

Summer Thermocline Crappie

By Steve Welch

About mid- July once the water temps get into the eighties a thermocline starts to form and on Lake Shelbyville it is usually at about 15-18 feet slightly deeper in deeper water.

This along with an algae bloom along about the same time turns Lake Shelbyville into the very best crappie lake in the state bar none. Once the algae grows with the warm sunny days in July it gets heavy and sinks down to the thermocline where it is held up. The baitfish follow and so does the crappie, large mouth and just about anything that feeds on the gizzard shad in the lake.

Now the trick to catching these crappie is learn to follow wind patterns. Baitfish just roam out in the middle of the deep basins on the south end of the lake then a predominant southwest breeze pushes them over to the east banks and the boat traffic moves them from the center as well.

You now need a home for them to ambush the bait from. Any tree or brush pile that the top branches reach up into the thermocline will do. Bottom depth means nothing you need the top to be in the fifteen to seventeen foot range.

Now you need to learn how to fish the drift as I call it. I start by throwing a marker buoy right on top the brush and then move the boat off to the side. We then throw our specially made slip bobber rig slightly upwind and then watch it drift right over the top of the brush. If done properly you will see three or four corks all go down at once. Truly for a fishing guide a thing of beauty.

I use a specially made rod that is eight-foot in length so I can put the bobber stop just off the spool and do an underhand flip about twenty feet or so just upwind of the brush. On the reel I have fourteen-pound Fireline Crystal braided line with a quarter-ounce weight a bead to protect the knot. Then a barrel swivel and a leader made from Seagar Fluorocarbon line that is fifteen-pound test. A number two Tru-Turn hook and lastly a slip bobber big enough to hold everything up. The reason for the heavy set up is that you snag brush all day long but with the light wire hook you just bend it straight put on a another minnow and go again.

Folks are always skeptical about catching crappie any other time than the spring but come away in amazement. We get our three or four person limit or forty-five or sixty each and every day all through late July all of August and most of September fishing this pattern. Plus we throw back as many as we keep so the action is really good.

Shelbyville is so good in the summer because of its depth the lake is nearly sixty-feet deep and the width allows a good breeze to not only push the bait but keep you from even feeling warm.

I have plenty of openings for this summertime fun so just go to my website and look at the front page for open dates and give me a call. While you are there look at my open dates for the fall Kentucky Lake trips.

I guide down there now about two months a year and the crappie are huge. This lake has enough current in it that no thermocline ever forms so we can catch the crappie all season long. By using some

of the same patterns I use on Shelbyville. Channel bends on drops. We catch huge crappie pushing or exceeding two-pounds.