

## ***“Chasing Fish” – The Garmin Livescope in Action***

By Bernard Williams

With the introduction of Live Sight / Live Viewing in crappie fishing, a new concept or technique has evolved. It's called “Chasing Fish,” or the following fish until they stop and allow you to present a jig or minnow to them. Months ago, nobody had ever heard of this method. Our buddies out west, in Oklahoma and Missouri, say they invented the chase.

To be exact, Josh Jones says, “One day I saw a fish come into the Livescope, I dropped the jig, and I could see the fish swim away. Fishing was slow that day, so I decided to try and follow this fish. I could tell this



fish was a big one, so I said what the heck. At times the fish would disappear off the screen until I turned the Livescope in the correct direction. Finally, after about 50 or 60 yards, this fish stopped on a small stick-up. I watch the fish from 50 or 60 feet before I eased up to the fish within 12 feet. I dropped the jig down just above the fish, and immediately, the strike occurred. My immediate reaction was, wow, that was fun. I tried it again with the same results.”

Josh admits that sometimes crappie are spooked to the point they swim away very fast, and they're impossible to follow. It's better to move on to other fish. I see lots of guys now claim they can chase open water fish. Some do it with success while others bomb out. I've tried it myself, I must admit, it's a lot of work, but the rewards can be great.

I fished with Crappie Pro, Brad Chappell, from Ridgeland MS a few weeks ago. We fished Barnett in Madison, MS. Brad called me on a Tuesday about 8 am. I agreed to meet him at the Twin Harbor Landing. Brad is a superb long-line troller. I figured we'd troll for crappie, considering it was a beautiful fall morning. I was wrong; Brad had two jig poles and two spinning reels. “What are we going to do?” I asked, “We're gonna Livescope them.” Says Brad.

I love jig fishing; I grew up jig fishing. I started tournament fishing with a jig pole, couldn't compete with the trollers with a jig pole. The Livescope has changed all of that. I'm not afraid to compete with a single or double jig pole in tournaments anymore.

We loaded up and headed to some brush-piles off the river channel. Brad aligns the boat, and we drop our jig down to the depth the fish show at, and bam, we both have good crappie. We see larger crappie, and suddenly they disappear. Brad turns the trolling motor and begins to follow the fish. He increases the Livescope distance out to 80 feet, and we see the two bigger crappie stop on another brush-pile. We ease up to the brush pile, and the fish are gone again.

This time we follow the fish to a small stump field; I guess they felt safer in the stump field. We quickly



recognized what stump the fish were holding on. Brad grabs a spinning rod with a small hair jig and makes a cast past the stump and let the jig fall. He then begins a slow retrieve, bam, a huge 2+ pound black crappie. “Sometimes you can get close to the crappie, especially when they’re holding between 6 feet and 10 feet. You have to cast to them. Tony and Mike Sheppard made that pay off at Lake Hamilton.” Says Chappell.

Our search and destroy method continued for the next few hours. We never put our jigs in the water until we saw the size fish we wanted to catch. This selective catching is something new to most crappie anglers; I know it’s new to me. Most of my jig fishing was dropping a jig by every stump or brush pile I could find until I found the magic pile or stump. Not anymore, we can now be super-efficient and selectively catch the size fish needed for tournament fishing.

Lastly, to get proficient with any method takes time on the water, practice, practice, practice. The more you do it, the better you become. Jig fishing is hard work. It takes concentration and patience to hold that jig pole all day, but the rewards are tremendous. One last tip to remember, when you see your bait spooking fish, downsize, Josh recommends using a jig as small as 1/64<sup>th</sup> oz. Sometimes fish are lazy; they don’t want to expend any effort chasing down a 2 or 3-inch minnow or a 1/8<sup>th</sup> or 1/4<sup>th</sup> oz. jig.

Finally, I see anglers going to these \$100+ jig poles. They want to be able to swing the fish into the boat. That’s not necessary; a \$40 B’n’M BGJP and a net will do the same as a \$130 pole, and you get to keep \$90 in your pocket. It’s not the pole that catches the fish; it’s the angler. Our equipment is expensive; some things are not necessary to be an effective Livescoper. **Bernard**