

Pike Anglers Club of Great Britain



Lure making by Graham Slater



When I first started making lures, about 5 years ago, it was for a very good reason; I simply couldn't buy the type of lure I required. I wanted something that had a nice action, sank slowly, was of decent quality and a reasonable price. I found quite a few claiming some, or all, of these attributes but they seldom lived up to their promise so I decided to have a go.

Some of my first efforts weren't brilliant as there was a lot of trial and error involved, some caught but some went into the bin after a couple of casts (I threw them there, I don't mean I miscast and they went in the bin). Five years on I've got it about right and, by penning this piece, will hopefully put any budding lure makers on the right track and help avoid some of the mistakes I made..

Making lures is not difficult; anyone with even the scantest of DIY skills is more than capable. I use power tools where possible as it is quicker and easier but they are not essential. Where I use a router, for instance, to round over the edges a rasp and sandpaper would do equally well, the same applies to the belt sander. The only real essentials are a jig saw, for cutting out the blanks, and some form of power drill.

Making lures is not only very enjoyable in itself but it is far more satisfying to catch a fish on something you've made rather than bought, be warned though that it can be as addictive as collecting them.

Materials are a matter of choice but I favour Beech for any kind of glider although you could just as easily use Meranti, Oak or Mahogany. My Beech comes from the local wood yard; I buy a plank and get them to thickness it for me, for the lure in question that would be 19mm.

Paint is simply spray cans from B&Q whilst the lead is off cuts of flashing from the scrap yard, or in the absence of a scrap yard, a roll of the stuff from Wickes. Some Araldite, Envirotex Lite, stick on eyes and screw eyes for hook attachment, split rings and hooks and everything is ready to go. I've listed specialist suppliers at the end of this piece.

Obviously you need a pattern of some kind to work to and there are a number of ways to obtain these.

There are quite a few available on the Dutch lure building site, these just need saving and printing off and are as good a way as any to get started. Another way to obtain a template is to draw round any of your mates lures that take your fancy, with the outline done you can then use one of those things sold to find cables and pipes in walls to identify the position of the lead holes. Finally you could just make your own design up but I wouldn't recommend that in the early stages.

Whichever method you choose it is best to draw the pattern onto cardboard, cut it out and use it not only to mark out the initial outline but also for the positioning of hook hangers, lead holes and line tie.

So; with the basics out of the way we'll build a lure step by step, in this case a glider, right through to completion. Draw around the template onto your chosen wood. Make sure the lure runs along the grain as opposed to across it, this avoids what is know as short grain, something which will weaken the body of the lure.



Clamp the wood to something suitable and cut around the outline with a Jigsaw.

Take the rough blank and sand both faces and the edges smooth, I've used the belt sander but you could just as easily do this with a sheet of sandpaper.

Using the template, mark the positions of the holes for the hook hangers, line tie and lead holes. It is absolutely essential that these holes are centered on the lure or it will not run true, I use a mortice gauge which I set up to the thickness of the wood when I buy it but again, you could measure and mark.



With all of the holes now centered and marked, drill pilot holes with a suitable bit. These holes will make it a lot easier when it comes to fitting the screw eyes but they also serve as a guide for the larger bit for the lead holes.

Round over the edges of the lure, this serves two purposes. Any glider turns better with rounded over edges and, when we come to finish the lure, it enables the Envirotex to cover completely as it doesn't cover well on sharp corners. Once again, I've used a Router set up in a table but a rasp (the smallest Surform is good) and some 80 grit sandpaper will achieve the same result.

Beech in particular soaks up water at an alarming rate and can be the very devil to weight correctly unless it is sealed first. To this end I use two coats of exterior grade varnish, the first thinned slightly so that it soaks into the wood. You will see in the photograph that I have mounted the blank on a stick; this is just a length of dowel with a screw eye fixed to it and makes life easier for varnishing, painting etc. Again, not essential but easier.



With the varnish dry, usually 24 hours later, it is now time to weight the blank. Everyone has their own way of doing this and what I'm going to illustrate here is the method that works for me.



Lightly screw in hook hangers with the same split rings, trebles and leader that you will be using. Cut two pieces of lead flashing, drill these and attach them to your previously drilled holes via a couple of screw eyes. Place the whole lot in a bucket of water and trim the lead until it only just sinks, ensuring that it sinks slightly nose down as this will give the finished lure the best action.

