

CRAPPIE NOW! DIGITAL MAGAZINE

fishhound
and the fishers

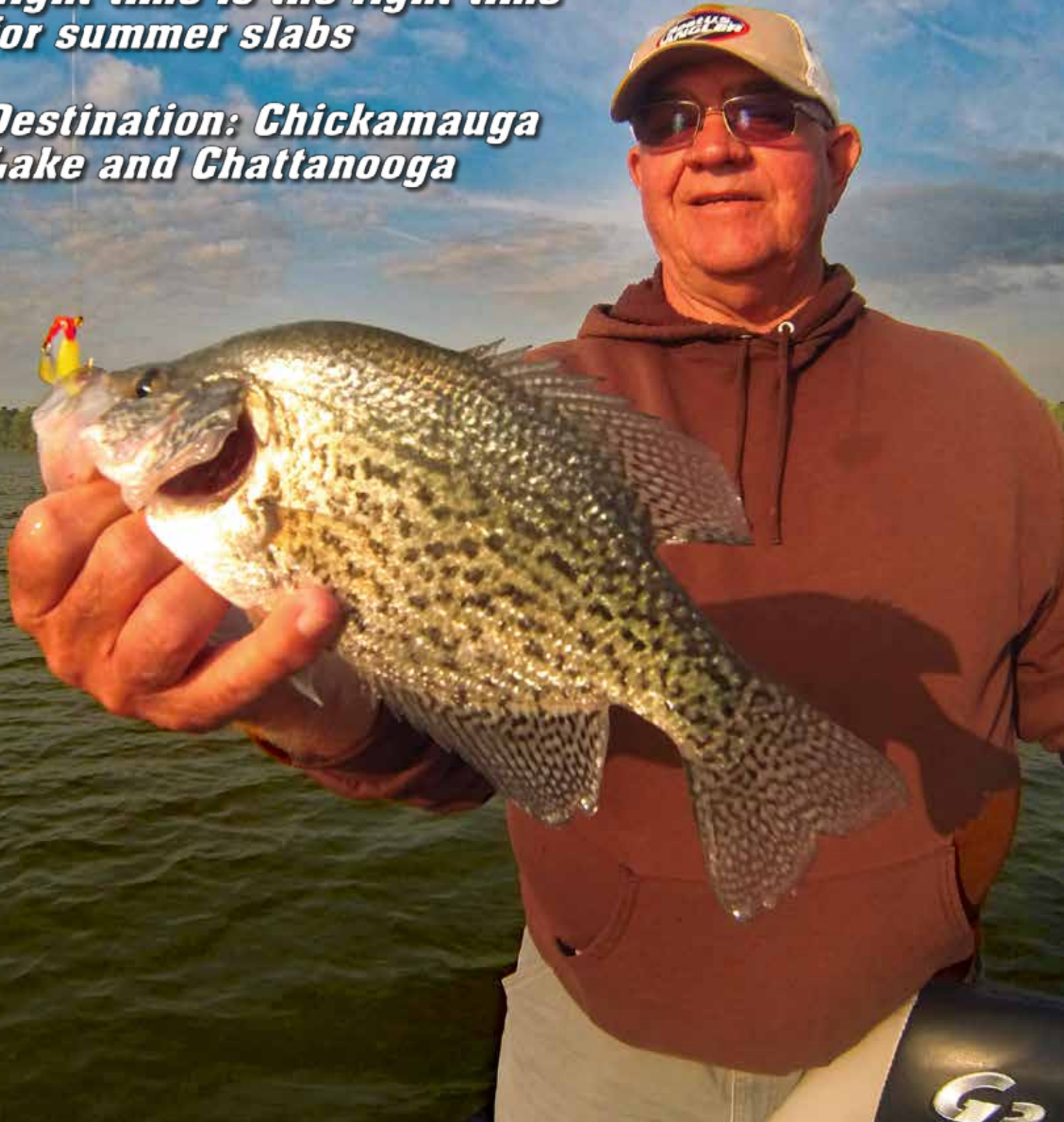
Crappie.com

August 2019 - Issue #102



***Night time is the right time
for summer slabs***

***Destination: Chickamauga
Lake and Chattanooga***



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When the hot days of summer arrive, don't sweat the daytime fishing. Three top-notch guides share their nighttime crappie secrets.



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Pulling crankbaits is a good way to beat the hot temperatures and timid crappie of summer.



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Forget springtime ... in the Alabama River late summer and fall often produce the best crappie fishing conditions.



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Most bass fishermen have probably heard of Chickamauga Lake in Southeast Tennessee, one of the hottest bass lakes in the country right now. You may not realize it, but it is also a crappie hotspot.



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Opening Cast

I'm not going to lie. As the new Editor of CrappieNOW, I'm nervous.

I've been a game warden kicked in the head by a poacher and left lying in the road in the dark of night. I've been on 100-mile car chases to arrest fleeing felons. I've been a news photographer chasing cops down the street on "shots fired" calls and I've followed firefighters into burning buildings.

But now, I'm nervous.

I am following in the footsteps of a man who made this magazine what it is. Tim Huffman has been here since the beginning. Many of you have grown up with Tim as CrappieNOW became the powerhouse publication it is today. Thankfully he is still here writing and lending me a guiding hand. But now, the buck stops with me.

I've been "The Boss" before. That is not what makes me nervous. What makes me nervous is that I may not know my subject as well as you.

I am also a fishing guide but when it comes to crappie I am a "one hit wonder." If you want to longline troll for crappie during the pre-spawn, I am your go-to guy. But take me crappie fishing the other ten months of the year and I am almost a babe in the wilderness. I can shoot a dock or finesse fish a 1/32 ounce jig 20 feet deep and not embarrass myself too badly. But I am far, far from the best.

Fortunately, after 35 years as a freelance outdoor journalist I know lots of people who are the best - or I know how to find them. With the patient guidance of the folks who created this great magazine and the incredibly talented group of writers who have contributed faithfully for many years, we are going to go places.

We thank you for coming along on for the ride.

Richard Simms, Editor

"The outdoors is not a place, it's a state of mind."



Cover Photo:

Dickey Porter shows off a Chickamauga Lake slab. Inside CrappieNOW Editor Richard Simms shares the reasons why the Southeast Tennessee lake might be a great destination for you AND your family. (Photo: Richard Simms)

Crappie: We'll Leave the Light on for You

by Brent Frazee

Lights create a food chain that attract crappies



In the summer when the days grow 15 hours long and at high noon you can fry an egg on the boat ramp parking lot, avid crappie angler and guide Joe Bragg gives up fishing – EXCEPT beneath the light of the moon. When days become too hot to handle Bragg goes nocturnal.

About the time other fishermen are loading their boat at the ramp, Bragg is motoring out to some of his favorite crappie spots under a setting sun. And one thing is certain - he does not have to fight the crowds.

Fishing Guide Joe Bragg of Topeka, Kansas is a night owl when it comes to crappie fishing in the heat of summer.
(Photo: Brent Frazee)

Does he get lonely? Nope, he is often too busy reeling in crappies to even notice.

“I don’t know why, but there aren’t a lot of other fishermen who go out at night in Kansas,” said Bragg, who runs the Thump Thirty Guide Service out of Topeka. “I’m not

going to sit out in the sun all day and fry. I'm going to be out here at night when it cools off, catching fish."

On this evening, as stars were just beginning to twinkle overhead, Bragg guided his boat to one of his favorite brush piles on Perry Lake in northeast Kansas. He dropped anchor within a short cast of the cover.

He lit several propane lanterns and hung them from rod holders. He also tossed out a floating halogen light hooked to a battery. Then the wait began.

"It takes a while for the food chain to set up," he said as he sipped a cup of coffee. "You have to be patient. It can take a half-hour, sometimes more."

On this night, however, it was less. First, the plankton began clouding the illuminated water under the lights, then the small minnows began circling and soon larger shad moved in. Bragg knew what he calls "The Late Show" was about to begin.

"Once you attract a good school of shad, it usually doesn't take long for the crappies to move in," he said.

Game Time

Bragg set the perfect crappie trap once they arrived. He had a semi-circle of slip bobbers arranged around the cone of the light. Minnows hung from hooks on several poles resting in rod holders.

On his sonar unit at the bow of the boat, Bragg watched as the display screen became more cluttered with marks by the minute.

The bobbers were illuminated by small light sticks Bragg taped to each one. Bouncing in a light chop on the lake's surface, one of them slowly cut through the water and then plunged. Bragg set the hook and felt the tug of a big crappie.

"This one has shoulders," he said.

Seconds later, the 12-inch fish was in the boat and Bragg was on the board.

The Late Show got better as the night

In the dark of the night, Fishing Guide Joe Bragg often is catching crappies on Kansas reservoirs. (Photo: Brent Frazee)



progressed. By midnight, there was an active school of fish under the lights and the fishing was frenetic. He and I had numerous doubles, some of them the big slabs crappie fishermen dream of. Others were barely bigger than the minnows we used for bait.

We pulled anchor and hit two more brush piles over the next few hours. By 3 a.m. when we finally headed to the ramp, we had caught and released dozens of crappies in a variety of sizes.

“Wild night,” Bragg said. “But nights like this aren’t that unusual. When the weather is stable and these fish get in a pattern, you can come back night after night and catch them.”

Night Life at Lake of the Ozarks

Terry Blankenship doesn’t have to put out the night lights when he fishes at Lake of the Ozarks, a popular destination in central Missouri.

The big shoreline condominium docks are often well-lit for security and navigation purposes. The light they shine on the water can create ideal night fishing for crappies.

“A lot of the condo lights are yellow to keep them from drawing as many bugs,” said Blankenship, a guide and a pro staff member for Bobby Garland Lures. “If you can find a white light, a lot of times that’s where you’ll find the most fish because they will attract more bugs. Once the bugs fall into the water, the baitfish will move in to feed on them.”

Blankenship has been fishing the night lights since the 1970’s. His dad discovered the technique almost by accident. After a long day of fishing during the day, he stayed after the sun went down and heard fish swirling under the lights. He dropped a jig into the activity and started catching crappies.

He went home with a nice stringer of fish that night and it wasn’t long before Terry followed his example.

