

Tactics for Catching Crappies in Hot Summer Weather
Article by Don Wirth in Field and Stream

July

PROBE CHANNEL COVER

With the lake now topping 80 degrees, crappies will most often be hanging around deep creek and river channels. Look for them to be suspending near, or holding tight to, stumps, brush piles, and flooded standing timber adjacent to channels in 20 to 30 feet of water. Mark channel drops with buoys, then probe for crappies using a Kentucky rig (see below). Use cheap 30-pound mono as leaders off of the main line. The stiff, springy leaders will keep the two lures from tangling. A bow-mounted sonar with the transducer attached to the trolling motor will help you stay on target. Lower the sinker straight down into bottom cover and s-l-o-w-l-y reel it up, repeating as you progress along the channel. July crappies often suspend in a tower formation, and this presentation will catch fish from 30 to 10 feet deep.

August

DRAG OFFSHORE HUMPS

Even though the lake temperature may exceed 90 degrees now, you can still catch crappies by keying on offshore humps (submerged islands). Target those no shallower than 15 feet on top, especially if they rise out of deep water near a flowing channel. Crappies gravitate to the peak of the hump to feed on bait fish when current is being generated from the dam, then drop back to suspend off its deep sides once the turbines shut down. Idle over the structure, marking it with buoys. Move to open water, let out about 40 feet of line with a Kentucky rig on the business end, and head back to the spot with your trolling motor, dragging the rig behind your boat. When you move across the hump and feel the sinker hit bottom, speed up slightly; if you haven't felt the sinker drag for several seconds, slow down until you do. Crappies suspending in hot water can be maddeningly slow to bite. When you spot a school on your sonar, you may have to approach it from several different directions to entice a strike. A sudden change of speed can also trigger a bite. As the rig passes near the school, either speed up your trolling motor to quicken the presentation, or kill it so the rig sinks. Find the right combination, and you can get two hookups at once.

Follow the Forecast:

Muggy

Minnows fade quickly in the heat, so switch to tube baits. Look for towers of suspending fish at drop offs down to 30 feet and probe them vertically with a Kentucky rig.

Windy

Wave action creates cloudy water perfect for ambushes, and crappies emerge from channels to prey on bait feeding on windblown plankton. Head to banks with nearby drop offs and slowly swim a small white or chartreuse twister jig.

High Pressure

Under clear skies, crappies retreat from piercing UV light in brushy cover near channel drops. Fish straight down into the thick stuff with a Kentucky rig.

Dropping Pressure

Before a storm, crappies school up to bird-dog wandering bait fish. Make multiple passes over channel drops until you find them on your graph, then troll crank baits or slow-drift jigs through the school.

