

WINTER FISHING SLOWLY RETURNS

By Steve McCadams

Updated January 09, 2014

Brutal winter weather dictated this week and Kentucky Lake's fishing scene was at the mercy of the elements. A lot of fish were caught but most all of them were taken around the fire and indoors where anglers were reliving outings of days gone by!

It appears the Artic blast is now in the rearview mirror and conditions are improving as the weekend approaches. Temperatures are forecast to return to normal in the days ahead with highs climbing back into the low 50's for a few days.

And how will fishing fare after the recent blizzard conditions? That's a question on the mind of area anglers as surface temps have dropped dramatically since last week and ice entered the picture in many shallow bays and flats.

When such conditions roll in as they did earlier this week in a short period of time there is usually a shad kill to some degree. Bait fish such as threadfin shad that have occupied shallow areas fall victim to the rapid drop in surface temperature and go into shock. Die offs are not uncommon for a few days in the aftermath of severe cold.

While a lot of baitfish will fall back to deeper water and ride out the cold there some don't make it. That scenario is usually tough on crappie, bass and sauger fishermen as the gamefish suddenly have an abundant food source that's easy to catch so they pretty much gorge themselves on the free buffet of bait.

Odds are that will be the case for a few days but all anglers can do at this point is try and see. Most of the crappie will move back to deep winter venues in the main lake so drop-offs will be the best choice and depths of 20 to 25 feet might be a good place to start.

Surface temps are likely to remain in the mid to upper 30's for a few days before slowly climbing back to the 40-degree threshold. Water color has been pretty clear and in good shape for fishing.

Lake levels have been falling slowly since last week and were forecast to be in the 355.2 range at Kentucky Dam by the weekend. Upstream in the New Johnsonville area the elevation is projected to be in the 355.7 range but falling slowly.

No doubt the frigid scene dealt a severe blow to winter fishing this week here on Kentucky Lake but watch for the warming trend now in progress to slowly improve things for the area's winter fishermen who have been pacing the floor while trapped indoors with cabin fever!