



DES TAYLOR

I'VE HAD A TOUGH SESSION AT A FRENCH WATER STOCKED FULL OF DREAM FISH. I'M SORRY TO SAY IT, BUT LIVEBAITING IS DOOMED

SO CLOSE TO A DREAM CATCH

I'M just back from a fishing trip to the hottest big-carp water in France... and I failed big style!

The long 800-plus mile trip down to Rainbow Lake went without a hiccup as we cruised down in Rob Hales' new Range Rover. By the time we got to our swim – peg 18 – we were still fresh and chatted to the angler packing up in our spot.

Apparently, he had taken two big fish of 50lb and 60lb in a fortnight. That's not many runs, but they were specimens – and that's what we had come for.

Both Rob and I had taken big catches abroad in the past of 30lb to low fifties, but we both had our eyes set on a 60lb-plus fish. If that's your aim, then there is no better place in the world at the moment than Rainbow Lake.

But even at Rainbow such giants don't come every trip and it's becoming painfully obvious for us both that we will have to put a few weeks or months down there to catch our goal.

The session began with Rob taking a 36lb common on the first morning, and a few big fish showed in snags opposite. It was a good start to the week.

Unfortunately, it seems they left after that morning because we had to wait three days for our next run. The 34lb mirror this time fell to my rod, but in fairness because no one was in the next swim I actually pinched it out of peg 17. I thought I'd cracked it when I placed the bait back into the same spot and it was immediately away again.

Would it be a fifty, sixty, or even a seventy? No, it was a 5lb tench!

Out went the baits again, but it wasn't until the final night that Rob eventually picked up another 32lb mirror. Don't get me wrong, on any venue in England you would be pleased with three 30lb carp in a week, but at this venue that's very slow going.

The problem with peg 18, which is notably slow, is that you have to sit next to the most prolific

spot on the lake – peg 19 – and watch the angler hook 20lb, 30lb, 40lb and 50lb carp by the score. The lad next door had two incredible commons of 52lb and 53lb which were truly amazing fish. One guy in peg 1 had one run all week but that was from a 61lb fish! But the highlight of the trip for me was a guy called Andy Hayley, who had a personal best of 20lb before his trip to Rainbow. After two weeks there he'd smashed that nine times, including a belting 58lb common.

I had been talking to Andy the night before that capture and he was telling me how he enjoyed his tench and roach fishing

back home. We actually arranged a trip together on one of his waters up north. Rainbow holds a lot of double-figure tench and he was hoping to catch one before he left, but he wasn't disappointed with the big common I can tell you!

I'd like to say we had more action but we didn't, so we packed up and made our way home. The 600 miles to Calais were covered in seven hours – the roads in France are fantastic. That's more than can be said for the motorways the other side of the Channel – it took an age to creep along the M25, M1 and M6.

Just as I was getting over the awful journey home I had a phone call from a chap still on Rainbow.

Carper Paul Hunt had gone into peg 18 after us and Sunday morning had taken a near world record 80lb 2oz mirror. The doctor has promised me that the cuts on my wrists will heal, but I will be scarred for life. Watch out Rainbow, I'll be back!



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ANDY Hayley with his new personal best carp – a cracking 58lb common.

AND ANOTHER THING...



I hope you have sent your form

in supporting the 'Save Livebaiting Campaign' – we need to protect our sport at every level. With fox hunting banned, next comes shooting and then it's our turn. I'm afraid, though, that livebaiting is doomed because predator fishing has some of the biggest 'stroke pullers' in the sport. They don't give a damn what happens to other species as long as their big pike list grows. Every winter buckets of livebaits are transported all over the country, many coming from disease-ridden pools where the pike experts catch their baits.

Pike anglers from all over the country travel with carp, tench, rudd and roach taken from anywhere they can catch them. I wonder how many spring fish kills have been caused by pike anglers using diseased carp as livebaits during the winter? Waters that make money from pike fishing should supply, at a fair price, livebaits caught or netted from the water.

If anglers are found bringing in livebaits they should be fined thousands of pounds and banned from buying fishing licences. They should also be shamed in the press – not made a hero of as is often the case. I remember pike being caught at a reservoir years ago on illegal livebaits but all the press showed were trophy photographs of these fish hailing the captors as heroes. In other sports like athletics when cheats are found out they lose everything – just look at Olympic sprint cheat Ben Johnson. It's about time some of these angling cheats were brought into line.

At last, talks over bringing rod

licences back into tackle shops are underway, but as usual in England I fear we won't go far enough. Why not supply licences for rural areas in cafés, public houses, supermarkets and fisheries like in France? Whatever happens I hope the Environment Agency is going to give the tackle dealers a decent profit margin. Perhaps a discount for paying early, or even an up-front payment would be in order, for be in no doubt the reason the Environment Agency pulled out of tackle shops last time was they were too slow paying those bills! But if you want a business to pay its bills, they must make decent profit and the licence should not be treated as a lost leader or a free service to the angler. How about installing ticket machines in tackle shops where the angler pays in the money, the Environment Agency collects the cash, and then the tackle dealer has his cut depending on how many tickets he has sold? That system would mean the tackle dealer cannot get into financial trouble and there are always EA licences available...everyone is happy!

