

Time to Strike back

By Andre Hoffmann

Whether you are fishing for yellows, trout or whatever species you can throw a fly at, you will always get those frustrating days on the water, when nothing seems to go your way. Not even the fish...

This is the time to call on all the available tactics, to help you make your day more bearable, and to put an end to those rodbreaking, blanking sessions on the water! There are a whole heap of helplines to call on, and one of the most underrated yet affective ones, is the strike indicator.

Now, for some this causes even more confusion and frustration, and the aim of this article is to try and answer some of those where, when and how questions.

With so much indicator materials on the market, it might feel impossible to choose which one to use. All of them will work, like for instance Poptop Indicators, foam indicators, Microballs, Floats, yarn and those fancy, creative inventions like small party balloons and you name it, which all have their pros and con's.

Through experimentation, I have found that the yarn indicators gave me the best results. They are lightweight, easy to cast, give you a wide range colours and I found them to be the most sensitive as well. Normally widely available at most flyfishing shops, they're also very easy and cheap to make at home.

All you will need are some egg yarn in various colours and water repellent like Loon's Hydrostop. It is easier to pre cut the yarn strips in the desirable lengths – about 4cm. Soak them in the Hydrostop for a few minutes, remove the excess floatant and place in an open plastic container for a day or two, in a sunny window. Indicators will be dry but sticky when ready.

After a few fishing sessions just treat with silicone, dryfly floatant, if they seem to absorb too much water. Or simply discard them, preferably not in the river.

The colours to use include green, orange, red, yellow, white –not very effective in rivers- and black. For me a combined green and orange does the trick in the river. When fishing in late afternoons, in smooth, mirror like surfaces, you will find that you might struggle to see the bright indicators in the colourful reflections of the afternoon skies. This is the time to switch to a black indicator. You will be surprised to how visible a black indicator can be at this time. You can even combine it with a piece of bright yarn – orange – to add to the continuous visibility.

It's also very easy to put on to the line. Just make an overhand knot in your leader, slip the yarn through

the loop. Fold it in half. Now pull the knot tight, but remember to pull the knot around the bud section of the yarn. This makes it easy to remove or just to move the indicator, by just pulling the two "ears" apart. And this will also ensure that you won't be left with indentations in your line that might weaken it.

With yarn or any indicator for that matter, you can also control your fly depth with ease. To get it to the bottom, make the distance between indicator and your control fly about one and a half times that of the depth of the water. This ratio works best for still waters and glides. For faster flowing water it's about 2 times the water's depth. As it is easy to move the yarn indicator, you can keep experimenting with the depth until you've found the ideal one.

When you see fish feeding just below the surface, it's a good idea to then put the indicator only about 30cm from your fly, preferably an emerger off some sort, to get the fly to drift close to surface. You might find the fish taking your indicator at times. This is the time to swap your indicator for a indicator-fly. There are a load of these on the market and you can use any that will work for you, taking your venue and time of year in consideration. Always suspend a small emerger just below the indicator-fly to make your chances off success even higher.

Another very important and helpful use of an indicator is to assist you in drag management in the river. It's very important to have as little drag as possible to be a successful angler for yellows. For this I use two different coloured indicators, a small distance apart, to help you identify any drag on your line. If there's some drag present, just sort it out by mending your line.

Always carry a small pair of scissors with you, with which you trim your yarn indicator to the ideal size, for in clear water conditions fish might be a little skittish.

The only downfall of yarn indicators is when fishing in fast flowing riffles. They tend to get dragged below the surface, and get soaked very soon. But you can get rid of the excess water by giving a few side casts. It's then best to use foam or poptop indicators, or use no indicator at all, as the takes in faster water are not that subtle.

It's important to always keep a close eye on your indicator while fishing. Look for any unnatural movements, like a sudden stop, a twitch, slowing down, speeding up or a sideways pull, all of them will be your cue to strike. Don't hesitate or wait till the indicator get pulled under, for this will usually

be to late already. In glides, where yellows tend to take even more delicate, you must watch for rings to form around the indicator. This is a sure sign of a take. With yarn, you'll find they tend to sit on the surface with their "ears" at the top. These will twitch at the slightest take, and this is what makes them the most sensitive indicator for my liking.

So after all has been said and done, it's still up to you to use what works the best for you, indicator or not...

I just hope that I could clear up some of your confusions and questions around the indicator subject. And hopefully I helped you to strike back at those ruthless days that the river used to throw at you!