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EDITION 36

# GOLDEN MAHSEER DIARY

**SEARCH FOR THE HIMALAYAN GIANT PART 2**  
**5th JUNE 2023 to 26th JUNE 2023**  
**NORTHERN INDIA**

**GREG ISZATT**

## The Catfish Conservation Group

Founded in 1984 we are one of the longest running specialist fishing groups in the World! We are a like-minded group of individuals who are mad about catfish - catching them, learning about them and promoting them as the hardest fighting and largest freshwater fish in the UK. Protecting and legally re-homing unwanted catfish is at the core of the Group's values.

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- ◆ Regular issues of **Silurus** our newsletter
- ◆ The opportunity to fish at **Adams Pool** - our own cat fishery
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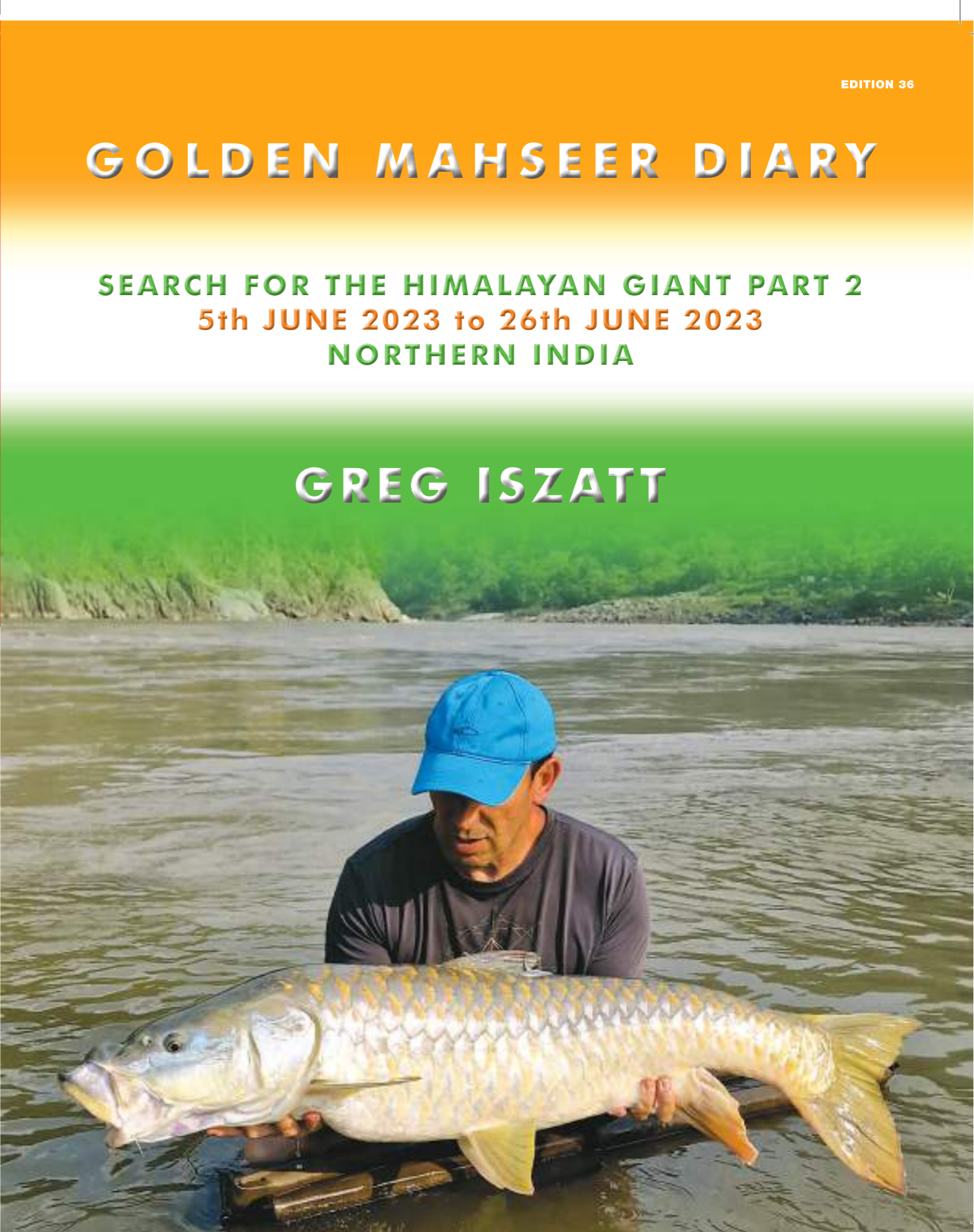
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**INTRODUCTION:**

We re-join Greg and his friends halfway through their angling trip for golden mahseer at Pancheshwar in northern India, aka 'The Junction'.

