

Fall Crappie As Good As It Gets, You Bet It Is

By Steve Welch

Now that all the ski boats have surrendered and the lake is all ours again lets get down to business. We have gotten through lake turnover and you can fish any pattern that you like. For those of you who like to fish shallow structure just go up into the feeder creeks. These creeks hold some of the biggest fish and surely would put you in the money in any tourney, but fronts can hurt you so I fish a little of both on any given day. At Shelbyville a flood control lake all your main lake banks have ledges and on these ledges lie old treetops and brush piles. We just throw a buoy on them and hover right on top of them. The trick for all you first time visitors is to find enough of them so you can create a little milk run of sorts. Hiring a guide can shorten your search time and put you on a big stringer of fish most every time out. I run a guide service on this huge body of water and have done so on a part time basis for nearly ten years now. My clients know that by fall I am out of vacation days and only working weekends so they call early. The crappie fishing on this lake is second to none anywhere in Illinois. We boat about a hundred or more fish on every trip out regardless of the weather and for those who really know when to come my trips in early December are your best big fish trips with a ton of fish to boot.

Let's talk a little about your average day. First we launch just after sun up and depending on where I have been catching my fish we might opt to go up the river which means we will be throwing a cork set about two feet above a jig back up in the feeder creeks or in the main river itself this is very peaceful and it is not unusual to have the whole creek to yourself. Big fish follow the shad up these creeks and it isn't out of the ordinary to catch a pound and a half or bigger crappie. If the creeks are muddy then we might decide to go out on the main lake where I will have us fish over the top of many downed trees. The best are right on ledges and I always prefer brush versus stumps they hold more fish so we don't have to move as much. To catch these fish we use a long ten foot pole and let out enough line to put you down in the brush and just jig it up and down or do like I do and slowly swim it from side to side. We either put a jig on it or a plain hook with a minnow on it. I always use large bait in the fall. The fish don't want to waste much energy so they prefer larger bait so they don't have to feed as much. The tubes that I use are a large two and a half-inch made by Super Jigs and they are available at Mike's tackle in Decatur. Pam Reeves at Reeves Lure Company make the jigs that I prefer. I use an eighth ounce in the fall unless I am fishing it under a cork then I use a sixteenth ounce. I like her jigs because of the superior finish and the light wire hooks that I can straighten. Color wise I stick with some variation of chartreuse with half of it being white or red or black.

October also spells tournament time for me I will be fishing the Springfield Open Invitational on the thirteenth and the Crappie USA on the twentieth and then the Bethany Open in early November. All of these are difficult to win so I just set my sights on being a consistent team in the money and about ninety percent of the time we are. I have won both the Springfield Open and the Bethany but as yet I have never fished the Crappie USA.

Lake Shelbyville has miles and miles of pristine shoreline lined with all sorts of beautiful fall colors and is one of the best vacation spots Illinois has to offer. Throw in a hundred fish day and the luxury ride of a twenty foot Ranger bass boat and you have the makings of a trip you soon won't forget and all those tasty crappie at your next fish fry to top it all off.

So why not give me a call and book your fall trip now like I said they will be going fast. Maybe you will pick up a trick or two.

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