

GRAN CANARIA CARP

STEVE ACHIEVES A LONG-HELD AMBITION WHEN HE WETS A LINE ON GRAN CANARIA.

My tackle box was amongst the few things I needed to take with me



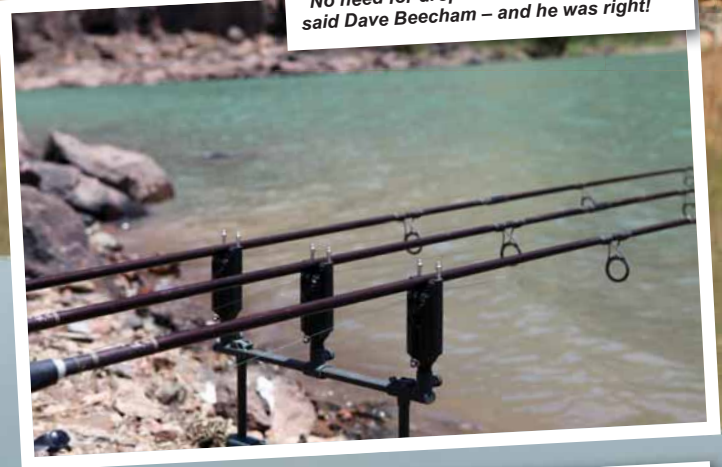
Main pic: At long last I came face to face with the famous Lake Chira

PING

A stunning Chira carp – they were all different and all lovely!



"No need for drop-back indicators here," said Dave Beecham – and he was right!



With no nuisance fish we could used a bed of mixed small seeds

For many years I've wanted to get myself over the Canaries and in particular to Lake Chira to experience the holiday atmosphere of the island – and of course to catch some of those lovely scaly carp! It's only in more recent times that I've really started to hear about Chira again to any extent; like many waters it seems to have almost been out of fashion for a while.

I'm sure that many of us can remember the exploits of Kevin Nash and Rod Hutchinson from times gone by. They were very much my inspiration for wanting to try it for myself, but like many other things in my life it got put on the back burner. Then I had a message one day from Dave Beecham of

carpgrancanaria.com. Dave has steadily built up a very good business of guiding people on the Lake, whether just for the day or for longer sessions, and he had a space in between other customers which also fitted in with the time I had available. That was all the incentive I needed – it was my chance to finally go for it.

Private

What has changed over the years is that the access to the Lake has become a lot more restricted. Whereas in the early years people used to make their own way over and fish wherever they could, that is not quite as easy these days as much of the land that surrounds the lake is privately owned. Thankfully

Dave has managed to secure his own piece of private land right beside the Lake in one of the best areas and so it's possible to fish there in safety and with plenty of privacy.

You don't need stacks of gear to fish the Lake but of course flying anywhere restricts that greatly. Still, flights are cheap enough and sun is almost guaranteed so clothing really consisted of shorts and T-shirts (I did take jeans and a jumper but they never once came out of the bag!). Thankfully just about all the fishing gear is there waiting for you, so all I had to carry was my camera gear and end tackle. I suppose like a lot of people out there, I can use any rods and reels, but I still like to tie

my own rigs as I always think that's a bit more personal to me. Surprisingly for a lake that has been known to so many for so long, the carp hardly see any pressure these days, so complicated set-ups aren't needed.

Altitude

I was surprised how high up in the mountains the Lake actually is. The drive up takes you through some

stunning scenery but my ears were popping all the way and the clouds which had been around at the lower levels were nowhere to be seen – simply because we were now above them!

I was dropped off lakeside while Dave went to sort out the gear and bait. What struck me first was the silence all around – but then after living close to Heathrow for many years most places seem quiet! The temperature was way hotter than I'd experienced for a long time, getting up around 40°C, and it's one of the few times of the year when the action was only expected to be through the hours of darkness.

As I stared out at the Lake I heard a splosh and turned around to see a flat spot on the surface which had to be from a carp. Minutes later I heard another and just caught the dark shape as it sank back into the warm depths. That was certainly a carp – and a reasonable one too! I'd only been there a matter of minutes and already there were carp rolling in front of me – and no other carp anglers as far as the eye could see. Needless to say I couldn't wait to get started as it looked like it could happen straight away. I think Dave was a little surprised that they were so active in the blazing midday sun. "Don't worry we'll have some carp before this time tomorrow," he said, "I know we will."