Greg writes: The longer you stay at this magical place the easier it is to see the links and patterns between the river conditions, feeding fish, new migratory fish arrivals, and hook-ups. I was careful not to say 'fish captures', as the average ratio between fish hooked and fish actually landed is probably at best 1 in 3. This ratio varies from mid-May to the end of June depending on the river conditions. The ratio was better this year with perhaps 1 in every 2 fish being landed from mid-May to mid-June when the rivers were lower and slower. However, it became much more difficult to land a sizeable golden mahseer once the rivers started to run higher and carry flotsam. In fact numerous fish were lost this season due to hook-pulls occurring due to debris on the line or fish getting into the fast water over on the Nepali side of the Mahakali River.

In respect of angling patterns and fish behaviour at Pancheshwar, here are my Top 7 Observations:

**TOP 7 OBSERVATIONS:**

**1** - Golden mahseer most often feed in the low water window when it occurs. (Because it is much easier and more energy efficient for mahseer to catch their prey in shallower water).

**2** - Golden mahseer rest in areas where they expend minimal energy, in these resting areas they are unlikely to readily take a lure or bait. (Unless they were unsuccessful on their recent hunting foray).

**3** - The resident golden mahseer are the hardest to catch, these are the 'Fish of a1000 Casts'. (These fish have seen every type of lure, bait, and fly cast at them before).

**4** - The arriving migrating golden mahseer are easier to catch than the Pancheshwar resident mahseer and local visiting mahseer. (Because they have been subjected to less angling pressure up until the point they arrive at the confluence).

**5** - Once several of a newly arriving pod of migrating mahseer have been hooked and landed, or hooked and lost, then the action will switch off once more. (Just accept this, there is not much you can do about it!).

**6** - Crystal clear water conditions on the Saryu River are not good, the mahseer can see anglers on the bank and their lines in the water. (In these clear water conditions fishing on the Saryu at night is your best option).

**7** - Rains that occur in May and June that raise the level and colour the Saryu and/or Kali are a good thing. They have a two-fold effect. As the colour drops out of the Saryu the mahseer can be easier to catch as it is more difficult for them to detect anglers and their lines. The mahseer also may be hungrier as their natural food could have become more difficult to catch in the dirty water. Secondly, the increase in volume and coloured water going down the Mahakali can encourage and accelerate more migrating mahseer to arrive at the confluence pool.

**TACKLE CHOICES:****Lure Fishing Set-up:**

A 9ft, 9ft 6" or 10ft spinning rod with a 30g to 100g casting capacity and braid rating of up to PE #3. Pair this with a quality fixed spool reel that holds a minimum of 200 metres of 0.24mm or 0.28mm diameter braid. The reel needs to have a smooth drag, with a minimum capacity of at least 8kg to cope with a big mahseer's first run. The rod & reel combo needs to be lightweight and well balanced so the angler can cast it for up to 2 to 3 hours at a time if necessary. This can be an advantage, especially in coloured water conditions. In clear water conditions fewer casts, and more emphasis on resting the pool is often a better tactic.

Golden mahseer are most often lost in the first few moments as they hit the lure, and this is the biggest challenge for the chosen rod. You not only need a rod that is lightweight and can cast a variety of lures weighing from 18g (Rapala J13s) to 50g (some soft plastic lures) as far as possible, but the rod also needs to be stiff enough in the tip section to set the hook on the take. The latter is important, and it can become a problem if the rod tip is too soft. A soft rod tip results in momentarily hooked fish which are then lost due to the hook failing to penetrate and take hold in the mahseer's mouth. The issue is compounded further depending on the angle of retrieve, when using single hooks, and when using certain types of soft plastic lures, such as the brilliant Zerek Fish Trap. The final required characteristic of the chosen rod is that it has enough power to play a big fish in the current, but, it is also nice if the same rod is enjoyable to play smaller mahseer on as well.

A special rod is required that can tick all the boxes. I am currently using a MajorCraft 9ft 6" Crosride rod (XR5-962MH) with a 20g to 60g casting capacity, and a braid rating of PE# 1 to 3. Although the rod is stated as having a casting capacity of 20g to 60g, I am assured by contacts at MajorCraft that it actually has a slightly higher casting capacity than this. If you like a slightly longer rod MajorCraft also do a 10ft version (XR5-1002MH) with the same braid and casting capacity as the 9ft 6" rod.

This rod is paired with a Daiwa Saltiga 4000H or Stella SW6000HG fixed spool reel, spooled with 200 metres of 0.24mm diameter (40lb), or 200 metres of 0.28mm diameter 8 stranded braid. You need to use a fluorocarbon leader of at least 5ft in length in 30lb, 40lb, or 50lb breaking strength depending on the conditions.

**Bait Fishing Set-up:**

The purists won't like it, but in my opinion you can't beat a 12ft spod rod with a 4.5lb or 5.0lb test curve. Pair this with a Shimano Big Baitrunner LC Reel (or similar reel), spooled with 200 metres of heavy braid (0.42mm to 0.46mm diameter). If you can get a 3 section spod rod this is even better for ease of transport. This rod/reel combo lets you reach parts of the confluence that others cannot reach. Although there are good bait fishing spots on the Saryu, and the near bank of the Mahakali Rivers, the spod rod/baitrunner combo allows you to also make longer casts at the confluence with enough lead to hold bottom (which can vary from 6 to 16 ounces). These casts can be made up



View looking down the Saryu River towards the Pancheshwar Temple Confluence.



