

X-Mas Ideas For The Fisherman In Your Life By Steve Welch

Every year my guide service grows in different ways. This past year we started an on-line store to allow people to purchase guide trips and any of my products. We also developed a fishing forum that allows anglers to become educated on electronics, fishing on several lakes in Illinois, recipes, ads for boats and tons of other general information. We call it Illinois Fish Talk and presently we have almost 600 members.

For many years I have used and promoted a heavy jig we call the Deep Ledge Jig. This jig weighs in at a quarter ounce and has recessed eyes and is squared off on top to allow a better sonar image. We use a small number four hook made by Eagle Claw and it bends easily so you can get your jig back once hung up in brush.

I think this is the best crappie jig on the market not because I helped develop it but I think it catches bigger fish. I think the big oversized head with the prism eyes is something they just haven't seen. You can bounce it off limbs in brush and you have excellent feel with it. Most crappie anglers that vertical fish on long rods just jig their 1/16oz. jig up and down and they are so light you hang on any branch and they aren't heavy enough to fall back off the branch. With my jig you swim your rod back and forth trying to climb over branches and once on the backside of that branch boom that heavy crappie is waiting. I think it has changed many of the crappie anglers I have had in my boat.

This year we came out with three other sizes of the popular Deep Ledge Jig design and a spinner model as well. We now offer 1/4, 3/16, 1/8, & 3/32. We also have a spinner model in all the weights listed. We put the smallest willow leaf blade you can get on it. I have taken it to Kentucky Lake and this is the only jig I will use from now on while down there.

For white bass and walleye we use a bait we developed called the Candy striper. It is a tail spinner lure that is ideal to catch white bass but I never envisioned how much both walleye and crappie love it as well. We make it in 3/8, 1/2, & 5/8oz. It can cover a stump filled flat and catch anything that swims but it is the ledges that I really think it shines. We position the boat up on top of a ledge and cast it out over the ledge into deep water then let it fall to the bottom. We simply pop it off bottom and reel up the slack and do it again. As it comes up the drop off you try and pop it about six-foot up of the bottom. The whites will hit this bait a dozen times on the way back to the bottom. I like the 1/2oz. for that.

For covering a flat that is in water as deep as six-feet I like the 5/8oz. It can bury on the bottom and the tail spinner drives fish crazy. When we are casting and letting the bait freefall along a bridge piling or standing tree I like the small 3/8oz. The bait falls on its nose and the tail spinner just turns and crappie and whites will just hammer it. They are very versatile and are tied on my spinning rods all summer.

We have also allowed folks to pre-pay for up coming guide trips on our on-line store and they love how easy it is. We also have a flyer to mail to anyone that you might want to give a guide trip as a Christmas present. I already am taking bookings for 2013 and my regulars are jumping on them.

At the time of this writing I am still tearing up the crappie. Most folks don't realize that crappie fishing is a winter sport and they remain very active all through the winter. December is one of my best months every year. We routinely limit out on crappie in less than two hours. They bunch up on down trees and you can harvest a ton of them from just one tree. If you still want in on the December crappie fishing just go to my website and check it for availability.

I will be speaking at many of the instate fishing shows starting with the Let's Go Fishing Show in Collinsville Show Jan. 4-6. Then I go to the Illinois Fish and Feather Expo in Bloomington Jan. 25-27. Then off to the Tinley Park Fishing Show Feb. 9-10. Then back home for the Central Illinois

Outdoor Expo in Arthur Feb. 22-23. Then I finish up at the Elmwood All Outdoors Show Mar. 2-3