

CRAPPIE NOW!

DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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Crappie.com

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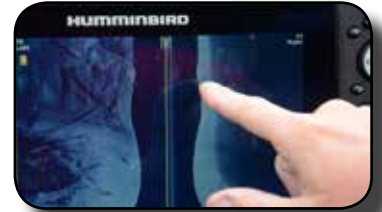
Sizzling August Tactics

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by John E. Phillips

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If you enjoy fishing a variety of techniques, the Alabama River might be your cup of tea. Spider rigging, single poling, and longlining all work well on the river to put slab crappie in the boat.



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By John N. Felsher, photos by Ron Presley

Docks offer good fishing much of the year. Knowing some of the basic rules helps put more fish on the end of your line.



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Opening Cast

I just returned from a very successful and informative ASA ICAST Show in Orlando Florida where fishing companies presented their new products for 2018 to the media and industry representatives/buyers. It was bigger than any before it and my feet took a pounding for three days trying to meet with the companies attending.



I was pleasantly surprised to see a substantial increase in the number of companies that were producing or about to produce products for all crappie fishermen, women and children. Although I did not get to meet all, I did get to see some cool crappie gear.

Bobby Garland has a new bait, the Pile Diver, that is going to be a big hit for jigging, pulling and pushing. There are six new colors in several of the existent bait styles that are "gotta-haves."

Jenko Fishing, a new-comer to Crappie Fishing, has a complete line-up of plastics, jigs, crankbaits, nets, etc. that all crappie fishermen should examine.

Garmin has improved mapping and will announce in the coming months new items for 2018. The show stopper with Garmin is the new 360 camera.

Engel has improved its bait coolers with a lift out net system, improved bubbler box entry and adding a 12V hookup so you won't use up all those batteries. I've gone through tons of batteries.

Two items by PowerPole are really awesome. A new battery management system and a WiFi accessory control pad called Vision. These two systems are a must on any boat old or new.

Cuda Brand has several new tools that are focused on the crappie market that all of us should own. See my video on these.

Although I'm just mentioning a few items, the show had plenty for the crappie fisherman. Be sure to support companies who support you and the sport.

Good fishin' all!

Dan Dannenmueller, Publisher

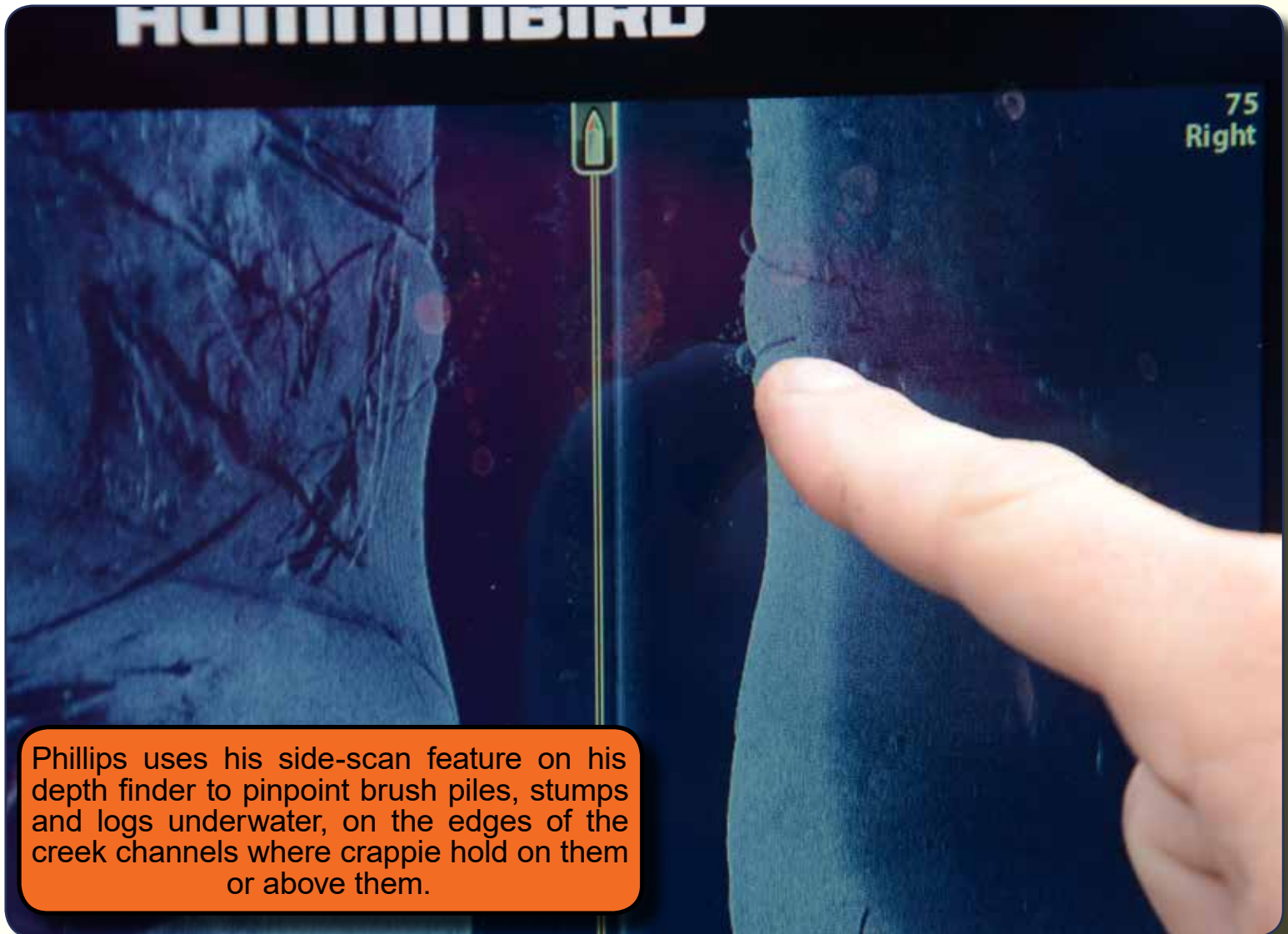
Cover Photo:
John Mayo with a good
Mississippi crappie.
Tim Huffman photo

Sizzling Hot Crappie with Jonathan Phillips

Story & photos by John E. Phillips

To catch the most and biggest crappie in any lake or river that you fish, during any time of the year, fish when and where most crappie anglers don't fish and use tactics that others rarely use. By formulating this simple recipe, Jonathan Phillips of Wetumpka, Alabama, catches big slab crappie all summer long.

"The hotter the weather, the easier the crappie are for me to find and catch," Phillips says. "I guide on Lake Jordan - on the Coosa River chain - and the Alabama River, as well as fish crappie tournaments. I've discovered a pattern that pays off in plenty of impressive-size crappie during the hottest months. You can use this same strategy on any lake



Phillips uses his side-scan feature on his depth finder to pinpoint brush piles, stumps and logs underwater, on the edges of the creek channels where crappie hold on them or above them.

with slightly-stained, deep water.”

