

### Crappie Corner



By Tim Huffman

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You have a 2-inch Yamaminnow jig ready to drop beside a stump. Did you know that the pole you use will determine, at least to some degree, the success you have in catching that fish? Are you far enough away from the fish? Will you see a super-light bite? You have to be in the right spot with the right bait but your pole can make a big difference in the number of fish you catch each trip. It allows you to present the bait, feel the bite, set the hook and land the fish. The following are some general guidelines for jigging poles.

#### ***11'-12', Light to Medium Weight, Graphite Jigging Pole***

This is the most popular, all-around choice for a jigging pole. The length is good for a variety of jigging situations and is easy to handle. A lighter, more limber pole is best for seeing more bites, working lightweight baits and a lightweight weight pole is important for less fatigue. Medium strength gives more backbone to better handle a fish when landing. An ideal pole will have a good backbone and light tip action.

A rear fly-rod style reel seat is my favorite for jigging. It balances a pole. A balanced pole is more sensitive and less tiring. For jigging consider the Ozark Ultra-Light or BnM Buck's Custom.

#### ***9'-10' Pole***

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You want the same characteristics as above but a shorter jigging pole is best in areas of overhead cover. Overhead tree limbs are a prime example where a longer pole will likely put your bait high in a treelimb.

### ***Heavyweight 10'-12' Poles***

The stronger and stiffer the pole the easier it is to handle large fish in areas with thick cover. Fishermen sticking baits in thick cover love these poles because they have better luck at getting a fish headed up before a fish wraps around a limb. Heavier line can be used. This is popular in the very stained lakes where big fish are common and the strength is needed to get the fish to the top. You can use a jig but a heavy pole will wear you out after fishing for a while. The poles are perfect for minnow/float fishing where sensitivity is provided by the float. An example is the BnM Brush Cutter and Grizzly Jig Co. pole.

### ***12'-16' Light and Sensitive***

These are rods that double for slow trolling light baits and for jigging. Why use a 16-foot long pole for jigging? Two important reasons are clear water and reaching out of the way spots. Clear water makes it difficult to get close to crappie without spooking them. Get the bait a little further from the boat and your success dramatically improves. When fishing an area you may

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find a stump or stickup that you can't quite reach with a shorter pole so the long reach allows you to get to it.

A great example is the popular BGJP (Buck's Graphite Jigging Pole) by BnM. Key ingredients include very light weight to make handling easier, very sensitive and a long reach.

### ***Brands***

There are many good jigging poles available. I often mention BnM because they are the poles I use so I know their characteristics. Ozark, Wally Marshall, Cabelas, Bass Pro Shop Crappie Maxx and others offer outstanding choices. Be sure to shop to find a good deal but more importantly, to get the right pole for your style of fishing.

### ***Other Tips***

Graphite poles are susceptible to damage so take care of them. Don't beat and bang them around in the boat. Clean them periodically with Blakemore Reel Magic to give them a protective coating and make line slide easier on the pole. Secure poles when traveling in the boat to keep them from beating or rubbing that can cause weak spots.

## **Tip of the Month**

Electronics is critical in the winter. For example, a hump rising to 15 feet can be dynamite but difficult to find. Use a paper map or electronic map to find spots then use your locator to learn contours, pinpoint cover and to find fish depth. You aren't wasting time when you spend it studying electronics before dropping a hook.