

A Beginner's Guide to: CRAPPIE FISHING

Spring 2019

CottageTIPS

MAGAZINE

15 ESSENTIAL BOAT MAINTENANCE TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

& Marine Communication 101

PLUS

How To Photograph
Hummingbirds

Cottage Buying Guide:
The Due Diligence Process

Kathy's Lakeside Lasagna

**7 TOP FUEL TIPS
FOR THE COTTAGE**

**Fuel costs can take a huge bite out
of the cottage budget, but there are
ways to minimize the hit**

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EDITOR

Andrew Walker

CONTRIBUTORS

George Ames

Tom Nagy

Kathy Walker

Graphic Design

Dynamite Design

ON THE WEB

CottageTips.com



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EDITORIAL

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A Labour of Love



The opening weekend at the cottage is always a time filled with both excitement and anxiety, as we never really know what we will find when we first arrive at the cabin.

One thing that rarely appears as a surprise, however, is the mess created by the little critters that had the audacity to occupy the cottage in our absence. Clearing the squatters out is no easy task, and keeping their presence a secret from guests during the season can be an adventure. Our mice tips feature might help you win the battle.

Boat maintenance is also a daunting chore in the spring, but the time is well invested, given the importance and value of the craft. The team has put together some key points to consider when preparing to hit the water, and George's fuel tips piece should save us a few bucks this cottage season, maybe to spend on a new mouse trap.

To those planning to buy a property in 2019, welcome to the club! One thing newbies quickly discover is that cottage ownership is actually hard work. Fortunately, great food is a core part of the cabin experience and sitting down to a tasty cottage meal is the reward for a job well done. Kathy's succulent steps for creating fantastic lakeside lasagna, Tom's expert tips on foraging for spring mushrooms, and our beginner's guide to catching one of cottage country's tastiest fish will make your mouth water.

The opening weekend certainly serves up some challenges, but we know in our hearts that cottage ownership is a labour of love. Every ounce of sweat and the occasional tear we shed is absolutely worth the effort when friends and family finally arrive to share time together at the lake.

May your 2019 cottage season be the best one yet!

Andrew Walker

editor@cottagetips.com



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How to photograph Hummingbirds

By Cottage Tips Staff



Hummingbirds make an impressive journey every spring, traveling from Mexico and Central America to their nesting sites in the forests that surround the cottage. The little birds provide hours of entertainment, and most people are content to sit back with a coffee or cool drink and simply admire the tiny wonders as they go about their business. For those of us who like to indulge in a bit of amateur wildlife photography, the cottage also offers an ideal setting to take pictures of these fascinating creatures. However, getting the perfect shot of a hummingbird requires a touch of know-how, some careful planning, and a ton of patience. Fortunately, hummingbirds are not shy and will stay near the cabin for the entire summer.

FEEDER LOCATION

Unless you have a significant flower garden at the cottage, the best way to attract the little birds is to put out a hummingbird feeder. Place the feeding station close to the deck. A nearby tree branch works well. Otherwise, a pole can be set up specifically for the photo sessions. The deck is an ideal location, as it provides a stable and comfortable spot to set up the tripod close to the feeder. There is no shortage of low-cost options for hummingbird feeders. Simply choose one that suits your situation.

TRIPOD

Taking photos of hummingbirds at the cottage is a perfect opportunity to use the old tripod. Shaky hands will ruin the photo if you try to shoot without using this helpful stabilizing device. If the tripod isn't available, try to use a stack of boxes, or a picnic table.

REMOTE CONTROL

Use a remote control to take the picture. Avoiding camera movements caused by pressing your finger on the shutter-release button can be the difference between a perfect picture and another file for the garbage bin.

BURST MODE

Take hundreds of shots. The beauty of the digital SLR camera is the ability to take endless photos in search of the perfect one. Burst away!

