Guntersville fishing report crappie

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By Eileen Davis "My best 30-fish stringer on Guntersville was in November," recalled Alex Rawleigh of Hazel Green, "and weighed 64 pounds. Three fish weighed more than three pounds, with the largest weighing 3.4 pounds. Guntersville has some monster crappie." Rawleigh has fished the 69,100-acre lake, which is located in the northeast corner of our state, for more than 40 years. He enjoys fishing for most of the species swimming in the Tennessee River, but crappie fishing prom late October to mid-December is the highlight of his fishing year. For most of those years, Rawleigh has kept a log of fishing conditions when searching for bass, bream, crappie and sauger. A review of his records revealed that he would occasionally catch trophy-size slabs in November with a one-ounce jig and pig while fishing bluff walls for bass." I was catching crappie that weighed nearly three pounds," he said. While recording a trip and looking at the map after a week of fishing, I discovered every time I caught crappie it was where the river channel swings into the bank." To test the pattern, Rawleigh decided to try it in a different location and found similar structure on his map 20 miles away. "Not knowing what to expect," Rawleigh admitted, "I cast my jig. When it reached a depth of 18 to 20 feet – bingo – the line jumped and a big slab came into the boat! In 30 minutes, I had a limit in an area I had never fished before. I knew that I had stumbled onto something special. "To duplicate Rawleigh's success, follow the Tennessee River channel on your map to where it makes a sharp bend into shore and back out again. Tightly stacked contour lines are bluffs. Above water, Guntersville's bluffs appear as fractured rock walls with cedar and pine growing tenaciously along its edges. In places, you'll see deep cuts where the wall has collapsed. Below water, the bluff stair steps down into the channel with a collection of blowdowns and boulders from above. This is mixed with debris washed down from the current. When planning a trip, Rawleigh

crappie, Rawleigh casts a 1/16-ounce jig rigged with a 1 ½- to 1 ¾-inch soft plastic body. His uses a 5 ½-foot ultralight spinning rod spooled with blue-fluorescent, 4-pound test monofilament. "Work the jig by counting down to where the fish are positioned on your depthfinder," Rawleigh said. "Then twitch the line, let it fall, and repeat. Since the crappie often position themselves nose up and move up to take the jig, you will not feel the bite, but you will see your line to catch fish."Rawleigh said the crappie on Lake Guntersville move deeper as the water temperature cools. In early November, look in water less than 15 feet deep, but by late December they may be as deep as 40 feet. Read more about how successful anglers find and catch Bama's fish. By Greg McCain Lake Guntersville's reputation extends far beyond the 69,000 surface acres that it covers. Traditionally known as a bucket list bass fishing destination, Guntersville has emerged as a regular stop on crappie fishing circuits in recent years because of the tremendous population of slabs that inhabit the lake. While the Big G will likely never shed its bass-lake label, the idea that Guntersville might be an equally good crappie lake is plausible. Locals don't really want everyone to know about Guntersville might be an equally good crappie lake is plausible. guarded the secret for years. Some time ago, various trails occasionally stopped for day-long tournaments, but those numbers dwindled away for whatever reason. In more recent years, organizations like the American Crappie Trail have brought attention to Guntersville as a premier crappie fishery. The numbers truly reveal that Guntersville is a great crappie fishery. Facing brutal fishing conditions with morning temps in the teens, the winners of the 2021 ACT tournament needed almost a 2-lb. average to win. The big fish weighed a Grenada-like 3.53. When the ACT visited in 2019, the winning weight was over 31 lbs. for 14 fish. Yes, Guntersville can be considered a crappie lake. 5 Things to Know about Guntersville: Guntersville is loaded with grass, a friend to fisher and a foe to fishermen. For people familiar with the lake, the statement that Guntersville is loaded with grass is something of an understatement, but the amount of aquatic vegetation can be overwhelming. Most southerners pursue crappie around wood structure, and that possibility exists in select places on Guntersville. In general, however, grass dominates the landscape on Guntersville, coming in a variety of forms. Some of it is rooted while at other times it simply floats. The