

## April Weather Keeps You Moving

Lake Shelbyville is an Army Corp flood control lake and that means they drop the lake from 599.99 to 594 feet above sea level. In April they allow it to come up two-feet and in May the remaining four-feet. That also means in April they will do everything they can do to keep it at 596. So you will see constant water fluctuations and you top that off with cold rains, high winds and some nice warm days. Oh well that is Illinois in early spring!

I have been a fishing guide for twenty years now and have learned to resist the temptation to go searching shallow. Those fish are here one day and gone the next. A fishing guide needs deep dependable fish and that means deep fish. They aren't as effected by cold fronts and constant water fluctuations.

Shelbyville actually fishes like two totally different lakes. North of the Findlay bridge it is shallow with many huge flats and very off colored water. Great fishing in May but too cold in April. The south end is gin clear and very deep with river channels cutting in and out of the high clay banks. These channels have both standing and lay down timber that crappie use to hide in all winter. You just need to know at what depth are the crappie suspended at.

Crappie will suspend at different depths all month long depending on how much sun we have. Two or more days of full sun the crappie will move up and suspend right under the first horizontal branch on the tree. This might only be a couple of feet down over thirty feet of water. These fish are both spooky and undependable. I tend to fish for the crappie that are right where they were all winter long about fifteen to twenty feet down on a river channel bank hiding in a big tree with huge branches to draw heat from them.

I like to use the same tackle and tactics that I use down on Kentucky Lake in the winter. I use a nine-foot rod and my two clients use a ten-foot rod. This makes a straight line in front of my trolling motor which has my transducer for my front depth-finder on the bottom of it.

This way I can see your jig on my Lowance HDS and make sure you are at the right depth. Crappie always feed up but in April their strike zone is pretty small. We tend to downsize our jigs in April to 3/16 or 1/8 rather than 1/4. You don't want to put any movement on your jig so we simply hold them very still and slowly move the trolling motor back and forth. When a crappie wants it here will be no doubt. They open their mouths and pull water through their gills and suck your jig in. This feels like one solid pop on your rod or like being smacked on the back of your hand. I tell my clients when you feel that you have a half second to smack them back before they spit that jig out.

The color of my Midsouth plastic tube or solid body Strike King Shad pole plastic depends on the color of the water. I have been down on Kentucky Lake for five weeks and have been using a lot of black baits. The water is a little dirtier than usual but I think they are hitting the black because they live on bugs all winter and have yet to switch to shad. Same thing will work on Shelbyville.

The tail end of April you might see water temps hit high fifties and this will start the males spawning ritual. This means start looking at six to ten feet of water for any signs of wood. The black males will move up first since the black crappie span earlier than the whites. I like to start using live bait about this timeframe. Male crappie won't tolerate a minnow near their nest.

Shelbyville crappie numbers are very good so we should expect a banner year so get out there and if it is a guide you need then give my guide service a call.