

Crappie Spawn Begins... Warm Days Trigger Annual Ritual

By Steve McCadams

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Warm days have descended, triggering sluggish crappie to begin spawning phases here on Kentucky Lake. By this weekend surface temperatures will climb into the mid 60's courtesy of several back to back sunny days that have really heated things up.

Since last week a lot of male crappie have shown the transition toward that beautiful dark purple appearance, a clear sign hormonal changes are taking place and the spawn is ready to begin. After a nasty spring the biological clock is now ticking but not before another cool start to a strange week.

The overall fishing scene has improved for both bass and crappie anglers but especially for slab

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alkers who thought warm spring days would never get here and stay. Overcoats were still standard attire earlier this week as gale winds and rain had quite a chill in the air before a midweek warm-up began.

Surface temperatures began the week in the 58 degree range, which reflected a cool down from the week before. By midweek the water edged across the 60-degree threshold and will continue to rise throughout the weekend.

Lake levels are rising too and some 18-inches above normal on TVA's scale for mid-April. Elevation projected for the weekend at both Kentucky Dam and upstream at New Johnsonville will be in the 358 range. That's only one foot below the summer pool level which isn't supposed to be reached until May 1 each year.

Many are watching the mighty Mississippi River elevation where snow melt and run-off from northern states has entered the picture. Higher river stages there will ultimately have an influence on lake levels here.

Water color is good throughout the Paris Landing area and up into most of the Big Sandy and West Sandy area. Some dingy water is present in the upper Big Sandy.

Rising lake levels continue to scatter crappie somewhat. A lot of fish have moved up Big Sandy into the New Hope and Country Junction sector this week in response to higher lake levels and rising surface temperatures. West Sandy anglers reported increased catches as well.

Some dandy stringers were taken by anglers vertical fishing jigs over manmade fish attractors in shallow depths of 4 to 7 feet. Boats pulling lines armed with curly tail jigs and Roadrunners were doing well as were drift fishermen and those spider rigging.

Down around the power lines and Sulphur Well Island area crappie were still suspended in places but moving up on flats in depths of 10 to 12 feet. A few fish were caught in 4 to 8 foot

stakebeds this week in the Paris Landing sector but shallow structure in the upper end of Big Sandy was more productive than in the Paris Landing region.

Fish will continue to be on the move the next few days as they blitz toward spawning structure. After several warm days a cool front is on the horizon for early next week, a scenario that might bring a short hiatus to the aggressive spawning activity.

Bass action backed off earlier this week in the aftermath of some cold nights that seemed to chill shallow water and diminish activity. Brisk northwest winds had an adverse effect earlier in the week but watch for the shallow bite to bounce back quickly as rising water and warmer days will team up for a positive change.

Spinnerbaits will have increased appeal in some dingy water areas as will loud colored crankbaits on gravel and rock banks, points, roadbeds, and sloping mud flats. Some anglers continue to toss Alabama rigs on deeper points and steep bluffs.

High winds will whip up sediments for a few days and anglers might work the windy sides of bays with a variety of loud colored bait presentations to find results. Surface temperatures in the mid to upper 60's are fast approaching and high lake levels may also send bass very shallow in the days ahead where some topwater lures will also be on the menu.

FISHING OPINIONS SOUGHT The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency is welcoming comments for its 2015 fishing regulations. This is an opportunity for the public to share ideas and concerns about fishing regulations with TWRA staff. Public comments will be considered by fisheries managers and may be presented as proposals for regulation changes. Comments may be submitted by mail to: Fish Comments, TWRA, Fisheries Management Division, P.O. 40747, Nashville, TN 37204 or emailed to TWRA.Comment@tn.gov. Please include "Fish Comments" on the subject line of emailed submissions. The fishing regulations are usually set each year during the October meeting by the Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission. This comment period concerning fishing regulations will be open until May 6.