

Crappie NOW

On-Line Magazine

fishhound
real-time fishing reports

Crappie.com

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Great Summer Fishing

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Summer brush piles and beds offer great opportunities for crappie fishermen. Here's how to do it right.



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Opening Cast

Hard to believe that July is here and the majority of the United States' crappie have already spawned. This brings on a new wave of fishing the post-spawn crappie. Fishing for this wonderful fighter and great food fish doesn't end with the spawn. The techniques to catch them change.



Fish must eat regularly like men and women to sustain life. After the spawn, the crappies' urges to eat accelerates to compensate for the rigors of spawning and to prepare for the next cycle of life. This requires them to pursue their food, mainly shad and minnows, in open, deeper water. Days after the spawn, crappie will school up and herd schools of their food. Feeding sprees can last for minutes or hours depending upon the weather, water conditions, moon phases, current and stability within each.

Post spawn can be a very productive time but fishermen must go to the fish that are mainly in open water, on ledges and on flats where the food is. The most productive techniques include: spider rigging, pulling and pulling Offshore Planner Boards.

Using your electronics to show the depths and areas the fish are located in, you then push and pull baits at or above those depths. The baits of choice normally include Bobby Garland and Roadrunner jigs tipped with my favorites; Bobby Garland StrollRs; Johnson Fishing Shad crankbaits; small Rat L Traps; and Johnson Fishing Thin Fishers. These baits allow you to fish large areas quickly as the fish will be widely scattered. The tactics can last all summer.

As the academic schools take a break be sure to take a child fishing and catch some crappies. Beautiful warm weather and good fishing can mean a lifetime of memories.

God Bless and Good Fishing,
Dan Dannenmueller, Publisher

Jim McClave at Conncaut Lake.
photo by Darl Black

Seasonal Structure

by
Tim
Huffman

Brush and crappie beds are prime summer structures. Casting and jigging are tactics that offer fun chase. Fast trolling is a great way to cover water and fish over the tops of beds and brush. However, most serious crappie fishermen will be slow trolling, also called spider rigging. The tactic allows brush piles and beds to be probed for summer slabs.

Where to Fish

Several factors come into play during the summer. The first is crappie movements for the lake you fish. Some crappie stay shallow, others go deep, but many times crappie are in the 10- to 16-foot range. Again, that varies from lake to lake usually based upon water color and overall lake depth.

A second major factor is thermocline. A layer of bad water with less oxygen and an upper layer of "sweet water" with better pH, temperature and oxygen is separated by what is called a thermocline. Finding the cline can be done with sonar on high sensitivity as it shows a line across the screen. An old-timer way is to drop a minnow down for a couple of minutes, bring it up and check to see if it is alive. When you get below the thermocline the minnow dies very quickly. The importance of the thermocline is to know the maximum depth to put baits. Always fish above the thermocline where the active fish will be located.

Anywhere you can find brush and beds can be potential spots for catching. Ideal spots are the edge of drop-offs, near-by flats, points and other structures. Sonar and scanning are critical for finding beds. Once found, GPS can help return to the spots.

A fisherman can quickly improve his fishing by adding beds to his own lake. Brush and small trees have always been a good attractor option. So are stake beds. The newest choice for long-term structure is PVC. It's more expensive but

will last forever and is easy to fish.

Spider Rigging

Slow trolling, or spider rigging, is still a top pick when fishing beds. Summer is especially good because a fisherman can go from spot to spot in a hurry but stop completely still at a bed so baits can hold still in front of the fish. Sometime fish are aggressive but other times they need to see a bait for a while.

The Johnson Fishing team of Billy and Scott Williams won the 2016 Crappie Masters Alabama State Championship this spring on the Alabama River. The team says spider rigging is the number one tactic on the tournament trail

"When I'm looking at a new area," says Scott, "I'll often spend more time scanning than fishing."

and brush piles are always a good structure to target.

"If we are on brush," says Scott Williams, "spider rigging lets us set on it and not move. After we fish a bed we can kick our speed up and fish to another top or bed and repeat. Other techniques don't let us fish that way."

"Without a doubt our number one tool for spider rigging is our electronics. We use Humminbird Side Imaging and it helps us tremendously. At a new lake we'll find a ledge and use our electronics with a LakeMaster chip and look for cover. We're looking for brush with crappie on it. A lot of time it's a brush top that's floated in but fishermen put many beds in most waters and they can be very good spots."

Scott says, "I'll look for fish in the middle depths this time of year but will go deeper to 18 or 20 feet until I find fish. We don't waste time



fishing spots that are not showing fish so we scan until we find them. Once found, we drop down to see if the fish are crappie and learn their size. Actually, during tournaments we seldom target fish deeper than 12 feet because it's difficult to keep them alive. However, a recreational fisherman should go to the depth where he can catch the most and bigger fish. In the summer that might be deep water."

Scott says some of his best summer spots are oak trees about 12 feet long they have sunk. They put them in deep water, stand them up vertical, not horizontal. They have found that crappie like to suspend up in the top of these trees among the limbs."

Billy Williams says spider rigging isn't difficult but there are a few things that are very important. "The first thing to being successful is to pay attention to details. Pay attention to your speed. The difference between going 0.3 mph and 0.4 mph can be critical at times."

"Also pay attention to your direction. This is probably more important in shallow water but it can make a difference any time. Fish will be facing the current so you want to make sure you present bait to them so they can see it longer."

"So paying attention means a fisherman is watching the things he is doing when catching fish so he can repeat the those things and eliminate the things that do not work. That's a pattern and will let a fisherman catch more

Billy & Scott Williams says spider rigging is a key element to fishing many waters across the country. It provides multiple baits, multiple depths, and a fast speed or total stop.

fish."

The team says baits boil down to using what is working. Sometimes it can be straight minnows but sometimes it's jigs tipped with minnows. Through experience they've learned seasonal trends. Spider rigging often means double-hook rigs but the team also likes single-hook rigs in thick brush for fewer hang-ups and fewer lost fish. Scott says there are few things more aggravating than to hook a good fish and have the other hook of the double-hook rig to hang in the brush and cause a lost fish.

"When we are using jigs," says Scott, "we will be using Johnson jigs not just because they are our sponsor but because the jigs work. We often use a jig tipped with a minnow but before we leave a good brushpile I'll drop a jig loaded with Shad Scales scent. Sometimes a big fish will jump on just the jig when it won't a minnow or jig/minnow combination. Johnson Crappie Buster Tubes, Shad Tails and Shad Tubes are all great baits and each one has a pocket to hold scent. The company went serious into crappie baits a few years ago they did it right."

The Williams' other spider rigging





Billy Williams displays the results of successful spider rigging.

