

Dapping on Lomond.

An introduction to the writer.

Angus has studied fishery management at the Institute of Fisheries Management, receiving an award for his work in the year 2000. Through study, exploring, experimenting and in that process learning a great deal about fishery management, Angus has prevented our sea trout runs from falling as badly as many other famous sea trout fisheries and river systems. Salmon stocks have also been given much needed help by stocking initially the main streams and over this last four years stocking above specific impassable falls.



A keen angler with a love for fly fishing particularly Dapping, Angus can be seen out on his boat on either a Saturday or during the week throughout the season. He usually puts his boat on the loch by May and heads for the traditional fly fishing grounds from then till the season ends. Rarely does Angus ever troll but perhaps after reading Peters article he might just be tempted in flat calm periods when he can't dap or fly fish. Angus has his boat moored at Balmaha.

Introduction.

I had been fishing for a couple of hours but had moved nothing. It was a warm day with the sun glinting on the water from a cloudless sky and I found I was going through the motions. I find you only occasionally rise sea trout to the dap in such sunny conditions. I had experienced taking an odd salmon on the dap when the sun was out, however that was later in the season and in shallow water about four to eight feet. This was mid-July and I was after sea trout lying in deeper water of ideally ten to sixteen feet at this time of year. I pondered to myself, a beginner out on the loch would be wondering if there were any sea-trout in, you only occasionally see one jump to clear itself of sea lice, or lampreys that can attach themselves to these migratory fish, perhaps doubts would be creeping into his mind, was he fishing at the right depth and in the right places, it is a big loch. All of these thoughts I and my friends went through as we learnt the loch over the years and that learning process continues today. However I was quietly confident, the forecast was for cloud to build later and there was a steady ten mile an hour wind from the West.

Confidence is everything; I knew I would be in with a shout when conditions improved. I had faith in my knowledge of the sea trout lies, depths, my setup, my flies and method of fishing.

As forecast the cloud gradually arrived covering the sun, this was high overcast cloud giving good light filtering through, but removing glare from the lochs surface. As I drifted in on the island of Creeinch I watched the fly with growing confidence. As the vast majority of these sea trout have stopped actively seeking food in freshwater, I believe it is usually the hunting instinct of chasing, when conditions are right and these fish become active, that gives us our best chance of catching these moody magnificent creatures.

Then suddenly it happened, nothing but nothing in fishing the big loch does it more for me than seeing the water part with a large head appearing through the wave followed by a thickset black arched back and silver flank, in this case cutting so smoothly and silently along the surface to intercept my dapping fly two to three feet away.

I am of course totally focused on that fly as it traverses across the waves; everything is so visual, awaiting the inevitable homing in of the fish onto the fly. This time the take is so confident and the fly disappears from view leaving the wake of another sea trout with its intended prey, my dapping fly, heading down. The big fifteen foot rod smartly lifts high in the air at a rate of knots, no "God save the Queen" here before I strike, I have to take up the slack bow in the dapping floss caused by the wind, this is maybe anything from twelve to eighteen metres away

from the boat and tighten before the sea trout realises its mistake and ejects my artificial fly.

Suddenly everything goes tight as the hook finds its hold and the water erupts as the sea trout's dive is abruptly halted, all hell now breaks loose as the fish thrashes about in the wave, shaking its head and flanks from side to side, its large spade of a tail spraying water in all directions as it realises it has been deceived, the hunter has now become the hunted. This has all happened in a matter of seconds and I know I will relive this take and many others in my mind's eye in slow motion when I'm back home on winter nights to come, when some boring TV program is on. After giving a great account of itself, running hard and jumping clear of the water many times before crashing down into the wave I slip the salmon net under this now exhausted ten pound fresh run Lomond sea trout and shout Y...E...S!!!, to the heavens. In an embarrassed kind of a way I hope no one is looking or listening, but not really caring too much what anyone might be thinking, this was a sea trout I had sought for a long time, one that was into double figures on a fly. This fish had stopped at its temporary lie on the underwater bank at the south west side of the island of Creeinch and was going no further.