Terry and his brother-in-law, a realtor with good connections to lakeshore condo owners, started fishing from docks underneath the lights and the duo found great success.

“I like fishing the condo docks because they’re usually in deeper water,” he said. “There might be up to 60 feet of water, but



Terry Blankenship catches crappies at night along condominium docks at Lake of the Ozarks. (Submitted Photo)

the crappies will only be 10 feet down.”

Blankenship uses his sponsors’ products to catch fish. He fishes with Mo’ Glow jigs by Bobby Garland Lures, which actually glow in the dark. He also uses [Lew’s rods](#) and reels and 6-pound Vicious monofilament line.

Green Lights at Stockton Lake

For Bob Bennett, a guide at Stockton Lake in southwest Missouri, a green light means “go” for night fishing.

Bennett sets up over brush piles and drops a green submersible LED light four to five feet down to attract the fish. He says having a light beneath the surface instead of floating on top has several advantages.

He says anglers don’t have to fight the flying insects that are attracted to the floating lights. Secondly, he says the green lights seem to be more efficient at attracting the zooplankton that starts building the food

chain beneath the boat.

"A lot of times, it takes under 30 minutes for the bait and fish to show up," Bennett said. "It works best over brush piles you know are there and along bridge pillars. We've had nights we'll catch up to 75 crappies fishing under the lights. Not all of them are keepers. There are a lot of small ones. But we'll catch our limit (15 crappies per person, 10 inches or longer at Stockton) a lot of nights."

He says the lights work best on the dark

"...the display screen became more cluttered with marks..."

phase of the moon, when the illumination stands out. Even then patience is often the key. The schools of crappies will move in and out, producing periods of frenzied fishing, followed by lulls.

"I used to catch fish at 2 or 3 in the morning," Bennett said. "I don't stay out that long now, but I know it can still be done."

Night Safety

For those fishing from a boat in the dark all three men stress safety.

Proper, legal lighting on your boat is essential. Bragg stresses wearing a PFD (personal floatation device) when under power and knowing where the navigation channels are. He routinely clears the old tracks on his GPS unit so he can easily follow the dotted line back to the boat ramp the same way he went out. He also makes a point to let someone on shore know when and where he is going to be.

"There aren't a lot of people who fish at night under lights," Bennett said. "But as long as you're safe, it can be a great way to catch crappies in the summer."

And you won't get sunburns or heat strokes while you're doing it.

Brent Frazee was the outdoors editor for the Kansas City Star for 36 years before retiring. He won more than 50 state, regional and national awards for his writing and photography. He lives on a beautiful lake in Parkville, Mo., with his wife Jana and his chocolate Lab, Zoey.

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 - Brent Frazee



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Growing the sport of fishing by educating and inspiring beginner and experienced anglers.



Crappie Basics #193

Keith Sutton for Bass Pro Shops

When night-fishing for crappie some anglers use only fuel-powered lanterns like those made by Coleman. Others use only floating or submersible fishing lights. Smart anglers use both. Hanging lanterns attract insects which attract baitfish which attract crappie. This isn't an instantaneous process, of course, so give it time to work.

Use at least two lanterns positioned on the same side of the boat so insects don't fog around your head. Meanwhile, sealed-beam crappie lights have a styrofoam flotation ring. They're an added attraction for fish but not bugs because the headlight-like beam points down in the water. Submersible fishing lights are made to sink beneath the water's surface and light up the depths below. These, too, are good additions to your night-fishing setup.



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Pullin' Crankbaits for Hot Summer Action

by Tim Huffman

Sometimes a slow presentation isn't what it takes to trigger big summer crappie to bite.



It's hot. Air and water temperatures are oppressive. Sticking a bait in front of a crappie's nose often gets no response. However, when fish are reluctant to hit a slow presentation, they'll often react to a fast-moving crankbait.

The Basics

Trolling targets suspended fish in open water. At 2.0 miles per hour, a fisherman covers a lot of water in a short period of time. The right speed, depth and area leads to great results.

Pulling is the traditional method of trolling baits behind the boat. Using

Pulling multiple poles isn't easy when (a) baits hang up, (b) several fish are on, (c) when the wind is blowing hard or (d) all of the above. A good system of holders and poles is important when pulling crankbaits or jigs.

multiple poles increases success but also adds difficulty. Inexperienced fishermen should pull with two or four poles while an experienced troller can pull six or eight poles, if legal.

Strong pressure is applied to equipment when a bait hangs or when a big catfish



gets on while the boat is going fast. Pole holders must be strong and so should poles. Line is usually 10-pound test monofilament because its diameter is small enough to allow baits to get deep and it stretches to absorb a hard, sudden pull.

A six-pole system can include a 16-, 12- and 8-foot pole off the side or back of the boat. The different lengths allow more line spacing between baits for fewer hang-ups and to cover a wider trolling path.

A crankbait must have proper action

Good crankbaits for pulling include a variety of makes and models. This attractive, proven crappie catcher is made by Strike King.

and stay stable at speeds up to 2.5 mph. Bandit 200 and 300 series, Strike King Slab Hammer, Berkley Flicker Shad, Arkie and Jenko Crappie Crankbait are a few good options. However, it's very important to keep baits the same on all poles so depths will be consistent and to



reduce hang-ups.

A pulling rig can be a pontoon, a small aluminum boat or any size in between. It must be safe for the waters and weather being fished. A smooth outboard motor can be used but the current trend is an autopilot-type trolling motor. Today's trolling motor can be set on a path and it will automatically make corrections for wind, waves and current. Adjustments can be made remotely from anywhere in the boat. These trolling motors allow poles to be attended without the worry of boat control.

Bait type and line diameters stay constant so line length is the determining factor for depth.

A word of caution about summer fishing. The sun and heat can be dangerous. It's best to go fishing at daylight and get off the water early. Early fishing also helps avoid recreational boaters and jet skis. Drink plenty of fluids and protect skin from the sun.

Pulling & Catching

Experience and/or electronics are used to find a trolling area. The boat is placed on a trolling path and baits are placed in the water. Line counter reels are not required but are a big advantage for setting and repeating depths. For example, lines could be set at 60- 80- and 110-feet behind the boat. Three fish are caught on the poles set at 80 feet. It's critical to be able to reproduce that depth. Poles could be readjusted for 70, 80 and 90 feet to put all baits near the strike zone. Note that bait depth depends upon several factors including bait type, line diameter and line length. Bait type and line diameters stay constant so line length is the determining factor for depth.

Russ Bailey, host of Brushpile Fishing, says, "A lot of things are amazing about pulling crankbaits. One, the hotter it gets the better the fishing. Two, it's a fast-moving technique to cover a lot of water in a short amount of time. Three, it's strictly a reaction bite instead of a hunger bite.

"Areas that produce include points, old road beds, flats and channels," says Bailey. "The fish will suspend up in the water column and nail a crankbait when it comes to them. They hear it coming, see it and instinct often causes them to attack."

Bailey uses line counter reels and says a very general rule of thumb is divide the line distance by 10, then add one, and you have the depth of the bait.

"I like 1.5 to 2.1 mph. Turns cause a change in speed of the baits, sometimes triggering bites, giving the fisherman an indication that pull speed should be increased or decreased.

"Colors are another thing unique because the crappie can be very picky about a crankbait color even though they have a short period of time to see it."

Bailey says, "My best trip was one morning at Grenada in the hot summer, when we had our limit within a couple of hours. It was great. I love the mood of the technique and still have trouble believing how productive it is."

 - Tim Huffman

Tim Huffman has specialized in crappie fishing writing and photography since 1988. He is currently the Editor/Senior Writer for Crappie Masters Magazine, freelance contributor to four magazines, book author and Senior Writer for CrappieNOW Digital Magazine.

One of the very first thing parents or mentors should do with youngsters is to teach them how to hold a fish. It doesn't matter if they're grabbing a big bass, a catfish or a tiny bluegill, all fish have fins that will stick you if not handled properly.

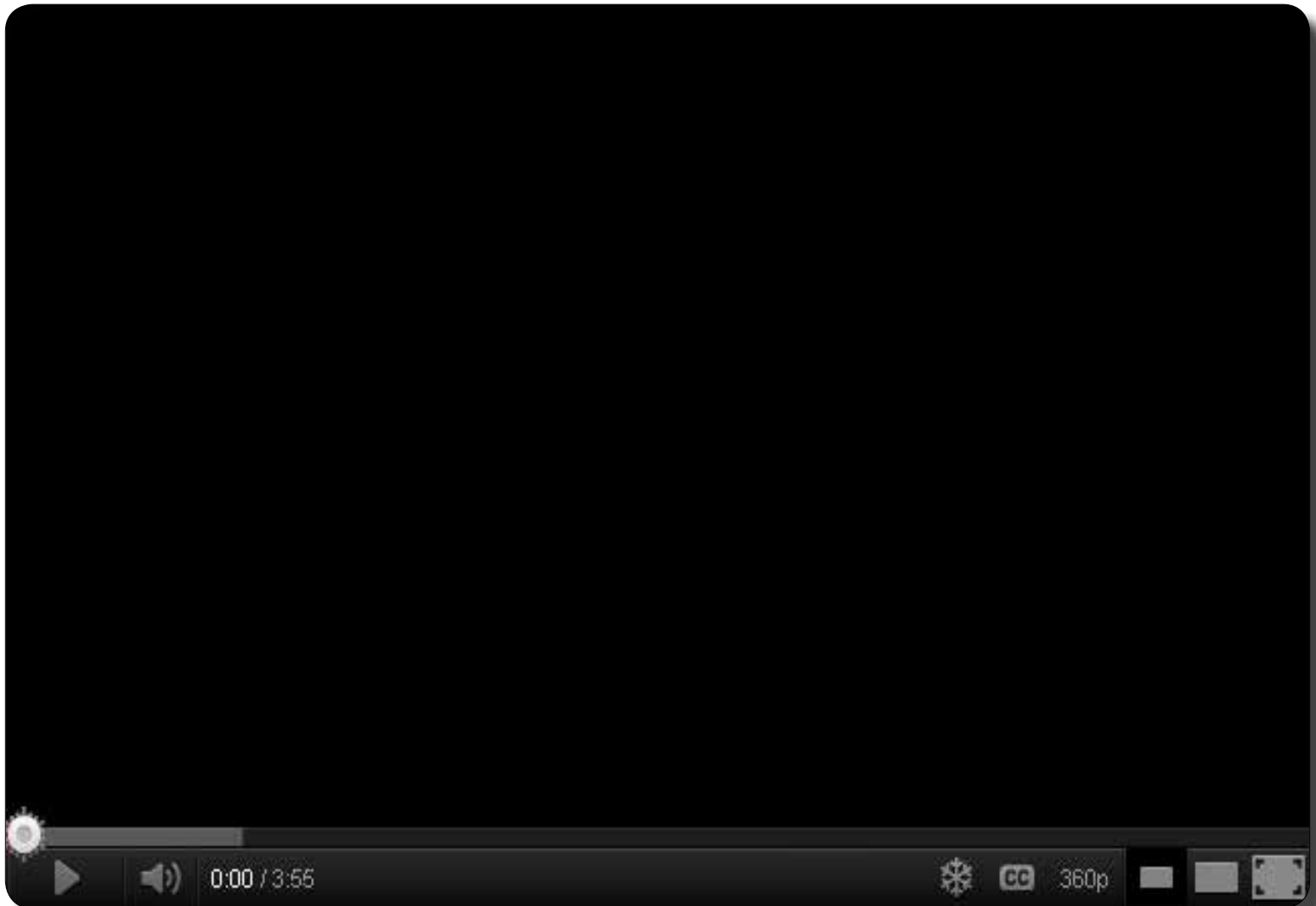
Just one bad stick from the dorsal spine of a little bluegill might scare a youngster away from handling fish for years... and maybe scare them away from fishing entirely.

