

**ROUTLEDGE'S
HANDBOOK
OF FISHING**

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Routledge's Handbook of Fishing by George Routledge

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GEORGE ROUTLEDGE

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A Monthly Magazine.

“Where sticklebacks and minnows
Each day I caught in store,
With stone-rollers and miller’s thimble;—
These brooks afford no more,

“But I a little angler,
With crooked pin for hook,
Would shun each noisy wrangler,
To fish the little brook.”



WHAT can be more delightful than angling? Not indeed so much on account of the fish we may catch, but for the pleasantness of the recreation itself, for the cool streams, the shady trees, the little sunny nooks, the tiny or gigantic cascades, the meandering rills, the still pools, "with sedges overhung;" the picturesque mill-wheels, the deep mill-ponds, "smooth sheeted by the flood;" and above all, for the hair-breadth escapes, for the duckings, for the hazards, for the triumphs. Ah, I do not wonder at boys being fond of angling, it is almost an instinct with them, and has long been a favourite amusement with boys of all degrees, ages and constitutions. Therefore we shall be somewhat comprehensive in our notices of this

interesting sport, that every boy who can bait a hook and hold a line may be an angler if he will.

A WORD ABOUT FISH.

First, however, let us say a word about fish in general, before we come to fish in particular. Fish or fishes are, to speak scientifically, a class of vertebrated animals (*i.e.*, having a backbone) inhabiting the water; which breathe through the medium of that fluid by means of branchiæ or gills, instead of lungs; which swim by means of fins, and are mostly covered with scales. They are also generally furnished with a white membranous bag close to the backbone, called the air bladder, by the dilatation or compression of which it is supposed they can rise or sink in the water at pleasure. All parts of their bodies seem to aid them in swimming in the water; their fins, their tails, and the undulation of their backbones assist progression, and their whole structure is as much adapted for swimming as that of a bird is for flight.

The fins of fish consist of thin elastic membrane, supported by bony rays, and are denominated according to their position—*dorsal* on the back, *pectoral* on the breast, *ventral* near the vent, *anal* that between the vent and the tail, and *caudal* the tail fins. The dorsal and ventral fins appear to balance the fish, and the pectoral to push it forward; while the tail fins are the grand instruments of motion, and enable the creature to dart forward almost as rapidly as the bullet from a gun.

With regard to the senses of fishes, the eye holds the first place; but this is best adapted for seeing under water. Of the organ of hearing there is no outward sign. The organ of taste is thought to be very unsensitive, and the power of touch but slightly developed. To preserve their own existence, and to transmit it to their posterity, seems to be their only enjoyment; and they move forward in pursuit of whatever they can swallow, conquer, or enjoy, and their insatiable appetite impels them to encounter every danger, and to their rapacity there seems to be no bound. A single pike has been known to devour a hundred roaches in three days. The fecundity of fish is prodigious. The number of eggs in the cod-fish often amounts to more than three millions; those of flounders above a million, of the mackerel 500,000, of the sole 100,000, and of the lobster 20,000; but the salmon is far more productive than any of these, as it has been known to have more than twenty millions of eggs!

Without saying any more about "Fish in the abstract," as the angler called his "catch," when he returned without one, we must go to the art of "catching fish;" and the first thing to be attended to is the necessary fishing apparatus, which may be increased to any extent; but the *young* angler would be wise to limit his stock as much as possible. I have fished many hundred miles of water, and killed many a thousand of fish, with no better equipment than this:—One rod of about fourteen feet long, with three tops—one stiff top, for bottom fishing and trolling, and

two for fly-fishing. Two reels or winches, one holding a silk and hair line of thirty-five yards in length for fly-fishing, and the other holding a similar line of forty yards, but much stronger, for bottom fishing, trolling, &c. One moderate-sized creel, or fishing-basket. One oblong tin box, about eight inches long, four inches deep, and six inches wide, divided into two compart-



ments at the centre, the lids opening each way, and pierced with holes, which serves to carry dead minnows and ground bait. A landing net; some shoemakers' wax in a piece of soft leather; a large clasp-knife; a pair of sharp-pointed scissors; a pocket-book, the centre filled with leaves of flannel to hold flies, and the remainder fitted up with gut, hooks, silk, baiting needles, a pair of small pliers, split shot, floats, &c.

ABOUT THE ROD.

The angle rod is a material article in the young angler's catalogue, and much care should be taken to procure a good one. The fishing-tackle shops keep a great variety, made of bamboo cane, hazel, hickory, and other kinds of wood. Rods are of different lengths, some fitted as walking-canes, and others are

made to pack in canvas bags; the latter are to be preferred, because you may have them of any length, and they are made more true. Those made of bamboo cane are best for angling near towns. But the rods made of the white cane are much superior for fine fishing, particularly for roach, being very light in weight, but stiff.

CHOOSING THE ROD.

In choosing a rod (not a school rod, for no one likes to choose that), observe that it is perfectly straight, when all the joints are put together, and that it gradually tapers from the butt to the top, and is from twelve to sixteen feet long. A bad rod is likely to snap in striking a heavy fish. Rods fitted with several tops all packing together, are at once the best and most convenient. Some anglers have one rod for trolling, another for barbel, perch, or other heavy fish, as well as those for fly-fishing—which boys may have when they become men—but a thoroughly good rod will suit the juvenile for all purposes. I have now one with which I can fish from a bleak to a pike, by only changing the top and second joints.

A good trolling rod should be made of the choicest stout and well-seasoned bamboo cane, about sixteen feet in length. When trolling with the gorge or live-bait fishing, a long rod is necessary, to enable the angler to drop in his baited hook over high sedges, rushes, &c., as also when the water is bright, for he should then keep as far away from it as he can, which

a long rod enables him to do while dipping, casting, or spinning his bait. If either a jack or pike see him, it is very rare, indeed, that he will take the bait; and again, with a long rod you will be able to drop your baited hook in some very likely place for jack or pike, such as a small hole, division or clear place among a bed of weeds, in a river or any other water where there are many weeds.

There is some difference of opinion among anglers about the number of rings necessary for *trolling rods*: those who have their line on a thumb winder, or on a bank runner, seldom place more than two or three rings on their rod, and others have only one large ring at the top; but if a winch is used, there should be a ring to every joint except the butt,—that is, fasten the winch to the butt about a foot from the bottom, and let that joint be without a ring—each ring made of double twist wire, fixed so as always to stand out, and nearly large enough to admit the top of your little finger; the top joint should have two rings, the top one nearly three times the size of the others; this prevents any obstruction of the line running, which is of material consequence. When not in use, rods should be kept nicely stowed in a moderately dry place, and they ought to be well scraped and re-varnished every three years; should the joints become loose by shrinking, they should be slightly moistened. Should any accident befall a rod while fishing, and should you not have a spare top with you, your only remedy will be to splice your rod. To do this the broken pieces must be cut in a slanting direction, so