

NEW GEAR

TRIED & TESTED

The latest gear is put through its paces by our independent tester Robbie Winram who has tested 1000s of tackle items over his 30-year flyfishing career. Expect honest reviews!

XS leader for all occasions

Snowbee XS leader materials

from £3.75 || snowbee.co.uk

SNOWBEE have brought out a new range of leader materials in both fluorocarbon and copolymer to replace the outgoing Magic and Fluoro-Tec lines. Plus they have added to the copolymer range with a camo Stealth version. The new XS materials have been made by one of Japan's leading manufacturers.

XS fluorocarbon

THE XS fluorocarbon is available in eight breaking strains from 3.5lb (6X, 0.15mm diameter) at £9 up to 15lb (02X, 0.35mm) at £22, all on 100 metre spools. I was sent the 8lb (0.23mm, £13), 10lb (0.25mm, £14) and 12lb (0.28mm, £16) for test.

The material has quite a dull sheen and there wasn't much elasticity, which is a trait that I like, but at the same time it is still reasonably supple and there was very little memory when I took it straight off the spool.

I went out on Rutland on a day when the trout were keen to take the fly and I tried out the various strengths of fluorocarbon with Buzzers, nymphs and lures. I fished Buzzers on a 20-foot leader with a team of four flies and opted for the 8lb XS fluorocarbon. It handled and tied well and the knots bedded down nice and tight. I had a number of fish and also a double hook-up, a good test for the fluoro and it came through with flying colours. I moved up to the 10lb when I started working back some Boobies and Blobs and experienced the same reliability. I found I could bring a lot more pressure to bear on this breaking strain.

Then I moved to the dark side and put on a shorter leader of the 12lb breaking strain with two barbless Humungus lures and headed for the boils. Some serious takes ensued and the fluoro held up very well. At one point the leader was rubbing along the

side of the boat as the fish made a bid for freedom and when I eventually landed it the leader hadn't suffered at all.

It comes on 3.25-inch diameter spools with a handy line clip.

XS copolymer

THE XS copolymer is available in nine breaking strains from 2.5lb (7X, 0.12mm) at £4 up to 15lb (02X, 0.30mm) at £5. It comes on the same size spools and I had the 8lb (0.22mm), 10lb (0.24mm) and 12lb (0.26mm), all £5, for test. I thought this material had even less shine than the fluorocarbon and it definitely has more elasticity than the fluoro but is not excessive by any means. There was a little more memory when initially pulled off the spool, but after stretching it out this soon disappeared.

I had the same positive experience with the copolymers and they are ideal for fishing dries up in the surface film without dragging them down. I also found the material was great for fishing nymphs when you want to keep your flies up in the water column – a tactic which really pays off at times.

XS Stealth copolymer

THE XS Stealth copolymer comes on 50 metre spools and in four breaking strains from 2.5lb (7X, 0.12mm) to 6lb (4X, 0.18mm), all at £3.75. The spool is about 2.5 inches in diameter and when the copolymer is on the spool you can see the camouflage colours of olive, green and brown. There is virtually no memory at all in this leader and it has a nice amount of stretch.

In this range of low breaking strains I can understand that it is aimed at river anglers – the stretch will protect very fine tippets. But I think the 6lb, which I tried out, would also be ideal for the light line stillwater angler when fishing dries and emergers for spooky fish. I used it during a session at Eyebrook reservoir when fish were being a little finicky and feeding just in the top foot of water. I put on a size 14 Bob's Bits and managed to winkle out a fish. The takes were lightening fast and the stretch in this Stealth material really made a difference between me keeping and losing the fish.

One little niggle I had is not with the material itself, but with the line retaining clip on the fluorocarbon and copolymer spools. It sometimes popped out of its housing when I pulled off lengths of the leader so I Superglued it into place, problem solved.

Verdict: I was very impressed with all these leader materials and while I know anglers get very attached to their own favourite brand, I would say they are definitely worth a try.