So what had I learnt before taking my first ten pounder on the dap, I will try to summarise some points that may assist anyone dapping for the first time to take a shortcut or two, to take up or try this wonderful, oh so visual side of angling on our big loch.

Boats.

Dapping on Lomond is done from an open boat of usually fifteen to eighteen feet that will keep you safe if a big wind gets up while you are out. One of the good points about Lomond is the number of Islands one can take shelter behind on the

odd occasion the wind rises unexpectedly, until it eventually blows itself out. While it is advantageous to have your own boat, or cadge a day out with a friend or acquaintance that has a boat moored on the loch, it is also possible to launch your own boat at the public slipway at Balloch or at Balmaha boat yard for a fee. It is also possible to hire boats and engines from Balmaha boat yard.

Rods.

As mentioned in the Introduction I use a fifteen foot soft actioned carbon salmon fly rod with a relatively slim line profile against the wind which I find is lighter to hold all day and still responds well with a good bend when playing an average sea trout. An alternative is the telescopic fibreglass rods which are sold as dapping rods; these can feel like they weigh a ton at the end of the day, especially those of seventeen feet, they have a much higher profile against the wind, being much thicker. I have used telescopic rods in the past and you do build up your arm strength as the season progresses. There is no denying however that where space in a boat is at a premium they are very handy if dapping is only part of your armoury and you also have fly and trolling rods to accommodate.

Reels.

Reels can be any decent fly reel but must be capable of holding a lot of backing, we are not talking of only fishing for Blacknebs (finnock) that we might rise at one part of a drift but the next rise might be a much larger fish, the largest seatrout I have taken dapping on the loch is sixteen and a half pounds and the largest salmon was fourteen pounds so make sure you have plenty of backing, remember you are generally using only a smallish light wire single hook and although you should be firm when playing your quarry if a large fish wants to run, let it, you don't want the light wire single hook to pull out or straighten by holding the fish too hard.

Floss.

This is our means of harnessing the wind to deliver the fly to our unsuspecting quarry. Well-known brands of dapping floss can be a variety of colours from pale cream through grey to green; this has made me wonder over the years if any of these colours have an adverse effect on the fish, as the floss wafts in the wind above the fish approaching our dapped fly. The honest answer is I don't know, it is like selecting a colour for your fly line, some people wish to have a colour that stands out indicating where their fly is in poor light conditions. Given a choice of colour when purchasing I would go for floss that was most likely to blend into an overcast sky, however most tackle shops tend only to stock one brand and colour and a reel of floss can last for years. I have used all colours over the years and have had my share of rises but I would still look for a floss that blended against the sky, given the choice.

I generally use about six to eight metres of floss knotted every two feet with a half hitch knot. When tying the floss to the backing line I first create a loop in the backing, then tie a knot at the floss end with a couple of half hitches, before threading the floss through the backing line loop and loosely tying a blood knot. As I gradually tighten this knot I try to ensure the knot in the floss sits just outside the blood knot to act as a stopper to avoid possible slippage and the knot coming apart. At the business end of the floss I attach a twelve inch length of fifteen pound nylon to the floss, again using a blood knot in the floss backed up with another stop knot. I thread the heavy nylon through the loop before finally tightening the floss blood knot, and then tie a further blood knot in the nylon to attach the nylon to the floss. The fifteen pound nylon is finished off with a loop.

Leader.

I would not normally go below eight pound nylon and could use anything up to twelve pounds nylon, remember the nylon will not be in the water, only our point of contact with the sea trout, our fly will be on the water surface. As to length, on average I would make this about five or six feet for normal conditions of steady wind, say ten to fifteen miles an hour. If the wind is between fifteen and twenty miles an hour then the longer the leader is within reason, say about eight feet, this will help you to control the fly as your floss may be getting blown about by the wind, but the air resistance of the nylon is minimal compared to the floss and by lowering the rod at times to even parallel but above the water this will keep the fly on the water surface longer. If the wind is twenty to twenty five miles an hour I have seen myself reel in the floss entirely and tie on a long length of nylon leader, twelve to fifteen metres, re-attach the fly and try to control the fly better that way. I think any more than twenty five miles an hour and it's time to come in for the day. At the other end of the wind spectrum with the wind between five and ten miles an hour if we shorten our leader to two to three feet, this gives the floss the maximum air resistance close to the fly and by our manipulation of the long rod lets us again work the fly better.

