

Alan Stagg has been getting some serious, rod-bending action from big crucians of late. This enigmatic, mysterious species is not as difficult to catch as some people make out, as long as you fine-tune your approach. Alan explains how.

Springing On
The Summer

Pit

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always look forward as the temperature begins to rise signalling spring is on its way. This means one thing to me, it is time to dust off my light gear and head for the nearest lake with crucian carp in it.

Living just outside Yateley has its benefits as the famous Summer Pit, controlled by CEMEX angling, is close by and even more of a convenience is the fact that I have to drive past it to get to and from work.

The Summer Pit is, in my opinion, the place to visit if you want to catch a specimen crucian and with spring now upon us, there is no better time than right now.

It All Adds Up To Success

The Summer Pit is a small but secluded lake of around three acres. It is shallow and contains many gravel bars and features luxurious weed growth. There are also overhanging trees, which make it an ideal habitat for producing giant crucian carp. When I say giant, I mean fish in excess of 4lb, and the venue holds the current British record, a colossal fish weighing 4lb 9oz 9drms.

The lake also contains a good head of tench which can be great fun on light gear. Water temperatures rise quickly after a few warm days of spring-like weather and fish soon become active and are a worthy target for any angler.

The lake holds a very good stock of crucian carp, mainly in the 2lb bracket, and an angler can expect some good bags of fish in short sessions. Lewis Read and myself had a dabble for a few short evenings last July and bagged 30 fish over 2lb and lots of tench, which shows what the venue has to offer.

The Float Rules Supreme

Crucian carp can be caught on a number of different tactics, the float, feeder or bolt rigs. The Summer Pit is an intimate venue and all of my fishing has been at very close quarters, which lends itself perfectly to using a float as the main attack.

Not only is it a very successful method of targeting the species, but in my opinion there is no better sight in angling than watching a small fizz of bubbles appear around the float as a crucian carp feeds, the angler knowing a bite is imminent.

Choosing the right tactics is important when targeting the species. However, I do not believe crucians are as finicky when it comes to feeding as many angling writers lead us to believe.

It is the way in which they feed which makes them sometimes difficult to catch.

Being a small and bulky fish, crucians have to tilt at an awkward angle in order to feed effectively.

When using a float, a fish has to almost touch the hook-length before a hook-bait can be sucked into its mouth, which sometimes makes them nervous when feeding around a baited rig.

Understanding Crucians

I have watched crucian carp feeding many times at close quarters, which has given me a great insight into the species and has allowed me to fine-tune my approach to match their behaviour.

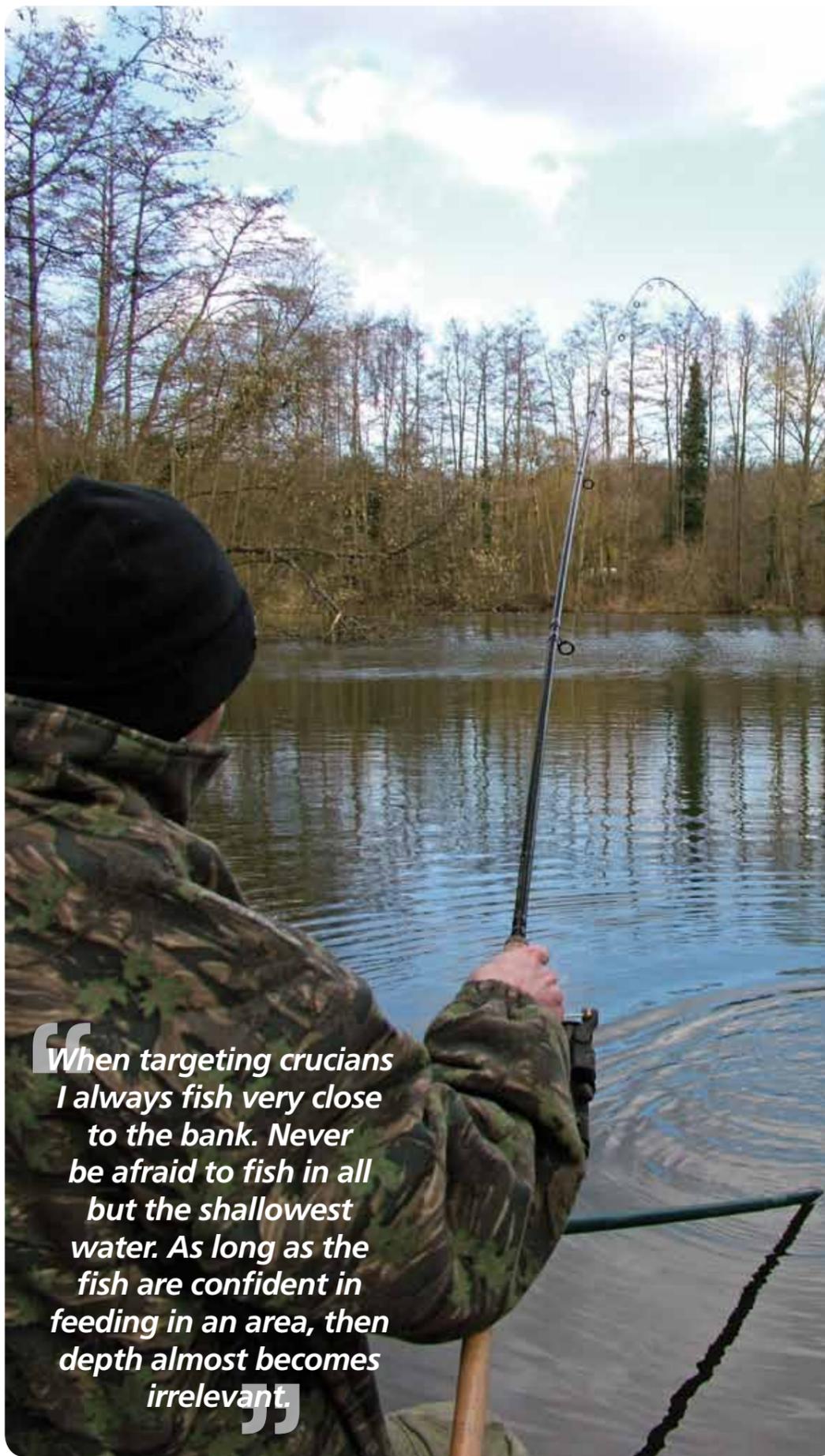
It is common to see a fish entering the back of the swim and gain its confidence in deeper water. Here it will remain feeding for a couple of minutes before leaving.

