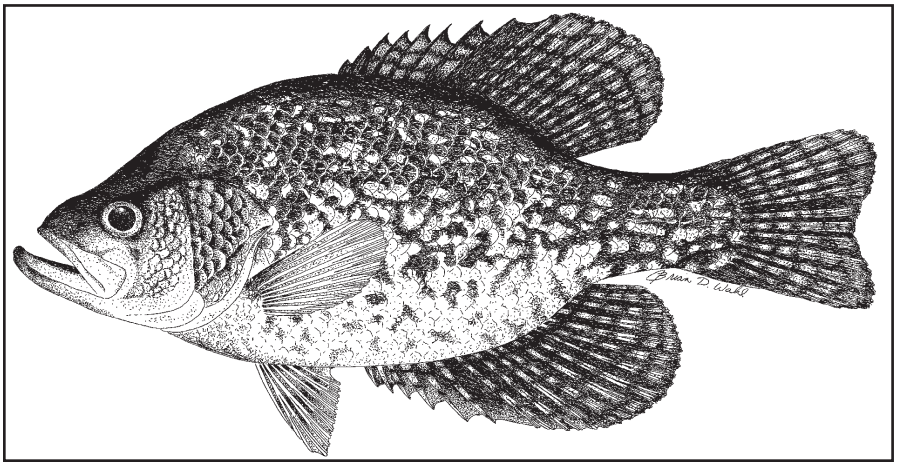
Ohio Department of Natural Resoures
Division of Wildlife

Life History Notes

Black Crappie

Common Names: Papermouth, Specks
Scientific Name: *Pomoxis nigromaculatus*



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Identification:

Black crappie closely resemble white crappie, but have deeper bodies. Furthermore, their head, back and sides are mottled with dusky or black blotches. These blotches do not form vertical bands as on white crappie. The most reliable characteristic, however, is that black crappie have seven or eight dorsal spines.

Range and Habitat:

Black crappie are less widely distributed than white crappie in Ohio, but are generally found throughout the state including western Lake Erie. Generally, black crappie prefer clear water containing aquatic vegetation. They are less tolerant of silt and turbidity than white crappie.

Life History:

Black crappie spawn during May and June in Ohio. Males construct a nest by fanning out small depressions on the bottom in and around brush, rocks, or vegetation in water between 1 and 5 feet deep. Females then lay 5,000 to 30,000 eggs in the nest. After hatching, crappie feed on zooplankton and insect larvae. As they grow, crappie switch primarily to a diet of small fish.

Adult Size:

Black crappie average 8 to 12 inches in Ohio. The state record fish weighs 4 pounds, 8 ounces and is 18.12 inches long.

Fishing Methods:

Black crappie bite best on live minnows, small jigs, and spinners. The spring spawning season is the best time to fish for black crappie. Anglers should concentrate on areas with brush, stumps, and docks. During summer and early fall crappie are usually found in deeper water along creek channels, roadbeds and submerged points. Late fall can be another hot time for crappie as they move inshore again for a short time.