

Photography for fishing -- Part 1 the equipment.



Introduction

We fish for the thrill of the moment, for the thrill of capturing a carp. The memory of the capture quickly fades and one way we can relive that memory and the excitement is by capturing the fish in a photograph. Capturing fish is not the only reason why we fish, it is being there, by the lake, out in the wild. If we can capture some sense of what it means to be out there by the lake, river, pond or whatever we can truly capture the essence of what is it to be a fisherman.

Some of you will know me as The-Q from the forums a British carp angler condemned to a life of servitude in Holland, I also happen to be a keen photographer and I enjoy photography almost as much as I enjoy fishing. As a fisherman I get to see many sights that many non wildlife photographers do not see, fry being chased by a pike, a dragon fly alighting on the pod or even an insect in incredible detail feeding on a flower.

Anyway a lot of you might be asking what is the purpose of this article and how it links to carp fishing ? well if you can take good quality photo's not only will you be able to remember your own and your mates captures that much better but you will also develop a useful hobby that can be practiced when the carp are not obliging.

I intend this article not to be a complete treatise on photography but an introduction to what photography is and why you will be interested in moving away from the full auto mode on a camera. To allow you to experiment with the features that you have paid for on your brand new digital camera and hopefully take some amazing shots. Photography is not difficult with modern equipment, anyone can do it and all it takes is a good eye to see the potential of a scene in a finished shot, and you are there. One point to bear in mind,

however, if you are a superb photographer it doesn't help if your mate taking the pictures of your new 50lber isn't. So if you like this article pass it on and ensure that the pictures of your fish turn out as good as yours of theirs.

This is the 1st article in a multipart series covering many aspects of photography. In this article I will focus on the why and the what of fishing photography. In part two I will look at the how, ie how to get the best out of your camera. In part three I will look at what makes a good shot as well how to photograph your catch. Part four will look at how to take photographs for articles as well as how to add a more professional touch to your lighting in all fishing situations.

What does an F stop mean and why should I care

I suspect that most of you own a digital camera of some kind, film has its uses but for 99% of modern photography digital is king. For the kinds of photography that we as carp anglers are going to do there is really only one choice – digital.

For our purposes there are 2 types of digital cameras, Digital Single Lens Reflex or DSLR's and Digital Still Camera's or DSC's.



DSLR stands for Digital Single Lens Reflex and is basically a digital version of the SLR cameras of old. They are generally larger and more bulky than DSC (Digital Still Camera) and have interchangeable lenses as well as many other “Pro” features. They are also generally more expensive but they allow you to get the best out of your photography as they allow for almost complete control. Due to the fact that you are looking down the lens when you take a photo they are also the camera equivalent of WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get). Generally as the sensor that records the photo is larger the image quality is generally better than on a DSC but standards are creeping up and the

photographic quality on some DSC's is amazing. That is not to say that DSC image quality is poor, just that DSLR's are generally better due to the larger image sensor.

	Pro	Con
DSLR	Exact control of the camera	Bulky and heavy, especially if you add on lenses
	Wide range of lenses available allowing you to cover fish eye to extreme telephoto	Expensive if you add on lens costs, external flashes
	Quality	Movie mode only on higher end cameras
	Full 35mm frame sensor available	Live view only on newer cameras
DSC	Relatively cheap	Onboard flash can cause issues and can be poor
	Everything in the box	Can be limited by the lens
	Has a movie mode	limited creative control
	Live view	

Please note that the “line” between DSC's and DSLR's is getting more and more blurred each passing year. In 2008 we saw the first DSLR's with HD movie capture with the release of the Canon 5D Mk2 as well as in body Image stabilization in some of the DSC range several years before. What I will say is that no one type of camera (and there are more than I have listed here) is the “best” one. Only you can decide which is right for you, and personally, just like fishing rods, I own several of each as both types are handy for different purposes. *Since writing this article Canon has released the 500D which is an entry level 15.7Mpixel DSLR with HD movie mode... oh well, should be a superb camera and really invalidates some of the arguments for the DSC. As soon as I get my hands on one I will rewrite this section.*

Please note that there is also another kind of camera (one that I didn't have to hand) that almost bridges the gap between the DSC and DSLR, the semi pro DSC. Examples of this are the Canon G series (currently G10) and the Powershot Pro1. These cameras offer almost the same level of control as a DSLR apart from interchangeability of lenses. They often have the advantage of flip out screens. These can be useful if you need to take a self shot as you can flip the screen round so that you can see yourself holding the fish. Personally speaking I moved onto a DSLR a while ago (from a Canon G5) and have not looked back, yes the flip round screen is useful but is not critical.

Film v's Digital

As this is a common debate I will cover this briefly here. Film is dead, get over it. Digital is cheaper to process and large memory cards make your shooting almost limitless.

DSC's

For the DSC tour we will be using another Canon the IXUS 90 IS a 9 megapixel image stabilized pocket sized camera. This is the type of camera that I will ensure that no matter what will be in my pocket / bag at all times. It is small, light and takes fairly good pictures if lacking in easy complete creative control.



As DSC's seem to work better in point and shoot mode I will only gloss over them here. The above picture of a Canon DSC is pretty much typical of a DSC in that the rear view is dominated by a large view screen. Unlike the DSLR you do not need to look through a manual view finder but you look at the large screen and frame your photo in there. This has many advantages in that you can hold the camera away from your face as you shoot and that even total novices (that you might have to hand you camera to) have no issues in framing.

