

CRAPPIE NOW! **DIGITAL MAGAZINE**

fishhound
and more fishing resources

Crappie.com

September 2019 - Issue #103



Destination: Historic Reelfoot Lake and Union City, Tenn.

Follow the Bait for Fall Crappie

Game wardens survive disaster on the water



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by Tim Huffman

Fall crappie are hungry. Find the baitfish and you'll find great action.



Pros & Cons of Jig Size.....12

by Darl Black

Matching the hatch is most often used when talking about trout fishing. But the same is often true for crappie fishermen.



Kid in a Candy Store....16

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The latest and greatest fishing products are unveiled at the annual ICAST trade show. Ron Wong shares a great glimpse at the newest products crappie fishermen will see on store shelves soon.



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It might be one of the most well-known and popular crappie fishing places in the eastern United States. But you may not know there is much more for you and the family to do at Reelfoot than fish.



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by Vic Attardo

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Opening Cast

I was recently asked whether fishing was just about tournaments. My reply was absolutely not. It is just a very visible platform which can highlight the sport, provide a competitive platform for people who like to compete and a way to create new productive techniques. This is true of any sport. Based on this question, it got me to thinking about what we are trying to accomplish with our CrappieNOW fishing resource.



We want to provide a very easy way for anyone to learn how to catch crappie. We realize that there are many levels of knowledge about the sport from beginner to professional. This requires our staff to provide how-to info on techniques for each level. Our job is to teach, promote, and give you a way to have relaxing fun as you engage in the sport.

I learned how to crappie fish as a boy. It was very basic, a cane pole, nylon line, bobber, sinkers made in wooden molds from used lead, Eagle Claw hooks and natural baits. We used live bait captured in the wild such as minnows, worms, crawfish, crickets. We caught lots of fish from the banks of ditches, creeks, swamps or natural lakes.

Fishing pressure has led us to refine our techniques but knowing how to use them requires some help. We will continue to perform our goals of showing each knowledge level how to fish. Stay tuned as we make some changes. Our future includes a reformatted website to help meet our goals and serve you better.

Invite a friend to read CrappieNOW.com. It is free with NO strings attached.

And remember to take a child fishing!

God Bless and Good Fishing,
Dan Dannenmueller, Publisher

Cover Photo:
Guiding for Blue Bank Resort
on Tennessee's historic
Reelfoot Lake, Billy Blakely
is one of the finest fishing/
hunting guides on the water.
Read more about the great fun
awaiting you and your family
in Northeast Tennessee in this
month's "Destination" story.
(Photo: Richard Simms)

Chasing the Bait for Fall Crappie

by Tim Huffman

When the water begins to cool it's time to be versatile



Fall fishing is a time to be open-minded and versatile. When water starts to cool, crappie change mood and location so fishermen should, too. Trying different places, searching for shad and using proper techniques pay huge dividends in fun and action.

Timber vs. Open Water

“Baitfish schools are a factor in the fall,” says Charles Bunting, three-time national classic champ. “We don’t always pay attention to them when fishing timber because we are focusing upon the wood. But when the shad move into the wood

The team of Charles and Travis Bunting slow troll a Mississippi oxbow lake in the fall and land a good crappie.
(Photo: Tim Huffman)

it’s for sure the crappie will be there too.”

“Baitfish are more important when fishing open waters like Grenada, Sardis and other big waters. The crappie follow the baitfish so we have to find them too, then follow along.”

Bunting says fall baitfish and crappie will be anywhere from three inches to ten



The father/daughter Overstreet duo from Alabama displays a nice crappie. (Photo: Tim Huffman)

feet deep and will change depth often. Therefore, paying attention to the locator during the day is important to keep baits at the right depth.

“Baitfish often just roam around but later in the fall they’ll start following ledges. We always start out looking with our side imaging to find schools of bait then switch over to Humminbird 360 to follow them. We are after big fish so we are still using bigger baits like a [Grizzly Jig Company) Muddy Water jig with a minnow.”

Pitching to Ledges

Missouri tournament fisherman Steve Hockett, says he spends a lot of time

fishing bluffs in the fall because that’s where the baitfish are usually located. “There are not many tournaments in the fall so we catch fish for fun. We are usually fishing on bottom in about 15 feet of water. We look for fast drops and sheer ledges.”

He says depth is critical in the fall but most of the fish will be at one depth once you learn the zone. Catching can be as simple as using a short pole and just



pitching the jig out and dragging it back to the boat.

Spider Rigging/Slow Trolling

Spider rigging is a popular year-round technique. Multiple poles give the advantage of numerous bait offerings to increase odds of more bites.

“In the fall we are chasing schools of baitfish,” says Kevin Jones, American Ethanol pro staffer and a regular on the Crappie Masters Tournament Trail. “The crappie are actively feeding up for the winter.

“We spider rig wherever we go and every season. We have confidence in that technique. Electronics is a key to success and we use the Humminbird with 360. We fish around different areas and watch the graph. We look and follow the baitfish.”

Jones says, “Find a pattern in the fall that includes baitfish and you can catch fish. The pattern usually holds for several days or weeks so that’s a big advantage.”

Longline ‘Em

“Fall is feeding time and fishing picks up tremendously,” say Mississippi guide and tournament fisherman, Brad Chappell. “Feeding is in full force. The crappie are fattening up preparing themselves for wintertime. They gorge during the day on shad making it possible to catch a lot of fish.”

Chappell pulls jigs. He says jigs are so much easier than buying, keeping and baiting with minnows. He uses Bobby Garland Stroll-R jigs and pulls 0.8 to 1.4 miles per hour in the fall.

“Cover a lot of water. Look for big balls of shad and pay attention to concentrations of very tight schools. I don’t like schools that are scattered. Tight balls are being fed upon and the shad will get tighter as the crappie feed on them because that’s the shad instinct. I don’t worry about seeing crappie on the locator because they’ll be there if the bait is there.”

Shooting Docks

Mike Baker, tournament fisherman from Missouri, says he is pulling crankbaits or shooting docks. Crankbaits are a great way to cover water but docks concentrate fish. Baitfish often hold under and around the docks.

“Feeding is in full force in the fall.”

“Shooting docks can be very productive in the fall. You have to form a pattern just like using any other technique. I like to start with a 1/32-ounce, shoot it in and bring it back high in the water. Next time I’ll let it fall and continue going deeper until I find the right depth.”

A dock can have special features including drop-offs, natural covers and manmade brushpiles. A dock can hold fish even when big schools of baitfish are not present. However, when the baitfish come in the action is guaranteed to be fast and hot.

Fall fishing is fun. One of the best ways to guarantee success is to find schools of baitfish. The experts agree that using electronics to find and follow the bait is a key to catching fish. So, chase the bait this fall and you’ll have plenty of action.

 - 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.