Conventional Wisdom: Lift and Lay method.

Let me say right away there is nothing new under the sun that someone else hasn't already done, but this was the start and my progression into dapping for sea trout. The first dapping fly which caught me a sea trout on Lomond was a black shaving brush of a thing in a good going easterly wave, just letting it sit there riding the wave on Inch Murrin. I was on the oars in the middle of the boat with a friend either side of me fishing the fly. I was just trying it for something to do, keeping it on the water and out of the way of the real fishing going on either side of me, waiting until it was my turn to fish the fly again. Suddenly a silver sea trout came out of nowhere, I struck and it was on, we all looked at each other as if to say how did that happen.



My first sea trout taken on the dap, 2 lbs. 7 oz.

Although I took some more fish dapping this way I missed a lot and fishing the fly from the fly rod was at least as successful and probably more so. I had fished the fly regularly up to that point using a long fly rod working the bob fly in the traditional style, if sea trout were taking the bob fly being drawn back through the waves why should I be using the then accepted wisdom of leaving the fly to sit on the surface, occasionally lifting and laying it to a different spot. I had also extensively fished a tidal river elsewhere in Scotland for sea trout and knew sea trout were great chasers of a spinning lure, even worked very fast. This accepted wisdom on dapping didn't make a lot of sense to me so I started to move the dapping fly about.

The "Arc" method.

With a steady wind you will soon learn to control the floss to create an arc by manipulating the rod from side to side, lowering and raising continually to keep the fly moving on the surface at all times. In a steady soft wind this skill will soon be learnt.



The Arc method of Dapping: A nice sweeping arc is attractive for sea trout

As stated you can vary the amount of nylon leader used depending on the wind strength.



A Shorter leader can be effective at different strengths of wind

When the wind is stronger and or gustier in nature the man who can react to every whim of the wind and keep his fly moving on the water in the same direction until the arc is complete will be capable of fishing correctly and giving himself the best chance of rising a sea trout in most wind conditions.

The rate at which the fly traverses the arc can of course be varied but I would start with a normal walking pace. This seems to stimulate the sea trout and takes became more frequent. This method also had the advantage of the sea trout coming onto the fly instead of the fly just being sucked under as fish must have been almost vertical at times below the stationary fly. There was little or no sign of a rise just the fly disappearing; hook-ups when this happened were few and far between. Hook-ups using the arc method were much better as you could see the sea trout come onto the fly. The longer the arc you can make, the more water you are covering as the boat drifts along. It also makes sense to me, the longer the arc, the more time a sea trout lying in deep water has. If this fish is stimulated to attack the fly it sees struggling in the surface film of the wave it also knows that this moving fly could take off and disappear, this can make the take when it comes usually very positive.

If there are two anglers dapping in the boat we adopt the sub sport of synchronised dapping, with both anglers moving the fly through the arc simultaneously in the same direction, If you can imagine the outer arc made by two windscreen wiper blades this will give you the idea, this avoids rods clashing in the middle of the boat.



Team work is vital with two anglers dapping: Matt Stewart & Angus MacRitchie.

It is sometimes not always possible to get a good arc in front of the boat if the wind is too strong. Sometimes you will lift and place the fly to the extent your floss will allow and work it back across the waves at an angle towards the boat by moving the rod from in front of your body until it is at right angles to you before resetting your fly downwind to repeat the process. One drawback can be when the fly has gone to one end of the arc and stops momentarily before returning in the opposite direction, this can be the time a fish following or catching up with the fly comes on to it. Needless to say your rod will be at its highest and furthestmost away point to your right or left, this makes striking really difficult and a lot of fish are missed at this time.