Lure rods and Bait rods stored outside the camp tents.



Big Rubber Mesh Landing Nets are the order of the day for lure fishing, they all had to be reinforced on this trip.



Greg casting a lure on the Saryu River



Cooking dinner on a stone by the confluence.

the line of the crease between the two rivers, or into the slack water near the temple steps. This is always subject to conditions, and sometimes the bottom cannot be held in these positions due to the increased flow coming down the Saryu and/or Kali rivers. However, when these casts can be made and the bottom held, they are often the most productive locations to produce takes on bait. The 12ft spod rod not only enables the cast, but by keeping the rod high at all times after the cast the extra rod length allows you to keep enough of your mainline out of the flow to hold bottom. Purist or not, why would you limit your chances by using a set-up that cannot effectively fish these productive spots...

Originally I started off using monofilament as a main-line for bait fishing, but in recent years I have switched over to using heavy braid (0.46mm diameter). This braid may seem heavy to some, but it has proven itself to be a better choice all round. Braid makes it easier to cast and hold bottom at distance, it gives you better bite detection, and it reduces the chances of your rig getting stuck between the rocks when you come to wind it back in. I haven't had any issue with abrasion from rocks since switching to heavy braid with takes, and/or when playing fish. Using the 12ft rod and keeping the rod high when playing fish has no doubt helped. I typically use either a mono or fluorocarbon hook link of around 3ft to 4ft in length, in 50lb or 60lb breaking strength depending on the conditions. This helps prevent tangles, and provides abrasion resistance from the pebbles and boulders on the riverbed that the hook length is in close proximity to. Any lead weight (or pebble) used must be on a suitable weak-link to break away should it become snagged.

**Lightweight Bait Fishing Set-up:**

There is a second lighter weight option for bait fishing. I only use this set-up when fishing on the Saryu river well up above the confluence, and only in daylight. The water is shallower up on the Saryu, there are less ledges to cut you off, and the rocks on the riverbed are smaller than at the confluence itself. The idea of this set-up is a more delicate presentation for fishing smaller baits, with the aim of getting more bites from small, medium, and hopefully big golden mahseer as well. This set-up consists of a 10ft/12ft rod with a 3lb/3.5lb test curve, paired with a fixed spool reel holding at least 200 metres of 0.40mm diameter braid. An inexpensive carp rod is fine for the job as you may well find yourself clambering over rocks chasing fish with it.

**LURES:**

This could be an article on its own in terms of which lures work best at Pancheshwar. From personal experience it's also easy to get carried away thinking you have found the 'Holy Grail of Lures', when in fact it is just the arrival of new migrating fish, or a feeding spree in favourable conditions in front of you. Disappointingly the same lure eliciting no further takes for days on end.

The 'lure self-fulfilling prophecy' is also heavily in play at Pancheshwar. Because it isn't easy and an infrequent occurrence to catch a big golden mahseer on a lure, anglers like to stick to using the same lure they have caught their

previous best fish on. So of course probability is highly stacked in favour of this same lure being the one they catch their next big fish on. Basically it's the lure in the water the majority of the time, so by default it catches them the most fish.

I am just going to mention here a few lures my friends and I have been using this season, and last season. These lures in no particular order of performance are as follows: -

Rapala Jointed J13 (Length 130mm) (Weight 18g) - (wooden plug / crankbait): This is the lure that has stood the test of time, and will probably always work for golden mahseer. In my opinion the reason for this is that it has the widest vibration frequency range of all the popular lures used for golden mahseer. Being a floating lure the speed of retrieve affects both its swimming depth and vibration frequency. Even the slightest variation in the retrieve speed, or small variations in the current change the vibration frequency omitted by a J13. This keeps the golden mahseer guessing, and prevents it from assigning a 'DANGER!' label to any set vibration frequency associated with the J13. Results speak for themselves, and there is no doubt the J13 has accounted for more specimen sized golden mahseer than any other lure in the last decade. The hook hold is generally very good with J13s, however the stock treble hooks do need to be changed out for strong singles in Size 1/0 or Size 2/0. Because the J13 floats it also snags up less easily than many sinking lures. The only real disadvantage of the J13 is that it does not cast as far as some of the soft vibe lures mentioned below.

