

## Improving your Carp Fishing Results

By Steve Borkowskis.



I thought I might share some of my knowledge of Carp fishing with you all in the hope that as a Club we can all catch a few more Carp at the Carpathon this year. There are many ways of fishing for Carp and I'm not for one second suggesting what you have been doing is wrong, or everything I say is right, but most of my fishing time is spent targeting Carp, and I read whatever I can about all things relating to Carp. So I'd like to think I know a fair bit about fishing for them, and I have some thoughts and ideas which may not be the mainstream opinions on Carp fishing.

I believe for the number of anglers we have fishing on the day of the Carpathon the quantity of Carp we catch is very low. I appreciate the fact that the Carpathon is more of a fun family/social event and not taken that seriously as a competition, but I'm certain that everyone would have a lot more fun if there were more Carp being landed!

As you know there are a lot of unknown factors when it comes to any kind of fishing. Sometimes the fish aren't biting, or the fish are in one place and not another, and there is nothing you can do about things that are out of your control. So there are no guarantees that the advice I give will result in you landing heaps of Carp.

What you can do is make sure you are doing everything you possibly can to give you the best chance of catching fish, and then the rest will take care of itself. There are a many things you can do to give yourself a few percent here and there, which can make the difference between catching Carp and not catching Carp, and I'll elaborate on these later.

In the main we Aussies generally don't rate Carp as species worth targeting and have a negative opinion of them, and therefore many anglers falsely believe Carp are a stupid fish that are easy to catch. More often than not anglers don't tend to put in much thought or effort

into catching them. In a Coarse Angling Competition held at Lake Burley Griffin in December some specialist Carp anglers caught in excess of 80kg of carp per day each. That's about how much we get at the Carpathon between us! These guys are serious Carp fishermen and are mostly Englishmen, but the point is these are the kind of results that can be achieved.

There are several effective ways of catching carp most of which Australian anglers do not exploit fully. I won't go into these as most require specialized or expensive tackle, and most Club members fishing the Carpathon seem to use variations of a running sinker rig or a paternoster rig so I will focus on basic ways you can improve you fishing based on these methods.

Carp generally have a cautious nature and feed by sucking food (or your bait) into the back of their mouths and chewing, they will often inhale and expel the bait several times when tasting it. If you aren't paying close attention more often than not this goes on without you even noticing. There are several ways you can take advantage of this feeding behaviour which I'll outline below.

### **If you prefer to take the passive approach and sit back and wait for a screaming run then there are a few things you can do to improve your chances**

1. Use a chemically sharpened hook made of fine gauge wire (and check the point regularly). Carp will often hook themselves when expelling the bait. As they spit the bait they feel the hook prick the inside of their mouth, and then panic and bolt which sets the hook. If you use a large, heavy gauge, or blunt hook they will suck it in, spit it out, and munch it all day and you'll be lucky if you catch anything. If you can't scratch your fingernail by gently dragging the point of the hook across it then it's too blunt.
2. When not actively attending your rod use a decent sized sinker (perhaps a ball or bean size 1-3 or heavier), as mentioned above the Carp will feel the hook prick and bolt, and the weight of the sinker can be enough to set the hook. When a lighter sinker is used this often won't cause the hook to set fully and they are more likely to carry the bait and spit it soon after realizing the danger.
3. Check your bait regularly, perhaps every 20 minutes even if you haven't had a bite, consider replacing the bait even if it's all still there. Corn loses flavour, bread gets soggy, and worms die and go limp. Carp rely a lot of taste and smell so you want your bait to be as enticing as possible when a Carp is inspecting it.
4. Present your bait properly, this means making sure you fill the shank of the hook with bait, leaving the bend and point exposed. Push the bait up slightly over the eye of the hook to hide the eye and knot if possible.
5. Keep an eye on your rod, big Carp can sometimes slowly bend a rod without ringing a bell.

### **If you prefer the active approach of sitting by the rods or even holding a rod, here are a few things you can do to improve your chances**

1. As above use a chemically sharpened hook made of fine gauge wire (check the point regularly), if you don't have any it's worth investing in some quality hooks.
2. When you are attending your rods you can use a smaller sinker because you don't need to rely on the Carp hooking itself, you can set the hook by striking when you see the rod tip bend, the line lift quickly or feel a pluck or pull on the line. Carp are more comfortable with lightly weighted baits and will often carry and then drop the bait if it feels weight from a sinker or line so attending your rod can result in many more hookups and a lot more Carp.

3. Check your bait regularly, perhaps every 20 minutes even if you haven't had a bite, consider replacing the bait even if it's all still there. If you feel or see a bite and miss it don't leave it more than a few minutes before checking your bait, chances are it's been stolen.
4. Present your bait properly, again this means make sure you fill the shank of the hook with bait, leaving the bend and point exposed. Push the bait over the eye of the hook to hide the eye and knot if possible.
5. Big Carp can give very tiny bites, never assume a tiny tapping on the line is a small fish. When attending the rod you can strike at these small bites and quite often hook a decent sized Carp.
6. If holding the rod keep a slightly slack line, Carp can be spooked by unexpected movement of the bait or rig. Keep you index finger on the line above the reel with the hand that is holding the rod and you will feel the bites transfer down the line. You will soon learn what is worth striking at and what isn't. Windy weather can make this style of fishing difficult.

