

CRUCIAN CRAZY

Over the last few seasons one particular lake has become a mecca for specimen anglers in pursuit of a potentially record breaking crucian carp and this season I wasn't going to miss out!

by Jamie Cartwright



For several seasons I have been meaning to cash in on this early season 'gold rush' but this year I actually got my act together, and with great anticipation I looked forward to targetting some of the biggest crucians in the country.

I booked the first day off. This would mean I could travel down early in the morning, arriving around 6am, so if there was a queue to get in to the car park I would hopefully be near the front and get a reasonable swim. This would also mean I could spend a bit of time walking around the lake looking for signs of fish rolling to give me an idea of the area I want to be in. The anticipated queue was a non-event and I sat in the car park in solitude for 7 hours before being allowed in by the bailiffs to secure a swim I was hopeful of getting!

The lake filled with more and more anglers as the afternoon wore on, and just before dusk it was completely full. I had fully expected this to happen and chose my swim with a view to not getting hemmed in by other anglers, giving me plenty of water all to myself, which I baited regularly throughout the afternoon. This had the desired effect of attracting a few crucians and tench in to the swim, and they gave their presence away, by rolling and bubbling up as they fed on the fine groundbait I had fed the swim with.

I thought carefully about my tactics and baiting approach and had decided to introduce a big hit of fine groundbait with a 'clipped up' Spomb to ensure accuracy. Adding no other feed to this groundbait, as it was purely intended to attract the fish into the swim and get them grubbing about on the bottom, the only actual feed being that in my feeder.





Jamie's rig components for targeting crucians.



A 1.25 Specialist Avon/Quiver rod perfect for the job.



The finished rig, fished over his fine groundbait mix.

When it came to deciding tactics I had done my homework, I found that the Flatbed Method Feeder had been doing the business in recent seasons and would be the obvious choice. However, I firmly believe that if you do the same as everyone else you can only expect to catch the same as everyone else. So, after a good think, I looked into some different methods used by match anglers targeting small match carp and F1s. The answer came to me when I saw some of the Drennan Pellet Feeders. They can be filled with micro pellets and you tuck your hook bait of choice just inside to avoid any chance of the rigs tangling.

Hook bait choice was also vital, I choose to use the new range of Yum-Yum Pellets and F1 Bandits or if nuisance fish were a problem, 4mm artificial pellet. These were presented on a mini hair rig with a baitband using a size 16 Drennan Wide Gape Specialist hook, whipped on to 3-4 inches of 8lb Drennan Gravel Braid, which is super reliable and strong yet supple enough to give the rig some finesse.

As dusk fell the wind dropped and the lake was flat calm, revealing a 'witch's cauldron' of bubbles over the baited area. My excitement was at fever pitch, I was stood with a baited feeder in hand for half an hour, desperately waiting for the 'all in' call from the bailiffs. First cast landed spot on so I quickly got the other rod cast out. As I was clipping on the bobbin to the second rod the first roared off, I was into my first fish of the session within two minutes of casting out. Nervously, I drew the fish towards me, with the forgiving tip of my 1.25lb Series 7 Specialist Avon/Quiver rod cushioning the lunges and head shakes. My small hook held its grip and I scooped up my prize and marvelled at its beauty with my tiny hook and Pineapple Punch F1 Bandit hanging from the corner of its mouth.

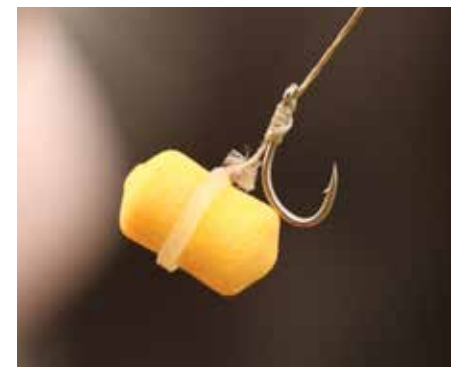
My personal best was 2lb 14oz and I could tell at a glance this fish was well in excess of that. On the scales it weighed 3lb 7oz, a new personal best and a new Northampton Specimen Group crucian record! I raised the bar on three more occasions during the next 24 hours, firstly to 3lb 8oz, (5 minutes after returning the 3lb 7oz fish) then 3lb 10oz the next morning before upping it further in the evening with a fish of 3lb 13oz. My final tally for the session was 15 crucian's (including 11 over 3lbs) to 3lb 13oz, and five tench to 6lb, which made it a session to remember.

I returned a few days later to find the lake was fishing a lot harder than it was during my first session. I used identical tactics to take a lot more tench than on my previous visit, plus a further five crucians with the best going 3lb 14oz to add an ounce to my personal best and NSG record. I'll be making plans to return next spring if only for a chance of repeating those wonderful trips I enjoyed this spring.

Jamie's personal best crucian at 3lb 14oz.



Loading The Pellet Feeder:



1. Jamie presents his hook-bait on a small latex bait-band for ease.



2. He then partly fills the pellet feeder with dampend down micro pellets.



3. He then adds a generous squirt of Crab & Krill Yum Yum Bait Booster.



4. Then he places the hook-bait on top of the feeder.



5. He then overfills the feeder with more micro pellets.



6. The pellets are then given a firm press before casting out.