

Forty-eight to Twenty-eight, Winter Crappie Fishing at its Best

by Steve Welch

The wind freezes you to the bone and I am loving it. The water temperature in near freezing and I am loving it. All the pleasure boats are long gone and even the Bass fisherman have hung it up for the season. But for those of us left still out in the boat the fishing is phenomenal.

I always tell my clients and the people who come to hear me talk during the winter fishing shows that Crappie fishing isn't real good until I have to put on the winter boots and snowmobile suit and tie the heater to the front pedestal.

All my early November Crappie trips were hit a couple of fish move on, hit a couple more and move on. Hard to pattern and hard to put clients on limits of fish. I just tell them look what a couple of weeks will bring we need the water temperature to get down to Forty-eight and it has hovered around fifty-five for three weeks now. Then along about mid November it hits us our first good cold front and boom the water temperature drops ten degrees and just like throwing a switch the fish move shallow and go to biting. I can fish in just a couple of feet of water for about a month but that also involves a lot of moving around from stump to stump.

Once Thanksgiving hits on Lake Shelbyville the fish start to school up on the main lake and a good ledge fisherman will have a field day and you don't have to move around much because a spot that once held just a couple of good fish will now hold ten or more. I have had days where I actually have caught sixty legal sized Crappie out of one spot. It is also much easier to teach someone to tight line a jig than to throw a cork. I have done many guide trips in which I motor away from the Bo-Woods boat ramp go about a quarter mile and hit a huge stump field and then make an entire day out of that one area. That way you don't get so cold.

Live bait is no longer needed. You always catch bigger fish on jigs once the water temperature gets below forty-eight degrees. The question is which jig, how heavy, what color, plastic or hair. I have been using some hair jigs this winter and really like them. Less is more during the winter months. You will see me with a twister tail jig tied on during the summer or large tube bait. But in cold water I like a hair jig tipped with a wax worm or a Crappie Nibble. Big fish really like it. I use either a sixteenth or an eighth ounce with a number two or a number four hook. The jig has some tensile and chartreuse hair on it. I also use Midsouth tubes that glow in the dark and Southern Pro umbrella tubes that fall slower than most tubes.

Boat control is by far the most important tool you can master. I can hover over a brush pile in twenty foot of water in a twenty mile per hour wind and still fish down in the brush along with my clients and not get hung up. You see we fish with nine to ten foot long poles and we don't cast them. You merely let out enough line to get you down to the top of the brush and just lightly jig it up and down or side to side. You feel a pop then set the hook and left the fish up and swing it in the boat.

Clothing do's and don'ts. I wear several layers of long underwear and sweatshirts and a turtleneck. Air tight is a must. I then wear a snowmobile suit. They are warmer than Car harts and zip up to your crotch making it easier to slip over your boots. I wear a good pair of winter boots that are big enough to wear three pairs of socks one of, which is wool. I wear a hood with a turtleneck attached to it and for my hands a pair of rag wool gloves. I have went the full circle on gloves and now prefer the rag wool insulated ones because they can get wet and still keep your hands warm and I also bring the Mr. Heater and you can put your hands up against it to keep them warm.

At no other time of the year do I catch fish as big as I do in the winter. It is winter that I take my Crappie trips to Kentucky Lake because I know the size of fish you can catch so if your inclined let me show you how to fill the freezer with great tasting Crappie. Just give my guide service a call.

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Crappie

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