

Tench Baits – By Tenchfisher’s Steve Innes.

About The Author: Steve has been specimen angling for forty years and a member of The Tenchfishers for 8. He started fishing for big carp and tench in the seventies and has followed this branch of the sport ever since. He is also a keen game angler and contributor to various angling publications/websites. He lives in West Berkshire surrounded by big fish venues.

Introduction

Continuing from my first article where I discussed the best way to get started on catching specimen tench, Part 2 looks at that critical subject bait.

Wherever possible I have tried to use statistics from our group records to substantiate this missive and drawn on a wider perspective of tenching too, in order to identify current trends. The group now has over 200 members so I do consider this a good statistical base to rely upon, with many hundreds of fish being captured annually.

Bait Evolution

I think most anglers appreciate that just about any bait will capture tench as they have a pretty catholic taste when it comes to their diets. Classically these fish were often captured on lobworm, brandling or breadpaste (often flavoured with aniseed or custard powder).

Then the boilie era arrived thanks to the pioneering efforts of Fred Wilton and many tench anglers made the switch to homemade HNV’s.

The maggot was the original particle bait but the early successes of Rod Hutchinson and his seed particles got many tench anglers thinking about mass baiting too. The next trend was pellets/seeds in their various forms and more recently the arrival of artificials.

So in reality I can see 5 clear evolutionary stages.

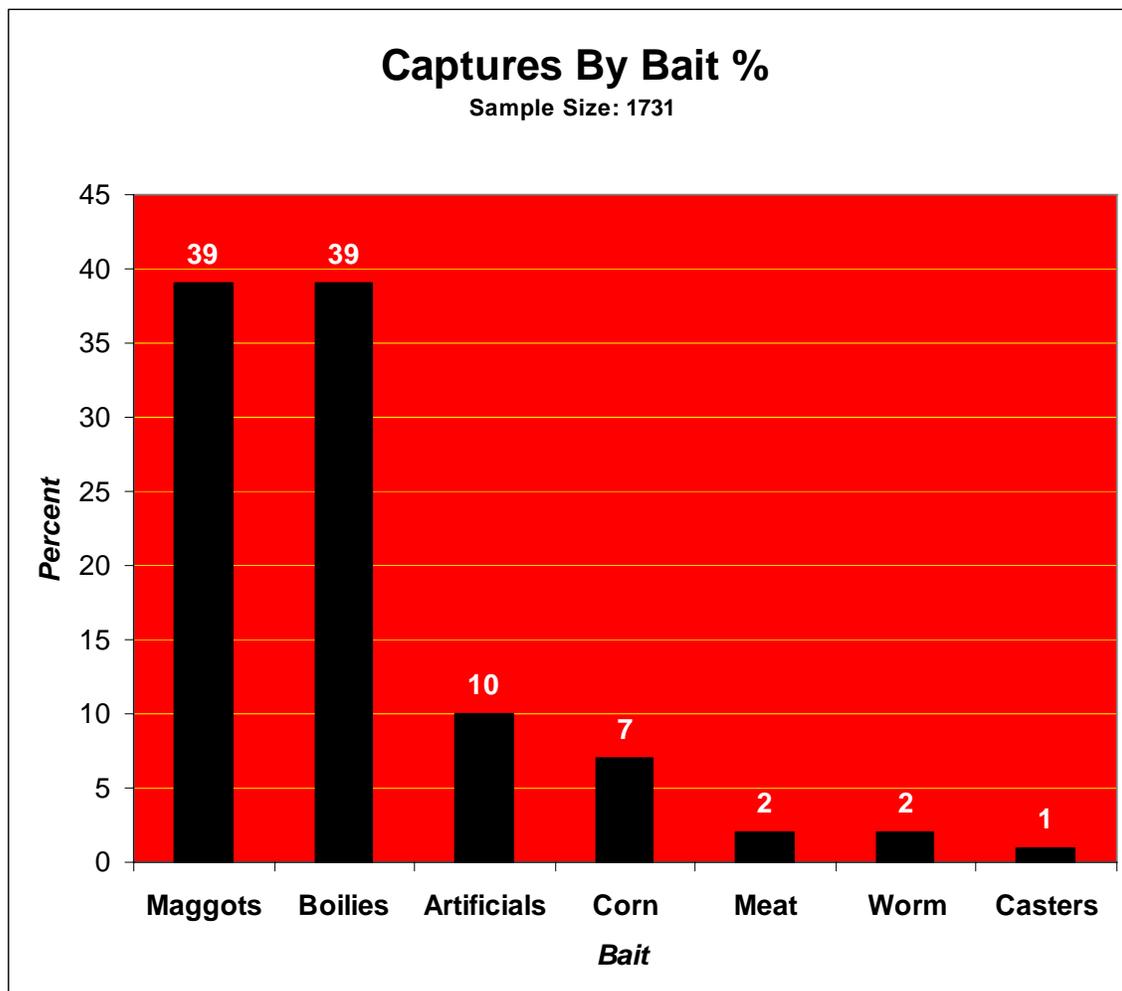
Today four broad classifications exist. **Traditional** (maggot, caster, worm, bread, meat), **Particles** (including corn, maize, hemp), **“Specials”** (boiles, pastes, pellets) and the **Enterprise/Berkeley artificials** in all their forms. The latter is the new kid on the block and a substantial development which is growing in momentum.

