

Ledge Fishing, The Key During Winter
by Steve Welch

Way back when I really started to get the hang of this crappie thing. I would just mark off a ledge and drag a jig right on bottom. I start by dropping buoys on top of a ledge some hundred feet apart and then I slowly walk a jig up and down this ledge always looking for brush so I could hover and get more than one fish. If we caught any good fish, we would mark the GPS waypoint and then return to it later.

You need to pick a depth and work that part of the ledge. For me at Shelbyville it is about fourteen-foot, but at Kentucky Lake it can be twenty-five or even thirty.

People ask me all the time what is my favorite time to fish and they would think the spawn during the spring would be my answer but oh no it is the winter. With the fish bunched on the ledges, you can hit the mother load, big fish and plenty of them.

I recently had an experience on Kentucky Lake where I did hit the mother load. A buddy of mine threw out and got a fourteen and a third just as soon as we pulled up, before I had quite got the brush on my depth finder. I looked down and it was

full of fish with the depth reading about twenty-eight foot topping out at about twenty-two. I tossed my jig out with about twenty-foot of line and as soon as it swung under the rod I felt a hard hit and I informed him that his fish wouldn't hold up as big fish for the day. I hooked a dandy fourteen -inch black crappie not quite big enough to take the big fish honor so then I threw out again and once again, boom another hard smack and a thirteen-inch fat fish, then another and another thirteen-inch and yet another. Then my reel actually let drag out on this next strike and I knew I had him this time. Up to the surface came a dandy fat fifteen-inch fish. All total just out of that brush pile in less than ten minutes we got seven thirteen-inch, two fourteen-inch, one fifteen-inch.

I love Paris Landing in the winter.

We caught several good fish dragging jigs between brush piles and this is the time of the year that I enjoy going down there because all the good fish are on the drops. On this particular trip we landed about ninety legal sized crappie with about half being over eleven and half of those being over thirteen with some fourteen-inch fish and one fifteen-inch fish, not to mention some nice bass. Not a bad return for just a couple days of December fishing.

Tackle that I use to do this is a stout medium heavy seven-foot spinning outfit and quality reel spooled with twenty-pound Power-Pro. This is a braided line with only six-pound diameter. Reason for such heavy braid is that I can straighten

the hook and with the braid, I can feel the bottom much better. With the stout rod

I can just snap it when I am hung and it will free the jig. We use quarter ounce jigs and larger tubes made by Mid-South. They are two and a half inches long. The fish need to see the bait and I am not hunting for small fish so this is why I upsize.

Most wouldn't venture from the warmth of their living room to cash in on this winter crappie fishing but if you dress for it and carry along a heater for your hands, it isn't too bad. I rarely see any other boats. Down on Kentucky Lake at

Paris landing where I go there are so many bird hunters that you have all the ledges to yourself.

Both Lake Shelbyville and Kentucky Lake are winter homes of mine and I can fill the freezer with huge crappie. If you want to learn more about how I do this then come on out and see me at the upcoming sport shows.

I will be at the Let's Go Fishing Show in Collinsville then at the Midstate Fish & Feather Expo in Bloomington and then at the Central Illinois Boating & Fishing Show in East Peoria.