Flies.

As the song goes "there's only one fly for dapping, one fly for da...pp..ing, there's only one fly for dapping."



The Daddy of them all: The Daddy Longlegs

Well maybe I'm getting carried away, as mentioned previously, sea trout will take traditional dapping flies, they worked in the past and they will work now.

However, one glance into my dapping fly box reveals one fly more than any other. It comes in a range of dressings from heavy to light, it comes in a range of colours from light to dark, and it is the Daddy of Dapping flies... the Daddy Longlegs.



Dressed in a range of colours and sizes, the "Daddies" are deadly for sea trout.



Take your pick from this lot!

So what in my opinion makes the daddy good in relation to the more traditional dapping flies? These dapping flies seemed to concentrate on ensuring the ability to float for long periods was paramount, this was achieved by using copious amounts of hackle wound onto a relatively heavier "lightweight salmon iron" hook than we would use nowadays, and then there were sometimes the addition of "protruding

horns" made from hair. The overall look was sometimes hard to relate to any possible kind of insect these could represent. Now I know I've mentioned that sea trout in general have ceased to feed in fresh water and that it is the chase and capture of what they take as a natural prey item that brings them to our lure. However having our lure look like something found in nature that is capable of evading capture by flying away from an interested sea trout can do us no harm at all.

Let's look at the Daddy Longlegs style of dapping fly. For a start it looks generally more insect like, look at the slim line body either on the hook shank or as a detached body. Look at the wide spread distinct wings, look at the relatively compressed hackle area in contact with the water (compared to some traditional dapping flies) and lastly look at all those potentially mobile trailing legs as it is moved across the water surface. Now imagine holding one above your head and looking up at it. This is the view a sea trout or salmon would fleetingly see as the fly skips along the wave. The hook shank would appear to merge into the detached body or be accepted as a dangling leg, the trailing legs, wings and body would be silhouetted against the cloud covered sky and most of all there will be the illusion of life as it will move and look like a struggling insect trying to free itself from the surface film as the wind blows it across the loch.



It looks alive and lifelike ready to fly out of reach: Grab it while you can.

Easy pickings for a bored sea trout to experience the thrill of the chase and the moment of capture. Yes, if only we can find one in that taking mood.

On the next page, we'll look at presentation of the fly.

Presentation.

Keep it floating!

As I place more emphasis on presenting a fly that looks and moves more like the natural insect I lose out on the flies ability to float high in the water for long periods like the more traditional dapping flies. This means I have to change my flies much more frequently when they start to become waterlogged from riding the wave or if we are fortunate enough to have caught a fish.

I cannot emphasise too strongly that a waterlogged dapping fly that has settled into the water and is furrowing through the water like a wet fly fished on the bob will not receive anywhere near as many offers from sea trout as one that is riding high on the surface film of the wave.



This daddy is starting to sink and is losing its effectiveness.



Get your daddy floating high on the surface: Like this one.

Funnily enough salmon seem more attracted to the dap when the fly is fishing semi submerged, when we enter the shallower water from early September to the end of October to seek them.

To keep our daddy floating high for as long as we can, we must select a suitable one from our box for the prevailing conditions, a big stoory wave for example will need a daddy with a bit more "presence", being scaled up but still retaining all the insect like features. When a light breeze blows giving not much more than a ripple on the lochs surface, at this end of the wave spectrum you will have scaled your daddy down accordingly to a size we would use more for brown trout fishing. Experience will gradually assist you make these choices. As to colouring for daddies I generally keep the patterns subdued. A point worth noting is the dapped daddy is not as successful as we go into the late evening. When the light starts to go. I have found at this time an all black hackle, black winged daddy has sometimes done the trick.

Points on dapping.

When to dap.

