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Get on short floats for shallow rivers

DISCOVER WHY I'VE SCALED DOWN MY RIGS FOR AUTUMN FISHING – AND HOW THEY'LL HELP YOU CATCH MORE FISH

I LOVE fishing shallow, pacey rivers during the autumn and winter months because they offer some really exciting fishing if you go about things correctly.

The key is to use floats less than 15cm long, so as not to spook the fish, and these five patterns of mine all work well.

1 SHALLOW WATER STICKS

These have really caught on with anglers fishing for chub, dace, roach and grayling. In five sizes from 4No4 to 8No4 they have bulbous-domed tops that are visible at distance. The alloy wire stem gives stability, and I either group the shots very closely together or bulk them about a foot from the hook.

I normally use a mainline of 2lb to 5lb, depending on the target species, and I prefer to tie the hook direct in very shallow water, as that way I get the benefit of a continuous length of line from reel to hook.

If you employ a hooklength you will end up using very short ones because of the shallow nature of the swim, and these will have very little in the way of stretch. As a result, you will be in danger of line breakage if you hook a big fish.

2 THICK SPECI WAGGLERS

These are the big brothers of the Speci Wag range, but they work in exactly the same way in shallow water.

The 2SSG, 3SSG and 4SSG floats are just 10cm, 12cm and 14cm long, respectively, so once again you can use them in very shallow water as little as 2ft deep.

Line strengths are determined by species and size but, generally, I'd go for 4lb to 6lb breaking strain.

Instead of No8 shot, I use No6 shots down the line for these floats, with a No6 per 2ft of water. The bulk of the shot is again used to lock the float on to the line.

3 NO1 AND NO2 PELLET WAGGLERS

You might be surprised to read that I've recently been using pellet wagglers - which were originally designed for use on commercial fisheries - for shallow river work.

I've only been using them in this way for a few weeks, but my No1 and No2 Pellet Wagglers have been working really well for me, and my results to date



From left: Shallow Water Sticks, Thick Speci Wagglers, No1 and No2 Pellet Wagglers, Barbel Missiles, Standard Speci Wagglers.



Dave Harrell

BRITAIN'S BEST RIVER ANGLER TELLS ALL – ONLY IN *AnglingTimes*

have been pleasing. They're even shorter than the original Speci Wags, ranging from just under 8cm up to 12cm in sizes from 3AAA up to 4SSG, and it might well be that the reason they have been working so well is that the colour

is less obtrusive to fish down below. Whatever the reason, they are now a very important part of my shallow-water armoury. Line strength and shooting for these floats is the same as the Thick Speci Wags.

4 BARBEL MISSILES

My fourth favourite float pattern for shallow water is the Barbel Missile. The name can be a little misleading, I guess, because its use isn't confined to barbel - in its smaller sizes it's also a great little float for other species.

From 3g to 5g, the floats are only 11cm to 12cm in length, and I fish these with a small bulk of shot or an olivette about 25cm from the hook.

In shallow water I don't put any shot on the line below the bulk, and mainlines range from 3lb to 6lb

5 STANDARD SPECI WAGGLERS

From conversations on my personal coaching days it has become clear that many anglers do not realise how useful very short wagglers are in medium-to-fast-paced shallow swims.

Faced with a long swim, especially one that runs down to a feature like an overhanging tree, these floats, attached bottom end only, will catch you far more fish than floats fixed top and bottom.

The 2AAA, 3AAA and 4AAA floats are only 9cm, 11cm and 13cm long and are attached to the line with a float adaptor

for ease of change, with nearly all the load capacity locking the float on to the line. I use AAA shot for this and also incorporate around six No8 shot into the locking shot. These are used down the line (3lb or 4lb breaking strain) and I would recommend a No8 shot every 2ft of water.

When pleasure fishing, position yourself well above a feature as fish will feel much safer 20m to 30m below you than in front of you. It's easy to cast the rig downstream and get good control running it right down to the feature.

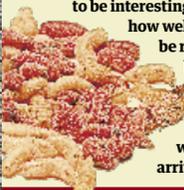
The strike is totally silent, so again fish are hardly spooked at all.

Shallow swim baits

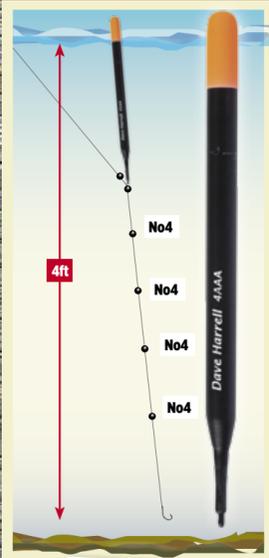
FOR me, the number one loosefeed for shallow swims from now until the end of the season is maggots. Hookbait for fast shallow water is usually double or treble maggot.

I also use casters and hemp, and will be carrying sinking carp pellets as well over the coming months. If you've been following the series so far you will know that I've had a lot of success with these in the summer so it's going to be interesting to see

how well they will be received by the fish when the colder winter weather arrives.



My Speci Wag rig



Shallow swims can still hold useful weight-building fish like this.