

Fourth of July, Kentucky Lake Style

by Steve Welch

Last year my new wife and I started what has become a tradition for the Welch family. Watching the fireworks from our boat on Kentucky Lake down at Big Sandy near Paris Tennessee. This year we went down a week early to do some fishing and tubing with the boys.

We had a great time. One of the best family vacations we have ever had. We survived all those pesky yellow bass with only a few cuts on our fingers, caught about three hundred brim, one hundred crappie, throw in some small mouth and largemouth bass, some sauger a couple of big channel cats and you have the makings for a great fishing trip. The fireworks were spectacular. There were close to five thousand boats all around us as far as the eye can see all lit up. Helicopters patrolling the sky so no boats would come speeding through and hurt someone.

If there was one draw back it was the fact that we bought seventy-five dozen minnows, two hundred and fifty wax worms, two hundred and fifty meal worms, and ten dozen crickets, but you had to have live bait to catch all the fish that we did. The trip started off with me catching a two pound crappie right off the first brush pile that we went to. The GPS performed without flaw again. I pulled up on a spot I had found last winter and threw out the buoy and turned and asked Jake if he thought he could find this spot again and he replied Dad we are in the middle of the lake there is no way I could find this spot and he was sold on the GPS for the rest of the week.

My typical day would start at five get up go down to the dock jump in go out on the deep crappie spots, enjoy the morning serenest catch a few crappie then go back about seven and get the family and go back out until eleven then go up to the resort for a late breakfast then graph a cat nap and then out under the bridge for the heat of the day, then back to the cabin to cook something on the grill and back out on the crappie from seven to nine. So I was quite fished out by the time I got home.

I used a couple of ways to catch the crappie, one was a sixteenth ounce Bob Folder tinsel jig tipped with a minnow and the second was a modified Kentucky rig or drop shot rig. We had a half-ounce weight on bottom then two or three above it I had a loop knot with an ice jig tipped with a minnow. The tinsel jig in clear water has got to be the best catch all bait of all time. If my depth finder would show a stake bed in twenty foot of water and it would black out the screen all the way up to about ten foot below the surface then we stay back and cast jigs to it. If you got the boat over it to vertical fish you would spook the fish. If we were working a ledge and fishing more natural cover then the bottom-bouncing rig worked best.

For the brim we just worked the riprap down by the route seventy-nine bridge and under the bridge along the supports, which was great to get out of the heat. The boys timed it and eleven seconds was the longest that we ever waited for a bite. That is what I call catching fish. We went three times for only two hours at a time on the brim and yet we boated about three hundred of them. The rig that we used was a long ten-foot pole so we could fish it vertically beside the bridge supports with a quarter-ounce weight then a barrel swivel and a short six inch leader with a thirty-second ounce tinsel jig tipped with a wax worm, cricket or meal worm. We had to fish the heavy weight because of the current being drawn through the bridge to get your bait down under the aggressive smaller fish. We fished about a foot of bottom about nine feet down. About one in five was a nice three-quarter pound brim plenty big enough for the frying pan.

Kentucky Lake might be a bit intimidating for some on the crappie because you really do need a vast knowledge of several brush piles since you won't see any of them sticking out above the water but the brim fishing is very easy and they taste even better than crappie in my book and even guides like Gary Mason have started to specialize in them once the early spring crappie fishing has slowed. He told me that he switches on April twenty-fourth over to the brim and puts about four thousand on the dock at Buchanan's Resort in April through June.

I am still catching crappie at this writing down at Shelbyville and have many bookings still available and will soon be going over to Mark Twain to get in on that fantastic crappie fishing so give me a call and set something up.

Steve Welch

Crappie

762-7257

217-

stevewelch@mchsi.com