

Wow, What a Year So Far

By Steve Welch

I have been guiding full time this spring and it has been a real grind. I have fished in sleet, rain, high winds, and more rain and did I say wind. Wind gusting to 63 miles per hour.

I have followed the crappie movement from their deep winter haunts all the way to the shallow spawning beds of less than a foot. One thing in common this year is Lake Shelbyville is back. Crappie are huge, white bass are very huge, walleye are numerous and large mouth bass are everywhere. I have even seen quite a few muskies this year. Actually caught one while white bass fishing the other day. Even had one come up and nail my marker buoy one day just five feet from me.

As of this writing I am still finishing up with the crappie spawn and we actually had 103 crappie today over the ten-inch mark for just two guys fishing. We never kept any just kept a tally going to see how many we could get. The lake is filling up to summer pool and the smartweeds and willows that line the lake have now got enough water on them to hide fish.

The carp use these weeds to spawn and the crappie hide in them as well. The weeds are alive and twenty-pound carp are thrashing everywhere. I can stretch out my crappie fishing until mid June if three factors remain intact. Water color which means timely rains, presence of food for crappie to eat and carp thrashing around to get good water color. If the small creeks clear up you can see bottom very quickly and all the fish will be gone.

Otherwise I am out with the rest of the fishermen chasing walleye and white bass on the huge flats. Can't tell you which one since wind direction dictates what you do each and every day. You want wind blowing in on the flat so the fish will be shallow and easy to catch. Mud lines created by wind and boat action will get the fish in just a few inches of water.

The typical hunting grounds for white bass/walleye action are point two, three, five, and six. You can throw in some smaller flats like in front of Findley Marina and Beckett's cove. Like I said I let wind tell me every day what to do. That and Seagull action. I watch for birds diving on shad and then chase them down. Seagulls are your best hunters on the lake.

The baits we throw depend on how deep you have to fish. I like a Gayblade or a Bigdude. Both are blade baits that give off a lot of flash. I also use a Blue Fox Vibrax spinner either a two or three blade size. Depending on how shallow the fish are and how big the bait is that they are eating.

Cover water is the game; white bass and walleye roam these flats like a pack of wolves. Once you locate one you better stop and fish the area completely. The walleye are the real prize and like I said they travel in packs so work the area hard.

I use my GPS to target large stumps on these flats and walleye tend to hide in them. We then take a quarter ounce jig and a small twister and tip it with a couple inches of night crawler. We stay back about ten feet and toss it in the root system of the stump. If a walleye is in there you will get one but you also catch a lot of large mouth bass doing this. I tell people that want to go on a walleye trip that you can call it that if you like but for me it is a multi-specie fish day. Anything will hit blade bait, in-line spinner or a night crawler on a jig.

Late May until mid July is your best months to run the flats so this is what we are doing for now. Once the water gets too hot and a thermo cline develops then we get out the jigging spoons and target drop offs on these same flats. Big white bass and very big buffalo. Clients just love the buffy action. Thirty-pound fish of any species are a blast.