

# Pike Anglers Club of Great Britain



## Landing & Unhooking Pike



When it comes to landing pike, a large, knotless landing net with arms of at least 36 inches should be used. Ensure that the mesh of the net is well sunk before drawing the pike over it and lifting the net sufficiently to retain the pike.

Holding the net as shown in the photograph will take the strain from the frame of the net, and allow you to carry net, rod and fish safely together to the prearranged unhooking area. If necessary, gather up the mesh to raise the pike further from the Ground.

If fishing with a friend you can keep the pike in the water in the landing net while they ready the unhooking equipment. Never lay pike down on hard or rough surfaces, always use an area of soft grass or better still a well padded unhooking mat.

When lure fishing many experienced pike anglers prefer to land their pike by hand. This is a method best used on small fish, and only when hooks are clearly visible and avoided. At all other times a net is to be preferred.

With your pike safely in the net and carried ashore, place it on a large, padded unhooking mat. Look to see where your hooks are before proceeding to handle the fish. Insert one or two fingers under a gill plate, keeping them well away from any hooks. You might like to wear a purpose made unhooking glove or leather gardening glove on the hand you do this with. Lift the pike's head carefully and its mouth will usually open. Maintain this hold while you use a pair of 10-12 inch artery forceps to grip and remove the hooks - top hook first, then the lower. It is now that you will appreciate the use of semi-barbed hooks. If the hooks are in deeper near the throat, insert the forceps through the gaps in the gills below your 'holding-hand'. Please do this with great care and preferably under instruction if for the first time.

When fishing with lures, which tend to have bigger and thicker-wired hooks fitted, you will benefit from the use of pliers as opposed to forceps. Always carry a strong pair of side-cutters in case you need to cut through the hooks to aid unhooking.



When you are a lot more experienced you may want to unhook pike in the water, thus minimising contact. Despite the awesome look of all those sharp teeth, the pike will not purposely bite you. Don't be frightened, treat the pike with respect and confidence. If the fish is small, you may find it easier to lift the pike to unhook it, as shown on the left. If the fish is bigger, then it is easier to unhook the fish by kneeling astride it, as on the right.

If the hooks are difficult to get out, do not cut the trace, unclip it. Put the pike in the landing net and into the water. Then seek help from another pike angler, do not feel embarrassed, we have all been there. More information for dealing with this situation can also be found on the '*Coping With Deep Hooked Pike*' Page.