latter type, mainly in the form of the eel grass that has exploded on the lake in the past 10 years, can be extremely frustrating to fishermen, especially when they are using moving baits. The floating eel grass can literally carpet an area. Fishermen can learn patience - removing grass after just about every cast is a thing most days on Guntersville - or move on. On the other hand, the grass can be a positive, especially for the fish. The abundant grasses on the lake provide a safe haven, a refuge from predators both those in the water and from those above. It's one of the main reasons that Guntersville is one of the grass. Just arrive with the understanding that at least some eel grass will be floating every day of the year just about everywhere on the lake. Winter and early spring calls for spider rigging, frequently with a jig-and-minnow combination, on the deeper flats and creek channel edges. As the fish start to stage for the spawn in February, long lining comes into play with many fish moving to 8- to 12-foot depths. Various trolling techniques work through the pre-spawn, through the spawning period, and into the post-spawn. At some point in May, pulling cranks is best in May and June with a definite slowdown once the water temps reach 85 and above. Night fishing is a good option. The lake features the classic spots for night fishing under lights, mainly the thousands of docks and piers, many of them which feature structure under and on the perimeter. Dozens of marinas exist and also feature good crappie fishing at night because of the abundance of lights around them. Crappie fishermen don't always depend on lights to find their fish, however. A good friend catches plenty, paralleling deep rip-rap banks and grass edges with a lighted cork-and-minnow rig. That same friend occasionally guides on the lake during the day but says he catches twice as many crappie afterhours than in the daytime. His favorite fishing period for crappie is from midnight until just after dawn. Extending the nightfishing theme, some of the best crappie fishing on Lake Guntersville on a cold, drizzly night shortly after New Year's. The weather was decidedly cold, the fishing scorching hot. At one point during the night, we found fish jammed into an indention in a main-lake bluff wall that served as a current break. I'm not sure how many fish were stocked there, but we caught crappie for over an hour without moving the boat and finally both boaters and bank fishermen flock to the bridges, usually from late fall through spring, and many of them fish through the night. If you don't think these night-time crappie addicts are serious, consider this anecdote: I watched one swap spools on his spinning reel, downsizing from 4-lb. to 2-lb. line because the fish were not biting to his liking. A final thought about night crappie fishing during the winter in Guntersville: Don't expect a guiet, solitary, restful time on the water; it's duck season and duck hunters are to winter nights what fishermen are to other times of the year. Do you like to catch black crappie or do you prefer the generally bigger white crappie? Guntersville has both. The specs or black crappie are some of the most gorgeous fish that swim. A 2-pounder is a good one anywhere, and Guntersville has a few that size. Among the white crappie population, 2-pounders are quite common, especially in the pre-spawn period of late fall through early spring. Bigger fish can be caught - plenty of 3-pounders exist on Guntersville, just about all white crappie. These are just a few of the things to consider about Lake Guntersville crappie fishing. The lake is full of slabs. A visiting angler just has to know which one of the 69,000 acres is best. My wife with her pb Large mouth Bass Crappie fishing generally is not the first thing people consider when discussing Lake Guntersville fishing. The sprawling Tennessee Valley Authority reservoir in northeast Alabama features just about any type of fishing imaginable. Of course, largemouth bass sits atop the Guntersville hierarchy and the Big G remains a top bass lake. Crappie are one part of the overall fishery that tends to be overlooked, at least outside the area. While visitors arrive by the thousands each year to sample Lake Guntersville bass fishing, crappie catches are mainly confined to locals, most of whom are quite content to keep secret that segment of Guntersville, grow up to three pounds and offer yearlong, around-the-clock opportunities. At different times of the year, Guntersville crappie can be caught in just about any way possible. ADVERTISEMENT / ADVERTISE WITH US Trolling remains a definite option, even on a lake dominated by acre after acre of grass. The