

October Presents Many Options at Shelbyville
By Steve Welch

I absolutely love fishing the fall and winter months. Clients ask me all the time do you hunt. My answer well sort of, muskie fishing is as close to hunting in the fishing world as you can get.

The best thing about fishing October is several of the species I guide for and just plain fish for are really biting. The bait is migrating towards the back of the major coves and muskie and white bass will follow. I love to muskie fish and the middle part of September through the middle of October is your best shot at getting a good fish on the lake. Whites go nuts in the skinny water at the back of the coves as well.

October is also the month that I love to go up the Kaskaskia River and do combo trips of white bass and crappie. Dipping a jig into shallow brush for big crappie then float down stream and cast jigs on the river flats and mouths of secondary creeks for some of the biggest white bass that we catch all year can fill even the biggest cooler. The whites we get in the fall both up in the river and backs of coves are bigger than the fish on the river channel drops that we get in summer. Our lake record of over four pounds came from the river.

I tend to shy away from guiding for muskie as I am geared towards getting a ton of fish on my guide trips and would really feel bad if we didn't get a fish or even see one. I know this happens more times than not and the true muskie enthusiast would understand. Last fall my best day was seven fish on and landing but one. It was a day I will never forget though and that is why I continue to fish for them. That fifty-inch fish is just a cast away.

It is crappie fishing though that I cut my teeth on and to this day about seventy-five percent of my guide trips are geared toward crappie fishing. I love to crappie fish. I take all my vacations, go crappie fishing, and have learned to find these tasty fish anywhere I go. Be it Kentucky Lake, Mark Twain Lake, Truman Lake, Arkabutla Lake, Tunica Lake or Patoka Lake. I have fished them all and many more.

I always tell my listeners during my winter seminars that the best crappie fishing even better than the spring is late October through mid December. The Corp will start to pull down the lake in mid December and the crappie fishing will really suffer so we switch to the spillway muskie during this period. Then if the winter is mild enough we are back on the crappie up on the lake.

Here is a list of the tackle that I use for the multitude of species that I fish for during the fall. For the muskie, you need some six-inch Jake's, shallow Manta's, Buck tails, Spinner baits and Bull Dawgs. For the white bass, I use Gay blades, quarter-ounce jigs, and Charlie Brewer slider grubs. For crappie, I use Mid South tubes in some sort of chartreuse and live bait under a cork early in the month in the creeks then tight lining with my long rods out on the lake in November and December. Up in the creeks I will use sixteenth ounce jigs but I use eighth ounce on the lake as we fish ten to fifteen foot deep.

I know most of you hunt during the fall but give the fabulous fall fishing a shot and you might see why I love it so. I still have a few openings left on my guide trips and hopefully I will see you at this winters fishing shows. Stop in and see me and we can reflect on this years catches.