Phillips has learned that during the summer, the crappie will relate to structure - drop-offs, humps, deep stumps and deep, underwater trees – that you can't spot without a quality depth finder.

“I like a Humminbird Helix 10 HD side scanning and down scanning depth finder because I catch crappie with it,” Phillips emphasizes. “When I get over structure or a drop-off, I can tell the difference between crappie that resemble little leaves and other kinds of fish. I can't always catch the crappie I spot, however, I know I'm fishing where the crappie are.”

Because Phillips fishes well offshore in the main lake on the main part of the river, he frequently has jet skiers, water skiers and pleasure boat riders create waves where he's fishing. “So, instead of using multiple poles and spider rigging, I'll fish with a single pole with either a double or a single minnow rig straight down to where I've located the crappie with my depth finder.”

How to Find Crappie Before You Fish

Phillips also uses maps like Navionics and Humminbird's LakeMaster. In the mid-summer, Phillips searches for contour changes on the bottom – particularly humps about 14 feet deep out in the middle of a river that drops-off to 30-40 feet. Phillips uses his depth finder to scan all the way around a hump to know where the crappie are ganged up.

On cloudy days, Phillips may pinpoint crappie concentrating just above the hump. A bluebird day with bright, hot sun means the crappie will be on the hump's shady side. The hump's west side may hold crappie early in the morning, since the sun rises in the east, with the hump's east side more productive in the afternoons.

How to Change Bad Fishing into Good Fishing

On a non-productive summer's day,



Anthony Milner, who works with Jonathan Phillips, says, “If I can't fish for crappie with Jonathan, I'll fish for catfish, since Jonathan knows where to find the big ones.”

Phillips looks at lake and river maps and attempts to pinpoint structure, bottom drop-off and/or a hump different from the bottom around it.

“Often a sharp bottom break or rise may concentrate crappie,” Phillips reports. “I check them out and fish a foot or two above the crappie.”

Catching crappie in deep water during the summer months is much like picking cotton. Start at the top of the school, and catch as many crappie as possible. Then move deeper into the cover or the ledge, and catch the center of the crappie school to keep from spooking other crappie.

“If I have to fish the heart of brush for



Here's a fine catch of 1-2 pound crappie taken in an afternoon of fishing when the weather sizzled for Anthony Milner (left) and Jonathan Phillips (right).

crappie, I prefer a single hook, which is easier to get out of brush," Phillips says. "I like to have two poles rigged - one with a single hook and the other with a double hook - catching the easy crappie with the double hook rig and using the single hook to go into the brush."

Phillips usually has 50-100 different locations identified where he's caught crappie before a trip. "I never try to catch all the crappie on any location. I believe


crappie attract other crappie."

The crappie Phillips catches are usually old and big crappie – generally weighing 1-1/4- to 2 pounds.

What a Half Day of Hot Weather Crappie Fishing Is Like

I fished with Phillips and Anthony Milner and was blown away at the size and numbers of black crappie we caught on a half-day fishing trip. Once Phillips found crappie, he dropped a buoy right on top of the school. When I asked if he wasn't afraid he'd spook crappie with the buoy, he answered, "No. When the lead on the buoy bottom falls 14-20 feet, it's not going fast when it hits the bottom and doesn't seem to spook the fish. Generally, the crappie are suspended up from the bottom. However, with a high sky, bright sun and deep fish, if your bait's 5 feet away from the school, you won't catch the crappie. I want my bait to be right above the school with a minnow dancing." We caught enough crappie to feed my entire family plus visitors for a weekend fish fry at the lake and had a blast fishing for summer crappie.

Call Jonathan Phillips at 334-391-9735, and go to <https://www.facebook.com/Team-Phillips-Guide-Service-935028296557829>.

 - John E. Phillips



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Phillips' Tackle for Summer Crappie

* Line and Sinker - Phillips likes 8-pound test SpiderWire Invisi-Braid due to the heavier boat wakes while fishing in the summertime. Phillips feels his bites better with that thin, small braided line than with monofilament and uses a lighter hook set than when fishing shallower water with monofilament that stretches. Phillips likes a 1/2-ounce sinker on the bottom of his line to get the bait down to the depth of water where the crappie are and to knock the hook out of any type of wood structure.

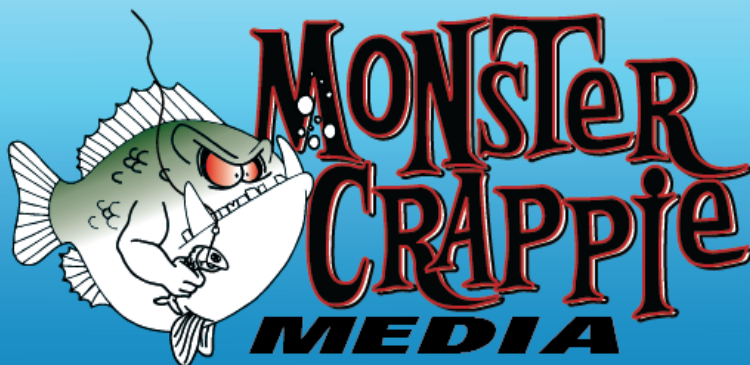
* Poles - Phillips prefers ACC Crappie Stix poles, made in Illinois by Andy Lehman. "I use the jigging poles designed to hold in your hand," Phillips says. "Fishermen may get 30 to 100 bites but not be able to feel many of them. I like the strong 10' and the 11' jigging poles to get far out in front of and on the side of my boat to pull a 2-pound plus crappie in without a net."

Since Phillips fishes with braided line, the least bit of slack in the line may allow the hook to pop out of the crappie's mouth. So, Phillips like to swing a big crappie (2-1/2-pounds) into the boat rather than use a dip net.

Top 50 Crappie Lakes for 2017

Did your favorite spot make the cut?

Find out more at MonsterCrappie.com





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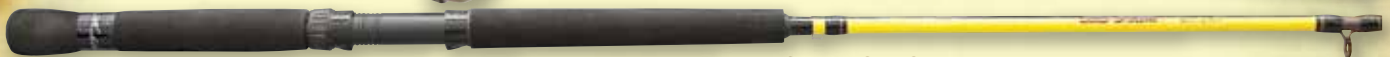
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International Convention of Allied Sportfishing Trades (ICAST) held the world's largest trade show at Orange County Convention Center in Orlando Florida, July 11-14. It is the ultimate showcase for the latest innovations in gear and apparel.

ICAST hosted 582 exhibitors, 1982 booths covered almost 200,000 square feet of show floor.