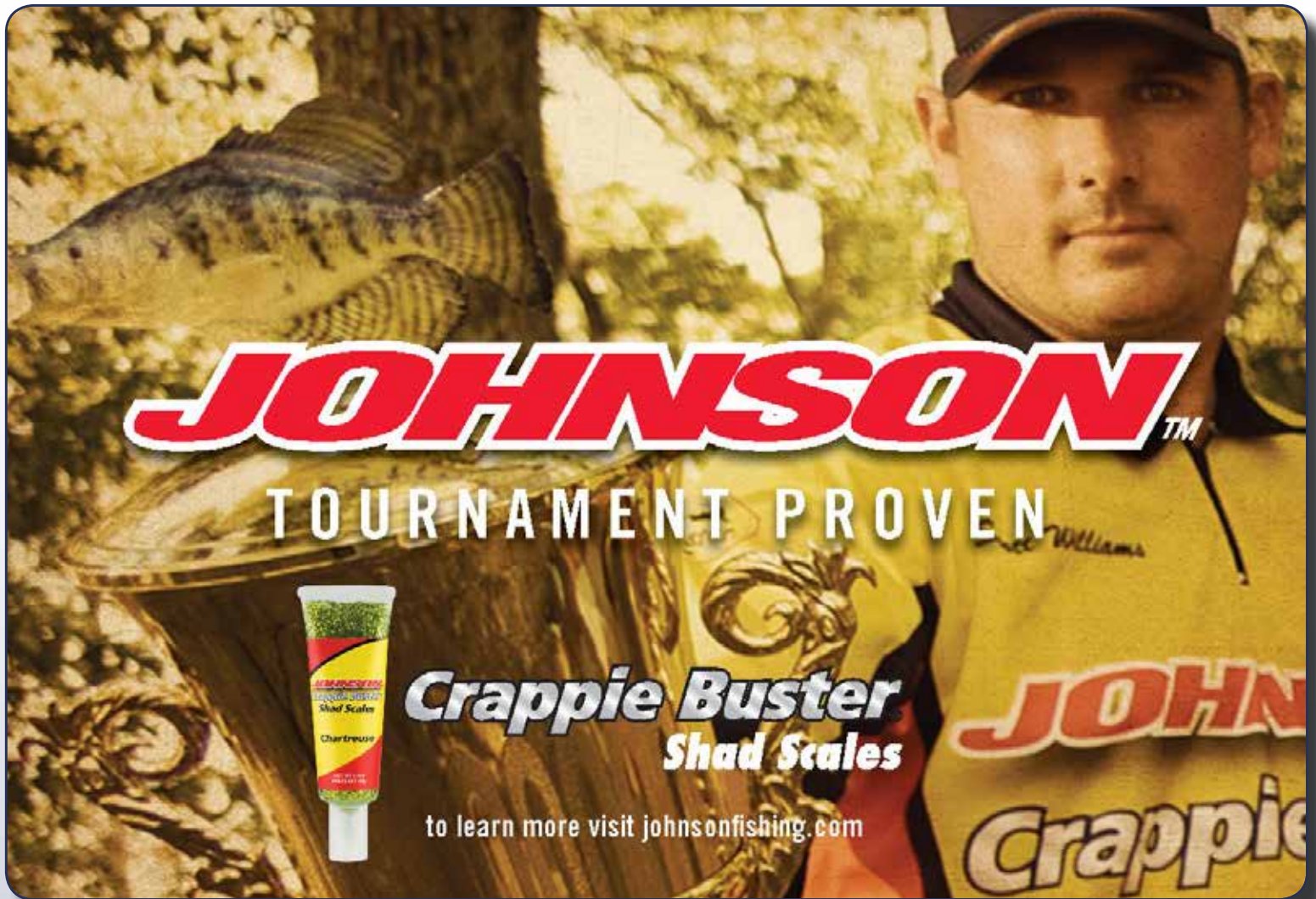
Looking for fish in new areas will likely include 2/3 of Williams' time spent scanning verses fishing.

equipment includes: 16-foot BnM poles to keep baits as far in front of the boat as possible; Driftmaster rod holders; and 8-pound test main line with 6-pound test leaders.

Improving Your Fishing

Scott says two things can make a big difference in catching fish. The first one is to analyze your results. Keeping a logbook might seem old fashion but making simple notes from trips will help in the future. Time of year, conditions, water temperatures, depths where you caught fish and didn't catch will help a fisherman develop a database and will definitely help in the future. Noting specific beds and brushpiles that produce the biggest fish is particularly important.

The second thing is to use your electronics to the maximum. Scott says a basic unit with GPS mapping is fine for a weekend fisherman. The key is to know everything it will do, be able to use all the functions and



then use it when fishing. Make it an important part, not just a secondary part of what you do.

“When I’m looking at a new area,” says Scott, “I’ll often spend more time scanning than fishing. And if a fisherman is ready to make a big jump in his fishing there’s no better way than to buy and use advanced electronics with Side Imaging. What it does is let you miss a brushpile by 40 feet yet still see it on your graph. Scanning lets you scan more water quicker. I may have poles in the water, but I spend probably 65 percent of my time using my electronics.”

Summer Brush Factors

Current: “The fish will be just out of the current, not in it,” says Billy. “Present baits slow and give the fish time to see them. The fish will be facing the current.”

Wind: Billy says, “When you can’t control the boat it’s a problem. If you’re jigs or minnows

bounce up and down you have to add weight or heavier lead. I want the boat straight into or away from the waves. If we don’t control our boat we won’t catch fish.”

Water Color: “The general rule is the darker the water the darker the jig,” says Scott. “Of course the brighter the light penetration the brighter the jig.”

Cold Front: Scott says, “The good thing about summer is fewer strong fronts. After a front the bite may slow down so we slow down. This is when minnows are very important to add bites.”

Fishing Pressure: “It’s not much of a problem with fishermen in the summer but the boat traffic, skiers and people having fun can be a problem. The fish don’t like it. Sometimes they keep biting but often quit. Early morning is a good time to fish.”

 - Tim Huffman

How To Find & Catch Summertime Crappie

The late Ken Cook of Meers, Oklahoma, a former fisheries biologist, longtime professional bass fisherman and avid crappie fisherman, shares his methods for finding and catching crappie in the summertime.

Find the pH Breakline and the Thermocline: Cook explains, "The drop-offs along major creek and river channels often are the best places to locate crappie during the summer months. The pH breakline will show us where the ideal pH is, and the thermocline will denote where the ideal water temperature is. Usually, the pH breakline will sit right on top of the thermocline. To locate these breaklines, I use a pH meter and find at what depth I get a pH and a temperature breakline. There's another method of identifying this breakline where not only crappie and bass but just about all the fish in a lake hold on, and that's by running your boat across the lake and taking note at what depth you spot fish showing up on your depth finder. By averaging the depths where you see the most fish, you reasonably can assume that this is the thermocline and pH breakline."



Locate a Bottom Break: "The bottom break is an edge that the crappie will travel along. If you can locate a place where it intersects the water depth where the proper pH and thermocline are, you'll know the water depth the crappie will be the most comfortable in and then you can find the ledge where they want to feed," Cook explains.

Pinpoint Cover "I define cover as some kind of brush, stumps, logs or anything that the crappie can lie next to, get under or get inside of," Cook mentions. "I use these three ingredients like a road map. I locate the water temperature and thermocline the crappie prefer first. Next I follow that water temperature line until I intersect structure. Then I follow that structure until I discover cover. This simple, basic formula will aid you in locating crappie on any lake the same way bass anglers find bass in the summertime," Cook explains.

Fish with Light Tackle: "During the summer months, the crappie fisherman needs to use smaller baits and lighter tackle," Cook reports.

*To learn more tips and tactics for catching crappie in the spring and summer check out **Crappie: How to Catch Them Spring and Summer** - <http://amzn.to/WGaJLT> available in either eBook or print book formats. Be sure to click on look inside to see the table of contents and read 10 percent of the book free.*

Crappie Basics #115

Fast Trolling

Trolling, or pulling, is a popular way to find and catch summer crappie. Southern anglers have used this tactic successfully for years. Trolling means different things to different fishermen, but in general, it's putting baits behind the boat and using a trolling motor to pull jigs or crankbaits.

