Spring Tips & Wade Fishing
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by Ron Wong
Wade fishing is a tradition in many of the southern waters. Experts share some important tips for wading.

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Spring is a great time of year when mature fish move into the shallows to spawn.

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Charles Bunting and his son are the only team to win national championship with A.C.T, Crappie USA, and Crappie Masters.

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March days tease us and then remind us that winter is still around but growing weak.

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Opening Cast

I’ve been writing about crappie fishing for thirty years. I’ve learned there are three things that separate the best fishermen: experience, elimination and analyzing.

Nothing replaces time on the water. Some of us do not have the luxury of fishing several days a week but learning from each trip does have an accumulating effect. Experience on home waters means knowing where the brushpiles are located and where the fish go after a quick rise and dingy water. Less time is required to find fish.

What about unfamiliar waters? Find an area that is similar to an area on your home lake then fish it like you would your lake.

The second thing is to eliminate water. For our example, consider a late spring trip with fish in post-spawn. A fisherman fishes the very shallow spawning depths, 2 to 5 feet in stained water, and finds no fish remaining so eliminates the 2 to 5 foot range. Next is 6 to 10 foot depth range, a stump row is fished and then a small drop-off. Only a couple of crappie, so at least for now, that depth is eliminated. The next is 11 to around 18 feet. The first check is a flat next to a channel and fish are found suspended up at 8 feet over 15 feet of water. It’s like a chainsaw woodcarver I watch creating an Indian out of a huge tree trunk. When asked how he knew what to cut off, he said, “I cut off everything that doesn’t look like an Indian and end up with an Indian.” Eliminate water that’s non-productive and you end up with productive water.

Third key is to analyze results. During the day and at the end of the day, a good fisherman analyzes what worked and didn’t, and why. They don’t keep doing what isn’t working. On both good and bad catch days, analyzing can add insight and overall fishing knowledge.

Enjoy the upcoming warm weather.

Good fishin’ & God Bless,
Tim Huffman
In many parts of the south, we have incurred quite a bit of rain over the winter months. The rains have many of the lakes with higher than normal lake levels. For example, the I-55 lakes (Arkabutla, Sardis, Enid and Grenada) are still trying to get to winter pool levels and most likely will not make it. However, this may make it a good year for super shallow fishing as the lakes will be rising with spring rain. As the lakes rise, more flats and fields with bushes, grass and other objects get covered in water. With the onslaught of warmer weather and water temperatures, the crappie will be moving up with the water levels.

One of the best and most effective ways to catch some big crappie during this time of the year is to go wading for them. We have a couple of excellent shallow water fishermen that would like to share some of their techniques and tips. John Harrison of Calhoun, Mississippi and Matt Outlaw of St. Matthews, South Carolina are well known shallow crappie fishermen willing to help you catch more fish while wading in flooded areas of a lake.

John Harrison of JH Guide Service spends a lot of time wading the backwaters of the big four crappie lakes along I-55 in Mississippi. Most of the time, he will be using a B’n’M 9-foot Capps and Coleman all purpose rod with 8- or 10-pound test Gamma line on his reel. “The shorter rod is easier to use when fishing thick cover such as vines and bushes”. This rod also has the backbone to muscle out the fish in the heavy cover. Best baits are the 1/16th ounce Pro Built Gamechanger jig rigged with a 2-inch Bobby Garland Slab Slay’R or Minnow Mind’R. If the fish are just moving the bait, then add a crappie nibble to enhance the bite.

He likes to drop his jig into a likely area, hold it still and let the fish come to the bait. Soon after a cold front, just a minnow rigged on the jig head will work best. John’s tip for carrying minnows when wading: punch some holes in a one-liter plastic bottle, put a dozen minnows in it and drag it around with a string tied around the neck of the bottle. One of his...

...Rising water is usually stained to muddy due to rain, so he recommends black/chartreuse color.
better tips is to feel the water with his hands while wading looking for a little warmer water early in the year. “Just a degree or two will make the difference in where the crappies are”. Another tip is to listen for carp jumping in the shallows. Where there are carp jumping, there will be warmer water and the crappie will be there.

Matt Outlaw of South Carolina looks forward to late winter, early spring wade fishing. He spends much of his time wading

Many good baits are available for crappie fishing shown here are (top to bottom) Crappie Magnet, Bobby Garland Minnow Mind’R and Slab Slay’R in 2- and 3-inch.
the backwaters of Santee Cooper. He likes to use a B’n’M Uncle Buck’s 10- or 11-foot jig pole rigged with a Bucks Best Ultra Lite crappie reel spooled with 10-pound test Slime Line. The reason he likes this setup is that it will float when he must use both hands for to stringer fish or tying on another bait. Matt’s bait of choice is a Pro Built 1/6th ounce jig with either a crappie magnet or Mid-South tube. During late winter, early spring much of the rising water is usually stained to muddy due to rain, so he recommends black/chartreuse color. As the water starts to clear, pink/chartreuse is preferred and in clear water white/chartreuse is the choice. He likes to drop his jig into some type of cover and lightly jig it, pause and repeat. He does like to leave his jig in a place for no longer than 30 seconds and then jig in another spot.

Several more tips for catching crappie while wading that John and Matt offer are:

• Be quiet, no splashing around; slide your feet in the water to lessen splashing
• Move slowly while wading to prevent spooking the fish
• If using a boat, enter area and park away from the area you will be fishing
• Fish the heaviest cover you can find by first dropping your bait on the outside edge of cover then moving towards the middle part of it

• When fishing cypress trees, start nearest to the tree and move out to cover, possible cypress knees, that will hold fish
• Start with upper end of lakes during late winter as this is typically where warmer water will be and move towards lake as the weather starts to warm
• Be aware of snakes not only in the water but in the trees. After the weather gets around 60 degrees, they like to get in trees to sun while it is still a little cool

A couple of tips we offer are: 1) if unsure of water depth where you are wading, carefully use your rod tip to determine depth and 2) if going out to wade fish, let someone know where you will be. In today’s world, everyone carries a cell phone, put it into a zip lock bag.