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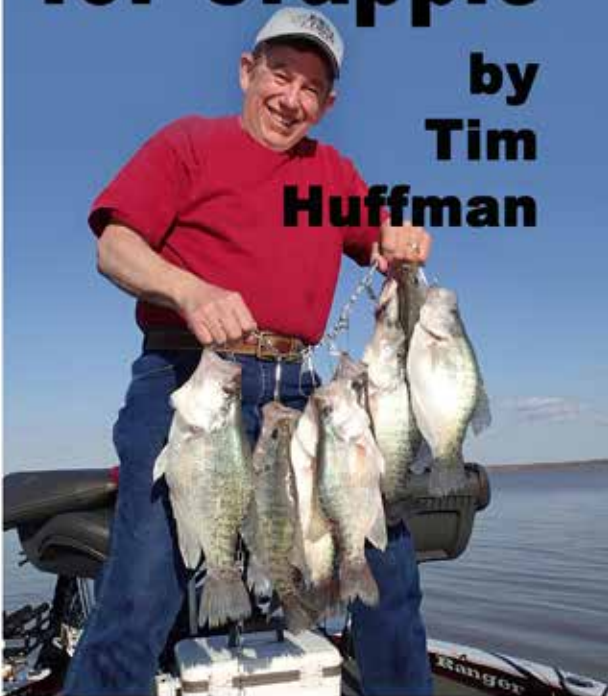
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Limiting Out for Crappie

by
**Tim
Huffman**



Spring Shallow Water
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10 Crankbait Techniques
Crankbait Tips & Tricks
Fall Visible Wood
Fishing the Turnover
Clear & Stained Waters
Fall Oxbows
Winter Slow Trolling
Shallow Casting
Lake Drawdown
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After the Catch: Livewells,
Cleaning, Cooking

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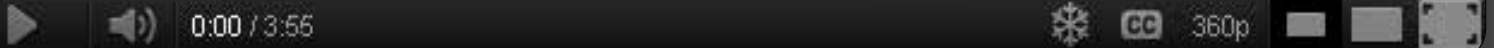
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Growing the sport of fishing by educating and inspiring beginner and experienced anglers.



Crappie Basics #195

Twisted line is a frustration every angler must deal with at some point. Maybe it happened when adding new line to a spinning reel. Perhaps the twist is due to hooking a large fish and an angler reeling against the drag. Maybe it is caused by reeling or trolling a lure that is spinning in the water. Or sometimes it just happens for inexplicable reasons.

Two potential solutions: (1) before you go fishing, especially if you haven't been in a while, remove the line spools from your spinning reels and allow them to soak in hot water for 20 or 30 minutes. Monofilament does actually absorb some water and soaking them helps the line lose its "memory."

(2) If twist occurs while you are on the water, remove any lures or terminal gear from the line. Then idle your boat along at a slow speed, letting your line trail off behind the boat for at least 80 or 100 feet. Allowing the line to trail along in the water under tension causes it to literally untwist. Allow it trail behind the boat two to five minutes, depending upon how bad the twist was. Then it's back to fishing.



2019
Crappie USA

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Barkley/Kentucky Lakes, Kuttawa, KY
2019 Super Event 11/02 – 11/03/18

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Pros & Cons of Jig Size

by Darl Black

Consider the size of your jig for tough summer bites.



Many northern anglers base the size of jig they use loosely on the size of prey being consumed by crappies through the seasons.

During the ice-out bite, most successful crappie fishermen in my region reach for an extremely small body jig, less than an inch long to more closely resemble large zooplankton or tiny minnows drawn to the rapidly warming water in shallow black-bottom bays and canals. Minimal movement bodies (such as a tiny tube or split-tail) are preferred over ones with a swimming action tail. The jig is tipped with a couple of maggots and suspended

Ken Smith shows off a couple late summer black crappies taken on Bobby Garland Itty Bit Swim'R. (Photo: Darl Black)

two to three feet below a float.

As water temperatures climb throughout the lake into the 50's and eventually above 60 degrees, slightly larger minnows are preferred by crappies. Therefore, anglers gravitate to slightly bigger jig bodies – typically a 1.5 to 2-inch body on a 1/16-ounce head. Twister and shad style action tails now come into play.

By the time northern crappies finish



their spawning routine, water temperature is in the 70's and June is drawing to a close. Most crappies – blacks and whites – depart the shallows for somewhat deeper water summer haunts. In many offshore locations, crappies dine on rapidly-maturing openwater shiner and small shad schools.

I've caught some of my largest summer crappies on 4-inch grubs while fishing for bass. Therefore, intentionally using a 2.5 to 3-inch soft plastic body on a 3/32- or 1/8-ounce head for summer crappies does not seem unreasonable to me. Of course, I always have my "standard" 2-inch 1/16-ounce crappie jig tied on another rod as well.

But going larger in the summer isn't always the answer.

Ken Smith, one of western Pennsylvania's top crappie anglers, endorses the match the hatch concept. He says, however, many anglers may be missing summer hatches yielding fry that excite crappies.

"Adult crappies are meat eaters," said

Matching the hatch is always sound advice for any angler. However, even as baitfish grow rapidly in the summer, remember there may be newly hatched fry or tiny fingerlings that crappies could be keying on. With your jig selection, be prepared to go large or go small as needed. (Photo: Darl Black)

Smith. "During summer their focus is almost entirely on minnow life. Crappies are opportunists willing to chow on whatever small fish are readily available; make no mistake – they will eat the fry of any fish species anytime."

While he acknowledges there is a case for crappies to consume slightly larger prey during the summer as minnows, shiners and shad continue to grow, he points out that there are also opportunities for crappies to zero in on newly hatched fry throughout the summer period.

Smith has always been a very observant angler, keeping track of all that goes on around him during hundreds of hours he



spends on the water each season. For years he had noted balls of fry hovering around branches of deadfalls during mid and late summer. He came to realize these were late spawning bluegills or a second wave of spawning bluegills – borne out by the fact that very tiny bluegill fingerlings would appear in these same trees a short time later. Other panfish and baitfish species may spawn more than once in the summer, which accounts for the very small fry that may be observed as late as September.

“I’ve caught some of my largest summer crappies on 4-inch grubs while fishing for bass.” ~ Darl Black

“So, when I encounter a marked slow-down in the number of crappies I’m catching during the summer with my regular-size jig bodies, I downsize,” explains Smith. “I drop down to tiny fry-size baits and fish them in areas I’ve noticed balls of fry. In most instances, this pays off for me.”

Smith says his favorite jig body is one that has only been on the market for a few years.

“The Bobby Garland Itty Bit Swim’R is the most realistic looking fish fry I’ve ever used and the Itty Bit Slab Slay’r is a good tiny fish imitator as well. When I’m fishing balls of bluegill fry or tiny fingerlings, I’m particularly fond of a combination of blue and chartreuse which is Bluegrass in the Garland lineup,” said Smith.

Monkey Milk or Double Silver would be a good color if finding shiner or shad fry. When fry are so small you have no idea what they are, black is always a good choice. Smith says the appropriate jigheads for these 1.25-inch baits weigh 1/32 or 1/80-ounce.”

To present these lightweight fry baits, Smith uses a small clip-on bobber. “I

usually have two rods rigged – each with a fixed float and one of these jigs. On one rod the bobber will be set for around 3 feet, while the second rod will be set for 7 to 9 feet.”

Shoreline deadfalls and submerged brushpiles on moderate-to-steep-sloping banks usually near a creek or river channel are the focus of his presentation. These are areas of cover where he observes fry and fingerlings, and these spots are immediately adjacent to the depth of water where crappies suspend during the summer.