Fish will reappear in the deeper water and will work their way along a baited area, feeding in a line-like motion. Once a fish has gained confidence it can be drawn up the marginal shelf into very shallow water, which can lead to some very exciting fishing.

I have caught some very big bags of crucians using this method and it is common to view a fish approach a baited hook and watch it trundle the bait along the bottom into its mouth, very exciting angling indeed. By doing this sort of fishing and viewing fish closely has enabled me to learn a lot about the species and refine my approach, which culminated in a good catch in March this year including a fish weighing 4lb 2oz.

Most of my viewing of crucians has been when using groundbait and it is surprising how hard the fish will feed.

Fish will often work in a line across the feed. Once one has been joined by a few of its friends, the water can soon become coloured as the fish go tails up, scooping as much bait as possible, very much in the way an angler would expect small carp to behave at a commercial fishery.



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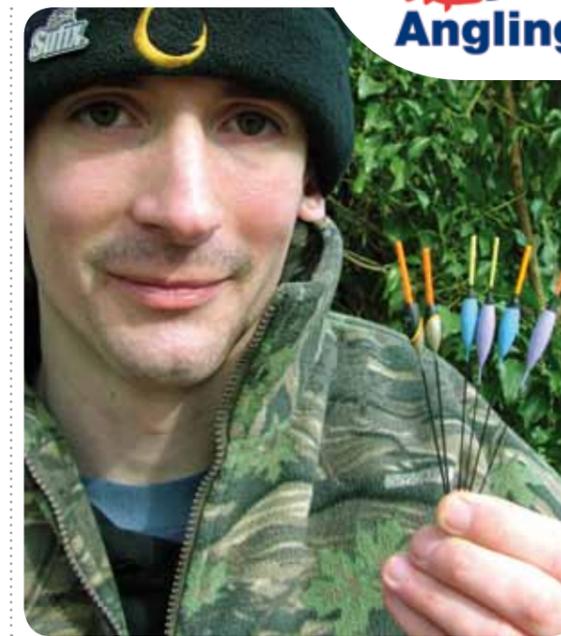
Head For The Features

I tend to carry out most of my fishing at the Summer Pit near to overhanging bushes or weedbeds that the fish spend a lot of time in. In this situation I favour a small pole float, which can be deadly and offers far less resistance than larger conventional floats.

My favourites are Drennan chop worm floats, which I have used for the last couple of years and are perfect for the job.

When presenting rigs in this fashion I have used both a pole and a running line set-up. I have found when fishing near obstructions that a hooked fish will fight hard and a running line allows for better control, meaning a hooked fish can be landed safely.

When fishing away from snags or into open water, a pole can provide a far superior presentation and is always used in such circumstances.



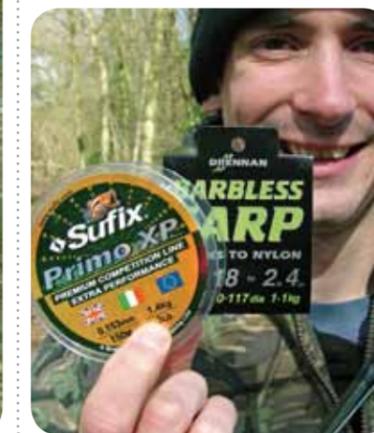
Tackle Talk

Main line choice in these situations is important as it is common for big fish to dive for any available cover.

My choice is always Sufix Primo XP in 3lb breaking strain. When fishing in these conditions a trustworthy line with high abrasion properties is paramount. Hook-lengths are made using the same material or if I am fishing a venue which is less snaggy or favours open water fishing then a lower breaking strain hook-length is used.