Jigs: Action is important. The typical choice in the summer is a high-action tail. Small is okay, but they need action. A Johnson Shad Curltail is a new-age curly tail example mixing profile with action. Paddle tails are popular with Brewer Slider and Assassin Crappie Dapper being good ones proven to work. Super-tails are popular with Bobby Garland's Stroll'R being a great example of a curly tail and paddle tail combination. To pick up crappie by fast trolling jigs, try more than one action and look so the crappie can show you what they want. –TH



2017 Tentative Schedule

January 27, 28 St. John's River, Deland, FL

February 3, 4 Lake Talquin, Gadsden County, FL

February 24, 25 Lake D'Arbonne, Farmerville, LA

March 3, 4 Lake Greenwood, Greenwood, SC

March 11 Lakes Washington, Whittington, Lee, Ferguson, Paradise, Greenville, MS

March 24, 25 Grenada Lake, Grenada, MS

April 8 Lake Fork, Emory, TX

April 15 Lake of the Ozarks, Sunrise Beach, MO

April 22 Lake Eufaula, Eufaula, OK

First Thing In

By Vic Attardo

Bobby Mustang starts most mornings about 4 a.m., launching his boat, on a summer's day, with a distant red glow in an otherwise dark sky.

Let me say quickly, I'm not sure Mustang believes in the adage, "The early bird gets the worm," or if he just wants to avoid getting his three girls ready for school. Or camp, or horsey practice. Let me also add, Mustang it not his real last name. He asked me to disguise it in order to save his marriage.

I'm not sure a guy who rolls out for recreation at 4 a.m., four or five days a week, has a marriage that's going anywhere — except to the Missouri lawyers at Cordell and Cordell. Mustang says that about himself so it's no great revelation, but another good reason to alter his name.

Anyway Bobby Mustang is a heck of a crappie fisherman and I often see him holding more crappie by 8 a.m. than most anglers catch all day. He quits fishing at eight to do his day job. "Here's the way I think about morning fishing," Mustang said. "The hotter and the brighter it's been, and the hotter and brighter it's going to be, the more you want to get out early."

When I fished with Mustang on the Harris Chain of Lakes in Florida, I got the real definition of what hot and bright means. In mid-summer it's stifling, even before the sun comes up, and then as the sun crests the shoreline's low trees, the expanding humidity makes it more intense. Once the white orb is released into full view, you're already downed two bottles of water and searching for your third. The breakfast Gatorade isn't too far behind.

But Mustang is smart in the sun. His boat position on the water keeps us in the shade as long as solarly possible. In the middle of July, he's working the shoreline weeds where he dips a good number of crappie.

"I'm playing a pattern here," he tells me. "The weather has been brutal for days and there's no change in sight. The crappie aren't happy but they have to eat. Some of them head into the channels during the day and stay there. You can catch them in the deeper water during the day but it's a struggle.

"In the evening a good number of them roam into the weeded shallows and they stay there overnight. They eat during the night but I don't think they're quite satisfied.

"But in the early morning, things in the shallows are waking up so to speak. There's a period of an hour, maybe two, when there's a lot going on under the weeds and certainly the crappie are eating.

"This is the when I get after them — in the summer." As if on clue Mustang plucked a good crappie from the outer edge of a thick pad field. It was his fifth in less than an hour.

"There's very good fishing before the sun comes up and through the first hour of full light," he went on. "Then it usually shuts off like a switch. Once the sun gets on the weeds, most crappie leave the shallows and head for the channels. Some will work back very tight to the bank but these fish are hard to get at. Just poling a boat into those spots chases them off.



the Morning



By 8 a.m. we were touching the dock at the ramp. The fishing day was over and Mustang's work time was just beginning.

"Well, now you've seen it," he says. "In summer it's critical if I want to catch a good number of fish — and three girls and a wife can eat a lot of crappie — I need to get out early."

Working along the Coosa River in

Once the sun gets on the weeds, most crappie leave the shallows and head for the channels. Some will work back very tight to the bank but these fish are hard to get at. Just poling a boat into those spots might chase them off. Pads are a good place to find summertime crappie. Mike Parrott displays a good fish.





Good results are possible when you follow a plan for summer crappie.

northern Alabama, US Boat rep. Dustin King — fortunately his real name — also sees the pluses of getting out early.

"It's very good to get out early in the morning, especially in summer, and there are several reasons," King said.

"Crappie are structure fish. So in early morning in low light they're holding in schools tight to cover. Many fish species like to feed in the morning — which gets everything started — so this plays a big part in it."

I watched as King shot a jig under a canopied boat house, flexing the short rod and precisely placing the jig in the

shadows.

"Also, another factor to this would be that before the sun comes up and gets high, crappie tend to move more making them easier to catch. Once the sun gets up, crappie will relate to structure tighter and not 'chase' a bait like they would in the early morning hours. Once the sun rises and starts penetrating the water, they'll hide behind cover in order to keep the sunlight out of their eyes. Crappie will hide behind stumps, in trees, and other structure and become very hard to catch," King said.

Of course, knowing you have to dangle an early worm is one thing, knowing where to place the figurative worm is another.

"To catch early morning, summer, crappie I would try to find schools of crappie in creek and river channel locations," King went on. "On

the Coosa River this can be depths from 10-15ft deep typically. You will locate schools on your graph and vertical jig to those fish."

And the how?

"My standard setup is 4-6lb. line on a spinning reel, fishing with a Roadrunner and jig combo," King said. "Also I pay close attention as the bites are very light and hard to feel at these depths.

In southern Illinois, the sun shines bright on the waters of Lake Kinkaid, a crappie factory that's shadeless as a low desert.

But Kyle Schoenherr isn't going to put his rods away because the sun is beating on the water. Instead he reveals in the conditions. The hot, bright season is his Christmas.

"Summer is my absolute favorite time of the year! It's definitely the most consistent crappie fishing of the year," he says.

"The obvious reason I get on the water early would be to beat the heat. Even on the

"Some of my biggest fish of the summer will come early in the morning from shallow water."

hottest days of the year, you generally will get three or four very pleasant hours on the water before the heat of the day sets in.

Illinois is certainly different than Florida and Alabama. Three or four hours is longer than the South's-heat shortened days. But while comfort is nice, catching crappie is the real reason to start the day at dawn.

"The most important reason to get on the water early would be light penetration. Kinkaid is fairly clear with 2 - 4 feet visibility from the surface on down," Schoenherr says.



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"I'll target shallow structure that is 'less dense' early in the morning when light penetration is at its least.

"These types of areas are generally hard to find fish in clearer water when the sun is high.

"An example of structure that is less dense would be old tree tops that have decayed over the years and are left with the trunk of the tree and main limbs.

"Some of my biggest fish of the summer will come early in the morning from shallow water. Once the sun starts to get high, I'll then switch over to weeds.

In Schoenherr's plan the composition of the place dictates the scheme.

"Kinkaid, has huge amounts of milfoil which is terrific habitat for black crappie through the summer months. It grows in

maximum depths of 15 feet and offers cover and shade.

"On Kinkaid, we have a great population of black crappie and also natural hybrids. The natural hybrids are basically a cross between a black and white crappie. You'll generally find these hybrids on lakes and rivers that have a good population of both black and white crappie. These hybrids have characteristics of both blacks and whites in their appearance but their patterns, preferred habitat and diet are more like a true black than a white."

And for all those reasons, Schoenherr, like Mustang and King, present the early worm.

 - Vic Attardo

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Crappie Basics #116

Spillway Fishing

Not everyone has a boat or maybe you just want a short, relaxing trip fishing from the bank. Spillways can offer good fishing. The reason a spillway has fish is because of water temperatures and oxygen. Still waters can be stagnate and have low oxygen levels but spillways water doesn't have those problems.

