



Crappies (*Pomoxis*)

Crappies in Indiana

-Black Crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*)

-White Crappie (*Pomoxis annularis*)

Do they have any other names?

Both black and white crappies are often called crappie.

Why are they called crappies?

Pomoxis is Greek for “opercle sharp” in reference to the spines on the gill cover. *Annularis* is Latin for “having rings” which refers to the dark bands extending around the body of the white crappie and *nigromaculatus* is Latin for “black spotted.”

What do they look like?

Crappies are silvery, deep and slab-sided sunfish with a large mouth and the upper jaw extending past the middle of the eye. The anal fin (bottom fin near tail) is as long and as large as the dorsal fin (back). The back is dark olive that fades to silver-white on the sides and belly. The sides, dorsal fin, tail, and anal fin are all mottled with black.

Black crappie have a color pattern of irregularly arranged speckles and blotches on the sides of the fish whereas white crappie have faint vertical bars on the sides. Another difference is that black crappies have 7 or 8 spines in the dorsal fin and white crappie only have 6.



Black Crappie



White Crappie

Photo Credit: Rick Hill, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

Where do they live in Indiana?

Crappies are common throughout the state and are found in lakes, pools of rivers and streams, and reservoirs.

What kind of habitat do they need?

Black crappie are less tolerant of murky water and prefer water without a noticeable current. They also need abundant cover like submerged timber or aquatic vegetation. White crappie also prefer to have cover like submerged timber or another form and are found at depths of 15 feet or more.

How do they reproduce?

Crappies spawn from mid April to early June when the water reaches a temperature of 56 degrees F. Males fan out a nest at a water depth of anywhere from 1 to 20 inches deep. Eggs hatch in about three days and the fry leave the nest at night and do not form a school.

How old are they when they reproduce?

Crappies are able to reproduce at the age of 2 or 3 years old.

How long do they live?

Few crappies live more than 3 or 4 years but sometimes they can live as long as 8 years.

How fast do they grow in Indiana?

Crappies are around 4 inches in their first year and a 3 year old crappie is about 8 inches in length. Adults are usually 10 to 20 inches long and weigh 0.5 to 4.5 pounds.

What do they eat?

Crappies eat small fishes, aquatic insects, and crustaceans.

What eats them?

Crappies are eaten by other fishes, fish-eating birds, and humans.

Are they safe to eat?

Crappies are edible and are a popular game fish. Wild caught fish are just as healthy for you as most commercially bought fish and in many cases are healthier. You have probably heard about the fish consumption advisories and wonder if any Indiana fish are safe to eat. Crappies are one of the “safer” fish to eat in Indiana as they are less fatty. *The fish consumption advisories that are posted are based on a model that people are consuming 8 oz. of fish on 225 days each year over 70 years.* Most people do not eat fish anywhere close to that amount. However, any meat you consume will have some risk associated with it. If you are in a high risk group such as a pregnant woman or a child please consult the fish consumption advisory at: www.in.gov/isdh/23650.htm . You can also see which water bodies have advisories on them (most lakes and reservoirs are lower risk than rivers and streams).

How do I fish for them?

Crappies can be caught by still-fishing or slow trolling with small minnows near submerged trees or other cover. Small plugs, spoons, streamers, and fly-and-spinner combinations are also effective. Dry flies and other surface lures are good to use in late evening.

How is Indiana managing crappies?

Crappies are stocked by the state and are managed through fisheries surveys. In these surveys the population is observed which allows the state to decide the best stocking methods and regulations to be used to maintain a healthy population.