When targeting crucians I always fish very close to the bank. Never be afraid to fish in all but the shallowest water. As long as the fish are confident in feeding in an area, then depth almost becomes irrelevant. Most of my fishing is directly under the rod tip which allows a small pole float to be lowered into the swim.

In some cases a hook-bait is positioned less than six to eight feet from the bank, particularly after dark, as fish are keen to forage along the top of the marginal shelf.



Depth Matters

When plumbing the depth, I usually set the float around two inches overdepth and have the majority of my bulk shot two to three inches from the hook.

Crucians are small, bulky fish and when feeding in the swim they tend to move the hook-bait around a lot as they feed.

This has been very noticeable on a number of occasions while viewing fish feeding.

By having the main bulk of your shot, which usually consists of two number 13 and two number 11 shot, positioned in this way, it helps to alleviate this problem and stops the hook-bait from being moved around the swim in an unnatural manner.

When using this rig, bites are unmissable and the float usually sails away.

Sometimes it really can be a case of trial and error and if fish are evident in the swim but bites are not forthcoming then changes should be made.

Try increasing the depth, try a little closer in or even adding a further shot on the bottom can all help increase the chances of a bite. Once the winning formula is found then bites are usually forthcoming.

Paste Takes Some Beating

Bait is a simple subject when targeting crucian carp.

I have used many different types over the years but have settled on my favourite, which has brought some very good results.

I always use groundbait as the base of my feed and my chosen mix is Carp Company's Icelandic Red, which contains high levels of fishmeal, which crucians adore.

A good dose of Carp Company's Aminol whilst mixing, helps to leak off a scent trail attracting fish into the area. I try to mix the groundbait as dry as possible, which creates a cloud when introduced into the water.

I have found crucians are very receptive to this and it will often draw fish into the swim. I do not add any

further free offerings into the mix, which is important, and I rely completely on the attraction of the groundbait.

I have found this to be much more effective than adding freebies such as pellets, hemp and casters.

The groundbait has enough pulling power, attraction and food content to pull fish into the area and keep them occupied for long periods of time.

After every fish, or if the swim goes quiet, I tend to feed a couple of small balls to encourage the fish to re-enter the swim and feed.

My chosen hook-baits include Carp Company Icelandic Red paste, which complements the groundbait very well. Crucians are very confident in feeding on small pieces of paste. They contain high attraction properties and are a very cost-effective way to fish. A small

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A betalight doesn't reduce sensitivity too much.

tub can last many sessions. I have also found small hookable pellets, which are available from various companies, and small cubes of luncheon meat effective, too. I tend to use a hook size 18 or 16 to match the size of bait being used.

Hark The Dark

Fishing into darkness can be a very good time for catching crucians. A lake which has been very quiet all day will often come alive into darkness and fish which have proved hard to catch in the day can prove very easy as soon as darkness falls.

All of my best catches of crucians have come into darkness and if I am honest I don't normally turn up until an hour before dark.

Often a few hours into darkness are more fruitful than a whole day spent at a venue.

When fishing into darkness I fit a mini betalight to the tip of a pole float

to enable bites to be seen. This can be done by placing a mini betalight into a small piece of Gardner Tackle Supa Shrink Tube, which is slid over the tip of a pole float.

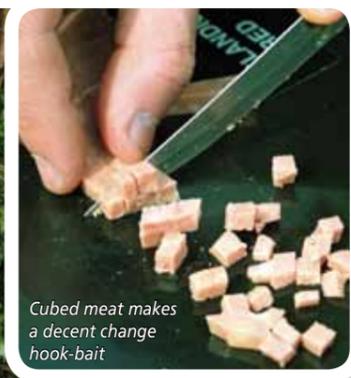
This grips the betalight perfectly, providing a good adaptor. There is something special about fishing at night for crucian carp. I love watching a mini betalight being moved from side to side, knowing that there are crucians feeding down below.

Watching a betalight sail away into the depths is a great sight, knowing that when you pick up the rod you are going to feel the tail thump as another crucian makes its bid for freedom. Truly an awesome feeling.

Crucian carp fishing need not be a complicated affair and simplicity is the key. Play around with your set-up and get it working correctly and success will follow. So get down to CEMEX Angling's Summer Pit this spring. **CF**



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Cubed meat makes a decent change hook-bait



Venue Facts

Summer Pit - Yateley Complex, Yateley, Hants. GU47 8JQ

The Summer Pit is part of the Yateley Complex and is covered by their special venues permit. This is an intimate fishery of some two acres, containing true crucian carp from 2lb upwards, along with tench to around the 8lb mark. For a night-time session you can purchase a night ticket if you only want to do one night at a time, or you can join the Night Syndicate, to be able to fish nights throughout the season.

Spring Ticket Prices (15th March - 11th June)
 Tickets for two rods cost from £45 for adults
 OAP and disabled anglers cost from £40.50
 Under 18s cost from £34.20
 For more pricing information please visit the web site below.

Call CEMEX Angling on 01932 583630
 Email info@cemexangling.com
 or visit their website www.cemexangling.com