

May on Shelbyville Means the Spawn is On

by Steve Welch

With the addition of my new web-site my guide service has been through the roof this year. Also not to forget all my faithful readers of this and all the other columns that I put out each month. I cannot go anywhere without running into someone who tells me that they read all my articles and enjoy them immensely. I would like to thank everyone for his or her support and maybe someday I will get to quit that nine to five job and do this for a living. If there ever was a month that I would want to just go fishing everyday it is the month of May and June. On my old job I had a lot more flexible hours and a ton of vacation time but that job like many of your up and moved to Mexico. So I actually had one year that I guided for Crappies forty-three days in a row.

Let us talk about May on this huge reservoir that I call my second home Lake Shelbyville. On most years the spawn will start with the males moving up into the shallows on the main lake about middle of April and start taking on that dark color around their bellies and face called their courtin colors. Not to be confused with a black crappie because most of the crappie in Lake Shelbyville are of the white crappie strain. Anyway these fish will pull in and out until a consistent water temperature of about fifty-five degrees is obtained. We can have very good success fishing for the aggressive males, but the females won't be up until the water temperature reaches about sixty-two or about the first of May and this carries on for several weeks throughout the lake.

Since Shelbyville is so large and extremely different in terrain and depths. The spawn actually gets going good in early May and the last remaining shallow fish can be caught up through the middle of June. Partly because it is a flood control lake and early in May they let the lake come up to summer pool which is five foot higher than winter pool. This fills the feeder creeks with water and the food and fish go up them and since the banks now have a good growth of smartweed for them to hide in and now have a couple of foot of water on them. I have caught the last remaining crappie up there in less than a foot of water on July 4th weekend. You tell me where else you can find this and I am there.

We are talking extreme north end of the lake and you won't find this on your hotspots map. My Gps unit actually has waypoints on my map that look like I am on dry ground. I am so far off the map. This is why you need a guide to get you to these spots. The stumps are everywhere and the channel gets to about fifteen foot wide with a good bottom depth of six foot.

You think to yourself why on earth would you idle for an hour to get up into these feeder creeks. Big fish that's why. You will not win any major crappie tourney on the lake. The creek fish are much bigger and even on Memorial Day weekend you will not likely even see another boat. I filmed a TV show with my buddy Dan Vinavitch a couple of seasons back and made a believer out of him that dippin as he called it was fun. He actually boated a fourteen-inch fish, which would weigh over a pound and three quarters had we weighed it. We had several for that show in little more than an hour of fishing that were over a pound.

The tackle that we use to go dippin is quite easy. I use a twelve-foot rod with an extremely light tip so I don't set the hook to hard and rip it out of the fish. You only need to let out a couple of feet of line and then we parallel the shoreline of the creek and fish everything. Weeds, wood anything that allows the fish to hide. We also use a slip bobber method with either a jig under it or a live minnow rig on a plain hook. If the cover is too far for us to reach with the twelve-foot rod. I use a large tube this time of year because we are fishing for larger more aggressive fish. I like the Southern Pro umbrella tubes and the large two and a half glow tubes made by Midsouth Super jigs. I always use a sixteenth ounce jig with a number two hook made by Reeves lure company. I want the larger hook this time of the year as these fish are pound plus with some pushing two pounds.

Late May we start to walleye fish on the flats as well and June is your best so don't count out a combo trip. I pull crawler rigs or make short casts to stumps that I have marked on my GPS with jigs tipped with crawlers. We work the main lake flats and catch all sorts of species of fish since we are using crawlers. A good day is about fifteen walleye with about nine or so being big enough to keep. Not a Canada trip but we do catch a ton of white bass and large mouth and those pesky drum and bluegill.

I hope this year I can start guiding for muskie and plan to fish for them every chance I get in June as I am told that is one of the best months on the lake, but if the walleye are biting who knows when I will get to fish for them.

Anyway that is all for now and one again thanks for all that have visited my new web-site and for those who fish with me this year look for your picture on the site as well. I will keep after the fishing report and update it quite often and look forward to having fun with it this year. See ya fish are bitin got to go.