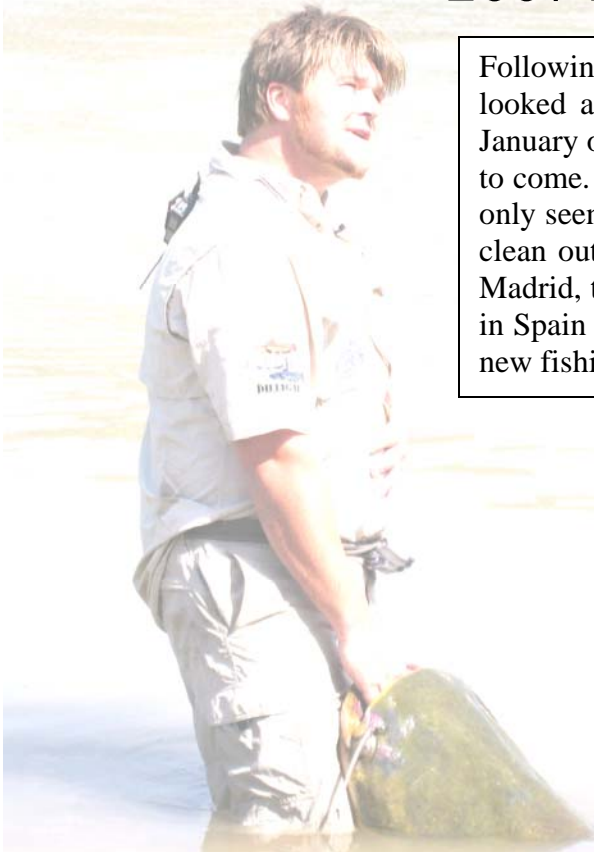


2007 Fishing Summary



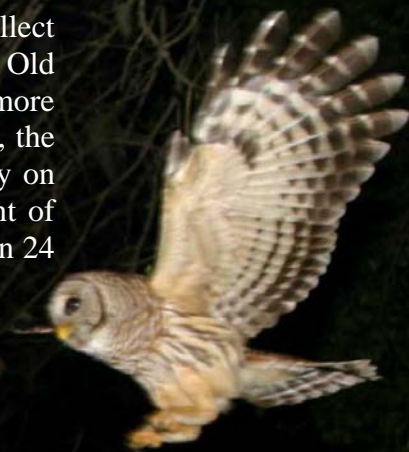
Following on from my last writing about the thirty 30's in thirty nights, I looked at the diary to see almost a full year of guiding ahead. Having got January off to a flyer on the fishing front, one could only hope for better things to come. 2007 saw my first real holiday of the millennium, to a land that I had only seen in the movies, 2007 saw our weekly record for catfish simply blown clean out of the water, a return for the monster barbel that lurk just south of Madrid, the year to loose my passport, have my first Cat fishing article printed in Spain and another for the American Carp Society, strengthen previous, gain new fishing friendships and so it is told.....

Fishing by boat and using dead baits I managed my first Blue catfish weighing in at 36lb, well chuffed as it came almost on last knockings before we headed for the boat ramp and a burger. My accommodation was a farm house; almost in the middle of nowhere on the outskirts of Memphis, several more days fishing and sight seeing had been planned before traveling South East and into Florida.

29th January saw Chemo, Ting Tong and my Dad depart for Blighty, Carpology covered the long weekends adventure, but to be honest I had rinsed the swim prior to there arrival...oooops. After packing down camp I had a week to clean all our rods and reels, a task not to be taken lightly as we like it spick and span. Another 4 day carp fishing session was soon upon me with two fishermen from deepest darkest Surrey, 48 takes with 5 lost fish, 3 fish over 35lb backed up by eleven other 30lb fish another 10 over 25lb and 13 twenties topped the diary as the biggest weighed fish. I had returned to the fruit orchard as I knew this swim was bubbling after a short rest and would produce the result needed. I then had 8 days to update the website and pack my bags for home shores. Having ran round like a headless chicken I then landed in Dallas with more fishing tackle and bait than you can wag a stick at, an internal connecting flight and just over a month to play I was excited to say the least. The next day saw me fishing the mighty Mississippi or the Big Muddy as it's more commonly called a river similar to the Danube that boiled at your feet, dirty a coloured like the Segre at Mequinenza after a good stint of rain and first impressions were that of a rabbit caught in full beam.