Spillways are a love-hate relationship. When water release is right the fishing can be great but if too low or too fast it will be tough or impossible to catch fish. Also, crappie fishing purist won't like catching other species but it will happen at a spillway, but most fishermen are there for fun enjoy the extra fight with a bigger fish. A jig-cork is the best choice but never rule out a minnow-slip float when necessary. Also, small cranks, spoons and other reaction baits can work but be aware that hang-ups in the rocks are unforgiving whether it's a 20-cent jig or 4-dollar crank. –TH

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VIEW DOCK SHOOT'R PULL TABS >

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Products

Mojave Hat –Glacier Glove Glacierglove.com

Sun protection is now a “cool thing to do” as it has been accepted by both professionals and weekend anglers. They’ve learned that not taking protection seriously now leads to terrible results in the future. A great way to start is with a Mojave hat that’s built with a long bill for added face protection, light khaki color with a dark under-bill, an adjustable chin strap, neck and ear protection and overall lightweight design. Glacier Glove’s Caolo Della Dordella says “Our hat has a mesh that protects your neck along with ventilation in the hat to help keep you cool around the neck, head and ears.” MSRP \$25



Micro Turtle - Bombshell, Bombshelllures.com

Crappie fishermen are always searching for a new bait and new look. You can't deny this is not your typical crappie bait. The Micro Turtle imitates the shape of a newborn turtle hatchling and also has the distinctive finness swimming action that young turtles naturally produce. They are 1.5-inches long and come in eleven colors. They can be matched with Bombshell's Micro Jigs available separately in 1/32-, 1/20- and 1/16-oz weights (5-pak MSRP \$4.60). Micro Turtles 10-pak MSRP \$2.50.

Bug Band --Bug Band, Bugband.net

A plastic wristband that is Deet-free and made with naturally-derived ingredients provides a protective shield around the immediate area keeping insects at a safe distance. The wristband works for 120 hours and can be stored and sealed between uses. It can also be worn on belt loops, hatbands or ankle. The natural smell makes it a great choice for recreational application. It comes in a variety of colors. "We have a variety of products including sprays and wipes that work great," says owner Dan Ritter, "but our band is by far our most popular product." MSRP \$5



Splizzers –Buck Knives, Buckknives.com

Splizzers are sissors and pliers all in on. These are desinged to cut any braid, even the light 10-pound braid often used by crappie fishermen that can be difficult to cut. They are made of 420 high carbon stainless so no rusting. This tool has crimping, forceps that lock, bottle opener, cutting and other chores. Their oversized handle allows a power grip and holster. Not inexpensive at \$115 MSRP, but a tough tool to do the job right.



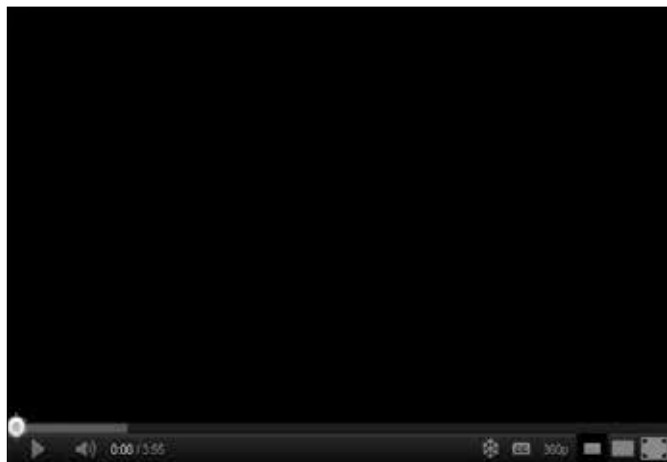


Mr Crappie FishPick –Buck Knives, Buckknives.com

“The product was designed to be fully contained,” says Mr. Crappie, Wally Marshall. “Take it apart to find the diamond plated 4-inch steel pin (with 750 medium and 1200 fine grit) to sharpen knives. The edge is for hook sharpening. The end has a v-groove in it so you can put the “V” in the bend of a hook, push lightly, put a little pressure on the line, and the hook pops out of the fish. In comes with a 24 inch lanyard so it’s easy to keep with you, keep it contained when not in use and pop it apart when you need it. Good for any small fish species especially crappie.” MSRP \$25. 69-pounds. \$2200.



HOW TO?



Crappie NOW How To July - Summer Protection

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Crappie Basics #117

No-Boat Options

Access to a private pond is the best choice for fishing from the bank but that option may not be available to everyone. Many states, like Missouri for example, have numerous small public lakes where bank fishing is encouraged and most of these waters are stocked for bluegill, catfish and other species.

Lakes and reservoirs often have a few locations where fishermen can give it a try. Specific bank fishing spots usually include piers. These have brush or some other covers within casting distance to hold fish. Don't expect miracles but you might get some good action.

Some marinas offer fishing from the dock. Going light and being patient can lead to some good results.

On the big reservoirs look for bank locations on the map where deeper water runs close to the bank. A creek or river channel swinging near-by perfect. These spots may require some hiking but the rewards can be good.

There may be other waters where the public can go or you can get permission. Golf course lakes, water supplies, small streams and other waters can be good.
-TH

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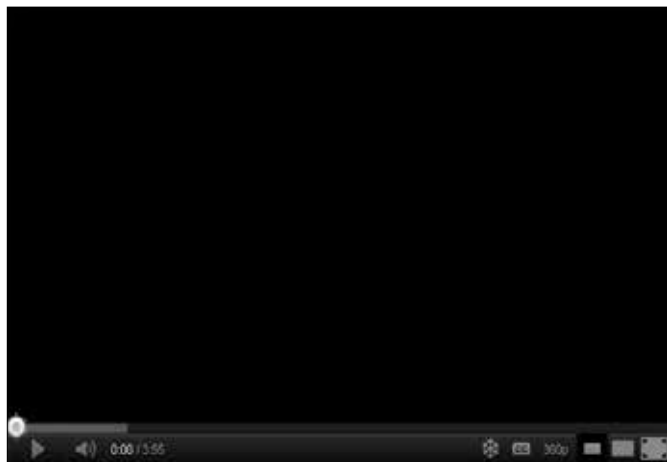
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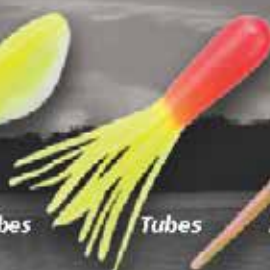
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Tubes



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Summer Crappies on Natural Lakes

By Darl Black

Summer time and crappie fishing is easy...if you are fishing a northern natural lake!

With summer in full bloom, you'll most likely find me chasing black crappies on a natural lake in Pennsylvania or the western panhandle of New York. And I'll be within casting distance of the deep weedline all the time!

Although natural lakes in other northern regions may differ somewhat in makeup from the lakes I regularly fish, if the other lakes have good weed growth and a black crappie population, then I'm confident crappies follow the same summer pattern. Crappies in northern natural lakes that I fish

“Under a good surface chop, crappies occasionally corral a school of baitfish just outside the weed edge...”

remain close to the deep weeds all summer. The weed edge may be on a shoreline-associated flat or on an offshore hump. The point is this: natural lake crappies do not migrate to creek channel ledges, stump fields or brushpiles on deep flats. The explanation is simple – these structures do not exist on natural lakes!