bridges that cross major tributaries are crappie fishing magnets and attract crowds that occasionally number in the hundreds. Even oldfashioned casting remains a go-to approach on Guntersville. Add other techniques that might be considered a bit extreme by some crappie fishing. Mike Carter, a guide on the lake (www.anglingadventures.info), generally put his clients on Guntersville bass in the past. However, within the last year, he began to focus on the crappie lake, but I can usually catch just as many on Guntersville. There may be a few days when I don't catch as many, but the quality is just so much better. We catch so many big crappie over here in the fall and winter. "I've always advertised crappie fishing but never pushed it. Last year, I pushed it, and people found out what it was like. We caught a lot of crappie and a lot of big crappie over here in the fall and winter. "I've always advertised crappie fishing but never pushed it. Last year, I pushed it, and people found out what it was like. We caught a lot of crappie and a lot of big crappie over here in the fall and winter. "I've always advertised crappie fishing but never pushed it. Last year, I pushed it, and people found out what it was like. 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If I have some kids along, I might bring some minnows to help them out a little bit, but otherwise, I just cast a jig for them." Carter locates his crappie holding on main-lake stumps from Scottsboro to the Highway 117 bridge near Stevenson. He uses side-imaging technology to locate the fish. "You find them on any type of deep structure," Carter said. "I have a lot of stumps I fish upriver from Scottsboro north. On any deeper stump out in eight, 10, 12, 14 feet of water that makes an eddy on the downriver side of the stumps. Once you find them, you can usually sit there and catch fish all day long." Carter's tackle is basic. He uses medium-action, 6.5-foot spinning rods and a quality reel spooled with 4-pound-test Vicious monofilament. Because he uses light jig heads - 1/24- or 1/32-ounce - the light line is essential in getting the bait down to the crappie. It cuts through the current better than a heavier line. Carter pairs the light jigs with Bobby Garland plastics. Popular colors on the lake include pink pearl, pearl chartreuse, Cajun cricket and electric chicken. "Casting light jigs on the bluff walls gives these fish a different look that they don't see that often." — Bevan Berry, fisherman The casting comes into play in a variety of situations on Guntersville. A night bite starts in the fall and continues into the frigid days of winter. Anglers target steep bluff walls, casting their jigs to the bank and letting them pendulum back to the boat. "You just watch your line in the black light and see that tic," said Bevan Berry, who makes the trip to Guntersville throughout the year from his home near Tuscumbia. "I haven't done it that much, usually starting sometime around Thanksgiving. When I go over there in the fall at night, you can usually catch them." Berry uses jigs and plastics similar to those employed by Carter. "Most people on Guntersville are fishing the bluffs with minnow rigs," Berry said. "Casting light jigs on the bluff walls gives these fish a different look that they don't see that often." Bevan Berry (back of the boat) and fishing partners double up on Guntersville crappie fishing occurs around the bridges crossing the many tributaries that enter the lake. The bridges, frequently labeled causeways around Guntersville, and the surrounding riprap host a parade of crappie through the fall, winter and early spring months. Generally, the Thanksgiving holiday marks the start of the best bridge fishing on Guntersville. Even on the coldest days - or nights - a congregation of crappie anglers gathers at the bridges to battle the elements and test their fishing skills against the crappie, which often become finity because of the lake and the Highway 227 bridges over Short, Town and South Sauty creeks near Guntersville State Park. However, just about any bridge area that features deep water will likely hold crappie at times. Anglers compete with boaters, who tie up to the bridge. While bank fishing might suggest an unsophisticated approach, many of the bridge fishermen arrive with top-end tackle and don't hesitate to drop down to fluorocarbon line as light as a 2-pound test when 4-pound is not getting the job done. The best bridge fishermen experiment with jig size, starting at 1/16-ounce, but working down to minuscule models to get the fall rate right on a given day. Guntersville area tackle stores stock jigs as light as 1/64-ounce at times. Plastic preferences change with