



The
CRAYFISH TALE
By TRAPPER ARNE

CRAYFISH AND COLORS!

In a previous newsletter I mentioned that the yellow funnel of the Trappy crayfish trap appears to improve the fishing abilities of the trap especially during dark nights. All according to the Swedish manufacturer of the Trappy and the Cray Shack. Add to that this corroborating item from my expert crayfish advisor Dr. Jay Huner at the U. of Louisiana Crawfish Research Center, that crayfish apparently have color awareness which supports that theory.

Dr. Huner wrote: *"The (crayfish catching) Poles would put pieces of broken porcelain in their crayfish traps because they thought (this) would attract crawfish. We have toyed with color (in our laboratory) but a problem is that water generally goes from very clear to totally turbid. (But as) crawfish seem to have color vision, a color might attract the crawfish if they can detect it."*

IT'S THE SCENT, STUPID!

But here is another bit of crayfish information, also from Dr. Huner. This has to do with the ability of the crayfish to hone in on the aroma of an attracting bait. He writes: *"Scent is strongest at the source and gets more diffuse as you move away from it. The (scent) molecules tend to go down and move along the bottom. The pyramid traps provide three entrances, one on each corner, so no matter where the scent is moving with the current, crawfish have a tendency to arrive at a trap near an entrance. Studies in Europe with crabs show that crabs will be attracted to the strongest source of scent. They don't really search for an entrance. They will climb upwards on the side of a trap. As they go up, the scent declines so they go back down to where the scent is highest."*

If your funnel traps are set perpendicular (crosswise) to whatever current is present, the crawfish will go to the center (of the trap) and get confused because there are no entrances there. The Atchafalaya Basin fishermen in Louisiana know to set their traps with the one or two funnels (both on the same end) pointing down current."

During my latest two excursions to my choice crayfish lake I experimented with a Trappy, the tubular trap with an entrance at each end. Theorizing that a slippery plastic plate around the entry/exit hole inside the funnel would make it hard for the crays to escape, I had equipped the trap with a smooth plastic plate that the crays would have to climb up on to escape. By making that plate smooth, the crayfish would not be able to grab onto anything and thus be unable to reach the exit hole. (Remember now that crayfish don't swim like fish, but crawl around using their legs to move around.)

Well, that was the theory anyway. During my first outing I found to my surprise and disappointment that the trap with the white plastic plate had considerably fewer crayfish than traps without plates. Back to the drawing board. I thought, maybe the glaring white color of the slippery plastic plate scared them away, so I spray painted the plates black as well as the whole yellow funnel entry of the otherwise black trap.

Then back to the lake for another test. Again I placed the test trap with plates between two 'normal' Trappy traps and waited for the result. Again very poor catch compared to the Trappys without the plastic plates, whether white or black. In disgust I

tore off the plates and during the following nightly sessions I caught plenty of crayfish in this test trap to my great consternation.

Apparently with the plates in place, the bait scent, instead of spreading through the entry holes, now came out somewhere around the trap middle – where there is no entry! Dr. Huner may be right!

ANOTHER TESTIMONIAL

“I just bought one of your traps a few weeks ago. I and my two sons went to work at Woods Canyon Lake by Payson. (I'm sure you're familiar.) They were in charge of crawdads, and I was in charge of trout. In four hours, we filled a 5 gallon jug half full with crawdads! We had to empty the trap every hour; we could watch it fill up 10 ft from the shore. They did their job with the homemade crawdad poles with the salmon eggs at the end of them, and they sure had fun, but the real money was that trap. Worked like a charm with canned cat food. (I later realized, as an army of crawdads came for the trout I had caught in the water, that the BEST possible bait is fish). Next time I'll throw one in there. Thanks Trapper Arne!”

BROCCOLI AS CRAYFISH BAIT?

Another reader writes: **“Thought I would tell you about a little experiment I tried. I know that crayfish are primarily vegetarian and I wondered if any vegetable might be good to use for bait. Broccoli came to mind, as it is firm enough to stay on the bait hook and has a strong smell that might attract crayfish. I decided to make two test sets, each with two pots side-by-side, one with broccoli and one with tilapia fish, which I thought I would try after reading your newsletter. Results? The broccoli did attract crayfish, but the tilapia out-fished it 5 to 1. Since the area I was fishing was not very productive to begin with (I had been fishing it heavily the past several weeks,) the test cannot be considered conclusive, but I think the indication is that fresh fish is still the winner.**

I would also like to comment on the yellow funnels on the Trappy crayfish traps, although I have never used them. You said the manufacturer told you they fish better, especially on dark nights. Terry Bullard says on his website that he originally made his pots with [light colored] wire-mesh tunnels, but he concluded that they were not very effective because the crayfish were spooked from climbing the tunnels because the contrast would expose them to their enemies. He then went to black netting and his catch improved. So who is right? Maybe the crayfish did not like climbing up the hard metal texture of the funnels, but I have seen them climbing all over the outside of your wire mesh pots trying to get at the bait.

Oh well, aside from the great culinary enjoyment of crayfish, it's fun trying to figure them out, and no one seems to have done that completely yet. I also believe that crayfish behavior, just like fish, varies with the environment. So their behavior in one body of water may differ from their behavior in another, depending on food supply, predator population, water clarity, and water temperature to name a few of the factors that may effect their behavior. I am sure I will have to learn some new tricks when I move to Washington.”

ANOTHER READER

“Good morning Arne. it's George in northeastern California! Your crayfish trap "The Trappy" is working so well we have had to find new ways to prepare crayfish. The photo I attached is just one of many new recipes Judy has come up with and we would like to share it with you....Prepare cooked crayfish tails cleaned and de-veined, large fresh sliced tomatoes and fresh sliced mozzarella cheese. On a large serving platter place a slice of mozzarella cheese between the tomato slices until the platter is covered. Sprinkle with fresh chopped

basil, fresh ground black pepper, salt to taste. Sprinkle with balsamic vinegar and extra virgin olive oil. Place crayfish tails over the platter, chill and serve.
Enjoy....”

Trapper Arne