



## Newsletter for the south Florida canal and urban pond angler

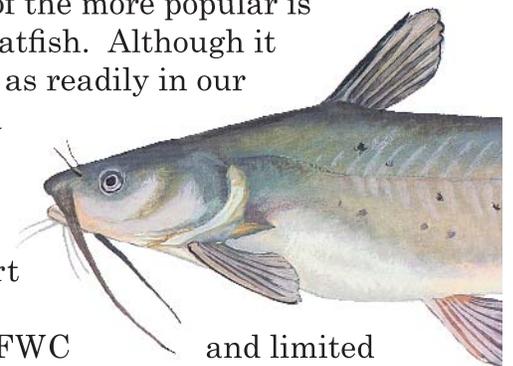
*Our Purpose: To identify excellent south Florida freshwater fishing opportunities and to provide urban anglers with relevant information that will enhance the quality of their outdoor experience.*

### Chasin' cats

The lowly catfish gets no respect. Maybe it's his habit of loafing around on the bottom of our lakes and canals. Or perhaps it's because he won't jump in a spray of aerial gymnastics when hooked. But those who don't respect Mr. Whiskers probably haven't faced the challenge of hooking a wary, angler-smart cat, or locked rods with a really big one. Fishing for catfish can be as demanding as most other forms of angling. On the other hand, catfishing can also be one of the more relaxed methods of fishing as well. Whatever

your desired level of challenge, fishing for catfish is worth a try.

In the FWC's South Region, there are several species of catfish you're likely to come across. One of the more popular is the channel catfish. Although it doesn't breed as readily in our south Florida lakes and ponds as it does in the northern part of our state, stocking by FWC and limited reproduction in our larger waters makes the channel cat accessible to most anglers. This is by far the largest catfish present in the area, readily achieving weights of over ten pounds. And the potential size is much greater—the Florida record stands at 44.50 pounds. Great baits for channels include commercial "stink baits," chicken or beef livers, cut sardines or shiners, and live worms. A good channel cat outfit is a medium spinning or casting rig spooled with 8-12 pound test line, depending on the size of the catfish you expect to encounter. However, if you're going after really big ones, line testing up to 20 pounds is not unreasonable. Depending on the size of fish you expect, use hook sizes ranging from 6 to 2/0. Aberdeen, baitholder and circle hooks are all popular choices for catfish, but the latter is most recommended, especially if you're not planning to



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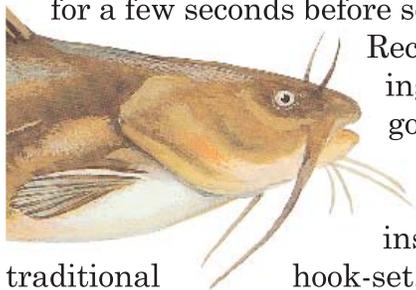


**Florida Fish and Wildlife  
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keep what you catch. Circle hooks, in addition to reducing the chances of gut-hooking, may also increase your percentage of solid hook-ups. Baits are usually fished directly on the bottom, with an egg sinker added for casting distance if needed. However, for wary biters in more heavily fished areas, no weight at all and a relatively light line gets more hookups. Otherwise, casting your bait into the deeper areas of any lake or canal will usually find fish. (Some anglers also do well floating their bait just off the bottom, suspended under a bobber.) Fish attractants applied to your bait will help catfish, which have a highly developed sense of smell, find your bait quickly.

I fish for channel catfish right on the bottom. Chicken livers are my favorite bait—though they are soft enough that care must be taken not to flip them off the hook when casting. I usually like to set out two or three rods, cast out in a fan pattern from my spot on the bank, and prop them up so that I can keep a close eye on the lines dangling from the rod tips. I use spinning rigs and leave the bail open; anglers (more coordinated than I am) that use baitcasters should put the reel in free-spool and engage the clicker if their reels have one. When line starts spilling off the spool or your reel starts chattering, you know a cat's just hit your bait! I'll usually let the fish run with the bait for a few seconds before setting the hook.

