

Dog Days of August, Go Deep

By Steve Welch

Once we get past mid month in July the water temps are hovering in that mid eighty range and the water has set up a thermo cline. Which is the depth in the water that is both coolest and most oxygen fortified. On Shelbyville this depth is usually about 16-20 feet.

All species of fish now inhabit those depths. If I were to crappie fish I would target trees on the main lake that have fallen off deep river channel banks and extend into depths of 16-20 feet or deeper. My Humminbird side-imaging unit helps me find these type trees.

If I were to white bass fish I would target shear drop-offs on big flats on river channel bends. My Navionics high definition-mapping chip on my GPS helps me find these spots. My depth finders help me find bait. Once that is done you will locate white bass.

The best thing about August is that both of these species aren't going anywhere. Once found you can use this method to fish for the whole month of August and half of September. I have set on one school of white bass and harvested over six thousand fish and never had to move.

If I was to crappie fish I would target trees both standing and down trees on the main lake. I like the main lake better since it gets wind and thus better oxygen. My Humminbird is great for seeing which trees have small branches on them. These trees will hold crappie. This lets me skip several root balls on the bank that doesn't have small branches.

My tackle for white bass fishing consists of a spinning rod spooled with ten-pound mono and a half-ounce sandblaster made by Strike King. This bait is a tail spinner similar to the little george. I simply cast it out on top of a ledge that I have marked out with buoys. I place my boat out off the ledge in deep water. I then cast the sandblaster only about thirty feet up on the top of the ledge. I let it go to the bottom and then I simply pop my wrist and snap the bait off bottom about three feet. Then as it falls back the small blade on the back of the bait spins and the whites hit it thinking it is a wounded baitfish. You don't really have to reel much since the bait is falling down the ledge. Once you come into contact with a white bass most likely you will get more so I stop running the ledge and attempt to get the school fired up. I think this is why my boat has more success than others close by because we have several rods casting into a small area and with three baits going you can get the school fired up and hold them there. I also use a bait caster with a Bomber slab spoon on bottom and a dressed treble tied on a short loop knot a foot above the spoon. Now I am catching two at a time.

It is also the big spoon that gets the attention of any larger species of fish that roam under these white bass. Huge buffalo and channel catfish will nail the spoon and it is August that we get as many as twenty a day of these big monsters. The buffalo range from fifteen pounds up to forty pounds and can really test an angler's skill. The channel catfish with their rolling and twisting and huge runs are even harder to land. They run from fifteen to twenty-five pounds.

My tackle for the crappie is simply my custom made eight-foot rod. I have a nine-weight fly rod blank made into a crappie rod with normal eyelets. This is a much stiffer rod than you can purchase. I like a stiff rod to pop my jigs free from deep cover.

I use my special made Deep Ledge jigs available through my website. They consist of a quarter-ounce jig with a small number four hook and the tube keeper flip-flopped to the other side to allow for a smaller hook. With the heavier jig you can feel those branches in deep cover. I try and find them and simply roll the jig over them and boom the crappie will nail it.

I also use braided line on my crappie rods. I use Fireline Crystal 8/3. It is supposed to be the only braid that is invisible under water. I know I can see it better than other braids and it is plenty strong. I use this no stretch braid, the last piece of the puzzle to free my jigs from deep cover.

With the stout rod and the small hooked heavy jig and the braid you can simply snap your rod from a slightly slack line and the jig pops free from most cover. I can make a jig last a week.

Since it is still summer I will tip my jigs with a small shiner or tuffy minnow. Never to large since they won't ride on a jig properly. I also believe whole heartedly in my bait pump. Also available on my website. I can place several Crappie Nibbles in the pump and extrude them into the Midsouth tubes that I use. I really like the new smoke glow tube in the clear water and I extrude Crappie Nibbles into it and you can see through the tube, so if you use other colors of nibbles you can change color of tube.

So for those that think August is dead and fishing is slow. I simply tell them I got the fish where I want them, deep and schooled up. So fear not and get out there and start cashing in on them. Or you can call my phone at 217-762-7257 or 217-840-1221 or simply visit me at www.LakeShelbyvilleGuide.com.