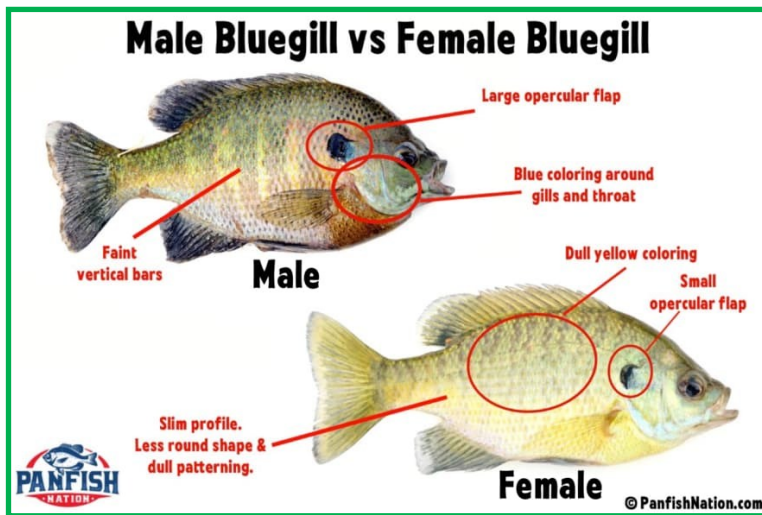


Protecting Barnum's Panfish

Not long ago, the bluegill and crappie fishing on Barnum was incredibly underwhelming as we went through a stretch of several years without seeing many big panfish. Today the large fish are back, but we need to be mindful of their roles during the spawning season to ensure the lake's population of larger fish remains.

The most popular understanding for conserving a healthy panfish lake is to reduce the harvest of mature male fish. Especially during the spawning season due to their roles during this critical cycle. A good article was published in the Minnesota Conservation Volunteer in June 2019 by Scott Mackenthun.

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mcvmagazine/issues/2019/may-jun/sunfish.html>



Bluegills: (According to the UofMn Website)

- 8" fish are 7-9 years old. 10" fish are 10-11 years old.
- Females will lay 1,000-50,000 eggs based on their size, and will lay eggs several times per spawn, in several different beds.
- Male Bluegills build the nest, and protect the eggs from predators until the hatch.
- Small males hide nearby the nest and attempt to fertilize the eggs before darting back to the weeds...avoiding their protection duties.

Scott Mackenthun: A famous study by former DNR Fisheries biologists Donald Olson and Paul Cunningham looked at weights of entries in the Park Rapids Fuller's Hardware Fishing Contest from 1930 to 1987. Until 1953, the average weight of contest-entered bluegills was around 1.3 pounds. After 1953, average weight declined to 0.8 pounds in 1987. Trophy-size bluegill contest entries also declined after 1953.

Crappie: (According to the UofMn Website)

- 12" Crappies are believed to be 8 years old.
- Females will lay between 3,000-188,000 eggs; like bluegills they will lay eggs several times during the cycle.
- Male crappies do not feed while protecting their nest, but they will bite small predators in defense of the eggs. Therefore they feed heavily leading up to the spawn. (Wire2fish.com)



Have you ever wondered how to tell the difference between a male and a female black crappie during the spawn?

The male black crappie is darker in color during the spawn with darker fins than the female. It can also be observed during the spawn that males may have mud or dark stained bellies and their belly fins and tail fins may appear worn or tattered from fanning out beds on sandy or gravel bottoms. The female will have distended bellies from being ripe with eggs. During the rest of the year it is more difficult to distinguish between male and female.

MnDNR: Declines in the quality of black crappie fisheries have been linked to angling. Numbers of black crappie 1.75 pounds and larger entered into an annual fishing contest in northern Minnesota dropped from 151 in 1941 to 15 in 1987 (Olson and Cunningham 1989). This decline in the number of large black crappies also coincided with increases in fishing license sales in Minnesota.