By Tim Huffman



Overall Best of Show may not be a crappie rig but is worth mention. The Bote Rover can be propelled by standing and paddling with a stable, deep-V nose and channeled bottom to slice through the water. Or, it can be run by a small outboard. 500 pounds capacity, 14 foot, 40 inches, 105 pounds weight, and will handle a 6 h.p. motor. \$3500. www.boteboard.com



Eyewear - The Sunrise Mirror Lens by Costa. A good choice for low light conditions but also versatile for changing light conditions. They allow 30 % light transmission versus the typical 10-12 % while maintaining 99% polarization. The sunglasses sharpens contrast all day and the mirror finish helps deflect harsh light from your eyes. Starting at \$189. www.costadelmar.com

Lifestyle Apparel: Frogg Toggs Pym1 Series Pilot II Jacket & Bibs. This suit will help enhance your experience whether fishing or doing some other outdoor activity. The newest addition utilizes proven performance of the Pilot II material and design while incorporating the bold, unique Pym 1 camo patterns in lifestyle colors and textures designed by wildlife artist, Stacie Walker. Set \$360. www.pymcamo.com; www.froggtoggs.com



Footwear: Attack by Huk Performance Fishing. Boat shoes engineered and purpose-built to bring performance features to the serious fisherman. Unique traction, bullet-proof durability, all day comfort and support. They feature GripX wet traction non-marking outsoles, Huk Fuzetek upper support cage, performance lacing and Kryptek Camo. \$85. www.hukgear.com

Boating Accessory: - LoadOut Bucket by Yeti Coolers. This is Yeti's solution to the tried-and-true plastic hauler. It's a 5-gallon work-horse made from high density polyethylene for toughness. It's ready for bait or anything else you need to carry. It's versatile and built to last. \$40. www.yeti.com

Electronics - Johnson Outdoors Marine Electronics Solix 15 Chirp Mega SI GPS.

Bigger is still considered better with the new 15 inch Solix winning the electronics category. It has Mega Imaging and AutoChart Live to Ethernet and Bluetooth connectivity. Cross Touch display for touch screen operation or menu buttons. You can zoom in or out with a pinch or spread of your thumb and finger on the screen. Screens can be customized to the fisherman's needs. The 15 inch Solix starts at \$3000. www.humminbird.com





Fishing Line: Pure Fishing, Berkley FireLine Ultra 8. Here's the toughest of the tough with 50% greater abrasion resistance, better casting with 10% farther distance, better handling with rounder, more consistent line structure, and the strongest high-tenacity Dyneema PE Fiber. It isn't inexpensive but the long wear will outlast others making it an good value. 125 yd \$20. [www. Berkley-Fishing.com](http://www.Berkley-Fishing.com)

Fishing Accessory: Yeti Panga Duffel. Whether it's raining or your bag just lands in the wrong spot, Panga offers zero access points for wetness. It's a fully submersible duffel designed to stand up to the toughest conditions. It won't give in to a fish hook. The company calls it a gear fortress. Starts at \$300. www.yeti.com



Freshwater Rod: - Fate Black by 13 Fishing. A quality spinning rod that claims casting accuracy, a lightweight blank, seamless reel seat and custom wrapped tangle-free guides. Cork handle. The rod is an easy to see matt green finish and will turn heads. \$100. www.13fishing.com

Tackle Management - Tactical Backpack by Daiwa Corporation. Whether hiking or fishing, this pack is for an angler on the go. It's unique with a 3-box stack system easily accessible from the side. Big pockets have ample storage. Configured with sunglass case holder, plier holder, booger box and Velcro attachment area. \$150. www.daiwa.com

Terminal Tackle - Trapper Round Bend Treble. Trapper Tackle made a big impact last year with its unique hooks. This year their treble hook is making noise and might be of interest for the crankbait crappie trollers. Their design includes very sharp hook points and a patented design hook bend that makes it more difficult for a fish to throw the hook. \$7 per pack. www.trappertackle.com

First Runners-Up

A few crappie-related fishing items were highly ranked. For the Boating Accessories was Johnson Outdoors Marine Electronics Talon Shallow Water Anchor 15-foot. Crappie fishermen are in many situations where a deep, easy to use anchor would be outstanding.

Footwear is always a critical element to enjoy the day. The good-looking Simms Challenger Mid Boat Shoe is waterproof and looks like a great choice. The Simms Contender Insulated Jacket is also worth careful consideration.

The runner up for electronics was the Lowrance HDS Carbon 16. If you want super-size and money isn't an object, this is one to consider. It has an internal GPS antenna, extensive mapping options along with built-in charts, InsightGenesis custom maps, dual microSD card slots, built-in Chirp Sonar, StructureScan 3D dual network sonar views, optional all-in-one TotalScan Skimmer transducer, DownScan overlay, and much more.

BoatUS Alert: Crime Rings Stealing Boats, Outboards & Electronics

According to the Boat Owners Association of the United States, crime rings are responsible for stealing boats, Yamaha outboard engines, Garmin electronics and other expensive navigation units. Boat dealerships and boat-storage facilities are two prime locations hit hardest but it can happen anywhere. It's difficult to stop a thief but BoatUS offers seven tips.

1. Take a look at where you store your boat. Is it lit? Does it have motion-lighting or audible alarms? Is it difficult to gain entry? Have signage of surveillance.

2. Slow a thief down. Lock electronics. Use tamper-resistant fasteners. Use a special nut with an engine-mounting bolt that requires a special key.

3. Make stealing expensive electronics less appealing by engraving and posting a warning. Keep an inventory list with serial numbers; and take pictures.

4. Be wary of suspicious questions. Boaters should remain cautious to questions from strangers. Recognize suspicious activity and people who don't belong.

5. Consider adding a boat tracking device that can sound an early alarm.

6. Engine owners may want to investigate programs like Yamaha Customer Outboard Protection.

7. Help get the word out. If you are a victim share the information with the National Crime Information Center, a computerized database available to every law-enforcement agency.

Bass Pro Shops Among America's Most Reputable Companies

Bass Pro Shops has always been a top national retailer of outdoor gear and apparel. They were named one of "America's Most Reputable Companies" by Forbes magazine in recognition of the public's trust in the organization.

The achievement is based on a national study compiled by The Reputation Institute, a well-established consultancy based in Boston, that measured 800 leading companies by gauging the perceptions of nearly 43,000 respondents familiar with them. Bass Pro Shops ranked 19th on the list of 100 distinguished companies, above Disney, Home Depot, Marriott, FedEx and others.

With a passion of the outdoors and a feel for the products and shopping experiences desired by outdoor enthusiasts, Johnny Morris' Bass Pro Shops helped transform the outdoor retail industry. They have also made giving back to conservation its hallmark, inspiring everyone to enjoy, love and conserve the great outdoors. The company works on behalf of conservation by supporting the efforts of nonprofit conservation organizations that share a desire to tackle key conservation initiatives such as wildlife habitat improvements, conservation and outdoor skills education, improving the quality of lakes, rivers and springs and conservation advocacy.

"There are no shortcuts to earning a customer's trust. Reputation is earned with genuine, friendly service and by offering quality products and experiences at an exceptional value each and every time," said founder/CEO and noted conservationist Johnny Morris. "This recognition is a tribute to all of our remarkable and passionate team members who work hard every day to make sure every customer experience is a positive one."