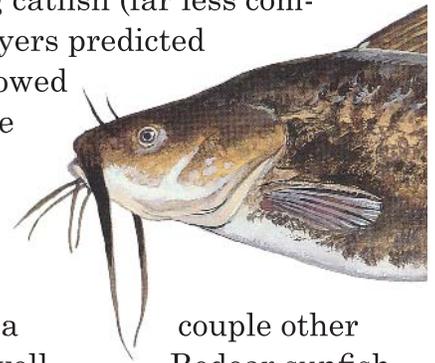


Recently, I've been using circle hooks with good results, and will gradually tighten up on the line instead of using the traditional hook-set. Although catfish usually won't take to the air, they will put up a strong fight—especially the bigger ones. While bass may jump and splash, a decent-sized catfish will make long, steady runs that will add a "Whoa!" to your fishing trip.

Yellow and brown bullheads are the other catfish that anglers are most likely to land in south Florida, and most everything said about their larger cousin the channel catfish will apply to these whiskered fish as well. Sizes are much smaller, with the state yellow and brown bullhead records standing at 2.75

and 5.72 pounds, respectively. Gear should be correspondingly lighter, with a medium-light outfit strung with 6-8 pound line just about right. Baits will be similar, but with live worms being more effective for bullheads than for channel catfish. Bullheads seem to take to our man-made canals more readily than channel catfish, and will also be more readily found than channels in places where the latter are not regularly stocked.

A couple other catfish that might also put in an appearance include white catfish (present but uncommon in southeast Florida), and exotic walking catfish (far less common than doom sayers predicted when they first showed up in Florida in the 1950s). Both are edible. Catfish anglers



can also expect to cross lines with a couple other species of fish, as well. Redear sunfish (shellcracker) anglers targeting fish on the bottom often come up with a bullhead or two; conversely, bullhead anglers might also put a few bream in the cooler, especially if using live worms. And odd as it may sound, I've actually caught a fair number of bluegill—including "hand-sized" specimens—on chicken livers.

Most catfish perform well in the frying pan—and that's usually how you'll want to prepare them. Dipped in egg and seasoned bread crumbs or cornmeal, cats will fry up nicely. They have a clean white meat that serves well. Flavor can vary, and an occasional complaint with catfish is that they may taste fishy out of certain locales. Some anglers only keep smaller fish, up to only two or three pounds, claiming that they taste better than the bigger fish.

So if you haven't gone after some catfish recently, throw a lawn chair in the trunk and grab a package of chicken livers for a morning outing. Whether you're looking for a fresh challenge or just want to sit back and take it easy for a few hours, you might develop a new-found admiration for Mr. Whiskers!



**Fish biology:  
Creels—aren't they  
old fashioned fish baskets?**

*By Bob Wattendorf, with Jason Dotson*

You might wonder why someone in a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) boat is stopping you and asking to conduct “a creel survey.” Two questions come to mind. What is a creel? And why does it require a survey? Very good questions – one answer involves tradition; the other answer involves a healthy fishery.

A creel is a wicker basket used for holding fish that an angler has caught, or a wicker fish trap. Today, we still use the expression derived from that old-fashioned, but very stylish, basket. Somehow we haven't adapted to asking if we can do “a live-well,” “ice-chest” or “catch-and-release survey.”

So bear with us when we ask for your participation. Your answers to our questions are important to the future health of Florida's fisheries.

The FWC's fisheries biologists need to know what you have been catching. Despite using old-fashioned terminology, the sophistication of these vital surveys has grown over the years, and they are now a critical source of information for determining how Florida's fisheries are doing.

Since creel clerks who conduct these interviews cannot talk to every angler, biologists and statisticians work together to carefully determine a sampling scheme of when and

where we momentarily interrupt an angler's recreation to gather this information. Each angler asked to participate represents many other anglers that we cannot talk to, so it is very important that we get the most accurate information possible. The interviewer will want to know how long you've been fishing, and what you caught and harvested as well as what you released. They may also measure your fish, check them for tags and ask some questions about where you live and other information that helps to explain results, including information on your age, which for instance relates to license sales.

This information is used to determine what anglers want to catch, what they are catching (species, size and numbers), whether they are keeping them, and other factors that allow biologists to estimate the health of a fishery. Combined with other data, such as information from electrofishing samples, biologists can determine what regulations are needed for size and creel limits, what is needed for habitat restoration, supplemental fish stocking, and where additional access, such as boat ramps, shoreline access, or fishing piers, may be needed.