He casts to the cover and lets the jig slowly drift down. Once depth is achieved, he gently nudges the float. Then he may slowly move the float before resting it again.

“I’ll know in short order if there are crappies around the cover. They cannot resist rushing in on fry of any species,” he said. “Remember, matching the hatch in the mid to late summer season may mean going to smaller baits!”

 - Darl Black

Darl Black has been fishing since he was old enough to pick up a fishing rod. He penned his first angling article in the mid-1970s on a now-extinct writing device called a typewriter. During his career as an outdoor writer and photographer, Darl has fished throughout the US and Canada for many freshwater species but still enjoys fishing for crappies.

In this "How to" video Crappie Dan shares a secret technique he learned years ago called "The Dinner Getter." It's a unique way of rigging a live minnow that works especially well when crappie are feeding heavily on shad.

It uses a 1/16th ounce jig head, however it is poured with a long shank hook. The video illustrates it best, but the hook point is threaded directly into the mouth of the minnow and out a gill plate on the side. The long shank hook is then turned and embedded into the meaty portion of the minnow's back, avoiding vital organs.

Crappie Dan suggests actually leaving the hook point embedded slightly inside the minnow rendering it almost weedless

The minnow will fall through the water on its side, just like a dying shad. Fish it in the same places you would normally fish your plastics - in heavy cover, through stumps or along ledges.

Crappie Dan says coupled with Garmin Live Scope, the Dinner Getter creates a deadly combination.



0:00 / 3:56

360p

Kid in a Candy Store

by Ron Wong

Preview some top products that will hit store shelves by Christmas

How about walking into a 650,000 square-foot store – about 15 ACRES - filled with new fishing tackle. Yes, I was like a kid in a candy store at the 2019 ICAST (International Convention of Allied Sportfishing Trades) show held in Orlando, Florida in July. Fishing tackle and service companies worldwide showcase new products for 2020. There is so much to see and do that it is difficult to cover all exhibits in two-and-a-half days. For the crappie anglers, there were some exciting new products presented and all those items could help you catch more fish.

YEAR OF THE TROLLING MOTOR

The biggest buzz of the show – it was the year of the trolling motor. Three companies introduced all new trolling motors, all designed to help anglers catch more fish easily.

Garmin introduced the “Best of Show” award-winning Force trolling motor. This motor comes with a cordless foot control pad, handheld remote control and is totally integrated with Garmin electronics such as livescope. It has a brushless drive unit they say reduces noise and provides more power.

Lowrance introduced the Ghost trolling motor which also has a cordless foot control pad. This motor is also designed to be integrated with all Lowrance electronics and like the Garmin, features a brushless drive unit.

Meanwhile Motor Guide reinvented the Tour trolling motor with true cable steering and a stronger mount. All the motors have GPS anchor capability, much like the Minn Kota spot-lock. All the new trolling motors will retail for more than \$3,000.

It was the “Year of the Trolling Motor” at the annual ICAST trade show in Orlando, Florida

NEW CRAPPIE RODS UNVEILED

There were some very nice crappie rods introduced at ICAST with most them available as early as the first of September.

B’n’M showed off its new Mossy Oak Edition Brushcutter rod - a very tough IM6 rod with strength and sensitivity finished with a Mossy Oak Element paint scheme. It will be available in 10- or 12-foot lengths.

B’n’M teamed with Leland’s Lures (Crappie Magnet, Fin Spins, Trout Magnet) to develop the Leland’s TCB Rod. Whether fishing for trout, crappie or bluegill, this crossover rod is built to handle light weight lures and line. This rod is a six-and-a-half foot ultra-light graphite rod with a split grip handle.

Jenko Fishing revealed the Big T Trick Stick built from a Paratek Carbon-blend graphite, the same material used in their bass rods. The Big T Trick Stick also comes with a 3-year, “No Questions asked” replacement warranty.

From Lew’s Fishing, the Wally Marshall Pro series introduces the 7-foot model rod. This IM-8 blank with cork split grip handle can be used for several different fishing methods.

NEW LURES, OF COURSE

One of the things happening in the crappie



tackle industry is the partnering of top-tier companies to come out with new lures.

Roadrunner has partnered with Bobby Garland to introduce the Slab Runner which features a Roadrunner head paired with a Bobby Garland Baby Shad. It will be available in one-sixteenth and one-eighth ounce sizes in a myriad of color combinations.

Roadrunner also unveiled new weedless heads that will be available both dressed and undressed in various sizes.

Bobby Garland showed some new colors for the Baby shad series baits that were developed by the pros.

Jenko Fishing showed the all new Big T Whirly Bird jig head. This jig head combines the classic "Slasher" style pill head with a longer shank sickle hook and an in-line chrome prop spinner.

Leland's Lures introduced the Fin Spin Pro series which dresses the Fin Spin head with a tied skirt.

Another very impressive new product

Leland's Lures Slab Bites are bait nuggets with a powerful scent embedded. They say the bites are designed to stay on the hook better and longer. They also come with glitter mixed throughout the bait.

shown at ICAST was Leland's Lures Slab Bites. These bait nuggets have a powerful scent which has been designed to stay on the hook better and longer. The bites come with glitter that is not just coated but mixed throughout the bait.

EYE-CATCHERS

A couple of other new products for the crappie fishermen that were eye-catching shown at ICAST included the award-winning Hummingbird Mega 360 Imaging. The Mega 360 Imaging is compatible with both the SOLIX and HELIX series fish finders. The custom viewing options let you choose how your returns appear on the screen.





Therefore, you can adjust the unit based on current conditions and your fishing style.

Slime Line introduced its Champion Edition super stretch fishing line. Ronnie Capps and Whitey Outlaw worked with Slime Line to develop this line which has up to 30 percent more stretch which will help fight the fish and not rip hooks out of the soft crappie mouth. They say the line has low memory and very abrasion resistant.


COMING SOON

As typical with most new products destined for 2020, many products will not be available until late summer/early fall. Most companies indicated product will be on store shelves in time for Christmas. Check out the respective companies web sites for product availability.


New crappie products seen at ICAST. (l-r) SlabRunner from RoadRunner and Bobby Garland, Slime Line Champion Edition line, Weedless Roadrunner heads and Jenko Fishing Bug T Whirly Bird jig head. (Photo: Ron Wong)

 - Ron Wong

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Ross Barnett, MS	April 26-27, 2019
Grenada, MS	May 17-18, 2019
Kentucky Lake, TN	June 21-22, 2019
Truman, MO	July 27-28, 2019
Ouachita River, LA	Sept 13-14, 2019
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As a rule crappie fishermen routinely think that summertime crappie are always going to be deep, often concentrating their efforts in 15 to 25 feet of water or even deeper in some lakes.

Crappie Dan, however, says depending on the weather and water conditions fishermen might be bypassing shallow fish, even in the summer.

That was exactly the case during a recent pre-tournament scouting trip to Missouri's Truman Lake. Lake levels had been exceedingly high and were still nine feet above normal pool.

Crappie Dan found crappie in 6 feet of water, even with water temperatures in the high 80's. Check out this video to learn why you should never fall into a summertime rut when you're searching for crappie.