If I am being honest there are times when I dap when it would be better to fish a team of flies sub surface or take to the trolls. The visual sighting of a sea trout nailing my daddy is what I look for when out on the loch and this at times does blind me to the need to change tactics, when I know I should, to gain a better chance of sport.

However over the years you can't help becoming aware of some of the sea trout's preferences, for after all they and only they decide if and when they will take our lures whatever these may be. In the case of the dap I will mention one or two I am aware of.

If the air temperature is below that of the water I find sea trout are reluctant to come right on to the surface and I find you can get fish coming short, swirling under the fly without taking, bringing it back fairly quickly over them can sometimes induce a take, but on days like this you would probably be better fishing the fly rod, your flies fishing sub surface. A squally wind that you find cool on the back of your neck can have the same effect. The sun when its out for long periods, with its attendant glare on the water's surface will usually send the sea trout into deeper waters well away from this glare on the surface where our lure is, this can affect the fly fisher with a team of flies just the same. Although the dap will take coloured fish on a fairly regular basis, the staler they become the more moody and less inclined they are to be bothered to chase and break the surface. Sometimes you will get one of those times a general movement of sea trout occurs on a drift, due to some change in weather conditions, this can affect migratory fish regardless of how long they have been in and they can become ready takers when the mood is on them. It is the fresher fish generally that really home in on the dapped fly, and I must say this gives me no problem at all.



Salmon, Grilse and Sea trout can all be taken on the dapped Daddy on the right day

The Artificial Daddy.

If you are tying your own dressing, I usually use the following pattern.

Detached Body

Natural deer's hair. I have found it is much better to go for darker deer's hair in preference to light coloured deer's hair.

Hackles

I use brown / black, red/ brown, ginger or furnace types of cock hackles.

Wings

These can be made of cree, blue dun, ginger or any colour of hackle points that take your fancy.

Hook

I bought a good stock of Long Shank Partridge size 10, D3ST hooks which I still use and find ideal, I don't know if these are still on the market but any light weight, strong long shank hook with a decent wide gape will suffice. Legs Eight to ten Pheasant tail fibres knotted twice.

Silk

Brown.

Tying Method

1) Apply a layer of silk onto the hook shank before tying in the deer's hair, this will stop the body from spinning and slipping about. Tie in the body first about one third of the way along the hook shank from the eye. After lashing the hair to the hook with six turns or so of silk, pull all the free ends together then wind the silk around them in an open spiral as tight as you can. When you get to the end of the body tie six close tight turns of silk before winding the silk back along the body towards the hook shank in an open spiral. A touch of varnish to the six turns of silk at the tail end will help secure the tail from unravelling once a sea trout's jaws have clamped on it.

2) Next tie in the legs immediately in front of the body, one side at a time is easier, i.e. one bunch of four or five legs. Try to keep these splayed out away from the hook shank / deer's hair body as much as you can.

3) After trimming of the waste ends of the legs you should be left with something like this.



4) The next step is to hackle the fly, tie in all three at the same time at the end of the body. I find it is easier to wind the three together, though you can also wind these separately. Sometimes I will put a different colour hackle in the middle to those either side to break up the colour outline.

5) Tie in the wings just in front of the hackle and the hook eye splaying these outwards and upwards.

6) Finish of the fly with a whip finish and varnish the head of the fly.



The daddy longlegs



Another Daddy completed and ready to do business.

More Dapping Techniques.

Trolling the Daddy

I have taken a good number of sea trout when trolling over the years.

This usually takes place when the wind is not blowing the boat parallel to the shoreline, but is either blowing you out of the correct depths or onto the shore.