the season, but popular choices remain Bobby Garland, Bass Assassin, Mister Twister, and Slider. Break Out the Guns Winter is the time for a little shooting on Guntersville. Yes, duck hunting is popular on the lake, but in this case, "shooting" means shooting docks when crappie fishing. Late in the fall, but especially in the colder winter months through the pre-spawn, crappie gathers around the myriad of docks found on Guntersville. If the current is light, main-lake docks are best. If the current is heavy, the fish will typically move back into the tributaries and coves to the first available dock. Shooting docks is a repetitive, even addictive approach, requiring a whip-like rod to propel light jigs and plastics underneath a dock. Anglers like Carter, who occasionally deviates from his casting routine to shoot docks, seek out older, bigger posts if available. The bigger posts provide the crappie some relief from the constant pressure of current. The docks just upstream and downstream from the Waterfront area can be productive for dock shooting, but the lake features plenty from one end to the other. While shooting docks can be a bit intimidating for inexperienced anglers, a little practice allows even novices to put a jig in front of a crappie under a dock. Casting for crappie remains a viable option on Guntersville. Bevan Berry, of Muscle Shoals, trolls but also catching fish casting with spinning tackle. Trolling Proves Productive While trolling is perhaps not as popular on Guntersville as on other lakes, the many variations still catch plenty of fish. Scott Echols, who lives in Eva in Morgan County, once viewed Wheeler as his home lake but has recently found that Guntersville is consistently better. Echols employs different trolling spread. "I usually start longlining in February, maybe in late January, depending on the weather," Echols said. "I catch them that way all the way into the spring. I catch my biggest fish in the late winter." Using four rods out the back and four to six out the front, Echols lets outline until he finds the right combination of line length and jig size that gets the lure to the depth preferred by crappie. He also switches jig sizes, but normally uses a 1/16-ounce model, either a Road Runner or a plain jig. As the fish move shallower around the spawn, Echols switches to a 1/32-ounce jig and trolls at about 1.1 or 1.2 miles per hour. At times, Echols will add two rods positioned out of the very front of the boat and "pushes" the same jigs. He threads a large egg sinker, occasionally two, onto the main line. He also adds a swivel and attaches a 2-foot leader tipped by a Road Runner and live minnow combination. Echols uses Crazy Angler Slab Bandits and other plastics by Southern Pro and Slider. He said color choice can change from hour to hour, so don't hesitate to experiment. Guntersville crappie can require some time to locate, but once he finds them, Echols said they are generally easy to catch. He spends most of his favorites. Beating the Heat Crappie fishermen typically take a hiatus through the late spring and summer months. The crappie are still feeding, however, and Berry and others target them with crankbaits trolled over feeding flats and along contour lines in the creeks. "White crappie group up on the flats and along contour lines in the creeks." fish later in the year, but you can still catch plenty pulling crankbaits." Fishing from a War Eagle 754 aluminum boat, Echols uses a spread of up to 12 B'n'M rods in models of various lengths to keep his spread of Bandit crankbaits separated. He favors 200 series Bandit crankbaits, typically in black or black and chartreuse. He reserves a couple of the rods up front for vertical fishing jigs. "I think it's a reaction bite," Berry said. "If you let out 90 to 110 feet of line and pull at 1.6 or 1.7 mph, the fish will bite if you get it around them. The book says 1.4 to 1.8 mph, but I think 1.6 mph is about right." Berry favors Browns Creek. He likes both the feeding flats from the bridge to the power lines to the south and the secondary channels on the main-river side of the bridge. He also fishes Spring Creek and Town Creek. Echols also turns to pulling crankbaits in the late spring and can be caught. You may not always catch as many fish later in the year, but you can still catch plenty pulling crankbaits." Crappie Reputation Grows Carter acknowledged that crappie fishing isn't exceptional. In the last few years, it may have been consistently better than the bass fishing. "When anglers think of Guntersville, they think of bass," Carter said. "They don't necessarily think about crappie lake will only grow.

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