Zerek Fish Trap (Length 110mm) (Weight 33g), and Zerek Fish Trap (Length 95mm) (Weight 23g) - (soft plastic vibe lure): This lure came on to the scene with a BANG! at Pancheshwar in 2022. From mid-May 2022 onwards it basically took over as the lure of choice to use. Anglers in the know were using this lure, and the results were pretty spectacular at times. The Zerek Fish Trap omits a tight vibration frequency that is consistent at slow, medium, and fast retrieves. Although there is some variance in the vibration level omitted between slow and fast retrieves, the vibration frequency range is nothing like that of a Rapala J13. Some of the advantages of the Zerek Fish Trap is that you are effectively fishing as soon as it hits the water as it sinks like a stone, and starts vibrating immediately. Another advantage of this lure is that it can be cast long distances. A disadvantage of the Fish Trap is that they can lose their alignment relatively easily, so good storage is key, especially in the heat. Once a Fish Trap loses its alignment it cannot be cast or retrieved correctly and it becomes effectively useless (this misalignment also cannot be corrected). The hook hold is generally only average when using a Fish Trap, and single hooks in my experience only make this issue worse. (Note: The stock treble hooks the Zerek Fish Trap comes with are best changed out for stronger trebles in Size 2).

'Various Ali Express Vibe Lures' - (Length 110mm) (Weight 30g to 32g), and (Length 95mm) (Weight 18g to 21g) - (soft plastic vibe lure): to the best of my knowledge these lures were used successfully at Pancheshwar for the first time in 2023. These vibe lures omit less vibration than the Zerek Fish Trap, and therefore provide you with a vibe



Rapala Jointed (J13) - the lure that has and will always work for Golden Mahseer.



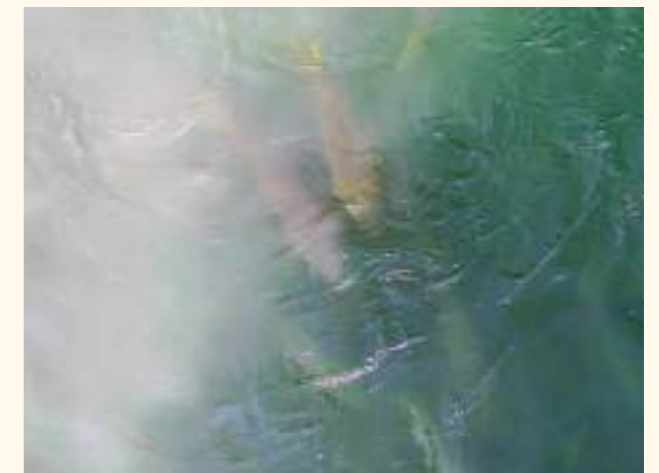
Soft Plastic Vibe Lures.



Weighing a Golden Mahseer.



Fishing the Pancheshwar Temple Confluence Pool.



Golden mahseer appear and disappear like ghosts between the waters of the Saryu and Kali rivers.



Tim Webb and Nick Peat baitfishing the bottom of the Mahakali pool down from the confluence.

lure in a similar size and weight, but with another vibration option. The vibration is consistent at medium and fast retrieves, but virtually non-existent at slow speeds. The same advantages apply to this vibe lure, i.e. it sinks fast, vibrates immediately, and is long casting. These lures are also a fraction of the cost of the Zerek Fish Trap, and therefore losing them to snags is far less painful... (Note: The stock treble hooks on these lures must be changed out for stronger trebles in Size 2).

Of course there are many other lures that work for golden mahseer at Pancheshwar, and many anglers will have their own personal favourites.

#### BAIT:

As golden mahseer have an omnivorous diet there are many options for bait, some of the most common include:

Livebait (asla - snow trout).

Deadbait (asla - snow trout).

Freshwater Crab (if you can catch one).

Chicken

Atta (a local mixture of wheat and water).

Frogs

Insects

There is not a lot I can add here other than to say that presentation is important.

My preference is to use strong single hooks in size 4/0, 5/0, or 6/0, and hair-rig certain baits. Bear in mind golden mahseer and redfin mahseer engulf baits whole, and therefore for certain baits a hair-rig can work really well. Any lead or rock used as a weight should be on a weak-link so it can break away easily should it become snagged.

#### GOLDEN MAHSEER DIARY 2023 PART 2

5th June to 26th June 2023

GROUP 3 - 5th June 2023 to 15th June 2023

ANGLERS - Nick Peat, Tim Webb Greg Iszatt and Christopher Oldmeadow.

#### DAY 23 - 5th June

Tim Webb and Nick Peat arrive at the camp. Blank. (All camp anglers). Clear and low water conditions on the Saryu.

Morning / Afternoon / Evening: Saryu running low and clear with 48 inches of visibility. Kali / Mahakali running low and milky grey / green with 12 inches of visibility.

Local heavy rain, thunderstorm, and lightning in the evening.

#### DAY 24 - 6th June

Blank. (All camp anglers). Clear and low water conditions on the Saryu.

Morning / Afternoon / Evening: No impact from the rains the day before, Saryu still running low and clear with 48 inches of visibility. Kali / Mahakali running low and milky grey / green with 6 inches of visibility.

#### DAY 25 - 7th June

Blank. (All camp anglers). Clear and low water conditions on the Saryu.

Morning / Afternoon / Evening: Saryu running low and clear with 48 inches of visibility. Kali / Mahakali running low and milky grey / green with 6 inches of visibility.

