

Warm Spring Could Trigger Walleye Bite

by Steve Welch

Each year it is getting better at Lake Shelbyville for walleye. The recent stocking of sauger has really helped because they actually look like they are spawning. The rearing ponds allowing fingerlings to be put in the lake instead of fry has also really helped as well.

What this and many other factors have done is give us on Lake Shelbyville the best walleye lake in the state. If we get normal water levels this year and the huge flats on the north end get that magic six-feet of depth around all the stumps then look out. Two years ago all you had to do is have an anchor, a crappie jig and an inch of night crawler and you would have your limit of walleye in less than an hour. Last year we had nine feet of water to deal with over summer pool. Instead of tossing jigs at the many stumps we pulled bottom bouncers and spinners around those same stumps. The results were about the same and the fish were bigger. I even had my best guide trip ever last year when we caught 31 over the fourteen-inch minimum and we had four over five pounds and a big eight-pound kicker.

But since it is still May and the crappies haven't quite finished spawning we are bouncing back and forth and it is possible to limit on both species. The lake rises to summer pool in May and this brings in a whole new batch of crappie to spawn and the feeder creeks will fill and every year it is always the big fish that come into spawn late. I love this time of the year, shallow crappie and big ones as well. We get my big Ranger as far up the feeder creeks as water will allow. I have been up so far it is hard just to turn around.

The tackle needed for both the walleye and the crappie is quite simple. For the walleye I like to use a Big Dude or an inline spinner like the Blue Fox Vibrex or my Candystriper. I used this bait last year to boat that huge bag of fish. We throw all these baits on a regular spinning gear and twenty-pound Power Pro Slick. I like the braid because you can load up the rod and pop most of your lures free from cover and this way you don't pull up on the shallow stumps and spook the fish.

For the crappie we use long twelve-foot rods to get shallow and not spook the crappie. We tight line a jig or use a slip bobber and jig or just a plain minnow. The long rods really help in getting those fish up and out of brush. My Deep Ledge Jigs really work well now that we are making the lighter 3/32oz and 1/8oz. Plastic choices depends on water color but since we are looking for very shallow fish the water will be very stained to almost dirty and that means some sort of chartreuse on your plastic choices. We like to use Midsouth tubes because they hold up and are larger than most.

I still have many good trips left and the summer white bass and crappie fishing will be very good. You can go to my website at www.LakeShelbyvilleGuide.Com and check for openings and while you are there feel free to go to my new fishing forum called Illinois Fish Talk and join up. It is growing fast and has had great reviews thus far.