DSLR's

For the tour around the DSLR we will be using a Canon EOS 20D as the demonstration camera. It is a good solid DSLR though has been superseded by the EOS 50D (and by the 30and 40D in previous years) in 2008 however most of what I show here is also applicable to any DSLR. If you are a Nikon (or other manufacturer) user most of the features here will be on your camera but will be called slightly different names.



The above picture shows the back of a 20D, though this camera has been surpassed by the EOS 50D it still makes a useful “work horse” camera and it’s 8.2 Megapixel resolution is perfectly fine to print out up to A3 as well as being perfect for the web.

The labeled parts are :

- 1, Hotshoe this is where an external flash will be connected
- 2, Multicontrol joystick, used for navigating menus as well as setting current focus point (custom function)
- 3, AE lock and Focus point selector buttons
- 4, Scroll wheel for menus and for setting exposure bias
- 5, 3 way On off switch, bottom setting – off, middle setting on, top setting – on but disable exposure bias modification (useful if you have a big nose :o)
- 6, Various buttons for accessing the menu as well as controlling playback

Creative control

This is where a DSLR really starts to shine, you have easy almost limitless creative control and if you own a DSLR you should use it! Move away from full auto and start to take the shots you want, not what the software decided.



In the picture above you can see the detail of the shooting mode selector of a 20D. Note that if you have a Nikon (or other manufacturer's camera) your symbols will be labeled differently but will have the same basic functions.

Starting from top left

A-DEP – Automatic Depth of field – see aperture later

M – Manual allows for complete control of both Shutter and Aperture

Av – Aperture value - allows you to set the aperture whilst allowing the camera to set the appropriate shutter speed

Tv- Timer Value - allows you to set shutter speed the whilst allowing the camera to set the appropriate aperture

P – Programmed AE – Allows you to set all setting on the camera, RAW file, flash etc but the camera sets the aperture and shutter speed.

Green Circle – Full Auto, the camera controls all features

Rest of settings – look them up in your manual. They are a collection of semi automatic scene modes to allow for different pre programmed shooting scenarios. If you have read my guide you should not need them.

Lenses



Lenses are also a massive plus point for DSLR's. By being able to swap the lens you gain huge amounts of control over how a picture is created and allow you to take the picture you want. Lenses are divided into 4 broad categories

- 1, Telephoto – Shown is a 70-200 F2.8 Image Stabilized lens (see later for explanation of the F number)
- 2, Macro - Shown is a 100mm F2,8 macro lens
- 3, Normal – Shown is a 17-85mm F3.5-5.6 lens
- 4, Wide angle – Shown is a 10-20mm F4-5.6 lens

There are many other types of lens not shown here that are more specialist in nature.

The most common type of lens and the one I would suggest if you are starting out is number 3 (or similar) as it is a good standard lens that you can use for close up portraiture as well as further off zoom shots.

To explain the difference between telephoto and wide angle lens's, a telephoto lens is commonly accepted to be greater 70mm a wide angle is accepted to be less than 20mm. Please note that these figures are subjective and some manufacturers will quote a telephoto lens at lower value and vice versa.

A telephoto lens will allow you to take a picture of a subject at longer range and will allow you to fill the view finder with the subject despite their distance from you. This

makes them very useful for wild life, journalism and the like where you might not be able to (or might not want to) get close to the subject you are photographing.

Wide angle lenses allow you to capture more of the scene in front of you, i.e. a wide angle lens will allow you to fit in a large amount of landscape in to the frame or to allow you to fill the view finder with the subject from close range. This last part is particularly useful in fishing photo's, a wide angle allows you to take a photo from a few feet away from the angler and his fish whilst fitting in the whole scene. This is of massive use at night as it allows the flash (see later) to illuminate the angler easily (as the flash is closer to the subject) and still not cut off the head of the angler or worse part of the fish.

Macro lenses are lenses that allow you to take pictures at a far closer range than you would have thought possible. They are useful in taking fine detail pictures of very small subjects such as my personal favorite – insects. The picture below shows what is possible with a macro lens, patience and some insects.



Nothing to do with fishing but when you get bored and mr carp is not playing ball indulging in macro photography is a superb way to pass the time. Just don't wander too far from your rods.

Another point worth raising that is useful to anglers is that of Image Stabilization. Canon uses the term Image Stabilization to describe a technology that allows the lens to absorb some of the shakes that a photographer might experience when trying to take a picture at slow shutter speed (see later). Other manufacturers call this technology by different names, Nikon for example calls it VR or vibration Reduction) The major points are that if a lens is fitted with IS it will allow you to hand hold shots with out flash at far lower shutter speeds than you might normally be able to. Note that IS only cancels out the movement of the camera not of the subject. If the subject moves the final image will still be blurry. This all makes it sound as if every lens should have some form of IS, well, IS

makes the lens quite a lot heavier and adds significantly to the price. However on large zooms it is invaluable and I would not have it any other way. If you are buying a large zoom make sure it has IS (or equivalent) and a low F number.

Well that is all for this part, I have covered most of the main information that you should know if you are buying or about to upgrade your camera. In the next part I will cover how to actually use your camera and will really dig into the technology and how it can help you take better shots.

Until then have fun and remember your camera, you never know when you might need it.