When you are introducing youngsters to fishing, always spend some quality time devoted entirely to teaching them how to grab or hold a fish. It is a simple,

yet important lesson, that will stay with them for a lifetime.

Many times the smaller species are the worst. A favorite technique is to create a partial circle using your thumb and fingers. Then raise the fish upwards, head first, into the circle. This forces the sharp dorsal spines downward, folding them flat where you can grip the fish firmly for unhooking.

In this video from long ago, Jacob VanZant demonstrates the technique on a small yellow bass. Jacob has grown into an avid and accomplished crappie angler now.



300 Miles of Crappie

by John Felsher

Diverse River System Offers Many Places to Catch Crappie

With hundreds of miles of rivers and thousands of acres of lakes, Alabama crappie fishermen never have to travel far to find excellent fishing. One of those places is the Alabama River in the southern portion of the state.

The Tallapoosa and Coosa rivers merge near Wetumpka, Ala. to create the Alabama River. From Wetumpka, the river flows another 318 miles. The entire system consistently produces crappie in the 1.5- to 2-pound range with some topping three pounds.

In most of the Southeast, crappie anglers figure springtime - March and April - produce the absolute best fishing conditions. However Gerald Overstreet, Jr., a professional crappie angler and guide, says the Alabama River typically reaches its lowest and clearest water levels in late summer or fall so anglers enjoy the best fishing from late August through November. He says as the water drops, crappie concentrate in deeper channels. Look for places where crappie can escape current, but still hover near it, like around sandbars, logs, fallen trees or other current breaks.

"The entire Alabama River system is full of shad and other bait, so crappie don't need to go far to eat," said Overstreet, from Gainestown, Ala. "In the fall, crappie feed heavily upon shad. When nights start getting cooler, shad go really shallow and crappie follow them."

Dams divide the river system into three main pools. The Robert F. Henry Lock and Dam in Autauga County creates the R. E. "Bob" Woodruff Lake, better known as Jones

Bluff Reservoir. Retaining much of its riverine characteristics, the northernmost pool runs 80 miles through Autauga, Lowndes, Montgomery and Elmore counties to the Millers Ferry Lock and Dam in Wilcox County. Several creeks branch off from the channel.

"The Alabama system is a river, but it's also a series of lakes with a lot of tributaries and backwaters," Overstreet explained. "In late summer and early fall, crappie start their feed-up and move into the creeks. Swift Creek by Prattville is a good area. It's a big creek with a lot of deep water. Some places drop more than 25 feet deep with flats off the channel that run six to 12 feet deep."

Near Camden, Millers Ferry Lock and Dam forms the William "Bill" Dannelly Reservoir, but most people call it Millers Ferry Lake. The impoundment flows 105 miles through Dallas and Wilcox counties. Some of the best fishing occurs along the rock walls and ledges near Mill Creek, Alligator Slough and in the Cotton House area.

"... "In late summer and early fall, crappie start their feed-up and move into the creeks." ~ Gerald Overstreet, Jr., Crappie Guide

"Mill Creek is always a good place to fish," Overstreet recommended. "It has some shallow, mid-depth and deeper water with



standing timber in it. Foster's Creek is another good creek. The water usually stays pretty clear in it."

The Claiborne Lock and Dam near Monroeville forms Claiborne Lake. From the Claiborne Dam, the Alabama River flows southward another 72 miles until it merges with the Tombigbee River to form the Mobile River near Mount Vernon in Mobile County. Claiborne Lake still contains some standing timber, but numerous fallen trees create additional crappie cover. In most places, tops rotted off, but the trunks remain. Some stand 20 to 30 feet high and sit in water 30 feet deep.

"Big trees that fell into the river make great places to find crappie," Overstreet advised. "The Cane Creek area has a lot of treetops, laydowns and other woody cover that offer good fishing. It has a distinct channel running through it. Fish hold on the ledge. We use side-imaging to find fallen trees and mark them so we can come back to fish them later. When we see a bunch of trees in a row or a big tree

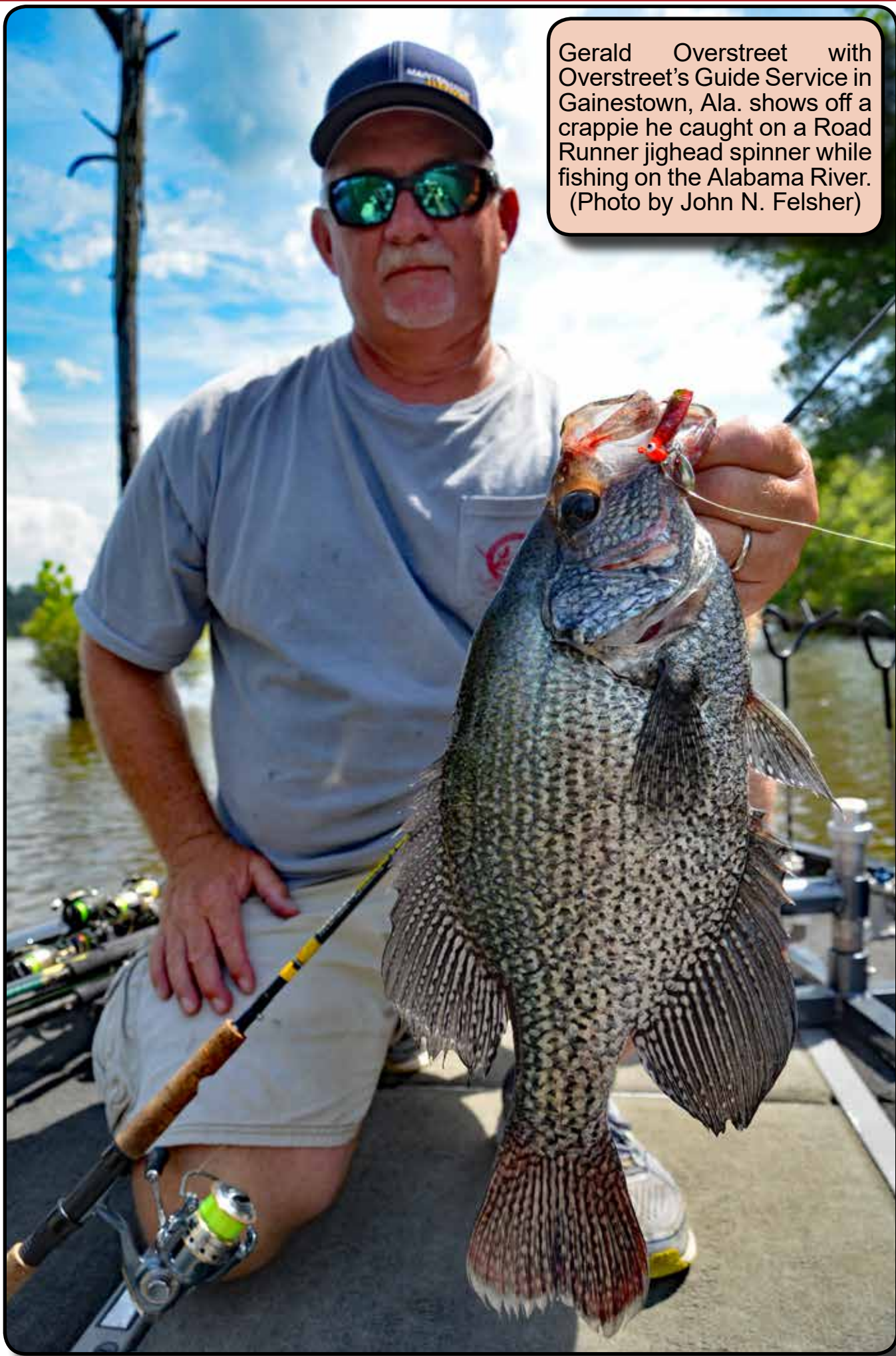
Gerald Overstreet with Overstreet's Guide Service lands a crappie while fishing a spider rig on the Alabama River near Montgomery, Ala. (Photo by John N. Felsher)

without a lot of small bushy limbs that could snag baits, we spider rig the area."

In entangling cover or when fishing vertical objects like stumps or standing trees, try single-pole jigging instead of spider rigging. With just one pole, drop a jighead sweetened with a Bobby Garland plastic trailer tight against the object. Let it slowly descend through branches in a fallen tree. Crappie frequently suspend next to vertical cover. Work baits completely around an object at various depths to determine patterns.

