

Retirement Made Easy

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DOCKS: Good for crappie

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the water allows too much sunlight to penetrate the water and might not hold any fish.”

In places like the Alabama River, dock pilings also create current breaks that position fish. A little flow can carry fresh bait, but crappie characteristically don't like to fight powerful currents. They generally hang at the current edge, but behind objects like pilings that create little eddies of slack water. They look upstream for the flow to bring them something to eat.

“When fishing places like the Alabama River, I look for any docks that create some type of current breaks,” Brown recommended. “In a tournament, that would be a money spot that would hold a lot of fish.”

When fishing in current, toss a bait upstream and let the flow carry it under the dock. Anglers can suspend lures or live minnows under floats. Anglers can also toss jigs upstream and let the current carry them to the honey holes by the pilings. Experiment with different weights. Use enough weight to pull a bait to the bottom, but not enough to keep it there.

Besides pilings, also look for secondary cover. Many owners establish brush piles within casting range of their docks. Don't overlook boats tied to docks. Sometimes, boats sit for long periods. Algae may grow on the hulls, lines, pontoons and lower units. Such growth feeds minnows and other small fish that attract hungry crappie.

A pontoon boat tied to a dock creates abundant shade, but some very tight places that make bait presentation challenging. Many people ping lures off



Photo by John N. Felsher

Wally “Mr. Crappie” Marshall, a professional crappie angler, “shoots” a dock.

boat transoms or pontoons, but monster crappie lurking way back under cover might never see those baits. To reach slabs lurking under moored pontoons, docks or other cover, try “shooting” jigs.

For shooting jigs under docks or other tight structures, use a light flexible spinning rod about five to seven feet long. Open the reel bail and grab the lure by the jighead. Bend the rod tip to build up energy as if preparing to launch an arrow from a bow. The bending rod acts like a slingshot. When released, that energy from the rod propels small lures under or between cover that few other anglers attempt to fish.

“Pontoon boats are great spots to shoot jigs,” commented Jonathan Phillips, a crappie pro and guide with Team Phillips Guide Service (334-391-9735 or see his page on Facebook) from Wetumpka. “Shooting docks can be a really fun way to fish and highly productive.”