Carping Similarities

It is no surprise that tench bait development closely mirrors that of carp anglers. The record tench choked down a boilie and many significant specimens are accidental captures by carp anglers. The principle difference is how that bait is presented as tench are not generally tolerant of heavy carp rigs. This means smaller boilies (10/12ml) are fished on lighter rigs and hook sizes rarely exceed a 10. Maggots find their way onto

size 12/14/16 hooks and not maggot clips! Monofilament hook links are still more popular than their braid counterparts enabling a balanced rig to be achieved. You only have to watch Korda DVD's to see how cute the tench are at getting away with it compared to the carp! Just watch Part 1 and see the tench avoiding popped up baits over a bed of particles. So similar baits yes, but a more delicate approach rig wise. This is an important consideration as bait alone will not put specimens on the bank.

The Bait League Table 2005 (all fish over 6lb).

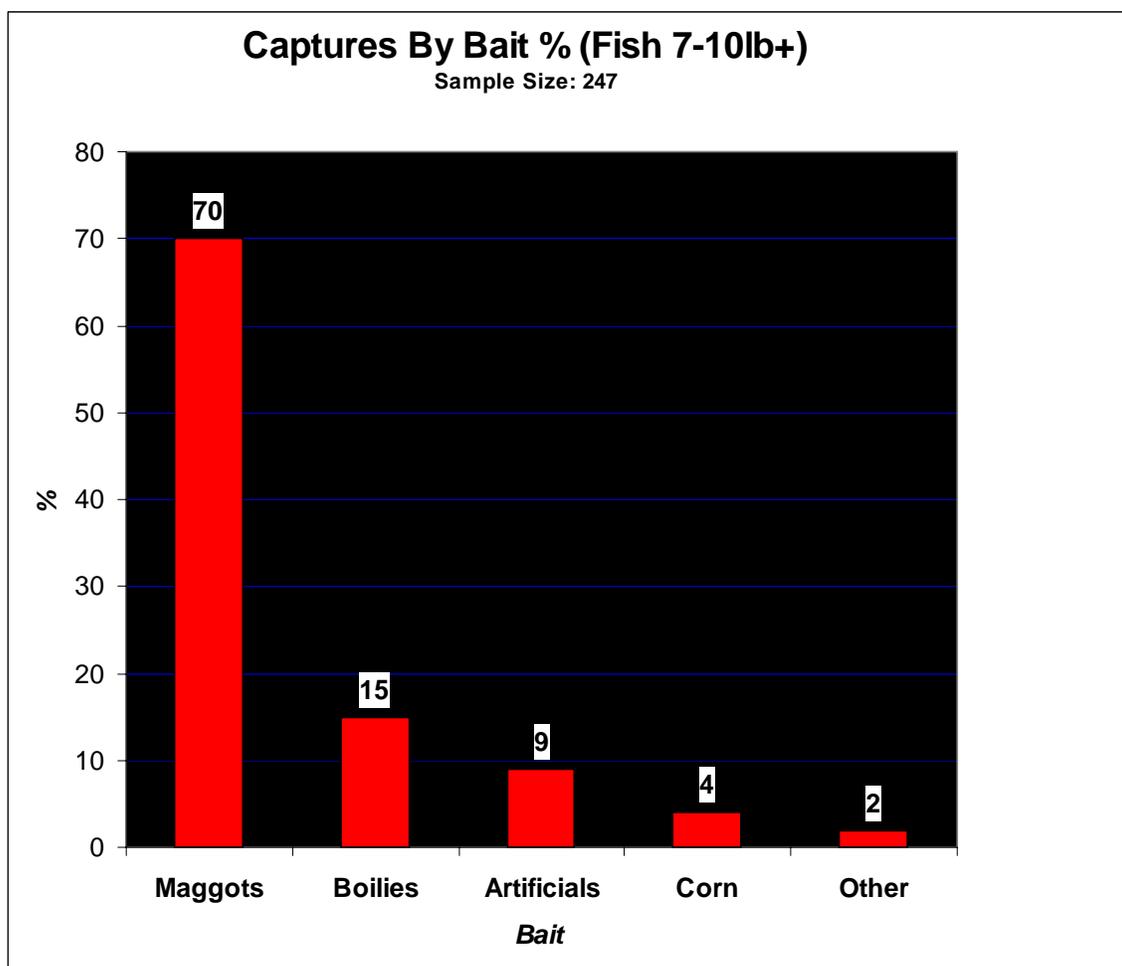


For 2005 boilie caught tench have moved up to high 30% from an average of 34%. Tench anglers seem to be in two camps about their use, some do – some don't. There are acknowledged boilie venues like Sywell for example, however the current absence of nuisance fish in many pits means that the high tech baits are far from first choice.

The maggot and other traditional still account for 61% of all tench captures. Red maggot is considered to give an edge and many tench anglers swear by them. Boilies used are legion but big name brands such as Mainline (Activ Maple 8), Richworth (Tutti Frutti), Dynamite (Squid and Octopus), would all be in a top ten.

As regards flavours some of our members do flavour their maggots. I was a great fan of Tench Magic (aka: Archies Aftershave!), but classics like strawberry, maple crème, tutti frutti, plum, esterberry still find their way into bait boxes. Archie Braddock is a big fan of “gassing” his hook maggots in a sealed container