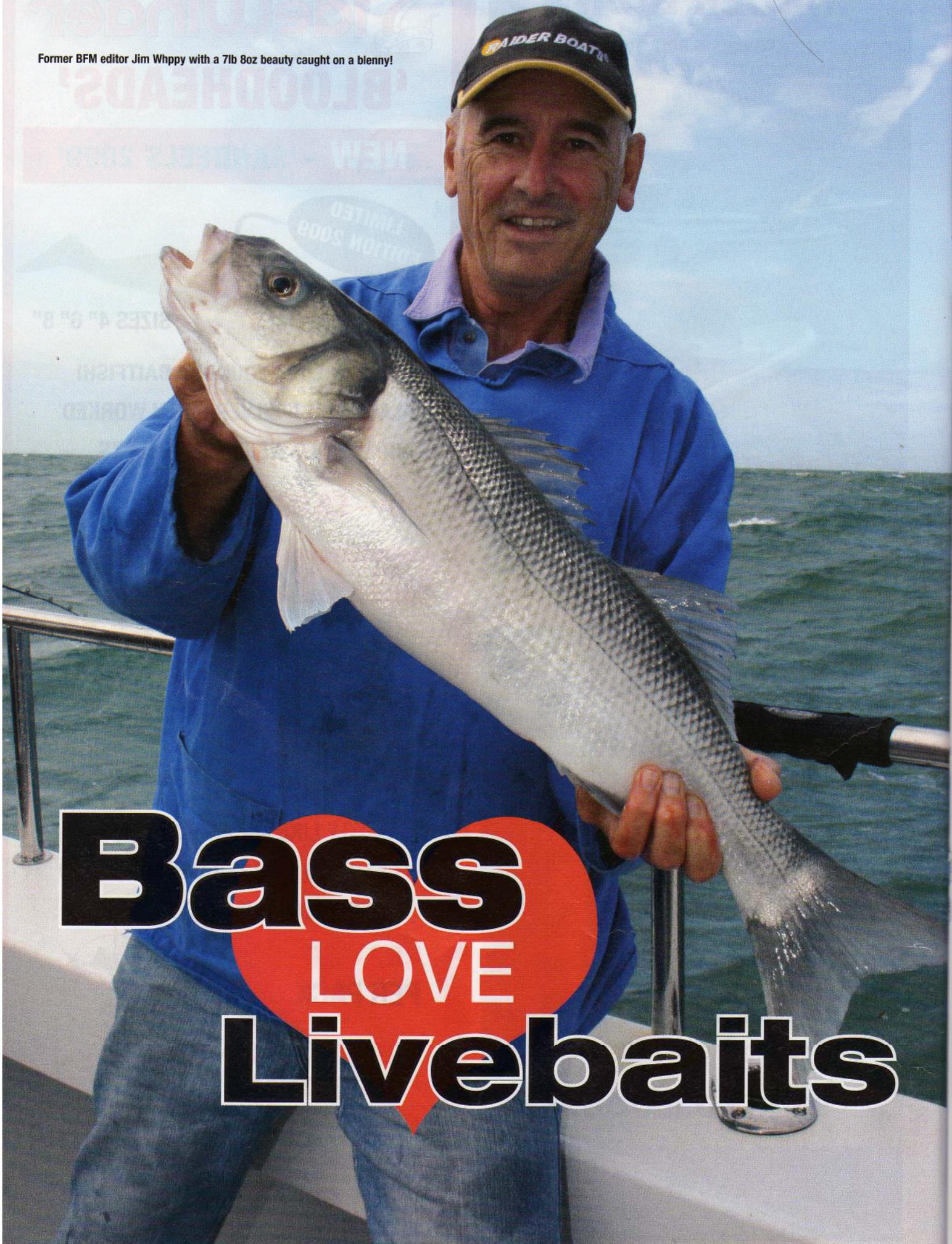
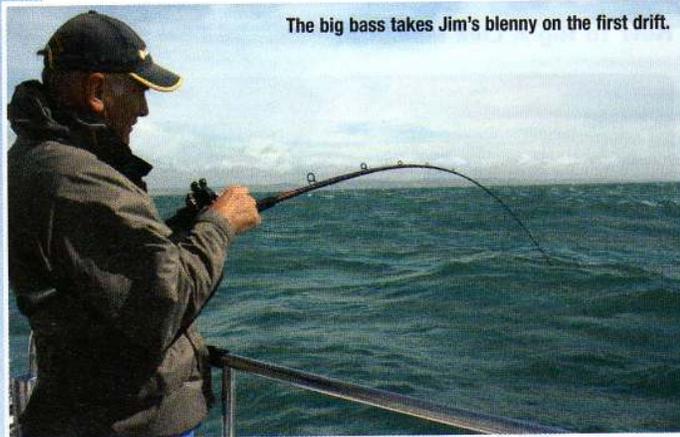


Former BFM editor Jim Whppy with a 7lb 8oz beauty caught on a blenny!