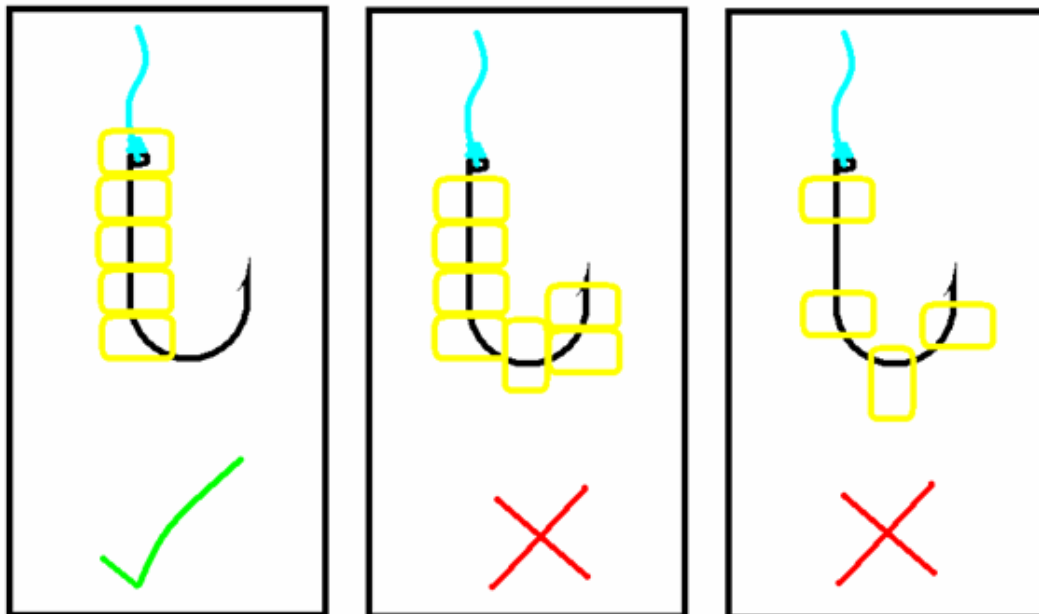
### **Random Tips**

1. Do not burley excessively you'll only feed them, obviously you can't take burley out once it goes in. The best way is to throw in a little burley, but do it often, this keeps them interested but hungry.
2. Try not to use lumpy burley, Carp will happily eat big lumps of burley instead of your bait! It's best if your burley disintegrates into tiny pieces on contact with the water, leaving a tasty cloud of flavour in the water but not too much for the Carp to eat.
3. Try not to hammer in rod holders, push them in if possible. I know the waters edge at Kingston is rock hard but the hammering transfers vibrations through the water and spooks the Carp. Yes I know it might sound over the top, but trust me on this one.
4. If you haven't caught a lot of Carp before consider backing your drag off a little. Carp have more pulling power than they are given credit for and a hook can easily pull from their soft mouths, or they can bust you off on light line. At worst they can drag your rod in if it isn't secured properly. There aren't many snags at Kingston so let them run a little because they've got nowhere to go.
5. Try not to get sunblock or aerogard on your hands because it will transfer to the bait, and Carp rely heavily on their sense of smell and taste. Wash them thoroughly if you do.
6. The idea of big bait big fish doesn't necessarily apply to Carp. You don't need a massive hook (or bait) to catch a massive Carp. You will catch many more on a smaller hook perhaps size 4-12. Andre's 11.15kg Carp was caught on a size 8.
7. If the wind is blowing hard make sure your sinker is heavy enough to hold your rig in position, otherwise it can trundle along the bottom and pick up debris or sludge and perhaps snag up.

### **Bait Selection**

1. Sweet Corn Kernels – this would have to be the number one bait for Carp in Lake Burley Griffin, it's cheap and relatively hard for Carp to steal. See below for a diagram of how to bait your hook correctly with Sweet Corn.
2. Bread – an excellent alternative to Sweet Corn, but is much softer and can soak off and is easier for Carp to steal. Also make sure you tie up the top of the bread bag because bread dries up quickly in the heat and it will be harder to put on the hook if it's dry.
3. Worms – a good bait but more expensive than Corn or Bread, they'll also attract the attention of every tiny Redfin in the area. They're worth considering as a backup if Corn or bread aren't producing.

4. Carp will take many other baits, so experiment if you like but the three mentioned above will get you more Carp than anything else in Lake Burley Griffin.



**Hook is baited correctly, eye and knot have been hidden, and bend and point are exposed.**

**Hook has too much bait, barb is covered and bend is full of bait. Chances of hook setting properly are significantly reduced**

**Not enough bait on the hook, Carp may sense the hook and avoid the bait. This is likely to be rejected.**

As I said earlier I'm not saying I know it all, nobody does. There is nothing extraordinary about what I've mentioned, most of it is fairly basic stuff, but it's just about getting all the little things right, and believe me they all add up in the end! Perhaps you can apply some this information to how you fish this Carpathon, I'm confident you'll have much more success if you do.

Cheers  
Steve.