

MINI FEEDER FISHING!

Jon Arthur tackles a snake lake swim at **Rookery Waters** with a short rod and feeder setup.

This is my first time fishing here at Rookery Waters and I must say it's an excellent looking venue. There are a number of lakes to choose from, but with it being a very windy day I've opted for a nice sheltered swim on Jay Lake. This is a snake-type lake with widths of around 14 metres and with it being surrounded by dense reed beds it really does look appealing and very fishy!

I know the number one method on this lake, like most canalised venues, is the pole. However, I have chosen to do something a little bit different today. I want to show you how to tackle these relatively narrow pegs with the feeder. This is a great tactic to have in your armoury and very easy for anyone to do with the minimum of tackle. It also catches carp very fast!

ANGLER FILE
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About Jon: **Top all-rounder and a three-time UK Champion**

SHORT SECRETS

I think the hardest part with this method is the casting. You generally want to fish as tight to the far bank as possible in the summer, as the water will be shallower and that's where the fish tend to feed best. However, even if you drop it slightly short the fact that you are feeder fishing means your bait is always on the bottom waiting for a fish. Feeder fishing on a slope is therefore much simpler compared to float fishing, as you don't have to worry about a float being set the wrong depth!

Trying to cast a feeder accurately across a narrow swim like this presents its own little problems, however. Because of the short distance you don't have very long to check and control the feeder while it's in mid air.

The first thing that will really help you is the line clip on your reel. This is an absolute must, as casting to a fixed distance with the aid of your line clip will prevent you overcasting into the far bank foliage.

The second important item is a short feeder rod. Forget your 11ft and 12ft models as they are not as manoeuvrable and offer less control on short casts. A rod of 10ft or shorter is what you ideally need. I personally think a short 9ft model is perfect. After doing quite a bit of dropshotting with lures on canals I have come to appreciate how much better a shorter rod is for accurate casts on narrow venues. Shorter rods are also more convenient on confined pegs with vegetation either side. They also allow you to play and net fish much closer in.

My rod of choice is a **Drennan Ultralight Mini Feeder**. This is a dual-length rod that can be fished at either 9ft or 10ft, but it's the shorter length I prefer for this game. This rod is extremely light and has a very soft, through action. It bends right through to the butt when you have a quality fish and cushions every little lunge. It is so forgiving that I never feel I am going to get broken, even with big fish on relatively light hooklengths. I helped to field test the very first prototypes and although I've caught a few bonus carp to 10lb, I think it's really suited to fish up to 2lb to 3lb. If you are regularly targeting much bigger specimens then I would maybe step up to a slightly heavier model. For today's fish at Rookery, however, it's absolutely ideal. ▶

The Drennan Ultralight Mini Feeder at its shorter 9ft length is ideal for close-range work.

TOP TIPS



Micro pellets and groundbait are kept separate. A third tub allows Jon to alter the ratios of each. A tub of water is also essential.



Dead maggots are the number one hook bait as they are so soft and readily sucked in by the carp.



One or two dead reds on the hook is ideal.



A size 16 Wide Gape Pellet hook is perfect for this style of fishing.



Incorporating a Quick Change Bead into the setup allows you to change hooklengths in seconds.



The V of the keepnet makes a handy rest, but make sure you wedge a rod guide snugly against it to prevent the rod being pulled in!

THE FEEDER SETUP

I have opted for 5lb **Feeder & Method Mono** today on a small **Series 7 BR 9-30** reel. This material is really durable and the fairly thin 0.20mm diameter ensures that it cuts through surface tension quicker than thicker mono, which can really help when bites are coming fast. I also like to twizzle the last 30cm of my main line to create a durable boom. that helps to take the strain of the feeder running up and down, plus when a fish is thrashing around in the landing net.

The feeder is free running down to a **Drennan Quick Change Bead**. To this I attach a short 0.16mm **Supplex** hooklength of around 10cm to 12cm. A size 16 **Wide Gape Pellet** hook is ideal for my single or double dead maggot hook bait. I may switch to a banded pellet if silverfish are a nuisance but dead maggots are my first choice as they are really light and soft, so sucked in very easily.

MINI FEEDERS

My little feeders are actually home made designs in two sizes. One is a standard shop-bought pellet feeder with the top carefully cut off. The smaller model is crafted from a cut-down syringe. I also like to drill lots of little holes so the feed evacuates quickly. They are between 20g to 30g in weight, which is needed to hold on a sloping bottom.

A small Method Feeder will also work, but my custom feeders are faster and more foolproof to load. Being so small ensures they make minimal disturbance on entry. They also allow you make lots and lots of casts without ever feeling you are overfeeding the swim.

FEEDING

For feed I have wetted 2mm micro pellets plus some crushed pellet groundbait. I keep these separate and then make small batches in a third tub so I can easily alter the ratios of each. I tend to feed mostly groundbait with a smattering of pellets, but some days I might want to add more pellets or maybe even just feed neat pellets.

I keep my groundbait on the dry side as this seems to explode out a little bit better than a damper mix. A tub of water also helps me alter the consistency really quickly just by wetting my fingers and running them through the mix.



Jon's home made feeders.

SPOTTING BITES

The first type of bite you'll get is a standard wrap-around as a fish takes the bait, hooks itself and bolts away. Don't strike! The fish should already be on, so just reel in and lean into the fish.

The second type is a drop-back bite as a fish swims towards you, so you need to watch the line as well as your quivertip and quickly reel in if the line slackens sharply.

You will always get occasional phantom bites caused by fish brushing the line. If the feeder accidentally moves I always reel in, re-bait and cast out again.

I rarely leave the feeder in the swim for more than three or four minutes. Regular casting will help to build up a nice area of feed. It also gets the fish used to the sound of a feeder plopping into the swim and ringing the dinner bell. It can be a really busy and enjoyable method once you get into a nice catching rhythm.

CASTING THE FEEDER

I recommend you spending five minutes just casting the feeder without a hooklength attached to get a good idea of the force needed to gently lob the feeder across to the other side.

You can try a sideways or underarm flick, but my preferred style is a simple overhead cast. I like to have a longish drop of about 3ft from my quivertip to the feeder before casting and cast with a slightly lower trajectory to avoid fouling overhanging foliage.

Don't be put off if you occasionally snag the far bank, though. I have never met a single angler who doesn't occasionally do this. Treat it as a good sign that you are attempting to get the feeder to land as tight across as possible.



Plop the feeder as tight to the far bank as possible.

THE SESSION

Today has been an amazing day on the mini feeder. The fish have responded really well to the tactic and I have never had to wait more than a few minutes for a bite.

Other than competing with some ducks occasionally dive-bombing my swim it's been a really simple and straightforward day. I have ended up with a lovely net of carp including commons, mirrors and some really hard-fighting ghosties.

Lifting my keepnets out for a look I am pleasantly surprised just how many fish I have been able to catch. On days like this I am not sure you could have caught them any faster on the pole. It's such a simple and effective tactic, so go out and give it a go! ■



All taken on the mini feeder at the excellent Rookery Waters!



VENUE FILE

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