



COURTESY OF BILLY BLAKLEY

**Bluegill spawn in relatively shallow water and are not difficult to find if you know what to look for.**

## Catch bluegills all summer long

**BY PHILLIP GENTRY**  
FOR THE JOURNAL

**P**anfish anglers who think bluegill can only be caught during May need to have a conversation with Billy Blakley.

The world-famous panfish angler said last week's full moon was the third where he's found bluegills still on the bed. Blakley added he doesn't look for the wave of bedding bream to end until mid-August.

"Bream usually bed at least four times from May till August," he said. "You can pretty much count on it every full moon through the entire summer."

Finding and catching bedded bluegill is about as simple as it gets. Blakley said the fish will pull out a little deeper after successive spawns.

There is no magic formula for finding them, although Blakley said the beds are easily marked using his side-imaging sonar and looking for saucer-shaped depressions in the bottom. Many times, the sophisticated electronics are not even needed.

"On a calm day, I can usually spot the beds below by looking for foaming bubbles on the surface," Blakley said. "It looks like you poured soda out with all the bubbles caused from the big bulls fanning the bottom."

When a bed is located, Blakley will position his War Eagle boat a cast away from the spot and cast a live-bait rig to the spot. The rig is comprised of 6-pound line with a split shot, a No. 8 light wire hook and a slip cork adjusted so that it settles the bait — a live cricket — just off the bottom.

Blakley said it's just as simple as it sounds.

"I use a 9-foot spinning rod paired with a spinning reel," he said. "I'll catch 15 to 20 fish from a spot as fast as I can get them in the boat and then head for the next spot."

Blakley said catching bluegill in rapid succession is a method to the madness of bream fishing.

"When I'm fishing, I try throw right back to the same exact spot just as soon as they can get the fish in, rebaited and back in the water," he said. "Once you get them stirred up, it starts a feeding frenzy. Don't try to cast off to the side to find other fish, because that lets the school cool off and they don't bite as well."

Speaking of feeding frenzies, Blakley said he is careful to harvest only male bluegills. It's easy to tell the difference because the females will have yellowish/orange coloration to them, while the males will all be dark purple or almost black.

"If you remove a female off the nest, there's no fish to lay eggs, and that means there won't be males to come along and fertilize the eggs," Blakley said. "Any female we catch, we put right back in the water and only keep the males."

Targeting the full-moon bite is a good way to catch the bulk of bream on a nest, but several days before and several days after is also ideal. During that time, the males will chase the females off the nest after she drops her eggs, and then he protects the nest from other predators. He will stay there until the eggs hatch — usually about five to seven days — and continue to guard the fry until they are able to swim on their own.

The continual bedding on consecutive full moons insures that male bluegills will be either building new nests, fertilizing eggs or guarding the nest until the next spawning cycle arrives.

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