

Superstition

Whether or not we admit to being superstitious there are certain things that apparently either help us catch more fish or put a hex on the entire day. It may not be items or rituals; it could be the arrival of a particular person that turns our fortunes round. As the person that I am about to discuss is not likely to read this I feel that I can use his real name without fear of giving offence.

Having fished the river Mole for almost 20 years I have met many characters but Chris is the one person that I seem to meet the most often. He is the type of person who uses ten words when one would suffice and so the discussion can be quite protracted. Subjects always range from the health of his aged father, what they are going to have for dinner, monetary investments that he is making all interspersed with his latest tally of chub caught and lost as well as the largest fish that he has caught this season. To be honest, not meaning to be unkind but, I do rather dread our encounters as it is not uncommon for Chris to arrive with enough tackle to test the stamina of the fittest of pack horses, only to deposit the aforementioned equipment on the path and remain talking continuously for 3½ hours before gathering it up again and departing for home without casting line into water. It was on one of these occasions that Chris jubilantly announced that he had landed a chub of just over 4lbs and that this was the fish to beat, when the tip of my rod suddenly curved round and it was not long before I was landing a chub whose weight was in excess of his best. As you can imagine that was somewhat of a conversation stopper and it was not long after that he departed, completely deflated. That is the way it goes with fishing. On another occasion I was fishing for pike and by the time Chris arrived I had missed a couple of runs and had just recast to a likely swim on the far side of the river. From the time of his arrival the morning was taking on a familiar scenario. I think that it was just as he was informing me of his lunchtime menu and the ineptness of his father in the kitchen that my float started to bob and gradually move upstream. Tightening down on the fish I struck into a respectable pike which made a fast run for some snags. After a few minutes the fish was brought to the surface – all 17lbs of it. I remember commenting “that’s a big one.....” the expression on Chris’s face was one of disbelief.

As for items that bring bad luck – a camera, any camera, would ensure a fishless day. I cannot explain why but I am not the only person to be struck by the curse of the camera. I did, however, find a way to lift the curse which was quite simple yet effective. There was no ritual or chant - just determination, and so it was, that on every fishing trip, the camera was diligently packed into the bag and eventually I caught a noteworthy fish which was duly photographed and the hex was finally lifted. I also had an unhooking mat that suffered the same way as the camera once did. It is quite a large mat and I can honestly say that for a long period I had not had even a bite when the mat was present. Once again I persisted and took it on every trip – eventually I landed a small pike which was placed onto the mat and the curse was broken..

To end with I will relate an incident that happened on a well known Surrey day ticket water. I should start by saying that I firmly believe that the future of fishing rests with the young of today. Having said that, the young persons should have a passing interest in angling if they are to continue to pursue the sport. It was mid afternoon in early May when a middle-aged gentleman arrived at the lake accompanied by 2 boys. Their ages were probably around 10-11 years and from the outset it was obvious to all that they were not the slightest bit interested in being there, let alone catching a fish. The adult with them was, I believe, their uncle – or that is

what they called him. The party made their way to a vacant swim opposite from where I was fishing and the uncle started to unpack the rods and assemble the gear. From the very moment of their arrival the boys began to argue and make the most horrendous noise which was totally ignored by their uncle. It was during the continual bickering and arguing that the boy, whom I had taken to be the elder of the two, called the other boy a 'f****g idiot' in his loudest voice. Immediately the uncle reminded him that he was not to swear and told him to 'shut up'. The argument continued with further swearing which elicited the same response from the uncle who appeared to be totally powerless to take control of the situation. It then started to rain and a golfing umbrella was produced from the rod holdall which was taken by the youngest boy who ran off with it. Further bouts of bad language ensued as the two boys began to chase each other around trying to get the umbrella from the other. I have to admit that I did find the whole scene amusing especially the lack of control of his young charges shown by the uncle. Fortunately for me time was getting on and I had to leave them to it. That is the trouble with commercial fisheries, you never know with whom you will be inflicted. Those two boys were surely bad luck charms for their uncle and if he has any sense he will not take them with him again.