"Around really dense cover we use a single B'n'M pole because we can get a bait all the way down through the thick stuff better," Overstreet described. "We can also pull





Gerald Overstreet with Overstreet's Guide Service in Gainestown, Ala. shows off a crappie he caught on a Road Runner jighead spinner while fishing on the Alabama River. (Photo by John N. Felsher)



hooked fish out easier with a single pole. The jighead weight depends upon the current. I like a 1/16- or 1/8-ounce head. In really strong current, I go up to a 1/4-ounce jighead to hold the bait in the strike zone.”

Below Mount Vernon, the Tensaw River and other streams break off from the Mobile River. This labyrinth of interlaced channels, lakes, backwaters, swamps and marshes form the 250,000-acre Mobile-Tensaw Delta in Mobile and Baldwin counties. Although more known for numbers than size, the delta can produce some fish exceeding two pounds.

In the fall, many delta anglers cast jigs, like a Bobby Garland Swimming Minnow or Slab Hunt'r Minnow, toward the shorelines. People can also throw Road Runners, small spinnerbaits or crankbaits around downed trees or stumps. Work baits past the drop-off edges into deeper water.

With so much water, anglers could spend a lifetime fishing the vast Alabama-Mobile river system, never fishing the same place twice

Gerald Overstreet shows off a black crappie (left) and a white crappie (right) he caught while fishing on the Alabama River near Prattville, Ala. (Photo by John N. Felsher)

and still not hit every crappie honey hole. Pick an area and learn it.

 - John Felsher

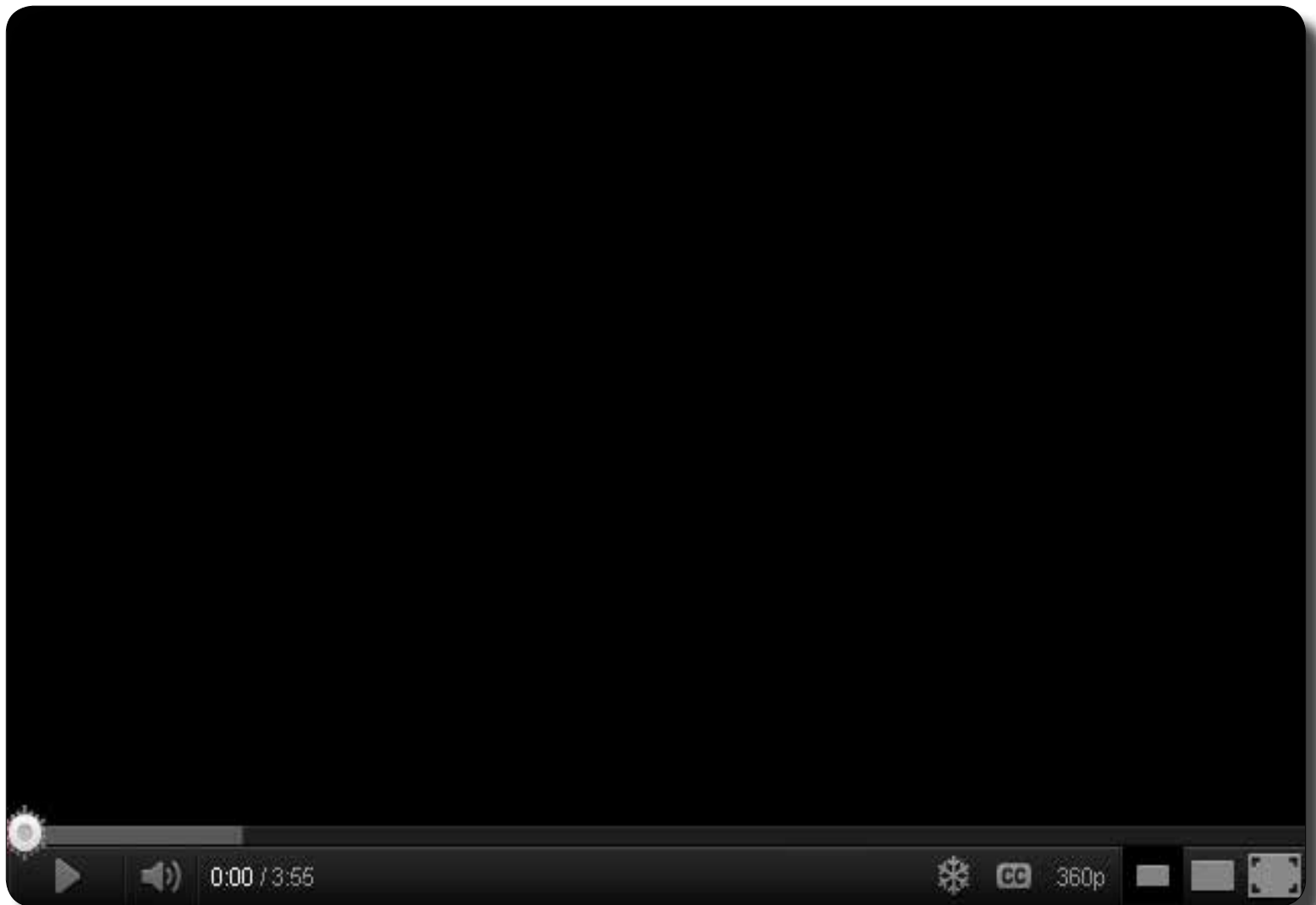
John N. Felsher is a freelance writer living in the Mobile, Ala. area. He has contributed more than 2,700 articles to more than 150 magazines since 1977. He began to write professionally in high school, serving as outdoors editor for four daily newspapers and a chain of weekly newspapers. He served 12 years in the U.S. Air Force and hosted live weekly radio shows in two states.

Any angler who frequents major lakes in the summertime is probably familiar with willow fly hatches, or some call them May flies. The nymphs live underwater for a year, sometimes years, before they emerge from the water en masse. The adult flies typically live less than 24 hours, emerging to reproduce, lay eggs back on the water's surface and begin the cycle all over again.

Tasty willow flies emerging and flying back to the water by the thousands,

maybe millions, attract game fish of virtually every species, including crappie.

CrappieNOW Editor Richard Simms and angler Dickey Porter happened to be on Chickamauga Lake in Southeast Tennessee this summer when a willow fly hatch emerged. Porter explains how crappie anglers can take advantage of what is often a rare opportunity.



Fishing Funny's



"Just remember: Big Lake is the small one, Long Lake is the short one and Round Lake isn't!"



Destination: Chattanooga and Chickamauga Lake

by Richard Simms

Chickamauga Lake crappie fishing may be one of Tennessee's best kept secrets

"Pardon me boy, is that the Chattanooga Choo Choo...."

Chances are you know those lyrics from the age-old song made popular by the Glenn Miller Orchestra in 1942. It was the first-ever song to achieve "Gold Record" status. These days, however,

The view from the historic Point Park on Lookout Mountain makes it clear why Chattanooga is known as "The Scenic City." (Photo: Chattanooga Convention & Visitors Bureau)



Chattanooga is known for much more than its choo choos.

The city in Southeast Tennessee sits at the front door of Chickamauga Lake, a 36,000-acre TVA impoundment on the Tennessee River. Chickamauga Lake has become famous for its extraordinary bass fishing in recent years. In the year 2000 the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency began stocking Florida-strain largemouth fingerlings in Chickamauga.

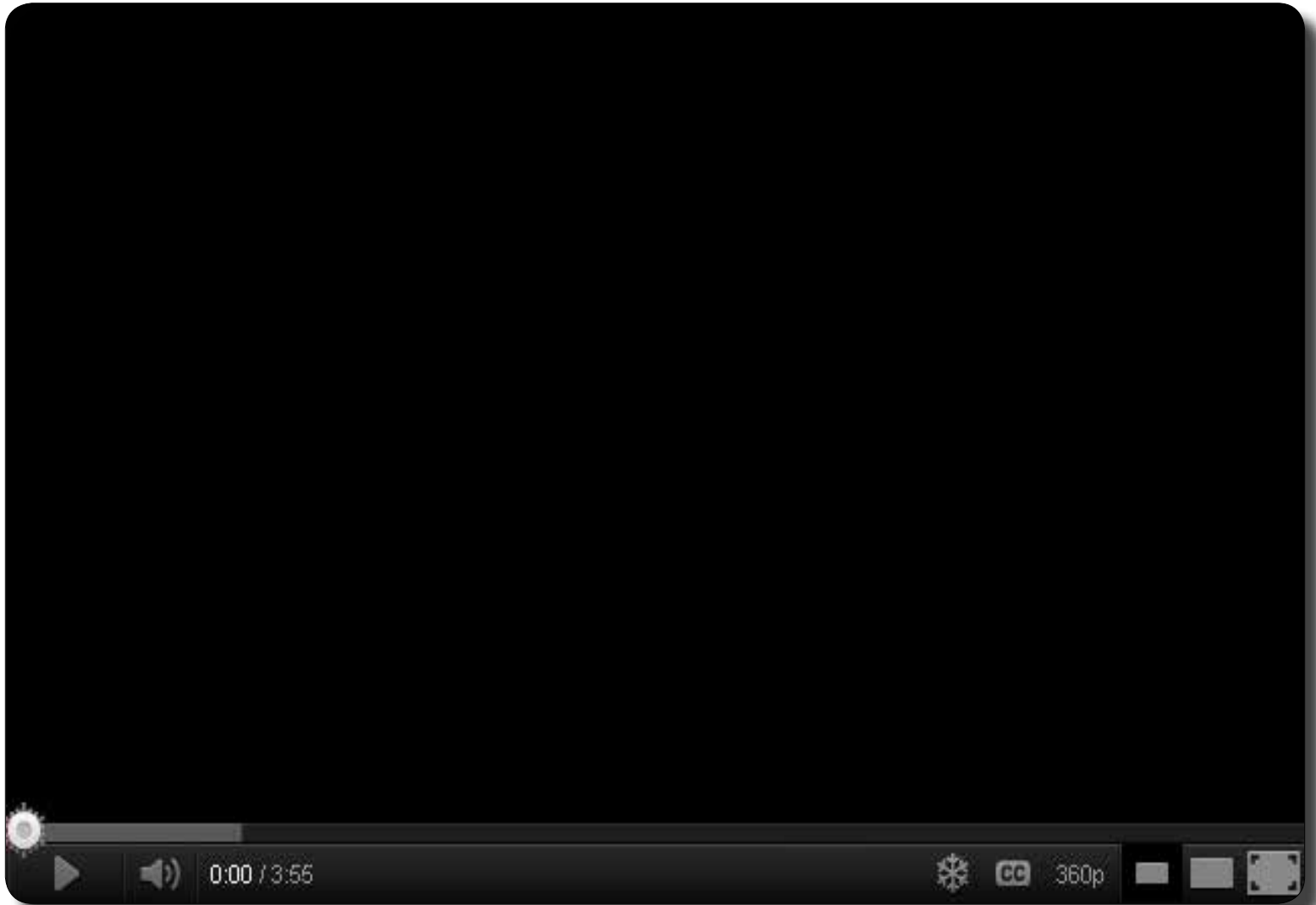
TWRA Regional Biologist Mike Jolley said, "We've put them in the lake every year since, except one. We've put more than 2 million [Florida bass] fingerlings in Chickamauga."

