

NEW
SERIES

Drifts For Wimbleball

South West Lakes Trust angling ranger Danny Ford guides us around Wimbleball, the 'jewel in Exmoor's crown'.

Growing up in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, I spent most of my younger years exploring the rivers and lakes that west Wales has to offer. It is only natural that Exmoor feels like home, with its landscape not too dissimilar from my old playground.

For as long as I can remember, I have had a fishing rod in my hand and I find it almost impossible to pass any body of water without stopping to peer into its depths and wonder what it might hold. Now, as an angling ranger for the South West Lakes Trust, I am able to develop my passion for angling and hopefully encourage others to take up the sport on what is, probably, the most picturesque reservoir in the Southwest.

Angling ranger Danny Ford drifts across Wimbleball where the 2015 rod average stood at an impressive four fish per angler.

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8 Drifts For Wimbleball

Wimbleball has 10 boats available, which need to be booked in advanced.



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Welcome To Wimbleball

Wimbleball is often referred to as the 'jewel in Exmoor's crown'. This lake is tucked away in the rolling hills, high up amid Exmoor's heath and woodland. The lake, which is a water supply reservoir for South West Water and Wessex Water, has a 50m high concrete buttress dam impounding the River Haddeo to provide a water storage capacity of some 21,000 mega litres with a surface area of 374 acres. Aggregate for the dam came

from a quarry at Bampton and sand from Uffculme. These were combined to give a pinkish tinge to blend in with the local geology.

Wimbleball is managed by the South West Lakes Trust charity, which carries out conservation and education work at nearly 50 lakes across Devon, Cornwall and West Somerset, alongside providing recreational opportunities at stunning venues for people of all abilities. The Trust's portfolio includes 14 picturesque trout



Catch and release is an option and bags of up to 20 fish are possible...

fisheries ranging in size from 41 to 740 acres.

Rainbows, Browns and Blues

Torre Trout Farms supplies quality rainbow and blue trout up to 6lb throughout the season and operates

from three proven and long established sites in West Somerset. These sites all utilise the crystal-clear water that rises out of Somerset's Brendon Hills only a short distance above the farms. Due to the exceptionally high quality of this water and

Set among woodland, grassland, and wildflower meadows, Wimbleball has to be one of the southwest's most picturesque waters.

farming practices that have been developed over many years, they have built a strong reputation for producing rainbow and blue trout renowned for their hard-fighting qualities. A good head of wild brown trout can be found all over the reservoir, with fish in excess of 4lb regularly caught. The best brown trout from the 2015

season was a 6lb fin perfect specimen (browns are catch and release only). The best rainbow trout in 2015 was a 6lb 8oz.

Wimbleball is also home to the South West Fishing For Life charity, which provides fly fishing sessions for women who have all been affected by breast cancer. At the monthly sessions participants

are able to learn to fly fish under the supervision of qualified coaches. Fly fishing not only refreshes the soul but provides gentle relaxing exercise, while the fishing techniques have been proved to be very beneficial to build up tissue and muscle for ladies who are suffering or recovering from breast cancer. It is fronted by Gillian Payne of Holworthy Farm B&B, which sits on the edge of the lake. Her hospitality and catering skills are well-known throughout the angling world!

Flies For Wimbleball

There is a good mayfly hatch in late June/early July, while buzzer and nymph fishing offers good sport throughout the season. Popular patterns are the Diawl Bach, Pheasant Tail Nymph and Gold Ribbed

Hare's Ear, as well as Foam-Backed Daddies and Hoppers when the fish are feeding on the surface. CDC buzzers such as the Quill Owl Cul from Fulling Mill are especially effective when trout are taking emergers. Floating lines are best throughout the season as fish can be found cruising sub-surface, while intermediate and sinking lines work well in early and late season.



... so care needs to be taken when returning fish to the water.

Flies For Wimbleball

Aero Daddy



CDC Bibio



Crank Shank Olive Buzzer



Quill Owl Cul



Stealth Red Holo Diawl Bach



Expect rainbows, wild browns and stunning blues to 4lb plus from Wimbleball's 374 acres.

8 Drifts For Wimbleball

Eight of the most notable areas on the lake include....

