

White Bass, a Guide's Summer Savior

© Steve Welch

Most fish become lethargic in the heat, not the hard fighting white bass. They are constant eating machines always ready to devour what ever crosses their path. They are so prolific on the lake that I guide on that there is no limit, size or creel. If you don't keep their numbers in check they just plain take over.

This is a good thing for a fishing guide. Clients love the constant action and on ultra light reels they really put up a good fight. We actually have hundred fish mornings quite often.

I am most known as a crappie guide and these fish are so radically different to pursue that I like the challenge. We start fishing for them in mid June, which gives a good break away from the crappie as their spawn is over and they become very difficult to catch.

In June and early July wind is the key to catching these fish. They push baitfish up onto massive flats right up on the shore. The windier the better. We cast two-jig rigs or two quarter-ounce jigs tied a foot above the other. We put a twister tail on one and a shad bodied bait on the other. They mimic baitfish, as does the small chrome colored Gay blades. They are a small metal bait that also resembles baitfish. Both of these rigs I can cast a country mile on four or six pound mono. Searching the flat quickly to find schools of whites is a must. Most of you have heard of busts or periods of time when a feeding school of whites are just devouring the baitfish right on the surface. This can go on for minutes or hours and you must move with them. If wind isn't present then you just drop back a little deeper to where you caught them yesterday. Some stragglers will still be there. This is another reason that boat traffic can help. I have caught fish in the mud line they create coming into and out of marinas.

Once we get into mid July this is when I really like to white bass fish. The surface temps have risen so high that the lake gets a thermo cline set up and the bait drops off into deeper water. This is the timeframe that you can just set in one spot for nearly two months and catch and catch and just stay with that same school of fish. I have harvested four or five thousand fish from one school and never put a dent in it.

This is also the timeframe that the six thousand dollars I spent on electronics really helps. I can run parallel to a river channel in the middle of the lake and spot the huge school of bait with my Humminbird side imaging. Then get over them with one of my three Lowrance units.

The tackle we use to catch these deeper fish is very simple. I set the clients up on a drop shot rig or a half-ounce weight on bottom and a simple small loop knot with a live bait hook tied a foot or so above it. This allows them to cast about thirty feet from the boat and let it fall to bottom then just pop it off bottom and reel it back slowly. If I am really on top of the school the bait never gets to the bottom. This is the best kid-friendly or inexperienced angler rig ever. You can't fish it wrong.

The rig I use doesn't catch as many but it gets some of the bigger fish and it really is my search bait if the school would happen to move on us. I use a bait caster with twenty-pound mono and I tie on a seven-eighths ounce Bomber Slab Spoon in either white or chrome and blue. I put this on a barrel swivel to eliminate line twist. The next part is the real trick. I tie on a dressed treble hook about a foot or so above the spoon. The treble is dressed with white buck tail. Nothing else I have found is tough enough to handle a hundred fish day. The whites think this is a wounded baitfish following to the bottom, as that is how you fish it. Pop it off bottom radically and then let it fall back to bottom.

The by-product of this spoon rig is all the other species you catch as well. Huge blue and channel catfish lie beneath the feeding whites as does huge and I mean huge buffalo. I can catch a buffalo on this rig at will no matter how hot it is, no matter if there isn't a breath of wind. Just find the bait and you will find a buffalo. They are intrigued by the dressed treble. You would have never thought you could catch a thirty-pound fish on just a little piece of buck tail on a treble hook but believe me it works. I have had many guide trips in which we gave up on the whites and switched to the buffies as we call them. I have had many days in which we got over two hundred pounds of buffalo.

This has caught on so well amongst my clients that my buddies are constantly giving me a hard time for making money catching a so-called trash fish. Hey anyone likes getting their paws into something that fights so hard you think they will pull you overboard. Buffies can down right fight. I have had them all the way up to forty-two pounds. Kids love this as does seasoned anglers. I have had kids in the boat that have caught fish within six-inches of their height. They will never forget a fish like that and go on for months about it.

As most of you know I have been doing how to fishing DVD's on crappie and everyone anxiously is awaiting my white bass slash buffalo video. We will get it done this year for sure as I have had many requests for it already.

So if getting a kid hooked on fishing is your quest or you just want to hang into one of these huge buffies then give me a call and we will schedule you a trip you will never forget.