

“Lake Shawn-Well Worth the Wait!” by Steve Felosa of Hunt ‘N Biz

Who likes to catch big fish??? I am sure everyone reading this answered, “He ll Yeah!” I love to catch ‘em too. It doesn’t matter if it is a bass, trout, or even carp for that matter. If it swims and tugs on my line I am ready to do battle. I am always looking for an economical fishing trip that provides not only numbers, but size as well. It was around 1998 when I discovered the fishing utopia I had been craving and at a cheap price with limited travel to the venue. All we had to do was cross the Ohio River from West Virginia to begin our fascinating journey at Lake Shawn.

Actually, it began back in the summer of 1996. A friend of mine came to me with news of a hot fishing lake in Ohio. He said that he heard the lake was private and when a party booked a trip they had the whole lake to themselves for the day. In addition, the numbers of fish being caught were astounding. This was music to my ears! I asked my buddy if he called to check into setting-up a trip and he said it was too late to book a trip that year. The following year, I decided to take hold of the reigns and attempted to contact the establishment myself. Once again, we would be denied access to this fishing Mecca. However, I did find out that in order to get a spot on this lake it was necessary to book the trip in January for a June/July timeframe. It seemed like most other great discoveries, everyone else was familiar with the hotspot and there were a limited number of days vacant once winter blossomed into spring.

Finally, it was May 1998 and my two buddies and I were about to realize fishing euphoria at its best. Although, it was a little foggy and chilly our aspirations were too high to be affected by the weather. As memory serves, I landed the first fish, a largemouth that weighed a pound or so. This was about five minutes into the day. The real energy boost came when my buddy, Carl had a four pound smallmouth bass explode on a *Heddon Tiny Torpedo* less than 10 minutes after I released my meager bass. The action would keep coming, fast and furious! I replicated Carl’s performance by fooling my own lunker smallmouth; at the same time my other buddy, Brian connected with a three pound largemouth bass on a spinnerbait. Poor Carl, he didn’t know who to keep the camcorder on and couldn’t wait to make another cast of his own.

As the morning disappeared, we used every fishing lure we owned and kept catching the bass. I would venture to say between the 3 of us, we landed in excess of sixty fish before noon. I failed to mention the number of 1.5# bluegills we were hooking. It’s a special treat when you are scoring on this size of ‘gills and on ¼ oz. spinnerbaits. What a fight! We were more than satisfied with our visit to Lake Shawn thus far, but had only landed one hybrid striped-bass that the lake has in abundance. Carl had that honor and the fish tipped the scale at close to nine pounds!

The afternoon slowed down, as the Sun made it’s presence known. We decided to go back to the dock to take a breather and eat a sandwich. Our host, Ray Brubaker was there to greet us and get a status update on our morning. He couldn’t understand why we had not caught more than one striper. Immediately, he barked-out orders to bait-up with the fish food (chum) that he had provided as bait upon our arrival. This chum is what he feeds the fish when the lake is vacant of fishermen. On the dock, we stood single file as Ray instructed us to cast out with a tiny bobber and the bait was on a #12 hook, we use to catch trout back home! We were all skeptical, but when Ray shoveled the chum on top of our bobbers they all disappeared, quicker than the marker barrels, when the captain on the movie “Jaws” harpooned the shark! We all had a hefty hybrid bending our rods double. The water churned with the feeding frenzy and the fish never seemed to get their bellies full. We were all wide-eyed and could not believe this kind of action existed in a freshwater setting. Every fish in the lake responded to the chum smacking the surface of the water. It took Brian less than 20 minutes to land three smallmouths that averaged #3 each. All our arms were sore and thumbs were raw from lippin’ the relentless feeders.

The day’s results: the average hybrid stripers were between 5-9#’s and the largemouth/smallmouth bass were between 3-5#’s. According to Ray, the lake was also inhabited with big catfish, carp, and yellow perch. In addition, Ray told us that the bluegills are also a hybrid strain; resulting in larger sizes of 1-2#’s which we are not accustomed too in West Virginia. I’m sure some of our Southern counterparts may catch way bigger, but I was impressed. In fact, we were all so impressed with Lake Shawn; we picked-up a cancellation for July of that same year. Those results were even better, but that’s another story for Hunt’N Biz!

