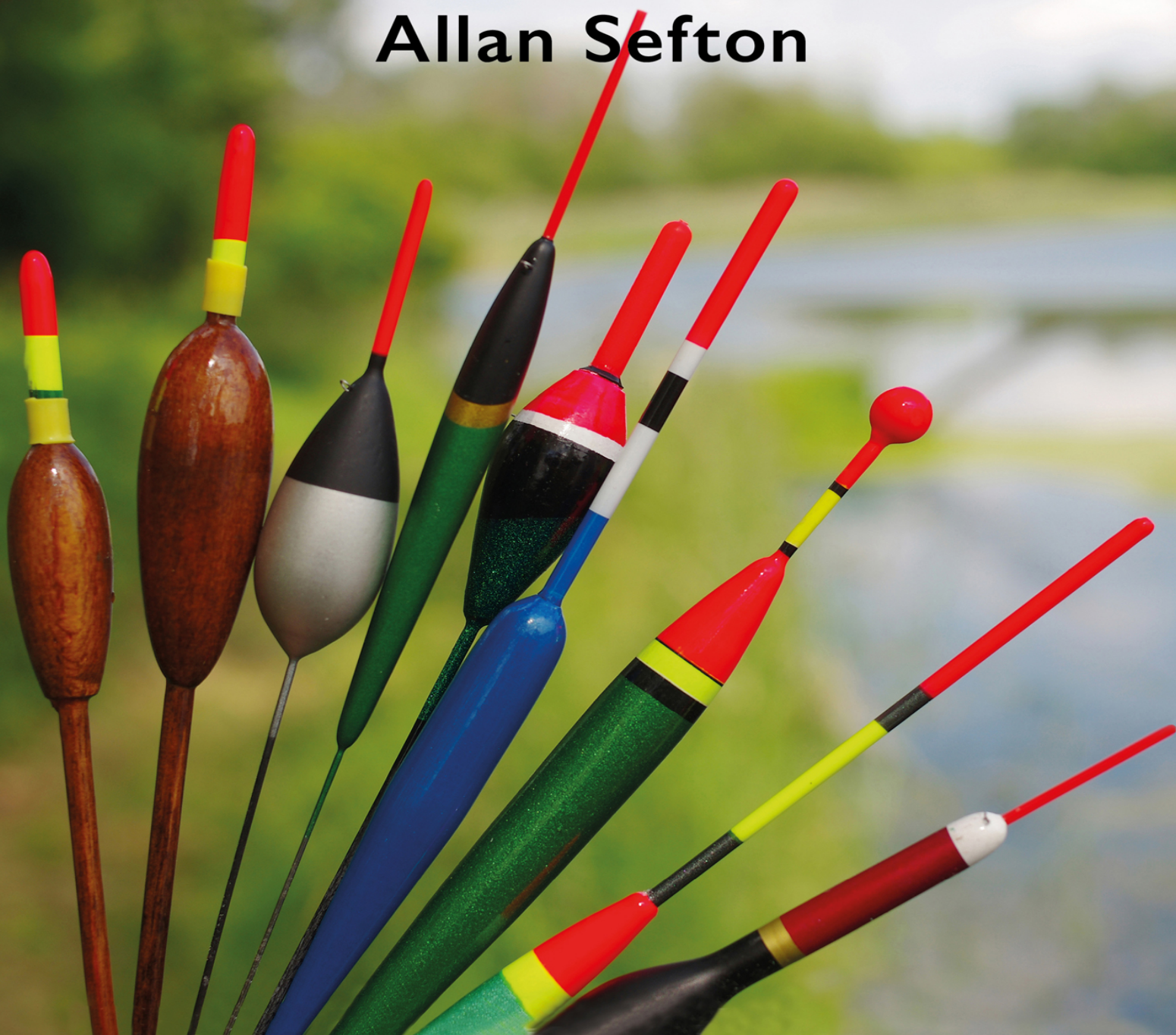


GET FISHING

the 'how to' guide to Coarse, Sea & Fly fishing

Allan Sefton



GET FISHING

the 'how to' guide to coarse, sea & game fishing

Allan Sefton



Published by Merlin Unwin Books
with the support of the Angling Trust

Contents

Foreword

PART ONE - COARSE FISHING

1. Before you start...
2. Tackle – and the fish you'll catch with it
3. Bait
4. Making the first day a success
5. Fishing with a long pole
6. Fishing with rod and reel
7. Coarse fishing in wild lakes and ponds
8. Float fishing and using feeders in rivers
9. Predator fish

PART TWO - SEA FISHING

10. Sea fishing is different!

PART THREE - GAME FISHING

11. Fly fishing and casting
12. Let the journey continue

Useful angling organisations & links



Hooked, played and netted - the thrill of catching a fish stirs every generation

Foreword



If you've always wanted to try fishing but have been confused by what to do, where to go, who to go with and what you need to catch a fish - then help is at hand with this new book by Allan Sefton.