The IGFA HQ was stood before me, a routine stop to collect paperwork in person before heading back North into Old Florida to fish on the Chipola river system for yet more catfish and carp. I must admit the hospitality was great, the people I met were top draw and a return was definitely on the cards, but I was ready for fish and chips and a pint of Directors, landing in London with a bump I had less than 24 hours before I was back in the air to Spain.

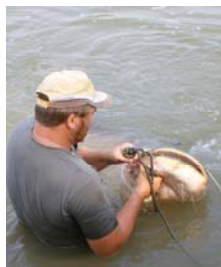


As I looked out the window, Zaragoza was nire on flooded; my heart sank as the next day I was to be working the river for Wels. Two weeks then past with little action and only lost fish, the dam gates were still open and the conditions made for fishing for fishing's sake. The third week in was upon me as were the faces of expectant anglers fresh off the plane. The river had calmed from the broiling mud stew of weed and trees and we managed 6 catfish to just fewer than 120lbs and 8 carp over 20lb to 32lbs 6oz.



The return of fishing friends and a familiar swim in the heart of the Nature Reserve produced regular action in the 5 days that wrapped up the month of April, another half dozen catfish to 177lbs with 3 carp over 35lb another three 30's, four over 25lb and 5 other 20's were all entered into the diary. A slow start to what should have been prime time saw us starring May in the face with fair result and no sign of the bigger fish. The whole of May and first week of June was dedicated to carp fishing, the river had calmed from a raging torrent of chocolate, the water level was consistently low and the bigger carp were on the munch with a vengeance. Having seen dad latch 17 carp over 20lb to the bank in an afternoon the rest followed suit, in 4 weeks I saw a low 40, five 35lb+, 29 other 30's, 62 25lb+ and 81 20's on the mat. I was very pleased for those out fishing with us and the month's effort saw me sunning myself on a Spanish beach for a few days in the recovery position.





Cat fishing was order of the day, or more like weeks to come, setting up swim in the pump house was a hot and sticky affair, I was to be joined by Peter Staggs and my Father as we had several groups including an American Film crew out, what was in store would have us all sat with rye smiles for months to come. Before all was upon us I had several days fishing with Mitch, bless him, we carp fished in the cool mornings and catfished during the hot evenings.

Having taken a slow 36 hours to set our stall out, 50kg of pellet was introduced, our first evening saw four catfish just over the 100lb barrier returned for another day. We baited with a sack of CSL pellet the next morning and had both sets of rods out for early evening that produced 4 carp to 28lb 10oz and five catfish to 153lb. With the fish in the area we introduced a further 50kg of maise and CSL pellet and the next two lazy days fishing saw 6 carp over 20lb to 31lb 10oz and 8 catfish over 100lb to 152lb. The swim was then rested as we had a bait mountain to set in place as our next group of anglers had 50 sacks of Halibut pellet, 20 sacks of CSL pellet and 10 sacks of maise to play with. The results from which go to show that some who have worked the river for so long still have so much to learn.



