

October Has Many Options and Patterns by Steve Welch

Finally the huge cigarette boats are gone. Those thirty-foot wave makers that play havoc on my main lake fishing. The wave runners darting in and out of traffic, never knowing if you are going to hit one. Yes finally there are no boat waves on the lake that I can't hit at seventy and not go air born. Not that I would do that with clients in the boat anyway.

The dreaded lake turn over is done and the fish have returned to shallow water. October through December has got to be my favorite fishing period of the year. The weather is more stable than in the spring and with a flood control lake you can be fishing at 594 ft. one week and 599 the next day then back to 594 as quick as they can get it. This rebounding of water fluctuations lasts until May first then they try and keep it at summer pool.

During the fall you just run and gun your brush piles in the ten-foot to two-foot range for the crappie and follow the bait for the other species. Late September through October I will fish for Muskie. I have the passion and desire to improve on my abilities to catch this elusive monster, but usually I just put the gear down about mid day and fish for crappie, a fish that I have very good success finding. However the fish of 10,000 casts becomes more predictable from late September through October and Lake Shelbyville is one of the premier lakes in the state and the holder of the current state record.

You just need to follow the bait and during this time frame the bait all move to the back of your larger coves. The area of the lake from Eagle Creek down to Lithia Springs is where you concentrate your efforts. Baits like suick's, large spinner baits, buck tails and jake's are among the favorites of the locals.

Unlike fishing for crappie where I run and gun brush piles at different depths catching a few off each one. Muskie fishing is more of a waiting game and concentrating your efforts on key feeding areas. Then having on the bait that they will eat. Secondary points in the larger coves and certain stumps in shallow water on main lake areas. Muskie are very territorial and will feed and remain in the same areas. Always look out for feeding fish. They will feed in the same general area over and over.

I would never count on my guide service to be a full time muskie fisherman. If you were to venture out on Lake Shelbyville on any given day and ask every fishing boat you see what they were fishing for. Out of a hundred boats you would see seventy crappie boats, twenty bass boats and ten muskie boats.

Lake Shelbyville and central Illinois in general are crappie fisherman. Bass fisherman and muskie fisherman all take time out to fish for this tasty fish some time during the year.

I have it in my blood and have had very good success both in the tourney scene and with my clients on guide trips. I know guides who would never tournament fish for fear of becoming mortal. I have won enough tournaments to gain the respect of my peers and also realize that the teams that I fish against are some of the toughest in the Midwest so don't expect to win every time.

A good knowledge of the lake is critical at all times but during the fall a good knowledge of the creeks that feed this massive reservoir will get you in the money of any tourney. Big fish inhabit the upper reaches of this lake and I don't care how many good spots you have out on the main lake drops. A few good spots in the creek mouths and the ability to fish very shallow in the backs of these creeks will get you that paycheck in the tourneys.

You have to read water and more importantly read watercolor and water temperature in these shallow creeks. Wind also has bearing on weather or not the fish will be active. I have caught crappie in the backs of creeks in less than a foot of water with skim ice a few feet away.

That is the beauty of fishing during the fall. Any pattern you are comfortable with will work. You can tight line over mid depth brush or you can cast a jig and cork in the skinniest of water.

If beautiful fall colors, hundred fish days, and total tranquility is to your liking then give my guide service a buzz and let me make you a memory you soon won't forget. Oh yeah I almost forgot, crappie for the freezer.