SHUTTER SPEED

Adjust the shutter speed on your camera. The auto setting is usually not fast enough. There is no secret recipe in this situation. You just have to gradually increase the shutter speed until you get the shot you want. Remember to balance the exposure with the corresponding changes to your aperture and ISO settings.

SUNLIGHT

A sunny day is preferable to catch the brilliant colours on the tiny feathers of the hummingbirds. Experiment with different times of the day to see when you get the best results.



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Lakeside Lasagna



Lasagna is a fantastic meal to take to the lake, or bake right at the cabin on a rainy cottage afternoon.

SAUCE INGREDIENTS

1.5 pounds of lean ground beef
1 medium onion - chopped
2 cloves of garlic - chopped fine
1 tablespoon of olive oil
1 teaspoon of thyme
1 teaspoon of savory
2 teaspoons of oregano
2 teaspoons of basil
1 pinch of hot pepper flakes
½ teaspoon of paprika
2 or 3 bay leaves
Salt and pepper added to your taste
1.5 cups of chicken broth (more broth can be added if the sauce is too thick)
1 large can of tomato sauce (680ml)
1 can of tomato paste (369ml)
1 can of diced tomatoes (540ml)

OTHER INGREDIENTS FOR LASAGNA

1.5 pounds of shredded mozzarella cheese
1 box of lasagna noodles

THE GEAR YOU NEED

1 big pot to cook the sauce
1 large baking dish or baking pan for the lasagna
1 pot to boil the noodles

HOW TO MAKE THE LASAGNA SAUCE

Using a large pot, sauté the chopped onions in the olive oil until soft, but not caramelized. Remove the onions from the pan and set them aside. Next, add the meat and brown it in the olive oil on medium heat. When the meat is brown, add the onions. Add the garlic and all the seasonings and mix them in. Add the tomato paste. Mix well and let cook for 5 minutes. Add the tomato sauce and diced tomatoes while mixing well. Add the broth to get the desired thickness of the sauce. Cook for 3 to 4 hours on low heat. Stir from time to time.

HOW TO MAKE THE LASAGNA

Pre heat the oven to 350 degrees. Boil the lasagna noodles until they are tender. Don't over cook. In the baking dish or pan, add a small amount of sauce to cover the bottom. Add a layer of the lasagna noodles. Cover the noodles with sauce and then cover the sauce with a layer of shredded cheese. Repeat the process until you fill the pan. Bake the lasagna at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Otherwise, leave it unbaked, freeze it, and then bake it at the cabin. If baking from a frozen state it will need double the baking time.

SPECIAL NOTE

Before serving the lasagna or cutting it into portions to be stored, let it sit for 10 minutes to cool. It takes time to make the sauce, so this part of the recipe is a great project for a Sunday afternoon in the city before heading to the lake. If you plan to take the cooked lasagna to the cabin, freezing it is a good option. This makes transporting the meal very easy and the frozen lasagna helps keep other food cold in the cooler.

Lasagna Meat Sauce

Preparation Time: 25 Minutes

Cooking Time: 3.5 hours

Lasagna

Preparation Time: 10 Minutes

Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Makes: 1 large baking dish or pan



7 Top Fuel Tips For The Cottage



By George Ames

Fuel costs can take a huge bite out of the cottage budget, but there are ways to minimize the hit and free up some cash for other projects or activities.

WATCH THE BOAT RPM

Gas usage in the boat can be extensive. Depending on your individual motor rating, your boating speed should probably be between 4,000-5,000 rpm. Travelling well in excess of the average 4,500 rpm will burn a lot of extra fuel and give you less time to react to an unexpected, and perhaps dangerous, situation.

USE PREMIUM FUEL

Ideally, only premium fuel should be used for your boat motor. The reason is simple. This higher-octane fuel shouldn't contain ethanol. Ethanol is eventually destructive to rubber, which is used to make fuel lines and some

key components in the engine. Pay the extra for this gas. You'll get better fuel efficiency, and will likely avoid inconvenient breakdowns and costly repairs.

