Last Shot At A Wall Hanger For Season

by Steve Welch

Even the most diehard crappie fisherman have hung it up in the boat and await ice. Not me I love December fishing. Both at home and at Paris Landing. It is winter not spring that I make most of my trips down to Paris Landing. I usually go down about six times from December to the end of March.

The best part about winter crappie fishing besides the crowds is the fish are big. Just kidding about the crowds you hardly see a soul. The fish congregate out on main lake river channels and this is the time of the year when they bunch up so tight you can get a limit off just one spot.

At my home lake I usually get my top two or three biggest of the season in December. On Shelbyville that is 14-15 inches or just under two-pounds.

At my second home lake Paris Landing I might get ten that big in just one weekend. I had a day last year in December that I pulled up on a stake bed in twenty foot of water and promptly caught ten big fish in less than ten minutes that weighed seventeen pounds collectively.

My wife has a sixteen-inch fish on our mantle that weighs two and three-quarter pounds that she caught in December. Oh by the way she doesn't fish in December anymore too cold.

I bring along a Mr. Heater to take the chill off your hands so it isn't that bad if you have a good snowsuit and snow boots and I use insulated rag wool gloves. No rubber fishing gloves for me or no gloves with the fingers cut out. Rag wool will get somewhat wet and stay warm and you can warm them back up on the heater.

Tackle is simple at home I use a nine-foot eight weight custom rod that Paul Center made for me. I like the lightweight and balanced feel you get with a custom rod. I spool it with four-pound mono. Hi-Vis if the water isn't just gin clear. Four-pound will cause less twist and you will catch more fish just because it presents the bait more life like.

Tackle down at Paris Landing I throw in a spinning outfit. Not a wimpy one but rather a medium heavy six and a half foot rod more likely to white bass fish with. I put on a small forty series reel to keep the rig light and spool it with four-pound. I have a second matching rod and reel only it is spooled with ten-two braid. The braid just lets me feel the brush so well and if you get hung up it will straighten the hook. I have seen on my last two trips down that the braid just doesn't get me as many bites so I am quick to go back to mono.

Why have the spinning out fit at Kentucky Lake and not home. It is merely a depth thing. At home we fish no deeper than fourteen feet and at Kentucky I rarely fish shallower than fourteen feet. Most of the time it is 18-24 foot. No need for a long pole you can't go down with your rod tip after your jig anyway.

Bait selection is simple. No live bait needed I use a quarter-ounce Big Head jig most of the time it is dark red. I use Midsouth tubes and very few colors. I use a red and chartreuse or an orange and chartreuse or a white and chartreuse or a silver-speckled chartreuse or an emerald blue shiner. Which is a light blue almost pearl and has blue speckles. Great color in clear water.

The fish are bunched up on or near the bottom so no need to worry about pendulum fishing your jig over the top of the brush. Just get it to the bottom and hold it still. Very still and the heavier jig helps you do that. It also has a big profile and big fish want a big bait. Winter is also when I get out my biggest two and half-inch tubes. The bait in the water is large so the fish are used to feeding on big baits.

Every month you need a good GPS system but December it is a must. No shallow fishing to be done. On both Shelbyville and Kentucky Lake you won't see me fishing standing timber. Brush is best always best over standing timber. Brush located on old river channels out in the middle of the lake are your best spots.

You need a handful of marker buoys and 374 waypoints on your GPS system. That is how many I have as of this writing and adding more every trip. You can return to a good spot over and over again and get within six-foot.

I have two Lowrance GPS units on my boat. One up on the trolling motor and one on my console. They are networked together and when I put a waypoint on my back system it automatically puts one on my front. I can move from a waypoint to another without having to start up big boat but more importantly now I can stop about thirty feet back from the brush and use my trolling motor to slide up over it quietly.

Winter crappie fishing can be very addictive especially once you start seeing just how much bigger the fish are. So get out there and give it a try and come on out and see me this winter at these fishing shows, Midwest Marine Open House, Illinois Fish and Feather Expo in Bloomington and the Central Illinois Boating and Fishing Show in Peoria.