

JIGS, MINNOWS, or BOTH???

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Another article by

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It's the crappie fisherman's eternal question. Which is better; artificial lures or live bait?

There are many advantages for using jigs. You can usually fish faster and cover more water with jigs. And by using artificial lures like Creme Mini-tail jigs or whatever, you don't have to stop and buy minnows before you go fishing. Nor do you have to worry about keeping minnows alive.

But I'm not as stubborn about the matter as some folks I know. When the crappie are hitting minnows faster than jigs, I'll buy a bucket of minnows and get right down there with the rest of the live-bait believers. Because minnows are a crappie's natural food. By the time the crappie has reached slab proportions, it has devoured hundreds, maybe thousands of minnows to fuel its growth. So, the point is why limit yourself to only live bait or only jigs.

There are times when each works better than the other. And there are times when both work well together, which brings us to the subject at hand... using minnows and jigs, in tandem, to take more crappie. And more often than not, we usually catch bigger crappies by using the jig-minnow combination. In past experiences, there are days when one of us is using a plain minnow on a hook will pull fish after fish while the other using a jig sitting right beside him catches only a couple dinky fish at the same period of time. But....when crappie are turned on to jigs, they can be caught much faster than minnows. There were days when one of us will toss 3-4 fish in the live well before the other could get a hook baited and cast made.

In recent years, we've found that using the minnows with jigs can be the best of both worlds. We like it for fishing in thick brush, and the minnow helps from getting hung up (we hook them through the lips when fishing them with jigs) to keep the hook point from engaging too many snags. Another advantage of using jig-minnow combination is that jigs are highly visible in a variety of water colors. Experiment with the jig colors until you find out what they want. (Just recently, my partner was using a Creme Mini-tail Chartreuse/Black combo and pulling in crappies as fast as he could drop a jig, while I was using a Creme Mini-tail Silver/White combo that I was tearing them up with a few days earlier, wasn't even touched.)

To start, go to colors that is most visible at that depth and the clarity of the water. And by tipping a minnow on a jig will not only make it look more lively, but crappie can home in on the scent. Combining the brightness of a jig and the flash and scent of a minnow also makes it easier for crappies to find the offering.

The action of the jig-minnow combination also plays a huge part of appealing crappie. Minnows make a jig more buoyant, slowing its fall and making its motion more subtle. Keeping the minnows alive is helpful, but not overly important, because the jigs provide the main action. The most important thing is to hook the minnow through the lower lip and out the top of the head, which keeps them on the hook and so that it sits upright in a natural manner. This also helps keep them stay alive longer.

Jigs? Minnows? Which is best? You can find out which one they want, but why worry about it. Use them both and put more and bigger crappie on your stringer.