

## **Bouncers and Spinner Rigs Sure Has My Name on It**

**By Steve Welch**

I started guiding back in 1994 on Clinton Lake and when we needed to cover water and catch a variety of fish we got out a presentation that had long been used up north. A bottom bouncer to get your presentation down and a simple single hook spinner rig to put on a crawler or minnow. We would troll this up in front of the power plant on the underwater dykes. We would catch everything that swims but it was the big walleye we were after. The big stripers and catfish would not stay off it. Then 9/11 came and they closed it for boat traffic. This was a big part of my summer fishing so I just moved the guide service down to Lake Shelbyville and naturally I brought my old habits with me.

Wouldn't you know it the first year I was down there the lake flooded and stayed up for several months. I thought what I can do to get a bait to the right depth and cover water. Thus the bottom bouncer spinner rig came out of retirement.

These days on Lake Shelbyville everywhere you look folks are doing the same thing. It is like I created a cult. Chip's bait shop at Bo-Woods can't keep them on the shelves.

I put my twist on them though. Up north they pull along weed edges hear we pull through stumps and trees. I started making my own and shortening them up and making them with heavier line. Mine are only 15-18-inches long. Up north they are routinely six-feet.

With this shorter rig you can be fearless with it and boy I am. One day a few years back I decided to try pulling across the face of a cove I knew crappie would be suspended in. The problem is this very deep cove had standing timber in it. I knew from doing this on the flats that at 1. Mph with a 1 1/2oz. bottom bouncer I needed to have out 25 feet of line to fish about 13 feet down. I use line counter reels for precise depth measurement. You can feel bottom with such a heavy weight on the flats but clients new to this had problems and they were getting hung up all the time by allowing the bottom bouncer to drag. I fixed this problem with the line counters.

Post spawn crappie suspend under bait and now they are not safe with this method and we catch everything doing this. This year I have hammered the white bass which have decided to make a return after a few years absence. These fish came out of nowhere and are exceeding two-pounds some pushing four. It is the walleye or sauger that I made the rig for and it still works for that.

This rig has been my savior during periods that the lake is ten-feet high and most brush piles are too deep to fish. I use smaller blades for the crappie number three and number four for walleye and the white bass. My boat is perfect for this presentation since I have a tiller handle walleye boat. We can set anglers on all four corners of the boat have a rod holder set up in case they get tired of holding the rod and then bring a whole armada of spinners through the area. My clients love this style so much that they routinely book a year in advance. Typically I start pulling spinners about May 15<sup>th</sup> and continue to do so until the lake has a thermocline set up in mid- July.

Once we get the water temps up to the low to mid-eighties the algae bloom we have will settle down the thermocline and be held up there the rest of the summer. This congregates the crappie over deep

brush so a slip bobber and minnow set up is much more effective than the bottom bouncers so we switch it up. So I start the month of July pulling spinners and finish drifting slip bobbers.

I also put my own twist on that simple concept that has been around forever. We start by using fourteen-pound Fireline Crystal braided line and then go to a barrel swivel and put on a leader of fifteen-pound fluorocarbon line a number two Tru-turn light wire hook a 3/8oz. sinker to get the minnow down quick and a slip bobber big enough to hold it all up.

We use the light southwest winds to drift this presentation latterly across the top of these brush piles that are in very deep water but the top of them are about fifteen-feet. Crappie hover over the top to ambush bait being pushed there by the wind.

The cool breeze, the deep depths of Lake Shelbyville makes it the very best summer crappie lake in the state or anywhere that I know of. We catch our three or four person limit of forty-five to sixty every day for some sixty days straight. For this reason I now tell my clients when asked when the best time to come on a crappie trip is. I tell them the spawn is not the only time to think about coming. The summer has much more stable weather and the bite is unbelievable. Hundred fish a day sometimes before lunch. I have three periods that I now equally rank and that is the spawn period, the fall return to the shallows period and the summer bite.