Northern natural lakes were created by retreating glaciers, not the result of man damming a creek or river.

To what depth the vegetation grows depends on water clarity. For the most part, natural lakes offer clearer water than impounded reservoirs that may exist in the



Bryan Stuyvesant with Conneaut Lake black crappie.

same general area. In very clear water, the weedline may be nearly 20 feet deep.

Tweaking jig presentation for the deep weeds...from the top

- 1/32 oz. head with Baby Shad fished with bobber over top of submerged weeds.
- 1/16 oz. head with Swimming Minnow or Shad Swim'R serving as go-to search baits.
- 1/16 oz. Crappie Slider Heads with tails rigged weedless for fishing deep into fringe weeds.
- 1/8 oz. heads with larger profile action tail baits when crappies are chasing baitfish schools just outside the deep weeds.

However, growth closer to 12 is more common.

Occasionally a small natural lake may feature water with a slight algae bloom stain or a darker tannic color. Here the outside weedline may be as shallow as 6 feet.

On most natural lakes there will be a fairly defined inside weedline, leaving a band of sand or small pebbles between the weedbed and the shoreline. In softer bottom shoreline areas, pad style vegetation or reeds may be found growing in the margin. Crappies usually establish bedding areas along the inside fringe of the weedline, in the pads or reed beds. However, it is the outside weedline edge which serves as the pivot point for crappies during the summer.

Submersed weed species will vary from area to area, but typically include a combination of native milfoil, coontail, cabbage (type of pondweed) and eel grass. But the exact species really does not matter. Rather, it is how the outside weed edge grows.



Generally, the more attractive areas for crappies are sections where the weed edge is less defined. Flatter slopes with sporadic weed clumps usually hold more crappies than a weed section with an abrupt edge. Now that's not to say crappies absolutely avoid sharply defined weed walls. There may be other factors which draw them to a particular site.

With sparse weed clumps, broken pieces of weed and multiple small fish marks of right on the edge, a sonar signal is messy.





Author Darl Black (in full sun protective gear) chasing summer crappies in the tall weeds of a northern natural lake.

Unless a group of crappies move into open water adjacent the weedline (which they sometimes do), it is difficult to identify them with electronics.

The most practical way to locate crappies is to tie on a favorite crappie jig and begin working sections of the deep weedline by casting parallel to the weeds until contact is made. Once contact is made, remember the spot and move on. You need to find multiple groups of crappies along the lake's weedline.

Unlike large schools of crappies often found on ledges in southern impoundments, crappies in natural lakes tend to be in small groups. If you continually harvest fish from one area time after time, you can impact the population. If keeping fish, a good practice is take no more than half a dozen from one area and then move on.

In addition, strong winds from a particular direction may prevent you from fishing a certain area of the lake. Therefore, look for different crappie groups on all sections of the lake in order to have backup spots.

About 95% of the time, my lure selection will be a 1.5 to 2.5 inch soft plastic action-tail body on a 1/32 to 1/8-ounce jighead. Permit me to provide some details.

On any given day, crappies may be positioned over the top of the submerged weeds, within the fringe weeds (high or low), or suspended slightly outside the weedline. Presence of minnow schools, strength of the wind and atmospheric pressure all play a part in positioning of crappies.

My favorite all around summer bait is the two-inch Bobby Garland Swimming Minnow on a 1/16-ounce Road Runner head. This is my go-to-bait for searching for active crappies. If I must slow the retrieve down to a crawl in order to get bites, I'll switch to a Baby Shad Swim'R on a Mo'Glo head.

On calm mornings, crappies may

be found chasing small minnows in the margin between the surface and the tops of the weeds. Given this situation I choose a 1/32 head with a Bobby Garland Baby Shad in Double Rainbow Glitter or Monkey Milk. Retrieve it fast enough to keep it from sinking into the weed mass, imparting an occasional twitch to the bait. Or use a clip-on bobber to provide casting weight and improved presentation above the weeds.


When crappies settle further down the water column within the fringe vegetation, it is time for a 1/16 or 1/8-ounce Charlie Brewer Crappie Slider Grub rigged weedless on a Crappie Slider head. Count it down and retrieve very slowly, but steadily. To offer a larger profile, I will substitute a 3" small worm on the Slider Head.

Under a good surface chop, crappies occasionally corral a school of baitfish just outside the weed edge, forcing their prey to the surface just like bass do. With active, chasing crappies, a faster retrieve can be employed. I'll go with a 1/8-ounce Road Runner head with a large profile action-tail body – either a Mr. Crappie Slabacious Grub or 2.5 inch Brewer Crappie Slider Minnow.

One final presentation is reserved for severe summer cold fronts that drive crappies out of the weed fringe to slightly deeper water where they suspend until a change in atmospheric pressure triggers a return to the weedbed. Here is where electronics can be useful in locating them.

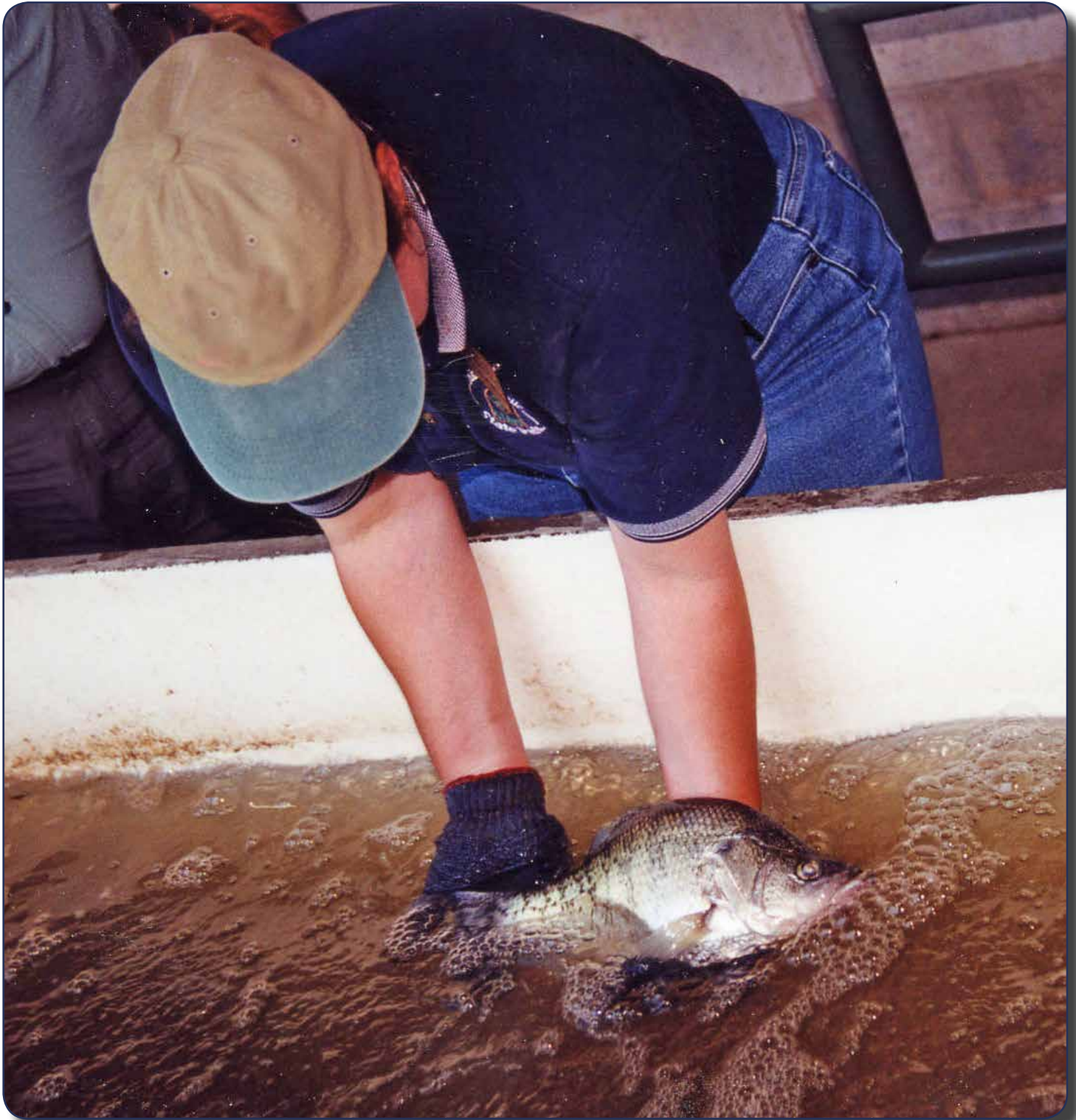
But getting them to bite is difficult. For this low percentage bite, I'll borrow a technique from crappie-fishing buddy Bryan Stuyvesant – slip bobber and live minnow. The minnow is usually suspended 10 to 14 feet below the bobber, depending on the depth of the suspected crappies. Medium-size fathead minnows will be the bait of choice. Be sure to have a quality aerated minnow bucket to keep bait lively.