SLOW AND STEADY WITH HEAVY LOADS

Heavy boatloads of supplies, building materials, and guests are common for water-access cottagers. In these situations, gas consumption is much lower if you travel at very low speed. Trying to go faster or attempting to "get up on plane" (skimming over the water) usually results in very inefficient plowing through the water.

CHANGE SPARK PLUGS FREQUENTLY

Spark plugs in good condition are crucial to gas-burning efficiency. Even a single "bad" plug will affect your motor performance in a big way. Many brands sell for less than \$10 per plug and replacing them will usually pay back that cost quite quickly.

DRIVE THE SPEED LIMIT

Regarding the car, your trips to and from the cottage probably

involve considerable gas consumption. The biggest factor you can control is the speed you drive. Apparently, the savings can be as high as 20% if you drive the highway speed limit versus 15 km/h over, which might not make a significant difference in the arrival time.

ADD STABILIZER TO THE GAS

Like beer, the shelf life of gasoline is amazingly short. After a few months, gas can get "stale". Somehow the freshness breaks down, reducing efficiency and performance. Adding a gas stabilizer not only keeps the fuel fresh, but also dissolves the problematic water droplets that get into your gas from condensation or other means. A highly concentrated, industrial-strength gas conditioner only costs about \$0.05 per litre of fuel.

BUY LOCAL GAS

Cottagers often haul their gas all the way from the city hoping to save a few dollars. As good as that may sound, it can sometimes be a dangerous or smelly endeavour, if spillage is involved. It also adds weight to the vehicle, which increases fuel burn during the drive. If you have a marina near the cottage, you may be best served to support the business, despite the higher price. Marinas have to incur extra licencing costs for operating near the water, and because it's only a low volume seasonal operation, they usually make less profit than the city pumps. Marinas provide a vital service to boaters, and their advice and facilities are very convenient and most useful. Help them stay in business.



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Mice at the Cottage

Can you win the war?

By Andrew Walker

The cottage-opening weekend is always a time of curious discovery, but one thing that is never a surprise is the mess left behind by our furry little friends during their stay at the cabin through the winter months.

For many cottage owners, the moment they open the door for the first time to start the new cottage year signals the launch of a multi-month battle with the resident mice. Throughout the summer the mice can be very active at the cottage. They are often heard at night, running up and down the walls or in the ceiling. Sometimes we even hear them gnawing away at a floorboard. If the mice are nesting in the structure, it isn't long before the cabin becomes the playground for all the young ones.

Unless you hire a cat to stand guard on mouse patrol 24/7, mice are going to get into the building, so acceptance is likely the first step in the fight against mice at the cottage.

Keeping our little guests to a minimum is possible, but it requires commitment and resolve. Let's take a look at some of the ways people claim to have succeeded in getting a leg up on their cottage mice.

STEEL WOOL OR COPPER MESH

A popular deterrent is the use of steel wool to seal all entry points the size of a dime or larger, especially near the support posts where they meet the cottage floor. Copper mesh can be used for larger openings.

It's not a fun job, especially if you have to crawl under the cabin, but it can make a difference. On the effectiveness scale, the tactic makes sense and is probably worth a try.

MOTHBALLS

A liberal scattering of mothballs around the exterior support posts and underneath the cabin is another common practice used to deter mice. As a part of the winter closing ritual it probably doesn't hurt to try, but it isn't recommended in the spring, as the smell can creep into the cabin.

MOUSE BAIT

The use of poison is generally a bad idea. There is no guarantee the

mice will eat the baits, and if they do, they might die in the walls and cause more grief.

Our own experience when trying this method in past years is that the mice have simply taken the baits from the point where they were found and hidden them all around the cottage, rather than taking the bait to a nest or storage depot located somewhere outside the cabin. If you have young kids coming to the cabin at any time, this strategy should be avoided.

FABRIC SOFTENER

Keeping mice out of the cabin beds, blankets, cushions, sofas and dressers is key to ensuring good guest relations during the summer months.

