

NIGHT FISHING BY THE LAKE

The lake itself is always silent, though from time to time you can hear a fish jump out of the water and then splash quietly back again. One of the houses nearby has a guard dog, which is shut outside in the evening. The barking often continues through the night, triggered by the slightest movement or sound in the peaceful surroundings. Now and then, you might just see the outline of bats circling round the trees, making quiet clicking sounds to avoid flying into anything. There are always lots of owls hooting in the darkness, waiting for unsuspecting prey.

It's pitch black in the bivvy, but if you have a light you can see clearly enough. When the door is open some light passes through, but if the door is shut then it is pitch black outside too. It's really warm inside the bivvy, although it's scary the first time you are on your own. It can be frightening late at night when people walk down the alley alongside the lake on their way home. You can hear them talking loudly, but they can't get down the very steep slope at the side of the path. The only other way in is through the locked gate, which is too high to jump over.

As soon as a fish bites, the alarm breaks the silence - it's time to wake up quickly. When you catch a fish you don't just reel it in, you have to play it and reel it in slowly so you wear it out and then it gives up. Next you have to net it and unhook it carefully, using your fingers to pull the hook out, making sure you don't tear its mouth. Most of the fish in the lake are Carp, although there are also Roach and Bream as well as some Pike and a few Tench. Tench are the slimiest and sometimes slip through your fingers onto the grass.



Jake and a 13lb 13oz Common Carp

Once the fish is off the hook it has to be weighed in a weighing sling. You always hope you have broken your PB! If you're with someone, they can take a photo of you holding your catch. Finally, you put the weigh sling into the water and let the fish swim away, splashing at first, and then the lake is quiet again.