

September Starts Fall Jig Bite for Crappie

by Steve Welch

I have been dragging around a 60 qt. Yeti converted into a bait tank as well as three Frabil smaller bait tanks since April. My boat won't know what to do with the lighter weight and me with the extra room and I know Chip's Marine will miss the \$150.00 or more a week I spend on live bait.

The reality is the crappie go on such a feeding frenzy in preparation for the winter that jigs are all you need. No more staying back and in fear of spooking the fish and no more fishing twenty or more feet of water depth.

Once we get the water temps back below sixty the jig bite is on. Partially because the shad in the lake are now too big for the crappie to eat and partially because the crappie are a cold water fish that bites very well all winter. A jig is a nice snack for them.

My partner and I developed a jig a few years back called the Deep Ledge Jig and we wanted a jig that would sit horizontally in the water and heavy enough to swim it back and forth above and in dense cover. We have a small light wire number four hook on it to aid in getting into tight spots. With this jig you can ram it into branches creating a reaction strike by swimming it back and forth.

Most crappie fishermen want a slow falling jig they can bounce up and down to entice a bite. For me you lose contact with the light jig and have to watch for any movement of your line. This gets you hung in thick brush much easier. Our jig is heavy enough to fall off most branches so you can bury it into anything you want.

So when asked at the fishing shows what jig do you use, my answer is I use a 1/4oz. Deep Ledge Jig 99% of the time. I will use my 1/8oz. when I am fishing it under a cork, which I rarely do any more since I purchased my last boat. It is a walleye boat and more comfortable in deeper water so I don't take it up into the feeder creeks like I did with my bass boat and this is where you are always fishing shallow.

I will take that 1/4oz. jig and fish it in six-feet of water and the next spot twenty so it is versatile. We use 8lb. Fireline Crystal braided line to help with strength and small diameter. We can simply pop the jig right off snags most of the time.

I rigged my boat up with three seats on the nose so myself and two clients can set right over brush and swim these jigs right through the brush. I use a nine-foot rod and they have a ten-foot rod so all three of us are exactly in a straight line right in front of the trolling motor which has my down scan and 2-d sonar transducers on the bottom.

I can see the jigs on the screen so I know if you are fishing too high above the brush. Rod length to place you right in the cone of your electronics is crucial.

This is my favorite way to catch crappie feeling that thump when they hit the jig I will never tire of. When we fish down on Kentucky Lake those fish are much deeper and for some reason they just hit your bait so much harder partially because they are bigger but your elbow is sore at the end of the day.

You can't get hung up on a favorite color of jig or plastic because water color and the size of bait has so much to do with it. I tend to stick with shad colored baits early fall and switch to brighter baits late fall because I am fishing darker colored water since the fish are now shallow.

During September you will see the beginning of the month be much like the last two a summer pattern then we start to cool off and then the thermocline will disappear and thus bring the fish shallow and back into the coves where the bait went to find even cooler water. Most fish tend to like water temps in the high forties to low fifties. They are very active at those temps.

The fall jig bite is very close and my open dates on Lake Shelbyville go quickly and I still have some dates left for Kentucky Lake to chase the big ones so go to my website and check the availability list.
www.LakeShelbyvilleGuide.Com or just give me a call at 217-762-7257