More About Bass Pro Shops

Bass Pro Shops was founded in 1972 when avid young angler Johnny Morris began selling tackle out of his father's liquor store in Springfield, Missouri, today more than 100 retail and marine centers host 120 million people annually. It also operates White River Marine Group, offering an unsurpassed collection of industry-leading boat brands, and Big Cedar Lodge, America's Premier Wilderness Resort. It has also been named by Forbes as "One of America's Best Employers".


This is a promotional advertisement for BugBand Insect Repellents. The top half of the ad shows a man and a young boy sitting on a boat, fishing together. Below this image, the text reads "BUGBAND INSECT REPELLENTS" in large green letters. Underneath, it states: "THE NATURAL CHOICE OF ANGLERS & FISHERMEN TO EFFECTIVELY REPEL MOSQUITOES, FLIES, GNATS, FLEAS, NO-SEE-UMS & TICKS. SAFE & NON-TOXIC." To the right of this text is a "made in USA" logo. The bottom half of the ad displays several product packages: a circular "Best Free" seal, a box of "BugBand Insect Repellent", a bottle of "BugBand Insect Repellent", a box of "BugBand Insect Repellent", and a box of "BugBand Insect Repellent". Below these products are labels for "WRISTBANDS", "PUMP SPRAYS", "TOWELETTES", and "COMBO PACKS". At the bottom, it says "MADE WITH NATURALLY DERIVED ACTIVE INGREDIENTS" and provides the contact information "678-721-9989 OR VISIT WWW.BUGBAND.NET".


Crappie Basics #143

Heavy Line

Get a group of fishermen together and you'll always have different opinions when talking about line. To some fishermen it's the diameter. Others are picky about clear or high-visibility.

Todd Huckabee is an Oklahoma guide who has also fished tournaments and given seminars around the country. He says, "Heavy line does not scare fish. They don't know what it is. Your job is to present a jig in the way it looks like something real. It doesn't matter color, mono, braid or size. You present a jig the right way and they will not have time to inspect it close enough to worry about the line. If presented in their face they will bite it."

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JIGHEADS



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We Produce Crappie Fishing's Finest Jigheads

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Alabama Bucket List

by Ron Presley

Whether you want to enjoy the fishing or take in the sights, it would be hard to find a more beautiful place than the Alabama River near Prattville, AL. The Coosa River and the Tallapoosa River come together near Wetumpka, AL to form the Alabama River. The meandering river offers plenty of nooks and crannies for serious fishermen to investigate and scores of amenities that support other tourist activities.

Crappie Now and Catfish Now magazines recently hosted a Press Camp for outdoor writers with the expressed intent of highlighting the great fishing and tourism possibilities that accompany the river. It was quickly evident that anglers and nonanglers alike could find activities that suit their fancy. The beauty of the area and the size of the crappie are reason enough to visit.

“The beauty of the area and the size of the crappie are reason enough to visit.”

The Fishing

“Crappie Dan” Dannenmueller, Crappie Now/CatfishNow Publisher, describes the Alabama River as a nutrient rich river that supports the rapid growth of both white and black crappie.

“The river is formed by a series of locks and dams that form pools,” indicated Dannenmueller. “Depending on current, power generation, river stages and weather, numerous crappie fishing techniques will work on the river. Crappies exceeding two pounds, with some more than three pounds, are caught in the Alabama River.”

The river can have strong current when power is being generated or when the river is being pulled down for flood control

purposes. Tributary creeks like Swift Creek and places like Cooter’s Pond give Prattville area anglers easy access to the river and also backwater fishing opportunities. Plenty of habitat, and plenty of bait in the river, give the crappies everything they need to grow and be healthy.

Three Methods That Work

Regardless of your favorite method of catching crappie, it will work on the Alabama River. Three of the most productive methods are spider rigging, single poling, and longlining.

Spider rigging the river and its tributaries is a very fruitful and favorite way to put numbers of slabs in the boat. Single pole jigging is probably next in popularity among local anglers, because of the fun it entails. Finally, the method known as longlining or pushing will also bring some nice crappie to the boat, especially when they are scattered and suspended.

Spider Rigging (Tightlining)

As awesome as it looks the first time you see it, spider rigging is a relatively simple way to put lots of baits in front of the crappie. A set of Driftmaster Rod Holders and B’n’M poles are a good place to start. The Driftmaster have the reputation for holding up to heavy use and keeping the poles in place. There are several good brands of poles but B’n’M is the pioneer and still the leader of crappie fishing poles.

The length of the poles is usually a personal choice based on fishing conditions. Fourteen-footers, and longer, are normal. Water clarity and depth are major factors in determining pole length. Clearer and shallower water call for longer poles that place the baits further away from the boat.

It is always a good idea to begin a day of spider rigging by probing different depths of water with different colors of baits. Road Runner jigheads with various colored plastics are a great way to begin, with

each line set at a different depth. Well-informed crappie anglers understand that the number one rule of thumb with crappie is to place the bait above them, because those big old crappie eyes are looking upward for their next meal.

Sonar can help you determine the depth to start fishing. If you locate bait balls and fish on the sonar you can make your first set near those depths. Once you have discovered a pattern, by actually catching fish, you should set all your baits to that same depth. Likewise, pay attention to color and re-tie with the most productive color.

Speed is another important variable. Some days they like it fast, some days they like it slow. A good starting point is about .5 mph. Slow down and speed up until you determine the correct speed by catching fish. Windy conditions, or heavy current may require some help to slow down. Most anglers use a drift sock or heavy chain to slow their speed.

Single Pole Jigging

The next most productive method on the Alabama River is single pole jigging. If you have ever heard the expression "I like to feel the thump," it comes from one pole jiggers. In the opinion of many crappie anglers, single pole jigging is probably the most fun of all crappie catching techniques.

Sonar is just as important in single pole jigging as it is in spider rigging. Many anglers will spend hours scanning the river in search of wood or at least artificial crappie attractors. Many anglers put out their own brush piles and mark them on their charts, but once found they become other angler's spots too. The idea is to have as many marked spots as possible in different depths of water. Once the leg work is done, more time is spent fishing than marking, but it is still a good idea to mark a few new spots on each outing. Over time, fishing the



The Alabama River near Prattville is very scenic and it produces world class sized crappie.

marked spots will separate the best ones from the mediocre.

The process is simple enough. The angler holds a single pole and fishes vertically over and around structure. Using a double hook rig or a single hook rig will depend on individual preference. Some crappie anglers prefer the single hook simply because it gets hung less. Those that use double hook rigs prefer light wire hooks that will straighten and come lose before breaking off if they do become snagged.

The next choice is artificial or natural baits? The advantage of artificial baits is





not having to dip a minnow and place it on the hook after every bite. The advantage of live minnows is the success rate that they produce. Both methods work and there may be some days that the fish will tell you which one they want.

