



ROB BEATTIE



*“Hell, if I’d jumped on all the dames I’m supposed to have jumped on, I’d have had no time to go fishing.”*

*Clark Gable*

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# GONE FISHING

There's a fishing scene in the 1936 screwball comedy classic *Libeled Lady* when leading man William Powell (whose character has clearly never held a fishing rod in his life) emerges from the last of many dunkings to discover that he's caught – by purest fluke – the biggest trout in the river. Standing there under the admiring gaze of Myrna Loy (the object of his affections and the reason he's soaked) and her fishing-obsessed father (once disapproving, now looking on with newfound respect), he watches as his just-purchased copy of *Trout Fishing for Beginners* floats down the river behind them both before rounding a bend and disappearing out of sight. His secret safe, Powell, beaming, responds to their praise with a modest: 'It was nothing.'

This is Olympic-standard bluffing and, although you can't expect to start at this sort of level, over the course of *The Bluffer's Guide to Fishing* you'll learn everything you need to know to hold your own among the enormous and diverse angling community – whether it's in a cosy snug over a pint of old Chubthumper, on board the

Saucy Sue for a day's mackerel fishing with a can of supermarket lager, tipping down a peppered vodka on Russia's Kola Peninsula or enjoying a bracing glass of 12-year-old McBeattie with a dash of water as the mist rises over the Spey.

With any luck, you'll never need to get your feet wet, but if you do, help is at hand.

*The Bluffer's Guide to Fishing* will go a-angling (there's a reference to Izaak Walton, the godfather of fishing writing) so that you don't have to. It will help you to tell your pinkies from your gozzers, your boilies from your pop-ups, PVA bags from bait droppers, bite alarms from buzzers, Hairy Marys from March Browns, and ragworms from lugworms. It will take you inside the secretive world of the specimen hunter, open the Aladdin's Cave of carp angling and the rapacious multimillion-pound industry that rides on its scaly coat-tails, eavesdrop on the sepia-tinted stuck-in-the-50s world of salmon anglers and their gillies, strike out in search of Mongolia's mighty taimen (minus the inconvenient bear attacks) and introduce household names like John Wilson, Chris Yates and Big Girl the carp, all from the comfort of your armchair.

Throughout this book the words 'fishing' and 'angling' will be used interchangeably and, generally speaking, this is perfectly acceptable. It is done all the time, as you will shortly discover. However, once you've mastered some of the basics, you will probably find yourself discussing 'fishing' with fellow anglers and 'angling' with those who don't fish. It's a small and seemingly contradictory point but, as every bluffer knows, the devil is in the detail. You should also know

that the terms ‘angling’ and ‘angler’ are very rarely used when talking about ‘game’ fishing. Confused? Don’t worry; all will become clear over the next few chapters.

And remember, commercial fishing is entirely different from the sort of recreational fishing described in these pages. Well, strictly, it isn’t – because they’re both about catching fish. But that’s where the similarities end. You, as a bluffer, will be pitting your estimable wits against a fish of very little brain with just a rod and a line, something tantalising on a hook, and sometimes a landing net. If you think that it won’t be much of a contest, you’re in for a very big surprise.

Fishing is a maze. People have spent lifetimes trying to find their way through it, and even a way out of it. The bluffer hasn’t got a lifetime to spare, so when you find yourself on the spot, this short but definitive guide offers invaluable help.

It sets out to conduct you through the main danger zones encountered in discussions about fishing and to equip you with the vocabulary and evasive technique that will minimise the risk of being rumbled as a bluffer. It will give you a few easy-to-learn hints and techniques that might even allow you to be accepted as a fishing expert of rare ability and experience. But it will do more. It will give you the tools to impress legions of marvelling listeners with your knowledge and insight – without anyone discovering that, until you read this, you probably didn’t know the difference between a fruit fly and a flash damsel.



*“Angling or float fishing I can only  
compare to a stick and a string, with a  
worm at one end and a fool at the other.”*

*Samuel Johnson*

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