

Lake Shelbyville, Arguably The Best Crappie Lake In The State

by Steve Welch

There is always two things you can count on in the fall and that is all the trees that surround Lake Shelbyville will turn the most magnificent shades of red and gold and the crappie will move back to the shallows. For those of you that are diehard crappie enthusiasts now is the time to reap the benefits. I preach every winter in my seminars around the state that it is the fall not the spring that is your best crappie fishing. The weather is more stable and that makes the fishing more predictable. From mid September up until the lake freezes over in early January you will find me doing nothing but crappie fishing. The fall is what I live for. Hundred fish days!!!!

I spend a lot of my spring and summer traveling and fishing on the Crappie U.S.A. tour. To other lakes like Mark Twain and Kentucky Lake to name a few but in the fall I would put Shelbyville up against any lake for pure action. As soon as we get through the turn over period about mid month the fishing will pick up considerably. The shad will move to the back of the feeder creeks and large bays and the crappie will follow. If the watercolor is stained enough you can catch fish out of only a few inches of water. This is what I call cardiac fishing. You toss a large two and a half inch tube under a cork up by a stump and if a crappie is home boooooom, that fish will have it faster than you can get your reel back in gear. This is the time of year when you catch yourself a wall hanger. Although it has been awhile since I have seen a fifteen inch fish on this lake I did catch three fourteen inch fish this spring and I have caught fifteen inch fish in the past and that is a solid two pounds.

Why you say is this fall going to be any better than years past. The floods from last year always produce huge fish the following year. The fish get little or no pressure and the shad get off huge spawns. This spring the tournament weights were up in the solid mid eleven-pound range for ten fish and I had a ten fish stringer in late May that went just over thirteen pounds. I expect better than that this fall.

This is also a good time to check out a fishing guide. The creeks are full of stumps and very shallow and you won't find any of the places that I take my clients on any hot spot map. I can get you so far up the Kaskaskia or Okaw River that you can't recognize anything about the lake. But it is the serenity that adds to your enjoyment of fishing this vast reservoir. No cigarette boats or pesky wave runners here. Just a few duck hunters to contend with.

I supply all your tackle needs and all you need to bring is a small cooler with your lunch and something to drink. We use Wally Marshall eight-ten foot rods depending on weather we are tossing a cork or just vertically dipping our bait around cover. I like the shorter one to flip the cork with. I have a small trigger spin reel on it filled with eight-pound test. You want a strong line that will straighten your hook if you get hung up. I use sixteenth ounce lead heads weed less and a large Southern Pro umbrella tube in a variety of colors all having some sort of chartreuse on it somewhere. Early in the fall I will fish live bait but once the water temperature gets into the low fifties you will do better without the minnow.

So if a little cardiac fishing thrown in with some beautiful fall colors and not to forget all the tales you can relate to your fishing buddies once you get back. If that is to your liking then give me a buzz and set something up for the fall season. You won't be disappointed.

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