

Fishing the IBM National at Rutland Water

Event Organisation

Details are published on the entry form, but the current established routine is to fish two full day sessions over Friday and Saturday from boats, with two anglers per boat and 8 fish limits. Accommodation is provided at Greetham Valley Golf Club on Thursday and Friday and optionally Saturday. Evening meals and breakfasts are also provided, but you need to provide your own lunch on the boat. You can get sandwiches from village shops (e.g. Cottesmore or Empingham) between the hotel and the lodge. Don't forget to take plenty of fluids on the boat, you are out for over 8 hours! Note that dress for dinner at the Golf Club is smart casual, so you should bring a pair of trousers, collared shirt or polo, and shoes not trainers. The golf club also has a bar for socialising which is mandatory! Parking is free at Rutland for anglers, just get your (reusable) ticket validated at the fishing shop (you can get this done on Thursday afternoon if you pop in to buy any tackle).

Fishing

Fishing at Rutland could be intimidating at first sight as it's so huge, but there are a lot of fish in there, and once located can be easier to catch than small water trout that see a lot of flies. The fish also seem to naturalise quickly, soon packing on the weight with the rich feed, so action can be fast and furious if you've got the right fly in the right place. On the other hand, if the action is slow it can be quite boring, so prepare some good jokes/tales!

The fish are stocked at around the 2lb mark to protect them from cormorants, but naturalise very quickly in the rich feeding soon growing big tails. This seems to make them fight harder than small stillwater fish, and if you contact a grown on rainbow then get ready for a real battle. Fish in the 3lb+ category can strip all the line off your reel in an instant, so make sure you have plenty backing and that it's well attached!

Boat fishing is certainly nothing to worry about. The boats themselves are large and sturdy, but easy to manoeuvre, with good anchors and 5hp petrol engines with a big tank. Buoyancy aids are supplied free of charge, and you are required to wear them at all times. Your normal fishing tackle will be fine: the boat is really just used as a mobile casting platform, and generally you don't cast far, particularly if the boat is drifting. It can be handy to have two rods set up in case you want to change technique quickly (floating v sinking or lure v nymph), but isn't essential: the competition is 2x8+ hr sessions after all!

Generally you fish one from the stern and one from the bow of the boat. If drifting, the boat tends to drift broadside on, so you each fish approx 90deg of water from directly in front to left or right as appropriate. Even at anchor, it's often easier to put the rope round a rowlock to make it sit broadside on. Drifting is a great way of covering lots of water to look for fish. An underwater parachute called a drogue can be used to slow down the drift in productive areas. Rainbows can shoal, so a typical drift involves a frantic 5 mins of activity then 15+ mins of inactivity. Alternatively, if you find a good spot, then anchoring up and waiting for the fish to come to you can be good.

Good places depend on a lot of things: weather, what's hatching, wind, etc. A good starting point is to look for an area with 10' or so of water (Rutland can be very clear) off a bank that's not sloping too steeply. In warm still sunny weather, however, the fish may retire to the comfort of cooler, deeper water. Ideal conditions are warmish cloudy weather with a breeze putting a ripple in the water. Under these conditions, if flies are hatching (nearly always Midges aka Buzzers when we go in May/June) then the fish will be on or near the surface taking the buzzers. Swallows and swifts can be a good indication of areas where buzzers are hatching. Another famous fish holding feature is the Scum Lane or Wind Lane: drifting down these can be very productive. In warm or bright weather, drifting near the aerators in the main basin can also produce fish (note you're not allowed to anchor in the main basin).

There are a variety of boat fishing techniques, some of which will be familiar and some not. Nymph and lure fishing can be practised much as from the bank, however, unlike small stillwaters you can use more than one fly. This can be more effective as more flies are visible to the fish, but tangles can be more spectacular too! When the boat is drifting, you need to remember that you need to retrieve faster than the boat to move the flies: at the very least you need to retrieve to keep up with the flies so that they don't end up underneath the boat. However, as the flies near the boat, it can be surprisingly productive to stop retrieving altogether for a few seconds before slowly removing the flies: this 'on the hang' tactic can be devastating! If the fish are feeding on the surface then using static dry flies can be very effective (and very exciting). One technique that may be new to you is traditional 'Loch Style'. This involves using a team of flies, with the fly nearest the angler being big and bushy and worked to deliberately leave a wake to attract the fish's curiosity. We don't use it very often, but again it can be very effective on its day. A pair of related tactics that have worked well for us in the last couple of years are 'the washing line' and 'fishing the bung'. In these instances a multi-fly cast is fished on a floating line, with a highly buoyant fly (like a Booby) either nearest the fly line, or at the end. If the booby is at the end of the leader (the 'point') then it supports the flies on the droppers so that they fish just subsurface: this is the washing line. If the booby is on the 'top' dropper, next to the fly line, then the other flies fish slightly deeper and at different depths. The flies are moved very slowly or not at all, and takes can be savage, literally ripping the rod from your hands. But despite all these techniques, most fish are caught in the normal way, retrieving nymph or lure: the majority of the fish are, after all, recently stocked.

