

# Angling and wildlife

## Protecting wildfowl

# Enjoy fishing follow the Golden Rules

Angling benefits our environment in many ways. If you spend hours by the water, you learn to appreciate the natural world. This often leads to an interest in protecting it. But the places you fish are important for wildlife too. Inexperience or a little carelessness with your gear can easily harm wildlife – and the good image of angling.

### Litter from angling

Always take your litter and equipment away with you. Discarded nylon line is really dangerous for birds and animals. Take your line home. Either burn it or cut it into short lengths before disposing of it carefully.

### Breakages and snagging

Rigs may get caught in bankside vegetation, branches or other underwater snags. If you can, remove caught rigs immediately. But don't put yourself at risk.

If you can't recover a caught rig, or if you lose terminal tackle, tell the club bailiffs or the fishery owner. They can arrange to remove it.

Use tackle that is the right size for the fish you are planning to catch.

### Swim choice

Choose your swim with care. Avoid snagging bankside trees, vegetation and obstructions in the water.

Make sure you don't damage the vegetation at the water's edge.

Be careful not to disturb nesting birds.

Try to avoid places where people feed waterfowl. If birds expect food, they are more likely to get tangled up in your equipment. Take extra care if you have to fish in such places.

### Unattended rods

Once you have set up your equipment for angling, always stay with your rods. It is illegal to leave setup rods unattended.

Birds or animals could try to eat the bait on the hooks and hurt themselves. They could also become entangled in the line.

Once you have set up your equipment for angling, always stay with your rods.

If you need to leave your swim, stop angling, gather together all your lines and secure the hooks to the rod. Remove bait from the hooks.



## Rigs

Try to lose as little line as possible in the event of snagging. If you can, use a hook length with a lower breaking strain line than the reel line. If you use reel line straight through to the hook, make sure it has a weaker link. And make sure that leger links have a lower breaking strain. Remember that weaknesses occur at the knots where line is joined, where it is tied to swivels etc, and where shot are pinched onto the line. This is true for all types of rig.

Check your reel line regularly for signs of wear and damage. Remove any damaged line and dispose of it carefully.

Replace your reel line regularly.

## Bolt rigs

It's OK to use bolt rigs or fixed leads. But ensure that the leger weight can slip free in the event of snagging or tangling. And make sure that a fish or bird will not end up dragging a leger around if the line breaks.

## Hooks

Where possible, use barbless hooks or reduced barb hooks. Birds can free themselves more easily from these hooks. And rescuers will also find them easier to remove.

## Weights

Lead weights are illegal in most sizes. Non-toxic weights are widely available and should be used whenever possible.

You may use lead weights that are 0.06 grams (No. 8 shot) or less, or more than 28.35 grams (1oz).

## While fishing

Beware of birds swimming into your line or picking up surface baits.

Submerge rod tips if you are legering using bite alarms. Keep lines under the surface to avoid waterfowl. If weed growth is light, it may be possible to use backleads to keep the line below the water's surface.

Always watch your rod when you're legering with quivertips or other visual bite indicators. You may be able to keep the rod tip under, or close to, the water's surface. If this is not possible, only retrieve the line when there's no risk of birds swimming across it.

Retrieve your line if you're float fishing and birds seem likely to swim through it. Remember that a waggler float with the line 'buried' still presents a risk – it will be only just below the surface.

Take great care when fishing with surface baits such as bread or 'floaters'. These may attract waterfowl.

Sometimes you can avoid the problem by anchoring the bait with a back-lead. This allows you to submerge the bait below the surface when a bird approaches.

But remember that swans can easily reach food a metre below the surface and that other birds often dive for food.

If your floating baits are attracting too much attention from the birds, move away or choose a different fishing method.

## Take great care when fishing with surface baits such as bread or 'floaters'

### Help new anglers

If you see beginners using unsuitable tackle, why not help them? You might also help to make a lifelong angler by improving their catches. **If the worst happens...** If a swan, or other large bird or animal, is caught in your line, cut the line immediately.

Never hold onto the line, as this may cause severe injury and will increase distress.

Report the incident as soon as possible to the Swan Sanctuary. Call their hotline on 01932 240790. You can also visit their website at [www.theswansanctuary.org.uk](http://www.theswansanctuary.org.uk)

Free small birds immediately. If treatment is required, hold comfortably in a small box or other dark space.

We would like to thank the following organisations for their help and support in producing this leaflet:

- Angling Trades Association;
- Angling Trust;
- National Swan Convention.

The Specialist Anglers Alliance (SAA) has produced a *Code of Conduct for Specialist Coarse Anglers*. This is available from [www.anglingtrust.net](http://www.anglingtrust.net)

### Are you an Angling Club or a Fishery Owner?

Make sure the anglers at your fishery follow these Golden Rules.

- Put the rules about litter on your angling permits.
- Publicise the phone numbers of the Environment Agency (08708 506506) and the Swan Sanctuary (01932 240790).
- Offer help and advice to beginners.
- Organise 'clean-up' days to remove litter and any tackle snagged in trees or vegetation.
- Consider providing rubbish bins – but only if you can empty them regularly. It is important that bins don't become overfull.

## More information

Do call us for further advice on 08708 506506. We will help if we can.

Would you like to know more about how to improve its value to wildlife? Contact us on 08708 506506 and ask for a free copy of *Freshwater Fisheries & Wildlife Conservation – A Good Practice Guide*.