



Part 3

Sidewinders

are the new lures on the block

Working a lure around a wreck is guaranteed to trigger an adrenalin rush so you'll be interested to learn that the new Sidewinder lures, in tantalising colours like Rhubarb and Custard, are deadly for pollack and cod

Kevin Tate

Anne Clare

We step aboard the smart Blyth 33, Anne Clare, which operates out of Torquay, South Devon, to fish with the latest rage in lures, the tantalisingly deadly Sidewinder.



Scientists tell us that colour ceases to exist below a certain depth. It is claimed that as the depth of water increases, each colour of the spectrum gradually fades away, with red being the last to disappear into the dark abyss.

Experienced wreck anglers scoff at the science as being a pile of tosh. They know that regardless of how much proof the boffins offer, the colour of the lures they use can have a major impact on a day's sport, regardless of fishing depth.

For many years countless wrecks littering the seabed have formed the backbone of offshore angling. Home, even if temporary, to pollack, cod, bass, ling and conger eels, it has taken years of development among skippers, anglers and tackle companies to work out what lures work best over these rusting hulks.

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s no angler would dream of stepping aboard a wrecking boat without having a supply of the deadly 6½in, 172mm Red Gill rubber eels in their tackle box. They would always carry a selection of colours, including the three 'must-haves' of the day - black, red and orange.

During the mid-1980s jellyworms were in vogue, and as the 1980s slipped into the 90s various soft rubber shads became the most effective because, of course, these were the lures everyone was using.

In recent years there has been a new lure on the block - the Sidewinder - and it is a fair bet that wherever you find anglers targeting pollack, cod or bass offshore these days, you will find that Sidewinder lures are often first choice.

Torquay skipper Kevin Tate,

like many Channel and Western Approaches skippers, is a great fan of Sidewinders, saying they are the most effective lures around at the moment. Whether or not a Sidewinder would catch any more fish than those ground-breaking 172mm Red Gills is open to debate - that they are a highly effective lure is not.

"The most successful pollack and cod anglers aboard my boat are the ones who use 6in Sidewinders," said Kevin, who has so much faith in them he even keeps a stock on board just in case customers run out.

"The lures are deadly for pollack and cod, and interestingly it is the lure most commercial rod and line anglers use," he revealed.

Choice of lure colour always triggers a raging debate, and it was one issue I wanted to nail before we started fishing a wreck lying 30 miles off the South Devon coast.

"For pollack you'll not beat a Ghost White lure, but if you want to specifically target cod then Rhubarb and Custard is the one to use," said Kevin. "Of course, each day and tide is different and the optimum colour of choice can vary, even over the same day, so it is always wise to carry a range of colours and always keep an eye on what colour the most consistent anglers are using.

