

# Summertime Crappie

BY JOHN ANDREW

Working deeper for summer crappie is very normal for most of us. Let's go over three specific techniques and locations for catching these tasty fish. To start with (location No. 1), I teach clients how important deeper wood and/or brush piles are, as these wood structures provide cover not only to the crappie but also to a host of smaller young-of-the-year hatchlings of different species of fish and, of course, larger game fish.

Once the structure has been located by using our electronics, I mark the spot by dropping out a marker buoy on top of the spot, and then we cast small jigs tipped with small minnows to the underwater wood. I use six-pound test Berkley FireLine in the smoke color on all my crappie and other rods. I like this line because of the casting quality, strength, along with the no-stretch factor.

The speed of descent (how fast the hook sinks) is a very important part of this technique. We want this presentation to look as natural as possible to the crappie that are suspended in and/or around the wood structure we are fishing. The slower the bait sinks, the more aggressive the strike becomes from the crappie. This is why a 1/32-ounce jig head is what we use. Can you catch them on larger size jig heads? Yes, of course you will; but for consistent productivity we have found smaller jig heads (in this situation) are better.

We cast out to the location or slightly past the location and allow several seconds for the jig to sink depending how deep you want your bait to sink. Then we start a slow retrieve with our rod tips in the upward position so when the strike does happen you will see the line twitch, or in our situation by using the no-stretch line such as the Berkley FireLine, my clients will even feel the strike. When we do get the strike, setting the hook immediately is good because the small jig size and small minnow size gets sucked right into the crappie's mouth.

Slip bobbers are also very important when fishing these underwater wood locations. Normally we will be anchoring and getting slightly closer to the location, and then use a No. 6, 8 or 10, long-shanked hook, held under the bobber with a split shot. I like to go with a slightly bigger minnow, but not longer than one inch. We also like to wait about three seconds after the bobber goes under before setting the hook.

When we are going after crappie in the weeds (location No. 2), this provides us with the option of all three techniques



Betty Gunther of Rockford, Ill., with a nice catch of crappie. Photo by year 'round guide John Andrew.



Dave Coons of Land O' Lakes, Wis., all smiles with his catch. Photo by year 'round guide John Andrew.

to be used. Using slip bobbers with the anchor down is almost mandatory. If we are fishing down in the weeds with our hooks and minnows, drifting slip bobbers is just a bad idea, since the hooks will constantly get snagged in the weeds. By anchoring we can target open areas of the weeds to cast our bobbers towards. Weeds and crappie are a good combination. Again, we are using No. 6, 8 or 10 long-shanked hooks, along with a two- to three-inch slip bobber; bigger bobbers create wind resistance when cast.

If we are fishing crappie in shorter weeds, we can drift our bobbers above the weeds with good success. Casting jigs is very good for weed fishing if the weeds are shorter and do not interfere with our retrieve. With this approach we are going to go to a 1/16-ounce jig head size and a longer, light action rod. This allows us to cast longer distances without spooking the fish with the approaching boat and trolling motor. Again, the retrieve is with the tip of the rod in the upward position and reeling slowly.

Fishing a large, soft bottom bay (location No. 3)—say 50 to 150 acres in size that has a maximum depth of 15 to 20

feet with two or three ten-foot deep humps located throughout—can be very, very good fishing for summertime crappie. Fishing these humps can be done with all three techniques. Drift jigging is very effective, or simply drifting with a long line set out, 50 to 100 feet and slowly moving over the hump without the jigging motion is also very effective.

Holding the boat over the hump with your trolling motor and vertical fishing is also very productive. Anchoring and using slip bobbers will work well during windy conditions. Boat control when drifting and boat location when anchoring is very important. Always anchor the boat upwind of the hump or brush pile so you can cast with the wind.

The color of the jig head does, at times, make a difference. You will need to experiment and find which color works best in the water clarity you are fishing.

Try these favorites: dark green, white, blue, plain led and pink.



Michell Spragon of Milwaukee, Wis., displays her success. Photo by year 'round guide John Andrew.

## New Boater-Assistance Service Opens On Lake Superior Black Warrior Marine In Bayfield, Wis., Joins the BoatUS Fleet

Capt. Tucker Culberson, who has been boating on Lake Superior since he was a young boy, has turned his passion for northern Wisconsin waters into a career. Culberson earned his USCG captain's license when he was still in high school and has been working on boats ever since. Now he has launched his own business, an on-the-water towing service that will be a boon to boaters who need a jumpstart, run out of fuel, have a mechanical breakdown or run aground.

His company, Black Warrior Marine, has joined the BoatUS on-the-water-assistance network. Black Warrior is the first and only dedicated towing service working in the Apostle Islands area of Lake Superior, and Culberson is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week during the boating season.

Similar to an auto club for boaters, BoatUS offers on-the-water towing plans for freshwater boaters and anglers for just \$58 a year. This includes BoatUS or BoatUS Angler membership. Without a towing plan, boaters face costs that average \$600 per incident nationally.

Bayfield and the Apostle Islands constitute "the most beautiful spot" on Lake Superior, according to Culberson, as well as the most popular recreational boating area on the lake. "It's big sailing country,

with races every weekend," he said. "But the number of powerboats and trailer boats is increasing every year. It's probably 60 percent sail, 40 percent power. Fishing is good, too," he added.

The nearby Apostle Islands, 22 islands that make up the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, are a major draw for boaters, who go there to hike, bike, kayak or just enjoy the remote beauty. Boaters from as far away as Duluth, Minneapolis and Chicago keep their boats in Bayfield, and others charter or trailer their boats in.

"The waters are deep," Culberson said, "but there are points near shore where people go aground every year." Culberson's boat, a 23-foot Grady-White with twin 150-horsepower outboards, is able to help with just about any problem. It sports a "BoatUS Approved Tower" sticker on the windshield, and is fully rigged for towing and salvage, with powerful pumps, battery jump packs, dive gear and extra fuel.

Boaters can contact Black Warrior Marine by hailing on VHF Channel 16, calling 612-708-1303, or calling the BoatUS toll-free Dispatch Service at 800-391-4869. To see the location on a map go to [www.BoatUS.com/bayfield](http://www.BoatUS.com/bayfield).

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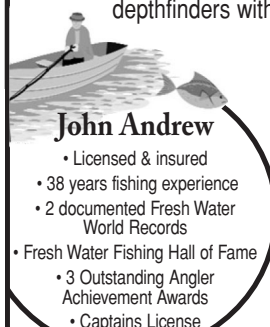
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