Be safe, have fun and you are subject to catch some of the biggest crappie of the year as they move shallow to spawn.

- Ron Wong

John Harrison has been wade fishing for decades. Mississippi lakes offer ideal situations, but other lakes, especially during high water, offers opportunities to get into the shallow wood and brush.

WADING FOR SLABS

- Ron Wong
Hookset and Loose Drag: By Jason Sandage

“This spring the crappie will move up shallow. It can be difficult to hook and land crappie when fishing with long poles and only a few feet of line out.

“A big crappie will hit so hard they can tear the line out of their mouths. Only a few feet of line really don’t have stretch so we keep the reel drags very light. I still use a hard hookset but the drag keeps the hookset or the hard run of the crappie from tearing out, at least most of the time.

“I use a landing net 100 percent of the time with clients fishing with me. A fish flopping on top of the water will get off quickly. When I’m fishing by myself or with dad, we swing everything to into the boat but it takes practice to do that because you have to stick you pole butt down into the water or behind you.”

Jason Sandage guides at Reelfoot in the winter, at Mississippi lakes from late winter through fall. Sandage Guide Service 573-624-0250.
Most crappie are caught in the spring when mature fish move into the shallows to spawn. The average date for fishing crappie spawns is generally around April 15 (in middle Missouri, sooner in the south, later in the north). Most fisherman can fill a spawning-season fish sack, but finding pre-spawn crappie in big numbers is a different story.

Pre-Spawn Timber Tactics

Crappie move from the shallow to deeper water when winter temperatures take over. Submerged standing timber found on deep flats becomes a favorite crappie haunt. They have food and a safe place to live.

I seldom miss an opportunity to crappie fish, especially with friends. I gratefully accepted Jeff Falkenberry’s generous invitation to join him for a pre-spawn trip on Truman Lake where he is an accomplished guide.

The day started with short strikes and no hooked fish. We floated up several creeks fishing tube jigs around submerged trees and bushes in open water with some luck, but not what Faulkenberry was looking for. We moved farther down the creek while fishing closer to cover, in fact, as close as you can get.

“Let your Roadrunner bounce down the sides of each stump and tree,” Faulkenberry said. “I think the bigger crappie may be hugging bark today.”

We immediately started catching crappie. His idea was correct and the crappie cooperated with this young guide who was teaching a veteran fisherman of 60-plus years new tricks.

We caught several “keeper” crappie that were indeed “hugging bark” when my lightweight rod suddenly doubled. I mumbled something about a nice bass when the sun illuminated silver flashing just under the surface. I had hooked a bigger crappie that was diving for tree limbs.

I could only hold on and fight out the fish, while putting frightening pressure on four-pound test line. Luckily Faulkenberry had a long-handled net and soon I held a 2-1/2-pound crappie. I took a couple pictures of the big female before releasing her to spawn and fight again. The old girl looked well fed after feeding off of tree-bark minnows and insects.

Sonar is useful in determining how many branches are on a submerged tree or even how many fish are suspended around the trunk. Fishermen without sonar learn to find likely looking cover and drop anchors and dip minnows or jigs.

Determining fish productivity around a tree is easy with sonar. Circle the tree while making sure your transducer, the submerged part that send signals back to your screen, passes within a few feet of the trunk. This will allow you to find where branches are thickest and where fishing will be the best. Stay within fishing distance to the tree and continue watching your screen.

Next, let your jig rub down the tree trunk and on the branches. Crappie may hit that jig, but pass on one a couple inches off the wood, depending on their feeding desires. You will likely lose more jigs, but more crappie will be caught.

Crappie occasionally locate close to cliffs and submerged rock islands. Small pockets of brush around these long, rocky expanses
attract crappie and are easily located by sonar. I discovered this years ago when the air temperature was about 30 degrees. Crappie disappeared from the beds and a friend’s depth finder found fish scattered in groups along a long, rocky flat. We cruised back and forth, watching the depth finder and catching a crappie every time we stopped or paused over a spot that showed fish on his screen. Open water crappie usually school in big numbers and are easily found on a sonar screen, especially today’s modern versions that can almost count the spots on a fish.
Crappie, too, suspend around giant bridge pillars or suspended bridges over lakes and rivers. Pillars illuminated from bridge lights attract insects and small fish. These sound structures, with or without illumination, attracts various species of game fish.

Anchor close to pillars throughout the day and cast a 1/16-ounce plastic jig just past the concrete. Retrieve slowly after the jig sinks a few feet and rub against the pillar where predator fish are waiting to ambush unsuspecting minnows. Not rubbing the pillar may mean no strikes when the bite is slow or it may not matter if the bite is aggressive.

One night a 12-pound walleye took my bridge pillar jig and fought a savage fight to the net before being released. Fortunately, we were fishing murky water and using six-pound test line. I doubt two-pound test would have held her, although it has been done—but not by me. Chances are the walleye were feeding on suspended crappie. That was the only "eye" we hooked that night, but there were likely more.

Finding early-spring crappie feeding areas requires electronic aids. Sonar units are important for navigating at night, a common time to fish for hot-weather crappie.

A sonar unit’s depth perception remains near perfect on the darkest night by tracing the bottom contour and displaying fish and structure with normal accuracy.

Be warned that different types of sonar are never equal in performance, especially after sundown. The newer versions with adequate backlighting and controls work great, while models with poor lighting systems are useless.

