

## May Fishing Spring Is Here

By Steve Welch

I love May for a couple reasons first one is that finally windy, rainy, cold April is gone one of my least favorite months. Second is Lake Shelbyville the lake I have guided on for now my 20<sup>th</sup> year is an Army Flood Control lake and that means in May they bring it on up to summer pool. This creates all sorts of new fishing holes with all the newly flooded weeds and huge flats with shallow stumps on them.

The crappie have been bouncing back and forth on their spawning ritual for a couple weeks now but in May they get serious about it. So shallow is the word for the whole month on both the crappie and the walleye/sauger.

Lake Shelbyville is so big you can actually split it into three regions for crappie spawning. They start up around the RR bridge area pulling up on the rocks and shallow brush in the same areas on up to about the Wilborn boat ramp. Then the lake starts to rise and this gets the spawn going on up the reservoir into the upper reaches of the lakes feeder creeks. Then lastly the south end which is very deep finally warms up and the spawn gets going down there two or three weeks after it starts on the north end.

As for the walleye/sauger you need a couple of things to happen. This isn't a spawn thing but more of a feeding thing. First we need the lake to come up to summer pool so the stumps on our big flats have at least six-feet of water on them. Second thing is that we need to see at least seventy degree water temps. This gets the shad to start their first of a half dozen spawns and in only a couple of weeks they grow big enough that they move out of the newly flooded willows and onto the flats. Then here come the walleye/sauger and white bass since they are just done spawning up in the Kaskaskia and pulling out back onto the main lake. This starts towards the end of May but it is June that is really your best month.

We got a double stocking of sauger a few years back to see if they would successfully spawn and take off. Well, last year we just hammered them pulling bottom bouncers and spinner rigs. I started a cult with everyone trying this. Our shocking surveys last fall showed we had five times as many walleye/sauger than any other lake they surveyed. This has given us the best walleye/sauger fishing in the state and most likely you would have to travel several hundred miles to find one better.

Let's talk about what you need to get in on the fantastic crappie fishing. First tool is a surface temp gauge. You will get on the lake and see high fifties and fish pull back off shallow spawn spots then about mid-day the magic sixty-two on up to about sixty eight temps hit and the big females will move up. If you are fishing a tourney you need to search out the right water temps for pre-spawn because those fish will weigh more. Second tool you need is your long twelve-foot crappie rod, a slip bobber rod with both a jig under the cork or a plain minnow. Then lastly a spinning rod with a fixed cork and jig under it if you plan on fishing up in the creeks over stump fields.

Then think shallow and fish brush and stumps. I tend to use my minnow rigs this time of the year the most because I know a hungry crappie won't tolerate a minnow near his nest.

For the walleye/sauger you need a stout spinning rod to fish my 1/4oz. Deep Ledge Jig Spinners tipped with a minnow and doing what we call snap jigging or going along on the drops looking for stumps and hopping the jig right by them as you travel about .4mph. Then you also need a line counter reel and a

two-ounce bottom bouncer with a short spinner rig tied to it tipped with either a minnow or a night crawler. In both these situations it pays off to have the set up I have on my big Yar-Craft tiller boat. I have a 36 volt trolling motor so I can pull all day long and never run my batteries down. Then I have four Lowrance HDS units all networked with side imaging and down scan on both the front and back of the boat. Then I also have mapping cards that show all the points and ledges. Then is when the real work starts and that is to go out and get as many stumps as you can at winter pool and put them as waypoints so you can return to them when the water comes up. I currently have about 3000 waypoints on my system for just Lake Shelbyville alone. This is the reason my guide trips for walleye are booked six months in advance, no other guide on the lake has this set up.

Right now I am booked until July but I do get cancellations from time to time so just watch the website for availability. Those that haven't got a trip booked yet don't worry the summer crappie fishing on Lake Shelbyville is by far the best place to go in the state since we are so deep they keep biting all summer.

We limit out every day once the fish get over deep structure on my slip bobber rig and minnow set up. I have a huge bait tank with both oxygen and aeration piped in all over the boat. Lively minnows is the key to catching summer crappie and we get a hundred a day during July through October. So bring out the family and we can go get them in nice weather.