

GOLD AND GREEN – CLOSE SEASON CRUCIANS AND TENCH PART TWO – MAY 2008 – ADDICTION CONFIRMED

Although it was only a few days since my last visit to Marsh Farm, the fact that it was now the month of May caused me to feel that spring was definitely here and summer was just around the corner. The lakes were looking good although some would say a bit too manicured. Not me, I find the way they are maintained a very pleasing part of the experience. The locals are very friendly and helpful; the bailiffing is also frequent, polite and understated.

So Close Again

I had arrived a bit earlier than usual and was surveying the lake by 8am. Conditions looked promising with good overnight temperatures, a decidedly overcast sky and a nice ripple on the water. My confidence was immediately boosted as I witnessed and photographed a superb 3lbs 11oz crucian and then found out from the bailiff that a 4lb 02oz had been officially recorded the previous day. I was set up and fishing by 8:30am.

Three hours later, I had my first bite, which I of course missed! Throughout the late morning and early afternoon I had a series of lifts, dips and nudges that I just couldn't connect with, very frustrating. Finally at about 3:30pm I "struck" a little lift and felt the satisfying thumping "nod" of what was surely a decent crucian. It was, but my only glimpse of it was as it rolled across the surface and threw the hook back! Next "cast" produced another lift which I again made contact with. I remained attached to this one and a big crucian eventually slid into the net. I was sure this was well over "3" but the scales read 2lbs 15oz. With my prize photographed and safely returned, the very next put in saw the float dive away and again I felt the thump of a good fish. Another superb crucian found its way to my unhooking mat but again the scales refused to budge past 2lbs 15oz. That was now three beautiful bars of gold weighing 2lbs 15oz, all superb specimens but I will admit to being slightly disappointed! But connecting with three bites in succession was a revelation and I stupidly assumed "they" had arrived. Not a tremble, not the merest dip/lift, absolutely nothing followed for the rest of the day!

Here We Go Again – And Then "Yes Please"

The following Saturday saw me arriving a bit later than intended but I knew *The Tenchfishers* had booked most of the lake for one of their regular meetings. I was told I could slip in anywhere there was room so eventually settled in the middle of a few empty swims about half way down the lake. Several crucians and tench were hooked and landed as I was setting up, which in fact took me almost an hour as I photographed two big crucians! Eventually I settled in and began to concentrate on my own fishing. Within an hour I had a superb tench of exactly 6lbs swiftly followed by another of 5lbs 04oz. I then had two or three crucians quietly roll between my pole line and the bank! So I came in a little closer and started to get a few indications but nothing I could describe as a half decent bite! But eventually the float slid away and I lifted into solid resistance. A big crucian quickly rolled and after a short "nodding" fight, it sat in my landing net. This was definitely a "3"! But no, my scales again stuck on 2lbs 15oz, as

did another set from a nearby “*Tenchfisher*”. Very pleasing, but four separate crucians at 2lbs 15oz!

No further action was forthcoming but potentially the best result of the day was achieved when Steve, from the on-site tackle shop, casually asked “*do you fancy a dawn start to see if you can get past that 2lbs 15oz barrier*”! As such start times are the exclusive preserve of the club members and their guests, I jumped at the chance. I don’t think I gave the impression of being too desperate but my response of “*how about Tuesday?*” was thankfully responded to in the positive!

Dawn Raid – Shortening The Odds

3:45am and there I was outside the locked gates forming a queue of one. What if he’s forgotten? Maybe he was having a laugh? But no, at 4am Steve arrived with key and access to the canteen for a quick cup of coffee. The anticipation couldn’t have been any more intense, second “cast” the float sailed away and I was into the first fish of the day. It turned out to be a pristine 4lbs tench. Steve was also soon into a big tench and I was just about to go and have a look when my float dipped and settled a bit lower in the water. I lifted into a solid fish which, because of the delicate bite, I was sure was a crucian. But the rapidly stretching elastic soon told a different story. Eventually a stunning tench of 6lbs 14oz lay on the mat, a superb looking female.

About an hour and a half into the morning, a few crucians started to gently roll in the general area of our swims. Steve was the first to land one which weighed.....2lbs 15oz! I was next as the float shot away and I glimpsed a flash of gold. I hadn’t particularly noticed but the water was definitely a lot clearer than it had been in the past few weeks and it was obvious this was a nice crucian. Quickly into the net and at 2lb 12oz a fine fish. Next “cast” the float dithered about and just did not settle properly. I assumed a rudd or roach was the culprit so when I lifted into what turned out to be another crucian, I was pleasantly surprised. As the fish slipped over the rim of the net, I knew I’d cracked it. This one looked BIG and what a difference a few ounces make because it went 3lbs 02oz. All was well within my world! Meanwhile, not to be outdone, Steve landed another fine fish which went 3lbs exactly.

