

Cover Stories



LATE season tench are a challenge, but our Where To Fish London and South guru Bill Rushmer, gives you tips to outwit them in All The Answers in page 26. And in the same section there's a great run down on some of the best hooker pellets on the market. The methods, the bait, go catch some tench!



FREE!
Matt Hayes
Camo hat

– just pay P&P see page 18.



BAG UP
ON CANAL
BREAM

– Action Replay shows you how. See page 36.



UNDER
COVER CARP

There's no hiding place if you follow Davo's advice in page 50.

Luxury Thai resort is the cat's whiskers!

OUR man Gary Newman is out in Thailand chasing big fish – and he's been enjoying it so much that he cheekily phoned the office to tell us he was extending his stay by another week, at Gillham's Fishing Resorts at Krabi in the South of the country.

Gaz was targeting monster arapaima in the resort's beautiful nine acre lake, but he soon found that other species were on the prowl and more than willing to snap up his massive baits.

There are 30 different species in the venue, all to specimen size, and this 45 lb red tailed catfish is a fine example of the diversity on offer.

'The colouration of these fish is stunning,' raved Gaz, who gives a great account of his first week at the resort in page 54.

NEWS



MAIL staffer Gary Newman used the Gillham's Fishing Resort's provided gear in the shape of a Free Spirit Cat Tamer rod, 35 lb Pro Tuf Line, Kryston Ton-Up hook length and a size 4/0 hook to land this 45 lb red tailed catfish which snapped up a sea fish deadbait.

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The best World Championship write up

EDITOR'S Welcome

“Angling programs need a lot more than just a big name.”



CONGRATULATIONS to Drennan Team England on their stunning performance in the World Championships in Italy, coming home with the team gold medal plus individual gold for Will Raison and bronze for his good mate Steve Gardener.

I well remember the first World Championship that I covered for *Angler's Mail*, it was in Zagreb, Croatia, and Will Raison was in the squad for the first time. Flying out with photo journalist Brian Gay, we speculated on the likelihood of Will forcing his way into the team. Maybe he'll get a run out on the second day, we surmised. But when we arrived we were soon tipped the wink that Will would be in the starting line up.

'He's been devastating, you just couldn't leave

him out,' purred Mark Downes.

Alan Scotthorne scored his third consecutive individual World win, and Drennan Team England cruised to victory, with Will Raison performing as if to the manner born. 'It's not a question of if he will win it individually, it's a question of when,' forecast Mark Downes – he was right.

EXTREME FISHING has certainly got anglers talking, and more have been critical of the TV series than have voiced opinions of support. It goes to show that angling programs need a lot more than just a big name fronting them if they are to satisfy our market.

The real downside is that program makers might be reluctant to dip into angling, and the TV channels might be unwilling to air the results. Good angling programs have inspired people

to take up the sport for the first time, and lapsed anglers to get back into it. Extreme Fishing could get anglers back onto the banks – simply because they don't want to stay in and watch it!

FLOODS are back in the news – good news for some – bad news for others. I know that a lot of barbel anglers have been looking forward to them, and judging by recent captures they haven't been disappointed by the results. If you do fancy a trip to your local river tread carefully. Slippery banks, some of them dangerously undercut, and high water can be a fatal combination. Take care, and enjoy your fishing.

Paul Dennis DEPUTY EDITOR



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 heads out East and he's hoping for arapaima.



THIS 85 kg arapaima came just three days into my visit to Gillham's Fishing Resorts, Krabi, Southern Thailand. And they aren't the only species in this piece of paradise – as I soon found out!

Land of the giants

THAILAND is a country that I've always associated with backpackers and family beach holidays, but in the past few years it has become a popular destination for anglers from the UK.

There is a huge fish trade out there, meaning that fishery owners have access to some huge species, both native to Thailand and from other countries around the world, some of them growing to massive sizes.

It has been on my list of places to visit for some time, having spoken to friends who had been out there and told me how good the fishing was.

So when well-known English

angler Stuart Gillham offered me the chance to travel out there and sample the fishing at his own water I immediately started planning a trip for the end of August, just after their rainy season ended.

Stuart Gillham is a name that many of you will be familiar with, having been a top carp angler back in the 1980s and early 90s, famed for his catches of big carp from Harefield lake, amongst other waters, and also for his exploits with big pike, culminating in a fish of 44 lb from Llandegfedd.

He disappeared off the English fishing scene 14 years ago and spent a lot of time running big game boats

in a number of countries around the world before settling in Phuket in Thailand.

With the sea fishing on the decline he decided to build his own fishery and, after much searching, settled on a 17-acre piece of land in Krabi in the south of Thailand. When he first bought it, it was just a bit of jungle, and many of his friends thought that he was mad and that it would never work.