The best way to find out what to do on the day is to ask the locals, either other anglers or wardens or people in the shop. The match sometimes starts with a briefing on productive areas and tactics, and there's also a notice board with information. The shop is very well stocked and contains everything you need. Once you have an idea of likely areas, it's worth checking alternative areas as it can take quite a while to motor to a new spot (it takes over an hour to get from the top of the north arm to the top of the south arm). Finally, don't forget to read the rules on the permit carefully, especially where you can anchor and limits on keeping brown trout.

Useful Web Sites:

<http://www.anglianwater.co.uk/leisure/fishing-news/>

http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/em/oakham_forecast_weather.html

<http://www.greethamvalley.co.uk/>

Recommended Personal Items

- Waterproof Shoes/boots or old trainers. (bottom of boat can be wet)
- Waterproof Jacket & Trousers (consider bib 'n' brace to protect lower back)
- Windproof and/or an extra sweater: can be cooler on the water (layers are good)
- Scarf if your fleece/sweater doesn't protect your neck
- Light weight synthetic trousers avoid jeans as they rub when wet and don't dry quickly
- Long Sleeve shirts (Sun protection, roll sleeves up if required)
- Polarised Sun Glasses
- Brimmed Hat or Baseball Cap
- Sun Screen
- Life Jacket (supplied by Rutland Water)
- Rod Licence
- Food, Drink & Snacks for example crisps / sweets. Local shops sell sandwiches, but buying e.g. fruit, crisps/biscuits and drinks beforehand is more economical and less hassle.
- A large water bottle if its warm/flask for tea/coffee if its cold
- Mobile phone: for keeping in touch with the other boat(s)!

Tackle

- 1 -2 Fly Rod's 6-8 weight 9ft – 10ft (and spares if you have them)
- Fly Reels & Spare Spools
- Fly line to match rod's 6-8 weight
 - WF-Floating (Essential)
 - Slow Sink, intermediate.
 - Medium Sink, Wet Cell 2, or Di 3
 - Fast Sinking, Wet Cell 4 or 5, or Di-6/7
- Leaders & Tippet 6lb breaking strain minimum is recommended, 8-10lbs is the norm if using fluorocarbon
- Fishing waistcoat or lanyard
- Snips
- Forceps
- Priest / Marrow Spoon
- Landing Net (generally only one needed per boat (in 2016 these were supplied))
- Boat Bag or Box (or an ordinary bag + bin liner if it rains)
- Fly Box & Flies (See separate list for recommended flies)
- Sinkant & Floatant
- Bass bags for fish
- Drogue if you intend to drift

Miscellaneous Equipment

- Boat seat or Cushion!! This is essential!! For economy you can just use e.g. foam rubber or an old cushion sealed in a plastic bag with duct tape, or an inflatable cushion (Barry Smith used to use a 'rubber ring' type cushion and said it was very comfortable). Or you can spend a lot of money on something posher. You can hire a 'barge board' (aka plank with stops at either end) which sits across the gunwales of the boat that you can sit astride to avoid twisting (generally you fish out of the side of the boat).
- Change of clothes inc shoes for evening/bar + usual overnight stuff (toiletries etc)
- Bin Liners (Keep equipment in boat dry in rain and store fish)
- Plastic Bags (for Fish)
- Gutting Knife & Spoon (gutting station and freezer on site)
- Marker Pen (label your fish in freezer, either at lodge or hotel)
- Cool bag for boat and fish on the way home. Note if you don't want to take fish home, the Golf Club will sometimes buy them (check first), or the wardens will take them at the weigh in to distribute to local old people's homes, or there may be spectators interested in buying fresh trout

Flies for Reservoirs

As a rule of thumb you should be looking to have at least two of each pattern, ideally two of each pattern in each size & colour. However often this is not practical for cost reasons or just plain tying effort. In these cases I would look to purchase the hot patterns from the fishing lodge tackle shop or tie up more of the effective patterns in the evenings or over lunch.

Nymphs & Buzzers

- Diawl Bachs sizes 10,12, 14 (Red / Green holographic Rib)
- Crunchers sizes 12,14
- PTN sizes 10,12,14
- GRHE sizes 10,12,14
- Buzzers Dark colours & red sizes 10,12, 14

Damsels & Lures

- Damsels (with and without bead) sizes 10,12
- Lures Black / Yellow / Orange (Gold heads & Marabou tails) sizes 10,12
- Blobs Orange & peach sizes 10,12
- Booby's coral, black, white & orange sizes 10,12
- Cormorant's various colours sizes 10,12 (Red holographic cheeks a bonus)

Dries & Emerges

- Shuttlecock CDC red, claret & black dry flies sizes 12,14
- Bristol Hoppers claret & fiery Red / Brown sizes 10,12
- Bobs Bits or Raiders orange, Fiery brown & red sizes 10,12
- Shipman's orange, Fiery brown & red sizes 12,14,16