Make Your Own Floats

FOR the do-it-yourself angler, shops that specialize in materials for model making are of particular interest. Here can be obtained most of the items necessary for making floats.

Many shop-bought floats are excellent, but often the range available is not great. Until recently only a few small firms bothered to make an antenna float which was really suited for its job.

The antenna float is designed for fishing still water or slow-moving rivers on windy days. It is also extremely sensitive, particularly for registering 'lift' bites. When a fish lifts a shot off the bottom of the river bed as it takes the bait, the reduced weight acting on the float will cause the antenna to pop up in dramatic fashion.

Most floats have their buoyancy centred nearer the top of the float than the bottom, but with antenna floats this factor is reversed. And on days when the choppy surface of the water resembles a miniature sea, a float with its centre of buoyancy low down is the one to use.

Below the troubled surface, the water is still calm—and that is where the main bulk of the float lies to serve as an anchor for the slim antenna which has to bear the brunt of the surface commotion. The small surface area of the antenna has a streamlining effect

To get maximum benefit from an antenna float, fix the line to the bottom ring only. About 2 ft. above the float, pinch on a small shot (dust shot, or a size 3, 4 or 5). Then shot the tackle in the normal way so that only the tip of the antenna will ride above water. After casting, dip the end of the rod under water and quickly wind in a few yards of line until all the line is submerged. This method helps to prevent line and float being blown about by the wind. A point to note: When fishing at long range with a sunken line, a more vigorous, sweeping strike is needed to connect with a bite than is the case when most of the line is held off the water.

An antenna float to 'rule the waves' is easy enough to make. To work well, the overall length of the float should be at least nine inches. The actual antenna can be made of cane (12 inch lengths of cane, already split, can be bought cheaply from florists) or lengths of $\frac{1}{16}$ in. and $\frac{1}{8}$ in. diameter balsa dowel from a model-making shop. Balsa dowel, although nothing like as tough as cane, has the advantage that it is already shaped.

A length of balsa wood ($\frac{1}{4}$ in. $\times$ $\frac{1}{4}$ in. $\times$ 3 ft.) is ideal for making float bodies. I shape the body after fitting the stem and antenna. Shape the body roughly to size with a sharp knife—a Stanley trimming knife or an Exacto tool is useful for this purpose. Finish off with Garnet paper (8d. a sheet). This lasts longer than sandpaper.

Boring a hole right through the centre of the balsa body can be tricky. An easier alternative is to make a hole about an inch deep at each end of the body (see diagram 1). This can be done with a darning needle, knitting needle, or a rat-tailed file.

The wire float ring should be non-rusting so use brass wire. For 2s. 6d. you can buy enough wire from an ironmonger to last for years of float making. Whip the ring on with nylon thread, binding from the bottom of the float towards the top. Whipping can also be used to add strength to the points where antenna and stem join the float body.

Humbrol clear varnish and fluorescent and matt paints are available in small tins costing about 9d. A white base paint is generally needed beneath the vividly coloured paints suitable for float tips. Balsa is porous, so seal it well by giving it at least three coats of varnish.

Make a float attachment

Considering their usefulness, float attachments are not as widely used by anglers as one would expect. The main functions of these attachments are to facilitate float-changing and to enable a float to swing freely on the line even though it is set at a fixed depth.

The necessity to change a float may often arise; a sudden change in weather conditions may call for heavier or lighter tackle, or you may find that the float being used is unsuitable—it's not sensitive enough, or the tip is of a colour which does not show clearly against the background of the water. When this occurs, you are far more likely to make the required change if you know that it can be carried out in a matter of moments.

The advantage of a true 'swinging' float may be less obvious, but you will find that the attachment acts as a sort of independent suspension which minimizes the effect of wind on the float. By reducing wind drag on the tackle, an angler is able to present the hook bait in a natural way.

Another advantage is that, because the attachment is fastened only to the bottom ring of the float, the float creates far less disturbance on the surface of the water when a strike is made than is the case with a 'fixed' float.

Even a float secured to the line by means of a short length of valve rubber, at one end, is not completely free-swinging. Unlike the true swinger, it sets up resistance when a strike is made because the float does not follow in exactly the same plane as the line (see diagram 3).

Negligible cost

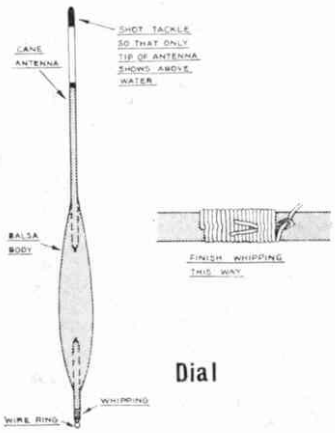
Excellent float attachments can be bought from tackle shops for about 1s. 6d. Usually they are made of light alloy so that they scarcely alter the normal shotting of a float. A satisfactory attachment can easily be made from a piece of cane approximately half-an-inch long and $\frac{1}{8}$ in. in diameter. To one end of the cane whip on a loop of non-rusting wire to secure an American swivel (6d. from your tackle dealer—see diagram 2).

The cane attachment is fastened to the line by being inserted into a piece of valve rubber of identical length. It will be found that any float attachment adds to the stability of a float in water and this is especially so if a cane attachment about 2 in. long is used.

Swinging floats and float attachments are normally used in still or very slow-moving waters, but a two-inch attachment also works well in rivers of reasonable flow, particularly when there is a strong upstream wind. On windy days, when orthodox top-and-bottom floats are being blown about, give the attachment rig a try—it can help you trot a float with the current more smoothly.

Using the longer attachment may reduce the length of your casting, so you may have to add some weight to your tackle in order to cast the distance you want. Still, changing to a slightly larger float is no bother now.

by **J. Crossman**



Dia 1

Dia 2

Dia 3