

KENTUCKY LAKE LEVELS RECEDE...NORMAL PATTERNS RESUME AFTER HIGH WATER

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Lake levels have been falling for the last several days after Kentucky Lake's elevation jumped more than two feet above normal summer pool last week in the aftermath of heavy rains across the region.

It has taken well over a week for the reservoir to crest and begin falling but TVA has been pushing a lot of water through Kentucky Dam this week in an effort to bring the reservoir back down to normal summer elevation.

Anglers are dealing with a lot of current in the main river lately---almost too much at times---but that scenario will likely improve by this weekend as the drastic drawdown slows. Lake levels crested last weekend around 361.3 range at Kentucky Dam but were falling several inches each day. By this weekend TVA should have the lake a few inches below summer pool (359) on its slow descent toward fall and winter drawdown.

Surface temperatures were in the 83 to 86 degree range this week as warmer weather descended. Water color was clear throughout most of the Big Sandy embayment but a slight stain was present in the main Tennessee River channel due to the dramatic flow of water flushing through the system.

Some boat docks, launch ramps, swimming areas, roads and campgrounds were adversely affected by last week's surge in lake levels. Normal lake stages should greet anglers in the days ahead barring any more flooding upstream.

Catfish, bass and crappie anglers had to play the current this week as main lake ledges and the edge of the river channel were a bit swift in places by Kentucky Lake standards. Some good stringers of catfish had been coming from the main channel in depths of 30 to 40 feet before the increase in current and lake levels pushed the fish to flats and secondary bays.

Watch for the main river channel banks to resume activity by this weekend as falling lake levels and diminished current will pull catfish back to their typical summer hideouts.

Crappie were still being caught in midrange depths this week as manmade fish attractors such as stakebeds and brushpiles in the 13 to 16 foot depth range were holding fish. There were even a few fish taken in 12 to 13 foot structure when cloud cover helped the shallow bite.

Rising lake levels lately likely helped midrange depths hold on to decent numbers of crappie as the fish found a comfort zone there where shad were roaming. And, the higher water helped filter sunlight and kept some fish in places that would normally be a bit shallow this time of year.

Watch for more crappie to move toward the deeper sides of drop-offs the next few days as structure in the 18 to 24 foot range will have more appeal. Falling lake levels usually pull fish back toward deeper venues.

Although most of the crappie are being caught by anglers vertical fishing jigs or using bottom bumping double hook minnow rigs, some boats are trolling crankbaits and scoring decent catches out over deep water or near the drop-offs.

Good stringers of bass continue to come in but the changing lake stages did throw some anglers off balance for a few days. A lot of smaller bass were taken in shallow bushes, weeds and around willows at river islands where schools of pin minnows were found.

Working spinnerbaits in blue/chartreuse with gold willow-leaf blades has produced around shallow weeds and bushes, along with some various topwater baits such as buzzbaits and assorted jerk baits.

Main lake ledges are still the choice for most summer bass fishermen who are tossing big deep diving crankbaits, Carolina rigged worms, lizards, and craws, and big 10-inch worms rigged Texas style or on shaker head style hooks.

A few fish are still taking jig and craw combos or such baits as Zoom's Brush Hog worked along the ledges.

Popular worm choices have been Berkley Power Bait ribbon worms in the pumpkinseed, blue fleck, green pumpkin pepper, and red shad colors just to name a few. Zoom and Culprit's big worms have worked well too.

Strike King's new 6XD and 10XD series of big crankbaits are quite popular as are Norman's HD22, Rapala's DT16, Mann's Deep Pig and Bomber's big Fat Free Shad.

A few scattered mayfly hatches were still underway and that was attracting some bluegill to river islands and bridge piers where flies were hanging before falling to the surface. Tossing crickets and small grubs were producing as were small Rooster Tails.

As Kentucky Lake falls back to normal elevation expect regular summer patterns to resume at typical summer venues. It has been an unusual week to ten days of changing lake levels for July anglers but that's about to be in the rearview mirror.