

Summer Crappie Tons of Action

by Steve Welch

On July 1st I will have done 100 eight hour guide trips for 2014 and have about 130 to go. Most would think I would be burned out but I love summer, the crappie get bunched up and we just hammer them day after day. Most anglers only think you can catch them in the spring when they come to the bank but my answer is do you think they just vanish they have to eat too.

All it takes is some understanding of how bait moves and be able to stay with the bait. The crappie aren't far behind. Once we get into the summer months of July, August, September Lake Shelbyville gets a good southwest wind to both keep us cool and to move the bait from the middle of the big bays over to the windswept banks. These are steep banks with tons of down trees that have branches in the 15-18 foot range. The lake set up a strong thermocline in summer and this puts all the fish in that 15-18 foot range. Bottom depth means nothing you just need those horizontal branches in the magic 15-18 foot range.

Now since we have that light breeze I rig my rods with slip bobber set-ups to drift minnow right through these trees. I use custom eight-foot rods so my bobber stops aren't on the reels. I have my reels spooled with twenty-pound Fireline Crystal so the bobber stop stays in place and then I use a Fluorocarbon leader and a quarter-ounce weight with a slip bobber big enough to hold everything up.

We are blessed to have a lake that is so full of crappie that catching tons of fish isn't a problem. We routinely catch a hundred fish a day or more and anglers young and old love this style of fishing. I have my Yar-Craft walleye boat rigged for this and everyone sets in comfort down in the boat so not up on any deck. This provides safety for anglers that are young or old. I have kids in the boat just about every day during the summer and this makes my job very rewarding just to see those smiles.

During the summer you need live bait and the ability to keep a ton of it very lively. I have two 12-volt air pumps that I ran air lines under the side rails on both sides of the boat and quick change disconnects so you can plug in a minnow tank right where you are setting and with this set-up you have a lot stronger air supply than a d-cell battery. We always carry about fifteen dozen or more minnows all day even in ninety degree heat and have no problems.

Since anyone can watch a bobber and tell if you have a bite I don't have to do anything other than set the proper depth and give instruction as to where the brush is located. Anglers catch their own fish all day long and the look on a young child when they get a bite is priceless.

We also chase white bass and walleye/sauger with bottom bouncer and spinner rigs that we put minnows on. This helps me find those deep schools and since we use a heavy bottom bouncer and eight-foot trolling rods there isn't much line out behind the boat. This allows me to turn around quickly once we find fish. We also use line counter reels to make it easy to return to the exact depth it takes. This is very easy just set in your chair and I will pull you along with my 36-volt trolling motor at about 1.4mph. This is a catch all meat getting system with tons of action and like I said you don't know what you will catch next with it.

Our DNR put in 366,000 fingerlings of both walleye and sauger to insure that Lake Shelbyville remains the best walleye lake in the state. I have never before seen so many 12-14-inch walleye as we have this year. I had three very good weeks in June pulling spinners and caught about 130 over the legal size limit and

every day about thirty shorts. Our biggest was a fat 28-inch fish but we also caught quite a few in the 25-26-inch range.

I still have plenty of summer openings and fall as well. Just go to my website at www.LakeShelbyvilleGuide.Com and scroll down on the front page for availability.