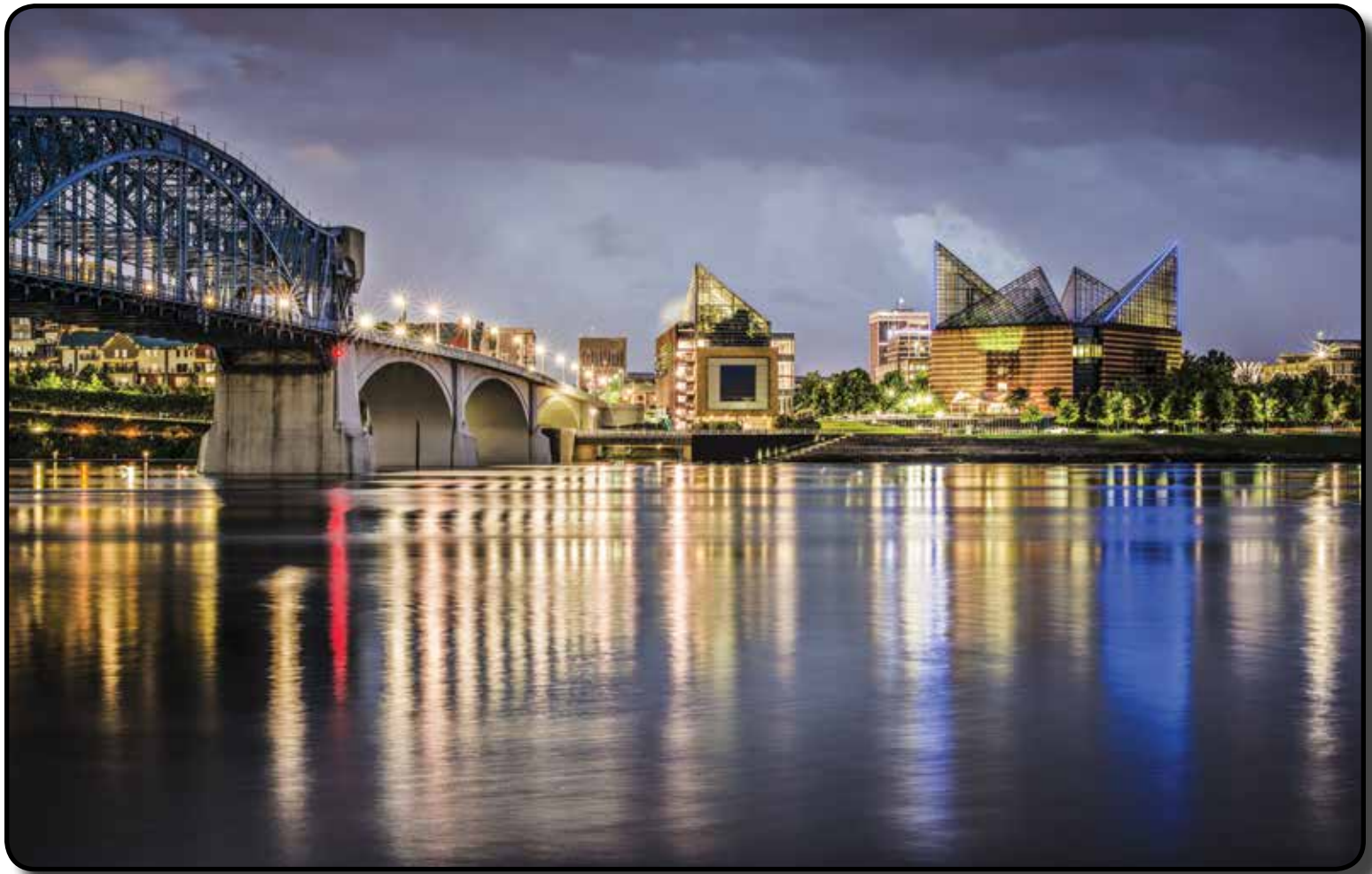
Jolley has frequently been quoted saying the combination of Florida bass, habitat (aquatic vegetation) and good numbers of bait fish combined to create "the perfect storm." In recent years,

Chickamauga Lake in and near Chattanooga, Tennessee offers some of the best fishing in the country these days, but it has also become an awesome, fun tourist destination for families.

bass over ten pounds have been caught routinely and there have been record-breaking weights brought to the scales in area tournaments. In February 2015 Gabe Keen capped it all off by catching a new state record largemouth (15.2 lbs.) breaking the previous record that stood for more than 60 years.

What anglers don't hear about however is that same "perfect storm"





has benefitted the crappie fishing as well. Crappie anglers ply the lake 365 days a year with excellent success. Recent TWRA creel surveys show an annual average of 2.36 crappie caught per hour of fishing. Ask any fisheries biologist – statistically that is incredible.

TWRA creel clerks once surveyed the anglers they encountered on Chickamauga Lake. During the 12-month period, they asked 935 fishermen, “How would you rate the quality of fishing in this reservoir overall?”

Of the 935 anglers asked, 870 of them said they were either “Satisfied” (48.1%) or “Extremely Satisfied” (44.9%). That means 93 percent chose the two most positive answers. ZERO percent said they were “Dissatisfied.” That is a pretty remarkable survey result and one that Jolley is very proud of.

“Between a new state record largemouth, and the great bass fishing

The Tennessee River rolls directly through the center of downtown Chattanooga beside the extremely popular Tennessee Aquarium. (Photo: Chattanooga Convention & Visitors Bureau)

we’ve experienced along with our Florida Bass stocking program, and some great crappie fishing, Chickamauga Lake anglers are obviously very pleased,” he said.

You won’t find many people spider-rigging for crappie on Chickamauga Lake. During the late-winter and early spring you’ll find lots of people long-line trolling creeks and embayments during the prespawn.

Pick your area to troll -- Wolftever Creek, Soddy Creek, Possum Creek, or Grasshopper Creek -- Dallas Bay, Ware Branch, and Harrison Bay -- in February,



March and April the creeks that feed these areas serve as crappie highways. They lead fish from the main lake back into sloughs and shallows where they are headed to spawn. But the fish are only on those specific shallow spawning spots a limited amount of time. The rest of the time they're hanging out on the highway.

And they are not necessarily holed up against specific structure. They roam around at random, often following schools of baitfish suspended well off the bottom. You put enough lures in the water for long enough and you'll find them.

In March and early April my boat routinely averages nearly five keeper crappie per hour. Factor in the small fish under the 10-inch size limit and it is probably closer to 15 fish per hour.

When you move past the peak trolling season in late April, you will find mostly

These days Chickamauga Lake is best known as an outstanding bass fishing lake. But Chattanooga crappie angler Dickey PortershowsclearproofwhyChickamauga's crappie fishing is somewhat of a well-kept secret. (Photo: Richard Simms)

single pole anglers fishing bluffs, boat docks and offshore structure. Pick your favorite plastic... Bobby Garland, Charlie Brewer' Sliders or a wealth of others on 1/32 ounce jigs up to an 1/8 ounce, depending on the depth and your personal preference.

There is a 15 crappie per person per day creel limit and a minimum 10-inch size limit. Black crappie make up the majority of the population but at times, good numbers of white crappie are caught. Three-pound crappie are rare



but two-pounders are not too unusual.

Lake access is easy, and in most cases, free. There are numerous public TVA, TWRA or Hamilton County boat ramps.

But don't just come for the fishing.

In the last 20 years Chattanooga has turned into a tourist mecca. Spurred initially by the creation of the popular Tennessee Aquarium, now Chattanooga's Downtown Riverfront is a focal point for vacationers.

Who hasn't heard of Rock City and Ruby Falls? Those old-time favorites are still there. But add to it the Aquarium, IMAX Theatre, the Southern Belle Riverboat, a wealth of Civil War history and national parks along with restaurants, adventure sports, music

and nightlife.

It is very easy to turn a fishing trip to Chickamauga Lake into a multi-day vacation the entire family will enjoy.

Need to know more? Visit www.ChattanoogaFun.com or [TripAdvisor](http://TripAdvisor.com).

 - Richard Simms

Editor's Note: CrappieNOW will begin featuring a monthly "Destination" story featuring great crappie fishing locales, but also areas that might be good for the whole family to enjoy whether they are crappie fishing or not. If you have suggestions for places you would like to see featured, we would love to hear from you at info@crappienow.com.

Go Fishing With The B'n'M Pros.



Sam Heaton's 7-Foot Super-Sensitive

The SHSS72n is a spinning rod with the same sensitivity and feel of the jig pole series. Improvements include Dyna-Flo guides for smooth line retrieval, and a cork knob handle for outstanding balance and feel. Historically one of the most popular rods on the water, the SHSS72n is still supple, strong and sensitive.



Whitey Outlaw DOUBLE DUTY

Get back to "Fishing The Basics" with Whitey Outlaw. This Medium-Action rod is for big heavy hybrid bream, monster shellcrackers & any size crappie. It's perfectly balanced with a comfortable foam handle for all-day fishing - no reel needed! It features a tough & lightweight Graphite Blank, and one tip eyelet, with one reinforced Tie Down Guide.



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Crappie Basics #194

Keith Sutton for Bass Pro Shops

The biggest problem when night-fishing is seeing your equipment, but a can of fluorescent paint can be used to mark equipment for easy visibility. You'll be surprised how much easier it is to see a bright yellow bobber than a white one.

