

## ***Black Crappie – Pomoxis nigromaculatus***

***Distribution*** – Native range is difficult to determine because the species has been transplanted widely. Apparently native along the Atlantic slope from Virginia to Florida, along the Gulf Coast to central Texas north to North Dakota and eastern Montana, and east to the Appalachian Mountains. Occurs in quiet warm waters, usually associated with aquatic vegetation and sandy to muddy bottoms. Inhabits large ponds and shallow areas of lakes. Generally prefers cleaner, deeper and cooler waters than white crappie, *P. annularis*. *Pomoxis* is Greek for "opercle sharp," and refers to the fact that the fish's gill covers have spines. The species epithet *nigromaculatus* is Latin and means "black spotted." The black crappie is easily confused with the white crappie. However, it is deeper bodied than the white crappie, and silvery-green in color. There are no distinct vertical bars, rather there are irregular black blotches. The dorsal fin has seven or eight spines. Males do not develop specialized breeding coloration during spawning season. \

***Food Habits*** - Young feed on small invertebrates, such as midges and other insect larvae; adults feed on small fish, such as minnows and sunfish

***Life History*** - Like other members of the sunfish family, black crappie are nest builders. They nest in the spring, April – June, when water temperatures reach 60 degrees; saucer-shaped nest is made by males in shallow water with mud or gravel bottoms near beds of submerged vegetation; one female may mate with several males and lay 20,000 - 50,000 eggs; eggs hatch in 2 – 5 days; male guards eggs and young until they can swim and feed; sexually mature at 2 years The biology of black crappie is very similar to that of white crappie. Growth in terms of weight is very similar between the two species. White crappie tend to have higher growth rates in terms of length, but black crappie are more robust in body construction. Black crappie adults feed on fewer fish, and more insects and crustaceans, than do white crappie.

***Life Span*** – 7 – 10 years.

***Sporting Qualities*** - Black crappie predominate in Texas' acidic waters of the east and northeast. Black crappie over 3.5 pounds and almost 4.5 pounds have been captured from Texas' public waters and private waters, respectively.

***Threats*** – Pollution and habitat loss. Over-fishing can harvest large individuals from the population.