Get Fishing will help you and your family discover the wonderful world of angling. With easy to understand words and pictures Allan uses his own wealth of angling knowledge to explain as simply as he can how fishing is a great way to spend time outdoors. Although you might think of fishing as a fairly slow-paced pastime, it has many proven health benefits and can be an active sport.

There's a type of fishing to suit everybody - no matter what your age, ability or experience level - and a great

angling community to help you at every step of your angling journey.

Angling embraces many types of experience. Whether it's just for a quick hour at your local lake, canal or river, or having the whole day with friends and family by the sea – give fishing a go and join the millions of people who enjoy it each year.

Fishing is brilliant for relaxation, it aids concentration and can be incorporated with other activities such as walking or cycling to a fishing venue – this makes it a good way to have fun with your family and enjoy an activity together.

Designed to get more people out fishing more often, the Get Fishing campaign at www.getfishing.org.uk is run by the Angling Trust with funding from the Environment Agency and Sport England. As part of Get Fishing, each year angling clubs, fisheries and organisations run hundreds of taster sessions which give tens of thousands of beginners the opportunity to try fishing for the first time.

Most of these sessions are free (or very low cost!) and include the use of tackle, bait and a freshwater fishing licence for the day. They are run by caring, qualified coaches and volunteers who make all Get Fishing events fun, safe and friendly. After coming to a beginner event all you'll need is some low-cost tackle, a fishing licence and a day ticket or club membership to access some fishing venues.

Indeed, you only have to read some of the positive comments from participants and their parents and carers to see what a great time you can have when you Get Fishing!

- *We are all fishing mad now! It's taken over the house, shed, garden, weekends! Thanks for showing us something new.*

- *Being child-friendly and free was a big bonus, everything included so no faffing about or buying kit they might not use again.*
- *The coaches were excellent. Full of information, patience and encouragement.*
- *My son is autistic and not into team sports. It was brilliant – but it was all down to the instructor, Charlie. I can't praise him enough.*
- *My family had a great time, so much so we bought them fishing rods and a licence. Thank you so much.*

Clive Copeland
Head of Participation
The Angling Trust
www.anglingtrust.net
www.getfishing.org.uk



Part One
COARSE FISHING



Before you start...



Deciding to learn to fish, then moving from beginner to expert, is a challenge.

There are local fishing clubs, and every newcomer should join one. Many sell junior tickets and are very low cost. Then, having found the water to fish, where does the beginner go from there? Happily there are a large number of local coarse and sea fishing clubs that also provide supervision and coaching for beginners, and there is also the Angling Trust.

The Angling Trust

The Angling Trust runs a national *Get Fishing* programme which introduces thousands of new people across the UK to angling at hundreds of free events every year.

Their *Get Fishing* website lists coaches, venues, news, blogs and 'how to fish' videos. Have a look at the websites:

www.getfishing.org

www.anglingtrust.net



Coarse fish capture the imagination in a display tank at a country fair

The Angling Trust has worked hard to set up its development framework, which is recognised and supported

by the government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Approved angling clubs or community groups which take part in national schemes to bring on talented youngsters can apply for grants from the Angling Trust.

The Angling Trust has also encouraged the development of a Level One course in angling which is now taught in some schools. It is a great qualification for pupils seeking a non-academic topic.



A beautiful little roach, caught on the whip

Fishing Licences

Game and coarse fishing are the only popular sports that, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, you need to get a

licence from the Environment Agency before you can take part. See www.gov.uk/fishing-licences.

There are concessions for youngsters. Children under 13 do not need a licence. Licences are free for those between 13 and 16 – but they do still need to get a junior licence. No licence is needed for fishing in the sea. Scottish anglers do not need a licence but the government there is re-considering it, so check on the current requirement.



Trout and coarse fishing licence. If you are under sixteen it costs nothing! But you need to renew it every year

Types of fishing

In the UK, fishing includes coarse, game and sea angling.

Coarse Fishing

‘Coarse’ anglers fish for perch, roach, pike, eels, carp and many other species – in fact all freshwater species other than trout and salmon. Coarse fish live in still and running water and almost every pond or canal in Britain and Ireland

has healthy populations. Coarse fish, and the fishing rights on their local waters, have traditionally been available to everyone at an affordable cost.

