

WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES

Crappie

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Crappie are an excellent tasting sunfish that are sometimes stocked into ponds. Two species of crappie occur in Oklahoma and Texas.

White crappie usually have six spines in the front portion of the dorsal (top) fin while black crappie usually have seven to eight dorsal spines. In white crappie, the space between the eye and the dorsal fin is longer than the base of the dorsal fin, while in black crappie, this space is about equal length to the base of the dorsal fin.

Crappie tend to be more difficult to successfully manage in ponds than largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, hybrid sunfish, or channel catfish. Most crappie stockings in ponds have produced less than desirable results because crappie were placed in less than ideal environments. When crappie are placed in the wrong pond environment, crappie eventually become overabundant and therefore stunted or crappie fail to maintain a population. Also, crappie compete with other sunfish such as largemouth bass and bluegill reducing the amount of bass and bluegill that

a pond will support. Thus, crappie should not be stocked into ponds where other fish species are the primary emphasis.

However, pond managers primarily interested in crappie fishing do not have to forgo their favorite fishery. Although not always as predictable as some other pond fisheries, crappie can be managed successfully in ponds with the right characteristics. Crappie generally provide the best fisheries in ponds with abundant 8- to 15-inch largemouth bass, abundant forage fish, some aquatic vegetation, and relatively clear water. ■

