

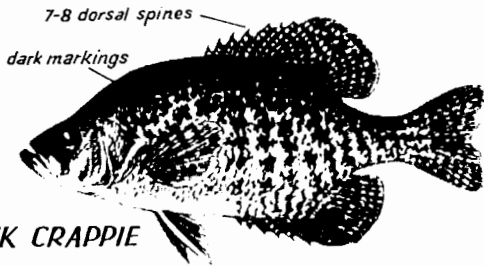
7/30/77

# Natural History Notes



MIKE DOMBECK grew up in the Moose Lake area and graduated from Hayward High School and the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point. He has a B.S. degree in Biology and an M.S. degree in Aquatic Biology. He has taught Zoology at the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point and is presently a staff member of the University of Minnesota's Bell Museum of Natural History. Mike has also been an area fishing guide since his high school days.

## THE BLACK CRAPPIE



**BLACK CRAPPIE**

The black crappie is a favorite for both the angler and gourmet. What a thrill for a fly fisherman to tie into a large crappie using a popper or dry fly. A large crappie fillet fried to perfection will indeed tempt anyone's taste buds. The crappie isn't noted among anglers for its skill as a fighter but is still a widely sought after fish. Creel census show that the crappie is surpassed only by the bluegill in the number of fish caught per year in Wisconsin.

Being a member of the sunfish family the black crappie has several close relatives, the closest being the white crappie. Other common members of the sunfish family are the large and smallmouth bass, rock bass, bluegill and pumpkinseed. The black crappie has 7 or 8 dorsal spines and is easily distinguished from the white crappie which has 6 dorsal spines. As the name implies the black crappie is much darker than its closest relative, sometimes almost black when it inhabits a dark water lake.

Crappies generally prefer to live in large streams and small to medium size lakes with abundant submerged brush and vegetation. They are common from Manitoba eastward and south to Texas and Florida. They generally range in size up to 12 inches but in some lakes grow larger. Record breaking black crappies over 5 pounds have been taken.

Crappies as well as other members of the sunfish family have especially interesting spawning behaviors. The male black crappie will prepare a nest by fanning out a depression in the bottom sediments with his tail. The nest is usually built in 3 to 6 feet of water with a muddy or silty bottom. The male must then attract a female and court her until she deposits her eggs in the nest. While the female releases her eggs the male releases milt to fertilize them as they settle. After spawning, the male chases the female away from the nest and protects it from any intruders. The male remains until the eggs hatch and the young swim away. Here in Wisconsin crappies spawn in May and June and their nests are often very close together in prime spawning areas. A very large female may lay as many as 150,000 eggs while the average female lay from 20,000 to 60,000 eggs. In some lakes the crappie becomes overabundant and the lake becomes crowded with stunted fish. This same condition is also common with bluegills and perch.

Crappies often congregate in large schools, especially around submerged brush, logs or treetops in water from 5 to 10 feet deep. Young crappies feed on small crustaceans like fairy shrimp and other copepods. Larger crappies are often cannibalistic. A large crappie was found to have 4 smaller crappies in its stomach. Various insects and minnows make up the larger portion of crappies' diet. Fishermen usually have best luck catching crappies on small minnows or flies. Many fishes' activities slow during the winter months when the water is cool and the lakes are ice-covered. Not so with the black crappie who remains very active the year around, much to the pleasure of the fisherman.

### KEEHNER'S INFORMATION & PLACEMENT CENTER



Specialists in locating you "A"

VACATION SPOT SURE TO PLEASE"

WE HAVE INSPECTED ALL RESORTS  
Member of Hayward Chamber of Commerce  
Location: Hwy. 27 S. from Jct. 63 - City of Hayward  
[1/2 Block S. from 4-Way Stop]

Connie Keehner Tel. 634-4656 or 634-4638

On Main Street - Downtown Hayward

Scheer's

Open Evenings  
Sundays to 3 p.m.

### NORTHWOODS SPORTS

Dick Scheer • Phone 634-8550

- FISHING TACKLE
  - GUNS - AMMUNITION
  - ELECTRIC TROLLING MOTORS
  - REEL PARTS & BULK LINE
  - CYPRESS GARDEN WATER SKIS AND ACCESSORIES
  - FISH LOCATORS
  - ARCHERY
  - HERMAN BOOTS
- The Largest Display of Mepps and Mr. Twister Baits in the North

One Stop Shopping for the Sportsman