



White Crappie

Pomoxis annularis

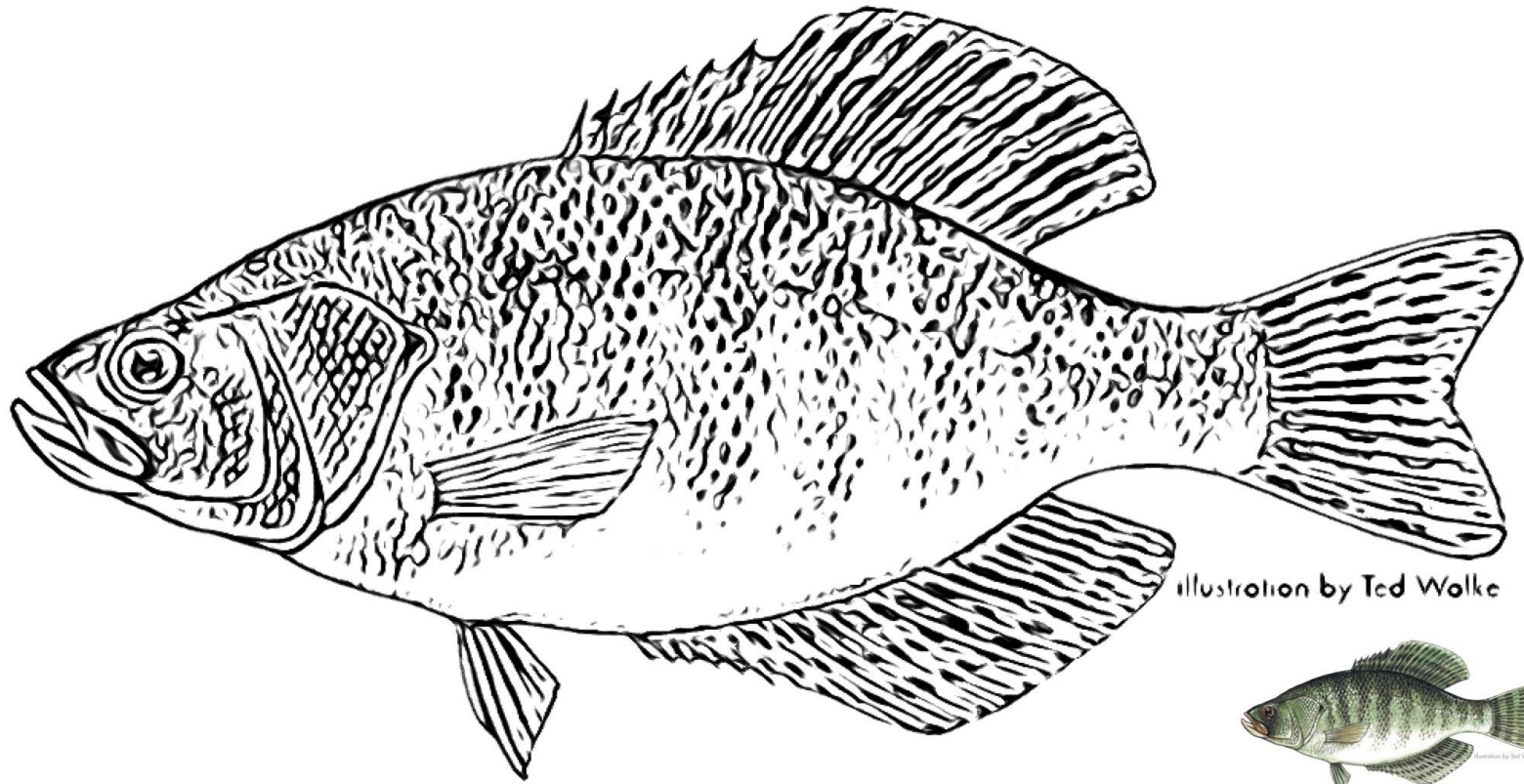


illustration by Ted Wolke

Today the White Crappie is found throughout Pennsylvania. It has been widely introduced around the United States. Biologists believe it was native to the Mississippi and Great Lakes watersheds, but not originally in Atlantic Coast watersheds. In Pennsylvania, the White Crappie is less common than its cousin, the Black Crappie, but it is found across the state. The White Crappie has a tendency sometimes to overpopulate its home waters, resulting in stunted fish. The species name "*annularis*" means "having rings," and probably refers to the bars on the side of the fish's body.

White Crappies are wide when viewed from the side, but very compressed when observed head-on. They are olive to bright-green on the back, and silvery, with greenish or yellow hints, on the sides. The sides have about eight to 10 vertical, dark, broken bars, and other mottling. Dark spots or dark wavy lines pattern the dorsal, anal and tail fins. Males during the breeding season become darker. The White Crappie is the only member of the sunfish family that has five or six spines on its dorsal fin, and a corresponding five or six spines on its anal fin. Its usual size is six to 12 inches long, but fish of 15 inches and several pounds are not uncommon. The White Crappie has a large mouth, but the membrane behind the lips is thin and tears easily. This gives the fish its nickname, "papermouth."