Seeing mouse poop on the cabin floor is frustrating, but finding it on the beds and in the cottage dressers is just too much for some cottagers to handle. This is especially true for renters and friends who are not accustomed to sharing their living spaces with the local wildlife.

One popular solution involves placing strips of fabric softener on mattresses, pillows, blankets etc. and then covering them with thick plastic sheets. At our own cabin, this technique appears to work.

We also set strips of fabric softener in the drawers of all dressers.

HI-TECH GIZMOS

A quick search online at your favourite Internet shopping site will reveal a wide assortment of electronic devices that plug into the outlet and send off sonic vibrations that are designed to keep mice and a host of other unwanted guests away from the cottage. Given the reasonable cost and the ease of use, I'd say give them a try.

MOUSE TRAPS

Traditional wooden snap-traps baited with peanut butter do an efficient job of eliminating mice that are in the cottage. Whether or not the technique is socially acceptable in our modern times is certainly up for discussion, and I suspect there are people with strong opinions right across the spectrum of the debate.

It's definitely not for queasy types. That's for sure. You have to get used to the "SNAP!" and a bit of thrashing around when one of the little rodents gets caught in the middle of the night. These old-style traps can also be messy, but there is no doubting their effectiveness.

Be sure to check the traps daily and don't leave them set up while you are away from the cottage during the week.

Alternative traps are available that claim to be more humane in their approach to the issue. Try a few and see what works best in your particular situation.

CAN YOU WIN THE WAR?

In the end, the small battles can be won, but the larger war will likely continue for years and decades to come. It is just another part of the great Canadian cottage experience.



15 ESSENTIAL BOAT MAINTENANCE TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

By Cottage Tips Staff

The moment the ice goes out each spring, cottage owners hurry to open the cabin or visit their favourite fishing holes. During the rush to get out on the lake, we normally focus our prep time on the motor, but ensuring the cottage boat is up to the challenge is also important. The life expectancy of the boat depends on how well we maintain it and spending the time to go over the spring checklist can save some serious frustration and costs. Here are a few beginner tips to consider when preparing to launch the cottage boat for a new season.



1. USER'S MANUAL Always ensure the manufacturer's manual is handy when checking the boat. If the manual has been misplaced, the boat manufacturer's website or the local dealer can provide directions on how to get one.

2. KEYS Make a note to ensure the boat keys aren't left behind when heading out to put the craft in the water for the first time. It sounds like a simple and obvious thing, but the keys are easy to forget during all the excitement. That's why we make checklists.

3. DRAIN PLUG Before putting the boat in the water, make sure the drain plug is properly fastened. Once the boat is in the water, check the plug again before heading out.

Special Tip: Some people tie the drain plug to the steering wheel when they do the fall maintenance.

4. BOAT BATTERY If the battery was removed in the fall, don't forget to put it back into the boat before going to the marina. Test the battery to make sure it is fully charged and then connect the motor. Make sure the wires are put on the correct terminals. If the boat battery has been sitting all winter, it might have lost some of its charge. Try to start the motor before putting the boat in the water to see if there is enough juice left. We don't want to run the motor when it is out of the water, but it is helpful to check to see if it will turn over.

5. HULL MAINTENANCE Check the hull for any damage that might have occurred during the winter or while the boat was being transported from the winter storage location to the lake. Clean the hull thoroughly and

apply a fresh coat of wax. This is a tedious job, but it is important for protecting the hull and ensures the boat will move through the water as smoothly as possible, which helps reduce fuel costs over the boating season. In addition, the process forces us to carefully inspect the hull for any small cracks or punctures that might be missed at first glance.



6. SAFETY EQUIPMENT Take an inventory of all the required safety equipment and check for damage. Replace any safety items that are worn, torn, or broken. Fines for not having the required safety gear aboard the boat can be expensive, so it is worth spending the time to make sure all of the safety gear is in order.