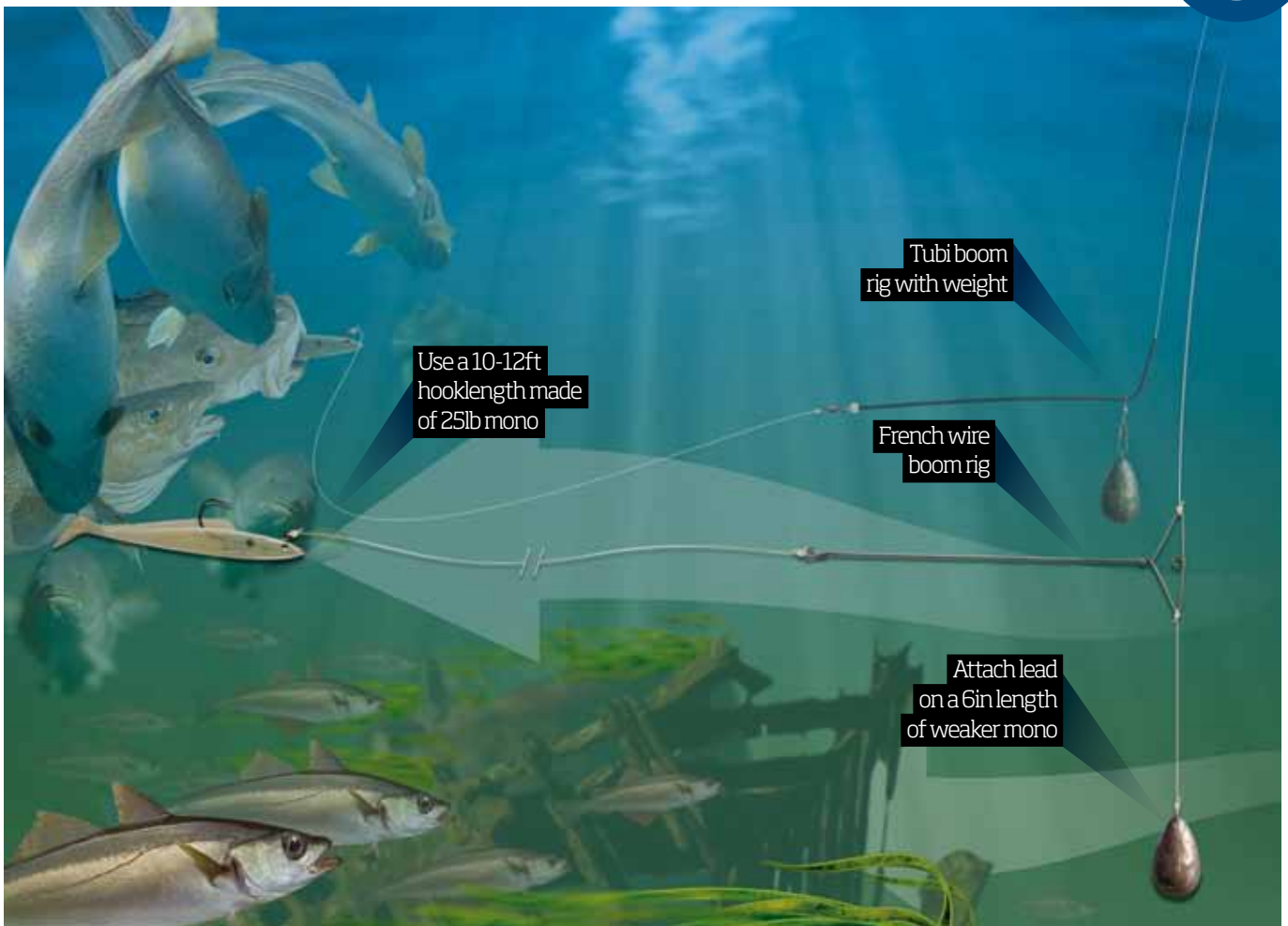
"The rule is to always have Ghost White or Rhubarb and Custard in your lure wallet," he added.

Fish shelter behind wreck as the tide increases

Fish rise off the wreck as the tide slackens

Allow the lead to touch bottom before retrieving

Retrieve the lure counting the turns of the reel handle



LURE PRESENTATION

Expert tips to help you fish a boom rig in a tackle-hungry wreck

Lure design has moved on apace, but how we actually present them has not.

We fish with long booms, today's angler favouring the tubi-type booms to carry the sinker and present their lure, although others, and that includes Kevin, stick with that traditional favourite, the simple yet highly effective French wire boom.

Whether you use a plastic or wired boom, the principle remains the same, and that is to minimise the risk of the long trace, used to present the lure, from getting wrapped around the mainline. This can very easily happen if you drop the rig too quickly through the water.

"I use a French boom because I think it's absolutely perfect for this style of fishing," said Kevin.

"I always tie the boom securely to the end of my leader, rather than simply thread the line and wrap it around the end of the boom a few times like many anglers seem to do.

"The reason for this is that I have

seen some very big fish lost as a result of the line parting, due to friction created during the fight when the wire boom is forced to slide down the leader under extreme pressure.