A splotch of glowing paint in a tackle box compartment eliminates the painful experience of sorting hooks by Braille. A stripe of fluorescent color on black needle-nose pliers thwarts their usual invisibility. Painting a black rod tip helps in detecting light biters.

The benefits are compounded when you use black lights. Look for special paints at craft stores that glow under ultraviolet.

MR.
CRAPPIE®
Wally Marshall

Strike King™
G

LEW'S®

June ACT Tournament on Kentucky Lake

by Richard Simms

The Ronnie Capps/Steve Coleman team continues to dominate on the ACT Trail.



PARIS, Tenn. - The powerhouse team of Ronnie Capps and Steve Coleman claimed yet another win in the June American Crappie Trail Tournament on Kentucky Lake. A total of 97 boats prowled Kentucky Lake searching for the fourteen biggest crappie over the two-day tournament held June 21-22.

Hot, stormy conditions greeted the anglers, many of whom found the fishing tough.

In the end Capps and Coleman weighed

(l-r) Ronnie Capps and Steve Coleman celebrate another win in the June American Crappie Trail Tournament on Kentucky Lake. (Photo courtesy ACT)

in two limits totaling 17.57 pounds. They squeaked out 1st place over the father/son team of Brett and Robert Luther who weighed in 17.20.

Due to hot temperatures and difficulties with livewell maintenance, Capps and



Coleman actually cut their second day of fishing very short.

“We had a great start this morning and got our seven fish,” said Capps. “It was a lot deeper fish, 50 miles away from where we fished yesterday. We had a little trouble keeping them as healthy as I’d like. I knew we were probably going to lose some fish if we didn’t make it here. So we were here at 12:30 and sacrificed the whole rest of the day, crossing our fingers that we had enough.”

They did have enough. Capps and Coleman won cash and prizes totaling \$26,000.

The second place Luther team used a totally different strategy.

“We did something totally different today,” said Brett Luther. “We usually spider rig but we just single poled it today. We used our electronics and hit more of the isolated structure that hadn’t been pressured.”

Teams fishing in the June ACT Tournament on Kentucky Lake had to spend some time outrunning storms. (Photo courtesy ACT)

The pair took home an \$8,000 check for second place.

Tony and Mike Sheppard came in third place with 16.91, winning \$5,250. Shane Walker and Daryl Williams (13th place) claimed Big Fish of the tournament at 1.87 pounds, winning \$2,365.

The total payout in the June ACT was \$67,085. Not surprisingly Capps and Coleman are in first place in the overall 2019 standings.

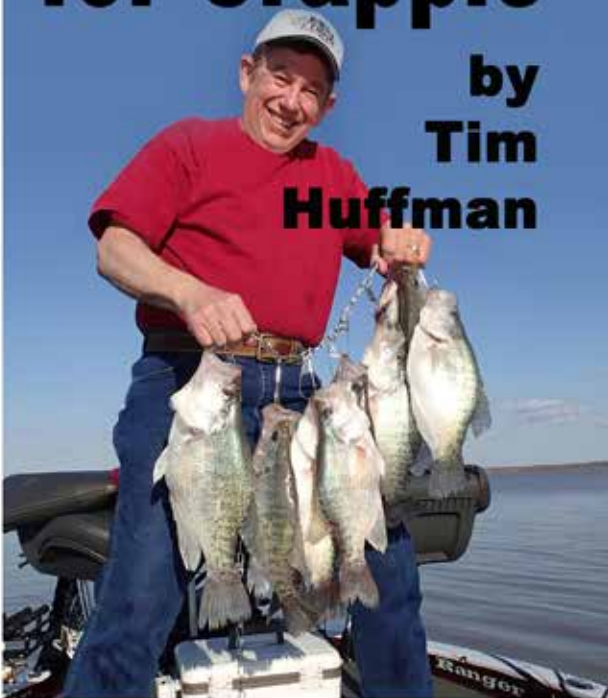
To watch the entire Kentucky Lake final day weigh-in, go here.

Next up is Truman Reservoir in Missouri July 26-27, followed by Ouachita River in Louisiana September 13-14.



Limiting Out for Crappie

by
**Tim
Huffman**



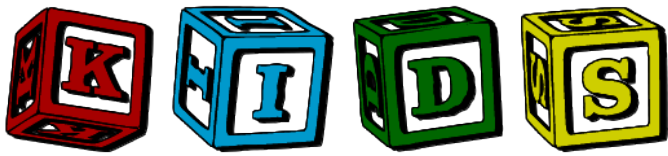
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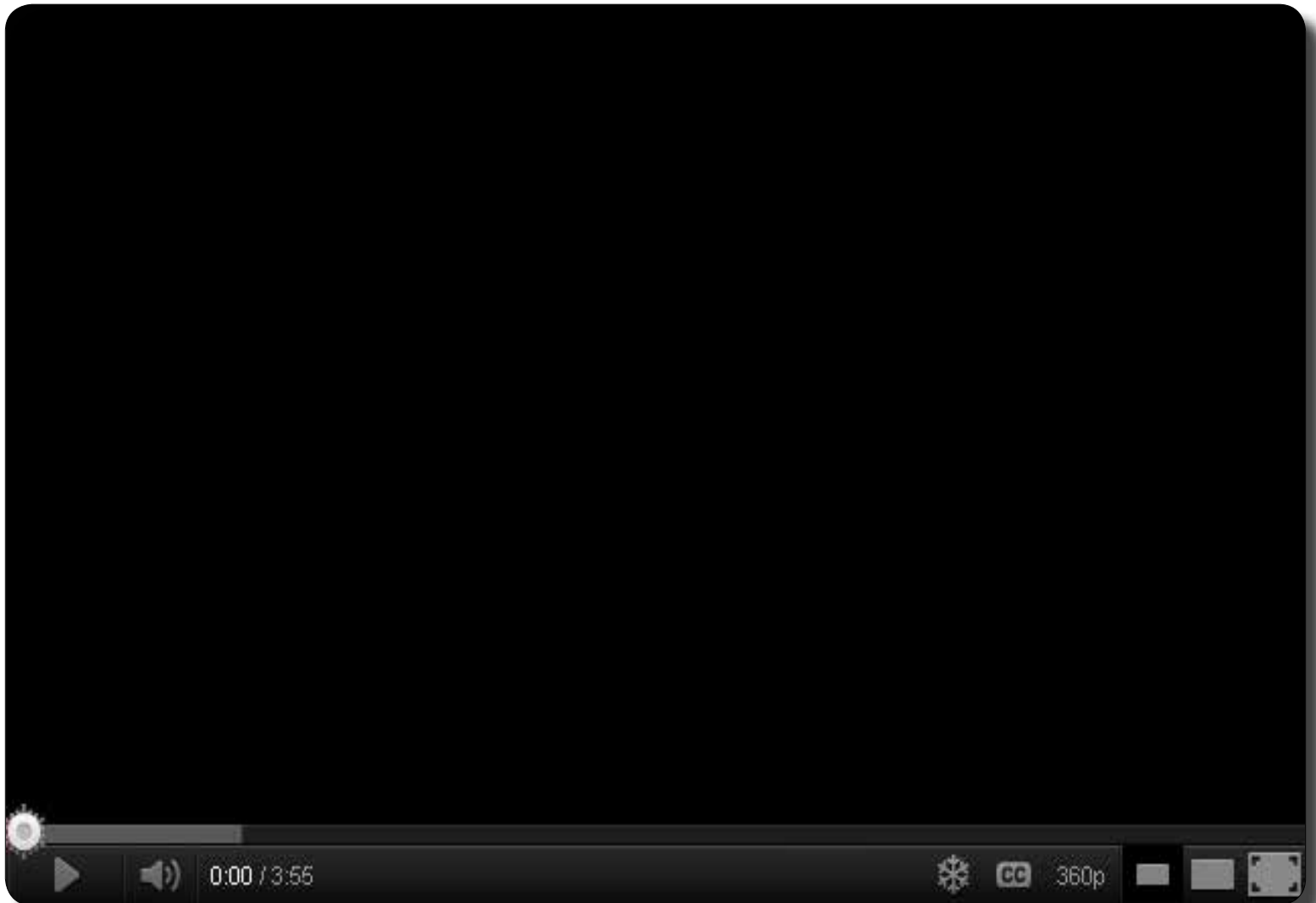


Go at their own pace

It happens in lots of families, and to lots of kids. Parents or some kids can't wait to go fishing. They're always chomping at the bit. But other youngsters might not be very excited about the idea, especially if they are involved with other extracurricular activities.

It is important to not pressure or push. Just look for opportunities to expose them to the atmosphere in their own way

and most importantly, at their own pace. This little episode from TakeMeFishing.org is sure to warm your heart, and hopefully inspire you to head for the water. To learn more about how to start your own fishing or boating adventure visit TakeMeFishing.org.