Fishing Funny's



"Oh, I dont mind. I've negotiated three trips to the mall for each one of these."



Destination: Reelfoot Lake and Union City, Tenn.

by Richard Simms

One of the most popular crappie fishing destinations in the country also offers a variety of family fun

The float/jig combination gently settled beside the exposed stump. In less than a second the float wiggled. It didn't dive under but just wiggled.

Billy Blakely raised the B'n'M rod that immediately bent like a question mark, but there was no question that Blakely had hooked another Reelfoot Lake slab crappie.

If you are a serious crappie fisherman it is almost a sure bet that you have heard about Reelfoot Lake in the northwest corner of Tennessee. And you've probably heard of Blakely who has more than 35 years' experience as a guide and has been featured in more than 100 outdoor shows and countless articles and magazines.

However you may not have heard of some of the other great family attractions in the area such as Discovery Park of America, Century Farm Winery, eagle-watching tours or Blue Bank Resort. Owner Mike Hayes and his staff pride themselves on providing more than just another hotel.

"We like to think of ourselves as the swiss army knife of resorts," said Brianna Roser, marketing director for Blue Bank Resort. "There many things to do here, for the fisherman, hunter, kayaker, family, bird watchers, garden enthusiasts, the

elderly and anyone in-between."

Outside of duck season, fishing is the focus on Reelfoot. Blakely enjoys taking kids of all ages. The historic Reelfoot Lake, created by a massive earthquake in 1811, is literally Blakely's backyard. As the lead guide for Blue Bank, it is a rare day when he is not exploring the cypress swamps and backwater bayous catching slab crappie. But Blue Bank owner Mike Hayes says it hasn't always been that way.

***"We like to think of ourselves as the swiss army knife of resorts."
~Brianna Roser, marketing
director for Blue Bank Resort.***

"When I was a kid in the 60's you'd have to catch eight crappie to add up to a pound," said Hayes. "It was just way overpopulated. It was like fishing in a stocked pond. It was nothing to catch five or six hundred crappie a day. We just had too many crappie."

At that time even commercial fishermen, mostly using barrel nets, were allowed



to catch crappie to sell to restaurants. But Hayes said popularity grew among sport fishermen and in the mid-1980's commercial fishing for crappie was stopped.

Sport fishing grew even more popular. Hayes said more pressure reduced the number of crappie, but increased the size. Even though there still is no crappie size limit on Reelfoot, Hayes says most crappie that anglers put in the livewell are above the ten-inch mark with a 30-crappie-per-day creel limit.

With thousands of acres of very unforgiving cypress stumps hidden beneath the lake's surface, Reelfoot is not a lake you want run your boat hither, thither and yon. Still, Hayes says more and more anglers are bringing their own boats these days.

His advice is to, "Trailer your boat to different parts of the lake, near where you want to fish. That way you can idle

Blue Bank Resort Guide Billy Blakely shows off a healthy crappie against a backdrop of the ever-present and scenic Reelfoot Lake cypress trees. (Photo: Richard Simms)

where you're going versus running long distances over unknown water. We have boat ramps all over the lake."

The most common crappie fishing techniques are flipping jigs or minnows under slip floats around the cypress trees, or spider-rigging through stump fields.

Blakely says do-it-yourselfers can do well on the lake.

"Yes, they can, just be persistent & move around a lot because it all looks fishy," said Blakely.

In my humble opinions, everyone NEEDS to visit Reelfoot at least once in their life. Whether you are a fisherman or





not, you will find no other place like it. And every season of the year brings new and unique sights, sounds and opportunities.

One of the newest in the area is Discovery Park of America in nearby Union City, Tenn. The centerpiece of Discovery Park is Discovery Center, a 100,000-square-foot building showcasing ten exhibit galleries including Children's Exploration, Military, Native Americans, Natural History, Regional History and Space. You will find a theater simulation of the 1811-12 earthquakes that shaped Reelfoot Lake as well as a 20,000-gallon aquarium revealing the underwater life of Reelfoot Lake. There are dinosaurs, fossils, Native American artifacts, military equipment, vintage automobiles and dozens more hands-on experiences for children.

About a one-hour drive from Reelfoot you will find the Century Farm Winery offering free tastings for Blue Bank guests.

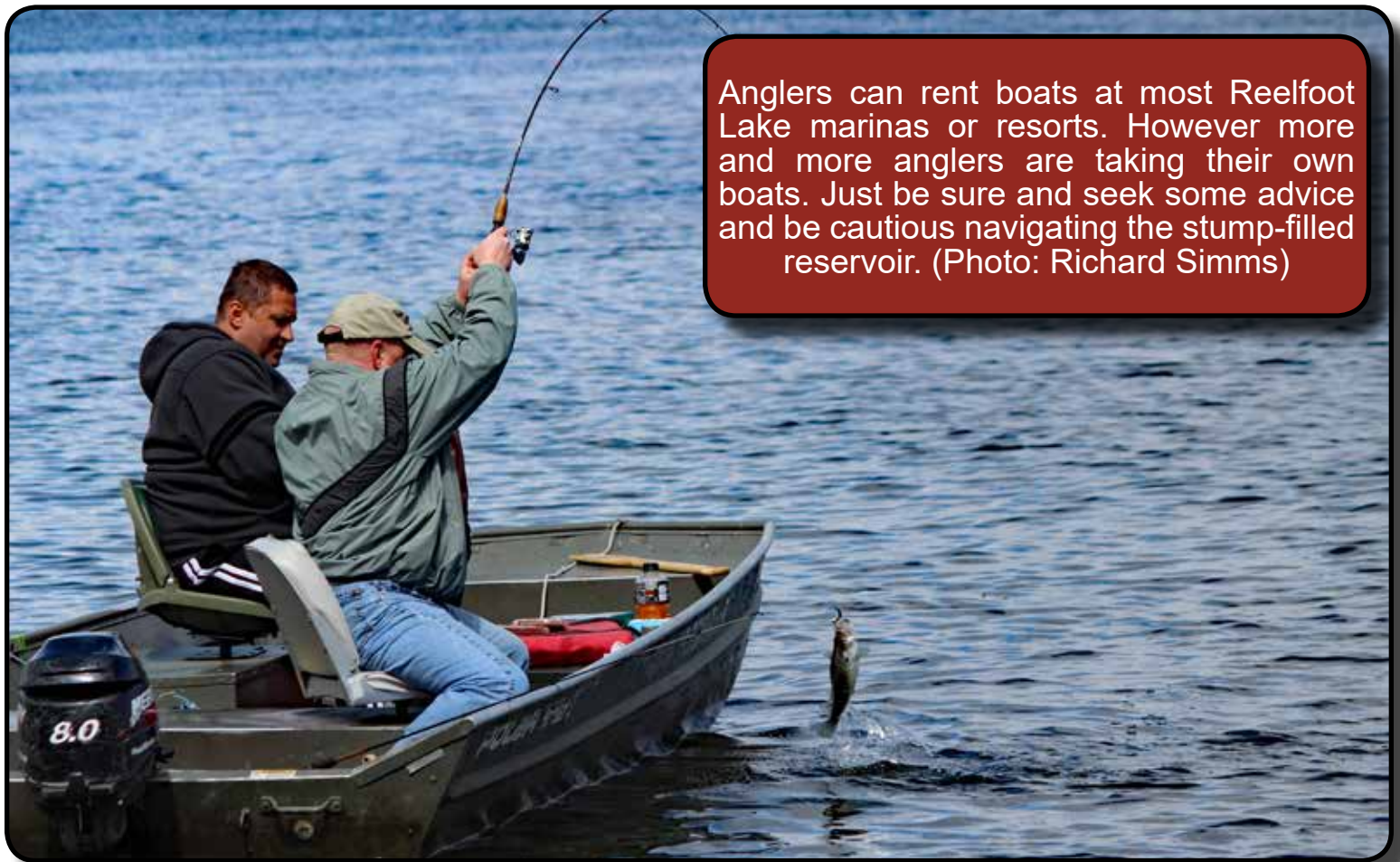
A jig and minnow combination is the go-to crappie lure on Reelfoot. Sometimes, mostly in the Spring, anglers prefer using rosy red minnows. (Photo: Richard Simms)

