

May Brings Everyone Out to Catch the Tasty Crappie

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Although I have been catching crappie all winter and early spring, most of us still relate crappie fishing to the spawn. In Illinois, that means the entire month of May.

We start out with surface temps in the mid to upper fifties and the males make a big charge to the bank. This makes it down right easy to catch them and why anglers relate to crappie being a spring thing. Once we get the surface temps up into the sixty to sixty-eight ranges the spawn is actually on. The big females move in and we can get our hands on a truly big fish in the two-pound range.

I love getting out my cork poles and catching those big fish shallow. Nothing is better than watching that cork go down. These shallow fish really hit the bait hard and you had better be ready. That cork will go down before you can get your reel in gear.

Lake Shelbyville is an Army Corp of Engineer flood Control Lake and that means the lake will come from 594 feet above sea level up to summer pool or 599.6 feet above sea level. What this does is fill the feeder creeks and all the big fish will move up them and prepare to spawn. We actually get to experience more than one spawn. This lake is so large and so different that we can catch spawning fish up on the north end of the lake. Then have the creeks fill and we can go get spawning females up them. Lastly the south end of the lake is deeper and slower to warm so we can get spawning fish two or three weeks after we started getting them on the north end.

Although I am still a big jig user in May you need to get the live bait out as well. Nothing helps you find an active crappie nest better than a lively minnow. I have won many a tourney following other good teams fishing jigs with a simple minnow under a slip cork on a plain Aberdeen hook.

Water temperature dictates to me when I use more live bait. I believe that once the crappie gets into their spawn they want protein over a jig. So I use live bait once the water temps get above fifty-five and switch back once we get into the seventy-five range. I think live bait in the summer month's get you a lot smaller fish so I switch back to jigs.

I use for the most part Midsouth tubes. I like their toughness and bright chartreuse glow colors. I know they make over a hundred colors but I stick to about five or six. For dirty water I like brown and chartreuse. Then as the water starts to clear I switch to either white and chartreuse or pink and chartreuse. Then once it gets very clear a light blue almost translucent tube or I like pearl white.

Jig weight depends on water depth. I use a sixteenth ounce under a cork or if I am fishing less than six feet. I use an eighth ounce if I am fishing ten to fifteen feet deep and lastly a quarter ounce if I am fishing very deep. The light sixteenth ounce jig will get me more bites as it falls slower, but the heavier jigs allow me to probe a brush pile and feel it come over the branches this gets me more bites as well. So it depends on the structure I am fishing, stumps or brush piles.

Lastly Lake Shelbyville is like no other lake that I fish. The creeks get filled and the fish move up into them and will stay there as long as the food remains and the water doesn't get to clear. I have caught fish in less than three feet of water all the way up to the end of June. Since you hardly see another boat it gives me a month before I have to go out on the main lake and fight the pleasure boat traffic.

I have been guiding more as of late during the week so if you thought you couldn't get a trip with me then you might call back. I am also taking summer white bass trip reservations too.