For biologists to make the decisions that ultimately impact the quality of your fishing, they need honest, accurate information. False responses that over or underestimate your catch can lead to unnecessary or unrealistic solutions. For example, an underestimate of angling success could lead to stricter creel limits (the number or size of fish anglers may legally harvest) when they aren't necessary and stunting of the fish population because enough big fish aren't harvested to allow the others to grow rapidly. In case of an overestimate of angling success, the decision may be made that habitat improvements aren't needed because the fishery is doing so well, delay a proposed fish stocking, or prevent appropriate harvest regulations from being implemented.

Of course, biologists consistently use multiple sources of data to reduce the chance these types of errors will occur. But with recurring budget cuts, creel surveys and angler-attitude surveys become increasingly cost effective. As other options, such as electrofishing, seining or trawling, are reduced to save money, or sam-

pling, such as block nets and gillnetting, are reduced because of adverse public perception, the need for honest, accurate answers to creels surveys becomes more and more important.

In 2007-08, FWC estimated fisheries dependent effects of sportfish catch, harvest, effort and success rates from creel survey data collected from 14 freshwater bodies throughout the state. Of the three primary sportfish types (black crappie, sunfish and largemouth bass), most anglers once again pursued largemouth bass (averaging 4.3 hours/acre/100 days). The 100 days refers to the peak spring fishing season, so multiplying by 3.65 to get an annual rate would yield an over estimate, which is an example of scientists trying to keep the data “real” and to standardize it so you can compare between water bodies. Some other highlights include the fact that anglers caught the most bass per acre from the L-67A canal (31 bass/acre) and the Stick Marsh (6 bass/acre), whereas a typical figure is less than 4 bass/acre. The canal fisheries benefits from concentrating fish from the Everglades, so the per acre calculation can be a little misleading, but it is nonetheless an outstanding recreational asset. It is important to note that less than 10 percent of those bass were harvested (removed from the system, the others were released). Catch success ranged from 0.32 bass/hour (Lake Harris) to 1.19 bass/hour in the L-67A. Often a figure of 0.25 bass/hour (meaning one bass caught per angler every four hours on the water) is considered typical in the U.S., with experienced anglers doing much better but the average influenced by the many novices and those casually fishing more for the relaxation than to compete for the most bass.

The Stick Marsh (5 hours/acre/100 days) and Lake Lochloosa (3 hours/acre/100 days) provided the most concentrated fishing effort for black crappie, but catch rate was highest for Lake Tohopekaliga at 2.33 fish per angler-hour. Lake Okeechobee, the international crappie fishing Mecca, has been somewhat less productive recently due to major habitat and weather-related effects. It produced 0.7 hours/acre/100 days of crappie fishing in the northwest area of the lake, with a catch rate of 1.49 fish per angler-hour. The greatest focused

effort and harvest for sunfish (8 hours/acre/100 days) was observed at L-67A Canal, while the “Big O” led the way with a 4 sunfish per angler-hour catch rate. The Stick Marsh/Farm-13 supported the most fishing pressure for catfish (0.7 hours/acre/100 days) and was second only to Lake Istokpoga (1.3 fish per angler-hour) in catfish catch rates.

So the next time someone tells you they are conducting a creel survey, remember you are representing many anglers and helping to ensure the safe and sustainable future of quality recreational fishing in Florida when you give a few minutes of your time and accurate information to the creel clerk.

Note: In the South Region the FWC is currently conducting creel surveys on the **L-67A Canal; Lake Trafford; and Okeeheele, Caloosa, Plantation Heritage and Tropical Fish Management Areas.** Your cooperation and assistance are appreciated.