Trolling is another great crappie fishing technique in early spring. Many troll under structures like bridges and along submerged
SPRING CRAPPIE TIPS

Creek channels. Suspended crappie sometimes hit passing jigs or minnows lightly, so move your bait slowly.

Minnows, jigs tipped or not tipped and small lures work best. Try heavier jigs when fishing depths. Tip jigs with minnows, generally hooked behind the head, euro larva, meal worms, small pieces of night crawler, commercial baits and some use crickets for early spring crappie. The key is an extra incentive for the crappie to bite your jig.

SCENT--Scents are used for two reasons: to smell like natural bait or to cover human scent. Many fishermen do not realize the importance of camouflaging odors on their hands.

Have you ever noticed that some fishermen catch fish while the person sitting next to them using the same bait and technique are skunked? I smoke cigars and use scent to cover up tobacco odor on my hands. Others might fill their vehicle up with gasoline, a strong smell. Odors that we take for granted can be transmitted to lures or baits. Crappie don’t like foreign smells and will shy away.

Most tournament professionals use commercial scents on jigs or lures. But when none are available, a fisherman can literally wipe a small bit of slime from crappie sides on his lure or bait. Only use slime off fish you keep to avoid damaging released crappie.

The second phase of cover scents are odors that imitate shad or other live prey. Crappie are well acquainted with the strong odor of shad that they follow in large schools throughout the year. Fruit flavored scents used mainly by bass fishermen will occasionally give crappie a sweet flavor they are not used to. This may or may not be productive, depending on what the fish want or don’t want.

Early spring crappie fishing success is possible by finding productive feeding spots with sonar. The key is staying out long periods of time while finding active fish.

Tipping jigs is an excellent spring tactic to trigger crappie in the trees.

- Kenneth L. Kieser

11 Crappie NOW March 2019
Crappie NOW How To
Crappie Boat Rigging – Console
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Our mission is to increase the professionalism – and the earnings – of our members as we work with the industry to grow and protect sportfishing.

NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL ANGLERS ASSOCIATION

Our mission is to increase the professionalism of our members as we work to grow and protect sportfishing.
“I’ve changed several things about my fishing over the years. One of the biggest differences I made was to switch from 8- to 6-pound test line. My catch rate probably went up 40 percent. Last year I switched to 4-pound test and started getting more bites.

“I use a 1/32-ounce jighead with a 1/4-ounce split-shot about 16 inches above the jig. Trolling speed varies each day so that’s a factor you’ve got to figure out each day you go fishing. Sometimes they want it moving and other times they want it totally still, or somewhere in between. It boils down to making changes until you learn what the fish want.”

Richard Williams is a Crappie USA National Champ and has been guiding for 29 years on Kentucky Lake.
In the Spotlight

Charles Bunting

by Tim Huffman
Charles Bunting started fishing tournaments when a friend persuaded him to fish a telephone tournament in the 80’s. He joined a newly-formed Capital City Crappie Club and says the older fishermen taught him how to fish. He has fished national tournaments since 1998.

Charles & Travis Bunting have been a power force on the tournament trails for many years. Charles, known by friends as Charlie, has a major role in doing much of the tournament pre-fishing, in-the-boat rigging and fish/bait care. Being retired allows him time to travel and prepare for the many tournaments they fish each year.

When asked about fishing strength he quickly stated that it was being versatile. “It’s about doing whatever it takes to catch fish. I’m a solid fisherman and can usually figure out a pattern and find areas with good fish. But Travis has an out-of-the box thinking that really helps us adjusting to situations.”

Charles’ two favorite lakes are Grenada, because of the big fish, and Truman because of the single pole fishing.

What keeps Bunting motivated? He and Travis have won the national championships in all three major tournament circuits, something no other team has done. He says it’s the competition and he has always been very competitive whether it’s been baseball, basketball or fishing. He loves doing seminars and promoting his sponsors. It’s about doing his job but most importantly helping others catch fish.

Fishing hero? “Not really, but Ronnie Capps and Steve Coleman are definitely the crappie icons.”

Pet peeves? “I don’t like that some people lie. I don’t like jet skis but I stay away from lakes when they are there.”

Boat food? “Deer sticks and jerky.”

Sports teams? “Cardinal baseball and KC Chiefs, but I’m not a big football fan.”

Tournaments a family affair? “Connie and I have been married over 45 years and she has always supported me in everything I do. She has helped Travis and me in our tournament fishing. She’s made jigs. Now she sells jigs at shows for us like at Grizzly Jig. She has always been the backbone of our team.”

Fishing highlight? “Without a doubt it has been getting to spend time with my son. I’ve been the luckiest person in the world to travel and spend hundreds of hours in the boat with him. We don’t always agree on stuff but at the end of the day it’s always good. I’m glad we’ve won some big tournaments. We’ve got to compete together and make many new friends. As far as awards, the Sportsman of the Year Award was very special to me.”

How would you like to be known or remembered? “As somebody friendly and would help anyone who ask. Giving seminars and teaching people how to fish.”
How good is the crappie fishing at Guntersville Lake? It took 20 pounds (two day total) to finish in the top 30. This is also considering the adverse weather conditions during the tournament days.

Jeff Ramsey with his step-son, Johnny Walker, won the first American Crappie Trail tournament of the year with a total weight of 31.67 pounds. They also had the biggest crappie that weighed 3.19 pounds. They caught all their fish the ole school way, single pole vertical jigging and some casting and dragging. They used a 1/16th ounce homemade jigs around stumps that were 20 to 30 feet deep along the edge of the river. The two key elements that helped them catch their fish were 1) using light braided line (either 5- or 10-pound test Power Pro Hi-Vis line) and 2) fishing very slowly around the stumps. As Johnny stated, “You had to saturate a small area very slowly”. Jeff has fished Guntersville Lake for over 50 years, and he said, “I only fish about one tournament a year and this one was close to home”.

