

# THE TRUTH ABOUT FISH MOVEMENTS



**New findings reveal the daily and seasonal habits of our favourite coarse fish...**

**A** FASCINATING scientific paper has shone a light on the interesting daily and seasonal migrations made by several species of coarse fish in stillwaters.

Written by Christopher Monk, Robert Arlinghaus and others, the paper bases its findings from a study which monitored 108 tagged fish, tracked every few seconds over one year in their natural environment.

The results of this research offer a remarkable look beneath the surface and can certainly help anglers chasing carp, perch, tench and catfish understand their quarry that little bit more. Fisheries Professor Dr Robert Arlinghaus explains some of the key observations...

## LAKE MAPS - WHERE THE FISH WERE FOUND THROUGHOUT THE SEASONS

### 'SWARMING' CARP

"Carp move to shallow water during the spring but are often concentrated in just a few sites," Robert said. "Come the summer they're found all over the banks, which continues into autumn. In the winter, however, they develop very unusual 'swarming' behaviour in the daytime, when they cruise through the entire lake in schools, while resting overnight in aggregations."

Anecdotal evidence supports these findings, with many winter catches falling to zig rigs, suggesting anglers are intercepting carp as they 'swarm' the lake in daylight hours. The coming of spring is usually when we see a flurry of big hit reports from 'flyer' pegs.



### TENCH UNDER THE TIPS

"Tench spend the winter in aggregations, before moving to shallow water (which in our study was the complete opposite end of the lake) in spring," Robert told us.

"In summer and autumn, they then spend the majority of their time all over the shoreline habitat of a lake."

This behaviour mirrors the classic assumptions of anglers made on the species that's frequently voted the UK's 'Favourite Fish'. It looks like we've been doing it right all along! It's why a float rig presented in the margins at dawn on a summer's morning is such a successful and reliable presentation for catching big tench.



### NIGHT STALKERS

Moving on to the predatory species, Robert said: "Catfish are typically nocturnal and form large aggregations at the deepest point in the middle of the lake in the winter months. The rest of the year, they spread out and are mainly shoreline orientated."

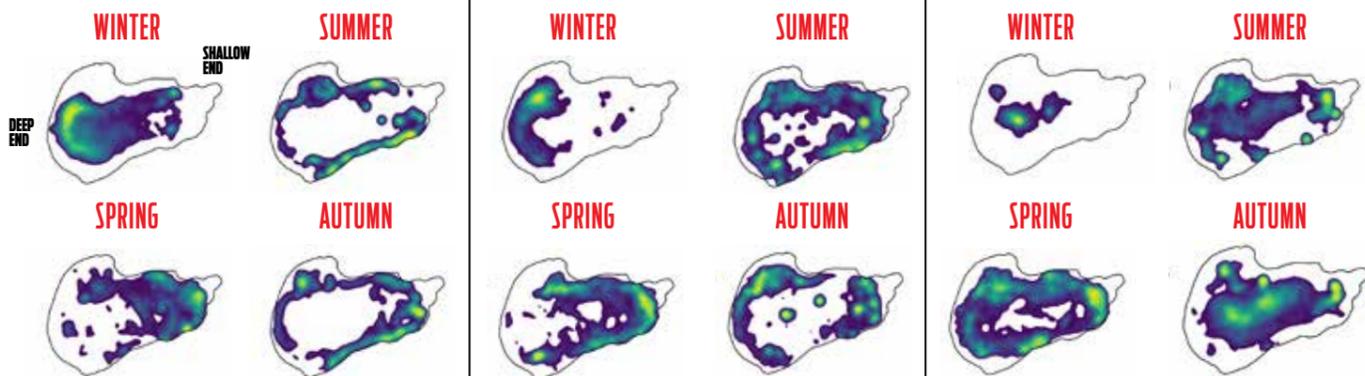
Once again, these findings will strike a chord with anglers, who have long suspected that catfish tend to 'hibernate' through the colder months. As spring arrives and they 'wake up', they often fall to carpers' zig rigs, and then in summer are extremely active after dark. The sound of catfish tails slapping the water as they hunt prey fish is something all fans of the species will have heard regularly on well-stocked waters.



### PROWLING PERCH

Another coarse angler's favourite, perch, "are active swimmers all through the year, but only in daylight," Robert revealed. "The core centres of activity change, but they can basically be found all over the place, except the central parts of the lake. They seem to like to hang around drop-offs and actively hunt prey fish."

Perch fanatics will confirm that dawn and dusk are the best times for this predatory species, with the hours of darkness largely being a waste of time. And, as both commercial and canal anglers will know, a line down the margins over chopped worm and casters is often the banker for a bonus stripey or two!



**KEY TO SPECIES ACTIVITY MAPS:**



### BUCKING THE TREND...

WHILE the study confirmed much of what anglers had already theorised on the habits of our coarse fish, it also ripped up the rule book when it came to the social behaviours of perch and carp.

In the study perch, best known as shoaling pack hunters by anglers, showed far more individualistic behaviour, almost creating their own territories. Robert believes this is due to the fact that the perch tagged were of a larger than average size for the species... food for thought for perch hunters who may be looking for a monster specimen!

In contrast, the carp studied were far more social creatures, preferring to hang around together in large groups.

This only adds weight to the argument that location is everything in carp fishing - find one and you might just find them all!

READ THE FULL PAPER...  
[royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/full/10.1098/rsif.2021.0445](https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/full/10.1098/rsif.2021.0445)



## HUGHES' VIEWS

TV STAR & ENGLAND CARP CAPTAIN LOOKS AT FISHING'S HOT TOPICS

## SPICE UP YOUR FISHING WITH NEW CHALLENGES

**T**HIS is when I always start thinking about what I want to get out of my angling for the coming season. Most of the time these days my goal is simply to enjoy a nice wide variety of species and tactics. Targets require a lot of time and commitment, and sometimes life doesn't allow that.

But the resetting of the calendar brings fresh hope and ambition, so each year I try to up my personal bests for at least two species. Usually, one of them is carp and, usually, I fail miserably - partly from not really trying hard enough through lack of time and facilities, but also partly due to me having a fairly decent carp PB already. That's the law of diminishing returns. The better your PB, the harder it is to beat.

I dream of catching 3lb grayling and 4lb perch, but they don't climb up the rods. When I saw that incredible picture of the recent brace of huge roach, and the enormous record-rattling Trent zander, it got me thinking that I really should try harder. I'm not talking about legging it out and trying to break a British record, but simply to up my game a little.

Still on that zander, and the fact that it was so close to breaking the record, it seems crazy that on the one hand Natural England/the EA are encouraging and even enforcing the removal of zander from watercourses, as they are deemed a 'non-native invasive', while at the same time the record list will accept them. Hopefully, 2022 will be the year when the whole zander debacle is sorted out once and for all.

**"Each year I try to up my personal bests for at least two species"**



The bigger your PB, the harder it is to beat - but this one would be easy!