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## **Fishing forecast**

### **January, February and March 2009**

#### **Osborne Chain-of-Lakes (Palm Beach County):**

This is the time of year anglers in south Florida can expect largemouth bass to move to shallow areas as the spawning peak (January/February/March) arrives. Fish the outside edges of vegetation with topwater baits in the early mornings and crankbaits or plastic worms later in the day. Areas along any piers or seawalls will probably hold fish at this time as waters start to warm. Other spots to try for largemouth are the deep holes located in the northern and middle sections of the lake during cooler days. Fish the holes with live shiners, free-lined or with a small split shot. This technique is also a prime producer for sunshine bass that become active at this time of year. Another method of catching sunshines is to fish on the bottom with cut shrimp. The

6th Avenue pass just before sunset is a good place and time to try this technique. Black crappie (speck) fishing will be good around the fish attractors using live minnows or jigs. Channel catfish, bream, and Mayan cichlid can be caught from shore using chicken liver, live worms, crickets, and small jigs or beetle spins. — *by Ralph LaPrairie*

**Everglades Water Conservation Areas (Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade counties):** Higher water levels and cool surface temperatures will continue through much of this period. These conditions will continue to keep angler success fair to slow. The high water tends to disperse fish by giving them access to the extensive marsh areas. Some fish will, of course, remain in the canals. However, this same high water allows anglers to utilize the numerous marsh access trails in WCA 3 off Alligator Alley and the L-67A Canal to pursue bass in the marsh (“the flats”). Anglers should also be able to gain access to marsh fishing in areas of WCA 2, although no marsh access trails are maintained there. Fishing in this typically dense cover requires weedless presentations. Floating soft plastics, such as trick worms or frogs, are good choices. Alternatively, pitch large Texas rigged plastics or a jig and pig into openings in the vegetation. **Please remember that displaying a 10x12 inch orange flag 10 feet above the bottom of the hull is required for all vessels entering the marsh.** Anglers seeking bass in the canals should consider casting large deep running crankbaits or spinnerbaits, until the water begins to warm slightly. During the colder periods live bait, such as shiners or minnows, fished near deep holes, water control structures, or canal junctions can provide consistent catches of larger fish. Fishing for panfish (bluegill, sunfish, and exotics) will have slowed, but good catches will still be possible—and those fish that are caught are apt to be the best tasting of the year. Natural bait or jigs tipped with bait fished deep and slow should produce mixed strings of panfish during the cooler weeks. As spring-like weather returns panfishing should pick up, and most techniques will produce. — *by Barron Moody*

**Metropolitan Miami Canals (Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade counties):** Between October and November 2008, fish in 11 southeast Florida

canals were stunned with electricity, netted, weighed, measured, and released unharmed back into the waterway from which they were collected. The overall electrofishing catch rate of largemouth bass was 23 fish over ten-inches-long every hour. A total of 366 largemouth bass were counted from the 11 canals.

The populations of butterfly peacock in several well-known-to-angler Miami-Dade canals are doing extremely well despite a great deal of fishing pressure, a testament to the good conservation ethic of catch and release practiced by many urban canal anglers for butterfly peacock and largemouth bass. This year the electrofishing catch rate of butterfly peacock larger than ten-inches-long in eight Miami-Dade and Broward counties averaged 27 fish every hour. A total of 327 butterfly peacock were counted and released from these canals. The electrofishing catch rate of bream (bluegill, redear sunfish, Mayan cichlid, and jaguar guapote) was 50 fish over six-inches-long every hour.

These results are from an annual electrofishing survey designed to monitor sportfish populations in urban canals in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties. Each canal is sampled for approximately eight hours and based on these findings, fisheries biologists at the Non-Native Fish Laboratory in Boca Raton predict that anglers will enjoy excellent catches of largemouth bass, butterfly peacock, and bream this quarter.

The recent survey produced some interesting facts:

- Southeast Florida urban canals produce good numbers of quality largemouth bass but have few “lunkers” over 6-8 pounds.
- Some of the best canals for largemouth bass were the Tamiami (C-4) and Snake Creek (C-9) canals in Miami-Dade County, North New River (G-15) and Cypress Creek (C-14) canals in Broward County, and West Palm Beach (C-51) and Earman River (C-17) canals in Palm Beach County.
- Some of the best canals for butterfly peacock were the Tamiami (C-4), Cutler Drain (C-100), South New River (C-11) and West Palm Beach (C-51) canals.
- The best canals for largemouth bass and butterfly peacock combined were Snake Creek (C-9) and Tamiami (C-4) in Miami-Dade County,

Cypress Creek (C-14) and South New River (C-11) in Broward County, and Boynton (C-16) and West Palm Beach (C-51) canals in Palm Beach County.

