

Fall Crappie on Shelbyville & Kentucky Lake

by Steve Welch

Most of you that follow me on my website or on my fishing forum called Illinois Fish Talk already know that I have started guiding on Kentucky Lake for a few weeks in the spring and fall. I will be down there from October 20th until November 5th on this go around. I guided down there in March of this year and we got some real bruisers as well as some bad weather. Fall weather is much more stable so I look to really be able to put some big crappie in the boat and show my clients coming down a real good time.

October and November crappie fishing on Shelbyville is very good as well. I look forward to fall fishing every year. It is simply the best crappie fishing of the entire season. We finally get out the jig poles and my three person seating system and hover right over brush. We fish the same way down on Kentucky just a little deeper. I have been throwing a slip bobber and minnow at deep brush for nearly four months now and plenty ready to try another method. Besides that thump when a big crappie hits that jig is priceless.

My Deep Ledge Jigs really shine both at Shelbyville and on Kentucky Lake since these jigs are heavier 1/4oz. and have a small light wire hook so you can get in and out of brush without getting hung up. We swim then back and forth down in the brush trying to get a reaction bite from a hungry crappie. Then at Kentucky we do what I call walk the ledge with them. We go slowly along a ledge at about twenty-feet or deeper trying to keep the jig just three-inches off bottom. Then when we get to another brush pile we stop and fish it. Then continue walking the ledge. I have caught some real pigs between brush piles on Kentucky. On Shelbyville we do a little of this in the dead of winter but for the most part we are bouncing from brush pile to brush pile spending about ten minutes at each one.

The plastics we use are mainly Midsouth but we throw in some Lake Fork and other big shad bodies. The bait in Shelbyville is really big in the fall so we throw bigger baits about 2-3-inches in length. The colors we use depends on water color and available light penetration. Dark days we use a lot of orange and chartreuse. Light days more shad colored baits but like I said it depends on the water color.

My Yar-Craft 2095BTX tiller boat has ample room to fish three from the nose of the boat so we all use custom ten-foot rods that are much stouter than commercial rods. They need to be stiff to allow us to fish the heavier jigs properly. On Kentucky Lake I have some eight-foot rods that are St. Croix flipping stick blanks converted into a spinning rod. I call them the meat sticks since they will allow you to simply swing in a two-pound crappie no problem. I even caught a flathead catfish while down there this spring on this rod that went 60 pounds and on my Deep Ledge Jig to boot.

We spool these rods with eight-pound Fireline Crystal braided line so you can get very good feel and with no stretch in the line we can simply pop the snagged jig right off the branch. I then use a tiny ultralight spinning reel since you don't need much line.

This is a great set up for crappie fishing both on Shelbyville and Kentucky. My clients love the open feeling of the big tiller boat and that it is deep and you feel more secure. Shelbyville and Kentucky can get rough and it is nice to know that you are in a deep good riding boat that can take it.

I have plenty of good crappie trips left on Shelbyville for the fall and right now a couple on Kentucky. So just go to my website and check the front page for my available open dates or give me a call at 217-762-7257.