

Six Days of Crappie Fishing on Grenada & Enid

By Bernard Williams, Magnolia Crappie Club

As most of you know, winter-time crappie fishing can be very rewarding. It's during this time of the year that crappie tend to school up and suspend over deep water. I just returned from a 6-day fishing trip on two of the Big-4 North MS Lakes. The lakes I'm referring to are Grenada and Enid.

While most of you may be familiar with Grenada, I have some good news, Enid is no joke. My uncle John Jones and his fishing partner Mr. Jake Taylor came down from Bolingbrook IL for a week of MS crappie fishing. I normally charge \$300 per-day to guide but when it comes to fishing with my uncle I cannot charge him. I remember the times he would pick me up, pay all the expenses and take me fishing day after day as a teenager. I promised him that one day I would return the favor, I try to every chance I get.

We started at Grenada on day-one. 80 degree, no wind, blue sky day, conditions were perfect to smack 'em. The reports coming from Grenada were of excellent catches the prior days. Grenada guide John Harrison had caught a 3.26# slab on a jig pole. That's huge; guide Vic Finkley was also reporting limits of over 2# slabs.

The morning began around 8:30am due to my uncle forgetting to set his alarm clock, oh well that's ok. We got our 1 pound of minnows from the bait shop and continued to the lake. Vic and John had told me to fish 5' to 7' water, about 3' deep. We launched the boat and I found the area where I was told these big catches were coming from. I began side-scanning for a few minutes and sure enough there were fish in this area.

We set out the B'n'M Trolling Poles (14' Capps & Coleman) with double minnow rigs and started to roll. I use a MinnKota Terrova (101#) I-Pilot trolling motor that allows me to operate it from anywhere in the boat. Everything is remote. I normally use the Capps & Coleman double minnow rig but this time I used the Kentucky Lake style double hook rig with a 3/4th ounce bell sinker on the bottom. I choose this weight to be able to troll around .5mph to .7mph. The bell sinker

would let me know when my rigs touched bottom. The fish were scattered so the more water you cover the more fish you caught.

Grenada only allows 3 poles per person, if they're biting, 3 poles can be lots of work. Before we could get all 9 poles in the water, Uncle John, Jake, and I all had a fish on the line. Another thing you need to know about Grenada, it has some of the largest if not the largest crappie in the country. I have no idea how or why they grow so big on this lake but thank God they do. Grenada has a 12" minimum (crappie must be over 12" to keep), when I informed the boys from up north the rules, their response was "In Illinois a 10" crappie is a slab", my response was "not here". I netted the 3 fish, all keepers and continued.

Water temperature was around 50-degrees, although it warmed to around 56-degrees in the afternoon, didn't seem to have much effect on the crappie. Vic informed me the night before that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that manage the lake was lowering the lake to do some repairs on the levee and the landings. This would affect the bite in days to come, so we had to have an alternate plan.

The bite was pretty steady; we caught fish nearly all day, with some really big fish coming in the mid-afternoon. The pattern I found that worked best was to keep your bait moving. The guys we talked to all said the same thing, keep the bait moving. Big crappie in shallow water are spooky, we turned off all the depth-finders to make as little noise as possible. I also used 14' poles to get the bait away from the boat. I asked one of the ole-time fisherman if they bite jigs as good as minnows his response was, "these fish at Grenada didn't get this size eating rubber or plastic, they want meat", enough said.

By the days end we had 42 keepers, by them IL boys standard these fish were monsters. They took the pictures and got ready for day-two.

Day-two started almost identical to day-one, same conditions, however less water. The lake had dropped nearly a-half-foot. That's too fast and we could tell from the light bite. Day-one's bite was hard and quick, day-two's bite was extremely light. No more poles buried under water, all you would see is your line moving to one side or the other. We still managed to scratch out about 18 good

keepers. I knew it was time for a change. On our way back home, I mentioned that we needed to try Enid. They all agreed, so the next trip would be a little further up north.

Day-Three started as another beautiful day. We arrived at Enid around 7am. We were told to put in at the levee and start fishing. That's exactly what we did. We put out the double hook minnow rigs and started our troll. Several other fishermen informed us that the bite was fast-and-furious early (6:15 to 6:45am). They almost had their 20-fish, 12" limit. That sounded great. We started to catch one here and there, then all of a sudden wham, it was on. We had 6 or 7 fish on at one time.

At Enid you can use up to 5-poles per person. My setup allows for 6 poles at the front with 2 people and 8 poles at the back with 2 people. These guys don't fish as often as I do so I decided to use 6 poles at the front and 4 poles at the back. Uncle John is 79 years old, he has sort of limited mobility. I had to make things easy for him to reach his poles as well as the minnow bucket, and net. He did excellent handling his 3 14' poles. Day-3 ended around 2:30pm with the 50th fish being caught by Mr. Jake. My rules for guiding are #1 – we quit when we get the limit.

Day-4 was a repeat of the prior days; we started a little before 7am, beautiful weather, no wind, blue sky day. We only had to crank the big engine long enough to back away from the landing and begin fishing. I only had one person today; Mr. Jake needed a break, so it was me and Uncle John. I envisioned us getting out of the lake before 12pm if the fish would cooperate, and they did. We would catch numerous fish with the keepers running about 5-out-of-8 over 12". We did catch several over 2 pounds each day. These guys didn't come for trophies, they want fillets, and boy did we catch 'em.

Our day-4 ended a little after 12pm. These lakes have new rule this year that states boats with 3 or more fishermen can only keep 50 fish, however the limit is 20 per person. So, we had our 40 keepers for today, good fish (13' to 15.5'). Uncle John was happy and I was pleased to see him happy.

Day-5 would begin with a cold-front coming through the night before and dropping the temperature and high-winds. The initial bite was a little slow until I figured out that the fish were a little shallow than the days before. I put out the drift socks and let the wind take us across the lake. We would float in and out of fish all day. We ended up with our limit around 2:30pm. We had another limit of 40 good fish.

Day-6 begins around 7:30am, with temperatures around 28-degrees, wind about 12 mph out of the north, it was kind of chilly even for some guys from up north. I used the drift socks again to go with the wind. I had a full crew today and I needed to catch 50. I found the fish a little deeper than the previous day, around 6' to 7' in mostly 12' to 18' water. The only difference was today the fish would be in larger schools than the days before. If you caught one fish get ready for other poles to go down, and when they went down they would bury the tips.

I try to keep an accurate count of how many I had in the live-well in order to know when to cut it off. I think Mr. Jake and Uncle John tried to pull a fast one on me or something. They wouldn't tell me when they put fish in the live-well, but it didn't matter. When I thought we had 40 fish, I always recount them. Well, when I counted we had 49 fish, one to go. I informed my partners that we needed 1 fish, the race was on. I begin wrapping up my poles, and all of a sudden, every pole we had in the water had a fish tugging on it. It was amazing. I had them lay out all the fish and select the largest, then release the rest. It was not a problem after I informed them that fish over the limit can cost up to \$100 per fish caught in your possession. They were glad to release them. I could hear my uncle say see you later.

According to Uncle John and Mr. Jake, "We'll be back in February to fish Sardis". My response was "Do y'all have any crappie lakes in Illinois?" "No sir, not like these". If you ever get a chance to come to Mississippi, be sure to take the Crappie Interstate (I-55) out of Memphis and stop by one of the best crappie lakes in America (Grenada, Enid, Sardis, or Arkabutla). You can contact me, Bernard Williams, Central MS Guide Service, (601) 454-0196 for more information.