

Plan Your Fishing Trips Now

by Steve Welch

Here are some destinations that you just might run into me this up and coming fishing year. It is January and colder than the dickens but am I ice fishing. No I am casting rattletraps and quarter ounce jigs for big Muskies in the Lake Shelbyville spillway. For this pattern all you need are a pair of quarter ounce Bob Folder tensile jigs tied a foot above each other on fourteen pound mono and a good stiff spinning outfit. You also need a bait caster spooled with 60 pound fire line and a big three ounce Cordell spot. Both of these rigs I use for the Muskie. I have a 44 and a 45-inch fish to date from down there. I have had one pull off on the Cordell spot that was a legal fish I am sure of that. I have only been there about six times and have hooked a big fish on nearly every trip, pretty good odds for Muskie fishing.

Another species of fish that has just begun to show up down there are Sauger. They come upstream from Carlyle and were very plentiful last January everyone was getting limits. For this rig you need a weight tied on the bottom then tie on two jigs above the weight and have a twister or sassy shad combo or two twisters but just tip them with a small piece of crawler. The weight on the bottom to keep you out of the rocks.

February and March I will bunch together because that spells early season Crappie for me. Down at Lake Shelbyville some of your best fishing is the two-week period after the ice comes off. The fish will move shallow for a short period to bask in the warm sun. They also suspend in the deeper coves around standing timber down only about four feet in twenty foot of water. This time period is also my first of about five or six trips down to Kentucky Lake. The fish are schooled up in deep water on the ledges. A great time period for a wall mount. For both of these patterns I use a long nine -ten foot pole spooled with six-pound test line and a jig tied on the business end. Kentucky Lake you are fishing much deeper so you might need to step up to an eighth ounce jig but mostly I fish a sixteenth vertically over the cover.

April has me going to Clinton Lake for the annual opening of the hot water discharge. I spend about the whole month there doing a lot of guide trips. It is a great time to book a trip with a kid because the action is very good. The Crappie fishing there is down somewhat so we tie on the two jig rig or a gay blade and fish the discharge and most anywhere in that basin between the forty-eight and Dewitt bridges for Walleye, Striped bass, Catfish or just anything that will hit our baits that are thrown right up on the bank. We frequently catch a hundred fish a day.

May and June I hardly ever leave Shelbyville unless it is to Crappie fish over at Mark Twain. I love both lakes and the Crappie fishing is very good in this time period. On both of these lakes I run up in the feeder creeks and fish shallow for some of my biggest Crappie of the year.

June and early July I will take clients Walleye fishing at Shelbyville. This is your best window because the fish are shallow on the many large flats. I will pull crawler rigs or cast the two-jig rig.

July through October has me out on the ledges at Shelbyville vertically fishing for the White Bass and up on the flats throwing the two-jig rig. I catch a few nice Walleyes doing this but hundred fish days are the norm on the big White Bass. Also a good time to bring the wife or kid on a guide trip. Vertically jigging is easy to get on to and the action is hot and furious.

October and November has me back Crappie fishing at Shelbyville. The big fish will run back up the creeks and this shallow pattern has got to be as good as the spawn. Throw in the magnificent colors of the trees and you have the makings of a great trip you soon won't forget.

December has me back to where we started and that is Crappie fishing on the drop offs on Lake Shelbyville. I hardly get any takers for the guide service but believe me they are missing out on some red-hot action. The fish are schooled up and you can catch a bunch without having to move around much.

I mentioned earlier that I go down to Kentucky Lake about five or six times a year. Like I said I usually go down very early the first time like late January or early February. I go down to the dam area and

mostly fish Barkley. I like the deep water and no run ins with shallow water out in the middle of the lake like you will have down at Big Sandy area. The fish are deep much like at home and you can get a very large fish during this time frame. Then the next time I go I try and hit the spawn. For this I go down to Big Sandy mostly because I have a bunch of good shallow brush and I know some of the guides down there who will give me a good idea on when to come. Last year I went the last weekend of March and hit it pretty good. You will do fine if you go somewhere from the last week of March until the third week of April.

The third time I go down is around Memorial weekend for the huge bluegills. They move into the stake beds and a jig tipped with a wax worm will just tear them up. Be prepared to clean a ton of them. The Red-ears get up to two pounds.

Then I try and go back in July for the fireworks slash deep Crappie bite. The fireworks from the lake are very cool and you can catch some big Crappies on the same ledge spots you used back in February.

If I get time to go back it is in November when the fish are moving shallow just like at home. Then my last trip is early December for the deep fish that were catching last winter.

Hopefully this will steer you in the right direction for the upcoming fishing season and if you want to book a trip with my guide service call ahead early I only have so many trips I can accommodate.