

Closest Spot We Have To Big Crappie

By Steve Welch

Here in central Illinois I was pondering on where can I target big crappie and not have to have a drive day on my vacation. I can get to Paris Landing on the south end of Kentucky Lake in five hours from my house or three hundred miles.

I know I can catch slightly bigger fish down in Mississippi but Grenada is at least an eight hour drive and that means having to add a day each way on my vacation. I can go to Paris Landing twice for the same money as going to Grenada.

That isn't my only reason for choosing Paris Landing over Grenada. With the clearer water and tons of brush placed by many, many guides. I just catch more fish and since I am a fishing guide that relies on putting lots of fish in the boat. I have become accustomed to getting a lot of bites and working my tail off for half as many fish just to get the chance for one or two bigger fish doesn't appeal to me. Like I said I like action and tons of it.

I have had a ten year plus love hate relationship with Paris Landing. I have been going down to Kentucky Lake much longer. It took me many years to settle in. I love the fact that you can catch so many fish over a pound and half. I have had days of getting my entire limit from one spot and all the fish were thirteen-inches plus. I even had one such day in the Crappie U.S.A. classic a couple of years ago. Thirty plus thirteen-inch fish and had to throw all of them back because the fish in my live well were bigger. In those tourney's you weigh in your best seven fish and all mine were fourteen-inch plus. Who would have thought complaining about thirteen-inch fish. I hate the wind, as does everyone. You have to fish way out in the middle of the lake when I go down there and that is the winter months, December through March. The Big Sandy winds around like a snake and you just fish a channel ledge and target around eighteen to twenty-five feet or sometimes deeper.

Since you are more than a mile from any shoreline the wind can ruin your day. You need light winds to hover over these deep brush piles. This is most likely why Paris Landing will always be a vacation spot for me. Lake Shelbyville will spoil a fishing guide when it comes to hiding from the wind. I need to go out every day and I can do that on Shelbyville even in forty mile per hour winds. It has extremely high banks to hide under.

I have become a very good deep-water fisherman because of my love affair with Paris Landing. I have learned to adapt and take what I learned home with me to Shelbyville. My boat is set up to fish deep with today's best electronics and side imaging and down scan and of course GPS. This year I went one step further and custom made a seating system to allow three anglers to set right up front so we can all watch my big Lowrance HDS 10 and keep an eye on our jigs.

With side-imaging I can target any brush out to the side of the boat and then with my GPS I can go right to it and then with my down scan I can see each individual branch and more importantly I can see the fish within the branches. Fish just can't hide from my big Ranger.

Like I said I have taken what I learned down on Kentucky Lake and used it on Shelbyville. I used to hate fishing the south end of this big reservoir and now I love it. My electronics show me down trees on deep channels and more importantly I can see high branches and they look like branches. Before I would have thought they were just suspended baitfish. These branches hold crappie all winter and early spring. Anglers pull up to me all the time and ask me if I need any help since they know I am out in forty feet of water. Little do they know that I am fishing those suspended branches. Those fish are only targeted by my clients and me. The north end has many anglers competing for the same brush piles that everyone knows and the deep fish on the south end are all left alone. Their electronics just don't show them what I can see.

Another good thing about Paris Landing all winter long is that they get cold spells but they don't

last. I can leave Illinois in temps of below twenty and down there it might be fifty. I always have my eye on the weather down there and if we get a light wind forecast for three days I am out the door. I need winds topping out less than ten miles per hour. Anything more than that and the waves are just too strong to hover over these deep fish.

As most of you know I went full time guiding in 2010 and did very well. I did 190 trips in nine months and in 2011 I am going to Paris Landing and guiding in late February and staying on through March if I can get the interest. I need to string together as many trips as I can since driving 300 miles for a guide trip isn't feasible.

All you need to do if you are interested in getting on the list is give me an e-mail or phone call and I will compile as many as I can get then just meet you at the Fishtale Lodge where I will be staying. It should be a bunch of fun and you give me a few weeks down there I will get a three-pound fish. I know they exist.

My website is www.LakeShelbyvilleGuide.Com and my cell and home numbers are 217-840-1221 cell and 217-762-7257 home.