

## The Benefits of Fishing A Flood Control Lake

by Steve Welch

My home lake is located in south central Illinois just west of Mattoon. Lake Shelbyville was first flooded in the late seventies and it has seen it's up and down years. I can remember when the crappie limit was twenty-five per person and then we had those drought years and the fishing really suffered. Then came the floods from the Mississippi. That year the lake remained up in the parking lots all summer and then came the year that Carlyle had problems with its dam and Shelbyville had to stay up at flood stage. Then there was the year before last and I believe it reached an all time high at 618ft. Above sea level. That is eighteen feet above summer pool. We catch fish out of the parking lots, park benches, gravel roads and even bean fields that surround the lake.

The benefits far outweigh the negatives but you must remain versatile. Early on when the lake has been drawn down for winter pool I stay out on the lake and fish the many expansive flats right on the backside of them where they drop sharply into deep water. Or I might fish the first deep water the fish can go to if they come out of the river and head back towards the lake. But once the lake has gotten to summer pool I spend the whole month of June above the lake in the two major feeder rivers. The Kaskaskia and the West Okaw. No annoying ski boats only Crappie and I mean big Crappie. After the spawn the lake will rise some six feet allowing me to get my big Ranger up into the skinniest water you can imagine. The pattern is simple just find wood along the shore or fish the willows or smartweeds. All of these hold fish.

This past weekend I had a ten fish stringer that weighed over eleven pounds with a fourteen-inch fish for a kicker. That may sound big to you but I have been in tournaments where that wouldn't win.

The way we fish for these is to stay back and cast a cork and a weed less jig. Color doesn't seem to be that important mostly because these fish are only in a couple of foot of water and will just nail anything that comes in front of them but I do stick to mostly chartreuse. I also step up to ten pound test don't want any break offs. Last year we had a nine pound Bass blow up on this rig and believe me a nine foot Crappie pole can fight a big fish if your drag is set right but this time it wasn't and my ol buddy Mo has yet another story to tell about the one that got away. We did get a very close look at the fish and I will testify in his behalf that it was probably a new lake record.

June is also the best month for Walleye so I am torn between the two. What to do so I usually opt for both Crappies at daylight until ten- thirty or so then hit the Walleye after the wind picks up a little. The shallow flats that we catch them on need wind to disguise their presence. We fish for these fish like this. I have taken the time to put about forty or so stumps on my GPS on these flats so I throw out a half dozen buoys if no other boats are in the area marking these stumps and then I stat back about twenty feet and toss a weed less jig and a small twister tipped with about a third of a night crawler. Let it settle to the bottom and then reel through the roots of the stumps. Walleye will hold in them and so will Bass, White Bass, Drum and Catfish so you never know what you will get.

This pattern will carry on throughout the summer, on the Walleye that is and I truly love to catch them. So if you want to see what a central Illinois lake has to offer then give my guide service a call and lets do a combo trip.