"I then attach the sinker to the bottom of the boom using a 6in length of mono that is weaker than the leader. This breaks first when the lead snags and all you lose is the lead.

"Many anglers use line that is far too light to attach the lure to, and I recommend using a good quality clear line of about 25lb. Always avoid excessively long hooklengths, which I feel are unnecessary and are obviously far more prone to tangling.

"I find a hooklength of around 10-12ft is perfect, and I use a single length of line, not two pieces joined in the middle by a swivel. Simple is best, but at the end of the day it's down to the individual's preference.

"Some of my top wrecking anglers always use a swivel with the section of line that the lure is

Set the hook only when you feel the weight of the fish on the rod



...tied to being of a slightly lower breaking strain than that of the other section of line.

"For example they might use 30lb breaking strain from the boom to a small high quality swivel, to which they attach a slightly lighter line of, say, 25lb.

"The thinking is that if the lure gets snagged in the wreck, then this should break off and you only have to re-tie a short section of line and a new lure to get fishing again quickly."

And the day's hot colour?

Rhubarb and Custard appeared to be a tasty combination for both cod and pollack, and while white Sidewinders accounted for plenty of pollack, the day's top rod Lenny Barnes used Bubblegum Pink lures.

It just goes to show you should always have a range of colours ready to go for a swim!

HOW TO FISH YOUR LURE

Lower your lure slowly to avoid a tangled mess

↘ All anglers have their own way of fishing a lure but this is how Kevin does it.

"Wait until the boat is stationary in the water," he said, "then drop the lure over the side, initially keeping hold of the sinker. Allow the hooklength to fully straighten out in the tide then drop the sinker and allow the rig to fall to the bottom slowly.

"If you let it plummet down too quickly then almost always this will result in a tangled mess. It is important to use a bomb or

spherical shaped sinker; leads with a flat bottom will not fall smoothly and will roll, causing tangles. On most days we use 8, 10 or 12oz sinkers, changing them as the speed of drift dictates.

"When you feel the sinker tap bottom start to retrieve, being sure to count each turn of the handle. Some days the fish will be concentrated close to the bottom, others they will be much higher in the water, and by making a note of the number of turns of the reel handle it will help you locate fish

quicker on subsequent drifts.

"The ideal speed of retrieve will vary from day to day, and even throughout the same day. Sometimes fish will respond best to a lure fished very slowly, but at other times you need to work the lure faster in order to trigger a fish to strike.

"Be a sneaky angler and watch how fast other anglers who are catching fish are working their lures. Keep an eye on the length of their traces and colour of the lures they are using."

>>> Factfile

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Besides being a top wreck skipper, Kevin also specialises in bass and the ever-popular three to five-day Channel Islands trips.

■ Check out the full range of Sidewinder lures at: www.sidewindirlures.co.uk

KEEP YOUR NERVE

Avoid that initial urge to strike at the first pull

↘ "Takes from even big fish are often surprisingly gentle affairs," said Kevin, "with the first indication that your lure has worked its magic being a delicate plucking on the end of your line, as the fish mouths the tail of the lure.

"Do not strike, stop winding, speed up or slow down the rate of retrieve, but continue winding at exactly the same speed. Often the fish will follow and play with a lure for a surprisingly long time, but in the end the temptation will be too great and it will attack.

"Still don't strike. Keep winding until the rod tip is almost into the water and you can feel the weight of the fish come on to the rod. Only then set the hook by firmly lifting into the fish: and then enjoy the fight," said Kevin.

Mostly we caught beautifully conditioned, golden-flanked summer pollack averaging around 8-12lb, but

the wreck also held reasonable numbers of tasty cod, which made a welcome change. Many of the fish came aboard coughing up fresh sprats, and by laying them alongside a lure we could see why 6in Sidewinders were so effective, in fact the similarity of a sprat to a Ghost White Sidewinder in terms of colour, profile and size is quite striking.

This wreck pollack liked orange

