

Pick Your 2006 Destinations Crappie Style

By Steve Welch

Here is a little insight on how I have been fortunate to have caught about fifty Crappie two pounds or larger in my life. First to catch big fish you need to go to big fish lakes.

My favorite Kentucky Lake has amounted for most of my two pounders. I have had a single day in which I had nine of them. We actually had our two men limit that day of fish running twelve inches up to nearly sixteen. That is sixty of them, awesome day. Twice while down there I have been able to get a three-man limit over ten inches and that stringer is still on their web-site for Kentucky Lake.

The time frame you need to hit for going down there is the last week of March through the second week of April if you are venturing down to the Paris Landing area. You can wait a couple of weeks if you are fishing up towards the dam.

The black Crappie is taking over down there and they seem to go to the bank earlier and stay there longer. I cast for these fish with a six and a half foot rod spooled with six pound hi-vis line and a sixteenth ounce jig and a white and chartreuse Charlie Brewer Slider grub.

If they haven't moved to the bank yet I catch them back out towards the main river channel on deep brush. I tight line a jig down right on the bottom on a sharp breaking drop. I have a ton of GPS waypoints to run to and this cuts down my search time for brush.

Mid April you need to check out the Corp lakes in Mississippi. Most go to Grenada and take a pair of waders with you. A buddy of mine said he saw boats this spring with mini bikes on the back deck. You go up the creeks as far as you can go in your boat then get on the mini bike and run further up the creeks using your waders and a cork pegged just a few inches above a jig, casting to brush. This pattern will get you some of the biggest fish of your life. Three-pound fish are common and at Lake Arkabutla they have a pair of five pound fish mounted at the bait shop that came from there tail waters below the dam.

Another favorite of mine is Old Town Lake in Arkansas. It is a very shallow lake full of Cypress and the whole lake is only four-foot deep. It is about five miles long and a half-mile wide with more trees and snakes than you can imagine. The fish run very large and the bluegill as big as you will ever see. Dipping in the knees of the Cypress is a ball and you won't believe the sight you will see at this old fish camp.

Once May hits then I like my home lake of Shelbyville. It is a Corp of Engineer Lake and in May they bring it up from winter pool to summer pool. That is five foot of water depth. On a lake this size that is a ton of water. The big fish have hit the bank and have run up the creeks. It isn't like the lakes I previously mentioned but for Illinois it is pretty good. I can get a two-pound fish on a very good day but mostly you can expect to see a half dozen twelve to thirteen inch fish and a ton of eleven-inch fish. I just like the pattern the best. Casting a cork with a jig pegged under it just a few inches. These fish hit hard and you never seem to get very many small fish doing this.

Another lake I should mention is Mark Twain. It seems to be good just a little later than Shelbyville. Memorial Day weekend is usually a great time frame. We fish the sheer bluffs right on the bank. I usually fish these spots with a twelve-foot pole and just a couple of foot of line out and dip it into any brush I can find. I love this lake for its sheer beauty and the wild life is plentiful. You will see many eagles on any given day.

The fish are just a bit bigger than Shelbyville and you can get twenty or more fish over a pound easily on a good day.

For those of you who don't give up on them after the spring Truman Lake is a great lake in the dead of heat in July. The fish bury themselves in cedar trees and you can get fish in as shallow as four foot. Mark Twain is another great lake in the summer. Just pendulum a jig down the bluffs beside trees. The trees can be in thirty foot of water no more than six feet from the bank.

I also like going back to Kentucky in July for the fireworks and some pretty good Crappie action. First of all nobody is fishing for them and you have the deep spots all to yourself. I catch them by casting and counting down a jig over deep brush. The fish suspend over them about ten feet down in twenty foot of water. The fireworks are great too. Five thousand boats of all sizes and all lit up with thousands of lights.

The fall and winter has me back home. Lake Shelbyville is as good as any lake in the state in the fall and winter. The fish move back shallow in the fall and then once winter hits we hover over them and just slay them clear up to ice-up in late December or early January.

Come on out and see me this winter at the fishing shows. I will be at the Midwest Marine Open

house in Rantoul on January 7th and 8th. The Midstate Fish & Feather Expo in Bloomington on January 27-29. The Peoria Boat show on Feb. 11th and the Boat show in Springfield on March 10-12th. So come on out and swap some stories with me.