

# 2020 CRAPPIE TOURNAMENT SUMMARY



FISHERIES BUREAU



MISSISSIPPI WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS

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Jackson, MS 39211



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In 2011, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) biologists began to archive information from crappie tournaments throughout the state. These data should prove helpful in managing one of Mississippi's most popular sport fish, as well as provide crappie anglers with valuable information for what to expect at different lakes for future tournaments.

In 2020, calculation of hours required to catch a two-pound crappie or larger (N2) was changed to better reflect fishing quality. In prior reports, tournaments where no crappie  $\geq 2$  pounds were caught were omitted to avoid dividing by zero. This method could omit hundreds of angler-hours and bias N2 low. For 2020 events where no crappie  $\geq 2$  pounds were caught, that event was assigned an N2 of 1000 hours (based on the highest N2 for 2020) and averaged with other tournaments for that lake.

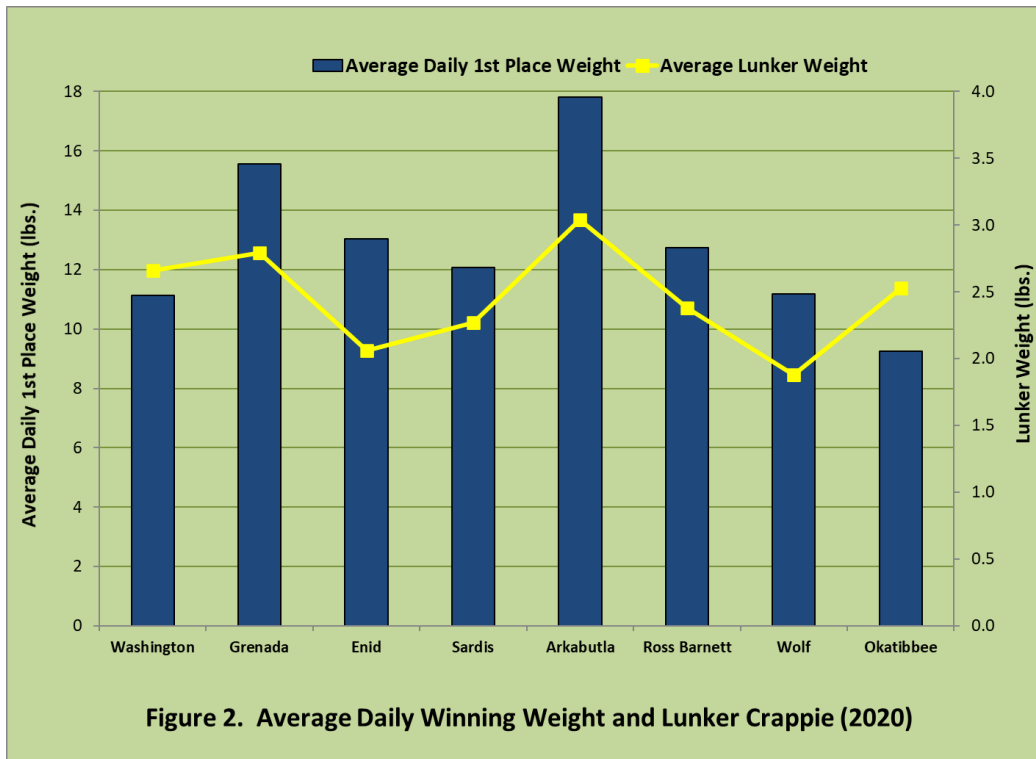
A "tournament" was identified as such if daily results for two or three-day events (or pro and amateur divisions) were reported separately or not. Most tournaments were one day. Tournament daily bag limits were seven crappie per team. MDWFP obtained results from twenty-eight tournaments at eight different lakes from six sources (see acknowledgements). The most notable findings in 2020 were:

- A total of 1,290 crappie anglers fished 20,058.5 hours. Grenada, Sardis, and Ross Barnett had the most tournaments. Arkabutla, Okatibbee, and Wolf each had one event. Anglers know there are good and bad fishing days. Results from lakes with fewer than three events may not accurately reflect the quality of those crappie fisheries.
- COVID19 had dramatic effects on tournament schedules and results. Only two fruit jar tournaments were held; the rest were canceled. National and club tournaments were also postponed and/or canceled. Unlike previous years, most tournaments were in June (Figure 1). No events were reported during January, April (COVID19 closure), or December (Figure 1).



- Fewer spring events likely explained declines from 2019 in all weight-related statewide averages (Table 1). Spring crappie are normally pre-spawn and/or plumper than post-spawn and summer fish. The increase in N2 likely was due to the change in methodology, as well as fewer spring events.
- The average statewide daily first place weight was 12.84 pounds (Table 1). It ranged from 17.81 pounds at Arkabutla to 9.24 pounds at Okatibbee (Figure 2).