Catching coarse fish has always been affordable and sociable with club competitions and even outings. Anglers have always seen 'their' fish as a valuable resource, not to be harmed. Although the fish may be held briefly in a 'keep net' for weighing, they are carefully handled and returned alive to the water.

Game Fishing

Game anglers fish for salmon and trout, highly-prized sporting fish from rivers and lakes (*see page 116*). Game fish tend to be targeted with flies or lures and fly fishing is an especially tricky but enjoyable way of catching them. Game fishing can be costly, but some clubs offer cheaper tickets for juniors, and some town and city rivers can provide cheap, accessible trout fishing.

An ideal start to all fishing is often through coarse fishing. You will learn lots of basic fishing skills which will be useful when you advance to fish in wilder places, and take on specialised techniques such as fly fishing. This book aims to help you and your family to make that journey.

Sea Fishing

Sea fishing is covered fully from page 93, but many of the techniques you will learn from coarse fishing, you will use to catch sea fish, which is why coarse fishing is the best way to master the basics.

Get Going!

Find your nearest club on the Angling Trust website:

- **www.anglingtrust.net**
- Find free events, lessons, venues and information on how to fish: **www.getfishing.org**

Commercial coarse fisheries

A modern development is the rise in the number of man-made waters designed specially as fishing venues. Often newly-dug ponds or dammed streams and ditches, they have been stocked with fish for anglers.

Some of these 'commercial' fisheries have grown into big businesses. Their owners provide holiday accommodation, shops and restaurants as well as a range of fishing opportunities. Usually they have several lakes with perhaps one aimed at beginners. Others are targeted at more experienced fishers determined to catch bigger fish.

Carp, which are fast-growing, easy to rear and tough, are the dominant species in most commercial fisheries but most lakes are stocked with other species of coarse fish too.

Coarse and Game

Some commercial fisheries stock one lake with trout. This is usually restricted to 'fly fishing only'. And, if you catch one you can take it home to eat.

So, the difference between 'coarse' and 'game' and the pursuit of 'wild' or 'stocked' fish is becoming blurred.

However, it is the choice that these commercial fisheries offer, with a near-guarantee of catching a fish, that makes them the perfect venues for learning to fish.

Summary

- Fishing is a lifetime journey that is open to all. Don't rush the first steps
- Search for a local club to join
- A good place to start is at a commercial coarse fishery
- Fly fishing is recommended as a 'treat-to-come'



Young beginners read this...

Parents who know nothing about fishing worry about the risks of children being near water, often in lonely places. Here are some things a young person can do to reassure adults, and it might make the difference between 'yes' and 'no'.

- **Find a fishing buddy**

All parents worry about the safety of their kids. If a family can't accompany a youngster fishing, say in the school holidays, then going fishing with a friend might give them peace of mind – you can watch out for each other.

So find a fishing buddy.

- **Can you swim?**

The first thing many parents think about is: will you be able to get out of the water if you fall in? This worry does not stand up to much scrutiny as the bankside water is shallow at most fishing spots, but reassure them by learning how to swim as part of a deal to go fishing.

- **Join a local fishing club**

Most kids get into a sport by joining a local club. The same is true for fishing but fishing clubs rarely operate out of a clubhouse or sports centre, have regular meeting times, formal coaching or a fixture list! Many fishing clubs exist to rent fishing rights, usually on local waters, so the purpose of being a member is to be able to go fishing there. Some clubs do make a special effort to attract and to help new, young members. Most fishing clubs have helpful websites so see if you can find a suitable local one on the internet. Your parents will be pleased that you have made this effort and will probably get in touch with the club to see if it is suitable for you to join and how to help you get involved.

- **Become well informed**

Online it is not difficult to find practical advice on fishing. There are also a number of weekly and

monthly magazines with excellent news, information and 'how-to' advice. For example, *Improve Your Coarse Fishing* magazine is targeted at beginners. The next chapter in this book shows how getting started at fishing does not need to be expensive.



Coarse fishing - the best way to start

Coarse fishing is the best way to get started because it is a lot of fun. And, because you will catch plenty of fish, you will learn quickly how to handle them and to look after them. You will also learn that fish are not stupid and that you need to think hard about baiting hooks properly, fishing in the right place and encouraging fish to feed. While the tackle is easy to use, you will quickly realise that the wind and weather can make it harder and that small differences to the tackle can make a big difference to your success.