Visitors to the Century Farm Winery can experience true-life West Tennessee farming through the rows of cotton and corn, as well as the allure of the vineyard.

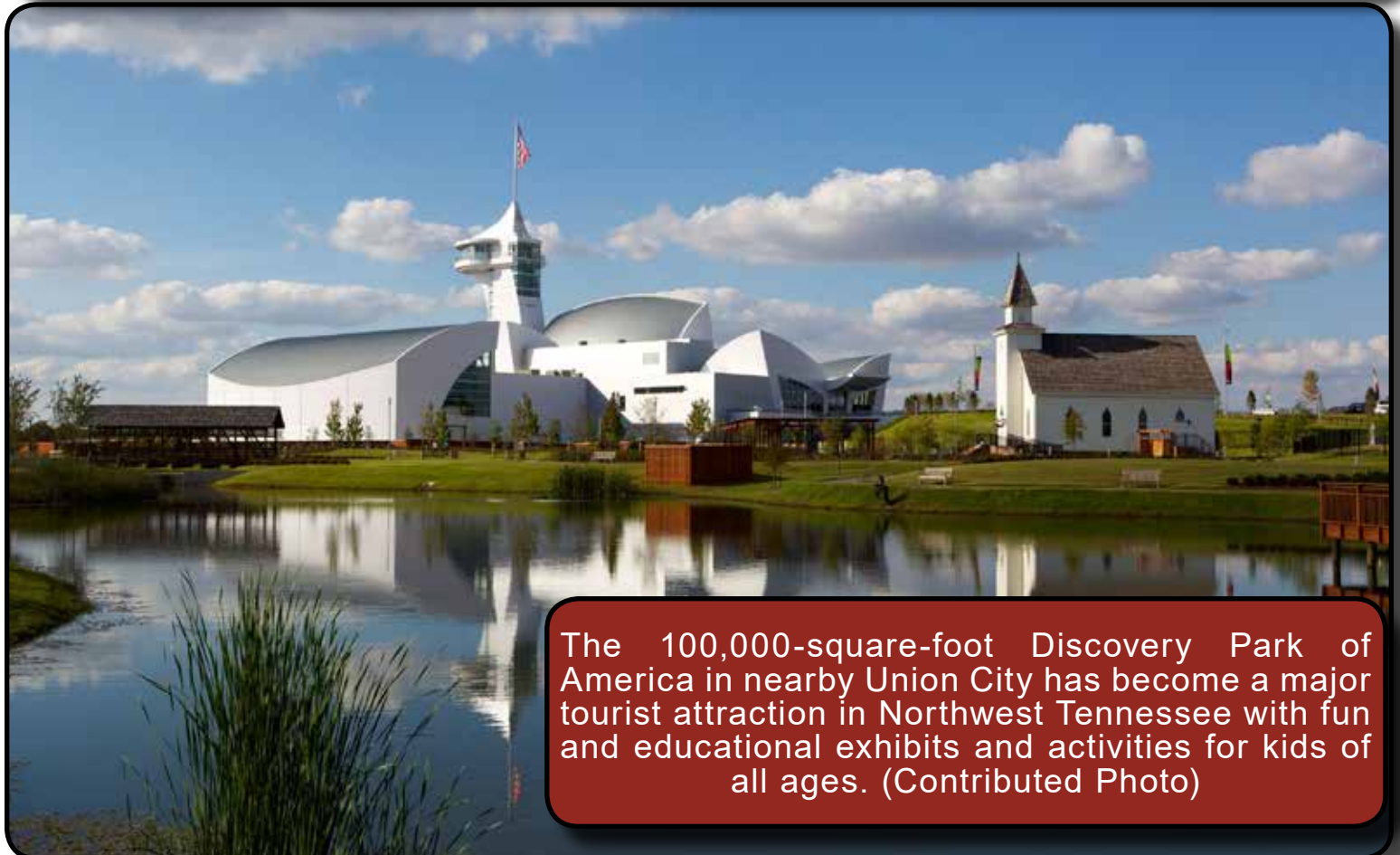
Back at Blue Bank, whether you are a guest or not, you are invited to explore their unique butterfly garden.

"Our ever-expanding half-acre butterfly garden is rich with beautiful blooms on the monarch migration trail, giving you an experience right here in West Tennessee like no other," said Roser. "We are so excited to offer many new events in addition to the outstanding fishing & hunting our resort was founded on."

If you've been to Reelfoot I am probably



Anglers can rent boats at most Reelfoot Lake marinas or resorts. However more and more anglers are taking their own boats. Just be sure and seek some advice and be cautious navigating the stump-filled reservoir. (Photo: Richard Simms)



The 100,000-square-foot Discovery Park of America in nearby Union City has become a major tourist attraction in Northwest Tennessee with fun and educational exhibits and activities for kids of all ages. (Contributed Photo)





telling you what you already know. If you haven't, you really need to go find out for yourself.

 - Richard Simms

We all know that these days kids much prefer to be "hands on." That is no problem at the Discovery Park of America as kids can enjoy a variety things to experience up close and personal. (Contributed Photo)

Editor's Note: CrappieNOW features a monthly "Destination" story with 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.

Crappie Basics #196

To troll or not to troll, that is the question. No question that when you're fishing specific structure such as a dock, a treetop or a sunken brush pile, casting a lure while "single poling" is the best technique. But when crappie are following bait schools or hanging out on open water points or drop-offs, trolling can definitely be the most effective. Let's do the math.

When slow-trolling a jig at 0.7 mph for eight hours, your jig is in a potential strike zone for 5.6 lure miles. If you are trolling six lines/jigs, that equals 33.6 lure miles.

When casting we will say your lure stays in a strike zone for 50 feet each cast. It's probably not that much but it makes the math easier. We'll also say you are good enough to make two casts a minute and strong enough to keep it up for 120 casts per hour, or 960 casts in an eight-hour day. Again, doubtful, but we'll use it to keep the math simple.

$960 \times 50 = 48,000 \text{ feet} = 9 \text{ lure miles}$

Which do you prefer... a lure in a potential strike zone for 9 miles or more than 33 miles? Tell us which technique you prefer and why at info@crappienow.com. We'll share some of your answers in October.