When you fish a drift like this we call it crabbing your way along the drift, at some point you have to correct yourself from going too shallow or too deep and relocate yourself on the drift. We will use a silent electric outboard or someone else on the oars so as not to disturb the drift for others following behind. We then start to troll the daddy across the waves and as at all other times when we dap we clamp the backing line to the rod handle with the hand used to hold the big rod. This allows us to quickly set the hook firmly when we strike. By judicious use of the big rod we control the floss to ensure the daddy is constantly on the water surface riding through the waves from the trough to the crest and back. This is usually for far greater distances than we would ever manage using our full arc at the front of our drifting boat, so more time for a sea trout to rise from the depths and home in on the fly. Your eyes must be totally focused on the daddy as when the offer comes it is usually a no nonsense affair with the sea trout crashing over the daddy, you will usually get only one chance to set the hook as you are moving at least at a good

walking speed and will not be able to stop the boat moving on and away from your quarry. This is an exciting time as I always anticipate a possible take when doing this.

The Real thing

In late summer into early autumn the natural daddy longlegs hatch occurs on land, as they are not particularly strong fliers they can find themselves blown onto the water and believe me the fish can differentiate and show a preference for the naturals over any artificial, especially in what we would describe as poorer fishing condition of less cloud with more sunshine about. First we have to catch our daddies, these will be found in long grass. You will disturb them when you walk through the grass but having spotted one taking flight watch where it alights back into the long grass, you then have to creep up very slowly on them and catch them with either pinched fingers or using cupped hands. Once you have your daddy you must have a suitable container in which to place it. Sounds easy so far, however the next one you catch and try to put in or when you are out dapping and need to replenish your flies there is a very good chance when you open your container the earlier caught daddies will fly out, so give some thought to your container. Some people use a clear plastic bottle with a screw top lid which allows you to remove them one at a time through the narrow neck.

Having caught sufficient naturals for a day out we use the standard set up, substituting only a size ten or twelve strong lightweight wide gape single hook in place of the artificial. We impale two daddies at a time through the thorax then let them be carried out on the wind by the floss to alight on the water surface. Now because these are naturals and are therefore very delicate in nature our normal method of working the arc is better carried out slowly when the wind is light, or in a breeze. You can go through a few daddies in a day if the wind is gusty and you have difficulty controlling the floss. In Ireland it is not uncommon for only about a metre of floss to be used with nylon backing when fishing the natural to gain better control in the wind and retain the fly on the water's surface. Fortunately because we are fishing the real thing, only a slight movement of the natural from side to side will encourage takes in a stronger wind while avoiding too many suck downs and resultant fewer hook-ups.

When a fish rises you can afford to give the fish more time to turn down with the fly before you tighten gently, there being far less chance of it ejecting the natural. I have to admit this is something I find hard to do, having used the artificial for so long.

However, well worth a try when the natural fly is available.

In the final section of this article, I will tell the story of a day on the

A fictitious autumn day's drift on Lonaig, based on real experiences with a hint or two thrown in!

I had invited a friend who is new to Lomond out for a day's dapping on the big loch, he is intrigued as to how we will catch a sea trout with a single fly about one inch long in a loch that is twenty odd miles long and at its widest about five miles. It looks like we have picked a good day, there is good cloud cover with only the odd blink of sun keeping the air temperature above that of the water, very important this. A quick trail of the hand over the side of the boat confirms this. The wind is coming from the west and is forecast to be twenty miles an hour. As my friend is new to this dapping game I'm thinking we will go up to Inchlonaig which suits either an east or west wind best, but as Lonaig lies between the hills on either side of the loch it will be more sheltered than down in the more open bottom basin of the loch.

As my four horsepower outboard motor pushes the boat out from Balmaha we are fortunate to see the Ospreys hunting, another few weeks later and they will be heading south. We then tend to the task of immersing our Daddies in floatant before shaking off the excess to allow plenty of time to thoroughly dry. I tend to always have a bottle of Mucilin handy, as the wide neck on this bottle is ideal for gaining access for large flies like daddies already attached to the leader. I personally also like the Permafloat spray which assists the daddy to float higher for longer but I long for the day when you could once buy a bottle of Permafloat.

