

# SHORT-RANGE SKIMMERS

We met up with **Steve Hemingray** on a cold and windswept Meadowlands Fishery. Prepare yourself for an international-class lesson in close-range feeder fishing!

**O**n ice-cold and windy days like this it is little fun trying hold a long pole and wrestling with the conditions. Days like this are when a short-range feeder approach can be much more effective, comfortable and enjoyable.

Large stillwaters like Meadowlands in Coventry can also move like a river when the wind gets up. That can make presenting a static hook bait really difficult.

This is when the close-range feeder really scores well. Done right and it is a really satisfying and busy way to catch fish. It is also surprisingly simple, as I can hopefully demonstrate...

## DID YOU KNOW?

Steve Hemingray is one of the only English anglers to have ever represented his country in both the feeder and float World Championships.

## INITIAL FEEDING

Think pole, fish feeder. That is a good motto to have in your mind. There are some big catches of silverfish to be had on stillwaters like this, so I like to put a small bed of feed in to start with. To kick things off I have thrown in five or six balls of groundbait. Fishing so close means you can be really accurate and this will hopefully create some noise to draw fish in to investigate.

Bream and skimmers respond really well to fishmeal-based groundbait throughout the year in the UK. Today I'm using Sensas Crazybait Marine darkened off with a small amount of black Sensas Tracix dye. To this I add a handful of softened 2mm micro pellets and a handful of dead red maggots.

If I was using this method overseas I might use a more traditional 'sweet' groundbait such as Sensas Magic or Lake and brown breadcrumb. However, I would definitely also experiment with fishmeal if it is allowed. A 50/50 mix can also work. In the UK we call this 'sweet fishmeal' groundbait and this can sometimes give you the best of both worlds.

## LITTLE & OFTEN

After feeding a few balls of groundbait by hand, I will simply use a tiny feeder to introduce smaller amounts of bait, little and often, for the rest of the session. There are lots of small skimmers to target, which means plenty of bites and plenty of casts. A little feeder is therefore necessary to avoid over-feeding the fish too quickly.

To try and maintain accuracy, I use the line clip on my reel and 'clip up' to approximately 14 to 15 metres. Some anglers prefer to use an underarm lob for this style of short-range work but I personally feel I can be more accurate with a gentle overhead cast.

## INSIDE THE FEEDER

I have three options for inside the feeder; groundbait, pellets and dead red maggots. Feeding just wetted micro pellets and a few dead maggots together can be best when you want to avoid smaller roach, as small roach seem to really respond to any groundbait. If tiny roach continued to be a problem I might also stop feeding dead maggots in the feeder as well.

However, my number one hook bait is still two dead maggots on a size 16 hook, so I do like to feed some if I can. This helps to give the fish a taste of my hook bait.

I may occasionally also try a hair-rigged pellet, but hitting bites from skimmers on pellets can be difficult. They definitely hang on to a dead maggot a lot longer!





## TINY FEEDERS

My starting feeder is the smallest 10g 'three-hole' Micro Drennan Cage Feeder. These are perfect when the fish are feeding well and you are getting bites every 30 to 40 seconds.

Even a tiny feeder like this can be too big at times, however, so I may occasionally make a cast with a completely empty feeder.

I have also adapted some of these cage feeders by cutting off the last row of metal to make an even smaller design. By swapping between the Micro feeder, a cut-down feeder and an empty feeder I can control the amount I feed throughout the day, depending on how the fish respond.

Another great tip is to occasionally fire bait over the top with a catapult. Today that is done with softened 4mm carp pellets. On other venues you could feed maggots or casters instead. Do not loose feed too regularly, however, as you really want to keep the fish on the bottom. I'm sure an occasional pouch of feed helps to pull in more fish and create a slightly wider catching area.

## A SOFT ROD

You must use a short and really soft and forgiving rod. This is vital to cushion the fight at such short range. My 10ft Drennan Matchpro Ultralight Bomb rod with the lightest 3/4oz tip is ideal for this tactic. This is matched with a small Series 7 BR 9-30 reel filled with 5lb Drennan Specimen Plus line.

My hooklength is 0.10mm Supplex Fluorocarbon, which is slightly stiffer than mono and less prone to spinning and tangling. The hooklength is around 45cm long, which I feel is the optimum length to give the fish time to take the bait and register on the quivertip without feeling too much resistance.

The hook is a size 16 Kamasan B911 F1 which is a barbless pattern to comply with the fishery rules.

## STEVE'S TIPS

Micro Drennan Cage Feeders are ideal, but Steve has even adapted one to make it even smaller!



If roach are a problem, cut out the groundbait and just feed micro pellets.



Two dead red maggots are the number-one hook bait.



Use a fine quivertip and try striking at any indication.



## ALL IN THE TIMING

Today I have rarely needed to leave the feeder on the bottom for more than a minute before I get a bite. I normally strike at the first positive tap on the quivertip, but I will also experiment through the day. If you are reeling in and finding a chewed maggot this is normally a sign that you need to strike sooner. Alternatively, if you are missing bites and the bait is not marked, try to let the bite develop a little longer before picking up the rod.

If you haven't had an indication, however, carefully drag the feeder towards you about 30cm. I might do this a couple of times to induce a bite before reeling in and repeating the process.

## LAST-HOUR QUALITY

As often happens, the last hour of the session can see a much bigger size of fish arrive in the swim. On the right day you can double your catch with a late, last-hour run of fish like this.

The key is to keep casting and gradually building up the area of feed. Stay confident and they will eventually switch on.

Casting a tiny feeder close in is a lovely way to fish on a chilly and windswept day. There are always little adjustments that you can make throughout the session to keep yourself busy. Go out and give it a go! 🐟



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### ANGLER FILE

Name: **Steve Hemingray**  
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### VENUE FILE

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