

Lake Shelbyville Combo Trip

by Steve Welch

The month of May has got to be my favorite time of the year. I can run up the creeks at daybreak and get a limit of big Crappie and still have time to hit the flats for some Walleye action by lunchtime.

Lake Shelbyville, an Army Corp of Engineer flood control lake, will fill up from winter pool to summer. That means an additional six-foot of water. But more importantly it means I can get my big Ranger up the rivers. When this happens the channels are still visible and all the banks have gotten a good stronghold of smartweed and willows. The fish will use the edges of the weeds and of course any wood they can find. I will use a spring cork set just a foot above a jig and just throw it to any target I can find. Even though the spawn will happen mid month, the fish will remain up in the creeks in shallow water as long as there is food available. Last year I still found three limits of fish up there on my last river trip on June 30th. Pretty late to be fishing in less than three feet of water.

The tackle that I use to catch these big Crappie is an eight foot pole to help with accuracy and an under spin reel spooled with six or eight pound test. I like large tubes like the Mid-South two and a half-inch in some sort of chartreuse or the Southern Pro umbrella or the Bass Assassin twister tail. All of these are big baits to Crappie fish with but these Crappie are in very shallow water and will hit anything that goes by them. The big bait just eliminates little fish. I have had many ten fish weights in the ten to thirteen pound range. That means ten fish at least twelve inches long. As far as fishing goes this pattern is as fun as it gets. The fish just slam the baits and fight like Smallies in water this shallow.

May is also the month that starts the Walleye bite. Some years ago they realized at Lake Shelbyville that if you put the Walleye fry in the Bass rearing pond and let them get some size the survival rate is much better and we have been reaping the benefits for some six or eight years. I have now been able to actually get a couple of limits on a good day and throw in some short fish a ton of Bass, White Bass and assorted trash fish. Suddenly Walleye fishing isn't so bad. The best thing is that this pattern lasts just about all summer.

The huge expansive flats on Lake Shelbyville get wind and boat traffic creating a mud line and opportunity for aggressive Walleyes. I used to take my trolling knowledge that I have honed for years at Clinton Lake to Shelbyville, not any more. Mind though trolling still works but with the aid of GPS and all the time I have put into marking all the individual stumps on point five and six and the Findley flat and numerous other little lesser known spots. I now use marker buoys and fish with a jig and twister tail tipped with a crawler or minnow. I back up enough to just throw a fifteen-foot shot just past the stump and swim it by it down in the root system of the old tree stump. These might only be in a couple of feet of water. Let wind tell you which one to fish on a given day, as they will clear quite quickly in the summer months.

Last year the wife and I were up on the five flat fishing this pattern and there happened to be a guys and gals big Bass tourney going on. We had thrown back so many three-four pound Bass back in, that a couple came up to us thinking we were in the tourney and asked us if we had fish bigger in our live well that we could afford to throw back all those quality fish. I informed him that they were in the way of my Walleye fishing and didn't want them. Since they weren't from the area they were shocked that Walleye fishing existed south of Wisconsin.

The tackle that I use is a seven-foot spinning outfit and eight-pound test. I throw a couple of rigs. One is a jig and twister, be it just a single eighth ounce or two tied a foot above each other. I sometimes tip this with a crawler or minnow. The other bait that I throw is the Gay blade, in the smallest size available. This bait is the best catch-all bait up on a flat that there is. I use either the chartreuse or chrome and blue model. This is a fun change of pace for me after chasing Crappie for the last four months.

If this combo trip is to your liking, then call my guide service and set something up. Call early as I now only guide on weekends and my trips fill quickly.

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