

Let Us Reflect on 2011

By Steve Welch

I try and look back on each year and see did I learn anything to use in the future for fishing. I pride myself for the work I have done learning the south end of Lake Shelbyville. With three years in a row with high water I no longer scratch my head and wonder what to do. I can always find clear water somewhere on the south end. I can always get out of the wind on the south end and now I know plenty of good spawning areas on the south end. I still prefer to fish the north end and most days that is where you will see me. Every crappie tourney I have ever participated in the winners was always fishing on the north end. The rivers just have bigger crappie especially in the fall.

I actually prefer to fish on the south end during winter draw down. I have deeper spots to fish and you can get some huge black crappie in late February and early March as soon as the ice comes off. I tend to fish down that way until mid April while I wait on the north end to warm up. Usually the north end is muddy in the early spring season.

Another trick I learned this year was my deep-water cork rig. I caught more triple limits this season in the summer months than I ever have. I spool my 11-foot Outlaw rod with 20-pound Fireline Crystal. I use the crystal because it has a heavy wax like feel to it and my bobber stop will stay where I put it. I then use a 3/8oz. weight and a cork big enough to hold it up and then I tie on a barrel swivel and then one foot of twelve pound fluorocarbon and a number four aberdeen hook with a chartreuse glass bead on it. The bead just sets on the hook and gives it some flash. I can fish this rig 15-20 feet deep and if I get hung up I simply load up the rod and snap it and the rig pops free. I also learned this summer if the boat hovers over any deep brush the crappie will leave. It blocks out the sun and spooks the fish. With my deep slip bobber rig I can cast it and keep the boat away from the cover.

With my side imaging and down scan I have found so many trees on Lake Shelbyville on river channel banks that are in 30-50 feet of water standing up right with all their branches in tact. I then go over them and pinpoint exactly where and how deep the crappie are hiding in the tree branches. I then drop a buoy on them and get back and use my deep slip bobber rig and just hammer the crappie. Only bad thing is that we use about 20 dozen minnows a day. I have a ten gallon insulated tank that can comfortably keep that many minnows alive all day.

I had my best year ever guiding and will have done 220 guide trips by the time this airs. I booked another 20-30 with my second boat so we must be doing something right. All this in just nine months. I have had little time off. I did however qualify for another Crappie USA Classic and placed 12th on Kentucky Lake. I had a ball and my partner and I caught about 400 crappie all week with 46 being 14 inches or bigger. You throw in the yellow bass, drum, blue cats and bass we must have caught over a thousand fish in the six days we were there. It is tough to beat anyone on their home lake but Kentucky Lake has the toughest teams in the country and six Kentucky Lake guides participated in this years classic and all of them cashed a check. I feel fortunate to place as high as I did. I lost two big fish on day two that would of jumped us up about five spots but oh well that is fishing.

My Deep Ledge Jigs were a big hit on Kentucky Lake and anglers were buying them as fast as we could make them. Those heavy quarter ounce jigs with the small number four hook really gets in the cover and the feel you get in deep water with them is unmatched. They have also taken off at Lake Shelbyville since we started offering four sizes. They are 1/4, 3/16, 1/8 and 3/32oz. I love the 3/16oz. for the ten to fifteen foot stuff I normally fish, great feel even in strong winds. They have deep inset prism eyes and a tough epoxy paint and clear coat finish.

The Candystriper has quickly become the main lure in every white bass fishermen's box. We designed it to fix some of the problems with other lures with spinners on them and targeted it for white bass but quickly found other species love it as well. We pendulum it along bridge pilings in summer and crappie love it. We cast it along weed beds and stumps and walleye just hammer it. I

actually caught an eight-pound walleye this year on it. My best two outings on walleye this year were a 31 and a 29 legal fish day. We caught a ton of walleye this past June and Shelbyville is now the best walleye fishery in the state and the sauger that have been put in these last few years got a spawn off this year so look out in 2012.

Now that Christmas is upon us I have great stocking stuffers in my Deep Ledge Jigs and my Candystripers and we also have gift certificates available for that fishermen in your life good for a 2012 outing. You can just go to my website at www.LakeShelbyvilleGuide.Com and look through the store.

I will be at several fishing shows this winter starting at Collinsville on January 6,7 and 8. Then off to Bloomington on January 27,28 and 29. Then Tinley Park on February 11 and 12 then lastly to Elmwood on March 3 and 4. Then off to start another fishing season. Hopefully 2012 will be my best ever. I know 2011 wasn't too shabby.