

September Has the Bait on the Move
by Steve Welch

I look forward to September every year. The trees start to turn the most beautiful shades of red and gold. The nights start to cool and September also means Labor Day and the annual retiring of the ski boats and the cigarette boats. You should attend the Labor Day party back in cove 5. You will be amazed on how many big boats are on this lake. You can see about three hundred in this cove on a busy weekend.

September also means lake turnover, then after turnover the bait move to the back of the lakes larger coves and its feeder creeks.

The lakes huge muskie are the first to key in on this, followed by white bass, largemouth and then crappie. Pretty much in that order.

Mid September through mid October is my period to fish for muskie. I love burning buck tails and working suicks on the south end of the lake.

I am used to catching a bunch of fish on every outing and have little patients when it comes to muskie, but Lake Shelbyville gives up some very nice fish in September and October and one can expect to get one or two or even three in a day. So this is my timeframe to work on these big fish. You can get them in just a few inches of water and literally see them blow up on your bait.

I am also guiding for crappie up in the Kaskaskia. This is the first area to turn on and some big fish come from this pattern. The lake has to cool more and I don't really get into good fish until nearly November. In fact I tell my spring clients to book a trip anytime three weeks before and three weeks after Thanksgiving if you really want to see Lake Shelbyville crappie. We usually get our limit in two or three hours and I have seen times where you can get your limit from your first stop. Typically two clients and myself can boat 75-100 on an eight-hour trip.

Here are some helpful hints on locating active fish during the turnover period, which typically happens in mid September. First of all if you can fish current. Fish aren't as affected by the turnover. For me that means Clinton Lake. What you say that is a lake not a river. This lake has a hot water discharge and most of the year it is useless to fish in. But the month of April and late September until it closes October the 10th. You can capitalize on some pretty good white bass action. The ditch is full of bait and the whites follow. This year Clinton's white bass are very respectable and I have seen them pushing three pounds.

I burn gaybaldes and twisters just like I do on Shelbyville for the whites down there. Remember just keep your eye out for bait.

My second little hint is to fish wind, just like I have all summer. Anytime I am on Lake Shelbyville during the summer I fish both deep ledges and windswept points. Burning gayblades, two-jig rigs and slider grubs. Wind pushes the bait up shallow and the fish follow.

My third hint is to fish the upper reaches of Lake Shelbyville. The Kaskaskia and Okaw rivers cool faster than the lake and both have current. The crappie fishing for quality fish starts up there by mid September. Unfortunately they are long runs from the lake and with all the hidden stumps bigger boats will struggle. I get a lot of strange looks from the locals in their johnboats when I go by in my 21 ft. Ranger. I have spent years on this lake and know my way around and with my hydraulic jack plate I can get into some pretty skinny water.

September can lend to some pretty poor fishing trips but hopefully these hints will help you and remember October will be here before you know it and it is back to just crappie fisherman on the lake. My kind of people.

Anyone wanting to book a fall trip I wouldn't wait to long I am back just guiding weekends again. New construction just won't slow down and I am back putting in fifty-hour weeks and have more homes to put heat in than I can count.