Bass
LOVE
Livebaits



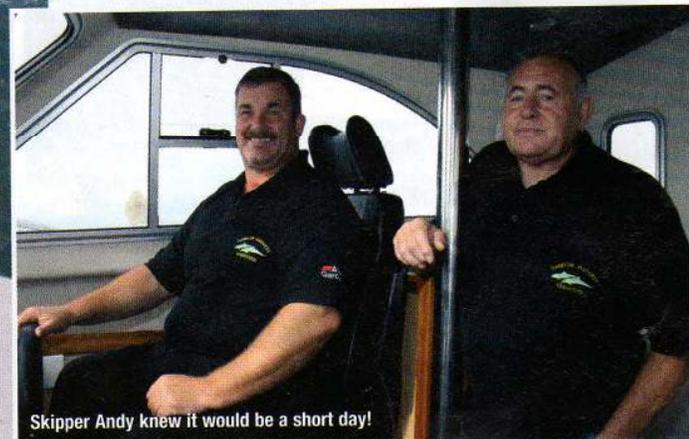
The big bass takes Jim's blenny on the first drift.



Even a small bass will hit a big livebait.



Another in the net.



Skipper Andy knew it would be a short day!

One of the most exciting methods for catching bass, especially big bass, is drifting over sandbanks with livebaits. BFM headed south to Poole in Dorset for a couple of hours afloat with top skipper Andy Adams...

The weather forecast looked a bit iffy, but a quick call to skipper Andy confirmed that we would at least get a couple of hours fishing on the chosen bank before the tide turned and made life impossible.

So, the BFM team headed south in a vain attempt to get out, catch some livebait, catch a big bass and head home before the sea conditions ended the day for us.

On this trip were BFM editor Dave Barham, plus ex editor Jim Whippy. The pair are well versed in catching big bass on livebaits, but who would be the one to score with such a small window of opportunity?

About The Skipper And Boat

Regular BFM readers will recognise Andy Adams and his boat 'Random Harvest II'. In recent years, Andy has given his services FOC to host the National Boat Fishing League final, which BFM used to run.

Andy is well recognised as a skipper both here in the UK and abroad in Kenya, where he also has a boat 'Happy Striker' that he runs for three months of the year.

'Random Harvest II' is one hell of a vessel, she's a 38ft Evolution powered by a 360hp Daewoo turbo diesel

engine. The boat has an MCA 60-mile licence and can carry 12 passengers plus crew.

If any boat could handle the types of seas forecast, this baby was it!

A Job To Do

We all met on the boat at 8.30am prompt. A few of the crew on board had already started catching livebaits in the form of blennies and a few wrasse, so even if we struggled to find live mackerel once at sea, at least we would be able to drag a few livebaits over the bank.

Now, you may be thinking that we're all a bit mad using blennies and wrasse for bait, but as the day was to prove – they work extremely well.

Hungry Predators

Bass will attack just about anything when they are hungry. Most anglers will know that live mackerel, sandeel or launce are the favoured livebaits when targeting bass, but don't rule out other species – if it swims, a hungry bass will eat it!

In the past, BFM editor Dave Barham has had great success from the shore when using live blennies, so he knew the full potential of the three that were in the livebait well.

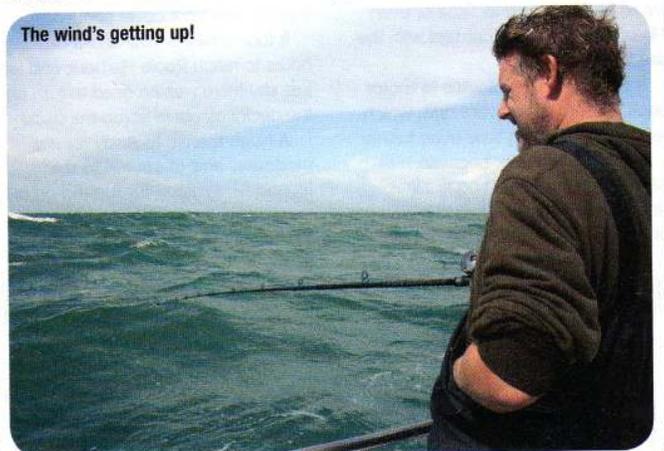
Jim Whippy also knew just how effective anything alive could be, so

The Technique

Fishing on the drift with livebaits for bass is quite simple really. All you do is drop your baited rig to the sea bed, then back off the drag so that line can be pulled freely – but keep your thumb on the spool. When you feel the first 'Thump' of a bass, release your thumb so that line pours off the reel and count to two. Then, tighten the drag and lift into the bass – there's no real need to strike unless you are fishing on a very slow drift.

Giving the bass free line and a count of two gives it enough time to hit the bait, turn it and get it in its mouth. Using this method will allow you to catch even the smallest bass on the biggest livebait.

