

Carp attraction at Eliburn, but there is so much more

Alastair Wicksted had been bankside for four hours from 7am waiting for a bite at Eliburn Reservoir. He had even started tying some rigs to pass the time then his alarm sounded.

Seconds later and the self-employed cleaning contractor lifted his rod and was into a hefty carp. The rod bent as the fish dived for the weeds to its right in a bid to rid itself of the hook. It then veered left and continued to fight by going one way and then another as the carp tried to outwit the angler.

Ten minutes later and it was all over. The fish (pictured) was safely in the landing net and the smile on Wicksted's face spoke volumes. Satisfied is the best way to describe it.

Volunteers have just cleared weed from the section of the water he was fishing. More has to be removed from the reservoir which is run by a not-for-profit organisation, and more and more anglers are making the trip.

It costs £7 a day for an adult to fish and currently the hours are from 8am to 8pm (juniors under 16 £2). And there are bigger fish to catch in the water.

Wicksted said there are resident carp of up to 30lb resident and other species include roach, tench, ide and eel, but it is the lure of the carp which makes many come to cast a line.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/X7XxdwjxbwM?si=3nYPsgmYBzaKBZFC>

Alastair Wicksted playing the carp at Eliburn in bright, summere sunshine. Video by ***Nigel Duncan***

He said: "We have hard-fighting fish in this reservoir. Full tails and the average size is around 8lb to 10lb, but there are a couple of fish 20lb-plus in here and even a 30lb carp. Eliburn is definitely a place to come and fish."

Magiscroft, near Cumbernauld, Broom near Annan and Orchill near Gleneagles plus Drumtassie at Blackridge tend to be mentioned by anglers ahead of Eliburn, but Wicksted said that it is a natural lake and not just a basin which has been dug out by man.

He added: "We are only 30 minutes from Edinburgh and 45 minutes from Glasgow and you don't need a lot of expensive gear to fish here. You can use a standard float set-up and I am using a running ledger but others use a method feeder.

"I prefer to use a PVA bag with a running lead and you have to pick your spot because of the weed. We are trying to get the weed under control but it is proving difficult but we are getting there.

"Volunteer labour is doing the work and we are even getting guys coming here on day tickets helping us because they realise how difficult it is. Everything we bring in in cash terms goes back into the fishery.

"It is stocked annually with carp and tench when need and ide, roach, perch, tench and the odd eel are in here and we are very keen to encourage kids to come and fish here. I try to encourage them when I can and give them tackle to make sure they have the right stuff.

"If we don't have kids coming through then we will not have a fishery in years to come. We've got guys who have been junior

members here and are now well into their 30's still fishing the place which is brilliant."

Season tickets are available but are "very much in demand" said Wicksted who revealed that a winter ticket is available of around £50 and that is unlimited fishing for the whole winter.

Day tickets are available from the bankside bailiffs and you are allowed a maximum of two rods, one for juniors, and anglers should bring with them a landing net and unhooking mat.

Rig checks are made by bailiffs and only West Lothian Angling Association members are allowed to fish at night.

Any theft of fish from the lake will result in a lifetime ban and barbed or micro barbed hooks are not permitted in the water which has a maximum depth of 13ft with water flowing into the river from the Neil Burn.

There are two outflows into the Eliburn and Lochshot Burns and the four-acre water is just off Houston Road.