Table 1. Statewide Tournament Statistics, 2019 vs 2020			
2019	-	2020	
2.85	-	2.66	Number of crappie caught per angler-day
4.18	-	3.54	Pounds of crappie caught per angler day
1.54	-	1.39	Average weight of crappie caught (pounds)
153	-	396	Hours to catch a two-pound crappie
2.62	-	2.45	Average lunker or weight of biggest crappie (pounds)
14.07	-	12.84	Average daily 1 <sup>st</sup> place weight (pounds)



- The top 10 heaviest 7-crappie limits came from four lakes (Table 2). Grenada broke the three-pound average (3.02 pounds) with the heaviest sack (21.17 pounds). Seven of the top 10 limits came from Grenada.
- The average big fish (lunker) ranged from 3.04 pounds at Arkabutla to 1.88 pounds at Wolf (Figure 2); both lakes only had one tournament. The statewide average big fish only declined 0.17 pounds from 2019 (Table 1) despite having fewer spring events.
- The top 10 big fish weighed in came from five different lakes (Table 3). Two big fish, each weighing 3.83 pounds, came from back-to-back March events on Grenada. Despite coming in last in daily winning weight (Figure 2), an Okatibbee big fish made the top 10.

Table 2. Top 10 Heaviest Daily 1<sup>st</sup> Place Weights from 2020.

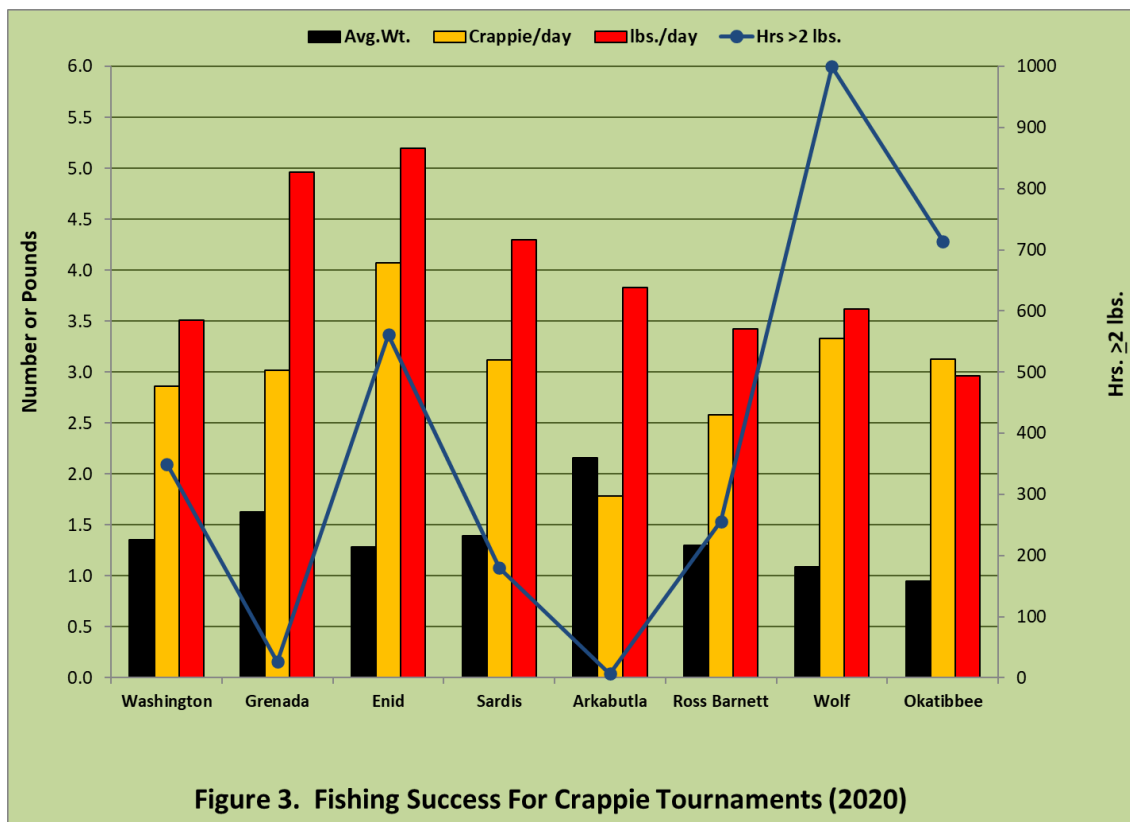
<u>Lake</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Tournament</u>	<u>Daily 1<sup>st</sup> Place Weight (lbs.)</u>
Grenada	March 7	Magnolia Crappie Club	21.17
Grenada	March 13-14	Crappie Masters Ntl	18.45
Arkabutla	October 10	Crappie Masters Trails	17.81
Grenada	September 19	Magnolia Crappie Club	16.42
Grenada	Sept. 11-12	American Crappie Trail	16.06
Washington	February 2	Crappie Masters Trails	15.91
Grenada	June 27	Crappie Masters Trails	15.50
Enid	July 18	Crappie Masters Trails	15.28
Grenada	June 11	Magnolia Crappie Club	15.23
Grenada	June 26	Crappie Masters Trails	15.08

- No crappie over three pounds were caught in 2019. In 2020, crappie over three pounds were caught at Grenada, Arkabutla, and Washington. Teams may only weigh one "big fish" per daily limit; but many March limits at Grenada had more than one fish over three pounds.

