



# FISHING REPORT

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The weather is cooling down and the water is, too. Fall fishing is a great time to get on some aggressive fish that are trying to fatten up for the coming winter. In this article, we'll go over some tips and things to remember so you can catch more fish this fall.

Until it gets unbearably cold, the bass, crappie and other panfish will become more active. All summer, they've been stressed out with the heat, lower oxygen levels and lack of activity from other species they consume. When the water cools down, the whole ecosystem of the lake gets more life to it. Predatory fish will take this opportunity to eat well before winter weather causes most species to lay low and conserve energy.

Due to the increase in activity, fish will be willing to follow a moving target. In the summer, it was common for anglers to slow their retrieval and use baits, such as soft plastics or jigs. They are fished right in structure, where bass are hanging out waiting for something to come along. Topwater lures are fished painfully slow. Unless it's early in the morning or late in the evening, there's often not much activity anywhere.

Everything changes in the fall. This is the time to throw bigger baits and speed up the retrieve. These fish are out in open water, chasing shad and everything that follows. Crankbaits, faster-moving jerk baits, swimbaits and spinnerbaits are great for this time of year. The increased activity is great for overall results. However, it can make the best spot harder to find. Fish won't be hiding under fallen trees, by rocks, or close to other structures waiting as they do when it's warm. They can be close to structures but may not remain still. Use baits that will catch their attention and that can cover a large area quickly. One of my favorites for this application is a lipless crankbait. Not only can it be fished at nearly any depth, the noise and flashiness of it will draw in fish. You'll know relatively quickly whether the area you're fishing is worth staying in.

Using a fish finder can also make a big difference during this time of the year. In the summer, much of the structures anglers are working are visible without a finder. When fish start following shad, a fish finder can locate them at any depth. Finders can be used for finding the thermocline, the distinct change in water temperature and density found in deep water. This is where I look for crappie waiting for baitfish. You could see a tree 25 feet down but find the crappie 5 feet above the top of it, where the thermocline is. Sometimes precision is required and you won't get a bite a couple of feet below or above that zone. Throwing smaller lures of a similar variety or a classic crappie jig will work well for them. Many brands make smaller-sized crankbaits and swimbaits but they are not recommended.



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