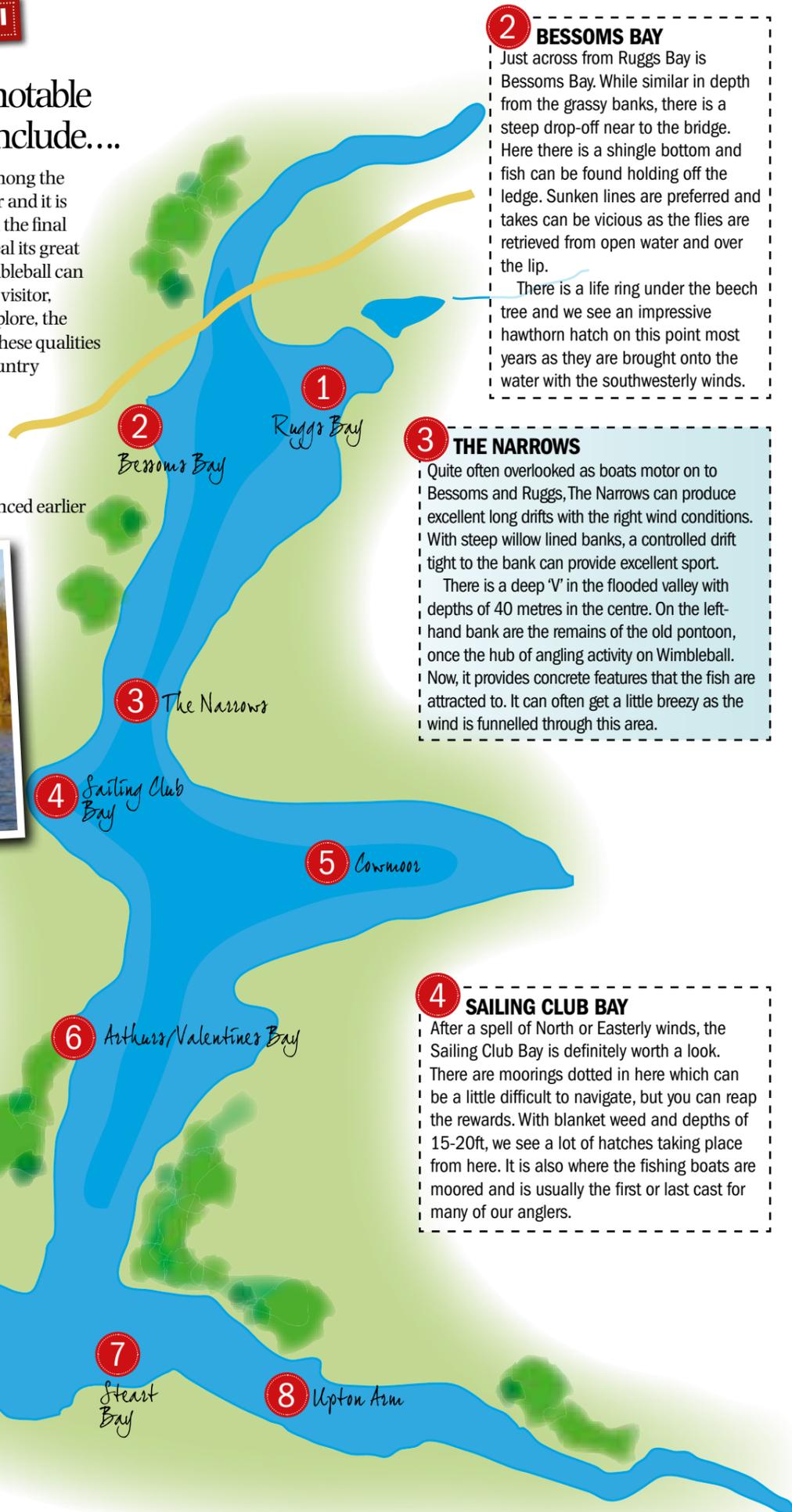
Wimbleball is hidden among the rolling hills of Exmoor and it is only when you are on the final approach that it opens up to reveal its great expanse of bays to discover. Wimbleball can be quite daunting for a first-time visitor, but with time and patience to explore, the rewards can be very satisfying. These qualities keep anglers from all over the country returning year after year. 2015 saw our best rod average of the last nine years at 4.24 and for the 2016 season so far the rod average is a fantastic 5.3, despite the cold northerly winds experienced earlier in the season.



1 RUGGS BAY

Probably the most prolific and well-known spot on the lake. Fish can hold up in this area and large bags can be caught on a catch and release permit. The average depth is around 15 feet and it has a blanket weed covering the bottom. It is popular with the bank anglers as it has easy access from the car park.

It is also sheltered from most north and easterly winds, allowing good fishing when all other spots are blown out. Anchoring and casting towards the bird hide with the wind on your back is a deadly method here, as the fish cruise the margins in a few feet of water.



2 BESSOMS BAY

Just across from Ruggs Bay is Bessoms Bay. While similar in depth from the grassy banks, there is a steep drop-off near to the bridge. Here there is a shingle bottom and fish can be found holding off the ledge. Sunken lines are preferred and takes can be vicious as the flies are retrieved from open water and over the lip.