Second place went to the team of Kent Watson and Drew Morgan. Their total weight was 28.88 pounds. They spider-rigged flats near creek channels, fishing 18-24 feet deep. After the first hour in the morning “it seemed the crappie went down and you had to have a your bait a foot from the bottom”. Double bait rigs were used on four of 16-foot B’n’M BGJP rods using a minnow on top and a Crappie Magnet or Big Diddy Bites bait tipped with a small minnow on the bottom. The other four poles were straight double minnow rigs.

Tim Blackley and Paul Turner finished in 4th place after leading on day 1. They ended with a total weight of 27.47. They fished ledges that had stumps in 20 to 25 feet of water using 16-foot B’n’M trolling poles. Tied to the end of the rods were 1/8-ounce Strike King jigs rigged with a Mr. Crappie Joker in orange/chartreuse glow color and tipped with a small minnow. Key to catching the fish was moving very slowly, 0.2 mile per hour.

It seemed like every team caught some 2-pound plus fish. The general consensus of all the anglers is that Guntersville Lake has the potential to rival some of the I-55 lakes and all the teams would like to return to this lake for another tournament.
2019 American Crappie Trail

Tournament Schedule

Lake Guntersville, AL ............ Feb 15-16, 2019
2018 Championship
Lake D’Arbonne, LA ............... March 28-30, 2019
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
2019 National Championship .......... TBA

American Crappie Trail
Provider of premier crappie tournaments with the highest guaranteed payout in the industry.
americancrappietrail.com
Spring Is Almost Here
March days tease us and then remind us that winter is still around but growing weak. Be assured though that spring will win this tug-of-war and it sure is worth waiting for.

I look forward to the first trilling sounds of the spring peeper frog because I know they will be followed by the haunting sound of the whippoorwill, the blooming of the redbuds followed by the flowering dogwoods. My thoughts turn to crappie fishing, finding mushrooms and turkey hunting.

Spring is also a time to do something new, try something different. Learn to cast a fly or tie one. Buy a new rod, different lures or think about new places to fish. It’s a time to look up some old friend’s like that big smallmouth in his secret hiding place or that huge largemouth that hangs out by the dock. It’s a time to enjoy a white bass run, catch a delicious walleye, go snag a sucker or dip a minnow for a crappie. It’s a time to take a nap by the stream in the warm sun, or roar around the lake looking for new fishing holes and then listen for turkey gobbles as you drift into coves.

If you love the smell of power bait and moonlight reminds you of great fishing trips, if you remember the date and weight of your biggest fish and forget your wife’s birthday, if you hope this is the year the fish will be bigger and more of them but really don’t care, you’re a fisherman and spring is almost here.

An Invaluable Asset
A good fishing partner is an invaluable asset. Study them, watch them carefully and if he is courteous and thoughtful of you they are a rare companion. Show your appreciation by trying to outdo their admirable characteristics.

Turkey Fact
Turkeys are known to exhibit over 20 distinct vocalizations including the distinctive gobble, produced by males, which can be heard a mile away.

Meet a Bird that Goes Fishing
Birds are incredible creatures. Consider the green heron, for example, a small wading bird often seen feeding along the shores of lakes and streams. It commonly drops “bait” such as bread crusts, insects or feathers onto the water’s surface and grabs small fish that come to investigate. And now you know what you might not have known.

Native American Quote
“Whenever, in the course of the daily hunt, the red hunter comes upon a scene that is strikingly beautiful and sublime – a black thunder cloud with the rainbow’s glowing arch above the mountain; a white waterfall in the heart of a green gorge; a vast prairie tinged with the blood-red of sunset – he pauses for an instant in the attitude of worship. He sees no need for setting apart one day in seven as a holy day, since to him all days are God’s.”

- Ohiyesa, Wahpeton Dakota
“We are not the only thing waiting for winter to be over”
Single stem Crappie Stalker 2 pole holder is adjustable at both top and bottom making it ideal for serious spider rig/slow trollers. “You can position the butt of the rod where it needs to be for fishing, then position the pole tip to the top of the water,” says owner/operator David Baynard. “It’s proven to be an effective addition. The main advantage of the single stems is that a bite or hang-up on one pole doesn’t transfer to the others. If there is a bite, you know exactly which pole got the hit.”

T-275-HCXX MSRP $98

Driftmaster/Black River Tool, Inc

“My dad (Calvin Baynard) started building holders for the catfish guys in the late 70’s,” says David. “A local catfish guide wanted holders, dad was working a desk job that he hated, so he started making the holders for the guides on Santee. It soon turned into a business.

“Dad is retired now and I have two sons who work for me. I do most of the marketing and travel.

Baynard says, “Dad has a sticky note on his desk that said “Simplify, simplify, simplify” and we try to stick with that concept today. I believe there is beauty in keeping a simple design, high quality and tough, rather than fancy. The Mississippi River catfishing is brutal on equipment and a good testing spot. We guarantee our holders for life and we answer our phones if someone calls. We take care of our customers one at a time with a lifetime guarantee no questions asked.

“We didn’t have electronics when I was a kid so one of my favorite toys was a pillow case full of blocks. I would build all kind of things. Today, I’m still playing only now it’s with steel and aluminum. My life has been
engineering and I love my job.”

What about the holders? “Our Gun Slinger holders are more popular with the serious crappie fishermen because they allow a fisherman to set the hook at an angle opposite of the direction a crappie is running. That’s especially important on a fish that runs sideways. Our most popular all-around holder for fishing is the Li’l Pro or Pro.”