- One canal yielded largemouth bass over eight pounds, four canals yielded largemouth bass over five pounds, and seven canals yielded bass over four pounds. The largest largemouth bass collected this year weighed 8.1 pounds and measured 24.3 inches.

- The highest number of largemouth bass were shocked in the West Palm Beach (C-51) Canal, and the Tamiami (C-4) Canal had the most butterfly peacock.

- Five canals yielded butterfly peacock over four pounds, and two canals yielded five pound butterfly peacock. The largest butterfly peacock collected this year weighed 5.4 pounds and measured 20.9 inches.

- Some of the best bream canals were Tamiami (C-4) and Snake Creek (C-9) canals in Miami-Dade County, Cypress Creek (C-14) and North New river (G-15) in Broward Canal, and Boynton (C-16) and West Palm Beach (C-51) canals in Palm Beach County.

- Snook and tarpon are found in many south-east Florida canals and the highest numbers of these sportfish were observed in the Tamiami (C-4), Snake Creek (C-9), and North New River (G-15) canals.

January and February are the peak spawning months for largemouth bass in south Florida, and now is the best opportunity for anglers to catch big bass. Butterfly peacock fishing continues to be excellent except for temporary slowdowns associated with cold fronts. We strongly encourage anglers to practice catch and release of sportfish at all times but especially for largemouth bass during this season. — *by Kelly Gestring*

**Lake Trafford (Collier County):** Water levels are normal and crappie (speck) fishing has been productive so far this winter. Anglers will find the conditions a lot less challenging than last year when water levels were extremely low. The bait of choice for most anglers is live minnow, but expect small artificial jigs to work just as well for those who know how to use them when fish can be located. Largemouth continue to be far and few between. The new 18-inch minimum size limit on black bass is designed to allow young bass the opportunity to make it to spawning size. On warmer days

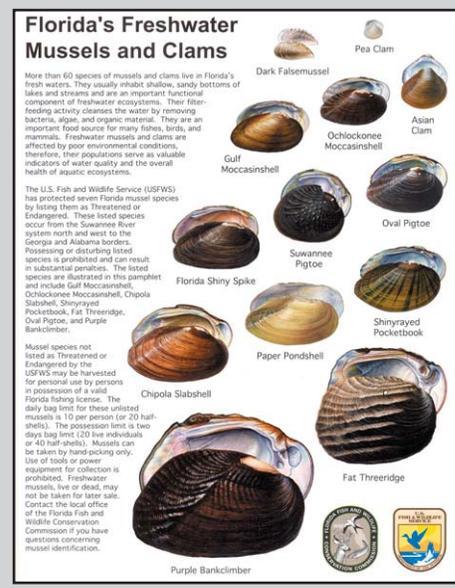
anglers should be able to catch good numbers of bluegill using crickets and worms by targeting the edge of vegetation such as cattail and smartweed. Catfish can be caught by fishing night crawlers or chicken livers near the bottom. Anglers are encouraged to harvest the non-native species found in the lake, the Mayan cichlid. They are related to oscars and will aggressively take crickets or worms and can be harvested using small artificial lures. They are fine table fare and there is no limit on the size or number an angler can possess. Just be sure to put them on ice since it is illegal to transport them live. — *by Ralph LaPrairie*

### Moving up



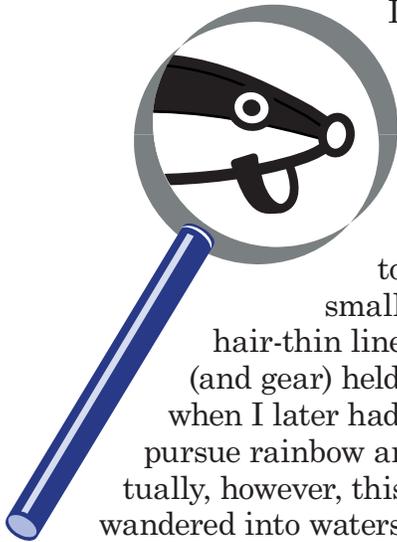
Regional Fisheries Administrator **Jon Fury**, interviewed in **Issue 27**, has been promoted to Section Leader of Freshwater Hatchery Operations and Stocking. He is now overseeing the FWC's Florida Bass Conservation Center (**Issue 30**) and Blackwater Fisheries Research and Development Center (**Issue 33**). Filling his shoes as the new South Region Fisheries Administrator is Barron Moody, interviewed in **Issue 12**. Good luck and best wishes to both in their new roles!

