

Crappie Spawn is Over, Time to Slow Down? Not Me! By Steve Welch

Since I got my web-site up and going about a year ago, my business has just grown and grown. Normally I count on my winter fishing shows and my repeat business to fill my spring trips. This year I have turned away over a hundred trips and those that just waited too long to get a spring crappie trip. I have convinced them that the June crappie / walleye trips are just as fun. I have even been booking fall crappie trips and summer white bass trips.

Thanks to the web-site, business is good. Yesterday, I did an interview with Field and Stream magazine in New York City, all due the web-site. I have a web designer, who constantly updates my search words and you can type in any kind of search in Illinois, and my sight is the top one. Virginia at Kestrel Technologies really hooked me up. She usually does big businesses and loved the challenge of building one for the outdoors.

Now back to fishing. June on Lake Shelbyville can be full of surprises. I have had years that I have fished up in the creeks all alone for big crappie right on up to July 4th weekend. With the creeks that late in the year you never know. First of all the water has to have some color in it and the carp and buffalo spawn along with all the gar keep the water churned up pretty good. Once they quit spawning they will leave the shallows. Then you have to count on Mother Nature. Also you must have a good supply of baitfish.

The male crappie will remain up the creeks long after the spawn to protect the young. They will even still be dark from the spawn. I love to catch fish in two foot of water as long as I can. Active fish and usually they are all of legal size.

About mid day we come out of the creeks and head to the main lake flats. Like the need for color up in the creeks, you need wind on the main lake flats to get the fish shallow. This gives the water color and the predators will use this to their advantage. Boat traffic all though it is a nuisance is helpful. They also color the water. I have caught walleye in a foot of water, mid day in the prop wash of a ski boat leaving a marina. The waves disorientate the baitfish and the walleye are ready to pounce.

Now I always tell my clients that a walleye trip with me has a ton of white bass to deal with. They live in the same areas and walleye actually follow whites all summer and eat the food they miss. If you ever see a mid summer white bass bust on the surface of the lake remember that the walleye/catfish and bigger whites are under them getting the baitfish that get stung and sink to the bottom.

I like to throw blade bait for walleye. Nothing covers water more quickly on an expansive flat. The flash that they give off will attract many species of fish. I have hooked big musky and large mouth and even catfish on this bait. I use a bait that is only available at Mike's Tackle in Decatur. It is called a Big Dude. I like the hooks on it better than a Cicada. I also throw a two-jig rig, which is nothing more than two-quarter ounce jigs tied a foot apart. I put a twister on one and a shad body on the other. Since the water is very shallow you must keep your rod tip high and reel very fast. Fish feed up and you have to keep the bait in the top two foot of water.

Flats are the number one spot to fish in June but once we get into July the fish move a little deeper and back off to the river channels. For me this is no time to slow down. The white bass fishing is at its all time peak. I love to fish the river ledges and we flat catch the whites. I have had many trips with over a hundred before lunch.

I use two rigs for this a drop shot rig with a half-ounce weight on bottom and a small loop knot tied a foot above it and a short shank live bait hook tipped with a minnow. We will go through nearly twenty dozen minnows a day. The other rig I use is a quarter ounce jig and a Charlie Brewer

Slider grub. It catches a few less fish than the minnows, but, oh I love the bonus buffy's we get. My friends call me the buffy king. They will pull up along side and not ask me how many whites we are getting but instead ask me how many big buffalo. We get those over thirty pounds and on light tackle they are a ball. We fish like this until September then back to the creeks for the white bass / crappie run.

So as you can see I have no time to slow down and I just move with the fish and stay on them until Christmas. Take a few weeks off then back at it mid February. Ya got to love it.