



Gary Newman's BIG FISH SCENE

THE UK'S
TOP YOUNG
SPECIALIST
ANGLER

Learn from the nation's ace specimen fish reporter, here in his own weekly column.
THIS WEEK: Gary is all at sea, but a return to dry land soon has him smiling again.



ADAM PARKER set the standard with this stunning arapaima estimated at nearly 400 lb. I had to wait until nightfall before I latched into a real monster.



This 300 lb-plus arapaima crowned my stay.



John Pearce with a small tuna. For their size they don't half go!

Beauty of the beasts

FOLLOWING a very successful first week at Gillham's Fishing Resorts, where myself and two friends had caught some fantastic fish, it was time to try something a bit different.

Upon our arrival in Thailand we'd been introduced to one of Stuart Gillham's friends, John Pearce, who has been running and skipping big game boats out of Phuket for years.

John used to be a well-known sea angler in the UK and graced the pages of *Angler's Mail* a number of times during the 1970s, including a front cover appearance, and was involved in developing the highly popular uptiding technique.

He'd kindly offered us a day out on one of the boats the company that he works for, Big Game Fishing Wahoo

Thailand, owns, aptly named Reel Hooker, to try and get some sailfish, which are usually found around the coast of Thailand at this time of year.

By the time we were due to go out another angler staying at the resort, Andy Wilson from Manchester, plus Richard Foster of Foster's of Birmingham fame had been invited to join us.

After a great night out in Phuket we headed out on the boat the following morning. I'd been on fishing boats before but nothing like this, being equipped with plasma TVs in the cabins making the inside look more like a luxury yacht.

Unfortunately the fishing was pretty slow and as usual I felt sea sick all day – sea fishing on boats

just doesn't seem to agree with me – but we did manage a few small tuna and we all caught, plus it made a nice change to see a different part of Thailand.

Unfortunately the sailfish hadn't arrived as they were running later than usual this year.

If you're in that part of the world and fancy a day out big game fishing then I'd definitely recommend Big Game Fishing Wahoo Thailand and you can check out their website: www.wahoo.ws

They also run extended trips to the Andaman Islands where many huge marlin are caught each year.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

WE arrived back at Gillham's Fishing Resort late in the evening and were all keen to get back to catching some big fish.

The following day I saw my mate Adam hook into what looked like a big fish on the other side of the lake, but he shouted across that it was a redtail, although he was soon to be proved wrong.

It quickly grew into an arapaima and a big one at that, so I wound in to go round and take some photographs and was greeted by the hugely

impressive sight of a fish estimated at 180 kg (nearly 400 lb).

Back in my swim there were quite a few arapaima still showing and, within minutes of casting a float fished deadbait near one, I hooked into a fish of around 50 kg.

Having had quite a few arapaima I'd decided to make this my last day fishing for them as I was hoping that my other mate, Vince, would get a big one and all I'd be doing by hooking more was to cut his chances.

Just into darkness I hooked a big fish which proceeded to snag me and eventually my leadcore went.

I felt gutted and was stood chatting

with Stuart and contemplating reeling in my other rod and calling it a day when I received a slow, twitchy take followed by a dropback as something picked up a deadbait fished to the far margin.

I immediately thought 'alligator gar' as I'd had several that had given me the same sort of bite, and my strike met with little resistance.

But it soon became apparent that the fish was coming towards me as it woke up and went on several runs during which I could feel the head-shaking that is typical of an arapaima.

When we first saw it roll on the surface after a very good fight Stuart put it at around 70 to 80 kg, but after a few more minutes when we got it in a bit closer it just seemed to keep growing until he was able to guide a massive arapaima into the cage. He estimated it at around 150 kg (330 lb) and I'd more than achieved my goal.

It is easy to lose sight of reality with fish of this size, but for me every arapaima I caught was a fantastic looking creature and achieved my dream, and the actual weight is just a bonus.

METHOD MADNESS

HAVING decided to target some other species I switched my rigs over from big hooks with fish baits to size 1 Nash Fang X hooks with four or five pieces of maize hair-rigged and tipped with Mutant maize hoping to catch some carp.