One big challenge on the river is current, or lack of it. The spot that is productive one day may not be the next, because the current flow stopped. This likelihood is why it is important to locate and mark plenty of spots, in different depths of water. When the bite's off at one depth, move to another.

It is usually a good idea to fish vertical structure by starting shallow and working deeper. This method eliminates the possibility of catching a fish deep and then spooking the school as you pull it up through them to the boat.

Single pole jiggers should also realize that once the bite stops they can leave the brush they are fishing and come back later in the same day and catch several more.

Longliners Jim and Barb Reedy prefer multiple length rods while pulling, to reduce tangling.

Longlining

The first task of any crappie angler is to find fish and determine where they are suspended in the water column. Depending on fishing conditions, crappie may be caught at three feet where the river is 18 feet deep, they may be on the bottom, or they may be somewhere in between.

Longlining, or pulling, can be adapted to reach the fish wherever they are in the water column. The method consists of trolling single or tandem jigs behind the boat at a speed and distance that targets the feeding fish. This method covers more water than other crappie fishing methods, mainly because of speed.

Like spider rigging, pulling requires rod holders, and in most cases, multi-length poles. It is common to see six to eight rods pulled out the back of the boat. Although

rod length is a personal choice, a typical eight rod setup could include all the same length rods or multiple length rods.

One multiple rod length example would be two each 8-, 10-, 12- and 14-foot B'n'M rods. Each side of the boat would feature the longest rods on the outside and the shortest on the inside next to the motor. Staggering the length of poles in the rod holders creates a distance between each rod that minimizes tangles.

Once the choice of tandem or single jigs has been made, make a normal cast out the back of the boat while moving at trolling speed. Remember, it is not the distance that the line is behind the boat, but the depth the bait is running that is important, so that initial cast may have to be adjusted.

Sonar is used to determine the holding depth of the crappie. Your goal is to present the bait at a level above the fish. Remember, crappies are normally looking up to feed and bait placement is crucial to a successful day. The real challenge of pulling is finding that right depth.

Several factors affect the depth. Suppose you make a normal cast (about 50 feet), using 6-pound test mono, two 1/16-ounce Road Runners that are being pulled at 1.5 miles per hour. According to crappie pro, Jim Reedy, that combination will run your bait at about 6 to 8 feet deep. Slow down to .8 mph the baits drop to 10 to 15 feet deep.

The distance of the cast, the size of the mono, the weight of the lures, and boat speed will all affect the depth of the bait. If you are marking fish on the sonar, a few passes through the area at different depths will determine the combination of variables you need for that spot. The trial and error process becomes more intuitive as you spend time on the water using the longlining method.

The sheer amount of water covered by longlining allows anglers to quickly eliminate unproductive waters and catch fish that are scattered. When a group of suspended crappie are found, simply troll back and forth through the school until the bite slows.

The Alabama River is a world-class crappie fishing destination. Whether your favorite way to catch crappie is spider rigging, vertical jigging, or pulling, the Alabama River has something for you. Tourism

There is a lot more to do in the Prattville area than fish for crappie. Old Town Prattville is full of history. It is known as being one of the first planned communities in Alabama. The architecture features graceful arches, soaring ceilings and vast open spaces. It is hard to miss the interesting brick and

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stonework that characterize the buildings and the old mill waterfall on Autauga Creek.

Other interesting attractions include the Capital Hill Golf Course. Capital Hill was designed by Robert Trent Jones, one of the premier golf course architects in the world. The course is part of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail that currently consist of 468 championship holes at eleven sites it the state of Alabama. Capital Hill is a beautiful course and currently host to an event on the LPGA Tour.

The Alabama Wildlife Federation operates a unique educational facility near Prattville. Kids and adults can learn about Alabama's vast natural resources. Visitors can explore five miles of trails with experienced Action Nature Center naturalists. There are ponds, creeks and woods to investigate. Visitors can picnic on the grounds and check out the educational movies in the hands-on Discovery Hall.

The area near Interstate 65 is full of shopping, eating and lodging opportunities. The Hampton Inn & Suites is just a stone's throw from the Interstate and minutes from Cooter's Pond. The Hampton offers clean and comfortable rooms, great Wi-Fi, and efficient workspace in every room. If you prefer you can use their computers and printers in the Business Center and get your daily exercise in the handy workout room. If you like to eat a good breakfast before fishing or sightseeing you will be offered an

A trip to downtown can take you back in time where you can enjoy lots of history along with the new developments.

excellent free hot breakfast every morning. They describe their facility as "Small town charm meets big city convenience." It couldn't be said any better!

If you need gear while on your trip the Prattville Bass Pro Shops is just minutes away. They have a complete line of fishing attire and equipment. You will also find the world-famous Islamorada Fish Company located inside BPS where you can enjoy a little bit of the island life without travelling to the Florida Keys.

Whether it is fishing for crappie (or other species), playing golf, engaging in other water based activities or simply a restful family vacation, the Alabama River at Prattville, AL is a bucket list destination for outdoor enthusiasts.

For more area information visits the Prattville website at <http://www.prattvilleal.gov/visitors/attractions.html>.

 - Ron Presley

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What's Up Dock?

by John N. Felsher, photos by Ron Presley

On many waters, a multitude of docks, fishing piers, boathouses or other manmade objects protrude from the shoreline. These docks create the dominant, most visible structure and often offer excellent fishing.

"People can catch crappie under docks all year long," explained Steve Brown, a semi-pro crappie angler from Millbrook, Ala. "Sometimes, I've seen 2.25- to 2.75-pound crappie stacked under docks."

Older docks with crusty pilings typically offer the best fishing since they've been in the water so long. Docks close to deeper water provide fish easy opportunities to drop into the depths or hunt in the shallows. The best docks provide good shade and overhead cover from predators like ospreys.

"I look for a big dock with a lot of shade and good water depth under it," Brown advised. "I like to see at least 12 feet of water under a dock. I also like a dock close to a creek channel or main river channel ledge."

On major rivers, many people build floating docks that rise and fall with frequent water level fluctuations. Usually, dock builders put down metal or wooden posts and slip these through holes in buoyant decking material like wood or plastic. Some use pontoons to keep docks floating. Floating docks offer fish excellent shade.

"Shade is the key," Brown said. "It's probably the biggest factor for why docks attract crappie. Floating docks provide a lot more shade for fish. A dock that sits too high off the water allows too much sunlight to enter the water and might not hold any fish. I'll always go to the dock with the most shade. I'll hit a spot six to eight times. If nothing bites, I'll move to another spot."

Also on rivers, anglers need to consider



Steve Brown shows the results of picking the right spot and using the right method.

current. A little flow can bring fresh bait, but crappie don't like to fight powerful currents all day. In rivers with swift currents, people might not build as many docks on the main channels, but some tributaries could offer outstanding dock fishing.