7. BOAT COVER Check all the canvas coverings and vinyl for rips, dirt, or mold. Tears in the cover may indicate the critters have gotten into the boat over the winter. Clean the cover and repair any damage right away, rather than setting the work aside for later when it might not get done.

8. ANIMAL DAMAGE Check for chewed wires, ripped seats, nests, and droppings. Mice and raccoons can really mess up the boat over

the winter. We want to inspect all the wires carefully and replace any that have been damaged.

9. ELECTRONIC BOAT EQUIPMENT

Install all of the electronic gadgets and make sure they are working properly before heading out onto the lake. Depth finders and maps are critical in areas with submerged rocks, reefs, and low water points. We



don't want to damage the hull or boat motor.

10. INSIDE THE BOAT Clean the inside of the boat thoroughly and organize all equipment properly. Aside from the good feeling we get when the boat is clean and fresh, the process also forces us to look for small problems that might otherwise be missed. Ideally, the boat was cleaned in the fall so there shouldn't be much to do in the spring. Tighten all pole mounts, clips, holders, and anything else that has screws or clamps that may have come loose last year, or during the transportation of the boat. Take the time to polish all the metal. Make it look good to start the new season!

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11. BOAT BILGE PUMP Check the operation of the bilge pump. This is one of the most important pieces of equipment on the boat. Inspect the connection to the battery and add some water to test the bilge pump's operation. Never assume that it is working correctly, even if it was fine when placed into storage in the fall.

12. BOAT INSURANCE Make sure the insurance policy is up to date on the boat, motor, and trailer. It is important to inform the insurance company right away when new equipment is purchased.

13. ROPES AND LINES Replace worn ropes, lines, and cables. It is risky to use old ones that are damaged. If a line breaks and the boat floats away from the dock, the possible costs to repair damage to the boat and other vessels it might hit are much higher than the expense of replacing the ropes. Also check the steering cables to ensure they are in good condition.

14. HORN Test the horn. We may not use it all summer but it must be functioning properly. A review of the proper horn signals is always a good idea at this time of year.

15. FUEL With all the other things we have to worry about, it is easy to forget to fill up the gas tank. Ideally, the winterization process involved adding stabilizer to the existing fuel. If possible, put new hi-octane fuel in the boat, rather than trying to burn off last year's reserves that might be sitting in storage.

Proper boat maintenance takes some time, but the investment pays off and will ensure the cottage boating season gets off to a successful start.





If a line breaks and the boat floats away from the dock, the possible costs to repair damage to the boat and other vessels it might hit are much higher than the expense of replacing the ropes.

The Due Diligence Process

By Cottage Tips Staff

RIGHT OF WAY

Most properties do not have right of ways, but it is important to clarify that this is the case. Check to see if there are right of ways deeded to other people on the property, or deeded to you on a neighbour's property.

In addition, shoreline ownership varies by municipality and province. Some properties are privately owned to the high-water mark, while others have a road allowance that is owned by the local government. In certain situations, you might be able to purchase the road allowance in front of the property.

Most shorelines are protected and unalterable. If you plan to make modifications, check the rules ahead of time.

COTTAGE OWNERSHIP

Get all the information about the existing ownership structure of the property you want to buy. Sometimes cottages have joint owners, co-owners, or are owned by a corporation. It is important to make sure everyone involved is in agreement with the sale.

Surface rights, mineral rights, and logging rights are all items to

investigate. Many properties only come with surface rights. Research the property, as well as the surrounding area for land claims, mining claims, and planned logging activity.

WATER QUALITY

Get the water supply tested for pollutants. It is worth the cost.

SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Check the age of the septic system and look for wet spots on the property or sections with extra-healthy grass. This could indicate a problem.

ROOF

Check for shingle damage on the roof. If possible, climb up and look closely. Inside the cottage, do a meticulous inspection for evidence of water damage.