#### DAY 26 - 8th June

28lb golden mahseer (other camp angler / lure / mid-morning / confluence).

38lb golden mahseer\* - may have been foul hooked\* (other camp angler / lure / noon / confluence).

27lb golden mahseer (Tim / bait - asla deadbait / night / Saryu - Black Rock).

29lb golden mahseer (Nick / bait - chicken / night / Mahakali pool 750m down from confluence).

Morning / Afternoon / Evening: Saryu running low and clear with 48 inches of visibility. Kali / Mahakali running low and milky grey / green with 6 inches of visibility.

#### DAY 27 - 9th June

10lb golden mahseer (Greg / bait - chicken / night / Mahakali lower confluence pool).

Morning / Afternoon / Evening: Saryu running low and clear with 48 inches of visibility. Kali / Mahakali running low and milky grey / green with 6 inches of visibility.

#### DAY 28 - 10th June

38lb golden mahseer (other camp angler / lure / mid-morning / Mahakali).

Foul Hooked - '52lb' golden mahseer (other camp angler / lure / afternoon / confluence) (weighing procedure looked inaccurate. This was proven to be the case as the same fish was caught 8 days later and accurately weighed at 48lbs).

10lb golden mahseer (Tim / bait - chicken / night / Saryu - Black Rock).

Morning / Afternoon / Evening: Saryu running low and clear with 48 inches of visibility. Kali / Mahakali running low and milky grey / green with 6 inches of visibility.

#### DAY 29 - 11th June

25lb golden mahseer (other camp angler / lure / morning / confluence).

36lb golden mahseer (Greg / lure / early afternoon / confluence).

15lb golden mahseer (Tim / bait - chicken / night / Saryu - Black Rock).

Morning / Afternoon / Evening: Saryu running low and clear with 48 inches of visibility. Kali / Mahakali running higher with more water significant increased snow-melt), and milky grey with 6 inches of visibility.

#### DAY 30 - 12th June

22lb golden mahseer (other camp angler / lure / morning / confluence).

Foul Hooked - estimated 30lb golden mahseer (Greg / lure / afternoon / confluence).

28lb golden mahseer (other camp angler / lure / late evening / confluence).



25lb golden mahseer - Greg.



31.5lb golden mahseer for Andrew Field, Vibe Lure.



27lb golden mahseer - Tim Webb, baitfishing - Asla.



36.1lb golden mahseer - Greg, Vibe Lure.



29lb golden mahseer - Nick Peat, baitfishing - Chicken.



47lb Redfin Mahseer - Greg - Chicken - 2022.

Morning / Afternoon: Saryu running low and clear with 48 inches of visibility. Kali / Mahakali running higher with more water (significant increase in volume of snow-melt), and milky grey with 6 inches of visibility.

4.30pm to 6.30pm: Thunderstorm, heavy rains, lightning, and high winds. Four dead cows spotted floating down the Kali / Mahakali which indicate increased water levels further up river (from snow-melt and rains).

Evening: Saryu running murky brown with 12 inches of visibility. Kali/Mahakali running higher with more water (significant increase in volume of snow-melt), and milky brown with 2 inches of visibility.

#### DAY 31 - 13th June

Blank. (All camp anglers).

Foul Hooked - 10lb golden mahseer (other camp angler / lure / confluence).

Foul Hooked - golden mahseer, (other camp angler / lure / confluence). Big fish lost over the rapid at the bottom of the confluence pool - angler spooled.

Morning / Afternoon / Evening: Saryu running chocolate brown with 2 inches of visibility. Kali / Mahakali running higher with more water (another significant increase in volume of snow-melt and rain water), and milky brown with zero visibility.

#### DAY 32 - 14th June

31lb golden mahseer (Greg / lure / morning / Saryu).

20lb golden mahseer (other camp angler / lure / afternoon / Saryu).

Foul Hooked - golden mahseer, other camp angler lost on Saryu.

4lb golden mahseer (Tim / bait - chicken / night / Saryu - Black Rock).

Morning: Saryu running brown with 4 inches of visibility. Kali / Mahakali still running high, and milky brown with zero visibility.

Afternoon / Evening: Saryu running murky green with 14 inches of visibility and clearing. Kali / Mahakali still running high, and milky grey with zero visibility.

#### DAY 33 - 15th June

Lost Fish (Greg / lure / morning / confluence).

Tim Webb and Nick Peat left the camp to make their way back home.

36.5lb golden mahseer (Greg / lure / evening / confluence).

Morning: Saryu running brown with 4 inches of visibility. Kali / Mahakali still running high, and milky grey with zero visibility.

Afternoon / Evening: Saryu murky brown with 8 inches of visibility clearing to 14 inches by the evening. Kali / Mahakali still running high, and milky grey with zero visibility.

GROUP 4 - 16th June 2023 to 26th June 2023  
ANGLERS - Andrew Field, John Beesley, and Greg Iszatt.

