

Time to start fishing for crappies

By Lam Massee
outdoors writer

Crappies are typically the first fish to get active in spring, and it's no surprise that early reports mention the silver-sided cousins of the bluegill and bass.

Reason: Crappies love minnows, and minnows move into the shallows where it's warmer this time of year.

Crappies are also better tasting this time of year, before the water gets too warm.

To catch 'em, fish in the shallows close to shore and around stumps and weedbeds. Give them time to take the bait. And use a landing net because a hook can tear their tender mouths.

Some good spots: Union and Kent lakes in Oakland County; Metropolitan Beach Metropark's boat basin, the Selfridge public access site on Lake St. Clair and Stony Creek Lake in Macomb County; the Huron River at the Flat Rock dam in southern Wayne County.

A SELECTIVE new fish toxicant, which kills only under-five-inch specimens, will be used this week by the state Department of Natural Resources in its "thinning project" at Lake Orion in northern Oakland County.

"By the end of the growing season, anglers will be catching larger, healthier fish in Lake Orion," said fisheries biologist Ron Spittler.

A fisheries survey confirmed Lake Orion anglers' complaints about stunted panfish. Out of 3,120 bluegills measured, only eight were seven inches or longer.

Spittler likens the thinning out of small, stunted fish to weeding a garden. The remaining crops grow bigger, faster.

The EPA-approved fish toxicant constricts blood vessels in the gills of small fish, causing suffocation. The concentration is calculated to kill only small fish. Larger fish, crayfish, turtles, gulls and ducks can feed safely on the dying small fish.

Carcasses may be windblown to the shoreline for a few days but should be no more than a minor inconvenience because of typical cool weather, Spittler said.

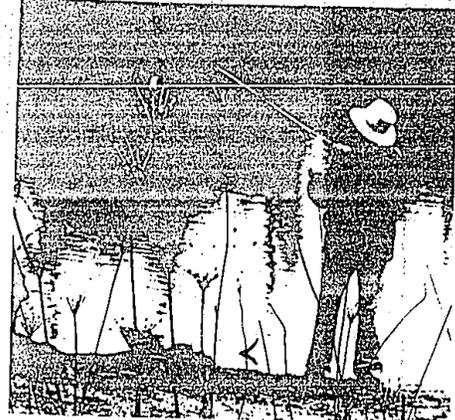
The solution dilutes and detoxifies into harmless natural compounds within 24 hours after application.

Rivers like the Clinton and Huron are producing spring runs of the whistle-mouthed bass, a.k.a. the nicker.

STONY CREEK Metropark northeast of Rochester has three nature events this week:

- "An April Evening," a family program with naturalist Roger Bajorek — 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 24, at the nature center.
- "Dance of the Timberdoodle," on the courtship antics of the woodcock — 7 p.m. Thursday, April 26, at the nature center.
- "The Ponds Are Alive," a spring walk — 10 a.m. Sunday, April 29. Wear boots and have nets to catch pond creatures.

Programs are free. A vehicle admission is charged at the park gate. Pre-register by calling the metroparks toll free at 1-800-552-6772.



OCC deadline nears

Candidates for the Oakland Community College Board of Trustees have until 4 p.m. Tuesday to file nominating petitions for the June 11 election.

Petitions with at least 50 valid signatures must be filed with the college secretary in the president's office. OCC's administrative center is at 2480 Opdyke, Bloomfield Hills.

Two terms expires this year — those of board vice chair Sandra Ritter of Waterford and trustee David Preston of Birmingham. As of late last week, Ritter had filed for re-election, but Preston had not. Douglas Wakefield of Southfield has also filed.

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