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August 26, 2008

Angler's Mail

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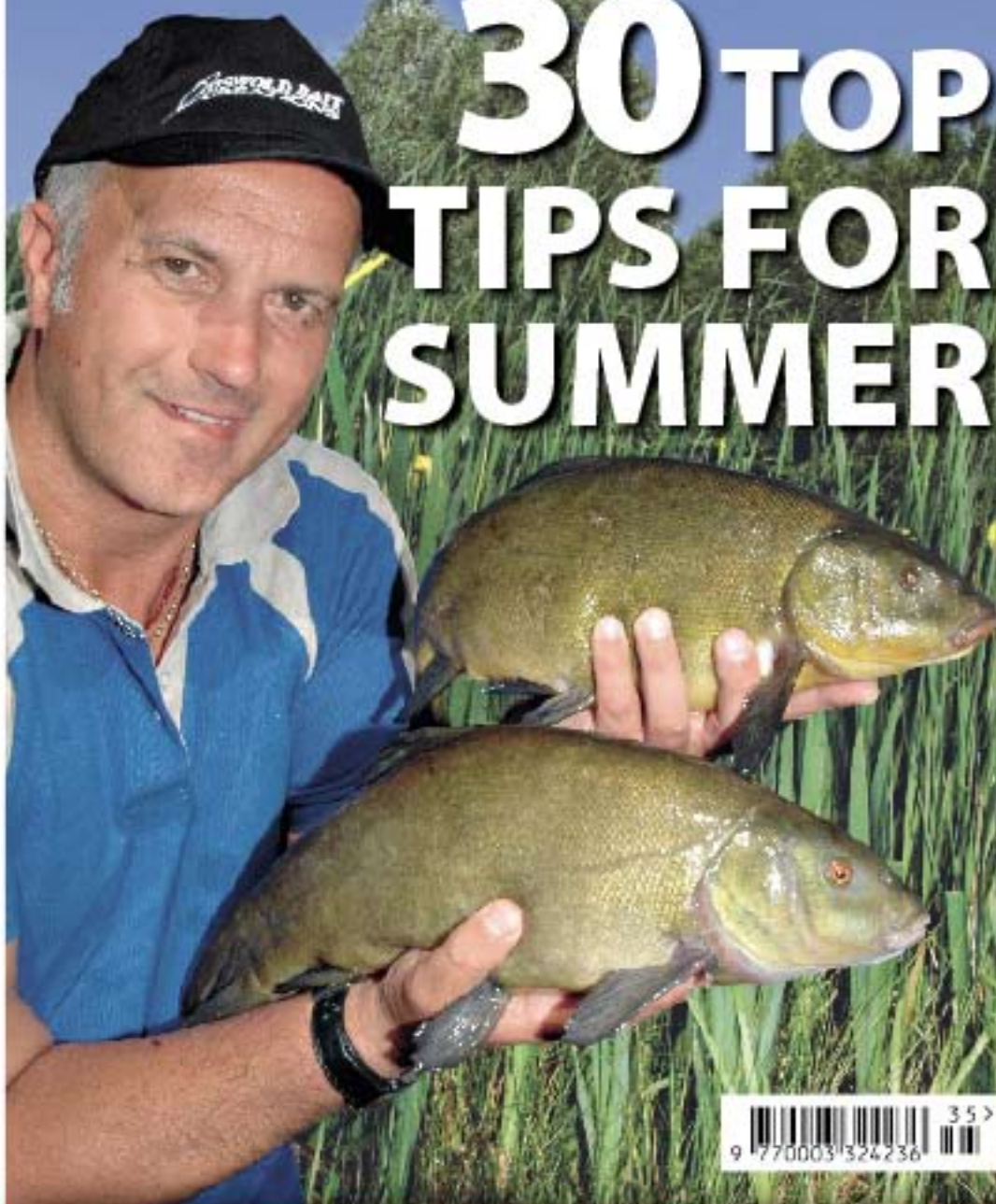
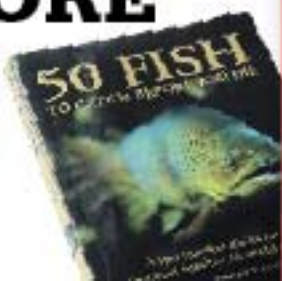
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THIS WEEK

RUSS EVANS
TRIES FOR CRAFTY
CRUCIANS ON THE
VENUE HE KNOWS BEST.