of flavour! A fair few flavours of all descriptions get added to spod mixes too these days. In the end it is all about angler confidence – and if you catch on a particular concoction then odds on you’ll repeat the flavour for the season. My 3 favourites are Tench Magic, Hutchinson Strawberry Frait and Dynamite Pineapple. One member did superbly well with a John Baker plum favoured paste. Fruity sweet flavours have been a long time tench favourite.

Bait Focus – Specimen Tench 7lb-11lb+



This sample is based on 247 tench including 5 fish over 11lb to a best of 11lb 12oz. The humble maggot reigns supreme here but do remember that this is a much smaller sample and as such less robust than the previous data. However the predominance of large tench caught on maggot remains significant.

The Rise Of The Artificial



Artificials, specifically maggot or caster have accounted for 10% of all tench captures in 2005. Five years ago when these baits were arriving in the tackle shops I think most anglers were somewhat sceptical. Nowadays their results speak for themselves. Some anglers combine these baits with the real thing relying on the artificial to counterbalance hook weight or improve hooking efficiency via the popular mag-aligner set up. Personally I have taken tench to 9lb plus and double figure bream, on artificials alone. I have a high degree of confidence in them, particularly Enterprise's red maggot.

In Summary

Bait is just one part of the equation in pursuing specimen tench. In order of priority bait is last on my list. Finding the tench in the first place is critical, you simply cannot overlook thorough location work. How I intend to present the bait is the second priority and what I stick on the hook, my last. Remember as the season progresses tench can get very tricky to hook up and you will need to scale down rigs and bait sizes accordingly. Simply fishing the same old 12ml boilie may be costing you fish!

Good Tenching.

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