

Huge Kentucky Lake Gills

by Steve Welch

I have been going down to Kentucky Lake for twenty years or so and have a ton of great crappie stories and one day look forward to bringing my guide service down to the Paris Landing area and retiring. I can think of no place on this earth that I would rather end my fishing career. Guide a little, enjoy my pension and my loving wife and grand children.

As good as the crappie fishing is. You never hear about the great bluegill fishing until you get down there and hang out with the locals. The bait shops down there gear their summer sales towards bluegill and believe me for good reason.

Crickets are a top seller and wax worms are hard to come by. So if you plan a trip you best bring your own and a ton of them. I can use three big two hundred and fifty-worm boxes in just a five day trip.

The fish start spawning as early as April twenty- seventh or twenty-eighth which is what Garry Mason a prominent guide and close friend of mine once told me. He regularly guides for gills as much as crappie and others have started this trend as well.

Memorial weekend is when I try and go down but the whole month of May is best. You need to closely follow the moon phase. They will spawn on the full moon each month in April, May and June.

Just look in the backs of the bays and on gravel covered banks for the tell presence of a nest. They will make a circle in the gravel and many fish will use this and if you remove one another will take its place and use the same bed.

For the spawn I use a few different tactics. You can just work your way down the bank and fish a Carolina rig with just a couple of small split shots pinched on above a 1/48 ounce Charlie Brewer Charlie Bee tipped with a wax worm. Once you come into contact with a nest stop and fish there will several fish using this nest. Another method is to cast a small cork with either an ice jig or a 1/48-ounce jig under it and the same split shots pinched on above. I use a weighted spring or fixed cork to make it easier to cast. I always go down to four-pound test and always tip this with a wax worm or cricket.

I also slide up to the nest with my long twelve-foot rod and vertical fish on top of the nest. If they are a little deeper try and find the stake beds the crappie just left. For this I fish the same small jigs but I use a small loop knot tied above a drop-shot weight. If you get hung on bottom the drop-shot weight will just pull off. This gives me the ability to get the light jig down to the bottom quickly where the bigger gills are.

I asked Garry what was the size fish one would expect and he told me the lake is full of six to eight ounce around ten inch fish you can barely get your hand around them and the shell crackers could be found as large as twenty-one ounces because he has one mounted at home. I have heard of two-pound fish but never seen one just like this lake has crappie over three and a half pounds and I haven't caught one of them yet, but each year someone does.

This also the same pattern I use if you should wait and go down during the summer. Huge gills are attracted to current and current breaks. Kentucky Lake is always pulling current and what better way to find a break than to fish the bridge piers. Any of the huge bridges hold a gazillion gills in the summer.

I have taken over five hundred gills off just one pier during a five-day trip. My youngest son once tried to count how long he could just keep the bait away from them and seven seconds is all he could muster. Now that is action.

Riprap is another good fish holding structure around the bridges. I take my long rod and vertically fish the rocks until I come into contact with them. I use the same drop-shot pattern as I do for the bridge piers.

Kentucky Lake is full of fish and no limits are put on them, as they are a very renewable resource. So if a good get away is in your plans for early summer or even during the summer just give Garry a call and he can put you on them. (731) 593-5429 or e-mail him at grmason@aeneas.net.

For the Charlie Brewer baits just go to their web-site at www.sliderfishing.com. I am sold on his baits and use them for crappie, walleye, white bass and bluegills.