

White Bass, A Guides Savior For The Hot Summer Months
by Steve Welch

Well the weather is down right hot and the crappie have all but disappeared. The walleye have retreated to places unknown to me. What is left for a guide to do? Ah the mighty white bass.

In July on Lake Shelbyville I actually welcome boat traffic and other white bass fisherman. The boat traffic gets the fish off the flats and on the drop offs. The congregation of other white bass fisherman just helps get the school worked up into a feeding frenzy. Last summer I would start my guide trips working some shallow flats until about ten-thirty then switch to the fifteen to twenty-five foot drops just adjacent to the flats. All the big fish would be deep by mid July.

I actually worked the same school of fish for three months and never put a dent in it. I had numerous trips with over a hundred good-sized white bass and many with over two hundred.

I fish them a couple of different ways. First and foremost you have to be able to interpret on your locator what to look for. I will throw a quarter ounce jig and a Charlie Brewer Slider grub in either white and chartreuse or chartreuse and black. I sometimes tip it with a minnow. I put the boat in deep water and throw the jig up on the top of the drop. Let it go to the bottom and then just pump it back to the boat. This will get you a multitude of fish including crappie, bass, and of course whites. I am constantly looking on depth finder for a solid bar holding in the twenty-foot range or about six feet off bottom. This is the mother load. When I find this I fish the jig straight under the boat and fish it like a jigging spoon. I radically jig it up off bottom about six feet and the whites will hit it about five or six times before it hits bottom. This is a ball and on light spinning outfits it is really a ball.

The second way I fish them is with heavier tackle. I use a bait caster spooled with seventeen pound test. I put an ounce jigging spoon on bottom and tie a jig about a foot above it. I can jig the spoon and the fish hit the jig or I get a double. But with this rig it allows me to cast it very far and thus it helps me to relocate the school.

Now lets talk more about location. White bass are creatures that have to be close to their food. To find the food you can watch the bird activity in the morning before the pleasure boats get out. Then just go to the deepest drop adjacent to the area that you saw the baitfish activity. They will pick a depth to suspend at on the drop and remain at that same depth on out into deep water. Thus the bar on your depth finder.

Since I mainly fish the north end of the lake I like areas like point six flat or point five flat or the island near the railroad bridge or the island near the coal shaft bridge. I like to stay up on the north end because the really big boats tend to stay down at the south end and all I have to contend with is the ski boats. Those thirty-foot plus cigarette boats can put out a huge wake, which makes it hard to fish.

Bonus fish that is what you also get fishing this pattern. I have caught numerous good-sized largemouth bass up to about seven pounds. I have caught a lot of good walleye doing this. They seem to follow the whites all summer. I have caught huge and I mean huge carp doing this. Over twenty pounds. I have caught catfish over twenty pounds as well.

Sure white bass isn't quite as good a table fare as crappie but you have no limit and if you take out the red meat you can get a cooler full. This is also a great time to bring a kid. I can teach them to vertically jig in just a few minutes and the fight is on. These fish pound for pound are as good a fighter as they come.

So summer doesn't have to mean put the fishing boat away. I have a ball catching the whites, enjoying the warm sun, and the view in cove five isn't bad either.

On a quick note I have made it to the Crappie U.S.A. classic in September with my second place finish in the region three regional. It was fun to fish against teams from as far away as Pennsylvania and some of the top teams in the country. I was this close to winning it but there is always next year. So wish me luck at Patoka. See ya on the water!!!