

Mark Twain Lake Our Neighbor to the West

by Steve Welch

Last year I went over to this Corp. Of Engineer lake nineteen times and got our limit on each and every occasion. Each trip I got a little better at unlocking this big lake secrets. My new wife and I will be fishing the Crappie U.S.A. tourney in mid April so I won't tip my hand too much. This much I will tell you though. There is no finer lake in warm weather that I know of to catch crappie from in those three months of summer that most of you crappie fisherman just hang it up and don't fish until the weather cools. Last year I good take anyone with me no matter their skill level and at the end of the day they would all agree on one thing. They have never had a day on the water where they caught so many fish in a single day that their hands actually hurt from handling so many fish. A hundred a day was the norm it just got so easy that I couldn't believe the lake wouldn't just be packed full of people.

For those of you that have never been to this lake which by the way is about a third again bigger than Lake Shelbyville. It has so many standing trees that boater's just stay clear of it. I wouldn't try and water ski on this lake you can see treetops rising above the water surface even in sixty foot of water. The rivers are all deep and just jam packed with wood almost too much wood. Crappie love wood though and you just need to sort out the good with the bad and concentrate on a preferred depth.

Mark Twain is a very lovely lake with its sheer bluffs and deep-water just inches from the bank and on most trips you can see a lot of wildlife. I have seen many wild turkeys, tons of deer and even have had eagles sore over my head. Usually I would see two or three on every trip.

But its Mark Twains high rock bluffs that make this lake such a good lake to catch fish from in the hot summer months. You can just parallel the bank and toss your jig about three foot past every standing tree then watch it as it falls past the tree. Usually about six-foot deep is all it takes. The fish suspend down about ten or so then charge up after a jig that appears to be a threat to them. A few of the months though the water temp is right for the fish to be on the flat side and you just go across the river and fish any downed tree along the bank. So here is a little hint when you get there ask the bait shop owner what the lake level is and ask if the fish are on the bluffs or the flats, this will give you a pattern to start with.

I use a lot of the same baits and patterns that I use wherever I go. I usually opt for a white or red and chartreuse tube with a sixteenth ounce jig on it. I also love the Bob Folder tinsel jig also in the sixteenth ounce size. I use a Wally Marshall crappie rod in the nine to twelve foot range. If I can't reach into the brush far enough the twelve footer comes out but otherwise I usually stick with the nine footer.

The GPS that I brag about in previous articles in so much a factor on this lake. I just use it for navigation. I do however use my depth finders to hover over hidden brush just like I would on any lake. I use a lot of areas where creeks intersect in the summer and look for very sheer drop offs on points. This is a great summer pattern but in the spring and fall you just run up the creeks as far as you can go then turnaround and fish.

I have gone back to school and won't be doing as much guiding as in years past and like I said I will be tied up in April and May fishing all the Crappie U.S.A. tourneys I can afford, but for those of you interested I will be setting up trips for crappie fishing in the summer both at Mark Twain and at Lake Shelbyville. I have decided to only guide for crappie and cut back on the hundred plus trips that I booked on most years.

Like I said Crappie U.S.A. is coming back after a few years absence and hopefully all my time over there last year will pay off. I like fishing in this circuit and have had very good success. I was a Regional qualifier last year and hope to get farther than that this year in a different division. I fished the Semi-Pro side last year and this year with my new partner I am fishing the male-female division. We will be thrown in against the men for the money but our points toward the classic will be scored differently hopefully making it easier for us to get to the classic in Mississippi. Crappie fishing is much more family orientated than Bass fishing and I am blessed to have two sons who both love to fish and a new wife who has taken this up wholeheartedly and really seems to enjoy herself so wish us luck in our new endeavor.

See you on the water.....Feel free to e-mail or call.....

Steve Welch

Crappie

Specialties Guide Service
217-762-7257

stevewelch@mchsi.com