

KINKAID: Bites are light, but frequent

Continued from Page 56

the bait. It would be too late because the fish would let go most of the time before I set the hook. The only thing that kept me positive was that my guide was sometimes having the same problem. Other bites were "tics" and a few were hard ones. When fishing deep, it's best to set the hook immediately when you feel anything abnormal because bites can be extremely subtle.

The pattern and technique was the same throughout the day. Drops on points, on the main creek channel and along bluffs provided the proper depths and covers needed to catch crappie. Small minnows dropped to the bottom were responsible for the bites. We kept 20 for the cooler and released the rest.

This technique will continue to work until the water starts warming. What about March and April at Kinkaid? "When water gets into the

high 40s or low 50s you'll start getting some big black crappies moving up the creek to spawn. It's a great time of the year. I prefer a jig and slip-cork rigged with a TeeZur 1/16-ounce jig and a MidSouth tube. I'll usually tip with a minnow. That pattern will usually last all the way through April."

Schoenherr (618-314-2967) qualified for the Crappie Masters 2010 classic where he and his partner finished second. His credentials are good and you'll have a great time if you book a trip with him at Kinkaid, Crab Orchard, Rend or the Ohio River. For Kinkaid Lake information contact Lake Murphysboro State Park 618-684-2867.

For more crappie fishing news visit Tim Huffman's Website MonsterCrappie.com.



Crappie guide Kyle Schoenherr displays a crappie taken from Kinkaid Lake on a bottom-bouncing rig. Expect February thru mid-March to include bottom fishing in 35 to 50 feet of water.

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Go deep for crappie at Kinkaid Lake

By TIM HUFFMAN

Kyle Schoenherr eased his boat along while closely watching his locator. He wasn't looking for shallow water crappie on this trip because our locator was varying from 32 to 40 feet as he made a little circle on a ledge. When he found what he wanted he tossed a marker buoy into the water.

"The buoy is painted black so it won't be seen easily by other fishermen yet it's easy to see when fishing around it," the southern Illinois fishing guide said. "I use a heavy half-pound sinker so it unwinds quickly in the deep water without drifting or paddling away like it does when it takes too long to sink."

The marker settled on a drop-off coming off of a main-lake point. The locator indicated cover. It appeared fish were holding on or near bottom but the cover was the key element. Minnows got the job of probing for any hungry fish hanging around the cover.

"I like to bottom bounce this time

of year," says Schoenherr. "I use a 12-foot BnM BGJP jigging pole because I like the long pole for getting good hook-sets. I use it during the warm months for jigging stumps so it's just comfortable for me. My main line is 15-pound test Power Pro high-vis braid. It has a small diameter yet is strong enough to pull free when hung up.

"The high visibility makes it easier to see strikes. At the end of the braid I tie a barrel swivel attached to 12-pound test monofilament. Eight inches down from the swivel I tie a three-inch loop, overhand knots in the loop to help hold it away from the main line and add an Eagle Claw No. 2 gold Aberdeen hook. From there I go down 12- to 18-inches and tie a 1/2-ounce river sinker.

"In the winter we'll fish anywhere from 30 feet down to 58 feet here at Kinkaid. The fish start moving deep in late fall and gradually move deeper as the water continues to cool. This pattern continues until late February or early March. The action

may be slow or fast but the size of the fish are usually very good.

"The good thing about the way we are fishing is that any fisherman can do it. The spots we're fishing are not difficult to find. If you have a map you need to use it. Your locator is important for finding water that drops off in whatever depth the crappie are holding. Bottom bouncing is the only technique you need to catch fish here."

Bottom bouncing, Schoenherr-style, is simply letting the sinker take the line all the way to the bottom. When it settles, lift up slightly and hold, then lift the sinker just off of the bottom. As the boat eases along a ledge, bounce the sinker occasionally to make sure the bait is at the proper depth. With varying bottom depths you may have to adjust your bait often but it's easy to do.

Bites are interesting in the winter. I missed fish because the line and pole tip would never move yet I would feel a slight resistance when I lifted

Continued on Page 57

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