

What is the difference between Crappie and Bluegill?

To the beginning/new fishermen, the differences are very subtle. To an avid fisherman the differences are pretty obvious. Before you go out fishing, you need to figure out which one you are going to target and learn as much as you can about them. Their habitat, what lures/baits work, best time of day to catch them, etc.. There will be very few similarities and some differences on the techniques used to catch them.

Crappie are found mainly in the eastern part of the United States. There are white crappie and black crappie. Bluegill are found along the coastal areas of the United States. From Virginia to Florida, in Texas and also New York and clear up into Minnesota. One similarity is that they are both considered to be “panfish”.

We are going to give you an overview of each fish; definition, habitat, spawning, prey, and more. I will go into depth on the differences between the crappie and the bluegill. I am also going to provide you with the few similarities between the two. By the end of this article you will know a lot of important information that will aid you in telling the 2 fish apart.

Crappie

These fish are part of the sunfish family and are very popular panfish. Both species, black and white, will feed on smaller fish species. They also eat zooplankton, insects, crustaceans and the young of their predators. Crappie are less active during the day and will hold up around weed beds or logs and boulders. They feed during dusk and dawn.

Fishing for Crappie

Crappies are very diverse and have a diverse diet. They can be caught using many different techniques. You can cast light jigs, troll with minnows and/or artificial lures. Crappies are also very popular with ice fisherman. The world record for black crappie is 5.4 pounds and for the white crappie it is 5.2 pounds. Some of the most popular baits when angling for crappie; plastic jigs, crankbaits, and live minnows.

Bluegill

Also referred to as bream or sunny, the bluegill is a freshwater fish. Native to North America the bluegill lives in rivers, streams, ponds, and lakes. They will hide in or around old tree stumps or underwater structures. Normally found east of the Rocky Mountains they can survive in deep or shallow water. Bluegills can reach 12 inches long and up to 4.5 pounds. They are omnivores and will typically eat anything that will fit into their mouth.

Fishing for Bluegill

Bluegill are best caught using live bait; such as worms, crickets, and grasshoppers. They can be caught in lakes, ponds, and rivers. You want to set your live bait 1-3 inches into the water with a small bobber. A number 6 hook with 2-6 pound test line is perfect for catching the bluegill. A lot of times you will find bluegill along the bank, nestled in the shade, among forage or under trees.

Differences Between Crappie and Bluegill

Some of what will be discussed here has been mentioned above, but I felt it was worth repeating because it is important information. Information that you will need to aid you in catching a bluegill or a crappie. There are 4 MAJOR differences between the crappie and the bluegill. We are going to cover those in this section, and then we will cover other differences.

- 1. The Gill Cover:** Of course the bluegill has blue gills and the crappie do not. Bluegill are also a lot more colorful than the crappie.
- 2. The Mouth:** Crappie have a larger mouth than the bluegill and can also grow larger. Because of the bluegill's smaller mouth, they have to have smaller bait. They also have a more rounded head than the crappie.
- 3. Body Shape:** Bluegill are more rounded than crappie, which makes them shorter. Crappies have longer bodies than the bluegill. Bluegill are usually only about 6 inches long, and crappies are 9 inches long.
- 4. Size:** Crappie, whether white or black, are normally around 9 inches long. Though you occasionally snag one around 12 or 14 inches in length. Bluegill very rarely ever hit the double digits in length.

The biggest difference and maybe the most asked question is; which one tastes better, the crappie or the bluegill? With a tremendous amount of research and asking some of the local fishermen; bluegill came out on top. There is a mutual agreement that bluegill have more flavor, their meat is more tender, and more flakey.

A lot of the fishermen still prefer to fish for crappie over bluegill. The crappie put up a better fight, giving the angler a challenge. They are also a larger fish so it is easier to get a nice filet. If seasoned and cook correctly the crappie can taste almost as good as a bluegill.

We are going to discuss, in more detail, some of the other differences between crappie and bluegill. These will include spawning, lifespan, habit/habitats, and more.

Bluegill & Crappie Life Span and Diet

The lifespan of a fish, no matter the species is partly due to the available food and the environment that they are living in. On average, both the crappie and the bluegill will live to be about 5 or 6 years old. Some crappies have actually reached between 8 and 11 years old.

Bluegill will basically eat anything that will fit in their mouth, which isn't much, as they have a smaller mouth than a crappie. Bluegill love worms, crickets, grasshoppers, algae, fish eggs, small insects, and zooplankton. Crappie feed on mostly minnows, but will also feed on insects, algae, snails, and crayfish.

Habitats & Habits

Bluegill are one of the most abundant species of fish in the United States. Bluegill can thrive in ponds, lakes, streams, and rivers.

A female bluegill will lay upto 100,000 eggs in a year. The drawback to this many eggs is the possible over population in smaller lakes and ponds.

Bluegill prefer slow-moving streams and reservoirs. They also love the warmer water in ponds and rivers. Their favorite and preferred hiding place is in aquatic vegetation. This is because they can find aquatic insects to feed on and other types of food.

Crappies also like to occupy ponds, lakes, and rivers. They also enjoy the underwater brush, aquatic vegetation, and rocks to hide and eat.

Crappie are found in deeper water during the hot summer months and in more shallow waters during the spring and the fall months. Don't forget that crappies also make excellent ice fishing targets.

Spawning

Both the crappie and the bluegill begin spawning in shallow water in May and June. There are occasions when spawning lasts until the end of July. Both species of fish are nest builders. The male fish, both crappie and bluegill, will make the nests. The females will lay the eggs and the males will then fertilize them. After doing so, the males will then protect the nest for 7-10 days.

Best time of day/season to fish

For crappies, the best time is in the spring. In the fall and spring months they prefer the deeper water or the deeply submerged forage and brush for shelter.

Bluegill are best caught at dusk or dawn. They prefer quiet, clear water and remain close to weed beds and timber; making it easier to fish from the banks and rivers. During mid-day they will hide deeper in the water where it is cooler, so you will need to drop your bait just a little further than 1-3 inches.

Bluegill and crappie are both fun and easy to catch, but the crappie are the favorite of most anglers. They offer a bit more of a challenge because they fight harder than the bluegill. Bluegill are really fun for the younger anglers to catch, and the first-timers, because they don't put up much of a fight. As long as the fishermen watch their bobber and yank at the right time, they will catch bluegill extremely quickly and easily.

Conclusion

Before you go fishing, especially for crappie or bluegill, it is a great idea to know the difference between the species. This way you will know what is on your hook when you reel it in. Both fish are fairly inexpensive to fish for, because you don't need fancy types of lures or live bait. Simple items like worms, crayfish, and minnows can be bought at low prices.

Always check the rules and regulations where you are going to be fishing to see how many you are allowed to take home with you in a 24 hour period. Make sure that you have a fishing license for the state that you are going to be fishing in, so that everything is legal.

I hope we have given you enough information in this article about crappie and bluegill, for you to be able to tell the difference and be able to locate a 'hot spot' and catch what you are wanting to catch. Just remember, no matter what you catch or how many you catch, you are building memories with the people you are with. You are relaxing, de-stressing and just having a great time away from the house and in the fresh air. Until next time everyone, Happy Fishing!!