The river level was high with some daytime weed but gut instinct said this was ideal conditions for fishing. The first day was surprisingly slow, maybe due to the initial introduction of bait, four catfish were caught a small 97lber brought up the rear with a 124, 159 (2m 32cm) and a rather skinny 177lber measuring 2m 36cm. The water level had remained high but by midnight it was starting to drop. With the water level still dropping the first morning take was late, 10:15 saw the first of an 8 take day, nearly 2 hours later the next fish banked was a nice plump 147lb and we all rubbed our hands for the next take. Some 10 hours later and we were all still looking up at the rods; 22:15 saw a right hand rod hoop over and after some puffing and panting a 2m 44cm fish laid in the weigh sling. Heavily marked from spawning this fish had the frame of a 200lber easily, she was almost empty but was a new personal best for one happy angler that went 190lb. The mood in the camp was a happy one especially on midnight as we had banked another 4 fish in the last 20 minutes and lost a lump, 156, 164, 139 and 151lb ensured some slept well whilst other burned the candle in excitement for what the next day would bring.

A new dawn broke to the sound of snoring, Peter and myself were up early to ready the rods and swim, during the day we baited and waited, the first take was to occur at 19:30, an immaculate 148lb followed half hour later by another cracking specimen of 168lb. Nearly two hours passed with carp crashing and catfish splashing all over our baited area, 21:45 saw a 178 on the bank and 15 minutes later before we could get the last fishes rod back in another nice fish of 158lb was sat starring up at us from the mat. Half hour passed as we all paused for breath before another big catfish weighing 166lb took us to 22:30.

With 90 minutes left until winding in another 4 takes were duly taken with one fish lost, a small guestimated 70lber a 124lb and a 172lb wrapped up the days events. The next day was a windless one, well weather wise anyway, we had some good clumps of weed come down in the morning due to a rise in water level and 8 catfish over 100lb to 166lb by 21:00. The evening session was not as hectic as the previous but 4 catfish to 160lb saw all with smiling faces as the heads hit the pillows. Another weedy morning greeted all that awoke, the river was still rising with no wind and very few clouds in the sky and it was to be a good days fishing with 16 fish from 0830: to 23:00. Three fell short of the 100lb barrier with five over 150lb to 176lb. Spirits were still high, but the action and energy expended was taking a toll, there was to be no let up as the next few days fishing was to get much better.



Thursday 28th June saw the river level high and consistent 6 fish in the morning sun, all over 100lb bar one to 141lb. Early afternoon saw banks of weed kill the swim but by 16:00 the rods were back in action, 169 and 158lb were the two best fish from the rest of the day that saw no fewer than 15 catfish and one lost. The night was bright, there were lots of fish topping in the high pressure before the full moon in two days time, whilst discussing the days events it was decided that we would all rise early in order to make a best effort due to the amount of fish still in the swim. We started Friday off with a pasty at 06:05, 10 minutes later we had a take that produced a 156 from a margin spot, the next take at 06:35 produced a 172, an hour then passed before the next lump of 168 was put on the scales, 08:00 and the same margin spot resulted in a 149 and again an hour later with another catfish of 155lb. We had hardly caught our breath as 20 minutes had passed before the next fish of 120lb was nearing the margin to a waiting hand, 115lb was the next fish followed by a 136lber which took us to midday. The swim was a bombsite, breakfast had been long abandoned and we were all dripping in blood, sweat, snot and a few tears of joy. In the 2 hour lull that followed we managed to gather stock, tie some new rigs and get our heads back round to sorting the swim out, baiting lines and holes.

The next hour produced 5 catfish over 100lb to 121. The fish and some of us then had siesta but by 17:00 the rods were dancing again to the tune of big fish. A 154lber kicked off the next round followed by a 136 and were banked just minutes before 6pm, the sun lowered and a sense of an action packed evening was beginning to dawn on the tired and weary. Fortunately just 7 takes were picked up between 21:30 and twelve bells, the last take resulted in a lost fish but the other six fish were as follows, 128, 136, 141, 157, 170 and 171lb. I slept well that night but awoke early to the sound of a loud fart, the rods were baited and by 7am two small catfish were banked quietly to those still grunting in their sleep.



