

## Wintertime Slabs – The Crappie Minnr

By Bernard Williams

Got a call from an old friend the other day, Warren Cotton, Professional Crappie Guide and Tournament Fisherman; he had just got back from Kentucky Lake fishing a Crappie USA Tournament and he want to share a new found tip with me. Warren is one those guys that don't talk a lot; he's a friendly person, just not real outspoken. I'm not saying he's a recluse, just got to get him to warm up. One way to do that is just mention the word "Crappie", and it's on.

Warren says, "I got a soft plastic bait you've got to try, I'm dropping you some samples in the mail. I don't want to talk about them until you get a chance to try them out." A few days later my packets arrive and I headed to my favorite crappie lake. Let me tell you something; they work. I caught fish on them; nearly every turn.

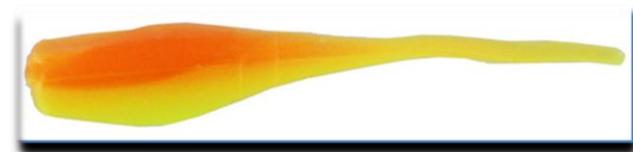


Big Bite Pro Staffer Warren Cotton

I called Cotton back; I asked him just what's so special about these soft plastics. He said, "The action the tail produces is phenomenal. My partner Jeremy Davis and I used them in a tournament on Kentucky Lake and had awesome catches. We only got edged out by a few ounces and I know we owe all our results to the 'Crappie Minnr' by Big Bite Baits. These rubber bodies come in 13 different colors. It's

about 2" long. That's perfect for this time of the year."

My next question was what makes it so attractive to sluggish fish? Cotton's reply was, "They are scent impregnated and they have a slight glow. They can be fished on a jig head or slid directly onto a hook with a minnow attached. At Kentucky Lake we used them on a jig head.



The lake is filled with structure; brush piles, stake beads, tree tops, rock piles, you name it. We found stake beads in about 12' of water and spider-rigged the Crappie Minnr on double minnow rigs with a 1/16<sup>th</sup> jig head on the top and a 1/32<sup>nd</sup> on the bottom. We fished 8 poles with all the colors in early morning; we let the fish tell us what color they wanted. It didn't take long before we settled on one or two colors."

The interview continued because he had made me curious. My next question was it looks almost exactly like the shad baits from other companies, what's the big deal? Warren says, "I

thought the same thing; matter of fact we tried other shad baits against the Crappie Minnr and the results were almost 3 to 1 in favor of the Crappie Minnr. We finally gave up and used only the Crappie Minnr. No need of reinventing the wheel. If it's working don't change it." I agree, I've learned to give the fish what they want instead of trying to make them take what I want them to have.

Warren and Jeremy are Big Bite Pro Staffers; they get to use any bait in the Big Bite Panfish



arsenal. That includes the Slab Tube, Paddle Tail (1.75", 2.5", & 3.5"), Balzy, Beetle (1", 1.5", & 2"), Panfish Minnow, Crappie Tub (Regular, Glitter, Three Color, Glow), Grasshopper, Cricket, Crappie Thumper, and

the Crappie Minnr. With an assortment like that it's kind of hard to get stuck on one bait.

That was my next question. Cotton's answered, "Whenever the water temperature is below 50 degrees, fish become very lethargic. They don't want a big bait; they have to expend too much energy trying to catch the big bait fish. The bait fish they're consuming are small, so you have to match the hatch. Another tip is to fish slow and watch your pole tips. Jeremy and I never turn around at the same time, one of us always have our eyes on the pole tips. The bite is so soft you'll miss it if you're not watching carefully."

I'm not hard-headed; I'll take heed to someone that's established themselves as elite tournament pros. They have a proven reputation. They've won some big tournaments; 10-Time National Championship Qualifier for both Crappie Masters and Crappie USA Circuits. Warren studies his prey; when he recommends me to try something I take note. I'm glad I took his recommendation. This is unquestionably a good choice for wintertime and pre-spawn crappie. You can buy them online at [www.bigbitebaits.com](http://www.bigbitebaits.com) under Products / Panfish Baits, Cabelas, or Tackle Warehouse. Better get you some; they're going fast.

Warren Cotton operates Warren Cotton Adventures Guide Service – Call (901) 550-6264 for Bookings Prices – Grenada Lake, Enid, Sardis, and Arkabutla