NOW is the time to focus on northern natural lakes for exciting summer action! Go Fish!

 - Darl Black

Where Are the Crappie?

By Lauren Plunkett



Fish studies provide good information for fish management along with information that can help fishermen. Tim Huffman photo.

The question on every angler's mind is where to crappie go during the year. Several states have recently conducted studies to answer this vital question. New research done by the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources shows the movement and behavior of both white and black crappie in Kentucky Lake over the spring and summer months.

The study was conducted to help determine crappie patterns in correlation with changes in water temperature, level, and flow as well as structure and food preference. The 1500 crappie used in this study were tagged and tracked in a variety of ways including hook and line catching, electrofishing (shocking), and radio telemetry (fish tracking).

The study begins during final

week of February. During this time, fish collected with hook and line were being caught in depths of 12-15 feet with the water temperature hovering around 40 degrees. The results revealed black and white crappie were most often located near primary and secondary channels of water 10 feet or deeper.

Once the water temperature hit 50 degrees, black crappie began to move to water of less than 10 feet while white crappie remained in the deeper water. A week later, many crappie could be found in 5 feet less of water, a majority of them being male black crappie. Fishing picked up once water temperatures reached the upper 50s with the crappie gathering around old creek channels of approximately 10 feet in depth.

By early April, water temperatures began touching on 60 degrees. Male



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Where Are the Crappie?

crappie of both species had began to move to shallow water, showing signs of pre spawn activity and nest building. Female crappie remained in deeper water close to river channels and flats. Many anglers were having luck with jigs and minnows near shallow structure.

Mid-April surveys found that the female crappie had finally moved to shallow waters, with many of them having already spawned. Several male crappie were also found very shallow. The most concentrated areas of fish were found around shoreline vegetation and timber. Through the spawn, males consistently stayed shallow while the females would return to deeper water to feed and recover from spawning activities. Suggestions were made to fish the shallows and flooded timber with jigs, minnows, and small crankbaits to catch the males guarding the nests. Fishing flats and points produced the most females.

The Department also tracked eight crappie over a 24 hour period during this month. Results showed that female crappie moved much more over the course of the day than males. One female moved over 3.5 miles during the 24 hour period, eventually returning to where she had started. Male crappie moved very little and stayed closer to flooded timber, whereas the females preferred deeper water.

Early and mid-May showed the crappie remaining in the shallows. Water temperatures reached the mid 70s. Rising water levels due to heavy rain kept the fish in 3 feet of water or less looking for cover in the newly flooded habitat.

The beginning of June continued to reveal crappie in the shallow brush and timber. A few females began to slowly make their way back to waters of 12- 22 feet.

Late June brought water temperatures of low to upper 80s. With the rising temperatures came a lot of crappie movement. Fish that had spent the last two months in the shallows began

moving out towards major drop-offs and river channels. Most of the white crappie females had moved out to depths of 20 feet.

Overall this study uncovered a lot of valuable information about crappie habits and movements. It gave a lot of insight as to where the fish could be located in reservoirs during the spring and summer months. Jigs and minnows seemed to be the bait of choice throughout the study and shallow brush cover contained crappie throughout a majority of the research.

Editor's note: Lauren Plunkett is a college freshman in Missouri. She was a member of her high school bass team, is an avid fisherman and all-around sports enthusiast.

 - By Lauren Plunkett



Fishing Funny's

by Jonny Hawkins



"STILL THINK MY SECRET BAIT IS A JOKE?"

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Cool Crappie Soups for the Good Ol' Hot Summertime

Cerviche, gazpacho and vichyssoise are soups (continued from last month's recipes) designed especially for summer because they are served cold.

Ceviche is typically made from fresh raw fish cured in citrus juices, such as lemon or lime and spiced with aji or chilies. Additional seasonings, such as chopped onions, salt and cilantro may also be added. Ceviche is usually accompanied by side dishes that complement fish flavors, such as sweet potato, lettuce, corn, avocado or plantain. Because the dish is not cooked with heat, it must be prepared fresh to minimize the risk of food poisoning.

An early form of cerviche, thought to have been developed nearly 2,000 years ago, became today's soup when Moorish women from Granada, who accompanied the Spanish conquistadors and colonizers, came to Americas, bringing citrus fruits (limes and lemons). This dish eventually evolved into what now is considered ceviche.

Ceviche is a popular international dish prepared in a variety of ways throughout the Americas, reaching the United States in the 1980s. Ceviche is not native to Mexico, despite the fact that it has been a part of traditional Mexican coastal cuisine for centuries.

This recipe is a terrific way to enjoy a cold soup of crappie.

Crappie Cerviche

- 1 pound crappie, cut to bite-sized pieces
- 8 limes, juiced
- 2 tomatoes, diced
- 5 green onions, minced
- 2 stalks celery, sliced
- 1/2 green bell pepper, minced
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
- freshly ground black pepper
- 1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/8 cup chopped fresh cilantro

Rinse crappie and place in a medium sized bowl. Pour lime juice over the fish to completely cover the fish. Chill the lime juice and crappie for 4 hours or until fish pieces are opaque (you cannot see through them). Remove 1/2 of the lime juice from the bowl and add remainder of ingredients to the crappie/lime juice mixture. Stir gently. Serve chilled.

Cerviche (compliments of chef Emeril Lagasse)

12 ounces very fresh (sushi-grade) white-fleshed ocean fish, such as grouper, wahoo, sea bass, or red snapper – or fresh

crappie.

1/3 cup fresh lime juice
 3 tablespoons fresh orange juice
 3 tablespoons pineapple juice
 1 1/2 tablespoons finely diced Serrano pepper
 2 tablespoons finely diced yellow bell pepper
 2 tablespoons finely diced red bell pepper
 1 1/2 tablespoons minced red onion
 1 teaspoon minced garlic
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro leaves
 1 tablespoon good quality extra-virgin olive oil
 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
 8 (3-inch) plantain chips
 Lime wedges, for serving

Cut the fish into 1/4-inch pieces. Place in a glass dish with the lime juice, orange juice, pineapple juice, peppers, onions and garlic, tossing to coat the fish pieces. Cover and refrigerate for 3 to 4 hours, stirring occasionally. Add the cilantro, olive oil and salt. Fold gently to mix. Serve with garnish of fried plantain chips and lime wedges. (To serve it fancy like Emeril does, put the soup in champagne glasses.)