The water had dropped considerably overnight as had several peoples guts but a half lazy day and full moon night still produced 14 catfish over 100lb to 163lb with 4 breaking the 150lb barrier. Sunday should have been a day of rest, but not for us fishermen, 20 takes with 1 lost to a hook pull and two pasties saw 14 catfish over 100lb and three over 150lb in the sling and onto the weigh scales. Monday was hot, but I had managed a night in my own bed so as refreshed as one could be rods were all in place by 8am, 2 hours of prime time had been missed but we were all cream crackered from the weeks events, so much so that the first fish was lost and the second fish a pasty was enough to send one fisherman back to bed.

The water level was still low, again no wind but there was cloud on the horizon as a stiff breeze welcomed the afternoon. 7 catfish were caught the longest measuring 2m 30cm and the heaviest 172lb, the rods were then wound in a 22:30, 4 beat the 100lb and the remaining 3 all went 150+. Our best weeks fishing to date was coming to an end with a short session 6 hour session before change over that produced 6 catfish, all over 100lb with three going 150+ to 164lb.

I must admit I was kind of glad and sad at the same time when the rods were wound in, glad for such a good result but knew that my Dad was mid flight and that the work was just about to begin. With an 10:15 airport pick up and the news of a ticking swim my Father was eager to wet a line, in true fashion the carp rods were already in the swim for his arrival and by the end of play he had banked 7 carp to 35lb 10oz and I placed my hand in the mouth of two cats of 137 and 154lb.

The next day was no let up as I watched him bank 27 carp and 12 catfish to his set of two carp rods, that man is a machine and most who have fished with him will agree, fortunately all the catfish were small which meant one of two things, either the smaller fish had pushed the other fish out of the swim or the smaller fish were here due to a couple of uncaught monster females, only time would tell as another sack of bait was loaded into the boat for deployment.

In the four days that followed we entertained some of Peters Spanish barbel customers, chomping at the bit to bank these home grown Wels catfish. They went home happy after a long weekend that saw 10 catfish in the form of two pasties, four over 100lb and 2 over 175lb with 11 carp over 20lb to 38lb 12oz. The next day saw action stations, Benji joined us in preparation as we were to entertain an American film crew who we eager to capture on film these monster Wels catfish. During this time we captured cats to 181lb on camera with the emphasis on fish care and safe return, we had been provided equipment from Pro logic for our lure fishing canoe trips, courtesy of Pete and a full range of carp kit from Paul Terry at Angling Intelligence for when Dad in true fashion banked 11 carp over 20lb to just over 30 in quick successions in front of camera. With the schedule as tight as it was we managed to clonk several fish by motor boat up as far as Escatron and by the time they left all were ready to bury heads for a day or two.



July's full moon was then upon us and produced a 154lb personal best for Neil Jebson, the weather was hot with little wind and the carp were starting to spawn for a second time. August saw another full month of guiding, I was drained both physically and mentally, new bookings were coming in thick and fast and being in two places at once was taking its toll. Never the less I had expectations to manage and my own well being was far from top of the list. Typically our best month, August was to disappoint me but on reflection July had been full of such rich pickings I found myself chasing fish to an extent. 27 catfish were weighed over 100lb with 4 over 150 and another big girl of 191lb (2m 32cm) 24 carp were also weighed over 20lb, 7 of them over 30lb with one over 35lb. August was the month of a carp kill, which saw maybe several thousand carp float down from the river Cinca below Fraga and into the town of Mequinenza.

