

March Means Spring is Coming

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My home lake is a massive reservoir capable of having two or more patterns going at the same time. Lake Shelbyville an Army Corp of Engineer flood control lake is really two lakes. The north end has large feeder creeks and shallow mud flats that warm very quickly. The south end has a lot clearer water and is much deeper.

The transformation takes place just south of the Findley Bridge. You just fish differently north of there. Lets look at a typical scenario for March. Like I said Lake Shelbyville is a flood control lake and that means in March the lake has been drawn down to winter pool, which is six-feet less than summer pool.

If I were to fish the north end I would start my day fishing the main river channels on the lake. Concentrating on stumps and brush in as deep of water as I can find. Waiting on the sun to warm the mud flats at the extreme upper end of the lake as well as warm the coves so the fish would suspend around standing timber. Crappie can feel the top layer of water warming and they suspend just under the surface.

I like the surface temperature to be at least 50 degrees for the suspending fish pattern and the shallow mud flat pattern to take place. With the dark bottom on these mud flats the surface temp. will be some ten degrees different than the deeper, clearer water on the south end of the lake.

Now let's say it is fifty-degree surface temp and you have full sun for the rest of the day. I would tie on a jig and peg it under a cork about two-foot deep. I would use a pegged cork over a slip cork because the jig won't ride up the line when you reel it back in. I like to use small jigs this time of year as the fish are used to eating small offerings.

I would go into just the mouth of every cove I could with a bunch of standing timber and cast past every tree and slowly reel your offering up to the tree and stop it at the tree and pop it a couple of times. If a fish is home he will slam it. Stay way back from these trees as the boat will spook them. Cover a ton of water and this works best in the afternoon.

Now at the end of the day I would make a run to the extreme north end of the lake and go as far back in a feeder creek or a huge shallow mud flat looking for big stumps. I would fish this same pegged cork and keep my distance. These fish will be in just a foot or so of water and yes it is still just March. These will be the biggest crappie in the lake. The surface temps just jump so much on a full sun day and believe me these fish know it.

If I were fishing on the south end of the lake, first of all I would use my Navionics mapping on my GPS and look for any bank that had the river channel running right down it. This is where the fish spend their winter. I would fish most every tree that had brush out in the channel or at least fifteen to twenty feet deep. I use my Hummingbird side imaging to scan these trees as I can see if they have small branches and not just broken off with the constant up and down of water levels that is the norm for a flood control lake.

Not only does the south end have more coves to fish the suspending fish pattern it also has tons of down trees on the main lake. Team this up with the fact that when they drop the lake a bunch of the fish are pulled by the current and relocate on the south end. You have much deeper water to fish as well. I usually start my early season trips at least half way down the lake looking for numbers. I have a big Ranger with a 225 on it so I can make big runs and cover water that helps tremendously.

March can truly be some of the best fishing of the year. April brings more rain and wind and you really have to bounce around with several patterns to stay on fish. Don't get me wrong though April can be good too as it gets us that much closer to the spawn in May. I am just saying most would not even consider March unless they have seen this pattern work.