Black (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*) and white (*P. annularis*) crappies are collectively two of the most sought after sport fish in Illinois. Across North America, crappie populations are plagued by two persisting management issues: stunting and poor recruitment. Like other members of the sunfish family (Centrarchidae), crappie populations are subject to overpopulation in small bodies of water without a sufficient forage base, which results in poor size structure and slow growth rates. Furthermore, crappie recruitment has been described as “quasi-cyclical” with strong year-classes occurring in three- to five-year cycles based on varying biotic and abiotic factors. These two recurring issues in crappie management are directly related to growth and survival at the juvenile life stage.

Supplemental stocking is a widely used management technique for many sport fish species and has recently gained popularity for managing crappie populations. Although black and white crappies are not historically stocked from hatcheries in Illinois, there have been some recent examples of crappie stocking through propagation in lakeside rearing ponds. Because of the need to differentiate stocked from naturally produced individuals in order to evaluate stocking success, management agencies began culturing blacknose crappie, a phenotypic variant of black crappie (Figure 1). Blacknose crappie can be found in three Illinois lakes: Clinton Lake, Sangchris Lake, and Lake Springfield. Anecdotal evidence suggests that blacknose crappie grow and survive better than black crappie in hatchery environments, but no formal evaluations have been made.

![Figure 1 Adult blacknose crappie, a phenotypic variant of black crappie. Photo by Jeffrey Gring, INHS.](image_url)