Final comments? “I appreciate the fact that fishermen take pride in their boats and it’s humbling they trust me to provide advice and products. I take that seriously. People ask me if I fish a lot and I don’t, but I talk about it every day and enjoy it through my customers.”
UNCOVER HIDDEN CRAPPIES

Your fish-finder shows lots of underwater “somethings,” but fails to reveal one vital clue: fish species!

Pick up an Aqua-Vu® and discover big crappies hiding in brushpiles, under boat docks and other heavy cover.

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“It’s a great gag to pull on float tubers. Wait’ll he starts paddling again.”
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.

Crappie NOW How To Loop Knot with Joel Harris
I’ve tried different minnow hooks just like everyone else. We use the rotating type hooks and have had good luck with them. One of their best features is a really sharp hook that stays sharp. You hang up and you lose them, but they aren’t very expensive. We re-tie so often that it takes very little time because we do it so often.

“We stick our double-hook rigs right into the brush. We have removed all the swivels to get rid of anything that hangs up or catches on timber. When fish get up shallow we typically have a Whack’em jig, 5/16-ounce, with a Muddy Water body on bottom. Up 14 inches is a loop with the other tag end being the top lead. A 2/0 Eagle Claw rotating minnow hook is tied as closely as possible to the loop, again to prevent too many hang ups. A straight minnow is on top and the bottom jig is tipped with a minnow.”

Charles Bunting, National Championship wins with Crappie Masters, ACT and Crappie USA.
Crappie Expo & Mr. Crappie Invitational Tournament

Date: Oct. 4-6, 2019
Lake: Lake Hamilton, AR
Place: Hot Springs Convention Center

Crappie fishermen have National Championship Tournaments with Crappie USA, Crappie Masters and the American Crappie Trail. However, none provide an event that encourages large number of spectators, especially those with only a little interest in fishing. The Crappie Expo will include access to manufacturers, expert fishermen and pro-staffers all under one roof, along with a fish fry, concert and boat giveaways to the public.

The tournament weigh-in will be held Friday and Saturday in the Convention Center. It’s an overall event crappie fishing has needed for a long time.

“The Expo will run from 9:00 am until 6:00pm the three days of the tournament,” say promoter Wally Marshall, Mr. Crappie. It will be a sale/expo meaning the vendors and manufacturers will be able to sell to the general public. This show will be huge for crappie fishing and will draw fishermen and families, some who have little interest in tournament fishing, to come see what is going on. There is a free fish fry, concert, two boat giveaways and everything is free including entrance to the Expo.”

The tournament is an invitational with a
$1000 entry fee. Only tournament fishermen with 15 years experience, or, teams who are entered through a national sponsor, may enter. It will be limited to 100 boats with an expected payback of 110- to 120-percent with first place paying $40,000.

First day fishing will be Friday with weigh-in at the Game and Fish public ramp off Fish Hatchery road. Saturday will be only the top 50 teams with weigh-in at the convention center. Sunday, the final day, only the top 25 teams weighing in.

Marshall says beginning in 2020, the top 25 teams from the major circuits will be invited, along with the top 25 from the previous year’s invitational. He wants a prestigious tournament that fishermen can’t just enter but must earn their way into and it be an honor to be a part of. His goal is not to take fishermen away from any circuit but to add to their exposure and bring more teams into the trails.

“This will be a family-friendly event that will be good for manufacturers, vendors, fishermen and the general public, along with bringing income to the Hot Springs area,” says Marshall. “It’s something crappie fishing has needed for a long time, I’m passionate about the sport of crappie fishing and am excited about the new level the Expo and Invitational will bring.”
Blackened, Baked & Broiled Crappie Fillets

Blackening fish should be done under a commercial hood or outside unless you want a sooty house, if so, cook on but turn off your smoke detector first ;>)

4 crappie fillets
2 teaspoons paprika
1 teaspoon onion powder
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/2 teaspoon white pepper
1/2 teaspoon thyme
1/2 teaspoon oregano
Non-stick cooking spray
2 tablespoons melted butter divided

Mix paprika, onion powder, garlic powder, cayenne pepper, black pepper, white pepper, thyme and oregano in a small bowl and set aside. Heat an iron skillet over high heat until a white ash forms on the bottom. Coat fillets evenly with the seasonings mix, patting fillets by hand. Gently mist one side of the fillet with cooking spray and place fillet sprayed side down in hot skillet. Pour 1/2 tablespoon melted butter on top of each fillet. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes per side or until underside looks charred. Double dipping makes a thicker coating if desired.

Crappie Baked with Cream Cheese

Cream cheese is a soft, sweet, mild-tasting, white cheese with a high fat content and a slight tang, and the only cheese I would eat as a child. Traditionally, it is made from un-skimmed milk enriched with more cream. According to Kraft Foods, the first American cream cheese was made in Chester, New York in 1872 by dairymen William Lawrence. In 1880, Philadelphia was taken as the brand name, after the city that was considered (at the time) to be home of top quality food in the USA.

A cheese distributor soon commissioned the dairymen to produce the cream cheese in volume under the trade name Philadelphia Brand. The company was eventually bought by Kraft Foods in 1928, and remains the most widely-recognized brand of cream cheese in the United States.

Cream cheese is categorized as a fresh cheese since it is unaged. As a result, once opened, it has a short shelf life. At room temperature cream cheese spreads easily and has a smooth and creamy texture. It is sold in foil-wrapped blocks or in a soft-spread form which has air whipped in to make it spreadable right from the refrigerator. Many flavored versions are available, including those with herbs, fruits and others tastes.