Spot-on skill for crucians

CRUCIAN CARP enthusiasts like to know the fish they are catching are the real deal, and not hybridised with other species. One person for whom crucian carp are his favourite species is Russ Evans, manager of the tackle shop at Bury Hill Fisheries, near Dorking, in Surrey. And just down the track from the shop is a prime spot for true crus, Bury Hill's Milton Lake, which was stocked when it was created 15 years ago with pedigree fish from famous private estate lake Witley Park. The crucians share 30-peg, 2.5-acre Milton with lots of tench, roach, rudd, perch and even a few small zander, and just a sprinkling of mirror carp. Cute crucians feature in catches there throughout the year, but it's in summer that they are most obliging, with up to 60 lb of them possible on a good day. The biggest reach 3 lb, though most are around 1 to 2 lb, and catching them is all about delicate presentation and not bringing the bigger carp round to see what's going on. But on warm days when the carp and tench have spawning on their mind, it's possible to have just crucians in your swim... until the roach move in.

Angler's Mail RATING:
Delicate presentation makes all the difference.



CHUBBY charmers that demand delicate presentation, crucian carp are worth the extra effort.

TOP TIPS

- This 13 ft/15 ft Drennan Combi rod is ideal for margin fishing, allowing pole-style presentation but with the advantages of a rod and reel for keeping carp and tench out of the reeds.
- When crucian fishing Russ always has a No. 8 shot an inch from the hook as a tell-tale to improve bite detection, fishing just half an inch overdepth. Finicky bites can be converted into fish by gently lifting the float to draw the bait away.
- Cupping in bait means less disturbance and a more concentrated feed area. Russ put in two pots at the start and one with 20 micro pellets every 20 minutes.



TICKET information

Day tickets for Milton also cover Bonds Lake and Old Bury Hill Lake, too, and cost £11.50 per rod for adults, with concessions for juniors and OAPs. Evening tickets (four hours) are £5.50. Opening times are 7.30am to sunset on weekdays and sunrise to sunset at weekends and on Bank Holidays. Visit www.buryhillfisheries.com or ring 01306 883621.

The early morning mist signals a warm day in prospect, but with two aerators on Milton Lake switched on at night, oxygen levels are high and the fish willing to feed despite the heat. Russ has set up in peg 11, on the furthest side of the lake from the track, as these swims get the least attention from anglers, which seems to attract the crucians.



Pellets are the main bait choice. Cotswold Bait Supplies 6 mm expanders soaked overnight in a quarter of a bottle of Bloodworm and pumped to use as hookers with micro pellets for feed. Red maggots and corn are alternatives, but once the crucians get a taste for pellet they often won't look at anything else. A pole line at ten metres and a margin line on the edge of the reeds are the two main target areas.



First fish on the bait is a greedy tench. Like carp they can act as bully boys and keep the crucians on the edge of the feed. By using a pole cup to introduce just occasional nuggets of dryish Cotswold Fishmix fishmeal groundbait with a bit of hemp they won't be attracted from a wide area by splashes and clouds of bait. Even so, they still outnumber the finicky crucians by two to one.



Pole floats (Drennan Choppas) and light lines are the order of the day, even on a running line set-up, as crucians are fussy, refusing to look at anything crude. Even then, unhit dips of the float are common until the fish get their heads down. Russ favours 4 lb Shimano Speed Master main line and a size 18 Kamasan Animal hook to nylon (0.12 mm). Any finer would mean trouble landing tench.



When the crucians switch on it can be a bite every put-in, and that unmistakable circular dance they do tells you what you've hooked before you see it. A 10 m pole with white hydro elastic (number 8-10) is an alternative, but with elastic it's harder to stop the inevitable tench and carp reaching the reeds. Russ landed several fish on rod and line that he wouldn't have done on a pole.



At around noon the crucians switch off, and then it is the turn of the roach, one after another – fun to catch but not what Russ is looking for. The crucians may have stopped feeding or shuffled on somewhere else until later. Warm evenings are a great time to catch them, and many people take advantage of the 5pm evening tickets to get four hours' fishing at one of the best times of day.



THE END RESULT



The total was 12 tench to 3 lb 8 oz, seven crucians, three carp and lots of roach and hybrids up to 1 lb for a total of about 50 lb (special permission was granted to use a keepnet for this feature.) Flat calm conditions didn't help, as the fish feed more confidently with a ripple over their heads, but an interest in spawning kept some of the carp away. Crucian carp are Russ's favourite species because they don't give themselves up like bigger carp. 'You have to suss out their feeding mood and give them what they want on a plate to catch them in numbers,' he said, 'which makes success with them all the more rewarding.'