There is a life ring under the beech tree and we see an impressive hawthorn hatch on this point most years as they are brought onto the water with the southwesterly winds.

3 THE NARROWS

Quite often overlooked as boats motor on to Bessoms and Ruggs, The Narrows can produce excellent long drifts with the right wind conditions. With steep willow lined banks, a controlled drift tight to the bank can provide excellent sport.

There is a deep 'V' in the flooded valley with depths of 40 metres in the centre. On the left-hand bank are the remains of the old pontoon, once the hub of angling activity on Wimbleball. Now, it provides concrete features that the fish are attracted to. It can often get a little breezy as the wind is funnelled through this area.

4 SAILING CLUB BAY

4 SAILING CLUB BAY

After a spell of North or Easterly winds, the Sailing Club Bay is definitely worth a look. There are moorings dotted in here which can be a little difficult to navigate, but you can reap the rewards. With blanket weed and depths of 15-20ft, we see a lot of hatches taking place from here. It is also where the fishing boats are moored and is usually the first or last cast for many of our anglers.

5 COWMOOR

A favourite spot for many anglers, Cowmoor can really produce on the day. Bank fishing from the north bank is clear, but avoid the south banks for wading as there is a serious drop-off all along it.

Good fishing can be had at the mouth of Cowmoor, if the wind is blowing from the north. To the far end is a small stream that provides food and well-oxygenated water. An accurate cast into this stream bed can be deadly!



6 ARTHURS/VALENTINES BAY

As boat anglers venture down to the dam, a quick stop at Arthurs and Valentines bay can often pay off. These two bays are on opposite sides of the lake and cut into the rolling landscape.

Wild brown trout are often found

here, especially in Valentines Bay. Arthurs is marked with a blue racing buoy that always features on our catch returns. There is usually slack water in these bays and surface-feeding fish can be seen holding on the edge of the

wind lane.

I have had some excellent dry fly fishing in these areas with an accurate cast to rising fish. The washing-line method is very effective when targeting rising fish on the edge of a ripple.

7 STEART BAY

This bay really comes into its own later in the season, as many of our larger fish show in time for the close of the season. The dam wall and Haddon Hill offers shelter from any southerly and westerly winds, however, it is quite exposed to north and easterlies. It marks the mouth of the Upton Arm, which reaches for close to a mile west from the dam.

This is the deepest part of the lake and holds many of Wimbleball's secrets. Its banks are lined with tree stumps from when the dam was created, perfect hiding spots for large wild brown trout. We often find the Coch-y-Bonddu beetle blown onto the water from Haddon Hill and imitative patterns can be fished dry or sub-surface.



8 UPTON ARM

I often spend hours on my own fishing on the Upton Arm. Its steep tree-lined banks offer scenery to rival anywhere in the world. It is the quietest spot on the lake and you are just as likely to spot red deer as you are other anglers. It also accounts for most of the brown trout caught, with low, overhanging trees offering

the perfect habitat.

The River Haddeo flows in at this point and cuts deep into the bed of the lake. An accurate cast here can almost certainly produce a few fish. As the water level drops, the riverbed is exposed and offers a glimpse of its course for future reference.

Best Of The Best

Wimbleball hosts South West Lakes Trust's 'Best of the Best' Trout competition final, which with £5,000 of prize money up for grabs should be on every angler's radar. Whether you are a pleasure angler or a competitive angler, everyone has a chance to win and claim the reputation as the best around. It is without doubt the biggest prize fund in the trout angling competition calendar!

This year the competition is sponsored by Snowbee, which is excited to be part of the nation's biggest trout fishing prize fund competition. There will be eight anglers winning from £100 to £2,000 at this year's final, and at least another 15 anglers winning prizes.

We have a fleet of 10 fishing boats (six with four-stroke petrol outboards) available seven days a week until 8pm. Advanced booking is essential to guarantee availability.

Flyaking is also available, so come and fish from a kayak – you can bring your own or hire ours. Float tubing is also permitted but we do not provide the tubes. The wheelyboat for disabled anglers should be booked 48 hours in advance via the Wimbleball Outdoor and Active Centre.

Wimbleball has a 'catch and release' permit option available all season, ensuring an excellent day's sport as bags of 20 fish are not uncommon (barbless hooks must be used).

The Trust is continually working to enhance the experience for anglers. Building on feedback we have extended evening fishing, improved car parking and improved ways of communicating with anglers. We will also be investigating ways of providing enhanced off-water facilities for anglers and increasing our stocking further. 