There are references to cream cheese in England as early as 1583 and in France as early as 1651. Recipes are recorded soon after 1754, particularly from Lincolnshire and the southwest of England.

1 1/2 cup cooked, flaked fish
1 3-ounce package cream cheese
1 cup dry macaroni
1 10-ounce can condensed cream of mushroom soup
1/4 cup chopped onion
1/4 cup chopped green pepper
2 tablespoon prepared mustard
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup milk

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Allow cream cheese to soften at room temperature. Prepare macaroni according to package directions. Drain. Blend soup and cream cheese with an electric mixer. Stir in macaroni, fish, onion, green pepper, mustard, salt and milk. Place mixture in a 1 1/2-quart baking dish. Sprinkle with Corn Flake crumbs. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes. Serves 4.

Tips for Broiled Fish

Broiling is a high-heat technique that browns fish more than baking does and adds more flavors. Many types of fish are suitable
for broiling.
• Preheat the broiler for 7 to 10 minutes prior to adding the fish.
• Broil fish in the bottom half of a broiler pan that has been lined with aluminum foil and lightly oiled.
• Oil both sides of a fish fillet, even if you are planning to baste with butter.
• When broiling whole fish, be sure the total weight doesn’t exceed 2 pounds.
• The skin on a whole fish should be pricked with a skewer to prevent it from curling and blistering.
• If broiling skin-on fillets, slash the skin a few times to prevent shrinkage and broil skin side up.
• The distance from the heat source is determined by the thickness of the fish, allow 2-inches distance from the heat for each 1/2-inch of thickness.
• Thicker fish fillets should be moved further from the heat to prevent over-cooking on the surface before the center is cooked completely.
• A general rule for broiling times is allow 2 minutes per side for each 1/2-inch of fish thickness. Or set oven rack 4 to 6 inches below the heating element to broil fish 6 to 8 minutes per inch of thickness (slightly less is using gas broiler).
• Fish thicker than 3/4-inch should be turned after half of the cooking time or else place fish farther from the heating element.
• Trout are a splendid choice for broiling. Less fatty or lean fish such as catfish, bass, striped or crappie, etc., dry out unless farther from the broiler and basted periodically with butter, marinade or oil.
• Don’t try to achieve the golden brown exterior you find on broiled fish from a restaurant by cooking it longer than the times recommended. Home broilers simply don’t get as hot as their commercial counterparts and you’ll end up overcooking your fish.
SOUTH CAROLINA CRAPPIE ASSOC.
LAKE WYLIE
JANUARY 19th
1. David Kingsmore/Joey Hilton 11.57
2. Lynn Robertson/Robert Jackson 11.39
3. Tracey Davis/Chuck Davis 10.79
4. Roland Addy/Bob Addy 10.72
5. Greg Matthews/Ronnie Shealy 10.64

BIG FISH
1. Lynn Robertson/Robert Jackson 2.24

FLORIDA CRAPPIE CLUB
ST JOHNS RIVER
JANUARY 26th
1. James Hazelton 12.08
2. Darryl Cole/Terri Cole 12.06
3. Larry Durden 12.02
4. Danny/Beth 12

BIG FISH
1. Larry Durden 2.05

LAKE OKEECHOBEE CRAPPIE SERIES
LAKE OKEECHOBEE
JANUARY 26th
1. Brad Gibson/Ron Veale 10.02
2. David Morris/Larry Ballard 9.26
3. Tim Eberly/George Parker 8.87
4. Jeff Sims/Wayne Quick 8.69
5. Capp Williams/John Dunlap 8.67

BIG FISH
1. Jeff Sims/Wayne Quick 1.68

MIDDLE TENNESSEE CRAPPIE CLUB
NORMANDY
JANUARY 26th
1. Toby Ivey/Matthew Nash 9.22
2. J W Jackson 3.99
3. Randy Clark/Del Hayes 2.52

BIG FISH
1. J W Jackson 1.99
S.N.A. KRAPPIE MASTERS
BARREN RIVER LAKE

JANUARY 26th
1. Willie Johns 4.13
2. Brad Bowles/Dean McCoy 3.1
3. Tony Long 0.14

BIG FISH
1. Willie Johns 1.4

YADKIN RIVER CRAPPIE CLUB
LAKE TILLERY

JANUARY 26th
1. Eudy/Koontz 11.97
2. Walser/Montgomery 10.66
3. Hawkins/Hawkins 10.32
4. Clifton/Clifton 9.53
5. Mayour/Rayburn 9.19

BIG FISH
1. Eudy/Koontz 1.815

WAPPAPELLO CRAPPIE CLUB

JANUARY 27th
1. Chism/Chism 10.45
2. Houchins/Houchins 9.89
3. Emerson/Greer 9.14
4. Owens/Maddux 8.17
5. Channell/Channell 8.17

BIG FISH
1. Owens/Maddux 1.88

ULTIMATE PANFISH LEAGUE
LAKE SARAH

JANUARY 27th
1. Matt Milbrandt/Adam Griffith 8.19
2. Ryan Sorenson/Mitch Bradshaw 7.8
3. Stuart Manning/Michael Thompson 7.71
4. Travis Adams/Gary Sandberg 7.62
5. Chris Lefean/Jake Morris 7.5

BIG FISH
1. Grant Birznieks/Pete Anderson 0.98
**CRAPPIE MASTERS**

**FEBRUARY 1st - 2nd**

ST JOHNS RIVER

1. George Parker/Tim Eberly  
2. Billy Williams/Scott Williams  
3. Lamar Young/Justin Churchwell  
4. Jim Freeman/Brian Bollencacker  
5. Terry Barker/Robert Harris

