

Spawning Crappie, Walleye on the Flats, What to Do

By Steve Welch

May on Lake Shelbyville an Army Corp of Engineer flood control lake means the Corp will change the seasonal rule curve to summer pool and let the lake come up to 599.7 ft. above sea level or usually about four feet from April and six feet from March.

What this does is fill the feeder creeks and the upper end of the lake so we can now get a boat to them. I have won many tournaments up in the creeks and I mean way up in the creeks. You are off the GPS mapping or paper maps you might have. So far up the creeks it is hard to turn my big Ranger around let alone go any faster than idle.

The stumps along the shore and even the freshly flooded smart weeds and willows will hold spawning crappie. This lake is quite unique. If the water in the creeks remains stained the crappie and more importantly the bait will remain up there in shallow water until almost July.

Best thing about fishing way up on this massive reservoir is no crowds and big and I mean big crappie for Illinois and since they are shallow aggressive is the word. Your cork just buries when they want it or the twelve foot noodle rod just doubles making you think is this pole going to snap.

I get this question all the time when I am doing seminars. Do you use live bait and when? My answer to that is when the water temps are from 62-68. That is the temps that the actual spawn takes place. A crappie will tolerate a jig coming by his or her spawning bed but not a minnow they hate them and they are hungry since males have been guarding the nest for a month now.

All spring I have been fielding the question can you handle a third person in your boat? My guide service and my second boat have a specially designed three man seating system designed to get everyone right on the nose so we can hover properly over deep structure. Pulling along side after you mark it with your front depth finder will work but you can't see what you are fishing and we try and hit the highest branches of whatever we are fishing so we need to see the structure.

Once My hits then the seat comes out and the corks go on the rods and we can utilize the twenty-one foot Ranger so a third can come. All summer we fish three for the whites so we are used to having four of us in the boat.

About mid month I have a decision to make stop fishing for spawning crappie or go hit the flats for the lakes now abundant walleye and sauger population. Why not do both? We hit the walleye before the sun comes up to utilize their excellent eyesight and more importantly get you a spot reserved. Everyone knows all the stump fields and they attract boats.

We simply go bass fishing so to speak. We target stumps in four to six feet of water adjacent to deep water and throw blade baits, spinners or jigs and twisters. We throw buoys out on the stumps and then get back and make short casts to the stumps trying different angles to entice the walleye to come out of the root system and inhale your bait. Very similar to flipping for bass and since they also live around these stumps as do muskie you will hook them as well. Last year I had the same muskie on my rod three times and lost him every time. Hooks are just too small on the walleye baits I use.

Last year we had the perfect storm for walleye fishing. We had little rain fall and the lakes flats had good color and team that with the newly added sauger and abundant walleye and everyone was limiting out in no time. I have never seen the walleye fishing this good and the biologist says the numbers are there for this year to top that. I had several four man limits last year in May and June and my best day was 53 total not all past the 14 inch minimum but 53 in a single day in Illinois who does that. Lake Shelbyville has to be the best Walleye Lake in the state as well as the best white bass, arguably the best of the three big reservoirs for crappie as well.

My guide service has grown and grown since I started it 17 years ago so this year we added a second boat to help handle all the anglers anxious to fish this big lake. You can just go to my website at www.LakeShelbyvilleGuide.com and get open dates and just how a guided trip works. The summer white bass trips are filling now so if three to five hundred fish a day is to your liking and maybe get that special kid you know involved in fishing then give me a call or an e-mail.