

# Stick Floats

Peter Drennan

## The Stick Float

The Stick Float is a straight, slim design with a subtle taper which is always attached to the line both top and bottom. Stick Floats are made from two very different materials: a light, buoyant



**Perfectly balanced stick floats can be consistently manufactured by carefully joining a light balsa body to a slow sinking plastic stem which has a specific gravity of 1.2**

top section of Balsa Wood and a dense, heavy stem of hard grade cane, non buoyant hardwood, or plastic.

Once the correct proportions of buoyant top and heavy stem are joined and shaped into a smooth, almost continuous taper, you get a critically balanced float which can be precisely controlled. When held back, the Stick Float will swing upward following the upward movement of terminal tackle. When allowed to run through, the float will fall through the water in a controlled arc, again mirroring the fall of the terminal tackle.

Originally some of the best Stick Floats had stems made from the special non buoyant hardwood Lignum Vitae. Unfortunately, this material was expensive, difficult to work and varied in density whereas the modern plastic stem

has a consistent S.G. (Specific Gravity) of 1.2, exactly the same as the ideal grade of lignum, so it is now possible to produce perfectly balanced floats every time !

Stick Floats are designed for light, close range work in flowing water which is smooth and non turbulent. They are never more than about 20cm in length and actually perform best when they are just 15 to 18cms long. Shot carrying capacity is usually from around 0.6grams, 4 Number 4 shot to 1.7grams 10 No 4 shot.

These light, delicate floats are most effective at depths of between 1m and 2.5m on light reel lines of .10 to .12 diameter. They will seldom be used further out than two or three rod lengths, 8 to 12 metres and work best being fished right under your own bank, no more than 4 to 6 metres out. Similarly their range down the swim is usually no more than 10 to 15 metres, 20 metres maximum. Accordingly Stick Floats have tiny fluorescent tops and are always shotted right down, leaving no more than 6mm to 7mm showing above the surface.

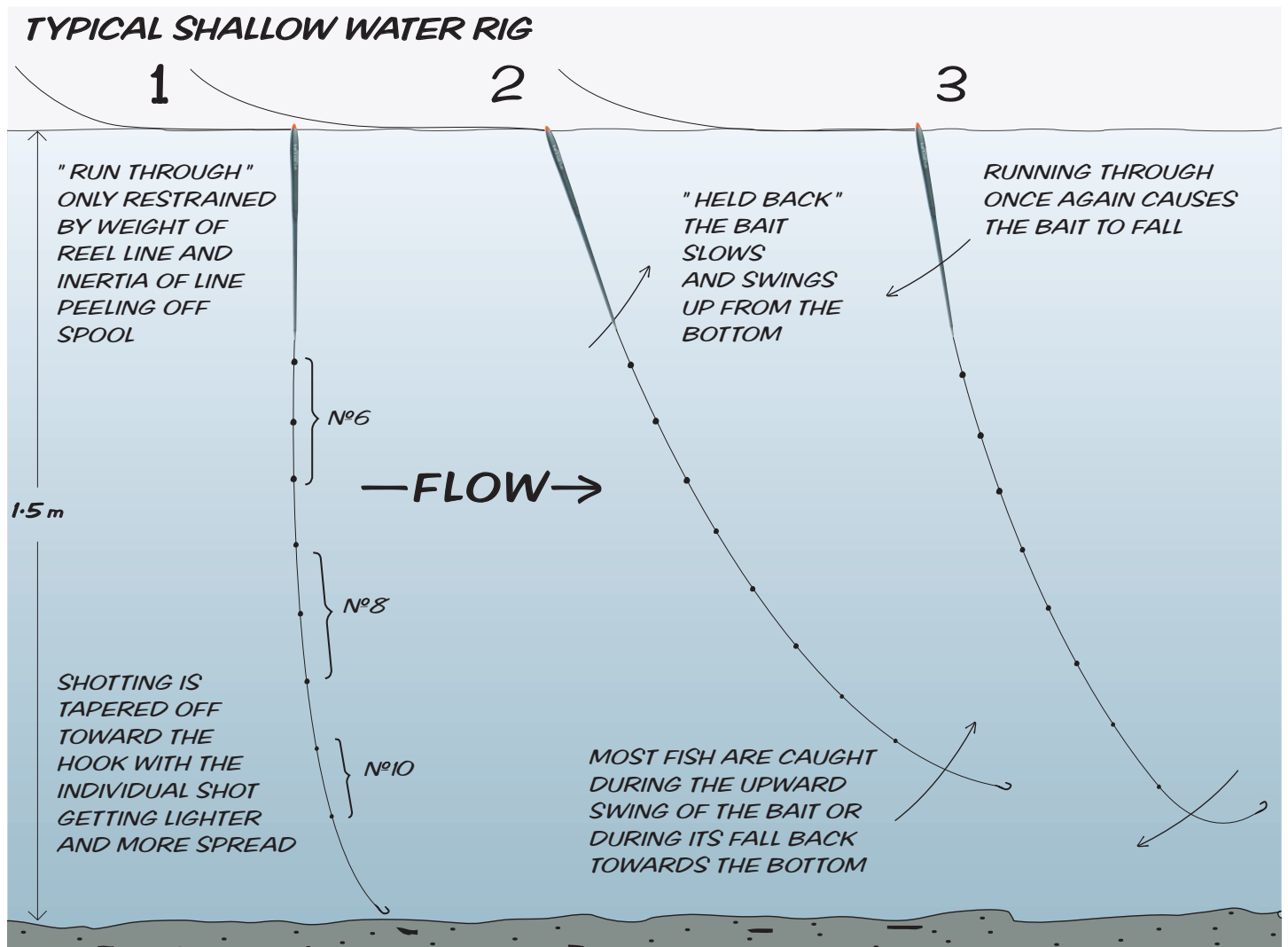
Stick Floats not only fish best in a non-turbulent flow, they are easiest to control with a light upstream wind which is slightly off your back. A convenient wind blowing in this direction helps to billow the line out away from you, avoiding the tendency for the Stick Float to drag back towards your bank. In more difficult conditions, with the wind in your face or particularly when it is directly downstream, "backshotting", behind the float, is the answer. The system is simply to place a small shot, normally from a No 8 to a No 4 about 20 to 30cms above the float. This sinks a small section of line, stops the float being pushed about by the surface skim and allows you to hold back against this shot rather than against the float itself.