Remove everything and dry thoroughly. I use an old serving spoon with a pouring lip formed at the front for melting lead, the heat source being a blow torch. If this is your first lure I would recommend using a piece of scrap wood with some 9mm holes bored into it, melt the lead, let it set and then tap it out. This will give you the depth of the hole, plus 5mm for filler, you need to drill in your lure blank.

PLEASE BE CAREFUL WHEN MELTING LEAD. EVERYTHING MUST BE COMPLETELY DRY AS ANY MOISTURE WILL CAUSE THE MOLTEN LEAD TO SPLATTER. WEAR SUITABLE EYE PROTECTION AND THICK GLOVES.

Drill the lead holes using a 10mm bit and either re-melt the lead and pour it into the holes or, if you are lucky, the pellets that you've already formed will just drop into the slightly larger holes. Araldite the lead in place, it will work loose in use otherwise, and leave to set.



With the araldite dry it is now just a case of filling the holes with wood filler, I use Ronseal two part filler as it goes off quick and sets very hard. Overfill the holes so that the filler stands proud of the surface, this will allow you to use the rasp and sandpaper to smooth it to the contours of the body.

With the body smoothed off fit the screw eyes, for the extra few pence I'd always use Stainless Steel as some of the softer options do have a tendency to sheer off as you are screwing them in. As I've previously intimated, I mount my lures on a dowel so don't fit the rear eye but you may wish to at this point. You can always grip it with a pair of mole grips for what comes next.

Mix a suitable quantity of Envirotex. I use a small measuring cup that I bought from the Chemists but anything will do as long as you can measure accurately. It is absolutely essential that you mix it 50/50 or it will never go off. With the Envirotex suitably mixed I then use a disposable glove to apply it although you could just as easily use a small brush, stick etc. I find using my finger to be far and away the easiest method.

NB. Not everyone does the above stage, some miss this step out and spray the lure straight away. I do it this way because it not only prolongs the life of the lure but gives a lovely smooth surface to paint on without having to spend ages sanding!

In my case I now put the lure on the drying wheel and let it rotate for 2 hours thus ensuring an even coat. A method you may like to consider is to have 2 pieces of wire bent into an S shape, these are then placed through the front and rear eyes and the lure is hung from a stick over a bucket. Turn the lure end over end every twenty minutes or so until the Envirotex becomes tacky enough not to run.



24 hours later and your lure is ready for painting. A rub down with some 120 grit paper to key the surface and you can let your imagination get to work. I always use two coats of matt white as a base, after that it's your choice. Just remember that it is better to build up thin coats of paint than to try and cover everything in one go. Templates for bars, stripes etc. are very easily made using cardboard and a craft knife. A tip I would share here is not to lay the template directly on the body of the lure but to use a couple of cocktail sticks as spacers, this stops the paint smudging.

With the paint dry it is now just a case of adding suitable eyes and giving the whole thing a dusting of glitter spray (optional). A further two coats of envirotex and you are ready to fit the rear hook hanger, split rings and hooks and try it out (I always put a blob of araldite on the rear screw eye to seal it). A useful tip for clearing the paint/envirotex from the screw eyes is to use a suitable sized drill bit in a battery drill.

It is worthwhile having a couple of sizes of split rings and hooks either side of the ones you used when you balanced the lure originally. You will be amazed at the difference in sink rated that can be achieved with even the smallest of changes.

Finally, a few tips regarding Envirotex.

- Always allow 24 hours for the Envirotex to dry before re-coating or handling.
- It will mix a lot better if you warm it first, either in the airing cupboard or in warm water.
- Acetone based solvents are good for cleaning the stuff (I use cheap nail varnish remover).
- Leave the mixing cup until the stuff has set, you can then flex the sides and peel it out like a skin, saves throwing the cup away every time.

I hope this has been of some help to any budding lure makers and may even inspire one or two of you to have a go. It is satisfying having a lure that you've made a good job of, it's even more satisfying catching a pike on it!

Finally, don't give up if your early efforts aren't always perfect. You can always add a twist of lead wire or even drill some of the lead out, and the paint jobs? They get better with experience.

