

**Water Temperature: 35 Degrees**

Crappie will be holding tight to bottom cover in 30-50 feet deep and tight-lipped, but they still need to eat and is catchable with the right presentation. Look for humps or other bottom-hugging cover in or near main-lake river channels. Fish straight down with a vertical presentation using small live minnows on a Kentucky rig, or very slowly "bounce" small spoons jugged just above the fish. Kentucky Rig consist of two hooks about a foot or two apart with a bell sinker attached to bottom.

**Water Temperature: 40 Degrees**

Schools of crappie often suspend in open water in 20-30 feet deep as they begin migrating from deep river channels toward major tributaries, where they will eventually spawn. Most females will remain on river channel structure in considerably deeper water. Slow troll as slow as possible with hook/minnow and a Road Runner with minnow tied on bottom just above the schools.

**Water Temperature: 45 Degrees**

Many crappies have started migrating toward their eventual spawning areas. Target crappie hanging tight to submerged wood on deep channel banks, about a quarter of the way into the creek arm, 10 to 20 feet deep. Cast soft plastic grubs or other lures with a vibrating tails to channel bends with wood. Cast, let the lure sink until it contacts the cover, then immediately begin swimming it slowly and steadily back to the boat.

**Water Temperature: 50 Degrees**

The prespawn migration is in full swing, with large numbers of crappies moving into reservoir tributary arms. The males will make their move shallower following a few days of mild, sunny weather. Continue targeting the creek channel migration route, keying on isolated wood cover along channel bends with deep water nearby, since crappie will insulate themselves from the impact of frontal passages. Fish with minnow or jig/wax worm in wood cover as males are preparing the cover for the spawn. Sometimes it wouldn't hurt to turn around and fish off other side of the boat with a Kentucky rig baited with minnows or a minnow/tube bait combination along the channel drop. The females will be hanging there waiting for the prime time to move in to spawn.

**Water Temperature: 55 Degrees**

Expect the bite to get more aggressive as crappies begin feeling "the urge to merge" and feed heavily before spawning. Schools of baitfish continue to be a primary location factor as crappies fatten up before spawning. Shallow ditches veering off the creek channel and running toward shallow spawning coves can hold huge fish. Work the creek channel with curly-tail grubs or minnows, keying on brushy cover in the 6 to 12 foot zone. Crappie may be as shallow as 1-3 feet deep along these structures.

**Water Temperature: 60 Degrees**

Male crappies fan out the nest while the females hang around outside the cover waiting for the water temperature to get a degree or two warmer before moving in on the beds, and now is a good time to load the boat with oversize fish. Some crappie may have already started the spawn if shallower water is warmer. Tightlining minnows and jiggling tube baits around sunken cover will score heavy crappie catches in murky water. In clear water, back off your target, make a long cast and swim a curlytail grub.

**Water Temperature: 65 Degrees**

Spawning should be in full swing now, but some will still be in a prespawn mode. If you aren't catching quality fish on likely spawning cover, back off and target prespawn crappies instead. Spawning takes place on woody cover such as: brush piles, stake beds, etc... in the upper ends of brushy coves and creek arms, in 2 to 8 feet deep, and some as shallow as 6 inches deep depending on the lake's water clarity. Prespawn fish will be in three to six feet of water, but will chase minnows shallower. Tight-lining minnows on long rods is the standard method now, but target-casting grubs and tubes to submerged wood works, too.

**Water Temperature: 70 Degrees**

Some crappies will be done spawning, while others are finally moving onto their beds. Keep fishing as the spawn is still going strong. Cast tubes and grubs or tight-line minnows close to cover. If you're catching small fish, back off and hit deeper isolated stake beds and stumps for the bigger females.

**Water Temperature: 75 Degrees**

While a few lingering crappie may still be spawning, postspawn fish will hang around bedding areas for several days until the water temperature rises. Some postspawn fish will be on isolated pieces of cover adjacent to spawning sites as the males move back in to protect the nests. Determine the crappies' spawning mode. If tube baits or minnows don't produce strikes in thick brush and stake beds, cast grubs to scattered wood.