Mission accomplished Steve had a tackle shop to open and breakfasts to cook so he packed up and left me to it. By about 8:30am I had another nice tench and some quality roach and rudd. I was beginning to crave a hot bacon and egg roll (or two) when “one last cast” produced a definite lift. I connected with the fish which immediately felt “heavy”, perhaps it was a tench but again I saw a flash of gold. This was indeed another big crucian which fought well before sliding into the net. The scales slipped easily past 3lbs and settled at 3lbs 09oz, a new PB and a stunning fish which turned out to be a bigger poser than me as the cameras clicked. I was quite happy to finish there and then as I floated over to see Steve to thank him and have some breakfast. However, when I returned to the swim about an hour later, just one more cast turned into three or more and I managed another fine crucian of 3lbs 03oz. A superb mornings sport in great company, I’m convinced the odds were definitely shortened by being there and able to build the

swim from that early hour. Cheers Steve! (I think I've promised him a double figure barbel from the Stour!)

It Gets Better!

I had to wait a whole seven days before my next trip! I had a prior engagement at the annual Keith Culley Clattercote match but the following Tuesday saw me back in Marsh Farm mode. Following an exchange of messages with fellow FishingMagic member "Lark", I headed for the far end of Harris Lake, completely the opposite end from my recent success. "Lark" has more knowledge of this end of the lake and had a new PB 3lbs 09oz crucian the previous Friday plus some nice tench. Armed with new information I settled in facing quite a strong wind. I started to get bites almost straight away but failed to connect with any of them. I played around with the depth and shotted and eventually connected with a 12oz rudd. Next "cast" produced a little lift, then the float just kept lifting and I was into a solid crucian, a superb fish of 3lbs 06oz. Safely photographed and returned, I potted in some more hemp and casters which almost immediately resulted in a lot of "fizzing". This was the signal that heralded a cracking afternoon and evening with a succession of quality tench and crucians. I ended up with 21 tench with 7 over 5lbs with the best weighing in at 6lbs 14oz. Interspersed with the tench, the crucians also fed well as I landed 10 in all averaging close to 2lbs including a further cracker of 3lbs 02oz.

But the best was yet to come. During a relatively quiet spell I "experimented" by feeding micro pellet and tiny amounts of meat on a different line. Punched meat on the hook, just enough to cover a #18, produced almost instant results. At first I thought it was a tench as it just would not come up off the bottom so when the golden flanks eventually appeared I was a bit shocked. The crucian eventually admitted defeat and slid into the net. I was convinced it was much bigger than my fish of the previous week and was hoping it would perhaps exceed 4lbs. One of two sets of scales registered the merest fraction over 4lbs while the other showed 4lbs exactly. 4lbs will do me nicely thank you! A truly stunning fish and again a great poser for the camera.

Although I had now achieved and indeed exceeded my targets, I was still hooked on this place. I certainly do not expect to catch another 4lb crucian but the overall quality of the venue and fish still had me craving for more! So the following weekend I returned.

Match Anglers!

"A match! What do you mean a match?" Yes, there was an open match on Harris Lake and on a Bank Holiday weekend as well! Ordinarily matches are held on Richardson Lake, don't these people know what it does to an addict when he can't get his fix?

I should have won it! 2nd in section and 6th overall was the result of my investment in entry and pools money and subsequent drawing of peg 26! No crucians but a couple of tench including one giant at 8lb 5oz (!) and two big tench lost was my reward for what was a hard six hours in flat calm sunny conditions.

Floods, Gales And Then More Gold

As it happened, I was quite happy working on Bank Holiday Monday! The torrential rain and howling winds didn't do a lot for business but I was quite content to watch it all from the comfort of my "office". My stint of selling beer and cider to the great British public also meant that I could take Tuesday off to go fishing!

So fairly early next day I pulled into the car park shortly followed by "*Lark*". Tickets purchased we headed off to the far end of Harris Lake where we set up a few pegs apart and started fishing at about 8:45am. To cut a long story short, we were both convinced we had crucians and tench in and around our swims but just could not connect with the bites, some of which appeared to be very positive "sail aways". By mid afternoon we were both somewhat frustrated and had very little to show for our efforts. Then I finally connected with a positive "lift" and what turned out to be a 3lbs 04oz crucian slid into the net. During the next hour or so I landed three more at 2lbs 12oz, 3lbs 06oz and 3lbs 08oz. I have no idea what I was suddenly doing differently but was very grateful whatever it was! I also then managed a couple of nice tench although I lost a couple of bigger ones.

Meanwhile "*Lark*" had picked up a single tench and a few bits although I'm sure he got wet from the splash of a BIG crucian that surfaced between his pole line and the bank! His frustration was finally rewarded as late afternoon merged into evening with a procession of nice tench right up until we packed up at 7:30pm.

Mission Very Much Accomplished

What started off as an exploratory visit and then quickly turned into an obsession had indeed been a bit of a rollercoaster. At times it was incredibly easy and at others, very, very frustrating. Refining my approach, learning from every visit and a lot of help from the locals, especially Steve, had seen me obliterate my crucian and tench PB's with fish of a lifetime. Godalming AS should be congratulated for creating such a venue and for having the courage to implement such a rewarding stocking policy.

I am still obsessed with the place and its inhabitants and will definitely continue to visit on a regular basis even post June 16th!