

Low Water and Clear Conditions

By Steve Welch

Lake Shelbyville has had high water conditions for the last three years running so this year has been a lot different. First of all we had the warmest March in history and I have never seen male crappie in spawn colors in March but I did this year. Our spawn went on for twelve weeks with April cold fronts slowing it down then May had it warming up again and before you knew it the spawn was finally done. It actually wrapped up about mid month and usually it is the very end of the month or first part of June.

Unlike the last three years the spawn got clear water and no huge rains to muddy up the water. The eggs need clear water for the sun to penetrate and not huge three-inch rains. Unfortunately with little rain that meant the feeder creeks wouldn't have enough water for the crappie to go up them and very few were caught this year.

The low, clear water also meant the walleye didn't get as shallow as normal and the best way to catch them was to troll. They did a bunch of suspending out in the basins near the flats and just wouldn't commit to getting up into the stumps on the flats. My walleye season just didn't go as well as I had hoped.

The low, clear water is good for one thing and that is white bass and crappie fishing. The whites like clear water so they can see bait from a long ways off and the edge of flats have been swarmed with hungry white bass. I have been hammering the whites at over a hundred a day for over a month now and we are still getting three limits of crappie before we go after the whites.

The crappies also love clear water so they can see their prey better. This year unlike any other I can remember we are catching plenty of crappie pushing two pounds. Every week all through the spawn I would see about a half dozen fish fourteen-inches or better each week sometimes two that big in a single day and plenty of twelve and thirteen-inch fish.

Now what do we do in July? We chase white bass on the edge of flats early in the morning or we go after crappie on heavy timber using a minnow and slip bobber take your pick or pick both. If we have wind I will look more for white bass because they love to push bait up against the side of a point or flat and bust them to the top and you can flat hammer them and catch two hundred or more in just two or three hours. If it is flat and no wind then we go after crappie on standing trees on channels and down trees in same areas. They suspend down about fourteen-feet in much deeper water and we routinely get our three-man limit each and every day all summer long.

To catch these fish the hi-tech Lowrance HDS electronics that I use to side scan these spots to locate fish before we ever fish these spots. I can then go over these spots with down scan and get an exact depth to set my slip corks at. This system is deadly. Then we just mark the spot to throw your cork and set back and reel them in.

Most wouldn't even think of fishing in July let alone crappie fishing but I am here to tell you that last summer we triple limited or forty-five crappie about every trip for ninety days straight or right on through Labor Day.

I also love to catch whites on ledges by popping my Candy striper off bottom and then let it freefall back to the bottom. The whites will hit this bait a half dozen times before it gets to the bottom. If you like to fish you will love white bass fishing. They fight so hard and are so prolific in Lake Shelbyville that we have no limit and encourage folks to take them out. A good day with me will be close to five hundred fish for three anglers. Your arms will hurt. These are also the trips that I love to get the kids involved and you will have them hooked for life.

If I get a kid on board I always save some time to look for the huge buffalo that set up in deep holes and school by the thousands. We mark off the school with a marker buoy after we find them

with the side scan and then we vertical fish a slab spoon until we hit one and the fight is on. These fish push thirty pounds or more and you should see the look on that kid when that fish surfaces. They quickly want nothing to do with it and give me the pole.

Anyone wanting to go fishing with me I am finally getting caught up so you can get in within a week or two. I have booked solid all spring and as of now July 1st I have already done 100 guide trips.

My on-line store has been a great success and my Candy stripers and Deep Ledge Jigs are huge success stories. I also have my baits in retail locations such as D&M in Sullivan, Chip's Marine at Bo-Woods boat ramp, Spillway Motel at Shelbyville dam and Gregory's Resort located at entrance to Lithia Marina also on Lake Shelbyville.

I also have a new forum called Illinois Fish Talk and folks really love it. We have great anglers to share experiences and have both Lowrance and Humminbird experts to answer most every question you would have. We encourage you to join the cost is free and the knowledge you will gain is priceless.

All these things and more can be accessed by going to LakeShelbyvilleGuide.Com. I also have hundreds of articles I have written to browse through. My schedule of guide trip openings is on the front page of the site and my second boat openings as well.