"If the current is too powerful, crappie can't suspend under the docks," Brown remarked. "When fishing rivers, I look for any docks that create some type of current breaks. In a tournament, that would be a money spot that would hold a lot of fish. Sometimes, people put a dock next to a sandbar, ledge or



some other underwater obstruction that keeps water from ripping under that dock.”

Most people fish slack spots downstream of current breaks. However, anglers cannot always reach those eddies easily. In such a situation, start upstream and drift baits to the sweet spot. Dangle live minnows or even jigs from small floats and let the flow carry the temptation under the dock. Without a float, use jigs heavy enough to sink, but light enough for the current to carry it. Experiment with different weights. With the right weight, the bait slowly descends as the current sweeps it along. Once the jig hits bottom, pop it up again and let it drift some more.

Whether fishing a swift river or placid reservoir, also look for secondary cover. Many dock owners establish brush piles within casting range of their properties. Don't overlook boats tied to docks. Sometimes, boats sit moored for long periods. Algae may grow on the hulls, lines, tabs and lower units. That growth feeds minnows and other small

Small and large crappie both live in and around docks. Getting the bite, setting the hook and swinging the fish into the boat is part of the fun.

fish.

A pontoon boat tied to a dock creates abundant shade, but some very tight places that make bait presentation challenging. Many people ping lures off boat transoms or pontoons, but monster crappie lurking way back under cover may never see baits. An opening covered by an intact spider web indicates that no one fished that spot for a while. To reach places where few others even dare to fish, try “shooting” baits.

For shooting baits, use a light flexible spinning rod about five to seven feet long. Open the reel bail and grab the lure by the head. Bend the rod tip to build up energy as if preparing to launch an arrow. The bending rod acts like a slingshot. When released, that





energy from the unbending rod propels small lures under or between cover that few other anglers attempt to fish.

“Pontoon boats are great spots to shoot jigs,” commented Jonathan Phillips, a crappie pro and guide with Team Phillips Guide Service (334-391-9735 or Team Phillips Guide Service on Facebook) in Wetumpka, Ala. “Shooting docks can be a really fun way to fish and highly productive. I use 4-pound test high visibility line so I can see the bites.”

A skilled dock shooter can hurl a small bait way under cover with remarkable accuracy. Sometimes, a bait hits the surface and skips farther back under cover. For shooting docks and other structures, people can use just about any type of bait, but many people fling 1/64- to 1/8-ounce jigs. Some anglers use

Shooting a jig into a small opening or between a boat and walkway can be a challenge but it's worth the effort.

Road Runner jighead spinners or other lures. A few use tiny flies.

“When I’m fishing a lake, I usually shoot 1/32-ounce jigs around docks,” Brown revealed. “On a river with a little current, I’ll probably switch to a 1/16-ounce jig to keep the current from washing it out too fast without giving it time to fall. Probably 99 percent of the time, crappie hit a jig as it falls. Quite often, anglers never feel the bite. They might just see a little twitch on the line.”

After launching baits into sweet spots, anglers can work them several ways. Frequently, the biggest fish hover along the edges and suck down baits that slowly sink past them. Throw assorted baits from different angles and experiment with various retrieves to determine what works each day.

"I want to shoot the jig as far under the dock as I can into the darkest spot I can find," Brown said. "Sometimes, fish nail the bait as soon as the jig hits the water. If not, let the jig fall and watch the line. If the line pops or starts swimming off, set the hook. When the

A skilled dock shooter can hurl a small bait way under cover with remarkable accuracy.

jig falls, I always count and keep track of when fish hit to determine patterns and how deep fish are in the water column. If I catch a couple fish when I reach 'one-thousand 4' that's how deep I'll fish each cast so the jig stays in the same water where I found fish."

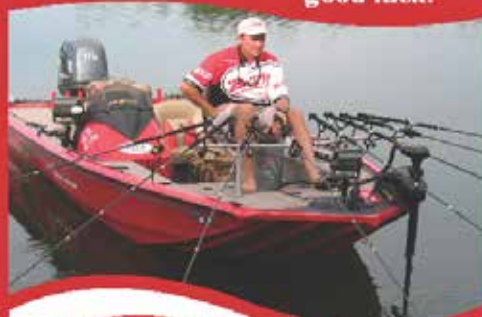
While people usually "shoot the docks," anglers can fish around such structures with many other techniques. Many people vertically jig around the pilings with single poles or pitch floats holding minnows to support structures. Some even nose spider rigs into extra wide boat slips.

After landing a few fish under a dock, crappie may stop biting. That doesn't necessarily mean that they moved or the angler caught them all. Try changing bait colors or perhaps use a different size. After thoroughly working over a dock and catching several fish, leave it alone for a while. Go look for something similar and then return to fish the original dock again a few hours later.


With any fishing method, pay attention to what works. Keep trying different methods to see what fish want that day and where they want it. Then, just repeat what works best.

 By John N. Felsher

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The Best Jig Color

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Seriously, there is no one 'best' color that works for every situation. Harold Neely, pro staffer with Spike-It, says, "The Color-C-Lector shows you the right color at the right time. Simple and easy to use. Like anything, light changes all day so you need to check it often. As light increases you'll need to go with lighter colors. You can't take one color and expect it to be the best all day long. The Color-C-Lector is a simple device that helps take the guesswork out of picking the best color."



2017 Tentative Schedule

May 5 & 6 Alabama River, Prattville, AL, Alabama State Championship

May 13 Rend Lake, Whittington, IL, National Qualifier

May 20 Truman Lake, Clinton, MO, Big Crappie Challenge

June 16 & 17 Truman Lake, Clinton, MO, One Pole Ultimate Challenge

August 5 Mark Twain Lake, Stoutsville, MO, 2nd Leg of Missouri State Championship

August 19 Truman Lake, Clinton, MO, Final Leg of Missouri State Championship

September 20-23 Lakes Washington, Lee, Paradise, Ferguson, Whittington & Chicot, Greenville, MS, National Championship

October 14 Carlyle Lake, Carlyle, IL, National Qualifier



Mouth-Popping Enhancements for Crappie

Gremolata, part condiments and part garnish, is one of those dishes where synergy creates something that tastes better than the sum of its parts. Garlic, lemon and parsley are common members of your kitchen's staff. This Italian condiment consists of these three items finely chopped together. Served it sprinkled over any number of dishes will make every mouthful pop with bright, fresh flavors. Gremolata barely needs a recipe because it's so simple but here's one to start with.

Gremolata is most commonly used for a final flourish of flavor to add a fresh zippy note to fish and other dishes. But don't limit yourself. Try it sprinkled over grilled or roasted meats and vegetables.

For instance, asparagus is particularly better with gremolata, as well as many pasta dishes. Creamy bean dishes, especially if they contain meat, are sure to benefit from a sprinkling of this simple embellishment. It's even good on beanie weenies.