But now, after much hard work by both himself and his Thai wife Benz, he has transformed it into a beautiful, nine-acre lake with luxury bungalows overlooking it.

The next thing was to stock it with

fish, and after extensive research he introduced 30 different species, a number of which have attained sizes in excess of the world record.

A few weeks back, myself and my mates Adam Parker and Vince Rogers caught a Thai Airways flight from Heathrow to Bangkok, and then onto Krabi, arriving at the lake late in the evening.

It was dark when we arrived so we wouldn't get to see the lake properly until the following day. But that night I hardly slept, such was the anticipation of getting some rods out, as well as struggling to ignore the huge fish that I could hear jumping all night, having left my door open.



Not the biggest alligator gar, at around 8 lb, but I was happy to notch up yet another species.



Stunning scenery makes this venue something special – and the fishing is out of this world.

AIMING FOR ARAPAIMA

THE morning confirmed everything that I had heard about the place, with landscaped gardens full of tropical plants and flowers running down to the water's edge, and jungle leading up to stunning, rocky outcrops.

After a quick breakfast we settled on our swims and I was happy to be left with a bay at the far end of the lake, especially as there were plenty of fish rolling as I set up.

I've always wanted to catch an arapaima, but don't have the time or money to fish for them in their native Brazil. But Gillham's Fishing Resorts holds these huge fish to in excess of 400 lb, with quite a number of specimens over the 200 lb mark, so I'd decided to target them to start with.

To stand a chance of landing one of these huge fish you need the correct tackle, and Stuart provides you with Free Spirit Cat Tamer rods coupled with Shimano Big Baitrunner reels loaded with 35 lb ProTuf line. They have sharp teeth, so a very abrasion resistant hook length is required, in this case Kryston Ton-Up, and to the end of this was tied a size 4/0 hook.

These fish feed by inhaling their prey, so avoiding deep-hooking them it is essential. You need to use either a Method feeder or a bubble float to stop them taking the bait back too far. Baits were sea deadbaits, with half a fish giving you a better chance of a positive pick-up.

Within minutes of casting out I had a take, but made the mistake of leaning into it as I would a carp back home, rather than hitting it properly, a mistake I didn't make again.

There are plenty of other predators in the lake as well as the arapaima, and that first day I managed to land seven sorubim catfish up to 30 lb, plus three redbtail catfish to 40 lb – the colouration on these fish is stunning.

Then during the afternoon I hooked into my first arapaima, and after a decent fight landed a fish of around 30 lb – not huge by arapaima standards, but I was happy to get one.

The following day I woke up with



This cracking redbtail catfish to Adam Parker was one of a number landed by the party.

a headache, and after fishing for a few hours and landing a few more sorubim and redbtails I decided to get some much-needed sleep.

I must have been knackered because I didn't wake up until around 4pm, but within minutes of casting back out I was into an arapaima of around 30 kg.

They must have been on the feed because I quickly hooked two more, but unfortunately both came off. These fish have hard mouths, and the way that they inhale the baits means that hook holds often aren't great. They also try to jump out of the water and shake the hook, meaning that you only land around 50 per cent of what you hook, but I soon sussed that applying sidestrain as soon as I felt them coming towards the surface, rather than keeping the rod up, resulted in fewer lost fish.

I landed two more that day – a couple of lovely fish of 70 kg and 85 kg – and lost another one.

The weights are all estimated as despite their size and ferocious looks they are very delicate, with a blood vessel running down there back that is easily snapped if they are bent at all when lifted. For this reason Stuart has designed cages into which they are led, rather than a landing net, and all photos are taken in the water with three people supporting the fish.

The next couple of days saw me land five arapaima to 100 kg – along with plenty of redbtails and sorubim, plus a few alligator gar to about 10 lb.

Vince and Adam were also getting among plenty of fish, with Adam landing a couple of 100 kg specimens,

including a fantastic brace of 80 kg and 100 kg when his second rod went off as he was playing the bigger of the pair.

Vince wasn't having much luck with the arapaima, having landed a smaller fish of around 35 kg – if you can call a fish of this size smaller – and losing a couple, but he'd had more success with the redbtails, landing three around 70 lb.

The fishing had already been fantastic, and everything that we'd hoped for, so surely it couldn't get any better?

Find out if it did in part two next week.

CONTACTS

To book a holiday at Gillham's Fishing Resorts in Thailand or to find out more information visit the website www.gillhamsfishingresorts.com Alternatively why not e-mail info@gillhamsfishingresorts.com or give him a call in Thailand on 00 66 861644554.



Gary Newman's BIG FISH SCENE

THE UK'S
TOP YOUNG
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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 skippering 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.