

Crappie Rules, The Scene at Lake Shelbyville
by Steve Welch

If you were to climb into my big Ranger practically any month and you would see rods rigged for white's, musky, walleye. However, not once we hit November, the only rigs are crappie rods. I try to tell all my spring clients those three weeks before and three weeks after Thanksgiving is the best crappie action of the year.

Any pattern that you are comfortable with will work. You can run and gun main lake brush in the ten-foot range. You can throw a cork up in the feeder creeks or you mix it up as I do. The creeks seem to work best early in the month and the brush towards the end.

Fall rules in my book because I get to throw my big baits. The baitfish are larger and the big fish key in on the bigger baits. I use the two-and half-inch tubes made by Midsouth and the umbrellas made by Southernpro and do not forget the best bait, the Charlie Brewer slider grubs. Colors will vary but I stick to chartreuses or white depending on watercolor. Rarely, I am lucky enough to find fish over thirteen inches in the spring since they are spread out. During the fall and upcoming winter pattern, I get into some very nice fish. I have a fish or two in the pound and a half range or larger on every guide trip. Many pound fish and many ten-inch fish that will be too small to make the live well.

The best thing I like about the fall bite is that every one of my spots hold fish and will hold them day after day. Rain and rising water aren't a problem like they are in the spring. Fish set up camp in the brush and remain there until mid December when they drop the lake to winter pool.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with how to hover over brush. You need to get a guide and let them show you how. Fishing vertically, right down in the brush will not work if you can't keep the boat movement to a minimum. No drifting ten-foot up and ten-foot back or everyone will hang up in the brush. That is why three things are very important in this style of fishing. A quality GPS system, to get you back to the brush no matter where it is located, a big bass boat that sits low and doesn't catch wind like the high-sided aluminum and a high powered trolling motor to hover into any wind.

Once mastered, everyone is a pro and can catch fish just as fast as the guide can. Crappie fishing isn't that hard, Crappie location is. I never believe in the old saying "they just weren't biting today", they bite when you find them. You just didn't move around enough. I hit over thirty brush piles a day and cover water at a break neck pace with my 225 Mercury. You are tired at the end of a day with me because we work at it. The reward at the boat ramp is worth it, a cooler full of tasty crappie fillets.

My home lake of Lake Shelbyville has sure been good to me, plenty of big tourney wins and more fish than I can count but my second home has got to be Kentucky Lake.

Paris Landing on the south end of Kentucky Lake is a great destination in November. They fish very similar to us but just a little deeper. By deeper, I mean twenty foot or so. Unlike us, they have not only brush to fish but stake beds as well. Weather depends on what they use. If they get a cold front, they will bury themselves in brush and you can fish stakes right beside them and not get a hit. You need to fish both and a bunch of both. A GPS a very important tool in relocating your spot, down there you can be a quarter mile from any shore so lining up your spots can be tough. Wind can kill you so a big bass boat is necessary with that powerful trolling motor, sound familiar.

I target sharp dropping ledges and look for brush with two different rigs. A drop-shot rig with a half-ounce bell sinker on bottom and a small hook two-foot up the line tipped with either a minnow or a jig. Both tied on a small two-inch loop knot. The other rig is a quarter-ounce jig and a slider grub; this is my rig once I find brush to hover.

I catch big fish down there and several two-pound fish have come over the side of my big Ranger. My wife has a sixteen and a half inch fish on our fireplace mantle, caught on a late November trip. Women are lucky that way. She had two fish that big up on the surface in a matter of minutes only to loose the first one by trying to just lift it over the side. I have to remind her, we net the fish down here dear.

I like Paris Landing because Buchanan's resort has several top-notch guides like Gary Mason and Steve McAdams, you can park your boat right next to them, and they will share information with you. The more guides in the area the more brush are planted and the more fishing spots you can borrow for the weekend.

Like I said the lake is huge, barge traffic will be the norm, and since it is at winter pool pay close attention to the navigational buoys. My new Lowrance GPS with the Navionics premium chip in it has all river channels and drop-offs. Down there the navigational buoys string together on the screen making it much easier to navigate at winter pool. Down there you can go from twenty foot to twenty inches very quickly. Shelbyville at winter pool just give all the flat looking banks a lot of room and you will be all right. Not that way at Paris landing, so be careful.

So if you want to cash in on some great crappie action on Lake Shelbyville give my guide service a buzz. The experience is one you soon won't forget.