Seen any Florida Shiny Spikes lately? A new flyer entitled **Florida's Freshwater Mussels and Clams**, printed by FWC in coordination with the **US Fish & Wildlife Service**, identifies many of Florida's common—as well as some of its threatened—bivalves. It should prove an



interesting reference for anglers who like to be able to identify everything, fins or not, that they see while fishing. For your copy, check the contact information on the front page.

## My love affair with tiny lures



In my early days as an angler, I was an ultralight bream fisherman. I'd been heavily influenced by writings describing the romance of tossing tiny lures with small rigs loaded with hair-thin line. My experiences (and gear) held me in good stead when I later had the opportunity to pursue rainbow and brook trout. Eventually, however, this ultralight angler wandered into waters frequented by bass and redfish willing to occasionally chomp a smaller lure. These unexpected encounters with some of the "big guys" caused me to quickly add medium gear to my angling arsenal, joined by heavier lines and larger lures. Soon, my ultralight tackle stayed home more often than it accompanied me. I was transformed into primarily a bass angler, and this remains my happy staple to this day. But occasionally I'll miss the "old days." I'll leave everything home except for my favorite ultralight outfit and a tackle box full of tiny favorites, and spend a morning tossing thumbnail-sized offerings for bream and the occasional bass. Whether you've tried ultralight fishing or not, it can be a refreshing diversion from the usual fare—or a rekindling of the happy romance of earlier days.

### A brief note about tackle

Modern technology makes ultralight fishing even more of a delight than it was in the past. It's now pretty easy to put together a good-quality ultralight spinning rig at nominal cost. (Due to the extremely light weight of the lures used, baitcasting is out; however, ultralight spin-casting outfits are available.) I like a graphite rod with single-footed guides, preferably six feet long (though most ultralights will top out at five-and-a-half). The extra length, if you can find it, will go a long way toward effectively playing larger fish on light line. However, longer rods frequently have oversized handles which can make the outfit feel cumbersome and reduces sensitivity to strikes.

Don't go too small on the reel. The tiniest offerings available can be marvels of modern technology, but a tiny spool won't hold much line, creates excessive line friction, and leads to unnecessary line curling (memory). Stick with slightly larger reels that are rated for up to six-pound line, even if all you ever put on it is two- or four-pound test. A slightly larger reel will also help to balance a rod with a larger handle, if necessary. "Ultralight" is a relative term, depending on the size of fish you're after, but for most freshwater anglers it will mean sticking with four pound test line, and occasionally dropping to two-pound. However, modern braids are thinner than traditional monofilaments, and heavier test lines can still provide the fine-line aesthetics of a light line while giving you a stronger connection between angler and fish. This will be an advantage to those learning to use ultralight tackle, as well as for those surprise occasions when a larger fish takes your lure.

### Spinners

Although these flashing lures are generally overlooked in the Sunshine State, they work great on both bream and bass. For tiny-mouthed bream you should stick to 1/16 or 1/8 ounce offerings (or smaller); the bigger hooks on larger sizes will lead to many missed strikes. I usually stick with either a silver or gold blade. Hooks dolled up with fur or plastic tubing may help prevent short-striking by cautious fish. I usually bend the barbs down on all my hooks, especially trebles, because the smaller size of ultralight lures allows them to be more easily "inhaled" deeper into the mouth than standard sized lures.

