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**A**FTER all the rain and high river levels during the first few months of the river season, things have now evened themselves out and it wouldn't surprise me if most of our major rivers will soon be in need of more water.

I'm not sure why but rivers these days seem to run off much faster than they used to 20 years ago, so what can we do to get some bites when the rivers are low and clear?

Temperature is a key factor and I'd recommend you get hold of a digital thermometer with a long cable and start to monitor temperatures every time you go fishing. I used to live next to the River Severn at Bewdley and while I was there I recorded the temperature every day for about four years. I learned loads from doing it and eventually I discovered exactly the right times to get the best from the river.

Living right by the river, I could monitor the level easily but now I'm not, I use the Environment Agency river level service every day to keep in touch. If you've not seen it yet, visit the website at [www.environmentagency.gov.uk](http://www.environmentagency.gov.uk) and follow the links to the river levels section.

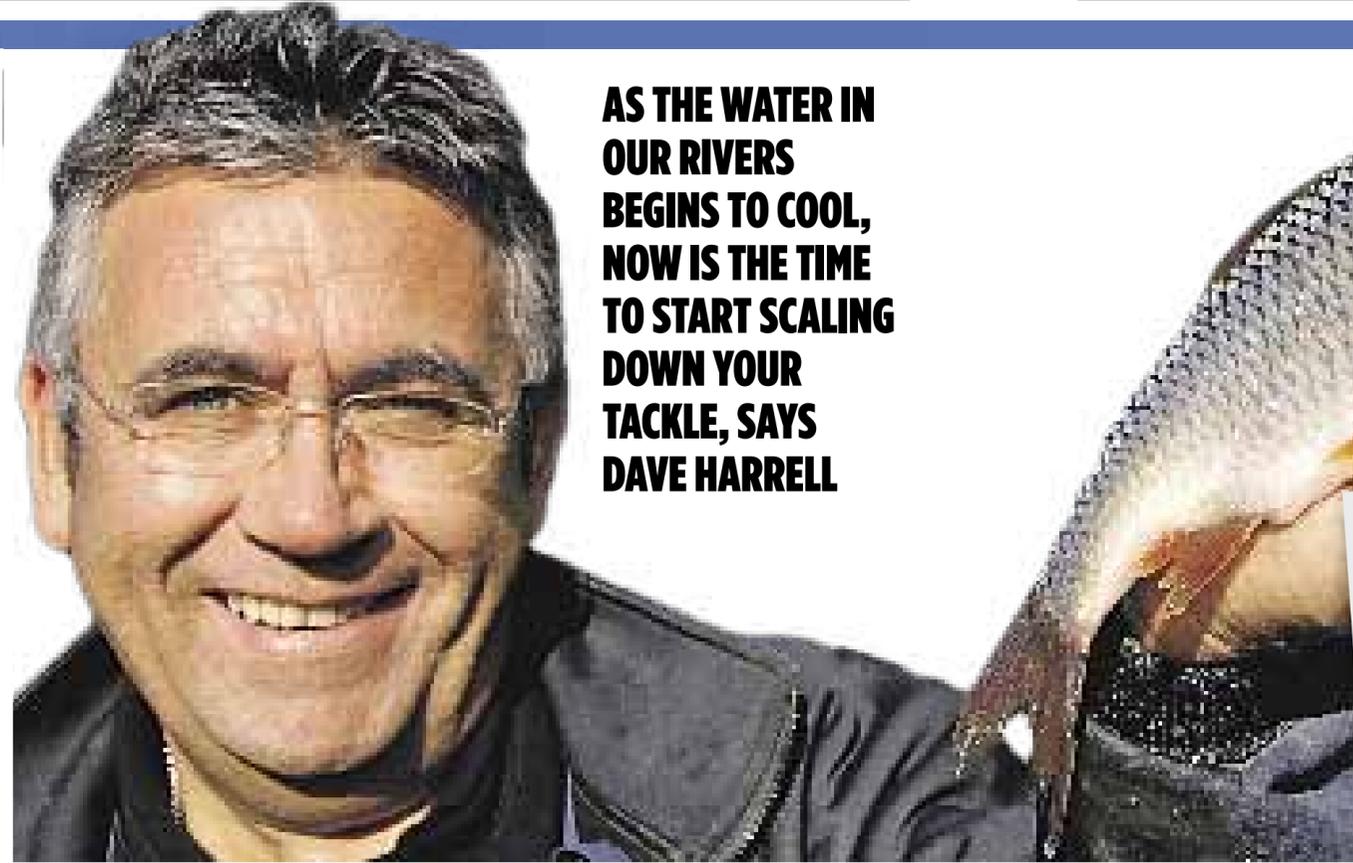
All you need to do is click on your region and then on the venues and if you follow the river back up on the map you will also be able to see what's happening upstream. This is vital information, as it will give you a clear indication of what is going to occur lower down the river the next day.