Gremolata

1 cup parsley, loosely-packed (washed and dried)

1 clove garlic, papery skin removed

2 lemons, organic (washed and dried)

Remove the leaves from the parsley and chop finely to make less than 1/2 cup. Finely grate garlic clove over the parsley and grate lemons on top of the garlic. Mix ingredients as you go. Best when used fresh but you can store it in an airtight container in the refrigerator for a day.

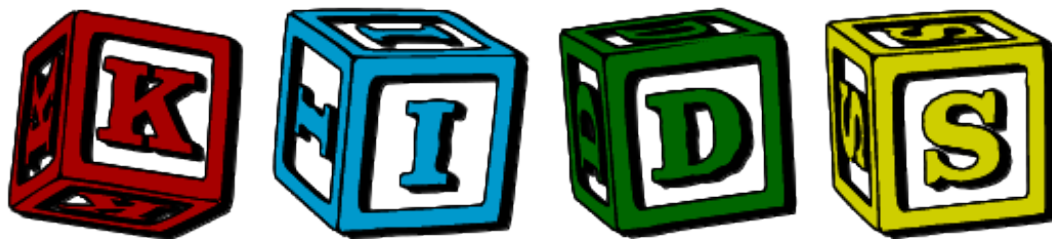
Options: Replace garlic with shallots or the lemon with another citrus fruit such as lime or mandarin orange. For a mint version use cilantro, lime and shallots. Create a cuisine adventure by mixing in a few fresh herbs with the parsley, such as a bit of tarragon. Because gremolata is so simple, it is easy to let your imagination add flourishes.

About the ingredients: Since the garlic is raw, you want it as fresh as possible. Old garlic will be yellow and sticky, often with a green shoot growing out, and it will smell strongly and slightly acrid. If you only have older garlic, remove the green stem and blanch it for a few minutes in boiling water to remove some of the acrid taste.

Use organic lemons if possible because you will only be using the zest where non-organic lemon peel can harbor insecticides.

Use flat leaf parsley if available, and wash it well. Most importantly, be sure it is completely dry before you start chopping it. If possible wash and dry it a few hours before you use it and then wrap it in a towel to absorb the last few drops of water. If the stems are thin and subtle, don't worry too much about including them. If the stems are thick and tough, you'll want to pluck the leaves. Chop the parsley as finely as possible. Parsley adds a clean, fresh, herbal note.

CRAPPIE



Twenty Sixth Annual Camp 7 Kids Fishing Day Attracts Over 350 Youth

Saturday, June 10th was Michigan's Free Fishing Weekend along with National Fishing Week and the NPAA and Learn 2 Fish With Us were present helping to educate youth and families on the skills needed to fish. Kids Fishing Day was held at Camp 7 Lake located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, in the Hiawatha National Forest. Michigan's Free Fishing Weekend allows families to fish without a fishing license.

NPAA Members, Greg Karch and Karen Karch were present at the fishing event where they worked with the youth on casting, fish identification, tying knots and more!!! Greg instructed the youth on casting by following a couple steps. Start by pointing the fishing rod tip towards where you like to cast. Next, look behind you to make sure no one is behind you. Utilizing the clock, go over your shoulder with the rod tip until you reach ten o'clock, then proceed forward until you reach two o'clock and release the button. Greg and Karen were busy all day teaching the youth and families how to cast. The families really enjoyed catching the Backyard Bass until it was their time to move to the next station, as youth did not want to leave!!!!

Kids Fishing Day had many educational booths which contained the following; Aquatic Invasive Species specimens, a trout pond where the youth could catch a trout and keep it, casting contest, fly casting instruction and more !!! The event provided lunch to the families so they could enjoy a



great day in the National Forest!!!

Greg was amazed at how the different groups came together to make this event happen. The US Forestry hosted the event along with Bay De Noc Great Lakes Sport Fishing Association, Wildlife Unlimited, NPAA and Learn 2 Fish With Us!! The NPAA and Learn 2 Fish With us would like to thank the groups for providing volunteers in their educational booth. Each youth went home with a prize which included fishing combo's, tackle box's, head lamps, lantern and NPAA Future Pro shirt.

Learn 2 Fish With Us mission statement is 'Grow the sport of fishing by educating and inspiring beginner and experienced anglers'. To learn more about the following organizations check out their websites Learn 2 Fish With Us at www.learn2fishwithus.com, NPAA at www.npaa.net and Future Angler Foundation at www.futureangler.org
(Reprint from the National Professional Anglers Association (NPAA) NewsBLAST)

AMERICAN CRAPPIE TRAIL

SARDIS LAKE

JUNE 23rd - 24th

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Terry Stewart/Cole Stewart | 21.46 |
| 2. Brad Calhoun/Clay Blaire | 20 |
| 3. Michael Walters/Rick Soloman | 19.47 |
| 4. Phil Brown/Patrick Stone | 19.31 |
| 5. Tony Edgar/Travis Lepley | 18.39 |

BIG FISH

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Warren Cotton/Thomas Hill | 2.6 |
|------------------------------|-----|

FLORIDA CRAPPIE CLUB

FLORAL CITY RAMP

JUNE 24th

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------|
| 1. Scott Lawson/Wendel Connor | 7.12 |
| 2. Darryl Cole/Terri Cole | 7.5 |
| 3. Jim Witt | 6.12 |

BIG FISH

- | | |
|-------------------|-----|
| 1. David Troester | 1.7 |
|-------------------|-----|

INDIANA SLAB MASTERS

LAKE MONROE

JUNE 24th

- | | |
|------------------------------|------|
| 1. Glen Gill/Scott Gill | 10.8 |
| 2. Kirt Wyman/Bob Raymer | 8.87 |
| 3. Eric Milsaps/Rick Hancock | 7.73 |
| 4. Jim Raymer/Rob Raymer | 7.57 |
| 5. Don Licht/Hershel Licht | 7.23 |

BIG FISH

- | | |
|-------------------------|------|
| 1. Glen Gill/Scott Gill | 1.93 |
|-------------------------|------|



SHOALS CRAPPIE

LITTLEBEAR

JUNE 24th

1. Team Lambert	5.39
2. Keith/Darrell	5.26
3. Jeff Harris	4.63

BIG FISH

1. Team Lambert	1.37
-----------------	------

KANSAS CRAPPIE CLUB

EL DORADO LAKE

JULY 1st

1. Osborn/Thomas	9.3
2. Tim/Wally/Ben	8.93
3. Brandon/Ryne	8.84
4. Lynn/Moreadorf	8.41
5. Garrison	8.26

BIG FISH

1. Bragg/Wedel	1.81
----------------	------

CENTRAL AK CRAPPIE CLUB

BLUE MOUNTAIN

JULY 8th

1. Karl Stephens/John Walker	7.06
2. Scott Black/John Williams	6.94
3. Scottie Shawn/Jeff Been	6.87
4. Jeff Handly/Chris Williams	6.7
5. Chris Chandler/Kyle Dines	6.63