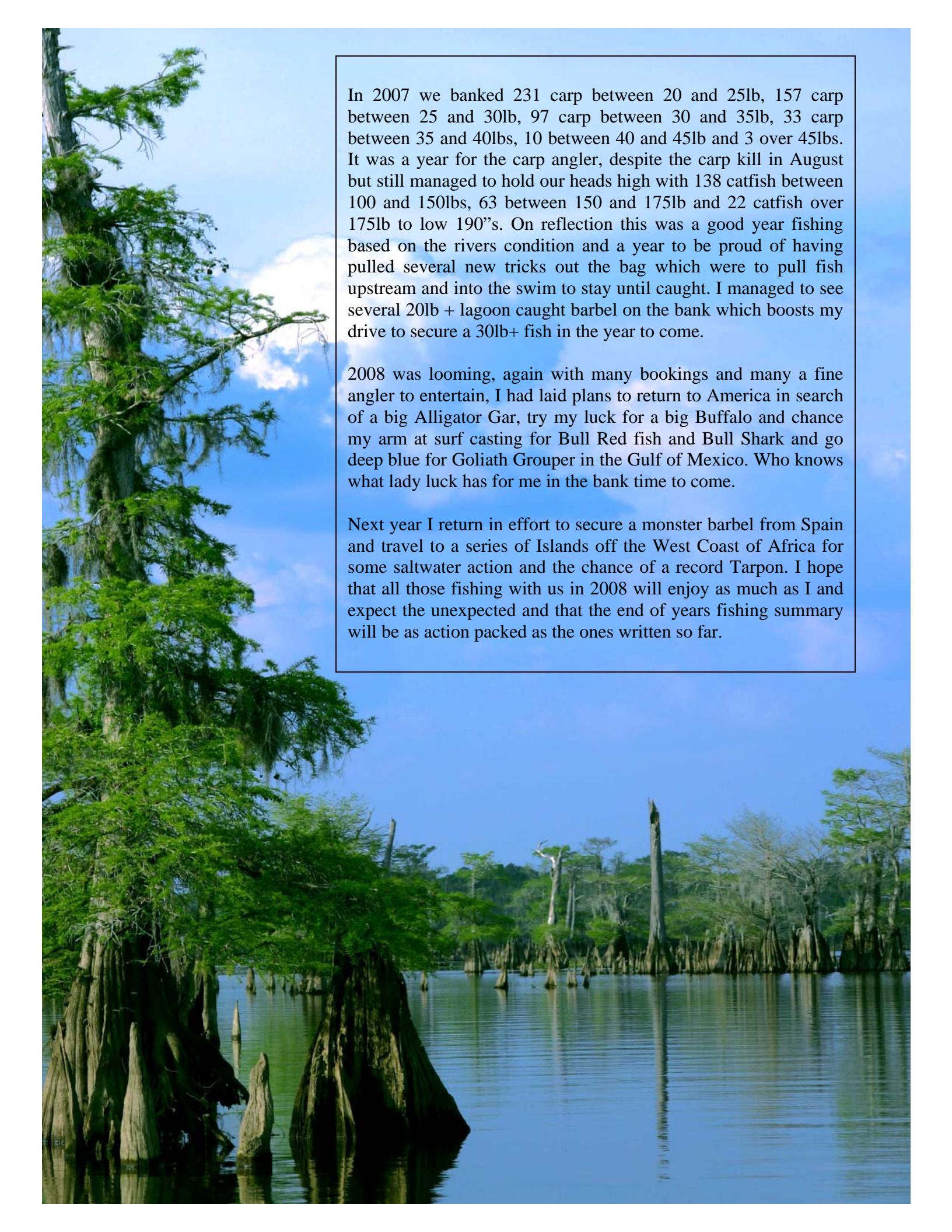
Peter was the first to phone the Spanish equivalent of the Water authority, they came to our swim in the nature reserve with a team of scientists to take water and dead fish samples, whilst there they were taking calls from other concerned guides and local fishermen but by then it was too late and the damage had been done.

September's fishing was definitely affected, although we did continue catching some nice catfish, our spirits were low as so many specimen carp were seen dead on the surface, we made jokes about catching them on top but we all knew the winters carp fishing could be a non starter. As October drew nearer I could only focus on leaving the Ebro to venture south for the Comizo Barbel. With news of a barbel trip Dad was back on a plane with a familiar face or two in order to winkle out the big ones we had heard of. October is my Birthday month and was celebrated in true style, we managed some good catches from the lagoons, capped of with a 25lb 8oz barbel from golden bollocks himself, he also managed a string of good carp and I'm sure Father Buss will be back.



