

Bob Church extols the virtues of this jewel of the Lake District.

I first fished at Esthwaite Water along with John Emerson for rainbow trout some 15 years ago. It was generously stocked with decent sized rainbows taken from its own on-site rearing cages. We caught a nice limit bag of six trout each and we had a great day in such a wonderful surroundings.

I travelled up to the Lake District again 11 years later, but this time with the pike in mind. David Coleman, who manages the whole set-up there is quite an excellent fisher himself, so who but David did we ask to advise us? Mike Green and I, that is.

Naturally, to approach trout-water pike we tried our specialised fly-fishing tactics with powerful fly rods and big lures, but we also took along our jerkbaits, big spoons and a few rubber baits. After three two-day trips to Esthwaite Water we realised that soft rubber baits catch the most pike.



Mike Green also had some lovely pike to 18lb

Mike Green and I were there for another two days piking in 2008. Although we caught with well-sunk

lures on our fly rods David Coleman demonstrated how much the catch rate improved with the rubbers. The first



Bob's best this trip was this 18lb 8oz pike



Mike Green ghillies as Dave Stuart plays his 26lb pike



All Esthwaite Water pike violently try for freedom

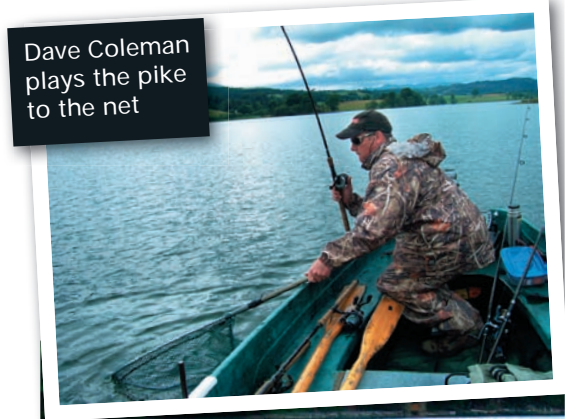
two days were impressive accounting for a massive catch of pike which was approximately 1200lb of really good sized pike for the three of us, and amongst that catch there was a 20lb-plus for each of us.

During the 2009 trip I had a flyer with a 25lb pike on the first cast. I just had to have a decent catch after that. In the afternoon session in pouring rain I managed 10 doubles between 12lb and 17lb 8oz. A red letter day, or what?

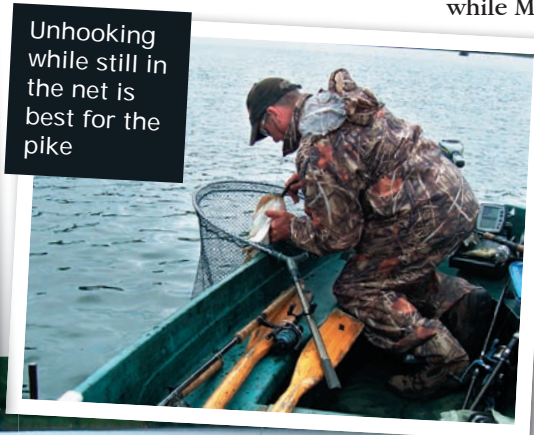
Back again

So it came to this year's trip back to my beloved Esthwaite Water, this time with Mike Green and I taking a guest, all-round fisherman Dave Stuart who

wanted to catch a few pike. The last time he came to stay I ghillied him to a 21lb beauty on a local pit. The first day out on Esthwaite Water was with Mike in the boat and Dave drew a blank while Mike caught a few, all on the rubbers.



Dave Coleman plays the pike to the net



Unhooking while still in the net is best for the pike

When we arrived at the fishery for our latest session, I caught well in numbers as did David Coleman, his best being a scraper 20lb and mine 18lb 8oz. That was a great pike to catch as I cast into a soft weedbed in no more than three feet of water. It gave me an explosive take as soon as the lure hit the water and the fight

that followed was exhausting. I am convinced that pike in the 17-18lb weight bracket make the best fighters.

The two best rubber lures were a very lifelike roach and a perch.

All change

There are going to be some major changes at Esthwaite Water during the next few years. The Environment

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Dave Coleman's scraper twenty

Dave Stuart's second big pike at 26lb 8oz – what a brace!



Agency is determined to change Esthwaite Water back into a brown trout stocking water only. The stocking will happen gradually and will be complete by 2014/2015. Then the screens will be taken off at the bottom of the lake to allow free access for migratory salmonoids.

This is, of course, an experiment, hoping the brown trout will behave like sea trout. This should not affect the piking. I suppose when it comes to it, browns are as good as rainbows for the pike to eat. I would say there are also lots of big roach and perch in the water.

Incredible

I have left Dave Stuart's catch on the second day until last because it was

such an incredible one. He took pike of 28lb 2oz, 26lb 8oz, 12lb 8oz, 10lb and 7lb. You can imagine how much he was on a high. All were lovely fish and all caught on a rubber roach lookalike lure.

For those of you who are dithering about whether to take a trip to Esthwaite Water, my advice is to get up there. Why not contact David Coleman on 01539 436541 or email trout@hawkshead.demon.co.uk

The two big pike chewed up Dave's rubber lure, so when he hooked a lively 12lb 8oz fish it ripped it in half