**BIG FISH**

1. Terry Barker/Robert Harris

**MALE/FEMALE**

1. Eric Howard/Leann Howard

**ADULT/YOUTH**

1. David Simmons/Jaxson Hall

**BEAVER LAKE CRAPPIE ASSOC.**

**FEBRUARY 2nd**

BEAVER LAKE

1. Clay Johnson  
2. Payton Usery/Tiffany Usery  
3. Matt Phillips

**BIG FISH**

1. Tiffany Usery
**FISH THE CAROLINAS**

LAKE NORMAN

1. N. Quan/C. Grimm 10.69
2. D. Potts/B. Shore 8.86
3. R. Smith/G. Smith 6.72
4. K. Hawkins/B. McGuirt 6.57
5. T. Robertson/N. Robertson 6.52

**BIG FISH**

1. N. Quan/C. Grimm 2.02

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**MAGNOLIA CRAPPIE CLUB**

WASHINGTON LAKE

1. Steve Marquis/Keith Sullivan 15.7
2. Sid Steen/Scott Steen 14.78
3. Taylor Rivers/Dwayne Barner 14.37
4. Keith Moore/Billy Baughman 14.22
5. Jerry Gross/Debbie Gross 13.42

**BIG FISH**

1. Steve Marquis/Keith Sullivan 2.76

---

**CRAPPIE MASTERS**

LAKE TALQUIN

1. Wade McDonald/Eric Cagle 27.48
2. George Parker/Tim Eberly 27.15
3. Billy Williams/Scott Williams 27.08
4. Todd Gunn/Edrick Tolbert 26.94
5. Dustin Miller/Dusty Stewart 26.66

**BIG FISH**

1. Todd Gunn/Edrick Tolbert 2.68

**MALE/FEMALE**

1. Eric Howard/Leann Howard 25.93

**ADULT/YOUTH**

1. David Simmons/Jaxon Hall 19.06

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**SHOALS AREA CRAPPIE ASSOC.**

WHEELER LAKE

1. Keith Dodd/Darrell Keil 13.02
2. Jenkins/Keith/Josh 11.35
3. Johnathan Kirby 10.08

**BIG FISH**

1. Rick Robinson 2.82
## Tournament Results

### TWIN LAKES CRAPPIE CLUB

**FEBRUARY 9th**

1. Chris Collins/James Thomason 6
2. Johny Feagen/Angie Feagen 5.83
3. Tanner/Jin Ed 4.62
4. Tony Sheppard/Mike Sheppard 3.22
5. Frank Finley/Reid Finley 3.14

**BIG FISH**

1. Chris Collins/James Thomason 1.67

### YADKIN RIVER CRAPPIE TRAIL

**FEBRUARY 9th**

1. Hawkins/Hawkins 12.7
2. Smith/Harding 12.66
3. Maynor/Rayburn 12.57
4. Eudy/Koontz 12.42
5. McGee/Eudy 10.53

**BIG FISH**

1. Smith/Harding 2.52

### ULTIMATE PANFISH LEAGUE

**FEBRUARY 10th**

1. Justin Hammer/Joe Crapser 9.76
2. Ryan Salemi/Kevin Clancy 9.15
3. Zach Jans/John Kline 9
4. Mark Sandquist/Jacob Grotbo 8.47
5. Kyle From/Aaron Carlson 8.27

**BIG FISH**

1. Justin Hammer/Joe Crapser 1.69

### AMERICAN CRAPPIE TRAIL

**FEBRUARY 15th - 16th**

1. Johnny Walker/Jeff Ramsey 31.67
2. Kent Watson/Drew Morgan 28.88
3. Mike Gore/Deborah Gore 27.96
4. Tim Blackley/Paul Turner 27.47
5. Gary Stephens/Tim Little 27.17

**BIG FISH**

1. Johnny Walker/Jeff Ramsey 3.19
## Tournament Results

### BEAVER LAKE CRAPPIE ASSOC.

**FEBRUARY 16th**

<table>
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<th>Place</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Seth Esen/Randy Eden</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cameron White/Bethany White</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cody Usery</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Brian Trolinger/John Doyl</td>
<td>6.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Payton Usery/Tiffany Usery</td>
<td>6.74</td>
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**BIG FISH**

<table>
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<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Seth Esen/Randy Eden</td>
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### CENTRAL ALABAMA CRAPIE CLUB

**FEBRUARY 16th**

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Matt Green/Joey Dickens</td>
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<td>Travis Hudson/Kelly Jacks</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Jason Threadgill/Brandon Threadgill</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Jason Hart/Tracy Hart</td>
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**BIG FISH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Matt Green/Joey Dickens</td>
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### CRAPPIE USA

**FEBRUARY 16th**

**AMATEUR DIVISION**

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<th>Team</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fred Walker/Danny Sisson</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Gary Kendrick/Blake Kendrick</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jason Bailey/Lori Bailey</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Frank A Jackson/James Stewart</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Greg Hanson/Paul Johnson</td>
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**PRO DIVISION**

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<th>Place</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rodney Talley/John Baker</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sean Dees/Aaron Knight</td>
<td>12.03</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Forrest Walker/Jacob Walker</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Robert Harris/Richard Greer</td>
<td>11.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Alan McGinnis/Charles Wood</td>
<td>9.96</td>
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**BIG FISH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
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<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sean Dees/Aaron Knoght</td>
<td>2.3</td>
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## Tournament Results

### EAST TN CRAPPIE CLUB
**FT LOUDON LAKE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Team</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Darren Caughron/Matt Xenos</td>
<td>9.57</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Brandon Henderson/Brian Harrell</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Mike Ferguson/Tim Fletcher</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Scott Baines/Alan Wetzel</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Tim Irwin/Corey Owenby</td>
<td>6.39</td>
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**BIG FISH**