MR.
CRAPPIE®
Wally Marshall

Strike King™
G

LEW'S®

Tidal Water Crappie

by Vic Attardo

Crappie can tolerate a little salt, not just when you're cooking them, but in the water they call home.



At first glance the docks extending out from shore didn't appear to be an unusual location for crappie. Any crappie angler worth his salt would toss a jig towards the gnarly pillars.

But if you spent an hour or two around these algae covered pilings, you'd have noticed the water level rise and fall -- a shadowy line first covered and then exposed as time marched on.

If, for some reason, you tried tasting the water in the vicinity, you would realize that salt was part of its composition. The flows would increase and

Capt. Jerry Sersen shows off the rewards of exploring the tidal waters of Chesapeake Bay for crappie. (Photo: Vic Attardo)

decrease periodically throughout the day. Around each piling the water might appear to stand still and then the flow would pick up steam, moving circles around the structure.

Welcome to tidal water. While brackish with only small amounts of salinity, crappie still live and thrive there.



The first time I was directed to fish a similar dock where the water rose and fell with the tides, I was surprised by the very existence of our acclaimed species. I thought crappie to be an entirely fresh-water dweller.

But crappie hanging out in the lee of the current's flow, on the "downside" of a piling, were as feisty and fat as the best crappie I'd caught in Reelfoot or Champlain or the Kentucky River impoundments. They latched onto a jig and soft plastic -- hanging beneath a slip bobber -- with gusto. With the added test of maneuvering them away from the obtrusive pillar they were as challenging to extract from these surroundings as from the most tentacled stump. It was this tenacity and tact that hooked me on pursuing crappie in tidal waters.

That and the fact that like so many brackish and salt water fish their cooking quality was so much the better. Yes, there are crappie in salt-flavored waters and they are every bit as exciting and perplexing as their completely fresh water counterparts.

What is brackish?

Of all the habitats occupied by crappie, perhaps the least understood by anglers is the brackish, tidal water locations. Crappie are

Fall is usually the best time to locate crappie in the more confined tidal creeks.
(Photo: Vic Attardo)

certainly structure-loving fish, but the structure they are found in varies somewhat from entirely freshwater crappie.

It would be a mistake to hunt for these fish in the wide open spaces of brackish habitat. I've never located them in main salt water channels or in large salt water bays. Instead they are found up rivers with a salt and fresh water composition. I encounter them in winding creeks with tidal and fresh water flows and in boat channels and backwater developments where boaters have access to more open brackish areas. Then too they can be found thriving around industrial piers -- in a pier's contorted maize -- not that far in distance from an open water salt location but a world apart in actual biological habitat.

Though I have searched and searched in academic papers I've never found any mention of the amount, or proportion, of salt to fresh water crappie can handle. Among the dedicated cadre of brackish water crappie anglers in my region we like to call this proportion, "Half and



Half,” which is about as unscientific as you can get. This leaves questions about the contents of such recognized brackish crappie habitat as the upper Chesapeake Bay, the St. John’s River in Florida entirely up for grabs. The fact that an angler can be catching redfish or bluefish within a half mile of a hot crappie location just poses more questions.

A key difference between entirely fresh and brackish crappie is their feeding habits, particularly their timing.

Tidal swings

A key difference between entirely fresh and brackish crappie is their feeding habits, particularly their timing. While fresh water crappie might bite throughout the day, or depending on location, have a preference for low light periods, brackish crappie definitely dance to a different tune.

The best tidal fishing changes with the tide, no matter what time of day. In my experience it is best from the last two hours of high tide into the first two hours of low. That is “the crown” as I call it. This is when the current is at its peak. The water moves swiftly creating mini-eddies and rushes around vertical structure. At these times a crappie’s menu is pushed by the strong current and becomes more vulnerable.

However, structure plays a key role in determining if “the crown” is the best time to fish at any one pinpoint location.

For example, in the peak of the high tide or incoming tide and the onset of the low or outgoing tide, the flow may be too fast for even a hefty crappie to endure. I’ve seen this occur on the outer most area of a dock or bridge riprap when crappie actual retreat back from the heavy flows and find a less powerful current away from the structure’s outward rungs. At such times middle of a dock or some nook and cranny of a riprap point offers a key ambush point for a hungry crappie, and consequentially of angler chasing them. Still the period of peak flow will motivate crappie into feeding at these times.

On the other hand, periods of slack tide, representing little flow, are universally the worst time to fish for tidal crappie. This is when we sit down in the boat and get out the sandwiches.

Winds play an enormous part in the feeding habitats of crappie. Primarily, wind is a water mover or a water stacker. Depending on its direction and strength, wind can extract water from a channel or it can flood water into a holding area. The effects of either might just push crappie around the crappie or move them entirely out.

Unfortunately, unlike the tide clock, there is no universality when it comes to wind strength or direction and the availability and mood of crappie in all locations. The effects of wind and water movement can even vary within a moderately reasonable distance. For instance in a large river inlet on the Chesapeake Bay we know to stay out of one area when the wind comes in from the north; at the same time with the wind blowing in the same northerly direction we can hop across the main channel and up into another river inlet where the crappie fishing can be as hot as Hades. The only way to know this is from experience, or a good guide.

Fall is usually the best time to locate crappie in the more confined tidal creeks. In the summer, fish are scattered in different locations and are rarely schooled. In some brackish locations catching largemouth bass and catching crappie in summer go hand in hand. But in water with regular tidal influence the crappie re-congregate in the fall and make their move up rivers and creeks.