BIG FISH

1. Scott Black/John Williams	1.58
------------------------------	------



CRAPPIE CALENDAR

AUGUST	5th	KANSAS CRAPPIE CLUB	TURTLE CREEK	CLUB
AUGUST	5th	CRAPPIE MASTERS	MARK TWAIN LAKE	2nd Leg Mo State Chmp.
AUGUST	11th - 12th	AMERICAN CRAPPIE TRAIL	TRUMAN LAKE	CLUB
AUGUST	12th	WAPPAPELLO	WAPPAPELLO LAKE	CLUB
AUGUST	12th	WILLIAMS CREEK	LAKE FORK	2 PERSON DRAW-5 FISH
AUGUST	12th - 13th	EASTERN MISSOURI	TRUMAN LAKE	CLUB
AUGUST	13th	EAST TEXAS CRAPPIE SERIES	LAKE PALESTINE	CLUB
AUGUST	19th	CAT TEXAS	LAKE O THE PINES	QUALIFIER
AUGUST	19th	CRAPPIE MASTERS	TRUMAN LAKE	Final leg Mo St. Champ.
AUGUST	19th	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	TIMS FORD	CLUB
AUGUST	19th	NORTEAEST OHIO CRAPPIE	CLUB PICK LAKE	OPEN
SEPTEMBER	2nd	KANSAS CRAPPIE CLUB	HILLSDALE	CLUB
SEPTEMBER	9th	CENTRAL ARKANSAS	TBD	CHAMPOINSHIP
SEPTEMBER	9th	FLORIDA CRAPPIE CLUB	LAKE MONROE	CLUB
SEPTEMBER	9th	HOI CRAPPIE CLUB	EVERGREEN	POINTS/CLUB
SEPTEMBER	9th	INDIANA SLAB MASTERS	BROOKVILLE LAKE	CLUB
SEPTEMBER	9th	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	WOODS RESERVOIR	CLUB
SEPTEMBER	9th	OKLAHOMA CRAPPIE TRAIL	OOLOGAH	CLASSIC
SEPTEMBER	9th	WAPPAPELLO	WAPPAPELLO LAKE	CLUB
SEPTEMBER	10th	CHATTANOOGA	CHESTER FROST PARK	CLUB
SEPTEMBER	10th	EAST TEXAS CRAPPIE SERIES	LAKE PALESTINE	CLUB
SEPTEMBER	16th	CAT TEXAS	LAKE PALESTINE	ON THE WATER SEMINAR
SEPTEMBER	16th	CENTRAL ARKANSAS	TBD	CHAMPOINSHIP
SEPTEMBER	20th - 23rd	CRAPPIE MASTERS	WASH.LEE,PARADISE,FERG,CHICOT	CHAMPOINSHIP
SEPTEMBER	23rd	HOI CRAPPIE CLUB	ILLINOIS RIVER	POINTS/CLUB
SEPTEMBER	23rd	INDIANA SLAB MASTERS	MISSISSINAWA/SALAMONIE	CLUB
SEPTEMBER	23rd	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	NORMANDY	CLUB
SEPTEMBER	23rd	SHOALS CRAPPIE	PICKWICK	CLUB
SEPTEMBER	24th	GRAND LAKES CRAPPIE SERIES	GRAND LAKES	CLUB
SEPTEMBER	30th	COOSA RIVER	NEELY-HENRY	CLUB
SEPTEMBER	30th	FLORIDA CRAPPIE CLUB	WEST LAKE TAHO	CLUB
SEPTEMBER	30th	NORTEAEST OHIO CRAPPIE	LAKE MILTON	OPEN 3 MAN
SEPTEMBER	30th	OKLAHOMA CRAPPIE TRAIL	OOLOGAH	CLASSIC



Club	Contact	FACEBOOK
AMERICAN CRAPPIE TRAIL	Matt Morgan	Facebook
BAYOU STATE CRAPPIE ASSOCIATION	Brandon Jennings	Facebook
CAPITOL CRAPPIE CLUB	Austin Kneeskern	Facebook
CAROLINA CRAPPIE ASSOCIATION	RICK Eudy	Facebook
CENTRAL ALABAMA CRAPPIE CLUB	Dan Dannanmueller/Jonathan Phillips	Facebook
CENTRAL ARKANSAS CRAPPIE CLUB	Jason Westerberg	Facebook
CENTRAL ILLINOIS CRAPPIE CLUB	Joe Schrader/Greg Foley	Facebook
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CRAPPIE MASTERS	Mike Valentine	Facebook
CRAPPIE USA	Darrell Van Vactor	Facebook
CRAPPIENUTZ MS	Robert Smith/Joe Faircloth	Facebook
EAST TENNESSEE CRAPPIE CLUB		Facebook
EAST TEXAS CRAPPIE SERIES	Creekside sports-903-849-2634	Facebook
EASTERN MISSOURI CRAPPIE CLUB	Steve Perotto	Facebook
FLORIDA CRAPPIE CLUB	Darrell Cole	Facebook
GRAND LAKE CRAPPIE SERIES OH	Jeff	Facebook
HOI CRAPPIE CLUB	Chad Anderson	Facebook
INDIANNA SLAB MASTERS	Joe Long/Damon Phillips	Facebook
KANSAS CITY CRAPPIE CLUB	Hoe Bragg/Frank Haidusek	Facebook
MAGNOLIA CRAPPIE CLUB	Michael Nowell/Roger Womack	Facebook
MIDDLE TENNESSEE CRAPPIE CLUB	Toby Ivey	Email
NORTHEAST GEORGIA CRAPPIE	Kevin Strong	Facebook
NORTHEAST OHIO CRAPPIE CLUB	Dan Elko/Robert Elko	Website
OKLAHOMA CRAPPIE TRAIL	Darrell and Brian	Facebook
PEACH STATE CRAPPIE CLUB	Robert Smith	Facebook
RIPPN' LIPZ	Jimmy/Jessica Walters	Facebook
SHOALS AREA CRAPPIE ASSOCIATION	Keith Dodd	Facebook
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS CRAPPIE	Chad Hamson	Facebook
SLABMASTERS TOURNAMENT TRAIL	Jamie Moore/Dan Sidle	Facebook
SPRINGFIELD CRAPPIE CLUB IL	Jerry Jallas/Rick Montooth	Facebook
WAPPAPELLO CRAPPIE CLUB MO		Facebook
WILLIAMS CREEK CRAPPIE CLUB	Danny Kemp/Bob Parkinson	Website



Photo Contest



1st Place

Brandon Clevenger
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Lawrence KS



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Fishing Funny's

by Jonny Hawkins



"He's got a point, Marie. Doesn't staying on a lake for 9 hours to catch the big one prove he can commit?"

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Jonny Hawkins
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*The CrappieNow Staff says
Goodbye until next issue*



**Good fishing spots can
become overcrowded, as
seen here on Truman Lake
during a Crappie Masters
tournament.**

Tim Huffman photo