

# The fall feed-up

*As temperatures drop, crappie go on binges*

BY JOHN N. FELSHER

Many people only fish for crappie during the spring spawn when fish congregate in larger schools and females swell to great size with roe.

However, the fall can also deliver excellent crappie action, often with considerably less competition from other anglers. Many people forget about crappie after spawning season ends, but fish must feed all year long.

"I love fishing in the fall," remarked Gerald Overstreet, a professional crappie angler and guide with Overstreet's Guide Service (251-589-3225) in Gainestown. "A lot of people fish for crappie in the spring, but the fall can also be a great time to catch fish. In the spring, the main thing on a crappie's mind is spawning. In the fall, the main thing on a crappie's mind is eating."

In the fall, crappie gorge themselves on shad. Baitfish frequently head up creeks and other tributaries off main water bodies. Crappie won't stray far from their groceries. In early fall, start scanning for baitfish

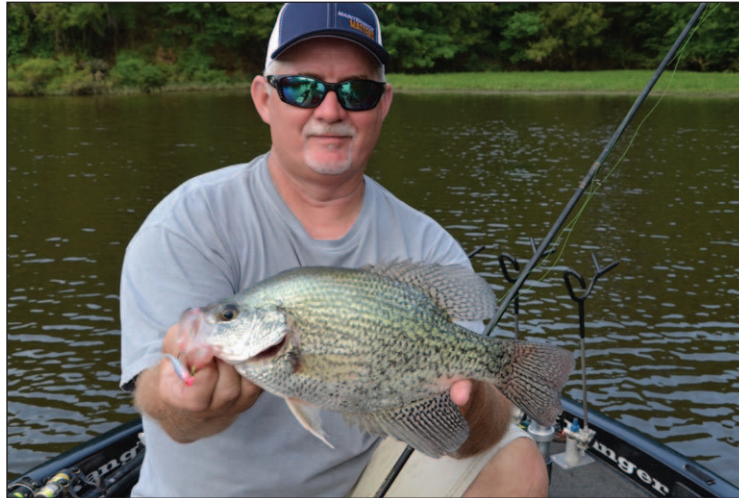


Photo by John N. Felsher

**Gerald Overstreet** with Overstreet's Guide Service in Gainestown, Ala., shows off a crappie he caught on a jig tipped with a plastic trailer while fishing the Alabama River.

with electronics near creek mouths. As the season progresses and temperatures drop, shad and crappie both continue their migrations farther upstream. Anglers just need to keep up with them as they move.

"As soon as nights start getting a little bit cooler and the water temperature drops a few degrees, fish feel that they need to put on some weight," Overstreet ex-

plained. "They've been kind of sluggish throughout the hot summer and not eating much. Then, they'll start what we call the 'fall feed up.' They'll eat everything they can to put on enough weight to get through the winter."

To find crappie, anglers need to cover considerable territory. When searching for fish, many crappie enthusiasts use "spider rigs." They hang several 12- to 16-foot long rods in holders arrayed in a semicircle off the boat bow so the entire rig resembles a spider web.

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