

HOW DO I START FLY FISHING?

The gentle art of fly fishing looks so easy when carried out by an expert, and it is, but to the beginner it can seem like a really complex and somewhat daunting hobby to take up. Where does one start? How does one select the right tackle? And if one ever gets out there ready to fish, where is the best place and what are the correct flies to use? So many questions; let's see if I can answer a few.

Instruction

There is no substitute for getting off to a good start in any sport, so if you wish to learn fly fishing seek the advice of a trained coach. Many anglers come into the sport having tagged along with a friend on a trip to a lake or river; they may even have had some basic casting instruction from that friend. However, if you are really serious about taking up fly fishing then get a professional to help you right from the beginning.

The governing body of the majority of instructors working in the field of fly fishing is The Salmon and Trout Association. Their website contains a wealth of information about all sorts of "fishy" things and it is well worth a look. www.salmon-trout.org

Recently a group was formed under the umbrella of the above organisation specifically to work on improving the level of instruction and thereby raise the



A company trip with guides on Litto



professional standard of all coaches out there. The majority of these coaches have now upgraded their qualifications and, should you wish to seek the best help, look no further than the Game Angling Instructors Association - see the website details below.

All qualified instructors are listed on the site and you can select one from the county in which you live. All instructors are fully insured, have to attend regular first aid courses and will have been police checked. www.gameanglinginstructors.co.uk

OK, but what if I am not certain that this is the sport for me. The first point of contact should be Bristol Water, after all that is more than likely where you have picked up this magazine. Bristol Water run schools specifically for newcomers to the sport and they are organised by qualified instructors. They offer a really good and inexpensive way to have an initial look at the sport without having to purchase loads of expensive gear.

Here are some of the options available through Woodford Lodge during the fishing season:

If you'd like to have a go but are not sure that fly-fishing is for you, once a month on Saturday afternoons, Bristol Water hold Beginners' Days. These four hour courses give basic casting instruction with a chance to try bank fishing and when possible boat fishing all for the cost of just £20 per person. This course runs from 2 - 6pm and tackle, licences and permits are provided.

For those who know they want to learn to fly fish or want to improve their technique there are 2 hour casting courses every Saturday morning. These are run by a qualified coach and tackle can be supplied. A maximum of six persons will be accepted and the two-hour course starts at 11am. The cost is £20.00 per session.

To follow this up there is a four-hour session of basic fishing instruction, which runs on one Saturday afternoon per month.



Bob Croft
cau



In this session a more in-depth knowledge is passed on to attendees, including knowledge on flies, lines, leaders, safety, playing and landing fish, entomology and many more subjects. This course is intended for the more competent. Permits and licences are included in the £40.00 charge but you need to have your own tackle for this course.

The minimum age for any of the above tuition is twelve years old. All sessions should be booked in advance by ringing Woodford Lodge on 01275 332339.

There are numerous angling coaches living and working around the Chew Valley area, so if you are particularly keen to try fishing but want to get instruction on a one-to-one basis, then contact the Lodge who will be able to supply a list of qualified coaches or see the listing on the instructors website.

Guiding

Once you have had your initial lessons there is really no substitute for getting out there and fishing as much as possible. Most newcomers find trout fishing a difficult

learning curve and it is not uncommon that many trips pass before fish are caught. If this happens and you don't have an expert friend who is prepared to take you under their wing, it is best to seek the help of a professional guide.

A guide can give you more information in one trip than you are likely to amass in a season. You will find all sorts of



John Horsey and his sister Pearl, who had just caught her first trout on Chew Valley Lake.

packages provided by the guides working on Chew Valley and Blagdon, and it is possible that a day can be tailor-made to suit your requirements.

John Horsey has been working as a guide on Chew and Blagdon for over ten years now and, as a current member of the England fly-fishing team, can probably do more to improve your competitive fishing than any other guide in the country.

Contact John on 01761 490367 or john@johnhorsey.co.uk

Martin Cottis moved on to guiding when he quit classroom teaching. He tends to specialise in top-of-the-water tactics and rarely uses anything but floating lines. On all full days with Martin a cooked meal is provided as part of the deal!

Contact Martin on 01179 140157 or martin@troutguide.co.uk



Hen party on a hot day in August

Group lessons or corporate entertaining

If you are part of a group which requires a fishing trip or casting lessons any of the aforementioned contacts will be able to help you. Bristol Water also run days for organisations or associations. A trip on one of the lakes with your work mates makes for a completely different team bonding exercise than a day on the golf course! During the past two seasons I have taken two groups on "stag events", one set of ladies on a "hen day" and several corporate teams having a change of activity.

Visiting Bristol Water's fisheries for the first time?



Why not book **Martin Cottis** to guide you on the lakes? Fully qualified through **STANIC/GAIA** and over twenty five years experience on the lakes.

- ✪ Full or part days
- ✪ Qualified casting instruction/improvement
- ✪ Father and son/daughter days – child goes free!
- ✪ Corporate events planned
- ✪ Lunch, with wine or soft drinks on all full day bookings
- ✪ Dry fly-fishing a speciality

Martin is presently secretary of the local club – Bristol Reservoirs Fly Fishers' Association and is at the lakes most days. At some stage he has won most competitions held on the lakes, and has represented his country. Four times winner of the prestigious "Orvis" competition held each June.

Try fly-fishing for pike with Martin!

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