It is only if you live in the north of Scotland, on Orkney, Shetland, the Western Isles or the far west of Ireland that there is no coarse fishing available. However, do not worry, you live close to some of the best trout fishing and sea fishing in the world and Chapters 10 and 11 in this book show how to get you started in sea and fly fishing.

Anglers go through four 'ages'. At first, a new angler just wants to catch a fish. Then, they want to catch as many fish as possible. Next, they want to catch a really big fish. Finally, they want to catch 'difficult' fish.



Fish can very often be found close to the bank on commercials, so fishing the margins with simple tackle is a great place to start

2

Tackle - and the fish you'll catch with it



The tackle a beginner needs for a successful first day at a commercial fishery is a cheap, 4-metre, telescopic fishing

pole, known as a 'whip'.

This chapter explains how to buy, assemble and use this simple but effective kit. It also poses a dilemma. Is it more cost-effective to start with a more expensive, longer 'take-apart' pole? This is a more versatile option. How keen are you?

Rod and line

Early Man fished with a pole, some line and a baited hook. Then, about five hundred years ago, some bright spark realised you got your bait out further by passing line through rings on the pole and winding it onto a reel. This was a 'rod-and-reel' which allowed you to 'cast'. Today, rods and reels are used for nearly all game and sea fishing.

Only one hundred years ago, the fixed spool reel was invented. This changed the reel from somewhere to store your line into a casting tool.

Soon afterwards, every UK coarse fisher used a modern rod and fixed spool reel.



Whips

Thirty years ago competitive coarse fishing was as popular as it is today and many matches were won by large catches of small fish, each fish weighing only a few ounces. It was easier to build up a good weight of small fish than to wait for a few big ones to turn up.

Some top match anglers realised that, if you were catching small fish right at the water's edge, you could do it

faster if you did not have to bother with using a rod to cast or winding a reel. They developed a light tapered 4-metre 'pole' (i.e. designed to be used without a reel and running line). With the same length of line tied to its tip, plus a float, weights and hook, this simple kit could be swung out underarm, and lifted back to deliver a hooked fish to hand. These experts encouraged a shoal of small fish to feed within reach and they could fill a keep-net with a mind-boggling number of fish over a 4-hour match. The 'whip' had been invented!

The first whips had a fine, flexible tip known as a flick tip. The rest of the whip was strong and stiff to make it easy to lift out a hooked fish. A bendy tip cushioned the pull of the hooked fish, so more were landed. It also absorbed energy when striking to hook a fish which helped the hook to penetrate and stopped fish being bounced off.

A great tool for catching 'silver fish'

A whip and flick tip worked perfectly on a lake or canal where small 'silver fish' such as roach or rudd were being caught but it could not cope on waters stocked with larger, hard-fighting carp. A big carp hooked on a whip and flick tip usually escaped. The fine line snapped or the hook pulled out. A different mechanism was needed to play a strong fish.

The elasticated whip

The answer for big fish was strong elastic that stretched when a big fish was hooked and pulled it back to control it as it tired.

This was achieved by a length of elastic inside the hollow top section of a whip or longer pole. A tapered plug anchors the elastic. It is tightened carefully round this plug so that

the elastic doesn't hang limply from the whip's tip where it will tangle, nor is it so tight that it cannot lengthen further when a fish is hooked.

Basic tackle for Coarse Fishing



Acknowledgements

Thank you to all who have helped with this publication including those who have supplied photographs. I would also like to thank David Moore, Chair of the Angling Development Board before it merged with the Angling Trust. He encouraged me to write this book.

Particular thanks to Dominic Garnett for his help and his many photos of freshwater fish and fishing, especially the three still-life photos of tackle. And to Will Smith, Dean Asplin and James Roche at the Angling Trust for their invaluable input.

Photo credits

pg 5 Float fishing © Matt Rand
p21 Pole fishing © John Deprieelle
p30 Whip fishing © Liz Dack
pp52 and 71 Carp fishing © Rupert Whiteman
p64 Killer shrimp and Signal crayfish © GB Non-native
Invasive Species Secretariat
p64 Floating pennywort © Dominic Garnett
p72 Canal fishing © Martynas Pranaitis
p89 Pike fishing © Leonard Cheshire Disability, a charity
supporting disabled people in the UK
p109 Sea fishing map © Lindsey Green
p110 Lugworms © Cliff Brown
www.seaangler.co.uk
Front cover © Shutterstock

Many photos in this book were also taken by Tim Macpherson, Andy Loble and Chris Clark – and to them we are most grateful.

David Overland, author of *Fishing with Emma*, provided the illustrations of fish and tackle throughout the book.