

Fall Fishing Is A Period Of Transition

by Steve Welch

The days are getting shorter and the nights a little cooler. This soon will cause the water to turnover and thus stratify the oxygen and eventually move the bait then the fish back to the shallows.

Turnover happens when the water temperature is about sixty-two or so. You can see the water take on a green algae look to it and see chunks of stuff float to the surface.

The bait will move to the backs of coves and travel up the feeder creeks and soon the predators will follow. I especially like this pattern. If you fish this time of the year you will catch anything. The whites really key in on this as do the muskies and walleyes. The crappie will wait until it is a little cooler when the water temps reach the fifty range or later in October and early November.

Lets talk about some patterns to help you catch fish during this tough turnover period. I guide on two lakes in central Illinois, Clinton Lake and Lake Shelbyville. I don't fish Clinton as much as I used to but I still use the hot water discharge when it is to my advantage. A good pattern to get you through the turnover is current. Fish are always active in current and oxygen levels are more consistent. Who cares if the water temperature in September might border a hundred at the discharge. For about three weeks before they close off the hot water section of the lake you can catch a white bass on every cast. You can see giant schools of them swim right by the boat and if you want to see white bass busting on surface this is the time frame for you. I actually caught three white bass on the same quarter ounce gay blade at the same time last year. That is small bait for three fish on those two tiny hooks.

Another good pattern to catch fish during the turn-over period is wind. Lake Shelbyville has plenty of huge flats on them and the whites and walleye will push the shad up on the shore. Cover water and use the two-jig rig and keep it up on top. I use two eighth ounce jigs or even two-quarter ounce jigs tied about a foot apart. I will use a three- inch twister on one and a three- inch shad body on the other. I love the new Gulp baits but if you move around a lot they dry in the sun very quickly. Keep them in the water.

Most of my guide trips won't be geared for crappie as of yet. But towards the end of September I will be switching up and fishing for both the whites/walleye windswept flats and back of coves pattern to half of the days geared towards crappie. Once we get to mid October I will fish only for crappie. Mid October to mid December crappie fishing at Lake Shelbyville is as good there as anywhere in the state.

We start looking for the crappie on the drops near brush then as the water cools we migrate up the creeks. This is a great pattern for both big fish and plenty of shallow action. We use shorter nine-foot poles with a good backbone and toss a cork with a jig suspended under it. We throw this to any wood you can find up in only a couple of feet of water. This works best up on the north end of the lake way up in the feeder creeks. I also like to use a long twelve-foot pole so I can keep the boat away from the structure and just dip it into the cover with just a couple of foot of line out. I let the cover dictate which method I use be it either cork or tight line.

My fishing season thus far has been a good one. I have tripled my business on white bass fishing trips and have many happy customers. Especially in August which we have put over a hundred fish over the side on each trip. My spring crappie trips were very good as some of the other anglers struggled around me. I came upon a pattern casting sliders on suspended fish that put limits in the boat early on then when they hit the bank in mid May I really shined and had many fish topping the pound and a half range. I fished the Lake Decatur Crappie U.S.A. qualifier. A lake I knew nothing about and placed just high enough in the semi-pro side to get to the regional at Lake Shelbyville. In that tourney I placed second. Oh so close to winning a new Ranger. Anyway I am fishing at the Cabala's Crappie U.S.A. classic over in Indiana's Lake Patoka in September. Forty-eight pro teams left for the thirty-eight thousand dollar first place prize.

My fall trips should be just as good as the spring trips on the crappie. With my GPS on board I have over two hundred brush piles on Lake Shelbyville that usually produce. I am as knowledgeable as anyone on the lake in both the Kaskaskia River and the West Okaw River and the smaller creeks such as Wilborn and Whitley. Even though I fish out of a twenty-one foot Ranger I have a hydraulic six-inch lift jack plate that lets me get into the shallowest of water.

Give my guide service a buzz and set up a trip for the fall. You will get to see the lake in style and the trees turning is a sight to behold. Not to mention the good fishing and very little boat traffic to boot.