

Fall crappie fishing around bridges and brush piles

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FOR THE JOURNAL

Veteran crappie angler Tom Mundy never has met a bridge he didn't like. If that bridge crosses a body of water that has crappie in it, he loves it even more.

Mundy is the owner of Fish Stalker Lures, whose flagship crappie bait is a tiny "do-nothing" jig that Mundy said was modeled after a freshwater shrimp.

Mundy said slow and small is often the secret to his success for crappie fishing around bridges and open-water brush piles when the weather is transitioning from fall to winter. To complement the slow speed and small size of his bait presentations, Mundy also designed a lightweight rod to help him fish his tiny baits.

These super-lightweight rods are designed for the most sensitive and lightweight tackle that will keep your jig moving and wiggling in a fashion that's irresistible to crappie, even when they are lethargic.

Mundy's signature technique for catching crappie that are in less-than-agreeable moods during the fall transition period is using 4-pound test line and putting his little jigs right in the face of the fish.

"Boat positioning is real important," Mundy said. "You want your baits to be right next to or on top of the structure. Some people frown on fishing under the trolling motor, but I'm fishing in 20 to 25 feet of water, and the trolling motor only goes down about 3 feet, so I don't view that as a potential disturbance to the fish below."

Mundy said fishing bridges is a lot like fishing a vertical brush pile that comes all the way out of



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Veteran crappie angler Tom Mundy finds that bridges attract brush piles, which in turn attract crappie during the fall.

the water. In fact, most of the sweet spots he likes to fish under bridges are where brush has been placed intentionally or collected naturally. He drops the baits vertically and then tests the fish's patience.

"It took me a long time to distinguish between a bite and the jig bouncing off a limb," Mundy said. "The secret is watching the rod tip. When a crappie sucks the jig in, the rod will go from a limber bounce to a stiff look, and that's when it's time to set the hook.

"You can also watch the line," he added. "The line will twitch long before you feel it with the rod, or it will start piling up in the water, which says the crappie sucked it in and is holding still while the line's still sinking."

Mundy also said the time of day is a big determining factor in his success in the fall. He believes crappie feed more heavily at dark than any other time of day, and that suits him. He'll get on the water as the heat of the day is leaving and fish through the sunset and even into the night.

"I'll put lights out once it gets dark — a green light on each end of the boat, and a white light in the middle," he

said. "Fish will come up toward the surface at sunset, then later they'll settle back down right on top of the cover."

After dark, the pro said the bite changes. Mundy also changes his offerings by switching to a glow-tail jig. He's fond of tipping the jig with a small live minnow once the lights start attracting baitfish to the vicinity.

Once he changes into night mode, he will put his extra limber rods in rod holders — fishing up to eight rods for the entire boat — sit back and wait for a rod to bend over.

"The rods are so lightweight, a crappie will eat the bait, especially if we tip with minnows, and just swim off and hook himself," Mundy said.

PHILLIP GENTRY is the host of PG & Boatgirl Outdoors Podcast. Download the podcast on Apple, Google Play, Spotify or at pgandboatgirl.com.