Watermelon Gazpacho is refreshing and cool. Gazpacho soups are usually made of raw vegetables and served cold, customarily with a tomato base. Its origin is the southern Spanish region of Andalusia. Gazpacho is eaten particularly during the hot summer.

6 cups cubed seeded watermelon
 2 English (hothouse style) cucumbers, chopped
 2 red bell peppers, chopped
 1 onion, chopped
 1/2 jalapeno pepper, finely chopped
 1/4 cup lemon juice
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 3 tablespoons chopped fresh mint
 2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger
 3 tablespoons honey
 1/2 cup pineapple juice
 20 small mint leaves

Reserve 20 small pieces of watermelon for garnish. Working in batches, place the remaining watermelon, the cucumbers, red bell peppers, onion, jalapeno pepper, lemon juice, olive oil, 3 tablespoons of fresh mint, ginger, honey and pineapple juice into a blender, and blend for about 30 seconds per batch. The mixture should be well blended but retain some texture. Pour into a large pitcher or bowl and refrigerate 1 hour. Serve in bowls and garnish each bowl with a couple of chunks of the retained watermelon and 2 small mint leaves.



Soups or Stews?

Vichyssoise is a thick soup made of puréed leeks, onions, potatoes, cream and chicken stock. It is traditionally served cold but can be eaten hot.

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 3 leeks, bulb only, sliced into rings
- 1 onion, sliced
- 5 potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon dried marjoram
- 1 bay leaf
- 5 cups chicken broth
- 1/4 cup heavy whipping cream

In a large stock pot melt butter over low heat. Add leeks and onion, cover and cook for 10 minutes. Add potatoes and season with salt and pepper. Add thyme, marjoram, bay leaf and stir well. Cover pot and continue to cook for 12 minutes. Add chicken stock and bring to a boil, reduce heat and cook partially covered for 30 minutes. Puree soup in blender or food processor and chill. Before serving, add the cream. If you are serving this soup warm you need to reheat the soup slowly so that the cream does not change consistency.

Fish and Vegetable Gazpacho

- 12 ounces crappie fillets, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 3 cups water
- 1 14 1/2-ounce can vegetable or reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- Several dashes of hot pepper sauce
- 1 10-ounce can tomatoes with jalapeno peppers
- 1 cup small cucumber, chopped
- 1 cup small yellow summer squash or zucchini, chopped
- 1 cup tomatoes, chopped
- 1/4 cup green onions, sliced

Cut fillets into 1/2-inch pieces. In a medium saucepan bring water to boiling; add fish. Cover and simmer for 3 to 4 minutes or until fish flakes easily with a fork. Drain fish, cover and chill. In a medium saucepan combine broth, cumin, garlic powder and hot pepper sauce. Bring mixture to boiling. Remove from heat. Transfer to a large bowl. Stir in tomatoes with jalapeno peppers, cucumber, yellow summer squash or zucchini, plum tomatoes and green onions. Cover and chill for 4 to 12 hours. Before serving, stir chilled fish into vegetable mixture. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

MAGNOLIA

ENID LAKE

MAY 14th

1. Steve Sullivan/Michael Lowrey	13.93
2. Brad Taylor/John Harrison	12.26
3. Pat Jeffcoats/Rabbit Rogers	11.97
4. Terry Stewart/Larry Holmes	11.86
5. Tommy Moss/Brad Calhoun	11.24

BIG FISH

1. Terry Stewart/Larry Holmes	2.21
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SPRINGFIELD

SHELBYVILLE

MAY 21st

1. Rick Moonth/Brad Ruyle	6.13
2. Jerry Jallas/Carlo Catalano	5.96
3. Bob Sarko/Rick Clifton	5.4
4. Luke Humphrey/Greg Humphrey	5

NORTHEAST OHIO

BERLIN LAKE

MAY 21st

1. Jerry/Mark	6.12
2. Brad/Mark	6.36
3. Luke/John	6.1
4. Dave/Steve	5.14
5. Shawn/Jeff	5.13

BIG FISH

1. John	1.5
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INDIANNA

LAKE MONROE

MAY 21st

1. Tom Hankins/Glenn Gill	11.62
2. Alan Reed/Brian Justice	8.54
3. Gary Reed/Blake Morris	6.23
4. Jason Burnette/Bob Bales	5.76
5. Don Light/Herschel Light	5.59

BIG FISH

1. Tony Williams/Theresa Williams	2.13
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CAT TEXAS

RAY ROBERTS

MAY 21st

DIVISION 1

1. Paul O'bier/George Nelon	11.11
2. Chris Scott/Willie Scott/H. Moon	10.24
3. Russell Chambers/Wes Williams	9.93
4. Jeff Schwieterman/James Rains	9.69
5. Pat Martin/Gary Sims	9.23

DIVISION 2

1. Clay Gann/Todd Froebe	8.77
2. Bill Mouw/Phillip Law	8.11
3. Donny Holder/Charles House	7.87
4. Steven Shields/Brandon Johnson	7.7
5. Alec Dyer/Pam Dyer/R Dyer	7.35

CENTRAL OHIO

DELAWARE LAKE

MAY 21st

1. Jerry Williams/Lynn Williams	6.54
2. Rick Gates/Todd Hicks	6.28
3. Charles Hillberry/Donna Richards	6.01
4. Randall Tucker/Kendall Stamper	5.93
5. Tim Thuring/Steve Smith	5.76

BIG FISH

1. Charles Hillberry/Donna Richards	1.38
2. Randy Woodgeard/Dan Collier	1.38

WAPPAPELLO

WAPPAPELLO LAKE

MAY 21st

1. David/Renee
2. Chris Channell/Kelli Channell

BIG FISH

1. Brody Roper/Becky Roper

WEST TENNESSEE

MAY 21st

1. Jamey Bates	7.25
2. John Keller/Nate Watkins	7.24
3. Everett Agee	6.93

BIG FISH

1. Scotty Shannon/Jerry Belew	1.77
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CAT TEXAS

CEDAR CREEK LAKE/JR ANGLER

JUNE 4th

1. Addie Edgett	5.67
2. Wyatt Standridge	5.4
3. Gracie Standridge	5.39

BIG FISH

Addie Edgett/Savannah Hill	1.78
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NORTHEAST OHIO

MOSQUITO LAKE

JUNE 4th - 5th

1. Bill/Jim	16.26
2. Shawn/Jeff	15.4
3. Bill/Terry	14.58
4. Chris/Brian	12.12
5. Luke/John	12.92

BIG FISH

1. Dan/Bob	1.76
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MAGNOLIA

GRANADA LAKE

JUNE 10th - 11th

1. Johnny Walker/William Clark	29.31
2. Terry Stewart/Larry Holmes	28.86
3. Bill Burnett/Jerry Gross	28.02
4. Roger Womack/Katie Womack	27.29
5. Ken Middleton/Larry Nipper	27.04

BIG FISH

1. Terry Stewart/Larry Holmes	2.65
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CENTRAL ALABAMA

ALABAMA RIVER

JUNE 11th

1. James Heflin/Jamie Heflin	9.5
2. Alex Johnson/Wade McDonald	9.34
3. Eric Cagle/Jared Gilbert	9.15
4. Gerald Overstreet Jr/Jennifer Overstreet/Beth Ann Overstreet	9.14
5. Collier Hunt/Ken Fisher	8.82

