

April Is Here - What To Do

by Steve Welch

For several years now I always crappie fish at Shelbyville in late February on through March. I like the ice-out bite and what the sun does to the early bite. It can be very good.

April however can bring very cold rain and drastic cold fronts as well. Answer to that is fish a hot water lake. Only problem is the crappie don't cooperate for me at Clinton. I once loved to fish for crappie there but my opinion is that over the years it has gone down due to many factors. Erosion on main lake banks is a big problem there for crappie that once spawned on the shore. The best trees are silted in. That is one of the problems but more exist.

Anyway I am talking about the hot water section of the lake. The coves have plenty of cover they just have the same water temps that Shelbyville has (cold).

Here is what I do to put fish in the boat. I switch over to white bass slash walleye trips. Blade bait worked on points and at the discharge can flat out be a ball. We catch a smorgasbord of fish on those blade baits including catfish, walleye, white bass, crappie, bass, drum you name it.

This year however I am sticking to my strengths and staying on the crappie at Shelbyville. Every other year my April trips at Shelbyville had plenty of numbers of crappie but at the end of the day we would have but fifteen to twenty keepers over ten-inches. Cold fronts and deep reluctant fish and the truly big fish haven't moved shallow yet, some days we really hammer them it is just easier in May. This year though they are changing the limits and allowing each angler to keep five under ten-inches and ten over ten-inches. Now the bags of fish look pretty good at the end of the day.

Let's talk about strategy for April. Lake Shelbyville is an Army Corp of Engineer Lake and it should be at winter pool but as of this writing it is far from that. You have to be ready to fish several different ways.

I start my days probing ledges in the deepest water I can find on the north end. I am waiting on the sun to warm up my other spots. I use a quarter-ounce Big head jig and a Midsouth tube in a variety of colors depending on water color. Clear to slightly stained I use pearl colors, stained chartreuse. I don't fish dirty water, as I know somewhere I can find stained.

Once the sun gets her going. I like about 48 to 55 degrees on the surface for this pattern. We toss a cork at standing wood in deep coves and river channel ledges. We also suspend a cork over cover. They are very spooky and you can't get a boat close to them. The sun will get the fish to suspend as they feel the slight rise in water temps. I can fish a cork set at two-feet in twenty-foot of water and throw it at standing timber.

My next pattern that happens later in the month is casting sliders. We use Charlie Brewer sliders on sixteenth ounce jigs and try and work the same water column four to six foot over deeper water. The males have moved up into the ten-foot range and will chase down anything. I watch angler's tight lining over structure during this time frame and spook the fish and I just tear them up by casting and retrieving. It doesn't work until water is over fifty-five on late April. The fish are to lethargic to chase a fast moving bait.

That should get you through pre-spawn. Will talk about spawn next month. Good luck out there.