**SCALE DOWN YOUR GEAR**

For floatfishing enthusiasts, the first job in order to catch fish when the water is clear is to scale down your tackle and cut right back on the feed.

Sensitivity in the tip of the float is often more of a requirement than buoyancy, so I'd recommend you use insert peacock wagglers rather than straight where the flow allows.

My own insert wagglers now have hollow plastic orange or yellow inserts, which allow the light to shine right



**AS THE WATER IN OUR RIVERS BEGINS TO COOL, NOW IS THE TIME TO START SCALING DOWN YOUR TACKLE, SAYS DAVE HARRELL**



A long pole with a long line can work well for roach on clear rivers.

# Go fine for big roach



**STRAIGHT LEGER AND POLE**

Another very effective way to tempt shy-biting fish such as roach on clear-river days is to search around the swim for them with straight-leger tactics. Down the years, this has become a brilliant way of catching quality roach from many venues.

For this style of fishing, I normally set up with a very light action 10ft or 11ft rod with a glass tip that is just strong enough to cope with the flow I'm fishing into. Main line is usually 0.16mm and I use a fixed paternoster of around 6ins in length in conjunction with a hooklength between 3ft and 5ft. This is usually created from hi-tech lines between 0.08mm and 0.12mm depending on what I'm likely to hook, but if it's just roach I always go light.

With a soft-actioned rod you might find it surprising to discover just how much pressure you can apply before a 0.08mm or 0.10mm hooklength breaks. Hook choice is also fine and for me this is usually a Drennan Carbon Match or Wide Gape.

through them, making them highly visible at distance in addition to being sensitive. If you've never used them, you might be surprised how low down you can shot them and still see them.

Shot these floats up with the bulk of the weight locking the float in place and down the line put just one No8 shot for every 2ft of depth plus a No9 or No10 on the hooklength.

Main line needs to be fairly thin and I normally use just 2lb to 3lb breaking strain. Hi-tech hooklengths of 0.08mm up to 0.10mm are the order of the day when bites are hard to come by and these should be tied to fine wire hooks such as a Drennan Carbon Match, which is an excellent silverfish hook in all sizes.

Feeding needs to be carefully thought

through as it's easy to overfeed a clear river, so go easy on how much you introduce early on in the session. As with any sort of feeding, try to build the swim up slowly and if there are enough fish in front of you, introduce more as the bites become more frequent.

Chances are, though, that you won't have a free catching situation until there is colour in the water, so go very lightly on maggots and casters and instead feed with hemp.

Hempseed can keep swims going for ages while maggots can overfeed very quickly, so I always have a can or two with me for any silverfish floatfishing situation. It's also worth trying tares on the hook and as a supplement feed to the hemp, especially if roach are the quarry.

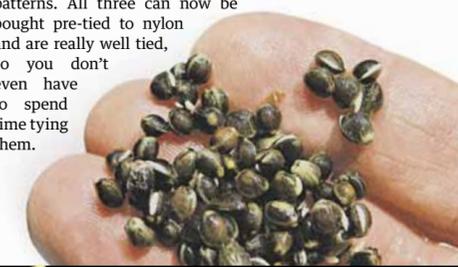
Another very effective way to tempt fish from clear rivers is with lightly-shotted pole gear, but this often means fishing long with long lines and it's not uncommon to use the top five sections (6m) in depths between 6ft and 12ft in order to keep the pole tip away from the feeding fish. The key to success here is to feed your bait slightly downstream so that you can run your rig down the swim well away from where you are stationed.

With careful feeding you can often line up the fish in such a position that you are picking them off from the top of the shoal which is almost at the end of your line limit. Some anglers use up to 16m of pole to do this and when you've got 6m of line on the end you can cover a lot of water.

Pole rigs need to be kept light and are often best with strung out patterns rather than with olivettes or bulk of shot. As a general guide on low rivers, I use a float taking around one No8 shot per 1ft of water. Done this way, an 8ft deep swim should be tackled with a float taking eight No8 shot. This would be best made up with a string of No10

shots right the way through the rig from about 1ft under the float down to 1ft from the hook. Again, I'd go for a Drennan Carbon Match hook for general maggot work but I also use the excellent Sensas 3405 and 3411 patterns. All three can now be bought pre-tied to nylon and are really well tied, so you don't even have to spend time tying them.

Always take a can or two of hempseed with you. It can keep a swim going for much longer than maggots.



**MORE INFO**  
Dave Harrell is recognised as one of the country's best ever river anglers and has devoted his life to learning different skills on running water. He has fished for England at World and European level and now owns his own tackle company, Dave Harrell Angling. For details of the product range go to: [www.daveharrellangling.com](http://www.daveharrellangling.com) He is also available for one to one and group coaching sessions on the River Wye throughout the river season. For more details contact Dave at: [info@daveharrellangling.com](mailto:info@daveharrellangling.com)



Hollow insert wagglers are key to running line success in clear water.