- 1. Mike Willard | 1.55 |

### FLORIDA CRAPPIE CLUB
**DORA/BEAUCLAIR/CARLTON**

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<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Larry Durden</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>George/Rosie</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Darryl Cole/Terry Cole</td>
<td>7.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Harrell/Joe</td>
<td>7.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Chuck/Randy</td>
<td>7.06</td>
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**BIG FISH**

- 1. Larry Durden | 1.07 |

### PEACH STATE CRAPPIE CLUB
**BLACKSHEAR**

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<th>Position</th>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Justin Churchwell/Lamar Young</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Scott Williams/Jacob Sapp</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Chance Kelly/Jackson Hanson</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Kyle Radford/Jason Holliday</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Keith Register/Robin Register</td>
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**BIG FISH**

- 1. Justin Churchwell/Lamar Young | 1.87 |

### SOUTH CAROLINA CRAPPIE ASSOC.
**CLARKS HILL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Team</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Lynn Robertson/Robert Jackson</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Chip Knight/Charles Knight</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Mike Huffstetler/Statia Huffstetler</td>
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<td>Brad Soper/Todd Frick</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Russell Riley/Derek Fulton</td>
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**BIG FISH**

- 1. Tracey Davis/Chuck Davis | 2.66 |

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36 Crappie NOW March 2019
CRAPPIE ANGLERS OF TEXAS
LAKE PALESTINE

FEBRUARY 16th

DIVISION 1
1. Dave Myers/Dan Langston         13.98
2. Jeff Schwieterman/James Rains    13.22
3. Mark Standridge/Darryl Standridge 12.7
4. Brandon Miles/Martin Klien       12.22
5. Jerry Hancock/James Peagran      12.05

DIVISION 2
1. Kevin Tidwell/Casey Jeffrey       11.98
2. Joey Johnson/Chris Coffman        11.7
3. Robert L./Michia P                11.63
4. Ron Duran/David Cobb             10.69
5. Brandon Davis/Brandie Davis       9.67

BIG FISH
1. James Aldridge/Stephanie Aldridge 2.58

WAPPAPELLO CRAPPIE CLUB
WAPPAPELLO LAKE

FEBRUARY 16th - 17th
1. Guiling/Conner                    16.6
2. Hill/Green                        16.29
3. Roper/Miller                      14.9
4. Parris/Comfort                    14.26
5. Houchins/Houchins                 14.15

BIG FISH
1. Chism/Chism                       1.93
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type</th>
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<tr>
<td>MAR 1st-2</td>
<td>CRAPPIE MASTERS</td>
<td>LAKE JORDAN/ALABAMA RIVER</td>
<td>ALABAMA STATE CHAMP</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAR 1st-2</td>
<td>CRAPPIE USA</td>
<td>LAKE WYLIE</td>
<td>SUPER EVENT</td>
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<td>MAR 2nd</td>
<td>BEAVER LAKE CRAPPIE ASSOCIATION</td>
<td>BEAVER LAKE</td>
<td>CLUB</td>
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<td>MAR 2nd</td>
<td>SHOALS AREA CRAPPIE</td>
<td>LAKE GUNTERSVILLE</td>
<td>CLUB</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAR 3rd</td>
<td>CHATTANOOGA CRAPPIE CLUB</td>
<td>CHESTER FROST PARK</td>
<td>CLASSIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAR 3rd</td>
<td>ULTIMATE PANFISH LEAGUE</td>
<td>CLEARWATER LAKE</td>
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<td>CRAPPIE MASTERS</td>
<td>WASH, LEE, PARADISE, FERG, WHITT</td>
<td>1st LEG OF MS STATE CHAMP</td>
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<td>MAR 9th</td>
<td>CRAPPIE USA</td>
<td>LAKE GUNTERSVILLE</td>
<td>TRAIL</td>
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<td>FISH THE CAROLINAS</td>
<td>CLARKS HILL</td>
<td>CLUB</td>
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<td>FLORIDA CRAPPIE CLUB</td>
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<td>CLASSIC</td>
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<td>MURRAY</td>
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<td>NORTHEAST OHIO CRAPPIE CLUB</td>
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<td>MAR 15th-16</td>
<td>CRAPPIE USA</td>
<td>LAKES MARION, MOULTRIE SANTEE</td>
<td>SUPER EVENT</td>
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<td>CENTRAL ARKANSAS CRAPPIE ASSOC.</td>
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<td>LAKE FORK LAKE</td>
<td>CRAPPIEFEST/INDIVIDUAL</td>
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<td>EAST TN CRAPPIE CLUB</td>
<td>WATTS BAR LAKE</td>
<td>CLUB</td>
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<td>HOI CRAPPIE CLUB</td>
<td>SANGCHRIS</td>
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<td>CLARKS HILL</td>
<td>VETERANS TOURNAMENT</td>
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<td>MAR 16th</td>
<td>TWIN LAKES CRAPPIE CLUB</td>
<td>BLOOD RIVER</td>
<td>CLUB</td>
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<td>MAR 16th-17</td>
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<td>GRANADA LAKE</td>
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<td>SOUTHERN ILLINOIS CRAPPIE ASSOC</td>
<td>CARLYLE LAKE</td>
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<td>CRAPPIE MASTERS</td>
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1st Place This Month!

Tracy Hart
Caught on Lake Talquin
01/26/19

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.
Runner Up
Jason Hart
Caught on Lake Talquin
01/26/19

Runner Up
Will Kilman
Sardis Lower Lake
Mississippi
2/13/19
1 lb 13oz. 15 1/4 inch long
Goodbye until next month

Fishing isn’t over just because there’s rain.

Tim Huffman photo