

Spring Is Finally Here, Fishing is in the Hearts of Many  
by Steve Welch

March can be tough on a fishing guide. I know you have cabin fever and want to get started early. But March still has that winter bite to it. Warm one day and near freezing the next. We really rely on the sun for a good outing.

Once April hits I have a second tool to help in catching more fish. That is a nuclear power plant. We can get a full month of water temp. over Lake Shelbyville by fishing in the warm water section of this lake. You give me sixty plus water temps. and I will put fish in the boat. Crappie however takes a back seat to walleye. That is what I am trying for but I tell my listeners at my winter seminars that you have to catch a hundred white bass just to get to the walleye. Not a bad thing.

The baits that I use are quite simple. I throw a sixteenth ounce jig and a slider grub or a small rattletrap or gay blade.

The fish are shallow so casting is the best way. You can troll along the first drop and that works as well. There are a ton of fish in that basin. Shad Raps, Wally divers are your best baits to troll. They need to dive down about six to eight feet.

Always keep a half-ounce rattletrap rigged in case you see busting hybrids. Not an uncommon site early in the morning. They average six to ten pounds.

By the third week of April we have that section pretty beat up and I am looking to expand. The walleye will stage down by the Dewitt Bridge on their way to the gravel pits. We troll and cast these areas. I have the GPS waypoints for the brush piles down at the gravel pits. We usually catch a little of everything in these two brush piles. Walleye will use them and crappie and even big catfish.

I certainly like going to Clinton Lake. It isn't far from my home and it is where I got my start in the guide business. Weekends however this lake is slammed with pleasure boats once the temps warm. The lake is too narrow and the boat traffic has the waves at a constant rock and roll. This muddies the lake and the fishing slows. During the week is when to hit Clinton and with my new weekday job. I will once again be doing weeknight evening trips for the white bass and hybrid striped bass. Huge walleye live in this lake and I have a couple of tens to my credit as well as the lake record striped bass of twenty-two pounds plus.

I certainly don't count out Lake Shelbyville. It is big enough to always get away from the crowd and it is a much better crappie lake than Clinton is.

April has the fish in transition from deep to mid range. This is also a good time to hit the water down there. I do however throw a twist into it now. I get out my spinning outfits and cast to these suspended fish.

You can target main lake areas that have standing wood and cast and retrieve a sixteenth ounce jig and a Charlie Brewer Slider grub. Try and fish this bait four-foot down in deeper water. The big fish spook so easy that you can't sneak up on them with the long pole.

I do have the long poles with me and if it is a brush pile that I can't cast threw we vertically fish it with the long poles. I have a SouthernPro tube on it, [www.southernpro.com](http://www.southernpro.com). I like the umbrella tubes, they fall slower and have a big profile. I always use some variation of chartreuse.

This is a flood control lake so it is still at winter pool in April and the fish haven't gone up the creeks yet like they will in May and June when we have six more feet of water.

Flood control lakes can confuse some anglers but I tell people to just forget about the first five foot of depth if you want to target spawning crappie and run the creek arms once they start to fill the lake. The second tip will keep you on crappie until deep into June. The smartweeds get a good start, then they flood them and the fish will remain in them as long as there is food available. I have caught fish up in the creeks until Fourth of July weekend.

My third tip is to buy live bait once the temps start to warm. A minnow will out fish a jig when the water temp is in the high fifty to low seventy ranges. I have cashed many a check in tourneys on live bait.

I do however believe once they get into a summer pattern, water temps eighty plus go back to casting a slider. Target drops on the main lake with brush on them. Cast, count down and retrieve.

My guide service is quite busy this year but I still have many good June-September trips for the crappie, walleye, and white bass combos. These trips are a ball and we catch a ton of fish even in the summer heat. The drops are full of fish and with my knowledge of the lake and my GPS and hi-tech electronics they can't hide. So give me a buzz and we will set something up.

Look for me on the water and stop and say hi. I have the twenty-one foot Ranger Cup boat. White with red and dark red almost black stripe and the 225 Mercury hanging off the back.