#### DAY 34 - 16th June

Andrew Field and John Beesley arrived at the camp.

Blank. (All camp anglers).

Lost Fish - possibly foul hooked (Andrew / lure / evening / Saryu).

Lost Fish - likely foul hooked (Greg / lure / evening / confluence).

Lost Fish (other camp angler / lure / night / Saryu).

Morning: Saryu running murky green with 16 inches of visibility. Kali / Mahakali still running high, and milky grey with zero visibility.

Afternoon / Evening: Saryu green with 20 inches of visibility clearing to 24 inches by the evening. Kali / Mahakali still running high, and milky grey with zero visibility.

#### DAY 35 - 17th June

Lost Fish (Greg / lure / morning / confluence).

Lost Fish (John / lure / morning / Saryu).

44.6lb golden mahseer (Greg / lure / noon / confluence).

Morning / Afternoon / Evening: Saryu running green with 24 inches of visibility. Kali / Mahakali still running high, and milky brown with zero visibility.

#### DAY 36 - 18th June

48lb golden mahseer (other camp angler / lure / noon / confluence). (Note: this was the same golden mahseer foul-hooked and landed on the 10th June 2023, and weighed at '52lb' by other camp angler).

Lost Fish (Greg / lure / evening / confluence).

Morning / Afternoon / Evening: Saryu running green with 24 inches of visibility. Kali / Mahakali still running high, and milky grey with zero visibility.

#### DAY 37 - 19th June

41.1lbs golden mahseer (Greg / lure / noon / confluence).

Lost Fish - likely foul hooked (Andrew / lure / evening / confluence).

Morning: Saryu running chocolate brown with zero visibility. Kali / Mahakali level dropped back, and milky grey with zero visibility.

Afternoon / Evening: Saryu running murky brown with 4 inches of visibility. Kali / Mahakali level dropped back slightly, and milky grey with zero visibility.

#### DAY 38 - 20th June

Blank, for all camp anglers.

Lost Fish - likely foul hooked (Andrew / lure / evening / Saryu).

Greg sick all day and did not fish.

Morning: Saryu running murky green with 12 inches of visibility. Kali/Mahakali level back up and running chocolate brown with zero visibility.

Afternoon / Evening: Saryu running green with 16 inches of visibility. Kali/Mahakali level dropped back slightly, and milky grey with zero visibility.

#### DAY 39 - 21st June

Lost Fish - after 10 minutes fight, braid cut-off on rocks, fish seen and estimated at 30lbs (John / lure / morning / confluence).



36lb golden mahseer - Greg, Vibe Lure.



44.6lb golden mahseer - Greg, Vibe Lure.



37lb golden mahseer - Greg, Vibe Lure.



47.4lb golden mahseer - Greg, Vibe Lure.



41.1lb golden mahseer - Greg, Vibe Lure.



56lbs - Eugene Conradie - the biggest weighed golden mahseer of the 2023 pre-monsoon season.

36.1lbs golden mahseer (Greg / lure / noon / confluence).

31.5lbs golden mahseer (Andrew / lure / early afternoon / confluence).

Morning: Saryu running murky green with 14 inches of visibility. Kali/Mahakali level back up and running milky grey with zero visibility.

Afternoon / Evening: Saryu running green with 24 inches of visibility. Kali/Mahakali level dropped back slightly, and milky grey with 2 inches of visibility.

#### DAY 40 - 22nd June

2 x Lost Fish - each after a few minutes fight, branches on line, hook came out (Greg / lure / morning / confluence).

Lost Fish - after 5 minutes fight, sari on line, hook came out (Greg / lure / noon / confluence).

10lb golden mahseer (John / lure / noon / Saryu).

Lost Fish - after 5 minutes fight, hook came out. Golden mahseer seen and estimated to be around 20lbs (John / lure / noon / Saryu).

15lb golden mahseer (other camp angler / lure / evening / confluence).

Morning: Saryu running green with 18 inches of visibility and up 18 inches in level. Kali / Mahakali level significantly up by 24 inches and running chocolate brown with zero visibility with lots of flotsam coming down.

Afternoon / Evening: Saryu running initial green with 18 inches of visibility and then rising by 18 inches and turning chocolate brown with zero visibility, with lots of flotsam coming down. Kali / Mahakali running chocolate brown with zero visibility.

#### DAY 41 - 23rd June

Blank for all camp anglers.

Virtually unfishable conditions.

Lost Fish - after 1 minute fight, fish started to head up Saryu and hook came out (Greg / lure / morning / confluence).

Foul Hooked Fish - as scale came back on the hook (Greg / lure / evening / confluence).

Night bait fishing session abandoned as too much debris coming down the Saryu snagging lines.

Morning: Saryu up 18 inches and chocolate brown with zero visibility. Kali / Mahakali up 12 inches and rising with flotsam coming down, running chocolate brown with zero visibility.