CRAPPIE GEAR

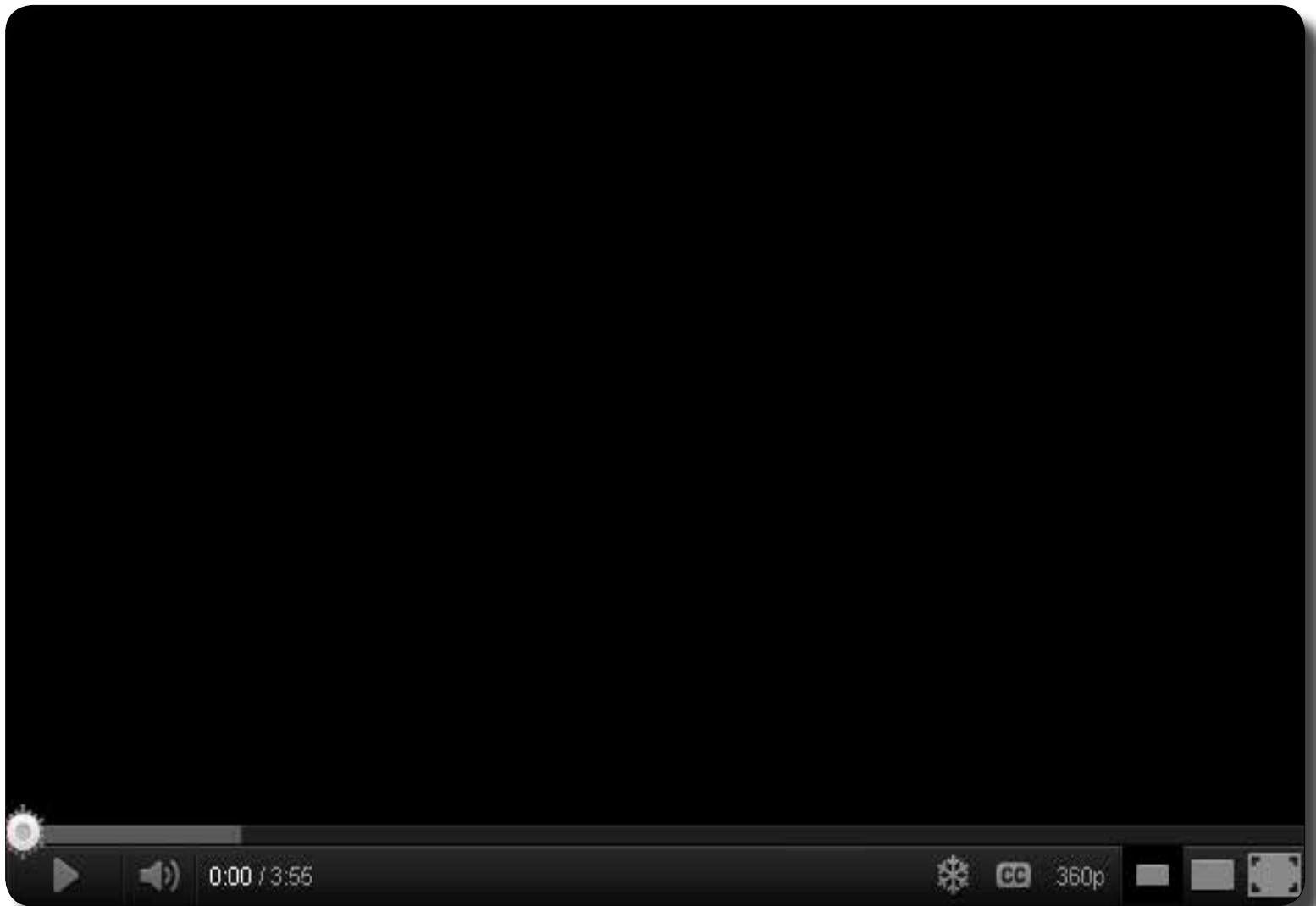
New Colors from Bobby Garland

Are you a “color guy” - one of those anglers who is convinced that every day crappie prefer a new or different color combination? If so, you will want to check out Bobby Garland 2-inch Baby Shads.

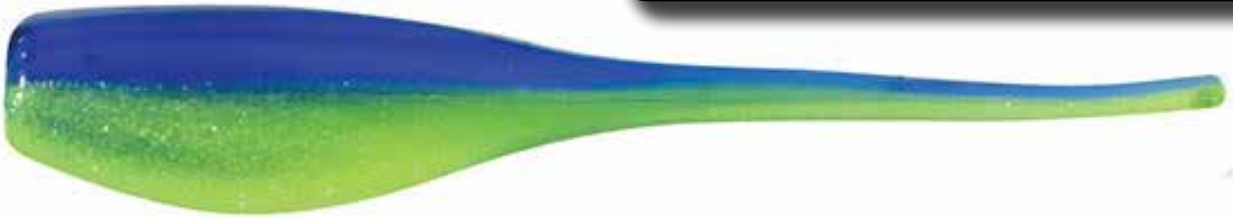
They’ve got four new colors added to the dozens that have been out for years. Indigo Sky, The Shadow, Green

Lantern and Monkey Milk Glo are the latest colors to add to your arsenal.

Here are some great tips from Kevin Rogers with Bobby Garland to help you when choosing your Bobby Garland Crappie Bait, based on the water clarity that you’re fishing. Regardless if you’re fishing clear or muddy water.



Indigo Sky



Green Lantern



Monkey Milk Glo



The Shadow





Cola-n-Beer Fried Crappie

Before we get to this month's recipes, let's look at the basic kitchen tools you'll need to get fish fillets from the fish, to the table and ready to eat. Basic is the operative word here. In my research for this column I found that there are about as many tools as there are fishing lures.

If you don't believe it, try searching online for fillet knives, for instance. A fillet knife gets your job started. Their blades usually range from seven to nine inches long in a ridged or folding design; both of which require your muscle power to do the carving. The easiest filleters are electric plug-in units and their cordless cousin. Being proficient with the knives involve a learning process. The rigid or folding type is more forgiving to the beginner while the latter is faster, but it takes practice to become efficient. I suggest to learn with a cordless knife if you plan to filet a large number of fish. I still use a vintage wooden handled Rapala from the early 1970s because I'm more of a CPR angler (catch-photo-release).

Once you have your fillets free of the carcass, you need a bowl to hold them until ready for seasoning and frying. There are no special bowls needed unless you plan to marinate; then you need a glass bowl. Another bowl, nothing special, is needed for mixing dry ingredients. Measuring spoons and cups are required for meeting-out dry and wet ingredients.

A stirrer, be it a spoon, a whisk or a clean stick is needed to swirl ingredients together. You can find a variety of these online.

Now for a brainier consideration,

your cooking tool. An iron skillet or a Dutch oven make excellent stovetop frying implements. Each can hold enough oil to cover your fillets. My favorite is a deep-fat fryer designed for outdoor cooking. I have a Cajun Fryer fueled by propane. Its design prevents burning the oil and saving it in a reservoir for many future uses. You can get Cajun Fryers to hold one basket or several. Fry your fish and then fry potatoes or onion rings quickly with very little oil being absorbed. Check out <https://cajunfryer.com> and other deep-fat fryers online to find the one that suits your need.

A deep fat thermometer is almost a necessity to cook your fillets properly. A Non-contact Digital Laser Infrared Thermometer Temperature Gun lets you check your oil's temp and stay clean. The deep fat thermometer stays in the oil while you cook. It has an instant read dial to clip to your skillet. You can purchase either type for less than \$20.

To harvest your fried fillets from a skillet or Dutch oven, you'll need a skimmer, slotted spoon, tongs or other tool to place on paper towels to drain on a platter or serving dish. Once you get the fish to the table it's time to eat Cola-n-beer Fried Crappie.

- 1-pound fish fillets
- 3 cups flour
- 1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1-1/2 teaspoons oregano
- 1-1/2 tablespoons garlic powder
- 1-1/2 tablespoons onion powder
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
- 1-1/2 teaspoons cayenne pepper

to taste

- 1-1/2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- 1-1/2 teaspoons kosher salt
- Orange or lemon-lime cola
- 1 cup beer

Add the dry ingredients into a bowl and mix and then blend in enough cola to make your batter. Dip fillets in beer and then coat fish completely with batter. Heat 2-3 inches of canola oil to 375 degrees in a large heavy skillet or Dutch oven. For Extras: Follow up by frying sliced and seasoned potatoes and/or green tomatoes. Serve with lemon wedges, tartar sauce, hot sauce. Save some cold beer for dessert.

TIP: Switch to metal measuring cups and spoons. Plastic warps over time, making them less precise.

POTATO AND CRAPPIE CHOWDER

- 4 cups raw crappie fillets, chunked
- 4 cups shredded potatoes
- 1/2 cup celery, diced
- 1/2 cup onion, diced
- 2 cans cream of mushroom soup
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 to 2 cans evaporated milk
- 1/4 cup melted butter

Cook crappie and potatoes in a

pan covered with enough water so it will come to a boil. Sauté the celery and onion until tender and drain. Combine all ingredient into one large Dutch oven or pot. Now add cream of mushroom soup, evaporated milk and butter. Simmer together until hot. Do not boil or milk will curdle. You can top this soup with crumbled bacon and shredded cheese. This crappie chowder soup tastes splendid with a green salad and fresh bread.



FLORIDA CRAPPIE CLUB

LAKE HENDERSON

JUNE 22nd

1. Chuck/Randy	7.15
2. Darryl Cole/Terri Cole	7.09
3. Moose/Hillbilly	6.07
4. Allen/Mr Bates	4.01
5. Scott/Randy	3.11

BIG FISH

1. Chuck/Randy	1.05
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NORTHEAST OHIO CRAPPIE CLUB

MISQUITO LAKE

JUNE 29th - 30th

1. Wes/Kolby	13.47
2. Bob/Bill	12.94
3. Brandon/Tyler	12.48
4. Jeffrey/Dominique	12.25
5. Dan/Bob	11.89

BIG FISH

1. Dan/Bob	1.74
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CENTRAL ARKANSAS CRAPPIE ASSOC.

LAKE NIMROD

JULY 13th

1. Jason Westerberg/Jim Westerberg	8.42
2. Chase Melder/Matt Foster	8.27
3. Andy Benet/Brandon Smith	7.69
4. Michael Kimble/Jeremy Davis	7.49
5. Jeff Handly/Chris Williams	7.26

BIG FISH

1. Michael Kimble/Jeremy Davis	1.74
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WAPPAPELLO CRAOOIE CLUB

WAPPAPELLO LAKE

JULY 13th

1. Porter/Pollard	6.59
2. Botsch/Botsch	6.58
3. Roper/Roper	6.18
4. Sanders/Sanders	5.91
5. Green/Green	5.88

BIG FISH

1. Porter/Pollard	1.24
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BEAVER LAKE CRAPPIE ASSOCIATION

BEAVER LAKE CRAPPIE ASSOCIATION

JULY 20th

1. Seth/Randy	6.54
2. John/Brian	6.42
3. Ronnie/Brad	6.32
4. Cody	5.47
5. Clay	5.14

BIG FISH

1. Ronnie/Brad	1.16
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EASTERN MISSOURI CRAPPIE CLUB

MARK TWAIN

JULY13th

1. Dillan Stocking/Emily Stocking	6.92
2. Jake Besselman/Miranda Besselman	6.5
3. Kenny Massman/Betty Massman	6.48
4. Aaron Frederick/Mackenzie Frederick	6.44
5. Travis Lepley/Randa Turpin	6.42



