

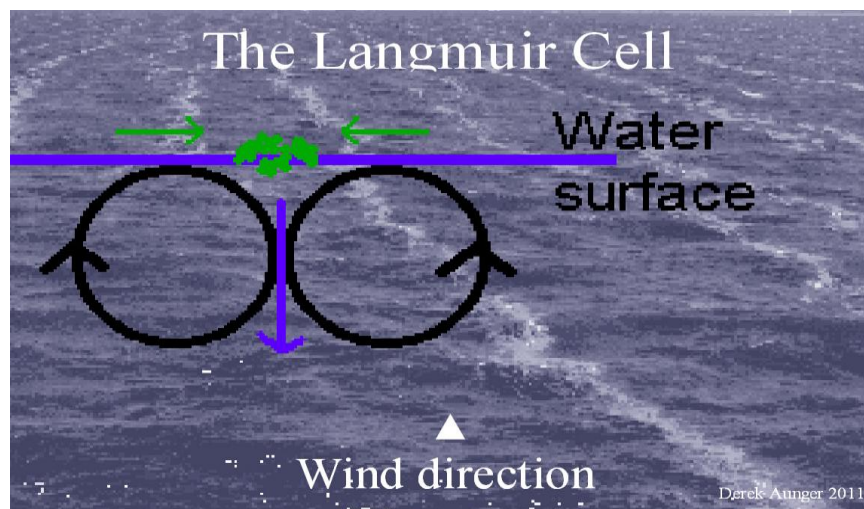
Get the Drift

Fishing the Wind Lanes

Looking down over a lake prior to getting to the bank, or into a boat for a days fishing, we have all watched the stretches of wind lanes. Some, gently wandering across the water, others, in high wind conditions showing as a definite path of foam amongst the wave breaks. These wind lanes often hold feeding fish

I am fanatical about fishing wind lanes and would like to point out their advantages. Let me explain the formation of these wind lanes, why they attract the fish, and how best to use them.

Wind lanes were studied in depth (excuse the pun) by Irving Langmuir, an American physicist, after noticing the lanes forming on the water surface. He discovered that when the wind was blowing across the top of a water mass in one direction, because of the 'Coriolis' effect (this is what make your bath water spin whilst going down the plug hole) cells are formed below the surface, and actually break the surface at the top of each cell. These are known as 'Langmuir Cells'



What we actually see is the top of each cell where it breaks the surface, and in fact the water in that space is turning very slowly at right angles to the wind direction.

Because this part of the cell has less movement, small objects trapped within the spinning cell are brought to the surface, and remain on the surface. Luckily, for us as fly fishers, this also includes sub-surface insect life. The ever clever trout have worked this out for themselves, and you will often see the splashing of feeding trout making their way along the wind lane, against the wind taking food off the surface.

To fish the wind lanes from the bank, find an area on a wind-ward side with your back to the wind. The fish then will be feeding towards you on or near the surface and often close in.

If you are on a promontory, not only do you have the advantage of the water surface and temperature changes associated with these areas (often known as 'Duffer's Point') you now know where the trout are likely to be, and at what depth.

Depth is quite important when fishing wind lanes. The visible wind lane itself contains only the aquatic life brought to the surface. The cell is often around 6ft in diameter and holds free swimming or trapped life within. Should you wish to fish deeper, casting into the visible wind lane and letting your flies sink into the middle of the cell will give you the greatest depth range. Casting either side of the visible wind lane will take your flies down into the side of the cell which has a little more turbulence. Because the cell is circular, you will have a void area to sink through before getting into the cell, and you will also sink below the cell earlier here.

Boat fishing in the traditional loch style now comes into its own. Slow your drift through the wind lanes with a well placed drogue, making shorter casts will give far better accuracy and presentation.

A team of nymphs or small emergers are ideal. Similarly small bushy hackled sedge type patterns, 'daddys', or 'hoppers' are extremely successful, as are many of the traditional wet fly patterns.

I use #6 weight rods for all my stillwater fishing, and for loch style I normally use a 10ft. When sitting in a boat, the 10ft is ideal for a longer distance cast if required, and for holding your flies higher in the water nearer the boat. For the majority of the time a roll at the end of each lift is all that's needed to get your flies where you want them. It's advisable when fishing wind lanes to cast as straight down a lane as you can, not only to keep within the area of the lane, but to be clear of nearby lanes that your boat partner may be casting over.

Leaders should be as long as possible, and a team of three with descending dropper lengths giving a variation of depths is ideal. It's good practice to use a proprietary line degreaser (or some 'secret recipe of your own – I call mine Wonder Jollop') on the leader to make sure it lays subsurface, and to reduce the shine. The speed of your retrieve is really a case of 'see what works at the time' and be prepared to make changes. Remember, if you want to fish your flies stationary, you will need to be retrieving at the speed of the boat's drift to keep in touch. Let the flies dwell at the end of each retrieve, and be prepared for a follow, or a take as you lift off.

I hope I've managed to wet your appetite to give the wind lanes a try, and maybe think a little more about changing weather and water conditions.

Derek Aunger 2011
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