Big crappie often hit small spinnerbaits.

Photo by John N. Felsher

A NEW SPIN
on old lures for crappie

BY **JOHN N. FELSHER**

Sunlight glinting off the silver spinning blade attracted the attention of a fish as it bounced off a submerged branch. Hiding in the brush, the fish rose to engulf the morsel with its cavernous mouth. Finding itself hooked, it fought valiantly to escape back into the protection of the sunken tree limbs, but to no avail.

"That's another huge crappie," exclaimed Jimmy Houston, a professional bass angler and legendary television show host. "It's about a 2.5-pounder. I like to eat crappie, but a big one like this, I let go because it's fun to catch trophy fish."

Many anglers use small beetle spinners, jighead spinners and in-lines to entice crappie, but few anglers throw conventional bass spinnerbaits for crappie. However, a bass in the 1-to-3-pound range eats essentially the same forage as a crappie of similar size.
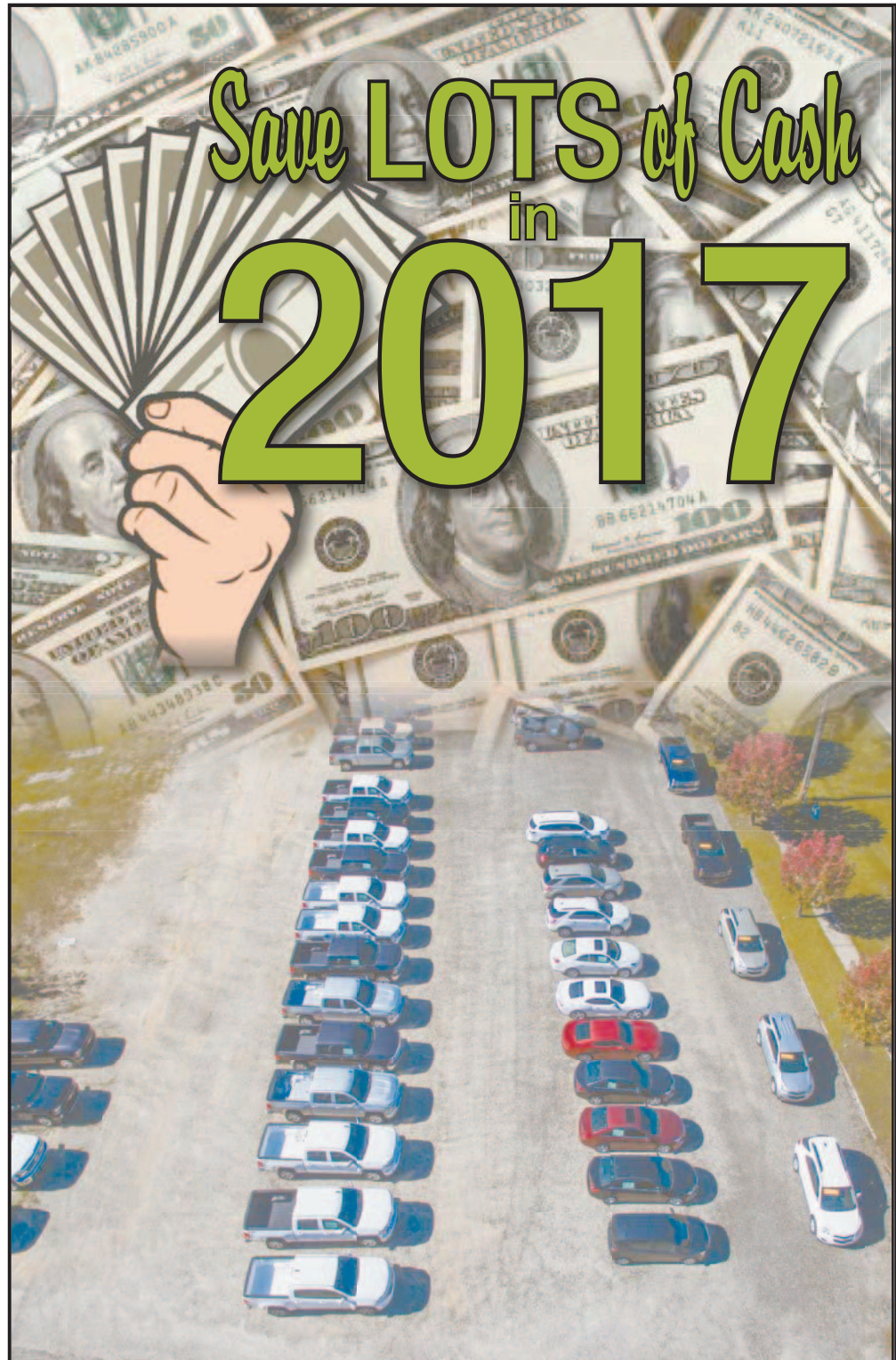
"Really large crappie hit large baits, just like bass," Houston revealed. "It takes a lot to fill them both up. Big crappie hit spinnerbaits, crankbaits or even large plastic worms. As a crappie gets larger, it eats bigger and bigger things. Big crappie often eat big shiners. With a bigger bait, anglers might not get quite as many bites, but they'll usually catch bigger fish."

Both bass and crappie feed heavily upon threadfin shad, shiners, minnows and other small fish. With streamlined features coupled with whirling and flashing blades, spinnerbaits simulate shad. The heads and blades of some spinnerbaits even look like baitfish, complete with eyes and appropriate paint jobs. For specifically targeting crappie, stick with shad colors such as white, gray or pearl.

Bass-style safety-pin spinnerbaits typically entice larger crappie. In lakes where both bass and large crappie exist, anglers throwing bass spinnerbaits commonly catch slabs weighing more than two pounds. The panfish equivalent of catching a 10-pound bass, boating a crappie