

May Spawning Crappie, Walleye on the Flats

By Steve Welch

My least favorite month is gone and one of my favorite months is here, combo time spawning crappie and shallow walleye.

Lake Shelbyville my home lake and this being my 20th year as a fishing guide is one heck of a lake in May and June. It is an Army Corp flood control lake so that means they draw it down almost six-feet for winter pool and once May 1st hits they then bring it back up to summer pool. This floods the shallow willows and many stumps on flats. Plus the feeder creeks are now full of weeds and nutrients for young crappie to grow.

The water temps are already there for the crappie spawn to be in full swing but with the rising water they move on up the reservoir and make beds up in the creeks and these are the big females and fishing shallow is the pattern. We rig up with 1/8 or 3/32oz. Deep Ledge Jigs and a Midsouth tube and put them under a slip bobber or a fixed bobber. Both work and both have their place. If you are fishing tight brush then the slip bobber gets the nod. If you are fishing stump fields then the fixed cork is your answer since you can slowly reel it past the stumps. We also keep some twelve-foot rods handy just in case it is too windy to throw corks and we sneak up on brush and stumps and tight line a foot or so of line out the end of the rod. In either case all you need is a light jig. Plus we always rig a rod with a slip bobber and plain minnow too.

Once the water temps hit 70 and the crappie spawn is all but done we switch gears and go after the walleye and sauger that have spawned and are in search of the young shad as they have just had their first of several spawns for the spring. They love to lie under a stump on a feeding flat and ambush their prey. We use bottom bouncers and short spinner rigs baited with either a minnow or crawler and target these stumps by trolling by them. We also use 1/4oz. Deep Ledge Jig Spinners and tip them with a minnow and do the same thing. This pattern is good from about May 15th on through early July. Then it gets too hot and the walleye just switch up and feed at night for the rest of the summer.

As for catching these fish first you must do your homework and go out and put GPS waypoints on as many stumps as you can plus the trails it takes to return to your trolling path. I have almost 3000 waypoints on Shelbyville and this plus the way my Yar-Craft is set up with a 36 volt trolling motor and four Lowrance HDS depth finders with both sonar, side imaging and down-scan on front and rear of the boat. I can watch my rear transducer from the front of the boat since all four of my depth finders are networked so I know I am bringing my clients right by those deep stumps. Plus I have the biggest live bait system on any boat with both oxygen and aeration keeping my minnows extremely lively.

Lake Shelbyville got a double stocking of sauger to see if they would take a few years ago and they have flourished and we are now the best walleye/sauger lake in the state with several times the fish per acre over neighboring lakes. My best thus far has been a 26-inch 5.3lb. brute and that is one big sauger. As for walleye you hear of folks catching fish pushing ten-pounds all the time throwing deep cranks for bass.

My PowerPoint presentation this past winter was full of walleye/sauger pics and it was no wonder those guide trips were the first to go and the crappie spawn trips right behind. Presently I am booked solid until July but for me that is a good thing.

Since I am booked solid until then let's talk about summer crappie. July through October we have most likely the best crappie fishing in the state due to how deep we are. We limit out on crappie each and every day once they get into this summer pattern of suspending over deep brush and out on the ends of down trees. Our thermocline concentrates the fish then all you need is plenty of live bait and deep slip bobber rigs. Just think catching a hundred crappie a day in your shirt sleeves and shorts. Those trips are a ball for you and your family so just go to my website and check it for availability.