

Fall Crappie Bite; Better Than Spring

by Steve Welch

Crappie is typecast as a springtime fling. Then you pick up your bass gear or walleye gear and never think about them the rest of the year. I am here to tell you that the fall period, from mid-October through mid-December and later, is every bit as good as the spring, if not better.

The weather is just so much more stable. Spring has us bouncing back and forth between cold fronts and even colder rain. Everyone is so anxious to get started that they tend to book a trip too early and are hit with bad weather or fish with lockjaw. We do our best, but Mother Nature is ultimately the boss.

In the fall, once the water temperatures drop into the mid-fifties range, the crappie strap on the feed bag. They just feed and feed right on up until the lake freezes over. They bite so well that we never worry about getting bait.

All you need is a good supply of Midsouth tubes in some sort of variation of chartreuse. I like yellow and chartreuse or brown and chartreuse or pink and chartreuse. I put them on an eighth ounce Reeves jig painted either pink or white. I spool up an ultra-light spinning reel with six-pound vicious hi-vis line and put it on my ten-foot custom-made jig pole.

Lake Shelbyville is full of timber and you can't go wrong just moving from tree-to-tree fishing anywhere from ten to fourteen feet deep. If you really want to fill the boat, you need to find some of the thousands of brush piles both natural and manmade. A brush pile will produce a lot more fish than a standing tree.

We hardly ever venture more than a mile from the Wilborn boat ramp. This area is full of fish and most of the crappie tournaments are won not far from this boat ramp. I have said over and over again that no crappie tournament has ever been won south of the Findley Bridge. The south end has tons of fish but it is the north end that puts out the truly big fish year after year. There is something about living in a river that produces big fish. Besides, you can fish much shallower on the north end, making it easier to catch the crappie.

I have had many crappie trips when we launch the boat just after daylight, run about three hundred yards, pull up on a hidden brush pile, and within thirty minutes we have our limit. A normal day's crappie fishing in October and November is about a hundred fish between my two clients and me.

This fall has me hustling with fishing the Crappie U.S.A. classic and guiding at home. I won the Region Three Qualifier this spring held on Lake Shelbyville and that qualified me directly to the classic. This year the classic will be held over in southern Indiana at Patoka Lake. I have spent a week fishing there a couple of years ago. So I have some knowledge of the lake.

I have another venture that I recently started. I am making my own fishing how-to videos. I have been a guide and tournament angler for nearly fifteen years and have amassed a ton of knowledge and tricks along the way. A friend of mine approached me with the idea this spring. He makes hunting videos and asked me if I would be interested in doing a crappie video. I didn't want it to be full of ads, plugs or commercials. Just good crappie spring fishing tips and lots of fish-catching action. I am currently making a white bass jigging spoon fishing video. This same spoon is deadly on huge buffalo. My clients love to catch these thirty-pound plus fish. Then this winter I am making a crappie video on both Lake Shelbyville and Kentucky Lake.

If you are interested in obtaining one of these videos, just go to my website and e-mail me. I will also have these available at the fishing shows this winter, so stop by and chat with me.