

# Icing Jackpot Crappie

BY JOHN ANDREW

This month we will discuss the crappie connection and fishing locations that we have previously marked a G.P.S. way-point during the open water period. We will discuss tried and true patterns (from my guiding, past and present) for individual lakes. Some of this information will always apply to your ice crappie and open water crappie fishing.

When fishing spring, summer and fall for crappie, we develop obvious patterns during springtime there on the shore-lines during spawning. This pattern lasts for about 10 days depending on the body of water you are fishing and the fishing pressure those fish receive, and including the weather and temperatures. These locations should be recorded on your depth finder's GPS. Using small baits and thin line we can coax strikes from these shallow fish and have a good end result of catchable fish.

As these same fish move off their shallow locations, they will set up temporary home locations along the first drop off or along the beginning weed line close by, and can be caught by fishing deeper, depending on your water environment. Now, as these fish begin their early summer movement, this is where we want to also use our handheld GPS. When we start catching fish off of brush piles and deeper weed lines or along bottom features not normally fished at any other time of the year, the use of the handheld GPS is very important for going back during wintertime to re-fish these locations. So, a long summer pattern that works for weeks on end will shift as fall approaches and again, using the GPS on your depth finder is critical for the following season and the use of the handheld GPS for early ice location is also very much needed.

We have noticed that a body of water that has a "very large population" of crappie will see the fish relate to structure similar to how walleye relate to summer and fall structure. Yes, we catch crappie that are on steep ledges, sharp drop offs next to shore, edges of mid-lake humps, long extending points from shore, along certain areas on deep flats and deep weeds. The portion of the lake we fish may be large, say two miles long and 3/4 miles wide and only have a maximum depth of 15 feet. Any irregularities along the bottom, extending points from the shoreline, brush or weed line edges will attract fish, being that this section of the lake is relatively shallow, but large. These spots are recorded on handheld devices so we can quickly return to these spots during winter conditions, by searching these areas we always find feeding fish.

Light line, small hooks, small crappie minnows, wax worms, learning the best



Dave Peterson from Key West, Fla., caught these summer pattern crappie while fishing with the author.



Dave Coons of Land O' Lakes, Wis., caught these 13- and 14-inch crappie while fishing in late November 2012.



Dave Coons of Land O' Lakes, Wis., caught this 13-inch crappie while fishing in late November 2012.

color of your lure and even using colored wax worms are extremely important for ice fishing. You will catch crappie on almost any color, but when you find the right color, your catch will rise from a few fish to a lot of fish.

Working a hump that you have recorded at the time of open water will almost always yield fish; although you may have to find the productive side of the hump, mostly the steep side of the hump and at twilight, the top of the hump. Using a handheld depth finder saves a lot of drilling time.

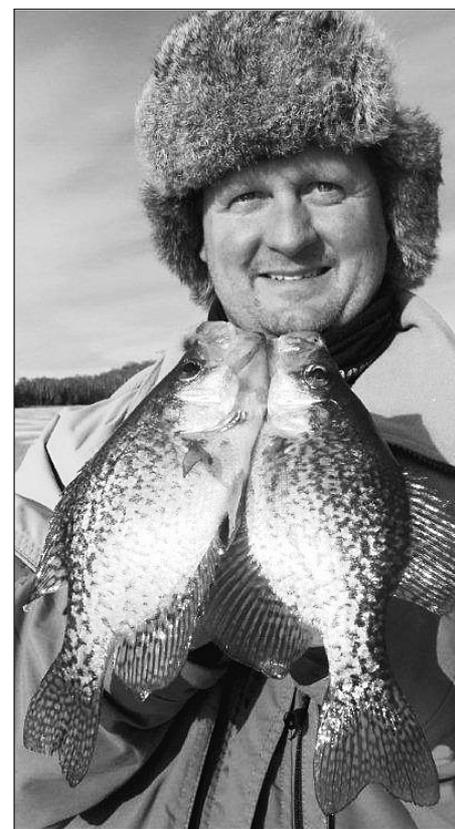
The steep shoreline drop may only be from five to 13 feet but this can be a bonanza during late fall and wintertime, especially if there is a brush pile located along that edge. The use of an underwater camera will accelerate your productivity once you see the structure you are looking for.

Drilling many, many holes about 50 feet apart along the deeper flats will result in a productive location. Once you catch a few, others will follow into the area you are producing from. Remember these techniques work on a highly populated lake of crappie. In a shallow, large area, as mentioned above, there are times when the deepest section of that area can be a gold mine, and I mean the **jackpot** of crappie. Make sure this is marked on your GPS. We have found that a long flat or extended sand or rock bar off shore that drops off an additional six or eight feet can also be the jackpot. As more and more people discover these methods and techniques, some of these water environments will wane as the crowds descend onto them.

Dave Coons of Land O' Lakes, Wis., caught these 13- and 14-inch crappie while fishing in late November 2012.



Ken Close of Milwaukee, Wis., caught this 14-inch crappie while fishing with the author on January 2, 2013.



Jim Gardner of Chicago, Ill., caught these crappie while ice fishing with the author in early January 2013.

Keep enough to enjoy and release the rest or you will be out of luck at these good lakes in just a couple of years.

Tight lines and good fishing!  
The author, John Andrew, owner/operator of the AnglersChoiceGuideService.com is a two-time world record holder. He can be reached at 715-892-3020. John Andrew is a

fulltime resident and fulltime, year 'round tour guide for fishing and hunting in the state of Wisconsin, specializing in Vilas, Iron, and Oneida counties.

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