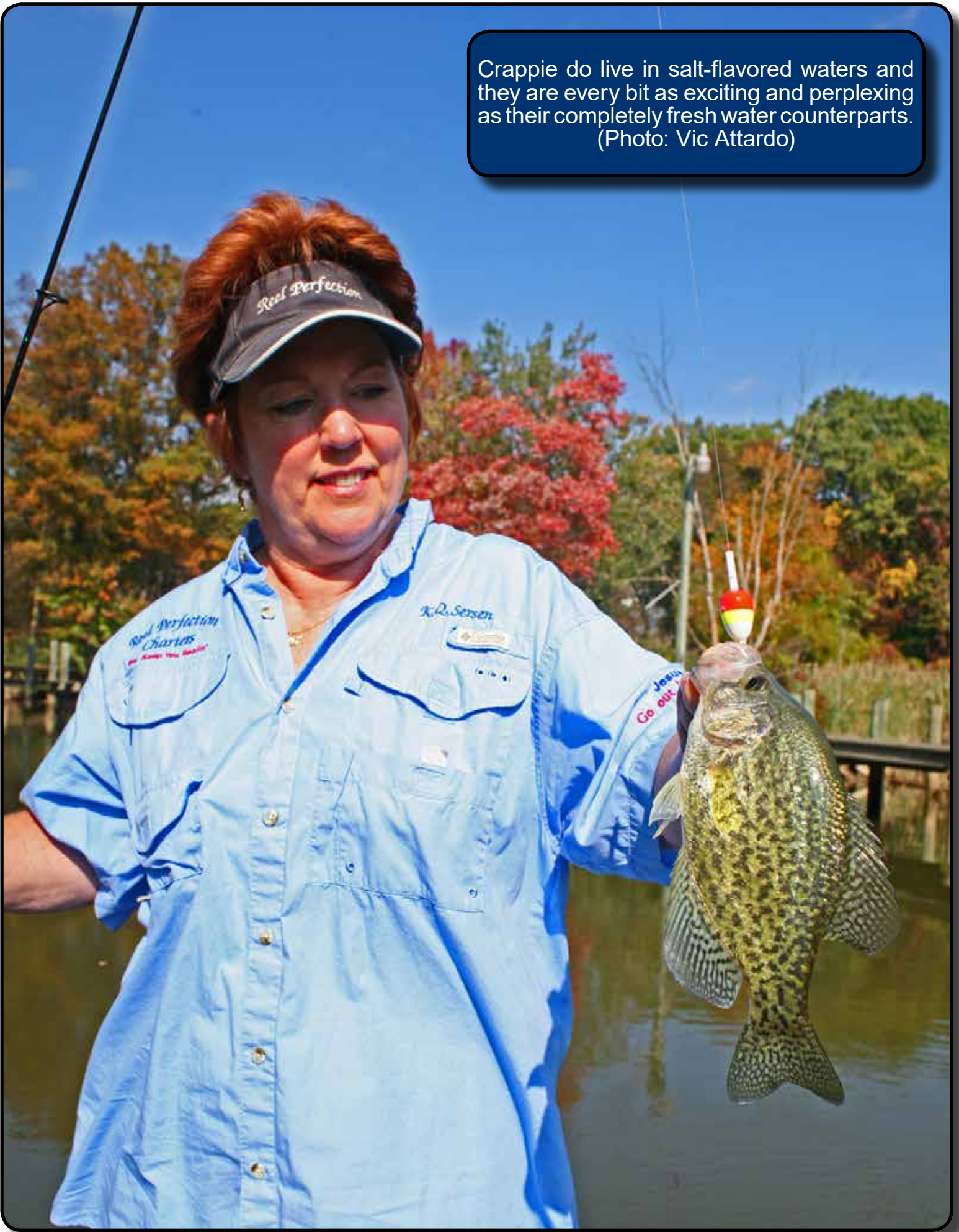
I know that is where I intend to spend the better part of my autumn chasing crappie.

 - Vic Attardo

Legend has it that Vic Attardo caught his first crappie when he was one-year old as his parents gave him a magnetic fishing pole and magnetic fish in his bassinet. He wrote about the experience on his high chair with spaghetti sauce. Since then he has fished with and written about the greatest crappie fishermen of the era including Bill Dance, Whitey Outlaw, Dan Dannenmueller, Jamie Vladyka and many others.

TIDAL WATER CRAPPIE

Crappie do live in salt-flavored waters and they are every bit as exciting and perplexing as their completely fresh water counterparts.
(Photo: Vic Attardo)



TWRA boating safety officers live to tell the tale

by Richard Simms

On the water, even when you are doing everything right, things can go terribly wrong.

Boating accidents can happen to anyone. But most of us usually think, "It will never happen to me."

No doubt Brandon Lee and Matt Price thought that.

Lee is a wildlife officer (game warden) with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. Price is a TWRA Boating Officer. Both men spend much of their life enforcing boating safety laws, ensuring that OTHER boaters stay safe. But last year, on Parksville Lake

in Polk County, Tenn. the two men became boating accident victims in a scenario that can happen to any boater, even when you are doing everything right.

The two men share their story in hopes of further protecting others. They learned first-hand that ignition kill switches and life preservers can and do save lives. But only if you use them.

Here is the story directly from the mouths of the officers who lived to tell about it.



CRAPPIE

K H I D S

The Holly and Madison Fishing Show

Holly and Madison had a really good day fishing with CrappieNOW Editor/Guide Richard Simms. Richard decided at one point to “roll video” and the pressure was on these young ladies to produce. Could the youngsters come through? Watch and see. We guarantee some smiles.





Bare Bones Basics for Frying Crappie

Lots of folks who provide recipes like to navigate into exotic and sometimes hard to navigate directions.

This month we're getting back to the basics with the help of Tim Spice. Spice is the Boater Education Director for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. He's also an accomplished outdoor chef. Here he teams up with Texas Parks and Wildlife TV to fry up a mess of crappie; lightly breaded and fried, and on the skillet with a touch of tarragon and lemon.



Texas Parks & Wildlife is a weekly, half-hour program airing on all the PBS stations throughout the Lone Star state, as well as a number of other public television stations around the country. You can also catch the show on about 60 city government and educational access channels across the state. Watch the show on your schedule with PBS Online or on their [YouTube channel](#). Learn more on their [website](#).



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CRAPPIE MASTERS

AUGUST 3rd

MARK TWAIN LAKE

- 1. Robert Carlile/Craig Nichols 9.78
- 2. Matthew Rogers/Bruce Rogers 9.13
- 3. David Cox/Kim Cox 8.44
- 4. Jackie Albin/Marty Snider 8.4
- 5. Mark Englehart/Aaron Englehart 8.38

BIG FISH

- 1. Roger Crowder/Mike Frazier 1.85

MALE/FEMALE

- 1. David Cox/Kim Cox 8.44

ADULT/YOUTH

- 1. TJ Palmer/Alex Palmer 8.32

TRUMAN LAKE TOURNAMENT SERIES

AUGUST 4th

TRUMAN LAKE TOURNAMENTSERIES

- 1. Vallentine/Stocking 9.15
- 2. Fernandez/Morgan 8.5
- 3. Braun/Palmer 8.39
- 4. Bowling/Shackleford 7.34
- 5. Shanks/Wareham 7.23

BIG FISH

- 1. Bunting/Baker 1.51

EASTERN MISSOURI TOURNAMENT SERIES

AUGUST 10th

TRUMAN LAKE

- 1. Jesse Shoemake/Mike Valentine 9.2
- 2. Ian Sanders/Brian Sanders 9.1
- 3. Ken Wilkinson/Chris Dudgeon 8.87
- 4. Ron Molitor/Mike Wehde 8.71
- 5. Kevin Dockler/Scott Orf 8.12

BEAVER LAKE CRAPPIE ASSOCIATION

AUGUST 17th

BEAVER LAKE

- 1. Brad/Brian 7.28
- 2. Greg/Payton 6.3
- 3. Hunter/Colby 6.21

BIG FISH

- 1. Brad/Brian 1.34

CRAPPIE ANGLERS OF TEXAS

BRIDGEPORT

AUGUST 17th**DIVISION 1**

1. Clay Gann/Todd Froebe	8.72
2. James Raws/Jeff Schwieterman	8.46
3. James Pegram/Jerrey Hancock	7.52
4. Brian Carter/Wes Belcher	6.91
5. George Nelon/Larry Middleton	6.4

DIVISION 2

1. Chris Tackel/Tish Tackle	10
2. Buddy Green/Kim Mask	7.6
3. Trey Suwane/Roper Wall	7.45
4. Jason Gaston/Raul Sandoval	7.3
5. Scott Bradshaw/Joby Bradshaw	6.13

BIG FISH

1. Brian Carter/Jeff Schwieterman	1.79
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CRAPPIE MASTERS**AUGUST 17th**

