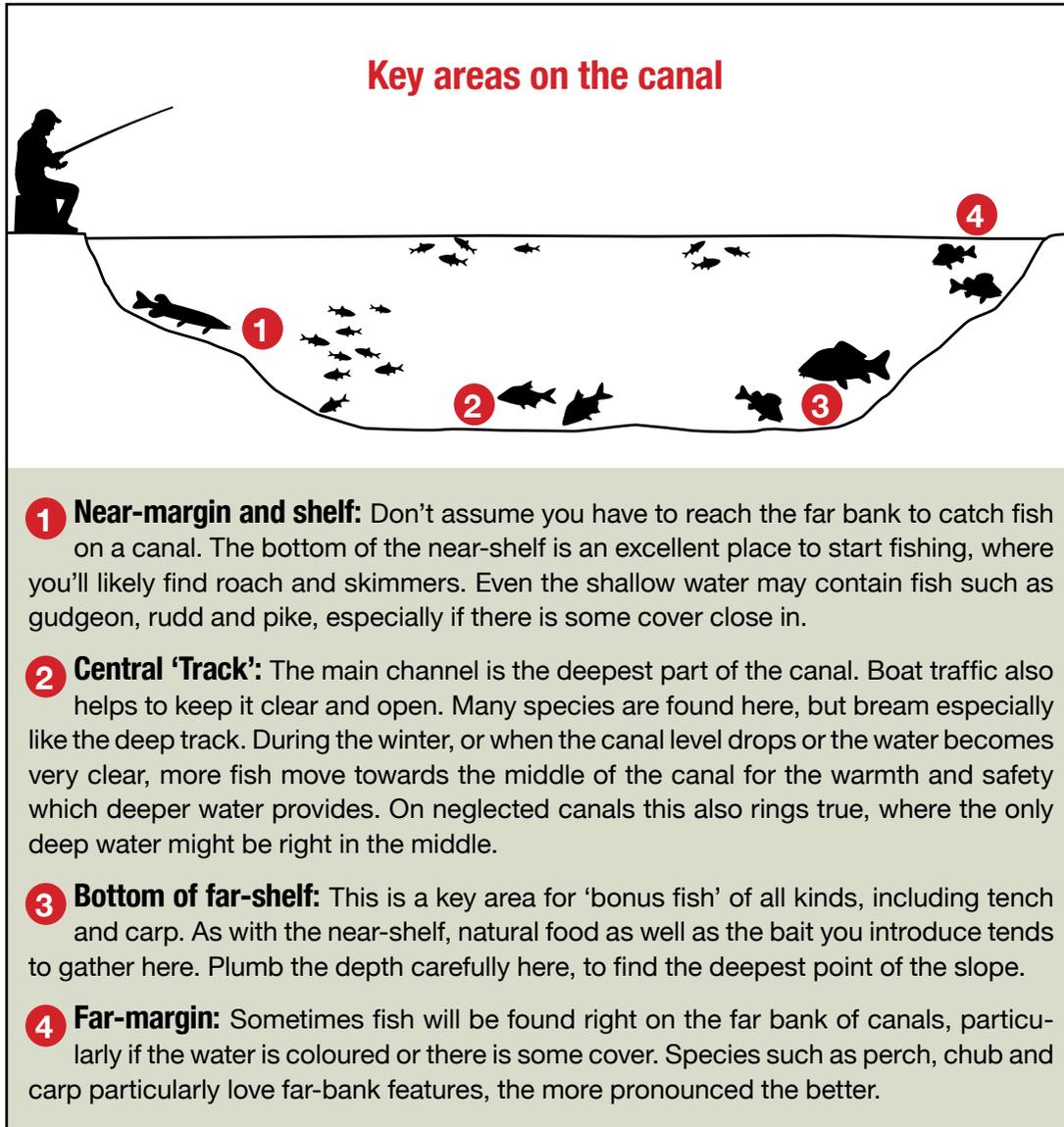


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Different Types of Canal

There is no such a thing as the 'typical' canal. Each one is unique and there is no substitute for gathering your own experience on a water. That said, we can certainly identify a few 'types' of canal that provide a useful general model. This is not set in stone. For example, some

individual canals will be quite varied in themselves – combining busy urban sections and quieter, clearer locations along their course.

