

## **Pre-Spawn Crappie**

**By Steve Welch**

I have guided anglers to crappie for this my 23rd year and very soon this job will be the longest lasting job I ever had. Along the way you pick up a few tricks and I always like to share them.

I tell listeners at my winter seminars that surface temps in the spring is the single most important tool you can have on your boat. Also learn to read water color another important tool.

In April on Lake Shelbyville you must remember the sun is still primarily in the south hemisphere and that means a north bank with good stained water will warm up ten degrees or so on a given day over a south bank with tall trees shading most of it.

This gets the males in the mood for making beds. They need to see consistent water temps in the 55-60 range. The color on the males will get darker when the spawn gets started.

On Lake Shelbyville the crappie have learned not to go up in a foot of water like they do on a lake with fixed water levels. They tend to spawn in the 4-6ft. range with slightly stained water.

They have learned this due to rising and falling water in April. Lake Shelbyville is an Army Corp flood control lake and April has the lake levels all over the place and you team this up with cold rains that come the first part of the month you can't wait until end of the month when the spawning urge outweighs everything else.

They like big stumps that the root systems have eroded and they can get under them. Plus these stumps draw heat from the sun.

Now how do I approach these spawning areas? First we are a flood control lake and in March the lake is two-feet lower so you can see the top of these stumps. Mark them with your GPS to return at a later date.

Next you need a long twelve-foot rod spooled with six-pound line and one of my 3/32oz. Deep Ledge Jigs and a Midsouth tube. The water is stained so I like a chartreuse color mixed with another. You slide up as slow as you can on the trolling motor and fish vertically all around the stump and each time you get a bite you have a half second to hit him back. Then just lift the long rod it will bend enough to swing him in. I use BnM BGJP rods. They are perfect for this style fishing.

Lake Shelbyville is a very big lake with shallow/stained water on the north end and deep clear water on the south. This makes the spawn go on for several weeks since the clear water warms much slower. It normally starts mid to end of April and runs right on through end of May with your biggest white crappie spawning deeper on the south end very late.

About 68 degrees on surface temps and it is all done and the crappie go out in deep basins to fatten back up on shad. We do very well on them trolling spinner harnesses while we are walleye fishing.

The post-spawn and summer crappie fishing on Lake Shelbyville is very good and I have several openings left for those. Just go to my website at [www.LakeShelbyvilleGuide.com](http://www.LakeShelbyvilleGuide.com) or call at 217-762-7257.