

## Down To Just Fishing For Crappie

by Steve Welch

Every season I switch over to white bass/walleye in mid June and stay on them until Labor Day then I get a musky fetish for about six to eight weeks and then I just empty the boat out completely of all other non species equipment and concentrate on my bread and butter fish. The fish that got my guide service started and the fish that gets me the most bookings to this date. That is the crappie, easily the best table fare and I have no doubt that we crappie fisherman out number the other entire fisherman combined.

Once November hits the fish can be caught shallow or deep just pick. Both patterns work and its funny. All those small fish that you were catching on the main lake just last month have been replaced with quality fish. We start the day prepared to do both and bounce back and forth on a milk run so to speak. I start at either Bo-Woods or Wilborn creek boat ramp depending on which river has the best bite. We just start hitting all my brush piles and work towards the other ramp then take one long ride back at the end of the day.

I carry nine poles with me to accommodate my two clients and me. I have three spinning outfits to cast spring corks and weed less jigs if I am fishing stumps up in the creeks. I have three twelve-foot very limber poles to fish shallow brush if it is too dense to get the cork through. I use the twelve-foot poles to keep the boat away from the cover. I like a limber pole so you don't rip the hook out of these shallow fish. I have three nine foot poles to hover over the deep brush. I like a stiffer pole so I can get a good hook set when hovering over brush in the ten to fifteen foot range. A stiffer pole has a better feel for a light jig in deep water.

As far as line goes. I use ten pound test on my spinning outfits so I can straighten my hooks and I fish this so shallow that sometimes I can't get my boat to it to get the snag. On my twelve foot poles and my nine foot poles I use six pound hi-vis Trilene sensation. I want to see my line so I don't miss a bite when the jig is on the fall.

As far as my bait selection goes. Minnows are hard to come by and you really don't need them anyway once the water-cools past fifty-five. Jigs will out perform live bait and catch bigger fish. Why, well hear are a couple of my reasons. You can cover more water, get a jig much shallower and a dead minnow isn't that appealing since you are moving it around so much it dies very quickly. Secondly a jig is a threat to a fish so even if it isn't hungry it will strike a jig.

I use a variety of tubes in all sorts of colors, most have some chartreuse and another color be it white or black or purple. Size depends on the season. Up in the creeks in shallow water I will use a much larger umbrella tube made by Southern Pro. I like the shear mass of the umbrella and it is a solid two and a half inch tube. I also like the Bob Folder tensile jig if the water is kind of clear or if the water is very cold like down in the mid forties all the way to ice up. I also use a Slater's jig that has both hair and tensile. My main stay and the tube that I have used for fifteen years is the Mid South super jig. I like the toughness of the tube and the fact that the chartreuse glow actually glows in the dark. They make a very large tube like the umbrella and I fish both it and the normal sized one. All of these baits I tip it with a crappie nibble. I have went the full spectrum on the available colors but now stick to just the white.

The boat that I use is a 2004 Ranger 521vx. It has a Mercury Optimax 225 on it and a six-inch hydraulic jack plate to get me up into the skinniest of water. This boat has a huge front deck to accommodate both my two clients and me. I have three Gamin depth finders on it. A color unit 250c on the front of the boat and I am so impressed with it that all my units will be color for next season. I have another in dash and yet another one beside the dash so I don't have to split my screen to see my GPS. I have over two hundred waypoints on Shelbyville alone and can motor right up to any of them with very little effort.

A bass boat has a distinct advantage over any other boat when it comes to fishing in cover or hovering on a brush pile on the main lake. While fishing in cover the boat sets low enough that the rub rail catches most of the stumps to keep it from getting scratched. When fishing over brush on the main lake it sets so low that it doesn't catch wind making it easier to hover. You can't get enough trolling motor to hold this big boat so never undersize. I have a twenty-four volt seventy-four pound thrust Minn Kota and it will hold up in twenty mile per hour wind if need be.

I will be out there until ice up in late December or early January then I have to get ready for all the fishing shows, only to be back at it by late February. So if you want to get in on some pretty awesome crappie action give my guide service a buzz.