

## June Means Work The Flats

by Steve Welch

I have been doing nothing but guiding for crappie at Shelbyville now for the last two months, well throw in a couple of trips up at Clinton for walleye slash catfish.

I love the run and gun approach that crappie fishing is. We hit forty brush piles a day. Cover water from ten foot to ten inches. Main lake one day and creeks the next or both in the same day. My big Ranger can flat out cover some water.

Every great thing has to come to a close and the crappie fishing can get tough in June. Spawn is over, fish aren't quite back to deep water yet and fully recovered from the spawn.

Lake Shelbyville is quite unique from most lakes. It is a flood control lake and each spring they raise the water from 594 feet above sea level to 599.9. This puts enough water in the feeder creeks that the smartweeds on the channel edges will have a few inches of water in them and enough shade for the fish to remain in shallow water a little later. I have caught fish up in the rivers in two foot of water clear up to July 4th weekend.

Each year is different though and I must have a back up plan. I stay in the creeks as long as I can then hit the lake running. We have to totally switch gear and tactics. The fish on the flats need search bait. I go to my gay blades so I can cast a mile and locate pods of roaming white bass. The other bait that I rely on is a quarter ounce jig and a Charlie Brewer Slider grub.

If the fishing in the creeks is done then a typical guide trip starts out like this. We hit all my sandbars and flats that have a shear drop with brush on it. I put the boat out in deep water and cast up on top of the drop and reel the slider just fast enough to keep it off bottom. If crappies are on the drops then we can get a dozen or so keepers with the boatloads of whites. The walleye are a little trickier.

I used to troll all the time at Shelbyville because that is how I fished for them at Clinton. This method works very well but I have modified it a little. The Lowrance GPS system on my boat has numerous waypoints marking the stumps on the flats where the walleye like to hide. I mark a handful of them with buoys and then get back twenty feet and toss a jig and crawler into the stumps. This catches just about everything that swims and likes to hide in stumps. We catch a lot of bass doing this and bluegills and of course drum perch.

A couple of years ago my wife and were up on the flats fishing this pattern and a guys and gals bass tourney was going on that day. Teams from several states were there and this one team had watched us throw back a half dozen bass in the three to four pound range. They came over to talk to us and wondered how we could have fish that big in our livewell to be able to throw back so many big fish thinking we were in the tourney. We informed them that these fish were a nuisance to us that it was the walleye that we wanted.

My walleye trips are my most nerve racking that I do. That is why I only guide for them from late May through early July. I try and tell them up front that this isn't Canada and walleye fishing in Illinois, a six fish day is a good one. Once we get into mid July the fish leave the shallows and it is much easier to just fish for the white bass. We catch a hundred a day or more from mid July on through early September. Got to keep the clients on lots of fish.

The weather in June is very nice and not all that hot yet so if a combo guide trip with some crappie, a bunch of white bass, and hopefully some nice walleye is to your liking then give me a buzz as of this writing I still have openings.