The wind's getting up!



as the boat neared the sandbank after a two-hour steam, he dove straight into the livewell and grabbed a blenny. He was fishing a really simple rig. Basically you tie a link swivel to the end of your main line, then tie on a 6ft hooklength to the btoom eye of the link swivel – then all you do is clip on a lead.

Andy emerged from the wheelhouse and made an announcement.

“Right lads, we made it here no problems, but as you can see it’s rough already. I reckon we’ve got an hour, then we’re going to have to head for home”.

We all knew what he was saying, conditions were less than favourable to say the least, and when that tide turned it was going to whip up an already angry sea into something that no sane angler would dare be afloat in.

First Fish – What A Cracker

With time at a premium, Andy set up the first drift. Jim lowered his blenny, while two of the other lads on board did the same. Dave B decided to wait for a live mackerel, and before he could even tie on a set of feathers, Andy’s crewman had a full string in the boat. So Dave quickly grabbed his rod that he’d already tied a Portland rig to, pinched a live mackerel and rigged it up.

Nothing happened on the first drift, and as always this was just a ‘taster’ to see where the wind and tide would take the boat. So, Andy called lines up and made the necessary adjustments and put us on another drift. This time it took a matter of seconds to get connected. Jim Whippy was first into a fish – and last to get it in the boat! It fought like an absolute demon, and when it hit the net we knew why. Lying there in the bottom of the net was a pristine 7lb 8oz bass, what a corker! It had taken the blenny livebait.

There were two other bass caught on that drift, about 3lb and 4lb, plus one lost to BFM ed Dave!

A Cruel Game

The tide was belting through at about 2-knots, which was increased further by the strong wind. Andy reckoned we were doing over 3-knots, which meant we all had to go up to 12oz or even 1lb of lead to stay in contact with the sea bed.

It too about five minutes to motor back up onto the correct drift, which reduced out fishing time even further.

It’s such a shame, because catching a decent fish on the first drift like that really enthuses everyone on board, and to know that there

are quality fish around increases the chances of that magical double! But Mother Nature was playing a cruel game with us, and we had to do the best we could in such a small window.

The Last Drifts

The second drift produced another 5lb beauty to Jim, this time on live mackerel, while there were three more bass in the 3lb and 4lb bracket – again all on live mackerel.

Drift three produced much more of the same, including a bass of around 1lb 8oz to Dave B – it was only just bigger than his mackerel livebait – which goes to prove yet another lesson. Too many anglers reckon that small mackerel or ‘joeys’ are the best bait for bass, when in reality they will hit anything. Dave B reckons he goes for the biggest mackerel in the livewell every time.

“If I’m going to catch bass, I really want to target a big fish, so why not go for a ridiculously big livebait? I’ve caught countless 2-pounders on 1lb mackerel, so I know that if the bass are present I’m going to catch one no matter how big the bait is. Using a huge mackerel livie just increases your chances of pulling that magical double-figure beast!” he said.

The last drift of the day threw up another four bass – this was really twisting the knife! The sandbank was loaded with quality bass and we literally had to run away from them!

Good Move!

With about half an hour before the tide changed we packed away all the gear, tidied the boat and wedged ourselves into the seats in the wheelhouse – we all knew what lay ahead of us! ‘Random Harvest II’ is quite capable of 20-knots plus as a cruising speed, but heading into the waves would severely slow us down.

We started off well, hitting about 12-knots for the first half-an-hour or so, but then as the tide began to push the wave height increased and Andy had to back off the throttle. We really were pushing our luck, but we’d done the job we set out to do – including getting this month’s front cover shot!

It took a further two-and-a-half hours to reach Poole Harbour, and let’s just say there was no need to turn on the deckwash or to scrub the deck!

A huge thanks to Andy for his madness, and of course to the legend Mr Whippy for turning on his magic and boating the best fish of the day – again! 

How To Rig A Live Mackerel



Step 1 You’ll need to tie a fixed pennell rig for this one with the hooks spaced about 6-inches apart. We use 6ft of 30lb fluorocarbon line with size 6/0 wide gape hooks.



Step 2 Start by passing the top hook of the fixed pennell rig through the lower jaw of the mackerel and out the top of the head. If you’re not expecting instant action, pass the point of the hook through the top of the head by going in through the mouth.



Step 3 With the top hook in place, measure the bottom hook along the mackerel’s back so the two hook sit comfortably in line. Mark it with your thumb then pass the bottom hook through the fleash of the mackerel.



Step 4 This is what you’re after – don’t worry about the second hook not laying perfectly with the line tight, it really doesn’t matter – not at 3-knots anyway!

Information

Boat – Random Harvest II
 Skipper - Andy Adams
 Mobile: 07802 672227
 Email: andyadams38evo@yahoo.co.uk
 Website: www.randomharvestcharters.co.uk