

Crappie fishing made easy during the fall months



Outdoors

Mike Hayakama

When a lot of anglers think of fishing for black crappies, they associate it with spring time.

Autumn, however, can be an equally productive period to catch these delectable delights, suggests crappie enthusiast Spiro Abouros.

Enticing me recently to wet a line with him for a day on one of his favourite hotspots on the waters of Lake Couchiching, Abouros proved his point after we filled a pail to the brim with these smaller members of the bass family.

Abouros theorizes that Old Man Winter's premature arrival turns over lake water temperatures which then deters weed growth. Crappies then seek out places where weeds remain relatively healthy. Fulfilling this prescription, he says, are back canals or shallow bays that bottleneck into the main lake body and are relatively free of any currents. Should these places also exhibit some form of structure, like wooden pilings or sunken brush piles all the better, he adds.

Anchoring our vessel tight to the shoreline we rigged up our light action rods with a slip float and a 1/16 or 1/32 ounce pink or white coloured Phenix tube jig. Using a slip float will enable you to experiment at what depth these fish might be feeding at. Abouros suggests it's better to fish shallower than deeper as crappies tend to come up to strike a bait rather than go down after one. As for tube jig colours, Abouros feels pink or white imitates a form of freshwater shrimp that comprise a part of their diet.

If you don't have a tube jig, a live pin-tail minnow rigged off a float is equally effective.

In using a float it does not hurt to go with as long a rod as possible, similar to river steelhead fishing, so as to pick up your slack as quickly as possible whenever it goes down. And when water conditions are crystal clear running fine diameter six- and four-pound monofilament line or leader might also entice a

few more hits.

Tossing our baits as far away as possible from the boat, we kept a close surveillance of our floats and gave it the odd twitch so as to let the jig show some underwater movement. The decision to do so paid off shortly after as Abouros landed the

first fish - a nice "thick slab" of about 13 inches.

Because crappies are a schooling fish in nature it wasn't long before the floodgates opened as the action at times was almost non-stop.

But like flicking off a switch, the feeding frenzy subsided and it was

as if the fish went on a hunger strike. We then moved to another spot that offered some form of structure. Like clockwork the crappies soon began to co-operate again, especially when a slight chop scarred the water surface.

What made the day even more

rewarding was that time does not factor into the equation as to when these fish will hit. Being diligent feeders, crappies will hit almost anytime of the day.

To paraphrase an old expression, why wait for spring for good crappie fishing when you can do it now.

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ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

MEGAN WILLIAMS
Megan Williams accomplished something that many figure skaters strive to obtain - that being a Gold Dance badge.

A member of the Unionville Skating Club for the last nine years, the 14-year-old Williams is also a member of the club's Village Express novice precision team which came fifth at the 1997 Canadian championships.

A graduate of William Berczy Public School, Williams is presently in Grade 9 at Unionville High School.

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