

## **Another Summer of Red Hot Fishing**

by Steve Welch

I guide on one of Illinois largest and most bountiful lakes. Lake Shelbyville is an Army Corp of Engineer Lake that spans at least twenty miles long with many coves and winding shoreline. It is much different than the other two large impoundments. One I can hide from the wind and two we have many deep channel banks with tons of down trees to probe.

I tend to leave the crappie alone most of the summer but not this year. I spent a ton of time searching the lake right after the ice came off looking for the elusive trees nobody else can find. I have a side-imaging unit and I can probe out to the side of my boat as well as down imaging so if I see a standing tree in deep water it looks like a standing tree. This precise pattern carried me through the early season and I know that once the spawn is done and the fish get back to deep water these same trees will be their homes.

With down imaging you can see the bait in the trees and the crappie suspended in the branches. This gives me a starting spot as to how deep to fish. I can then switch over to regular sonar and fine tune it to see my jig. I can lower it right to a fish and catch this fish, pretty cool. I have transformed my boat to accommodate three anglers in nice seats all up on the nose of the boat. I have shortened the rods so I can get all three in the cone of my down sonar and watch and make sure everyone is in the strike zone. Everyone that came with me in the early spring loved this set up.

With the last two years of high water and the recent change in crappie limits Shelbyville is alive and prospering. It was like Mother Nature and Mike Mounce our Fisheries Biologist was communicating. It isn't just the crappie that has benefited. The white bass and walleye fishing are the best I have ever seen.

White Bass is a guide's savoir during the hot months. Shelbyville has no limit and the fish are so plentiful that anglers are recommended to get as many out of there as they can. We usually clean over a hundred a day and the fight on a light action rod is incredible. But it is the size that gets me excited for this year. I have been catching them all season and I have seen many two-pound fish and last summer we saw several three-pound fish. Believe me a twenty-inch white bass is a big fish.

It is the pure action that brings out the anglers in the summer heat and I have many regulars that bring children. They are out of school and what better thing to do is to introduce them to a species of fish that bite often and fight hard.

Another specie that I play around with in the summer heat is our huge buffalo. I can take a slab spoon and concentrate on the fish under the huge schools of whites. Anglers love this. It is like hooking onto a bus. These fish range from twenty to thirty pounds and I can get them to hit my spoon then I give the rod to a kid and let them fight this beast to the boat. We can thirty or more on an average day and everyone just loves it. I have glorified a trash fish but really we just catch them and turn them back for another day. I take a scale and place it in a small zip lock bag so the child can show his or her teacher. These scales are as big as a half-dollar.

While most guides lay down their rods for the summer heat I crank mine up. Partially because Lake Shelbyville is such a good lake but mostly it is the kids and their enthusiasm. So get ready Drew and Adam and the many other kids that come every year. It's going to be a good summer.