I have been filling my friends head with fishy stories from the past as we head north passing by the islands, now we have arrived at the western tip of Lonaig, opposite Luss village on its north facing shoreline, the wind strength has indeed weakened to a more manageable level for him and we are ready to start. In my boat he will have seen a depth sounder and as we approach to drift into the sandy bay at the westerly end of Lonaig. I mention we are in fourteen feet of water fairly close to the shore as our daddies sail out. He asks me, "is there any fish showing yet on the screen?", I tell him "no, and it's highly unlikely, as its only on the depth sounding mode". "How do we know we are over fish?" he replies, "we don't" I replied "and we won't be spending all day looking for fish on a screen!" I tell him the lies of the salmon and sea trout are well known, don't tend to change from year to year and are available on the Map prepared by the association which shows all the holding areas and drifts.

The only thing we shall be concentrating on is our dancing daddies, with me having an occasional glance at the depths.

We ease our way onto the drift, one angler at each end of the boat, the floss billowing out in the soft steady wind with the daddy riding high on a smooth easy rolling type of wave, the best wave for dapping, the daddies start moving from side to side of our arc. We drift along past the sandy shore moving slightly in as we

progress along the rocky tree lined shore towards an underwater bank just past the rock face. We are keeping ourselves in a good depth without so much as stirring a fin. As we approach the bank I ease the boat out, maintaining the right depth as we drift on, the sun comes out momentarily from behind a cloud and we feel the warmth on our backs. My friend turns round to me and mentions how pleasant it is to be in scenery like this, fishing for sea trout so near to the central belt of Scotland, as he turns back all I hear is, "Did you see thaaaat??!!" I look up from watching my own fly. His fly had probably lifted off the water as he turned to speak to me earlier or maybe the sun coming out had caused too much surface glare for the fish. He pointed to the swirl of a decent fish with his daddy now blowing behind the floss ten feet up in the air. I casually mention, "If a fish misses your fly or you fail to connect at all when striking, don't shout "Did you see thaaaat??!!", just get your Daddy back into the swirl as quick as the wind and floss will allow and keep moving it slowly, then wait with baited breath, if it comes back, "Biff it!!!".

We had now reached the extreme point of this underwater bank and I ease the boat back in towards the shore. We continue to drift along the next sandy shore out in the correct depth of water. Our flies go unmolested but my friend is no longer asking is the depth finder in fish finding mode, his eyes are focusing on his daddy. As we approach another underwater bank at the end of this sandy shore known as the Mid Bank I ease the boat out to maintain the right depth, suddenly a black neb of a pound throws itself at my daddy and nailed it, the big rod raises skywards and after a short fight the fish is then netted and released.

I decide to change my daddy at this point as it is waterlogged and put on one that can do well at this time of year, this daddy has dyed orange pheasant tail legs and can out fish the standard daddy in the autumn. The sun has gone behind the cloud again as we continue out onto the Mid Bank, I tell my friend there are often good fish around here, he mutters something without facing me, he is a quick learner. This bank can go out for up to two hundred metres or more and in places is quite a wide bank holding a good average depth of ten to eighteen feet. As we drifted on, the daddies searching the wave, we approached the shallow rib that runs out to the point of this bank.

Out of the blue, without any warning, the wave flattens and a huge swirling boil, the size of a large dust bin lid wells up beneath my daddy as it continued its dance across the wave. The hair momentarily stands up on the back of my neck, I know from experience the size and ferocity of this boil means it is a good fish. I immediately check the daddies progress, turn it around and bring it back over the now receding boil, the adrenalin is now pumping, this time it was my turn to wait with baited breath for what seemed like an eternity, but was probably only six seconds or so, then, whoosh, the salmon rose from the depths, its mouth wide open as it came crashing down, clamping its jaws tight shut on my daddy. The caution

that held it back a few seconds earlier, now gone. I strike hard, there is the customary thrashing for about twenty seconds, my heart is now pounding, and then the reel sings its song. I ask my friend to quickly wind in his floss out of harm's way but as a brown trout fisher he is not used to this kind of action and responds a bit slowly.

