

Crappie Fishing At Winter Pool Just As Good

by Steve Welch

Any Army Corp of Engineer lake that you fish in early spring can be treacherous because of the hidden sand bars, stumps, points you didn't think went that far out into the lake. You just need to always swing way wide on what looks like a flat and don't cut points off and most of the shallow sand bars will have buoys on them, you hope or just get you a guide they know the lake and will show you more in a day then you will learn in a season.

Lake Shelbyville, the lake that I have guided on for now my eleventh season and practically grew up on since my parents always had boats. They draw it down from 599.9 summer pool to 594 winter pool. This winter has been an ordeal as it got up to its second highest level ever in early December. It has taken all winter to bring it down some twenty-three feet, believe me that is a ton of water.

As of this writing they are back to summer pool and should have it back in another week or so. Finally no more current and the fish constantly moving with five inches of water being pulled off their head every twenty-four hours.

Lets talk about fishing the normal pre-spawn bite. The water temperature at Lake Shelbyville will bounce all over from high forties to high fifties with cold fronts and cold spring rains. I like a couple of patterns in April. First for the high forties up to about fifty-five. I like to throw a cork tight to standing trees back in coves. Keep the boat away from suspending fish and you can catch fish about three feet down in any depth you choose on a sunny day this works best, and let us face it full sun is best in April. Several days of it if you can get it.

Once the water temperature gets closer to fifty-five then I start looking at the first drop off from the bank in six to ten foot of water, right on the bottom. Just parallel the bank and keep an eye on your electronics for and wood. From this temperature on up I tip with a minnow or fish a drop-shot rig with a minnow on it. Colder water jigs work better.

If it is Mark Twain Lake you are going to then I especially like fishing it at winter pool. Finally I can see the river channels and I can navigate back into coves without hitting submerged trees. You still need to stay back from flats and watch for buoys. I have done very well over there in April I took third in a big Crappie U.S.A. tourney with over ten pounds of fish for a ten fish tourney.

You can use some of the same water temperature patterns that you use at Shelbyville but when you fish the first ledge at Mark Twain it is only inches from the bank. I like to use small cuts in the rocks where high water will bring in driftwood and strand it there. The fish will get up under it and any little three-inch opening you can put bait into could hold a big pre-spawn fish. This is why at Mark Twain I always bring some twelve-foot rods to reach into the cover better.

I always like to fish one of the rivers but let the fish tell me how far up to go. They don't always go as far up as they do in the fall. Once the water temperature hits fifty-five don't leave out any cover on the flat side of the river channel. You will see bluff sides with shear drop-offs and directly across the river you will see flat sides. Big fish will use the flat sides at times so don't over look any cover with a couple of feet of water on it.

The tackle that I use on either lake are tube jigs in some form of chartreuse and black, red, white or purple. I like the Mid-South tubes and especially I like the umbrella tubes from Southern Pro. I use a sixteenth ounce lead head on them made by Reeves Lure Company. I will rig these up with a slip-bobber rig or a spring-bobber rig both set about three feet deep. I also fish these rigs tight line on my long rods in the nine to twelve foot lengths.

April can throw you a lot of curve balls with cold fronts still lingering, cold rains that make huge drops in water temperature but if you hit it right and try and plan the weather it can be as good as it is in May when the actual spawn is in full swing. A guide can be a big help in these conditions because he just plain fishes it more than your average angler can and has a greater knowledge of the structure to fish when the lake is at any pool level.

For those of you who would like to venture to my new web-site it is called www.lakeshelbyvilleguide.com. I will have an up to date fishing report and many new pictures and a ton of back articles if you want to read them. It isn't quite done yet but it is up and running so just bare with me. Will see you on the water this spring. I am the one in the shiny new Ranger 521VX with the Ranger Cup color scheme or white,red,and very dark red.