BIG FISH

1. Dewayne Scott/Bryant Golson/Parker Scott	1.95
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CENTRAL OHIO

O'SHAUGHNESSY RESERVOIR

JUNE 11th

1. Kim Endsley/Troy Becker	6.23
2. Randy Woodgeard/Dan Collier	5.73
3. Jerry Williams/Lynn Williams	5.71
4. Tim Thuring/Steve Smith	5.55
5. Steve Kennedy/Mark Reeves	5.49

BIG FISH

1. Jerry Williams/Lynn Williams	1.3
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INDIANNNA

MISSISSINEWA/SALAMONIE

JUNE 11th- 12th

1. Tom Hankins/Tom Bilbrey	13.24
2. Jason Burnette/Bob Bales	10.96
3. Jeff Yeakle/Jonathan Brumley	10.45
4. Charlie Hildreth/Myron Etchison	10.35
5. Bret Cunningham/Keith Lucas	9.95

BIG FISH

1. Tom Hankins/Tom Bilbrey	1.45
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MIDDLE TENNESSEE

WOODS RESERVOIR

JUNE 17th

1. Rodney Edwards/Coby Edwards
2. David Travis/Brian Travis
3. Jerry Cartwright/Goodey Hill

CRAPPIE MASTERS

TRUMAN LAKE

JUNE 17th - 18th

1. Charlie Rogers/Kevin Rogers	19.16
2. Kyle Schoenherr/Rodney Nehaus	19.15
3. Barry Morrow/Chad Maupin	19.01
4. James Mitchell/Kerry King	18.18
5. Noel Fernandez/Allen Morgan	17.83

BIG FISH

1. Mark/McClure/Don Brooks	2.16
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MALE/FEMALE

1. Jackie Linton/Hollie Linton	15.69
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ADULT/YOUTH

1. Aaron Clark/Dylan Clark	14.14
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CENTRAL ARKANSAS

LAKE MAUMELLE

JUNE 18th

1. Greg London/Russ Clark	11.11
2. Lamar Bunting/Jeff Davis	7.34
3. Jason Westerberg/Jim Westerberg	6.56
4. Kyle Dines/Chris Chandler	5.97
5. Hunter Collie/Robbie Collie	5.62

BIG FISH

1. Kyle Dines/Chris Chandler	1.84
2. Greg London/Russ Clark	1.82

WAPPAPELLO

WAPPAPELLO LAKE

JUNE 18th

1. Isabella Sifford/Luke Conner	5.56
2. Cole Younger	5.2
3. Taten Roper	5
4. Stormy Gaines	4.86
5. Drake Channell	4.83

BIG FISH

1. Isabella Sifford/Luke Conner	1.53
2. Cole Younger	0.95

NORTHEAST OHIO

PYMATUNING

JUNE 18th

1. Brad/Justin	8.94
2. Shawn/Jeff	7.44
3. Dom/Jess	7.38
4. Luke/John	6.6
5. Bob/Bob	6.42

BIG FISH

1. Dom/Jess	1.96
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CAT TEXAS

COOPER LAKE

JUNE 18th**DIVISION 1**

1. Paul O'Bier/George Nelon	12.71
2. Jeff Schweiterman/James Rains	7.6
3. Chris Scott/Willie Scott	4.83
4. Mackey Whyte/Keith Moore	3.56
5. Jimmy Mathis/John Hernandez	0.86

BIG FISH

Tournament Results

1. Paul O'Bier/George Nelon 1.93

DIVISION 2

1. Clay Gann/Todd Froebe/Langdon 4.33

2. Robert Russell/Cody Russell 3.19

3. James Turner/Stewart Turner 2.47

4. Clinton Joseph III/Clinton Joseph 1.44

5. Truston Hibdon/John Zoski 0.66

BIG FISH

1. Clay Gann/Todd Froebe/Langdon 1.74



(Fishermen, check with club/association for exact dates, changes, cancellations and rules.)

JULY	8th	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	NORMANDY	WILDCAT
JULY	16TH	CENTRAL OHIO	CAESARS CREEK LAKE	CLUB
JULY	16th	CENTRAL ARKANSAS	BLUE MOUNTAIN LAKE	CLUB
JULY	17th	WAPPAPELLO	WAPPAPELLO LAKE	CLUB
JULY	16th	CAT TEXAS	TEXOMA	QUALIFIER
JULY	22nd	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	TIM'S FORD	CLUB
JULY	30th	EASTERN MISSOURI	MARK TWAIN LAKE(Jack&Jill)	CANCER BENEFIT
JULY	30th	SHOALS AREA	LAKE GUNTERSVILLE	OPEN
AUGUST	6th	CRAPPIE MASTERS	MARK TWAIN LAKE	MO ST Championship
AUGUST	13th	CENTRAL ALABAMA	ALABAMA RIVER/CAMDEN	QUALIFIER
AUGUST	13th	EASTERN MISSOURI	TRUMAN LAKE	3 MANM BUDDY
AUGUST	13th	CENTRAL ARKANSAS	LAME NIMROD	CLUB
AUGUST	19th	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	NORMANDY	CLUB
AUGUST	20th	CENTRAL OHIO	INDIAN LAKE	CLUB
AUGUST	20th	CRAPPIE MASTERS	TRUMAN LAKE	MO ST Championship
AUGUST	20th	WAPPAPELLO	WAPPAPELLO LAKE	CLUB
AUGUST	20th	CAT TEXAS	TAWAKONI	QUALIFIER
AUGUST	27th	SHOALS AREA	CEDAR CREEK LAKE	OPEN

Photo Contest



1st Place This Month!

James McClave
Pymatuning Lake - 15 3/4"



Photo Contest



Honorable Mention

Stuart Baum, Spencer Baum, Tanner McDonald Boef River, Hebert, Louisiana
Suspended slabs caught in channel and in stump lines on channel. 16 ft of water 3 ft deep.

Don't forget to send in your recent photo by the 15th.

Crappie NOW e-magazine accepts color digital images for publication. A single photo will be selected after the 10th of each month for the next month's edition. The winner will be contacted via email with prize information.

Check out www.crappienow.com for more details.

CRAPPIE CLUBS

(Note that club news, results and schedules are taken from websites around the 10th of each month. Only those who provide information through their website or by email will have updated information and results included.) Fishermen, check with club/association for exact dates, changes, cancellations and rules.

Clubs/Regional Tournaments

MAGNOLIA CRAPPIE CLUB - MS
www.magnoliacrappieclub.com

CRAPPIE ANGLERS OF TEXAS (CAT)- TX
www.crappieanglersoftexas.com

WEST TENNESSEE CRAPPIE CLUB-WTCC -TN
www.westtennesseecrappieclub.com; also facebook

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www.shoalscrappie.com shoalscrappie@yahoo.com

WEST ALABAMA CRAPPIE ASSOCIATION -AL
www.westalabamacrappie.com Tracy Humber 662-574-0649

SLAB MASTERS TOURNAMENT TRAIL -GA
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www.easternbuckeyecrappieclub.com

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A scenic view of a body of water, likely a bayou or swamp, with large trees and reeds. The water is calm, reflecting the surrounding greenery. The trees have thick, buttressed trunks, characteristic of cypress trees. The reeds are tall and green, growing in the shallow water. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

*The CrappieNow staff
wishes you a quiet,
peaceful day on the water.
Goodbye until next month.*