

Finally Cool Evenings, Trees Turning, It's Crappie Time

By Steve Welch

September brings a lot of change to my routine. The weather is starting to cool down at night so the water temps will as well. This brings opportunity for combo trips of white bass and crappie or just plain old crappie trips.

The month starts out warm so I am still setting on deep ledges catching tons of white bass. You know business as usual. Then we start to get some very nice evenings and this gets those surface temps from low eighties down to low seventies.

This starts a migration of bait from main lake to backs of major coves with creeks in them and up the main river the Kaskaskia. The white bass are first to key in on this as is the muskie. We get into some of the biggest white bass I see all year and hook a few muskie but rarely land one on spinning gear. I personally have had four on this spring while walleye slash crappie fishing.

Then the crappies start to move from the huge schools out on the main lake back into the coves. They start out at just the front and as the water cools they will be in the extreme back of these coves. They get just as shallow in the early fall as they do in the spring. It is just for a different reason. Food is the reason and the whole key to finding crappie or whites.

Then it is time to get out the crappie rods and go pendulum fishing. The deep coves in the middle to south end of the lake all have tons of standing timber. We simply go by every tree and flip an eighth ounce jig about six to ten feet past the tree. You then just keep your pole at about the three o'clock position and let the jig pendulum back past the tree. It will fall by it at about six feet deep in water that might be twenty or more.

If a crappie is by that tree then he can not resist hitting the swimming jig. Tight lining at this time isn't near as successful. So since we are swimming a jig I use several different types of bodies. I like solid baits since they don't fall off the hook as easily. I also like the curly tail type baits over a simple tube type.

This is my first taste of crappie fishing since May so I am like a kid in a chocolate factory. We can do very well at this but the key is just keep moving. There might be only one fish to a tree. You have to have branches on that standing tree at the right depth to hold multiple fish. I rarely get into the huge fish we catch in late October on through December but hey it is crappie fishing and we get plenty of 11-12 inch fish. We also catch quite a few bass doing this as well, so hold on.

The changing of the seasons is absolutely beautiful as Shelbyville has nearly two hundred miles of shoreline with no homes on them to clutter the view. We see eagles quite frequently and of course the pelicans migrate back through by the thousands. Throw in a few loons and you think you off on a wilderness lake up north. I love the fall especially during the week. Most days I see only a couple of fishing boats. The big pleasure boats have all but disappeared and finally the lake is ours again.

As most of you know I have made the plunge into being a full time guide. The plumbing and heating business is so up and down since very little construction is going on. I am making a solid effort at staying a full time guide. I have done nearly 120 guide trips this year so far and the crappie trips are coming in for the fall. If you haven't done a fall crappie trip with me. It is a ball and like I have said all year long Lake Shelbyville is in the best shape of her life. The food is abundant and the fish are fat and healthy. I know most of you turn to hunting this time each year but take a day here or there to get in some crappie fishing. You won't regret it.

I am currently working on all the hoops that I might need to jump through to guide down at Paris Landing this winter. I am thinking of guiding some in December then February and March, or maybe a little more down there before we get going up here. So if I could get a list of possible

trips just drop me an e-mail and that way I can see if it would be worth my time and effort. Just go to my website and browse around and while you are in there you can drop me an e-mail.
www.LakeShelbyvilleGuide.com