

# Firecracker Bluegill

BY JOHN ANDREW

Summertime bluegill are fun and easy to catch. As children, we had caught them from shore or off the dock during family get-togethers at the lake cabin or resort where we vacationed.

Practicing various methods, from hooking a worm with a bobber to casting tiny plastic baits and spinners and my favorite of all, fly fishing for bluegill, are great summer fun for kids and adults of all ages.

Pulling the boat up to a patch of lily pads, dropping the anchor and staying there hour after hour catching fish brings a smile to many people. Just watch a child's face light up with excitement as they reel in one bluegill after another—a truly joyful occasion they will remember for years to come.

As the water temperature rapidly increases during the summer months, the bluegill move shallow to feed on almost anything that they can squeeze into their tiny mouths. Shallow logs, docks, swim rafts, weeds, a fallen tree and lily pads are all magnets for these tasty fish.

Sunny days have always been a favorite time for bluegill. As the heat of the bright sun shines onto the water, the bluegill will use all the above areas mentioned for cover, but when offered bait or a lure the size of their liking, they will come out of hiding and attack the bait with a vengeance. Using a fly rod will also provide hours of action catching bluegill. A tiny black gnat, dark green or brown nymph, brown fly and very small poppers all work extremely well. The fight and battle that a hooked bluegill offers on a fly rod is absolutely unbelievable. They pull like a small bone fish from the ocean or a small Arctic grayling from the far north. The bluegill has been there for us for untold years. They offer family enjoyment, and are great for the serious anglers who desire them for fine table fare.

Many children make their fishing debut with the panfish, whether it is perch, crappie or the bluegill. I remember my grandfather always going out to the reeds (bull rushes) in the early morning on Big St. Germain Lake, where he lived. Each year, during the hot summer, he's catch 'gill after 'gill all day long. Joining him back in the early 1960s was a true thrill! When hooked, the 'gills ran straight for the reeds and if possible, they would rap the fishing line continuously around a single stalk of reed and we were stuck, forcing the line to break while trying to pull the hook free. Believe me when I tell you, Grandpa was never happy when that happened.

When we were done fishing, using an old Coca Cola bottle cap nailed to a small



This happy angler caught these July bluegill while fishing with John Andrew.



This youngster caught this bluegill while fishing with a hook, split shot, bobber and a piece of nightcrawler and John Andrew.

piece of dried out maple tree branch (about 10 inches long and one-half inch thick), he would clean and scale every keeper, which was never more than dinner for that night. Grandpa would say, "Don't worry, they will be there when we go back." And he was right! Each week of summer, we had a fish dinner from those reeds.



Big belly, big head, spawned out and still a giant.



While fishing with John Andrew, the bluegill shown in this picture were caught with a black Nat on a fly rod.

This is still true today for similar locations on many, many lakes across northern Wisconsin and several other Midwest and Southern states.

Enjoy the bounty but respect the resource. To be here for generations to come, these fish need all our help. In fact, taking what's needed for a meal or two is actually protecting the fish population. Learning the critical concepts for continually catching these fish is not hard. Ultra-light tackle with two-pound test monofilament line and micro lures is a fun start.

Locating these fish, as mentioned above, is not difficult either. This is only effective during the heat of the summer, not spring or fall. Remember, the old-fashioned method of a small hook, split shot, small bobber and a piece of nightcrawler is still the most used and tried method of catching the bluegill. If you do not like the mess and smell of the worms,



Using ultra-light tackle and micro-light lures produced this trophy bluegill for this happy angler while fishing with John Andrew.

try a single kernel of whole corn right out of the can; it works! Also, from the refrigerator, a piece of bologna, cheese and even a small tightly bound bread ball can be used as bait.

Personally though, I would stick with the worms, corn, micro lures and my favorite, the fly rod.

Good fishing and set the hook.

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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