SUPPORT STRUCTURE

Support posts and cement pads are commonly used to build cottages. Check for settling issues and disconnected cross braces under the cabin. If the problem is minor, it might simply require an adjustment, but you have to account for the cost of fixing it when running the numbers.

In previous issues we covered the importance of lining up financing and making a wish list for your ideal summer retreat before you begin the search. Once you have finally identified a property of interest, it is important to ensure you are going to get what you expect. Here are a few items to keep in mind when evaluating a property before you make an offer.

DECKS AND DOCKS

Check for rotten boards, raised nails, and inspect the overall condition and stability. A new deck or dock can be an expensive project.

WOOD STOVE CHIMNEY STACK

Inspect the pipes for rust. If the cottage has been empty for a long time, make sure the stack is not blocked.

ANIMALS

Check the attic for signs of bat colonies, mice, raccoons, and squirrels.

MOLD

Mold can be an issue in cottage country and it is often only discovered during renovations. Search for indications of mold issues under the cabin and in the attic.

LAND COMPOSITION

The first visit or two to a cottage often focuses on the living space and other structures, but the property itself is also important to consider.

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COTTAGE BUYING GUIDE CONT.



Sand provides good rain drainage and is stable for foundation posts. On the downside, it also has higher erosion risks at the shoreline. Clay drains poorly and foundation posts can shift after the winter thaw. A yard is possible if you get enough topsoil.

Bedrock can have water drainage concerns, so you need to see where all the water goes during a heavy storm. On the positive side, bedrock is solid for anchoring foundation posts.

PROPERTY SLOPE

Level property makes it easy to carry stuff to and from the dock. It has more usable land for recreation or outbuildings, but could have waterlogged low areas in the spring and during very wet seasons.

Medium-sloping land might have rain run-off concerns, and can make the hike back and forth to the water a bit challenging.

A steep property offers a good view of the lake, but has limited

usable land for a yard, and is very difficult to climb and descend. Steps are required and they may be difficult for people in poor health.

THE BOTTOM LINE

While buyers can do much of the due diligence work alone, enlisting the services of independent professionals is often worth the expense. The property is going to be your dream retreat, so you want to know exactly what you are getting right from the beginning.

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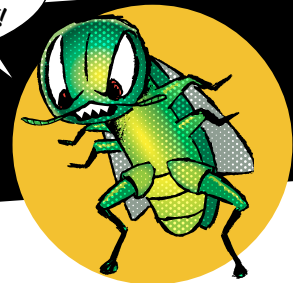
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Marine Communication

101

By Cottage Tips Staff

Emergency situations are rare when we are at the cottage, and many people have fortunately never had to use a marine communication system, especially if they spend most of the boat time close to the cottage.

Nonetheless, it is important to be up to date on how to properly communicate on the lake, and the spring is a perfect time to take a VHF course or review the material if you already have a Radio Operator's Certificate – Marine.

The ROC(M) is required to transmit on all marine radios (VHF, MF/HF, and SSB radios). Boaters are not required to have the ROC(M) certificate to use FRS or CB radios.

