

October and November, Crappie fishing at it's Finest

By Steve Welch

I get this question every year which month is the best month to schedule a killer crappie trip. My answer is always the same. Mid October on through mid December. You start out in October chasing them shallow. Once the water turns in late September the crappie will move in and out of the shallows until the water temps drop below forty-five.

We chase these shallow crappie with a twelve-foot rod and vertical jig any wood structure, be it a tree stump or a brush pile. We also have a rod rigged with a slip cork and a jig under it and if you are only fishing tree stumps then you also have a spinning rod spooled with twenty-pound braid and a fixed cork and a jig under that. We don't need live bait since these shallow fish are so aggressive they will take a jig immediately. It is a ball to see that cork just buries as fast as you take it by the stump. We use the heavy braid so if you get hung up you can straighten the hook. The areas we fish are so shallow you can't get a boat to them so you must make long casts to reach them.

I love this pattern and my big Ranger bass boat will get into skinny water with the hydraulic jack plate on the back. I can raise the motor vertically and run in a foot of water. Then the huge front deck allows three anglers to stand on and cast.

Then once we get close to Thanksgiving the fish drop back to brush in the ten to fifteen-foot range. I also love this pattern because my boat is loaded with electronics and currently I have twelve hundred waypoints on Shelbyville alone. I have down scan and side imaging on the front and back of my boat and four GPS units. I can spot a brush pile a hundred feet away and put a waypoint on it from my boats position. I can spot fish hidden within the branches as well. It makes running and gunning through brush piles way more efficient.

I have made a custom seating system on my boat that allows three anglers to set right on the nose of the boat. That way we can all vertical jig down in the brush and watch our jigs on the big ten-inch Lowrance I have mounted at the trolling motor. Big fish will suspend right on top of the brush and if you constantly let your jig go to the bottom and bring it up a few inches you will miss these fish.

The rods I use to fish the deeper brush are custom made by Norm's Rods and he makes a nine weight eight-foot rod that is very stiff compared to production rods. The reason is that I always use my Deep Ledge Jigs. They are perfectly balanced quarter-ounce jigs with a number four light wire hook. I use these jigs so I can purposely bounce it off brush and drag it over branches within the brush pile. A lighter jig doesn't give you the feel you need to fish like this and a rod with a lighter tip won't give you the feel either. Also the heavier rod allows me to snap my rod tip and with the braided line I use with no stretch. The jig frees itself ninety percent of the time.

The fish just hammer that bigger jig and it is a ball catching close to a hundred fish a day off an orange marker buoy. My brush is hidden very well so for the most part I am the only boat fishing them. We will run and gun all day and fish close to fifty brush piles and pick the big ones off them motor to the next one. I have so many that I rotate brush as not to over fish them. Since we fish every day.

I still have plenty of open dates for the fabulous fall fishing and beautiful foliage. The trees turning the dark shades of red and gold are a sight to behold. You can go to my website at www.LakeShelbyvilleGuide.Com and see the open dates and to check out my products such as my Deep Ledge Jigs that are custom made and balanced with inset prism eyes and my Candy stripers that has everyone using them for white bass and walleye.

I have been working on a message board on my website so anglers can post pictures and share fishing stories. I will be on there every day to help anglers with questions on patterns and electronics. We are not just limiting it to crappie fishing but encourage anglers to share any fishing stories and not just from Shelbyville anywhere you like to fish. I hope it takes off so be watching for it soon.