**Water Temperature: 80 Degrees**

Most crappie fishermen hang up their rods after the spawn, but a shift in tactics can yield fast action on postspawn fish. Before moving to their deep summer haunts, many crappies gravitate to the edges of flats, hanging tight to scattered wood or suspending above the breakline closest to the structure. Troll small diving crankbaits like the 200 series Bandit around the edges of flats in the 6 to 18 foot zone, occasionally banging the plugs off stumps and bottom.

**Water Temperature: 85 Degrees**

Crappies will be moving out of tributaries via the same creek channel migration routes they traveled before spawning. Slabs gang up on secondary and primary points that drop quickly into deep water. Look for them suspending 18 to 30 feet deep around baitfish schools. Target channel points using a Kentucky rig bumped slowly along bottom.

**Water Temperature: 90 Degrees**

Crappies suspend for long periods, and may be sluggish now to conserve metabolic energy. River-run reservoirs with a flowing channel usually have better fishing now than calmer lakes. Channel ledges lined with standing timber or brushy cover offer your best bet now. Crappies are probably suspending 18 to 30 feet deep in 50 feet of water. You can still catch crappie in shallow water if you can find shady areas such as lily pads and over-hanging trees where water may be cooler.

**Water Temperature: 85 Degrees**

While the lake's surface temperature cools quickly as the days grow shorter in early fall, deeper water cools more gradually, so expect to find crappies deep. Deep channel cover continues to be your best bet for finding concentrations of fish. Kentucky rigs bumped along cover and minnows or spoons jigged over wood.

**Water Temperature: 80 Degrees**

Crappies are following channels, or moving shallow to prey on baitfish schools, so expect a pickup in activity. Primary tributary points, where the creek and river channel intersect, can hold a ton of baitfish and crappies. Target the 12 to 25 foot zone with minnows on a Kentucky rig. If crappies are suspended, slow-troll jigs, Road Runners, or crankbaits.

**Water Temperature: 75 Degrees**

Shad move into shallow coves and tributaries to spawn, and crappies follow. The first half of reservoir tributary arms will hold large schools of crappies. Target scattered wood along the creek channel 10 to 20 feet deep, sometimes shallower depending on water clarity. Kentucky rigs with minnow works well for me.

**Water Temperature: 70 Degrees**

Crappies follow baitfish back into the tributaries to feed and fatten up for the winter. Check channels, secondary points and flats in the back half of reservoir tributary arms. Crappies hold anywhere from two to 10 feet deep, depending on water clarity. Cover water quickly, casting a curly-tail grub or small shad colored crankbait to every piece of wood you can find.

**Water Temperature: 65 Degrees**

Reservoir drawdown usually starts about this time, thus dropping water levels push baitfish and crappies out of tributary arms into deeper water. Crappies use the same migratory routes they took in spring to move back to the main lake. Find them on creek channel cover in the 10-18 feet deep. Cast grubs or bump Kentucky rigs around creek channel cover.

**Water Temperature: 60 Degrees**

Colder nights spell a rapid cool-down. As drawdown continues, many crappies leave reservoir tributaries. Deep points and steep banks at or near the mouths of tributaries hold large schools of crappies in the 15- to 25-foot zone. Try slow trolling live minnows on long rods rigged with heavy sinkers. Lower the sinker to bottom, then reel up to the level of suspended crappie. The sinkers will help locate cover and prevent hooks from snagging.

**Water Temperature: 55 Degrees**

The 60-degree pattern should remain about the same until the lake turns over. Deep points and steep rock bluffs near tributary mouths hold concentrations of fish. Slow troll jigs or pull crankbaits through schools of fish in the open water between the points.

**Water Temperature: 50 Degrees**

Turnover usually occurs during the fall-winter transition, triggering a wholesale movement of crappies. Crappies are often tight to bottom around intersection of channels in 25 to 40 feet deep, and they're going to stay that way through the cold weather months, so slow trolling with vibrating lures could be your best bet along the channels.

**Water Temperature: 45 Degrees**

Crappies have settled into a winter pattern now, setting up on deep channel structure. Channels with brush, 18 to 40 feet deep. Fish the bottom along bends, drop-offs, and humps..

**Water Temperature: 40 Degrees**

Crappies are deep and feed only sporadically. Look for crappies 30 to 50 feet deep. Fishing spoons along the channel, or hug bottom with your Kentucky rig.