Knowing how to recognize different types of water and deal with different conditions are all part of the craft of canal fishing; and with no closed season on most towpaths, you'll certainly witness great variation each year.

CANAL FISHING



Where bigger bream are present, a worm and castor cocktail is a winner.



Maggots catch bream year round, but try a bunch if small fish prove a nuisance.



On wide, open sections of canal, the feeder is a useful bream weapon.

large 'slabs' are the target, the species has a particular liking for a potent mix.

The difference a savvy feeding approach makes can be absolutely critical to success. Even an average shoal of fish can eat a lot of bait, so an initial bed of crumb laced with hookbait samples makes perfect sense. This might mean two or three small balls just to test the swim on a tough canal or match conditions, but could also mean a much heavier bombardment where a good net is expected. Your aim is to get the fish feeding vigorously and the advantage of groundbait is that it offers a lot of smell and tiny grains of food to keep a shoal occupied.

Two other useful options are pre-baiting and night fishing. At its simplest, pre-baiting can mean going to a likely spot the evening before your session and introducing a good quantity of bait. This could be several kilos of crumb mix, along with a generous helping of tit-bits: frozen sweet corn or stewed wheat are both cheap and effective.

It's fair to say that early morning and late evening are prime times for

Baiting Strategies

Bream can be taken on all manner of baits. Maggots, bread, corn, boilies – you name it, bream will eat it. Few match anglers would be without worm and casters for bream fishing, however, which are superbly effective. Maggots, including the smaller pinkies and squats, can also work but tend to be less selective. That said, dead maggots are an absolutely first-rate bream bait.

Of course, your hookbait is only the final part of the puzzle for bream. Groundbait is often the key to both drawing fish into the swim and keeping them there, and whether skimmers or



This fish was spotted lurking menacingly in a clear canal. Note the small fry, seemingly oblivious!

Bait and Wait?

Some things never change in angling. For generations of anglers, perch fishing has begun and ended with a float and a wriggling worm. Our tackle and mindset may have developed beyond recognition but the fish are still suckers for a lively bait, whether this means a delicately pole fished worm section or a whole lobworm. At the most refined end of the spectrum,



Some things in fishing never change: perch always love worms.

modern pole-fishing techniques represent an incredibly productive and accurate way to catch perch of all sizes. A pole can be used to sneak a bait into the tightest of corners, while the canny angler can also use the tip to lift and drop a worm enticingly off the bottom.

Typical pole set-ups also offer sensitivity. Slightly thicker-tipped pole floats cater for worm fishing, but otherwise tackle needn't be ultra-heavy. Perch give a gratifying thump but present little danger on balanced tackle: rigs constructed of 3-4lb line and either a light hollow elastic or a solid number eight is ideal for big perch. Some finesse can be a great benefit because although smaller perch can be suicidally eager, the larger fish are surprisingly canny.

Whether it's quality or quantity you want with perch, feeding is crucial. Loose fed maggots are one way to draw in both perch and the prey fish they like to bully. But for the dedicated perch angler there is no better feed than chopped worm. This can be mixed with suitable groundbait and casters, or just pure worm. I find dendrobaenas or red worms best, chopping them into a mixture of fine and

With no closed season on most canals, traditional rules don't always apply. Russ Hilton took this thirty pound bag of tench on a cold day in March!



PIKE

shallow canals it can be a great method for the impatient pike angler to cover a lot of fish.

Perhaps I'm soft at heart, but the only method I hesitate to use is live baiting – an effective weapon no doubt, but one now banned on the majority of canals. For sensible reasons too, because every time a bucket of fish arrives from a different water, with different parasites and diseases, the angler gambles with the health of their fishery. I make no moral censure here, but should you choose to bait with live fish, you must always catch your bait from the canal you intend to fish.



*Above: The jaws have it!
Pete Gregory took this canal monster on a large spinnerbait.*

*Below: Canal pike are not always jacks!
The author tempted this fine 23-pounder with a wobbled roach.*