Table 3. Top 10 Heaviest Big Fish Weights from 2020.

<u>Lake</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Tournament</u>	<u>Big Fish Weight (lbs.)</u>
Grenada	March 7	Magnolia Crappie Club	3.83
Grenada	March 13-14	Crappie Masters Ntl	3.83
Arkabutla	October 10	Crappie Masters Trails	3.04
Washington	February 2	Magnolia Crappie Club	3.00
Grenada	Sept. 11-12	American Crappie Trail	2.84
Grenada	Sept. 19	Magnolia Crappie Club	2.76
Ross Barnett	June 13	Magnolia Crappie Club	2.64
Ross Barnett	February 8	Fruit jar Crappie.com	2.63
Ross Barnett	Oct. 23-24	American Crappie Trail	2.56
Okatibee	October 17	Magnolia Crappie Club	2.53

- Average crappie weight ranged from 2.16 pounds at Arkabutla to 0.95 pounds at Okatibbee (Figure 3). Number of crappie caught per angler per day was highest at Wolf (3.33 fish/day) and lowest at Arkabutla (1.78 fish/day). Pounds caught per angler per day was highest at Sardis (4.30 pounds/day) and lowest at Washington (2.71 pounds/day).
- Hours fished to catch a 2 pound or larger crappie (Figure 3) was lowest at Arkabutla (7 hours) and highest at Wolf (1000 hours = none caught). Both lakes only had one event. Average N2 depends on many factors (season, weather, etc.), but appears to be a good indicator of presence of larger fish. Examining Figure 3, N2 and crappie/day were lowest at Arkabutla: few but big fish. N2 was second highest and average weight was lowest at Okatibbee: mostly small fish.
- Grenada finished at the top in overall quality indicator rankings (Table 4). Arkabutla was second; Sardis was third. Although Grenada was first overall, it did not rank first in any of the six measured parameters. However, it ranked second in five of them (Table 4).



So, how good is crappie fishing in Mississippi? Compared to bass fisheries (relative to their respective world record weights), a state average 2.45-pound big fish (White Crappie) would equal a 10.51-pound Largemouth Bass. A state average 12.84-pound, seven fish, crappie tournament limit would equal a 39.37-pound, five fish, bass tournament limit (a 7.87-pound average).

Since tournament anglers only weigh in their seven largest fish, crappie tournament results differ from the catches of average crappie anglers. This report augments other MDWFP survey data (creel, electrofishing, netting, etc.) used to evaluate, monitor, and manage Mississippi's nationally acclaimed crappie fisheries. It also can be utilized by other biologists, average crappie anglers, and tournament organizations to improve crappie management, increase angling success, and maximize tournament success and participation.

**Acknowledgements:** Results were copied from websites and/or Facebook pages of the American Crappie Trail, Crappie Masters, and Crappie USA national tournament organizations, the Magnolia Crappie Club, and posted results of fruit jar tournaments on the Mississippi forum of Crappie.com. Special thanks to Billy Baughman of Crappie Masters Mississippi Trails for emailing their tournament results.

Tournament organizers that want to participate directly in next year's Crappie Tournament Summary can email their 2021 tournament results to either:

Keith Meals [keith.meals@wfp.ms.gov](mailto:keith.meals@wfp.ms.gov) or Arthur Dunn [Arthur.Dunn@wfp.ms.gov](mailto:Arthur.Dunn@wfp.ms.gov)

Table 4. Final rankings of crappie tournament lakes in Mississippi based on 2020 results.

Overall Rank	Hours to catch a crappie $\geq$ 2 lbs.	Average daily 1 <sup>st</sup> place weight (lbs.)	Average Lunker (lbs.)	Average weight (lbs.) of fish	Average number of crappie per angler per day	Average lbs. per angler per day
#1 Grenada (9)*	Arkabutla 7	Arkabutla 17.81	Arkabutla 3.04	Arkabutla 2.16	Wolf 3.33	Sardis 4.30
#2 Arkabutla (1)	Grenada 27	Grenada 15.55	Grenada 2.79	Grenada 1.63	Okatibbee 3.13	Grenada 4.29
#3 Sardis (5)	Sardis 180	Enid 13.03	Washington 2.66	Sardis 1.39	Sardis 3.12	Enid 3.90
#4 Enid (2)	Ross Barnett 259	Ross Barnett 12.73	Okatibbee 2.53	Washington 1.35	Enid 3.03	Arkabutla 3.83
#5 Ross Barnett (6)	Washington 362	Sardis 12.08	Ross Barnett 2.38	Ross Barnett 1.30	Grenada 2.67	Wolf 3.62
#6 Washington (3)	Enid 623	Wolf 11.17	Sardis 2.27	Enid 1.28	Ross Barnett 2.12	Okatibbee 2.96
#7 Wolf (1)	Okatibbee 714	Washington 11.14	Enid 2.06	Wolf 1.09	Washington 2.06	Ross Barnett 2.74
#7 Okatibbee (1)	Wolf 1000	Okatibbee 9.24	Wolf 1.88	Okatibbee 0.95	Arkabutla 1.78	Washington 2.71

\*Number of tournament samples in parentheses.



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