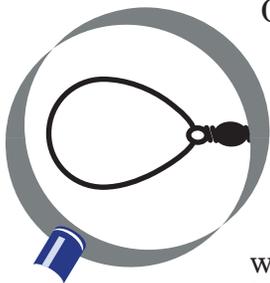
I'll use a steady retrieve punctuated by occasional twitches when working spinners. Cast and let the spinner sink to the desired depth, staying alert for a possible strike during the fluttering drop. Then twitch your rod tip to get the blade spinning as you begin your retrieve. You'll want ceramic or aluminum oxide guides for working spinners, because the constant line tension will wear a groove in the



simple chrome-plated guides found on cheaper rods. I like Colorado-bladed spinners (such as the Mepps Aglia) or in-line spinners (such as Panther Martin) because the blades rotate easily with a slower retrieve. These are ideal for working the shallows. If you need to go deeper, or are working moving water, try Mepps' Aglia Long series (those with the plastic minnow teaser are tops for bass) or Rooster Tails; the longer, narrower blades will run deeper and won't twist as badly in current.

An extra trick with spinners is to attach a one-foot dropper to the treble with a nymph or wet fly tied on the end. Often, bream that pass up or miss the spinner will take the fly. I've found this to work especially well on scrappy spotted sunfish (stumpknockers), a fish small enough that ultralight tackle is a must for any real challenge.

### Beetle spins

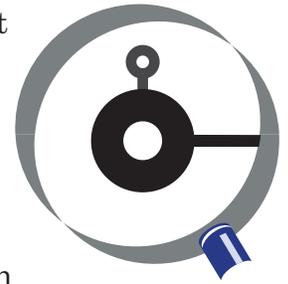


One of the disadvantages of going to light line is that you often won't get your snagged lure back from a lily pad or cypress branch. Beetle spins have the advantage of being one of the few semi-weedless lures in the ultralight angler's arsenal. They allow you to snake an ultralight offering into places most other lures won't ever emerge from. I prefer dressing mine with a curlytail grub, although marabou or spinnerbait-skirt style dressings can also be effective. I usually stick with white, yellow or black, in that order, though experimentation will yield plenty of other effective shades. Stick with the smaller sizes—1/16 or 1/8 ounce. Although the traditional "safety-pin" style beetle spins are most commonly available, smaller "crappie spinnerbaits" can also fill the same role. And just like their bass counterparts, these crappie spinnerbaits (and beetle spins) will often attract the attention of nearby bass. Blade styles are limited, with most beetle spins sporting a single Colorado. This is usually satisfactory for most situations, though you'll see more variety in the harder-to-find crappie spinnerbaits. I usually stick with a steady retrieve, throwing in occasional twitches of the rod tip. Letting the lure flutter once in a while may also draw an extra strike, though you'll have to stay pretty alert to detect it on a lure

that creates very little line tension compared to a standard spinnerbait.

### Jigs

Among the simplest and most basic of artificials, jigs come closer than anything else to being the universal lure. They'll catch, at one time or another, any sportfish that swims our waters. Tiny jigs are no exception. Available in smaller sizes than other lures, ultralight anglers can go as small as 1/32 or even 1/64 ounce. The tiniest jigs are hard to cast, and hard to detect strikes with (due to their almost nonexistent line tension). Most anglers will do well sticking with 1/8 or 1/16 ounce sizes. Dressing styles and colors vary widely, but will be similar to those for beetle spin jigs. You would be hard-pressed to come up with a wrong way to work a jig; suffice it to say that if it's not actually lying on the bottom, you have a chance of catching a fish. A quick retrieve with lots of jerks will work well, although with curlytail or swimming jigs a steady retrieve with less twitching can also be quite effective for most species.



### Crankbaits and minnow imitations

There's a much greater variety of tiny crankbaits and minnow imitations now than ever used to be available to anglers. Most less than two inches in length would qualify for the light to ultralight category. Better known examples are the No. 5 Rapala Original Floater (my absolute favorite in this category), smaller sizes of the Rebel Minnow (jointed or straight, including a petite 1-1/2 inch model), the Rebel Teeny Wee-Crawfish, and the Rapala Mini Fat Rap. Silver and gold are my standbys in all models except the Wee-Crawfish. Yo-Zuri, Bagley, and other major manufacturers also offer scaled-down versions of their better-known offerings. There are plenty of off-brands available too, but ultralight crankbaits must be carefully balanced to not tumble and this is one place where the dollar or two savings won't be worth it. Regardless of brand, be careful not to retrieve small crankbaits too fast or they may roll or become unstable. Tying the line directly to the lure eye might hamper the action of these tiniest of swimmers, so I like using a tiny cross-lock style snap so that the lures can swim freely.