

Summer Family Fun Lake Shelbyville Style

By Steve Welch

Every summer I look forward to all my trips with the kids and their parents. Lake Shelbyville is by far the best summer crappie fishing lake we have in Illinois. Its depth and wind and boat action keep the water oxygenated. It has a strong thermocline that sets up in the summer that concentrates the fish at a certain depth. That depth is typically about 15-18 feet. All you then need to know is where a lot of brush or tree tops that are in those depths. Bottom depth means nothing since these fish suspend.

I rig all the rods with twenty-pound Fireline Crystal braided line then a quarter-ounce weight barrel swivel and a foot of fifteen-pound leader with a small light-wire number four Aberdeen hook and a slip bobber big enough to hold everything up. Pretty heavy rig for crappie fishing is what I hear all the time. Not worried about the crappie but more worried about all the snags we will get over the course of a day. With this rig you just straighten the hook once snagged.

Kids, young and old, love this set up and it is very effective at catching those deep summer crappie. Live bait is what it is all about during the summer months. So on my Yar-Craft walleye boat I have an on-board air system that is run throughout the boat. You can then just plug your minnow tank in anywhere you want and you will have very good air all day long. No more d-cell batteries.

My Yar-Craft is set up for comfort and I have seating set up the length of the boat with your own minnow tank right next to you and we simply mark out the deep brush and pull the boat alongside and all you have to do is cast your minnow set-up close to the buoy. All while comfortably setting in your seat down in the safety of a deep boat not up on a deck like in a bass boat.

We routinely catch close to a hundred crappie every day so all anglers, young and old, love the action. Plus you can't beat those tasty crappie and few anglers would believe how good the fishing is right on through the summer months.

All we need is a slight breeze both to keep us cool and to push the bait over to the deep structure on the wind swept bank. Most days we get a nice southwest breeze and then about noon we get boat traffic to keep the water stirred up for oxygenation. I have set out there in mid ninety degree heat and you never feel it due to the breeze.

I have my twelve-foot crappie rod rigged with light line and one of my Brush bugs during the summer and I swim it back and forth over the brush. I stick to clear water shad imitating colors and this works as well as the minnow rigs.

We also pull bottom bouncer and spinner rigs during the summer in search of deep white bass and walleye/sauger and this really gets some nice fish. I use a heavy ounce and a half bottom bouncer so we can keep it close to the boat and turn right around once we find fish. We use line counter reels to make it easy and all you have to do is set in your chair and reel in the fish.

Lake Shelbyville has really turned into the best walleye/sauger lake in the state. My best week in June of this year boated ninety-three legal sized fish and caught close to twice that many. We had six fish over 25-inches and a big 28-inch fish as well but most of the fish were 16-20-inch fish. Then like all water

control lakes the water went up and the bite slowed so I simply switched back to crappie. Our DNR put in close to 366,000 walleye/sauger 2 ¼ inch fingerlings again this year to insure our fantastic fishery. I have Chicago area clients in the boat all the time that can't believe that they went to Wisconsin for years not knowing how good the fishing is down here.

I have plenty of openings for both summer crappie/white bass and fall crappie trips so just go to my website at [WWW. LakeShelbyvilleGuide.Com](http://WWW.LakeShelbyvilleGuide.Com) and check it for availability.