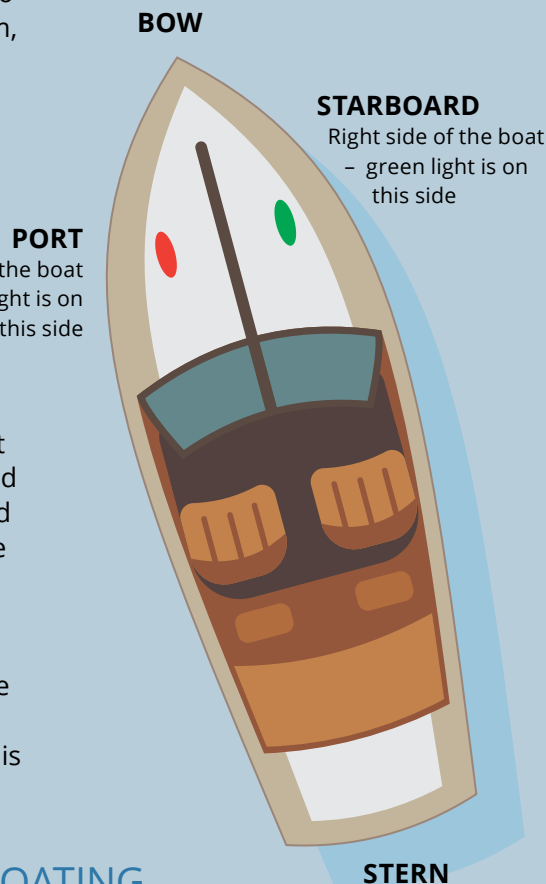
The Canadian Coast Guard recommends the use of a VHF-FM radio for making distress calls on the water. When making marine radio transmissions the nautical alphabet is the accepted standard.

HORN SIGNALS WHEN BOATING

The following horn signals are used to indicate the direction you intend to go when boating:

TURNING TO STARBOARD:	1 SHORT BLAST
TURNING TO PORT:	2 SHORT BLASTS
GOING ASTERN:	3 SHORT BLASTS
LEAVING THE DOCK:	1 LONG BLAST
DANGER:	5 SHORT BLASTS

PARTS OF THE BOAT



NAUTICAL ALPHABET

It is a good idea to review the nautical alphabet every year before each new cottage boating season begins.

A	- ALPHA
B	- BRAVO
C	- CHARLIE
D	- DELTA
E	- ECHO
F	- FOX-TROT
G	- GOLF
H	- HOTEL
I	- INDIA
J	- JULIET
K	- KILO
L	- LIMA
M	- MIKE
N	- NOVEMBER
O	- OSCAR
P	- PAPA
Q	- QUEBEC
R	- ROMEO
S	- SIERRA
T	- TANGO
U	- UNIFORM
V	- VICTOR
W	- WHISKEY
X	- X-RAY
Y	- YANKEE
Z	- ZULU

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WILD SPRING AND SUMMER MUSHROOMS



Tom Nagy is an ecologist, seasoned forager and mushroom growing enthusiast from Hamilton, Ontario. He delivers passionate and engaging programs and workshops on organic agriculture, foraging for wild edible and medicinal plants, natural fermentation and mushroom cultivation. He contributes informative and entertaining articles to a number of annual and seasonal publications and produces quality mushroom spawn locally in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He can be reached at his website rivercitymushrooms.ca, on [Facebook](#) or on [Instagram as nagthompson](#).

By Tom Nagy

While autumn is often considered to be the quintessential season for wild mushrooms, fungi are in fact active throughout the year. In the northern United States and southern Canada, as the tight grip of winter slowly yields to the welcome sounds of melting snow and trickling streams, fungi too are beginning to stir underneath their earthen blankets.

Early Season Mushrooms at the Cottage

Spring is perhaps the most suitable time of year for mushrooms to reproduce. During the previous growing season, safe from the desiccating heat above, fungi release enzymes into their surrounding environment to help break down the complex molecules produced by plants and many other organisms. These by-products are further decomposed and combined with nutrients in the surrounding soil to create fungal sugars.

Each day, the fungus accumulates more and more stores of energy and produces more hyphae; the individual fragments, which comprise a mycelial network, the body of the fungus. This process exponentially increases the area from which fungi can gather nutrients and continues until, slowly but surely, the chill of autumn crescendos into the deep freeze of winter. During the sprint melt, the increase in moisture coupled with the warm days and cool nights are all signals for some specialized

and highly charismatic early season mushrooms to make their appearance. Spores; released by mature mushrooms, require ample moisture and humidity if they are to germinate and grow to sustain the next generation, and these conditions are particularly abundant early in the growing season. Spring is also kind to the humble mushroom forager since the weather is often pleasant, and each day longer than the last.