This was fished with a Method feeder and cast to one of the plateaus which run down the centre of the lake – for some reason the Siamese carp prefer to feed on them.

There are several different species



Flying fish! Arawana spend as much time in the air as in the water when you hook one.



A big arapaima makes a last bid for freedom as Sean Gillham tries to steer it into the cage. With their bony heads and plenty of weight behind them, they can be dangerous if they hit you.



Mail reader Andy Wilson showed me the way with this cracking 65 lb Siamese carp.

➤ of carp in the lake and I really wanted to catch a Julian's Golden Prize carp, but it was the wrong time of year for them and the Siamese were going to be my best bet.

From pictures I'd seen of them they'd never impressed me that much, but after seeing Andy land one of 65 lb I realised that they are much more impressive in the flesh.

Things were a bit slow to start with but after moving swim and taking some advice from Stuart's son, Sean, to keep the bait going in, I started to get a few more fish.

But I also had some bad luck, losing a couple of black pacu that bit straight through 45 lb Quicksilver, and then one evening hooking something that felt very big which hugged the bottom before going off on slow runs before finally straightening the hook. It could have been a big redbtail or it might have been one of the huge Mekong catfish.

Not many fish were showing at my end of the lake and I felt I should be catching more, so another move was in order. I'd also decided to stay on for another week so it would give me the chance to build the swim up with maize and groundbait.

The fishing was a lot different to what I'm used to, with baits being recast every 15 minutes or so, and more balls of groundbait being introduced via the feeder every hour. I'm more used to casting out once a day when carping back home and struggled to fish effectively all day.

In total I landed over 35 carp with the best going around mid-30s. I had several days where I landed six fish and lost a similar amount – Siamese carp have soft mouths and hook pulls are common.

It can really kick off when they get on you properly as my mate Adam discovered when he landed 15 in a spell of a couple of hours, including a 40, 50, 60 and a 75 lb monster.

jumped straight out of the water and quickly unhooked itself.

I had more luck with the next one though, and landed a beautiful looking fish of around 5 lb or so which put up a great fight on light gear. I went on to land a couple more of a similar size or slightly bigger.

TALKING STALKING

SOME of the most enjoyable fishing that I had whilst I was out there was spending a few afternoons stalking towards the end of my stay.

Arapaima make huge bubbles – think tennis ball sized – as they move along feeding and a bait dropped in front of them often resulted in a take.

I spent many hours crawling around on my stomach, so as to avoid spooking fish feeding just feet from the bank, often in the pouring rain, but loving every minute of it.

I managed to land one of 50 kg which was very satisfying given that my float was practically touching the bank when I hooked it.

The following day I hooked a very big fish which came along the margins towards me before surfacing with its head facing me, and the hook pinged out. I'd have said it was definitely bigger than my 150 kg fish.

Fishing in this way also saw me land some nice redbtails, including fish of 65 lb and 60 lb, and I could have had more had I not been trying to limit the amount of disturbance I created and only casting a bait in when I spotted an arapaima feeding.

All too soon it was time to leave but I'll be back. Everyone at the resort was friendly and as well as superb fishing we also had a good social. I enjoyed the company of Stuart, his wife Benz, son Sean and his girlfriend Noi, cook Steve, plus all the Thai staff.

AIR ARAWANA

THERE are many other species that I didn't get the time to fish for whilst I was there and that I'll be going back to have a go for in the future.

One that I did manage to catch a few of though was a fish called an arawana. They were easy to spot swimming around below the surface and, although small compared to the other species, I wanted to catch one.

I had a light spinning rod with 15 lb line and a size 6 hook handy in my swim and whenever I spotted an arawana swimming past I flicked a small piece of fish in front of one and it took it. As soon as it was hooked it

CONTACTS

To book a holiday at Gillham's Fishing Resorts in Thailand, or to find out more information, visit their website www.gillhamsfishingresorts.com Alternatively why not e-mail info@gillhamsfishingresorts.com or give him a call in Thailand on 00 66 86 1644554.