Afternoon: Saryu up another 18 inches (total 36 inches today so far) and chocolate brown with zero visibility. Kali / Mahakali up another 12 inches (total 24 inches today so far) with flotsam coming down, running chocolate brown with zero visibility.

Evening: Saryu back down 36 inches and chocolate brown with zero visibility. Kali / Mahakali back down 24 inches with flotsam still coming down, running chocolate brown with zero visibility.

#### DAY 42 - 24th June

Blank for all camp anglers. Unfishable conditions.

Morning: Saryu up 12 inches and chocolate brown with zero visibility. Kali / Mahakali up 12 inches with

flotsam coming down, running chocolate brown with zero visibility.

Afternoon / Evening: Saryu up another 6 inches and rising another 12 inches by the evening, chocolate brown with flotsam and zero visibility. Kali / Mahakali running chocolate brown and rising with flotsam and zero visibility.

#### DAY 43 - 25th June

Blank, for all camp anglers. Unfishable conditions, fishing abandoned.

Heavy thunderstorm and heavy rain early morning.

Conditions taking a turn for the worse with the Kali / Mahakali rising rapidly.

Decision taken to pack and be ready to abandon camp if necessary to do so.

#### DAY 44 - 26th June

No fishing.

Early morning, travel by road from Pancheshwar back to New Delhi Airport for the return flight to the UK.

#### END OF PART 2 OF DIARY

NOTE 1: The Saryu and /or Kali rivers turning chocolate brown at the confluence is a result of rains further north. At this time of year this is a positive thing, as it reaffirms the signal down river for the migrating mahseer to come up the Mahakali. This muddy water can accelerate the migrating mahseers' arrival at the confluence. A day or two after the muddy water passes through, a new pod of migrating mahseer can often arrive at the confluence pool.

NOTE 2: At this time of the year the Kali and Mahakali fluctuate daily in level due to the different rates of snow-melt between day and night time temperatures. These changes in water level can influence the daily feeding patterns of the mahseer who often hunt in the low water window.

#### LIST OF 25lb PLUS GOLDEN MAHSEER CAUGHT & RELEASED BY OUR CAMP ANGLERS

Between the 15th May and 26th June 2023. Order by Weight.

- 56lb Golden Mahseer - Eugene - Lure.
- 47.4lb Golden Mahseer - Greg - Lure.
- 44.6lb Golden Mahseer - Greg - Lure.
- 44lb Golden Mahseer - Eugene - Lure.
- 41.1lb Golden Mahseer - Greg - Lure.
- 37lb Golden Mahseer - Greg - Lure.
- 36.5lb Golden Mahseer - Greg - Lure.
- 36.1lb Golden Mahseer - Greg - Lure.
- 36lb Golden Mahseer - Greg - Lure.
- 36lb Golden Mahseer - Greg - Lure.
- 35.7lb Golden Mahseer - Greg - Lure.
- 35.5lb Golden Mahseer - Greg - Lure.
- 31.5lb Golden Mahseer - Andy - Lure.
- 31.5lb Golden Mahseer - Tom - Bait - asla livebait
- 30.1lb Golden Mahseer - Eugene - Lure.
- 29lb Golden Mahseer - Nick Bait - chicken.
- 28lb Golden Mahseer - Greg - Lure.
- 27lb Golden Mahseer - Tim - Bait - asla deadbait

**BIRDS SPOTTED ON THESE TRIPS:** Himalayan Griffin, Egyptian Vulture, Red-headed Vulture, White-browed Wagtail, Barn Swallow, River Lapwing, Crested Kingfisher, European Kingfisher, Grey Tree Pie, Red Billed Blue Magpie, Greater Yellow Nape, Great Tit, Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Blue Throated Barbet, White Throated Kingfisher, Chestnut Headed Bee Eater, Sand Martins, Eurasian Collared Dove, Spotted Dove.

**WILDLIFE SPOTTED ON THESE TRIPS:** Leopard! (seen by Tim Webb), Goral (Mountain Goat), Rhesus Macaque Monkey, Langur Monkey, Yellow Throated Martin, Garden Lizard, Frogs, Toads, Praying Mantis, Scorpion, Monitor Lizard, Indian Rat Snake, Butterflies - Plain Tiger (similar to Monarch), Blue Tiger, Himalayan Sergeant, PUNCHINELLO, and Common Mime).

#### THE SEARCH FOR THE HIMALAYAN GIANT CONTINUES.....

Rudyard Kipling the author of the classic; 'The Jungle Book', wrote:

*"There he met the mahseer of the Poonch, beside whom the tarpon is a herring, and he who catches him can say he is a fisherman."* - Rudyard Kipling - 'The Day's Work' 1898 - 'The Brushwood Boy' 1899.

I have often contemplated the above, and wondered what was going through Rudyard Kipling's mind when he wrote this some 125 years ago.

