

## My Two Favorite Watering Holes

by Steve Welch

Lake Shelbyville and Mark Twain Lake have got to be the best fall crappie fishing of any watering holes I have found. What you thought I was talking about the East End tavern. No I am talking about crappie the size of dinner plates and that familiar thump on the end of your pole happening time after time all day long, as if you were to think that the lake is so full of the tasty fish that they are just lining up to get out.

I have been a guide on Lake Shelbyville for about ten years now and have gotten to know her pretty well. I call her a woman because who else could treat you so badly then turn around and bless you with the best day of your life. Like Mark Twain, Lake Shelbyville is a flood control lake and both present different problems with their pool levels. Both can come up six feet in a couple of days just muddy up everything. Mark Twain uses its lake as power source in the summer and can draw from summer pool back down to winter pool, have a rain fill her back up then do it all over again. Shelbyville is more stable but suffers more from erosion more since it doesn't have all the rock cliffs that Mark Twain does.

These are primarily spring problems which is why I look forward to fishing in the fall. The weather is just much more predictable as are the water levels, and the trees are just magnificent. Throw in the fact that your only company is a handful of duck hunters and you have the makings of a day you soon won't forget.

The lakes fish are similar in size and run from an average of about 11-14 inches in length or three-quarter of a pound up to about a pound and three-quarter. Pretty nice crappie anywhere when you throw in the fact that you can literally catch a hundred a day.

You fish them in the fall pretty similar in the fact that you run up creeks as far as you can go then start fishing. At Lake Shelbyville you don't have the cliffs and you just stay in the channel and fish a lot of submerged stumps and old treetops. You are stirring up mud quite a bit you are in that shallow of water. At Mark Twain you fish the cliff side of the creek on most occasions but in the fall you need to check both sides as the flat side has bigger fish and with the predictable water levels. They will stay in the this same pattern all of October and November on both lakes.

The fishing equipment is a quite similar. I use an eight-foot Wally Marshall rod with an underspin reel on it filled with eight-pound magna-thin line. I use the stronger more invisible line on my cork pole. I then put a spring cork on the line a mere foot or so above an oversized sixteenth ounce jig with a large number two or number one hook, weed less variety so you can pull it over brush and not hang up. I then use the big two and a half inch Southern Pro umbrella tube in some sort of chartreuse. The large bodied tube really attracts the bigger fish. I also use the twelve-foot version and just dip around any structure too thick to get the cork in. I have on the hi-vis Trilene Sensation line in six-pound test. I am a firm believer in line watching and the hi-vis line stands out in any light. You don't need it on your cork pole since you are watching your float. I let out enough line to get into the thickest part of the brush I can get into and just jig my bait up and down a few inches or swim it side to side to entice a thumb and believe me in just a couple of feet of water it is a thump. The twelve-foot pole is so I don't spook these shallow fish too much.

If it seems as if all my fall articles are of the same nature then maybe I am on to something. I don't hunt, as it would get in the way of my crappie fishing and don't fish for anything else from September until ice up. The fishing is just way too good to spread myself thin and indulge in other activities. I catch about two or three thousand crappie each year on this fall pattern and still can't get enough of it.

I have had many enquiries thus far but still have many good fall dates open so if you want to get in on some fantastic fall crappie fishing then give me a call.

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