Now that's confidence for you!

Basics

With the carp being so numerous and under virtually no pressure at all, I just went in with my standard fish-anywhere rig which consists of a size 4 Stronghold longshank hook knotless knotted to a length of 25lb Solar Easy Strip coated braid attached to a ring swivel and lead clip.

Hookbaits were double tiger nuts on a short hair – and there was good reason for that. Undoubtedly the carp will eat a wide variety of baits and there are virtually no other species of fish in the Lake, apart from black bass which are of course no problem. However, there are terrapins present and although I didn't see a great many of them, they do seem to have the knack of finding baited areas quite quickly and it just so happens that the tiger nut is one of the few things which they won't attack. The groundbait consisted of a number of small mixed seeds and crushed maize which had all been mixed together and prepared well in advance.

Spots

It seemed that the margins to our left and right were the main productive areas but I was keen to try one or two of the deeper spots straight out in front of us too as that was where I'd seen a couple of the shows, in fact by the time it came

to getting the rods out we'd seen about half a dozen fish. However the initial hopes of a quick start were slightly dented when they stopped their activities after the commotion of getting the baits in place. We perhaps should have just cast a couple of hookbaits out to see what happened but Dave was so sure of action anyway that we just went out in the boat and lowered the rigs that way with a good helping of the groundbait.

As darkness fell it was a welcome relief from the sun and it looked a lot more carpy. To be honest after all the travelling and lack of air at that altitude I was hoping for a decent kip as much as a carp and before long I was knocking out the zeds! At about 3am I was woken abruptly by a few bleeps. "That's only a liner," said Dave, "You'll know when it's a take as they're all one-toners. I've heard them jumping over the spots so it won't be long!"

He was right! A short time later the same rod blitzed off, and it was getting faster all the time. I picked up the rod and the power on the end was just great. In the deep, snag-free water I could enjoy the battle and we both just smiled as the rod creaked in my hands. In the clear water below me I could soon make out a mass of scales as one of those distinctive Chira carp was almost mine. Dave lifted the net and we let out a cheer. In the net was a lovely mirror of around 22lb, but we didn't have long to admire it as one of my other rods was soon screaming out with a slightly larger and even prettier fish on the end. The takes were just unbelievable and so were the fish for that matter. It was great to be there!

It takes a while for the sun to appear over the mountains, but as soon as it did appear the temperature instantly went up and the activity of the fish slowed right down again. At any other time of year the action is consistent through the day, too, but I'd caught so that was a great start. One of the best things was that just a short drive away was a small shop which sells bags of ice and every day we had a fresh supply to fill up the cool box. Believe me, the ice-cold cans of drink were like heaven every time they were opened!



An immaculate early-morning mirror for Dave Beecham

More action

After the first night I could see that Dave was right about the action and I knew that we would catch when the dark hours returned. In fact it seems that normally the first night is the slowest and the action increases as the fish find the bait and move in to feed in greater numbers.

Not only did we catch more the second night but it also started earlier. Dave hadn't fished at that point but he soon latched into a very hard-fighting fish. The beauty of playing those fish is the excitement of seeing what you've got on the end. Virtually all of them are mirrors, but every one is different and this one was a dark fish of around mid-thirties with big scales down the lateral line. It looked like it had never seen a hook before – as most of them did.

A fast burst of action at first light saw us land decent fish in quick succession and although it

looked like it could go on for longer the fish just seemed to know it was time for a swim and a sun-bathe, which was just what we did too.

It continued that way for the remaining nights that I had left. I had probably gone at the most difficult time of the year, yet every 24-hour period was just about guaranteed to bring at least a carp or two to the bank. It was perhaps all too brief but in the short time I'd been at Chira we'd banked quite a few fish and they were all stunning. I was so pleased that after all this time I'd finally managed to get myself out there and catch a few of those Canaries carp. They are getting bigger, too, and I am regularly hearing of forties coming out these days. Somehow I get the feeling that Lake Chira could be coming back into fashion and I certainly wouldn't mind another crack at some of those fish in the near future. Better late than never, eh?