CRAPPIE CLUBS

Club	Contact	Link
AMERICAN CRAPPIE TRAIL	Matt Morgan	FACEBOOK
BAYOU STATE CRAPPIE ASSOCIATION	Brandon Jennings	FACEBOOK
BEAVER LAKE CRAPPIE ASSOC.	Peyton Usery	FACEBOOK
BOYDS CRAPPIE TRAIL	Blake Phillips	FACEBOOK
CAPITOL CRAPPIE CLUB	Austin Kneeskern	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
EASTERN MISSOURI CRAPPIE CLUB	Steve Perotto	FACEBOOK
FISH THE CAROLINAS	Nate Quan	FACEBOOK
FLORIDA CRAPPIE CLUB	Darrell Cole	FACEBOOK
GRAND LAKE CRAPPIE SERIES OH	Jeff	WEBSITE
HOI CRAPPIE CLUB	Chad Anderson	FACEBOOK
INDIANNA SLAB MASTERS	Joe Long/Damon Phillips	FACEBOOK
KANSAS CRAPPIE CLUB	Hoe Bragg/Frank Haidusek	FACEBOOK
LAKE OKEECHOBEE CRAPPIE SERIES	Derrick Moore 954-650-0456	FACEBOOK
MAGNOLIA CRAPPIE CLUB	Michael Nowell/Roger Womack	FACEBOOK
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NORTHEAST GEORGIA CRAPPIE	Kevin Strong	FACEBOOK
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S.N.A. CRAPPIE MASTERS	Tony Long/Todd Ulery	FACEBOOK
SPRINGFIELD CRAPPIE CLUB IL	Jerry Jallas/Rick Montooth	FACEBOOK
TRUMAN LAKE TOURNAMENT SERIES	Roger Mann 913-963-6350/ANGLERS PORT MARINE	FACEBOOK
TWIN LAKES CRAPPIE CLUB		FACEBOOK
ULTIMATE PANFISH LEAGUE/UPL		FACEBOOK
WAPPAPELLO CRAPPIE CLUB MO		FACEBOOK
YADKIN RIVER CRAPPIE CLUB	SHANE WALSER	FACEBOOK

AUG 3rd	CRAPPIE MASTERS	MARK TWAIN LAKE	2nd LEG OF MO STATE CHAMP
AUG 4th	KANSAS CRAPPIE CLUB	MELVERN LAKE	CLUB
AUG 10th	EASTERN MISSOURI CRAPPIE CLUB	TRUMAN LAKE	CLUB
AUG 17th	BEAVER LAKE CRAPPIE ASSOCIATION	BEAVER LAKE	CLUB
AUG 17th	CRAPPIE ANGLERS OF TEXAS	BRIDGEPORT	QUALIFIER
AUG 17th	CRAPPIE MASTERS	TRUMAN LAKE	FINAL LEG OF MO STATE CHAMP
AUG 18th	WAPPALLO	WAPPAPELLO LAKE	CLUB
AUG 23rd	CAPITOL CRAPPIE CLUB	LAKE OF THE OZARKS	CLUB
AUG 23 - 24	MAGNOLIA CRAPPIE CLUB	BARNETT Reservoir	RIGLAND TOURISM
AUG 24th	EASTERN MISSOURI CRAPPIE CLUB	BARNETT LAKE	1 POLE/ARTIFICIAL 3 FISH
AUG 24th	INDIANA SLAB MASTER	RACCOON LAKE	CLUB
AUG 24th	TRUMAN LAKE TOURNAMENT SERIES	TRUMAN LAKE	SERIES
AUG 25th	EASTERN MISSOURI CRAPPIE CLUB	MARK TWAIN LAKE	FISH OFF



The Great Outdoors

by Larry Whiteley

A SUMMER EVENING

The summer evening is dark, the air is warm, and I drift into a secluded cove. Swallows dip and swoop, crickets chirp madly, bats dive at insects in the night sky, frogs croak their chorus of songs, and the sun sets the sky is ablaze with red, pink and violet.

I drop my topwater bait between an old stump and a small patch of grass. It lay's there for a moment while I breath in air laden with the pungent scents of summer like honeysuckle and new mown hay.

I twitch the rod tip and the water explodes. The bass tail walks to deeper water, trying to pitch that nasty tasting thing out of its mouth. Then he dives, taking my drag out as he goes deep. He gains a little and then I get it back until finally I lift him out of the water, admire him for a moment, and then slip him back into his watery home.

I hope there are a lot more summer evenings like this in my life before the good Lord calls me home.

MARRIAGE ADVICE

If your wife asks if you are planning on going fishing this weekend, do not laugh and say, "That's a good one honey". If she doesn't smile, looks at you with squinted eyes and says "It's either me or fishing" do not hesitate while you stand there and make a prolonged humming sound.

A TIP TO TRY

If fishing action is slow, try slapping and splashing the water with your boat paddle. That may seem kind of crazy but the commotion sounds like feeding fish and could attract nearby crappies and white bass to come in and take your bait.

WATCH OUT FOR SUMMER LIGHTNING

Summertime means a lot of people are spending more time in the great outdoors. Summer is also the peak season for a deadly weather occurrence-- lightning. We average 51 lightning fatalities per year in the U.S.

If you hear thunder, lightning is close enough to strike you so get off the water and stay there at least 30 minutes after you hear the last sound of thunder.

LOONEY LAWS

There are actual laws still on the books in cities and states across America that are just a little bit looney and here are just a few of them.

In Tennessee it is illegal to use a lasso to catch fish. It is illegal to get a fish drunk in Oklahoma. In Chicago it is illegal to fish in your pajamas.

One of the many looney laws in Washington D.C. says it is illegal to catch fish while on horseback. Of course laws aren't the only thing looney in Washington.

STAYING CONNECTED

Philosophers, poets, and wise men of all times have always promoted the rejuvenating and creative qualities of a few moments of solitude spent in the outdoors. Most hunters and anglers know this whether they can verbally express it or not.

Staying connected to the natural world is vital to many of us, and that's as good of an excuse as any to grab the rod and reel, the gun or bow and go get connected in our great outdoors.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

"In every walk in with nature one receives far more than he seeks."---- John Muir

Photo Contest

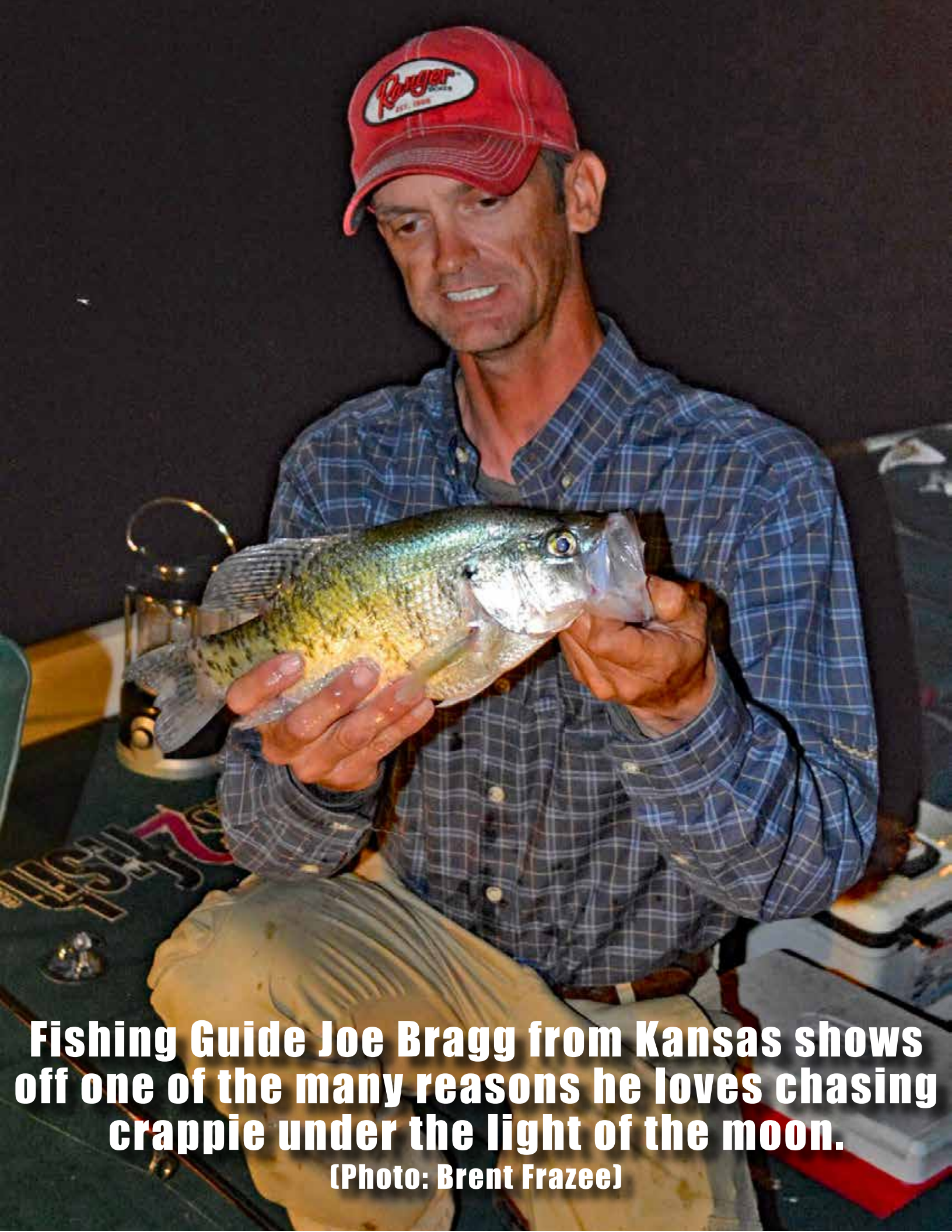


1st Place This Month!

JJonathan Brown
McIntosh Al.
Tombigbee River
Length- 15" Weight- 1.79lbs

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 details.



**Fishing Guide Joe Bragg from Kansas shows off one of the many reasons he loves chasing crappie under the light of the moon.
(Photo: Brent Frazee)**