1. Paul Turner/Elizabeth Turner	11.54
2. Matthew Rogers/Bruce Rogers	10.39
3. Matt Beckman/Jeff Lewis	10.22
4. Eric Cagle/Wade McDonald	9.91
5. Frank Haidusek/Mark McClure	9.83

BIG FISH

1. Paul Turner/Elizabeth Turner	2.02
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MALE/FEMALE

1. Jackie Linton/Holly Linton	9.29
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ADULT/YOUTH

1. Larry Gorham/Dalton Gorham	9.08
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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
CHATTANOOGA CRAPPIE CLUB	Mike Johnston/Jim Edmister	FACEBOOK
COOSA RIVER CRAPPIE CLUB	J CULBERSON	FACEBOOK
CRAPPIE ANGLERS OF TEXAS	JAY Reve	FACEBOOK
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
MIDDLE TENNESSEE CRAPPIE CLUB	Toby Ivey	FACEBOOK
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
SHOALS AREA CRAPPIE ASSOCIATION	Keith Dodd	FACEBOOK
SOUTH CAROLINA CRAPPIE ASSOC	Jerry Bundrick	FACEBOOK
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS CRAPPIE	Chad Hamson	FACEBOOK
SLABMASTERS TOURNAMENT TRAIL	Jamie Moore/Dan Sidle	FACEBOOK
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

SEPT 7th	CAPITOL CRAPPIE CLUB	LAKE OF THE OZARKS	CLUB
SEPT 7th	HOI CRAPPIE CLUB	EVERGREEN	CLUB
SEPT 7th	INDIANA SLAB MASTER	CATARACT	CLUB
SEPT 7th	SHOALS AREA CRAPPIE	PICKWICK LAKE	CLUB
SEPT 7th	WAPPALLO	WAPPAPELLO LAKE	FORE LIFE TBA
SEPT 7th - 8th	INDIANA SLAB MASTER	MISSISSNEWA/SALAMONIE	SUPER EVENT
SEPT 8th	KANSAS CRAPPIE CLUB	MILFORD LAKE	CLUB
SEPT 9th	CHATTANOOGA CRAPPIE CLUB	CHESTER FROST PARK	CLUB
SEPT 13th - 14th	AMERICAN CRAPPIE TRAIL	OUACHITA RIVER	TRAIL
SEPT 14th	BEAVER LAKE CRAPPIE ASSOCIATION	BEAVER LAKE	CLUB
SEPT 14th	FLORIDA CRAPPIE CLUB	LAKE MONROE	CLUB
SEPT 14th	NORTHEAST OHIO CRAPPIE CLUB	SHENANGO LAKE	CLUB
SEPT 14th	TRUMAN LAKE TOURNAMENT SERIES	TRUMAN LAKE	SERIES
SEPT 15th	GRAND LAKE CRAPPIE SERIES	GRAND LAKE	SERIES
SEPT 21st	CRAPPIE ANGLERS OF TEXAS	LAKE LAVON	EVENT *VETERANS FISHING
SEPT 21st	HOI CRAPPIE CLUB	ILLINOIS RIVER	CLUB
SEPT 21st	MAGNOLIA CRAPPIE CLUB	ENID LAKE	CLUB
SEPT 21st	TWIN LAKES CRAPPIE CLUB	FISH ANYWHERE	OPEN
SEPT 21st	YADKIN RIVER CRAPPIE CLUB	HIGH ROCK LAKE	TRAIL
SEPT 22nd	GRAND LAKE CRAPPIE SERIES	GRAND LAKE	SERIES
SEPT 25th - 28th	CRAPPIE MASTERS	GRENADA LAKE	NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP
SEPT 28th	CENTRAL ILLINOIS CRAPPIE CLUB	SULLIVAN	YOUTH
SEPT 28th	FLORIDA CRAPPIE CLUB	LAKE GRIFFIN	CLUB
SEPT 28th	NORTHEAST OHIO CRAPPIE CLUB	LAKE MILTON	CLUB
SEPT 28th - 29th	INDIANA SLAB MASTER	MONROE	CLASSIC
SEPT 29th	GRAND LAKE CRAPPIE SERIES	GRAND LAKE	SERIES

The Great Outdoors

by Larry Whiteley

SEPTEMBER OUTDOORS

In some parts of the country the first part of September can still be hot, muggy and buggy. Cooler fall days are coming though, if not already here, depending on where you live.

Summer crowds are gone now from local lakes and rivers and the fishing is great as they gorge themselves for the cold months ahead. It's a great time to stock the freezer with fish for your winter enjoyment. It's also a great time to paddle around the lake or float a river.

If you are a deer hunter it is time to get ready or go hunting. Bow hunting opens in September in some states as does teal and dove hunting. If you're a western big game hunter the elk are waiting and so are the mule deer and antelope.

Camp grounds are a lot less crowded than summer days and hiking trails are too. September in the great outdoors is waiting for you, so get out there and enjoy!

DELICIOUS DOVE AND CRAPPIE TREAT

Dove hunting is a whole lot of fun and dove breast are delicious. The simplest preparation is to make kabobs with your favorite veggies. Let them sit for an hour in your favorite marinade if you wish but there really isn't much gamey taste. A bunch of fried fall crappie fillets served along with them is a delicious treat.

BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW

Pound for pound, the hummingbird has the most powerful muscles of any animal.

FISHING IN YOUR HUNTING CLOTHES

I have seen anglers fishing in bright, colorful clothing under the fall sun and more often than not, they are not having very good luck. In most cases, that's sometimes because of what they are wearing. Fish can see

movement above the water and hide before an angler even realizes they are close to fish.

The wise fisherman will wear camouflage clothes while fishing in the thin water of fall. In fact, it's a good idea to wear camouflage clothing year-round. Fishing clothing companies have figured that out too and are offering several choices of fishing camo that will hide you from the fish.

ROADS OF GOLD

The beautiful Goldenrods are the most common fall roadside wildflowers. Contrary to popular belief, they do not cause hay fever. Goldenrod pollen is heavy and sticky and must be carried from plant to plant by insects. It is the windborne pollen of the inconspicuous ragweed that is probably to blame for your runny nose and watery eyes.

EYES IN THE NIGHT

Early season bow hunters and even fishermen often spy greenish pin pricks of light in the glare of flashlights. That's not dew they're seeing. By September, young spiders born throughout the spring and summer have matured into adults. Many of these are Wolf spiders, whose large eyes reflect light with an eye shine not unlike that of a deer and other mammals.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

"One word of caution, though, should you ever buy commercial worms. If you go into a backwoods gas station and find a large, rough-looking woman behind the cash register, don't ask, "Do you have worms?" My friend Retch Sweeney did that a while back. He should get out of his full-body cast any day now." ~Patrick McManus, *The Horse in My Garage and Other Stories*

Henry Lehman scooped up this monster crappie that bit off more than it could chew, choking on a bluegill too big to swallow – proof positive that sometimes even crappie want something big to eat.



**Learn when to “go big” or “go small” by reading Pros & Cons of Jig Size by Darl Black inside this edition of CrappieNOW.
(Photo: Richard Simms)**