I polished off my personal fishing for the year in early November with a scraper 40lber from the boat with fellow guide Gary Allen, there had been a string of big 40's and a low 50 out in the days before I departed from barbel country and was eager to get back and entertain a string of fishermen until Xmas eve. A battery of good fish led to the last week of the year, including half albinos, yet more 150+ catfish and many carp over the 30lb barrier. I had started back from my holiday to America with a blank and ended it on one, a contrast from last year where I banked a 200lb cat on my first week and ended it nearly in the same fashion.





In 2007 we banked 231 carp between 20 and 25lb, 157 carp between 25 and 30lb, 97 carp between 30 and 35lb, 33 carp between 35 and 40lbs, 10 between 40 and 45lb and 3 over 45lbs. It was a year for the carp angler, despite the carp kill in August but still managed to hold our heads high with 138 catfish between 100 and 150lbs, 63 between 150 and 175lb and 22 catfish over 175lb to low 190"s. On reflection this was a good year fishing based on the rivers condition and a year to be proud of having pulled several new tricks out the bag which were to pull fish upstream and into the swim to stay until caught. I managed to see several 20lb + lagoon caught barbel on the bank which boosts my drive to secure a 30lb+ fish in the year to come.

2008 was looming, again with many bookings and many a fine angler to entertain, I had laid plans to return to America in search of a big Alligator Gar, try my luck for a big Buffalo and chance my arm at surf casting for Bull Red fish and Bull Shark and go deep blue for Goliath Grouper in the Gulf of Mexico. Who knows what lady luck has for me in the bank time to come.

Next year I return in effort to secure a monster barbel from Spain and travel to a series of Islands off the West Coast of Africa for some saltwater action and the chance of a record Tarpon. I hope that all those fishing with us in 2008 will enjoy as much as I and expect the unexpected and that the end of years fishing summary will be as action packed as the ones written so far.

As ever a year of fishing did not come without thanks, firstly my parents who have had words of wisdom in times of need, secondly John and Ella; daddy loves you, the pebble rig and my local butcher then Chris Barr for coming on board to steady the ship whilst I vacated the swim, Mark Kavanah for dragging me away from confrontation, Peter Staggs for all his effort in making fishermen's dreams come true yet again, Johnny Jensen for a few games of chess, Adey and Daniel Hull, Time Cadman and Paul Hurst for some record breaking hauling, British Airways for getting me too and fro safely, Dan Baylis, Stephen Ross, Sean "Eggy" Fay (RIP), Steve and Jan, Leninchko Milachko, Mitchamatois Labousky, Andy "Arr" McGregor for a great start to what should be a best seller mag for Spain, Ian "Chemo" Russel and Ian "Ting Tong" Macmillan, Larry Millar and Co, Pete and John Wilson, Bobby Baker and Colin, Paul Terry, Tommy Cooper and the Grady Bunch, Tim Hade, The Schoemaker's, Soupy, Dale Kirby, Don and Angie Minchew for taking such good care of me in America, Neil and Ryan Jebson, Mike Wood and Tim Sumner, Howard Lamb and Alan Bailey, Dan Milan, Andy Franklin, Tony "Top Boy" Kellner, Tom "The Terrorist" James, Mark Smith, Dave Gawthorn, Mick Clements, Ian "The Hauler" Sav, Derek Noon and Kevin Airey, Mark Angold, The Top Lake Poachers, Tony Millar, Dean Goodwin, Adrian Bingham, Billy Powell and his Productions, The Two Francisco's, Benji Jaques, Eric Wright, Steve Curuthers and the Magnificent Eleven, Rune and Soren, Kenth Larsen, Thorke, Martin and the rest of the Viking crew, Tom, Joe and Pappa Bullman, Graham Noon, Joe Finnis, Alan Marpole, Steve "The Arm Wrestler" Cousins, The Surgeons and all those others who came, cast and caught with us during 2007.

