

SPRING HASN'T SPRUNG...BUT IT'S ABOUT TO FOR KENTUCKY LAKE ANGLERS

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If you plan on fishing during the month of March it's a good idea to pack a snowmobile suit and suntan lotion; you never know which one you might need! Such has been the case as Kentucky Lake anglers had another week of March Madness in the form of sunshine, snow showers, cold winds and a pleasant day or two sandwiched in there somewhere.

When will spring get here and stay for a spell? That's a question on the minds of anglers this week and it appears some warmer weather is indeed forecast for the weekend. The week started on a cold and clear note. Snow showers and gale north winds further added insult to injury on Tuesday, keeping most boats at the dock or on the trailer. At midweek a slow warm up started.

To say that March has been brutal would be an understatement. Most anglers will be glad to see it go and welcome April with open arms.

Surface temperatures across Kentucky Lake have been in the 49 to 53 degree range this week. Cold nights have kept the water chilled and below average but watch for the weekend warm up to gradually improve things.

The weatherman promises temperatures will be in the upper 60's and may cross the 70-degree threshold as the weekend approaches. That will help the attitude of both the fish and the fishermen, assuming high south winds don't accompany the warming trend.

Lake levels have risen slightly the last few days for some unknown reason and were forecast to be in the 355.4 range at Kentucky Dam. Upstream in the New Johnsonville area elevation will be in the 355.1 range.

Water color is in pretty good shape across the reservoir with a slight stain throughout the Big Sandy and West Sandy area and also in the main Tennessee River channel. Some bays are clearing up compared to last week at this time with a little dingy water on shorelines where high winds have whipped up sediments.

For most crappie fishermen it has been a sluggish start to a stubborn spring. However, there have been some exceptions as late last week and earlier this week some decent stringers were taken south of the power lines in Big Sandy by an armada of boats trolling jigs.

Several boats reported limits taken while long-lining Road Runner style jigs in depths of 15 feet but out over deeper water and around the old Big Sandy river channel. Other techniques producing were spider-rig style presentations and drifting or pulling multi-pole rigs.

Crappie have been scattered and suspended out over deeper areas, a likely response to the colder weather that has kept them staging there awaiting a warm up. For the most part fish have not

been relating to structure and riding out the inclimate weather in la-la land.

Popular colors for the army of trollers have been red/chartreuse, blue/chartreuse and some Christmas tree glitter with a chartreuse tail just to name a few.

Crappie fishermen stalking the stakebeds in midrange depths of 8 to 12, along with others working deep ledges on main lake drop-offs have been less productive. The fish in these areas have been very scattered and catch rates have been low but improving.

Watch for a rapid change to take place in the next week to ten days once warmer surface temperatures enter the picture. Crappie will make a blitz toward structure soon and begin to stair-step their way toward spawning territory once surface temps climb into the mid to upper 50's.

Based on the present conditions it appears peak spawning will not take place for another ten days to two weeks. Cold weather has pushed the timetable back this year. Male crappie have not shown any hormonal changes and that darker appearance that signals the early phase of spawning has yet to present itself.

Spawning phases begin once surface temps reach the low 60's but peak phases kick in once the water warms into the 62 to 66 degree range and stays there. Right now anglers need some stability in the weather to further our cause.

Bass showed increased interest recently when a few rare days of sun popped out and helped warm things. Some good size fish have been taken lately on crawfish colored crankbaits, jig and pig combos, suspending jerk baits, and both Carolina rigged craws and Alabama rigs with shad variations.

Fishermen have been targeting some deeper venues where humps and ledges out in the main lake have been holding fish during the cold weather but there was an increase in shallow activity this week. Fish were showing signs of moving up toward shallow gravel banks, sloping points, and rip-rap.

A few hefty fish were taken in shallow zones this week as the fish moved up when sunny days warmed some of the dingy water in the backs of bays too. The midweek cold snap brought a short hiatus to the shallow bite but watch for things to rebound quickly by this weekend and into next week.

Kentucky Lake's schedule for reservoir filling kicks in April 1 each year so TVA will begin implementation of that next week. The curve is designed to reach the summer pool elevation of 359, which would be about four feet above present levels, by May 1 under normal conditions.

With rising lake levels and warmer temperatures teaming up anglers will see a transition of fishing patterns taking place beginning early next week.

Wave goodbye to a mean March that has worn out its welcome. Now let's hope it's not an awful April ahead!