Some of the most highly revered of wild edible fungi are exclusively found in the spring and early summer. These choice delicacies include morels (most notably *Morchella esculenta* and *M. elata*), and scotch bonnets (*Marasmius oreades*), among others. These species inhabit considerably different ecological niches, ensuring that no matter where you choose to roam you may very well encounter one of these edible mushrooms.

Morels

Morel mushrooms hardly require an introduction, as they are one of the more familiar of edible fungi, even among people that do not consider themselves foragers. The fruiting body of a morel mushroom is highly variable, but in general can be described as

producing a rounded roughly conical cap comprised of deep pockets and raised ridges. Stalks are often short, buff to tan in color and distinctively hollow. Morels usually appear after the first few warm rains in late May through to the middle of June in open woodlands with rich, well-drained sandy soil among a wide variety of tree species including poplars and conifers.

Scotch Bonnets

The scotch bonnet, also known as the 'fairy ring' mushroom, is a smaller mushroom species particular to open, grassy habitats in city parks or areas of short, mown grass in the countryside, appearing throughout May and June. The mushrooms are strongly gregarious, and often form rings in lawns. These mushrooms are light beige through to tawny brown in color with a long and slender stalk that is remarkably strong. Foragers normally pick individual mushrooms by their fibrous stems. Caps are bell-shaped when young and flatten as they mature, producing a distinctive bump in the centre of the cap that is also somewhat darkened. Gills are few and well spaced and concentric, radiating outwards towards the cap margin from the centre of the stalk.



A Beginner's Guide to: Crappie Fishing

By Andrew Walker

THERE'S NOTHING CRAPPY ABOUT CATCHING A CRAPPIE. MANY ANGLERS CONSIDER THIS TO BE THE FINEST TASTING FRESHWATER FISH, AND THE SPRING MIGHT JUST BE THE BEST TIME OF YEAR TO CATCH A CRAPPIE MEAL.

Basic Equipment for Beginners

Crappies are small fish and the bite is light so you need to have sensitive gear to maximize success. As with all fish species, there is a wide assortment of gear that is specifically marketed for crappie anglers, and if you decide to join the crappie fan club, you can quickly find yourself spending significant cash and clogging up important storage space. Fortunately, that's not necessary. A low-cost, light-action or ultra-light rod and spinning reel combination with 4-pound line should do the trick for those who want to pursue these fish without breaking the bank.

Regarding artificial baits, small jig heads with plastic tails can be very effective. Many anglers prefer to use live bait, with minnows and dew worms (night crawlers) being the top picks.

Where to Catch Crappies

In the spring the fish are often located in the shallow bays of lakes and rivers, which is where they spawn. When you finally locate one crappie, you are likely to catch your limit. These fish prefer to be near a source of protection to avoid larger fish, such as pike, that will feed on crappies. Try your luck near fallen trees or submerged brush.

In the summer, crappies tend to spread out and head to deeper water, making the fish harder to find. We often catch them by accident when fishing for walleyes through the warmer months. Sometimes crappies are found suspended off the bottom near submerged structures, or around docks.

In the fall, the fish will move back to shallower water as temperatures drop. According to the Ontario MNR, the best water temperature for a crappie is about 22 degrees Celsius (72 degrees Fahrenheit). If you are a serious crappie angler, this information is important to consider and might well make the difference between a fine meal and an empty stringer.

A Cottage Treat

Crappies don't get the same attention as walleyes, or even perch in some areas, and much of that has to do with the fact that they are often difficult to find. However, with the right gear, perseverance, and a bit of luck you will catch your crappie limit this year and enjoy one of the finest meals available at the cottage.





Technique - How to Catch Crappies

In shallow water try a live minnow hooked through the back and placed on a line with a small bobber. Use a jig head with a minnow or rubber tail to find fish that are deeper. A slip bobber set-up can also be effective in this situation.

When you get a bite, remember to set the hook gently. A crappie has a very soft mouth.

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