The hen salmon runs long and hard and I am happy to know there is limited resistance to the run from the floss as opposed to a heavier fly line. As the run eases the salmon jumps high in the air crashing back into the wave a good forty to fifty metres away. A few more runs and some dogged boring beneath the boat then my friend slips the net under her, she weighs about eight pounds and is a bit coloured, we let her go to do the business on the redds later that year.

Amazing how happy a place a boat can be when a good fish is landed. We decide to go back to the west end of the island as the wind was veering more to the south west leaving a lot of good water ahead of us unfishable as the wind and wave died the further east we drifted the island. Having restarted the drift I sensed my friend seemed somewhat impatient to reach the first underwater bank where he had previously raised a fish. As we had seen nothing move to our flies previously on this part of the drift, this was understandable for a newcomer to the big loch.

I knew from past experience this drift and all the other drifts often hold fish and at some point in the day they would move, you could drift them a number of times over the day and move nothing then sometimes a change of light conditions, atmospheric pressure, wind strength or direction have brought fish on the move and if you persevere, it can make your day.

Halfway along the beach a perfect head and tail of a rise came to my friend's daddy as it neared the end of its arc, a solid strike had this two and a half pound sea trout jumping repeatedly as it circled around the boat before I slid the salmon net under this silver beauty.

As the wind had now turned completely southwest, we call it a day on Lonaig and head off to one of the many other drifts more suited to this wind.



The only time fish moved on the day this photograph was taken. A six and a quarter lb. grilse with a three and a quarter lb. sea trout and two smaller sea trout. All caught between 5:30pm and 6pm one July evening at the eastern end of Inchlonaig.

Summary and a Plea...

I hope some new members, and for that matter existing members, of the Association may be encouraged to try the dap on the big loch and may have picked up a pointer or two from the rest of this article. The previous "day out" incidents have of course happened at some point, along with the many many other incidents over the seasons on Lomond, although this outing was obviously put together to try and give someone new to dapping or to fishing the big loch, a flavour of a good day out with the dap...

A thought for the future and a plea for moderation.

I can go to some small rainbow fisheries, stocked to the limit and catch half a dozen trout in a couple of hours at the right time. After two or three sessions I am asking myself, is this what my fishing is all about, as I walk round this "hole in the ground" yet again. Almost guaranteed fish, everyone two pounds or sometimes a heavier big "soft bag of water" of a fish grown on in a stew pond. I'm afraid I'm too long in the tooth and have experienced too many great days fishing for wild fish of various species all over Scotland for this to be my bread and butter fishing, alright for an odd day out or if you need fish for stocking your freezer.

Give me the wild fish on a big loch like Lomond, where nothing is guaranteed, some days you will rise or catch nothing, some days you will catch a black neb followed by a bar of silver weighing three pounds that leaps against the background of Ben Lomond and when netted is really firm to the touch. We are fortunate to have this

choice, however nowadays we must protect such fisheries and wild fish from over exploitation. I look back at the photographs in my scrap book, from the days of plenty, some of which are in this article and I know I would feel ashamed of myself if I took all the fish I catch now, it is a different ball game as they say. These wild fish currently face many threats. At sea the ever growing seal populations, possible sea lice infestation from fish farms and at the bottom of the food chain the decrease in sand eel populations by over fishing or climate change. In fresh water, at the juvenile stage there are increasing numbers of Mink, Herons and Mergansers. Diffuse pollution due to over enrichment of the streams by farming practises and in the fairly recent past, pollution from sheep dip are only some I'll mention and there is of course ourselves, the anglers.

Sea trout stocks almost everywhere in Scotland are well down on what they were twenty years ago. These days I only occasionally take sea trout I can use for the table, with protecting future stocks kept very much in mind. Some systems either now impose a total ban on killing sea trout or strictly limit the number to be killed each year. We are fortunate, we still have reasonable numbers of sea trout to fish for and the association supplements the natural spawning, by carrying out a yearly stock enhancement of fry into some of the burns, but we all must take care of and manage our stock for the future, for ourselves and for those who follow on from us.

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