



Pictures to be proud of

Society member **Steve Pitts** talks about basic fish photography - that way you capture the memory and the fish swims free

I was enthralled by a presentation given by Henry Gilbey on fish photography at one of our annual general meetings. His passion for getting the best results has made him a leading angling photo-journalist.

He took us through his golden rules, and how he 'works the fish and the angler' to best effect. Henry thinks about each photograph, weighing up the conditions, the subject and all the options including the weather conditions and lighting.

But what if you haven't got a professional camera? Well, a compact digital 'point and shoot' is the favourite for many, providing good results if you use the controls correctly and apply thought and organisation to every shot.

Here are some tips for the average snapper with a digital compact costing £50 to £150:

Most will be auto-focus, but you need to be familiar with the basic

functions and optional manual effects. You can influence how the camera takes the image by selecting auto, manual, video-clip, landscape, portrait or macro by using the control or mode dial

or mode pad, a four-way joy-pad with central OK button.

The menu dial or mode pad gives options on the image screen for pre-set exposure, shutter and aperture settings for sports, macro, landscape, sunset, night-time, snow and beach etc. I'll cover the pre-set modes I use the most.

Macro mode, often shown by a tulip, is for keeping the subject in focus while getting very close to it to capture fine detail. It gives clear images of fish scales, eyes, fin rays and fine detail of tackle. Macro is also useful for the 'grip and grin shot' with the fish's head and eye in sharp detail, with the body and angler gradually losing focus, emphasising the head and eye. In this mode there is a limited depth of field - the distance in front of and behind the subject that is in sharp focus.

Sports mode captures movement - a leaping fish or an angler casting. The aperture opens to let in more light and increases the shutter speed to freeze the action.

Zoom is a function of all digital cameras of this type for adjusting the apparent 'closeness' of the subject. Zooming-in brings the subject closer or makes it appear bigger, and zooming-out makes it appear smaller. Many angling shots are taken from too far away with not enough detail of the

fish, so zoom-in and fill the frame.

Flash is typically set to 'auto' so in low light the flash fires automatically on full power. But reflections from fish scales can bleach out the detail of the fish, so I select 'soft flash' - to fire every shot but slightly under-exposing the image. This makes the fish's detail and colour more realistic. It can also fill in poorly lit subjects and make shadows appear less prominent, without over-illuminating or washing out the lighter parts of the image. Fill-in flash can be used to fill in dark areas on bright sunny days

Bass can't pose for you, so you need the angler to present the fish to add interest to the shot. A fish covered in muck isn't going to look good, while fish and hands covered in blood are a no-no. Give the fish a dunk to rinse it just before you take the shot and you might even catch the droplets of water as they drip off its body.

When the weather is dull, try to lose the sky by using a more interesting background such as a beach or cliffs.

The two most important things in the picture are the bass and the angler. Get in close, fill up the frame, wet the fish, get the angler to smile and always focus on the fish. Take the shot, check it out on the rear screen, and if you don't like it, take another shot.

See some great photos by Henry at www.henry-gilbey.com SA

Camera tricks (clockwise): Use macro for detail; think about the pose; silhouettes add mood

