponds in Somerset and up here in Yorkshire where no one seems to fish for much else than the carp.

I have caught some real treats of late whilst bait fishing on my old trusty centrepin, using maggots, corn and soft pellets. My highlight was a 9oz silver bream. I know recent records of nearly 3lb now exist, but for me this is the fish record that stood for so long at 14oz. It is my personal best now at 9oz. I really don't care about the success of others in comparison. They must set their own standards. So what if mine is a smaller standard.



*Andy's 9oz Silver Bream*

The bait fishing for perch hasn't worked out, with only a few "tiddlers" coming to maggots. But instead I've caught Ide, which I'de (ooh sorry for that one), only caught in Sweden before, plus some super hybrids. I have some photos just to remind you how beautiful and hard fighting these natural hybrids are.



*Roach-Bream Hybrid*



*Rudd Bream Hybrid*

I would like fishery managers to just let nature make its freaks, and not mess around with F1 carp. I would much rather see native butter-bronze crucian carp being stocked any day.

Talking of natural beauty, imagine a lake 9 miles (14.5km) long where the fishing needs nothing but a rod licence. All the fish are wild and pristine. This is Ullswater. There are to my knowledge: schelly, sticklebacks, minnows, sea trout, salmon, wild trout and perch all inhabiting Ullswater's deep clear water. In places the depth is over 100 feet within a few yards of the edge. Like casting off the Blackpool Tower! It is a classic glacial low fertility lake. Therefore, most of the fish cling to the fertile shallow bays where dense beds of potamogeton grow. Here lie the lean ferocious perch.



*Ullswater*

If there was ever a place less likely to through up a specimen perch, I think it is Ullswater. The fish are likely to grow slowly, and I think a 2lb'er would be a remarkable beast from this lake. Yet I doubt not that they exist.



An Ullswater perch is a water coloured piece of art. Long lean and full of attitude; if they can get you with their gill covers, they will. Be prepared to need plasters. But the fight these fish give you puts those southern fat softies to shame.

You can float fish and ledger for the perch. Many do! But Ullswater is at most, sparsely fished. The trout seem to get the most attention, and there is a good head of them. However, I'd say the lure fishing is the most fun, and fortunately most of the bank is available to fish, and the perch are often found at the edge of the gravely drop off, short of the weedbeds. Therefore they are well within casting range. Just take a pair of waders.

Worm seems to be the most popular bait, while I have found small cranks baits like *Salmo* minnows, and executors in the 5 to 6cm range most effective, but *Ondex* and *Mepps* spinners are lethal and probably the most popular lures being used. However, I have had excellent sport casting small grubs on jigs, or by vertically jigging them.



*Ullswater Perch Takes A Crankbait*

One of the mysteries of this deep lake is the absence of pike. All others waters in the Lake District have them, but not Ullswater. The local boat hiring outlet offers a free day out on the lake if you catch a pike! Yep, that proves the point. Why there are none remains a mystery. It is certain that some pike anglers in the past have tried to release them. Some say it is the acidity of the water, but my PH test suggested otherwise. However, the lack of the toothed predator does give us an opportunity to lure fish without a wire trace.

I have long believed that a wire trace makes no different to the use of crankbaits for perch. I have used crankbaits with and without wire on Ullswater with no discernable difference in results. I may be so bold to suggest that the slightly dulling effect on some lure's action caused by the wire's weight enhances the attention of perch.

The reverse is true with small plastic grubs. I fish these on 6lb fluorocarbon attached to 15 or 10lb braided line. With the clarity of the water going 20ft, you can watch a shoal of perch stalk, surround, and for one to finally engulf the grub. There seems less hesitation when wire is off.

I therefore use two rods, one loaded with 15lb braid and wire, the other a loaded with 10lb braid and 6lb fluorocarbon. I will stress if you are going to lure fish, don't forgo the braid. Without the sensitivity of braid a friend struggled for a handful of perch while I sat in the same boat and had 65, with lots of other hits. He just couldn't feel the takes.

Takes on crankbaits are different, as Ullswater fish don't tend to hesitate and bites are bold and ferocious. You'll be amazed at the strength of these fish and what they lack is size they make up in spirit. Expect fish between 4oz and 1lb.



*Ullswater Perch Are About Fun, Not Size*

Although these perch have gorgeous colours, there is far more to Ullswater than the perch. The scenery is magnificent, especially in the north end. There is a good pay and display car park at Glenridding, where the steamships sail from (good place to launch a boat too), but you might find a free road side lay-by in places. Just arrive early for those.

So if you're up in the Lake District for a family holiday try Ullswater. Lots of kids swim from the beaches, so the family can self entertain while you sneak out a few perch. I've never caught less than 30 in a day, but they seem to top out around the pound. The season is also short, from May to early September. Then those perch disappear into those depths without a trace.



*Ullswater Perch Like Perch Coloured Lures*

I've also found that these Ullswater perch seem to particularly like perch coloured lures too. Not surprising as small perch are going to be a very important part of their diet.

However, a recent purchase of some wonderful perch lures from *HRT Lures* of Poland has made me consider a new article on all the different types of perch lures available. But just cast your eyes at these lures for now.



*HRT Lures*

I've tried them also on the Clyde and Forth canal and caught two pike on my first two casts with them. Look good don't they?



Take a further look at [www.agmdiscountfishing.co.uk](http://www.agmdiscountfishing.co.uk) if you are interested.

### 'Footy'

