

White Bass, The Hardest Fighter in the Pan Fish Family

By Steve Welch

Once we get into the four summer months or the last half of June until the first half of October my sights are on white bass. Lake Shelbyville is an Army Corp of Engineer flood control lake and that in it's self makes it a fantastic white bass lake. They love current and boy oh boy do they love to eat. Lake Shelbyville is so full of these hard fighting fish they encourage you to take as many as you can clean. I do my best and clean about 15 to 16,000 every summer or do the math about a 133 a day.

We start out the season where we are at this writing, the first shad hatch. The white bass push the tiny bait to the surface and just go nuts on them for hours on end. Yesterday I was scanning the horizon and saw about a dozen blue herons circling and diving on fish like you would normally see seagulls. Believe me you can spot that a mile away. I got in a school busting on the surface and the wind blew me and the school very slowly for over a mile and they stayed on top boiling over five acres of water for nearly three hours. For anyone that has ever seen this you know they will hit anything that gets in the school and the second it hits the water. I like to throw a Blue Fox number three Vibrex. It has a big blade that displaces a ton of water and you just crank it as fast as you can then pause then start again as fast as you can go. They just about break your arm they hit it so hard. I also like my 3/8 oz. candy striper. It stays on top very well and also has a blade, just burn it like the vibrex. With myself and two clients in the boat it is triples on every cast so it doesn't take long to fill the 48-quart cooler or about 75 pounds worth or what I call a four-bag day. Which means four-gallon zip locks as full as you can stuff them.

I have all the latest electronics on my boat including side scan and down imaging so I pulled up in this massive display of busting white bass and told the clients to look at the down scan. It was fifteen feet deep of solid white bass, five acres worth. Now that is a big school of fish.

Once we get into July and the water warms to the point that the fish need to move deep. Then they attack bait differently. They push them up against a steep river channel bank and then my candy striper comes into play and that is the bait that I use basically until we get into late September. I know of no better bait to work through a school. I place my self either on top of a ledge and cast out into deep water then work the bait up through the school or I put the boat out in deep water and then cast up on top of the ledge and simply pop it off bottom all the way down the ledge. Both ways work you just need to imagine that the bait is popping off bottom about six feet and fluttering back to the bottom. The blade on the back of the bait spins and drives the white bass nuts. They will hit this bait a half dozen times before one gets it.

It is July and August that all my electronics come into play. I have down scan and side imaging on front and back of the boat and of course GPS to return to that exact spot. With the side imaging I can go along a channel bank and see where the white bass are then drop a waypoint on them from anywhere over a hundred feet away. I have done this so much this past year I can show the difference in a crappie school versus a white bass school and of course a school of bait.

When looking for white bass just play the wind game as I call it. The bait is easily pushed around by the wind and the predators follow. Then just look for a sheer drop with bait on it. Knowledge of typical stopping spots helps a bunch but so does having mapping on your GPS. I run the Navionics premium version and it has all the depth contours colored in different colors. I have very shallow water in dark blue and water about fifteen feet or shallower in light blue then the deep water is in white. This helps when working points and helps locate sheer drops.

It is the summer months that the kids are out of school and I get a ton of them. I had an excited one last week. His name was Mason and believe me that boy would be fishing at midnight if I would have stayed. I helped him catch not one but two buffalo in the twenty pound range plus a couple of walleye and a bunch of white bass. He was a real joy to have in the boat. I have raised two sons myself and have tons of memories of us fishing together. They have both got stripers

over fifteen pounds and muskie over twenty and crappie over two. My youngest caught nine two-pound crappie in one day on Kentucky Lake with me. He has two of them mounted along with two that I caught to commemorate the trip.

So if any of you have a young child please introduce them to the hardest fighting easiest to catch pan fish we have, the white bass. They will be a fisher person for life. Or you can contact my website and set up a date to catch a ton of white bass yourself and your young angler.