## How do I shot stick floats?

The Stick Float method is absolutely inseparable from regular loose feeding of small particle baits like Maggot & Caster where you are expecting shoal fish like Roach and Dace to be queuing up to take the free offerings as they fall down and through the swim with the flow.

For this reason, terminal shotting is normally spaced out above the hook over a distance of about 1metre to 1.5 metres, the idea is to retain as much fluidity as possible in the terminal tackle so your hook bait is

presented like the loose feed. The whole rig is fished on a tight line, which combined with this even distribution of shot, allows you to control the rise and fall of your hook-bait as you either hold back on the float or allow it to run through. It is this movement and this controlled rise and fall of the bait which makes the method so effective !

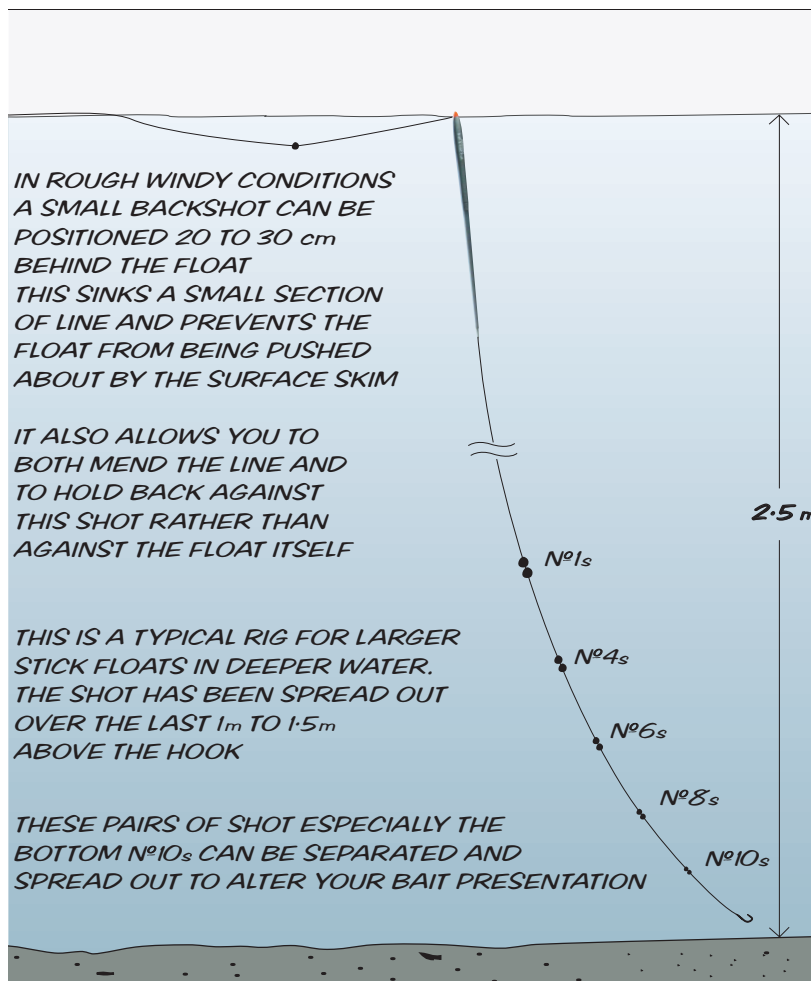


# Controlling Sticks

Lots of bites will of course come from simply running the Stick Float through with the current. Under these circumstances, you can rely in part on the weight of the line behind the float and the natural resistance of the line peeling off the reel to marginally slow the progress of the Stick Float. However, extra bites will be induced by holding back harder and causing the bait to rise and by then allowing the float to proceed and causing the bait to fall back towards the bottom in a tempting manner.



The angler has carefully positioned himself on the bend of a small river where the current goes out and away from his own bank. he is able to loose feed out in front of his keepnet and let the current do all the work for him. 6 or 8 maggots have been introduced every single cast for more that two hiurs and with all the bait going down the same channel, the roach and dace are now queuing up just downstream. The easy precision of the loose feeding being matched by the easy stick float control which is straight in line downstream of the rod top.



## How to cast a stick float

With evenly spaced shot, overhead casting can easily produce tangles, but because the Stick float is only used at fairly close range, this type of casting is seldom necessary. The preferred method is therefore to cast out with a flat, almost horizontal swing which ensures everything lands on the surface in a line: Hook at the downstream end, Float upstream. Most top anglers hold the line immediately above the hook or even hold the hook itself flicking the rod forward underarm to achieve the correct result.

Remember to loose feed small quantities of a particle bait like maggot every single cast and you will find the traditional Stick Float is an excellent method of catching fish !