The tarpon, aka the 'silver king', in its own right is a serious gamefish reaching weights over 250lbs, yet it is described as a meagre 'herring' in comparison to the golden mahseer of the river Poonch by Kipling...Of course we could just dismiss the comparison out of hand, and assert they are the words of a 'mad-man' or simply misplaced, but these are the words of the acclaimed author, acknowledged genius, and youngest ever recipient (he was 41) of the Nobel Prize for Literature - Joseph Rudyard Kipling... He must of had reason to write what he did, so let's consider why he might of wrote it;

Firstly, perhaps Kipling was not simply referring to comparative size of each fish, as the tarpon would surely win this hands-down based on what we know. Instead, perhaps he was referring to the comparative angler skill and effort required to catch either fish. In Part 1 of this article I mentioned the 'gauntlet of survival' any big golden mahseer has to get big, and how this alongside their in-built survival instinct makes them ultra-spooky. The tarpon although not 'herring-like' in tariff of capture, is probably relatively easier to catch than a huge golden mahseer.

Secondly, perhaps Kipling was also referring to the comparative beauty of each fish. 'Beauty' is said to be in the eye of the beholder, but it is difficult for anyone to make a case for the tarpon (silver and 'herring-like' in appearance), being more beautiful than the majestic golden mahseer, with its scales etched in gold and canary-yellow fins.

Finally, I want to leave you with something thought provoking. Perhaps the tarpon does not actually grow that much bigger than the golden mahseer...perhaps this is actually the reason why Rudyard Kipling wrote what he did...

There are historical accounts and records of golden mahseer reaching 9 feet in length, however recent photographs and records to support the existence of such huge fish are lacking. Many mahseer anglers are convinced that a number of these giant golden mahseer still exist. In my opinion from my travels there are too many sightings and accounts from anglers, and local fisherman for this not to be the case.

Controversially, I believe the golden mahseer (Tor putitora) of the north of India could still be the largest species of mahseer, growing even larger than the hump-back mahseer (Tor remadevii) of southern India. In my opinion it is just a matter of time until this is proven to be the case. There are stories of 70kg golden mahseer caught in nets by local fishermen and taken to market, but again without supporting photographs. Christopher Oldmeadow and I know of a sighting involving four anglers from a bridge seeing a huge mahseer in the Mahakali river beneath them, they all estimated the fish to be over 10 feet in length!

Another sighting of a golden mahseer at Pancheshwar by a trusted angler from 20 yards away, described the fish as having a huge head and eyes, with the distance between its dorsal fin and tail being at least 6 feet. An estimated weight of 200lbs was assigned to the fish.

There are other reported captures, and sightings in the various rivers and dammed lakes of northern India. Additionally in less accessible areas many miles of these rivers still remain largely unexplored from an angling perspective.

The challenge remains in the modern era to catch and release one of these Great Fish. Personally this is what keeps me going back to northern India again and again. If not to catch one myself, at least to see close up in the flesh one of these Himalayan Giants. Just imagine such a golden mahseer...it would surely be the Greatest Freshwater Fish ever caught on rod and line!



**2024 and 2025 - PANCHESHWAR GOLDEN MAHSEER ANGLING TRIPS**

The GREATEST Fish in partnership with Pancheshwar Fishing run a limited number of exclusive Golden Mahseer Angling Trips to Pancheshwar in May, June and October each year. The GREATEST Fish is run on a strictly non-profit basis, it provides Guest Anglers with an informative point of contact in the UK so they are properly versed and prepared to get the very most out of their fishing trip to India. All angler trip sales revenue goes to the local Indian camp operator in India and that way their angling trip prices are kept low. If you would like further details, and are interested in being a Guest Angler on one these trips please contact by email: [enquiries@thegreatestfish.com](mailto:enquiries@thegreatestfish.com)

**GOLDEN MAHSEER ANGLING - FURTHER READING & VIEWING**

- 'Casting for Gold' - John Bailey.
- 'Somewhere Down the Crazy River' - Paul Boote and Jeremy Wade.
- 'Man-eaters of Kumaon' - Chapter 6 'The Fish of My Dreams' - Jim Corbett.
- 'Circumventing the Mahseer and Other Sporting Fish in India and Burma' - A. St. J. Macdonald.
- 'The Rod in India' - H. S. Thomas.
- YouTube, search term 'Golden Mahseer Fishing'.



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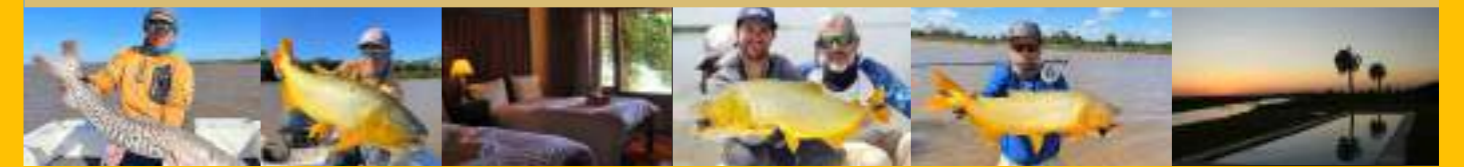
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