

Fall Jig Bite Shelbyville Style

By Steve Welch

For anyone wanting to catch crappie with jigs, November through next April is your time frame. Yes it is the cold weather months that jigs really shine. The only difference that I see on Shelbyville versus some other lakes I go to is that we have a strong gizzard shad population. They eventually grow too large for the crappie to eat but they will attempt it so big plastic shad style baits is what we go to in the early fall. We then downsize as we get into mid-December.

So get out the big stuff, and I am talking two and even three-inch plastics, with big jigs as well. We use my Deep Ledge Jigs in 1/4oz. 99% of the time. I like the big profile and its' ability to get into a brush pile and ram into branches and then crawl right over them trying to entice a reaction bite. Plus, I like pendulum fishing along down trees. I do this by flipping it up towards shore and allowing it to swim right down the trunk and controlling it with a long, very stout ten-foot Norm's rod.

When fishing the bigger, heavier jigs those light action rods just won't do. My rod needs to be strong enough to pull heavy crappie from dense cover and not let them have any chance to get away. Plus a heavy jig on one of those rods designed for a 1/64oz. jig will just bend the rod completely over and you lose feel. It works vice versa though as my stout rods don't work very well on a very small jig.

This is the time of the year we get out the big Lake Fork shad style baits and even my 2 ½ inch Midsouth tubes. As for color you need to let the water color dictate that. I like my Deep Ledge Jigs and my plastics in black, orange and chartreuse on dark days and white, light blue or pearl on sunny days.

I have four different weights that I pour in the Deep Ledge Jig design and each lake is different as to what weight will work best for you. The weights are 1/4oz., 3/16oz., 1/8oz. & 3/32oz. but we use the 1/4oz. most of the time. The colors we make are Black, Chartreuse, Orange, Red & White. We sell them on my on-line store and at several locations around the state. My website has the listings as to where.

I set up my Yar-Craft big tiller boat for jig fishing by putting three pedestals all up on the front deck to allow each of us to have an equal share at catching the crappie. This allows me to put the front end of the boat right over the brush and I can see all three of our jigs on the screen of my Lowrance depth finders, so I know if anyone is not fishing the right depth. Once you start fishing in deeper water, knowing exactly what depth you are fishing and if you are just fishing the very top of the brush is critical. So you don't get under the crappie. Down on Kentucky Lake, another lake I guide on, the big fish take over the very top of the brush and if you simply allow your jig to go to the bottom, you've gone right by those big fish. We generally fish at least twenty feet down on Kentucky Lake so seeing your jig on the screen is very easy. On Lake Shelbyville we only fish that deep for crappie in the dead of winter but it is effective on both lakes.

November on Shelbyville fishes very easy. You just go out and find some brush up on the north end of the lake that is in about ten-feet of water. Hold the boat over it for ten minutes catch about a half dozen or more then move to the next spot and repeat. Being able to perfectly hold a trolling motor very still and hovering over the brush is a skill not learned easily. Heavy fiberglass

boats really help in hovering and someone that can make slight adjustments to boat position in their sleep. This allows you to get three anglers down in the thickest brush and catch fish without getting snagged all the time. Some say after twenty years of doing this I have finally mastered it.

I have waited for this month all year long and there is nothing better than that hard smack of a hungry crappie hitting that jig. So come on out and give it a try. I still have plenty of open dates in November and December. Just go to my website at www.LakeShelbyvilleGuide.com and check for available dates.