

ROLLER COASTER CONDITIONS TAKE ANGLERS ON RIDE

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Anglers have seen the weather roller coaster return! It appears a warming trend is in progress for the Kentucky Lake area as the weekend approaches. Everyone deserves a warm-up after enduring the winter blast of ice and snow earlier this week that pretty much paralyzed the fishing scene for a few days.

After a decent Saturday the weather turned nasty as heavy rains preceded another winter storm that saw temperatures dip several degrees below normal on Sunday, setting the stage for severe conditions. For the last several days folks have been digging out from the ice and snow that had roads impassable.

Boat ramps that had a thick layer of ice all week have finally thawed, opening the opportunity for anglers to get back out on the water this weekend as temps are forecast to climb into the upper 50's and maybe the lower 60's.

Surface temperatures dropped back the last few days. The snow melt is sending cold runoff into the reservoir so the water will be sluggish to warm despite improved weather. Readings were in the 39 to 42 degree range at midweek.

Lake levels were rising earlier in the week due to heavy rains and runoff but crested at midweek and began falling slowly. Projections for the weekend at Kentucky Dam will be 356.7. Upstream around New Johnsonville lake elevation is projected to be in the 357.2 range.

Those readings are some two feet above normal winter pool but the reservoir is headed back down and may well be there by the middle of next week barring additional rain.

TVA is spilling water at Kentucky Dam so watch for a slow, gradual drop in lake levels the next several days. Water color had been a bit dingy in the Paris Landing area and up Big Sandy while some of the larger bays were showing better color. The main Tennessee River channel has dingy water and quite a bit of curret.

The region's first major bass tournament got off to a good start last Saturday when calm winds and warm sunshine descended for a rare appearance. It took a hefty stringer of five bass weighing 26 pounds, 7 ounces to win the LBL Division Walmart Bass Fishing League event out of Kentucky Dam Marina.

Taking the top spot and a check for \$4,610 was Brent Anderson of Kingston Springs, TN. Anderson said he was cranking bars in 6 to 8 feet of water with a Strike King KVD HC Flat Side crankbait and that he caught upwards of 30 keepers.

Bass fishermen got lucky last Saturday with the weather as before and after the event conditions were cold and horrible. The bite had been pretty tough prior to the one decent day of fishing last weekend as most anglers indicated they had not done well in practice.

Watch for activity to rebound in the days ahead if warmer weather continues. March on Kentucky Lake has a reputation for producing the biggest stringers of the year. The fish really put on the feed bag as they come out of a winter lull and start bulking up for their prespawn phase.

Crankbaits will be the lure of choice for the next few weeks. From crawfish variations to loud Firetiger colors, the rocky points, shorelines, and rip-rap rock banks will be worthy of consideration as will those sloping mud bars and points where fish move up during the warmer afternoon periods.

Crappie anglers were reporting some success before the frigid conditions moved in. Just how the fish will react in the aftermath of the cold front and cold surface temperatures remains to be seen.

Odds are fish will rebound gradually as warmer days enter the picture. A few fish had been caught in midrange structure last week. Depths of 10 to 13 feet gave up a few scattered fish as did some of the main lake ledges where depths of 18 to 25 produced.

A few boats were spider rigging along the main lake humps and ledges, encountering some sluggish fish. Others were tightlining jigs with mediocre results as were those anglers dunking live minnows. Generally speaking the numbers were low but overall reports indicated some improvement over the previous week.

March is a month where things change quickly. Both bass and crappie will be on the move, especially when a day or two of warmer weather comes along and influences surface temperatures.

Anglers are hoping ice, snow and severe cold are gone for good. It has been a mean week and no doubt some cool days are ahead but hopefully no knockout blows like anglers received earlier this week. March Madness started with a vengeance!