

WILL FALL ARRIVE EARLY? ANGLERS ENJOYING UNUSUAL SUMMER SITUATION

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It's been a wet one! Even Kentucky Lake anglers have felt the rippling effect of a soggy summer.

At a time when lake levels are usually falling slowly on TVA's curve for annual winter drawdown the reservoir has had some surges. And, temperatures have been below normal on several days but no one is complaining about that one.

It might be mid-August but at midweek I had to reach in the closet for a long sleeved shirt and even a light jacket as north winds dropped the temperature and humidity, making it feel more like a late September outing. No doubt fall was in the air.

Lake levels jumped earlier this week in the aftermath of a series of thunderstorms that drenched the region for several days. Runoff has been significant for tributary streams entering Kentucky Lake and the elevation jumped about 18-inches and returned to the summer pool reading of 359 at midweek across most of the reservoir.

TVA was spilling water through Kentucky Dam and really got rid of a lot of the surge as the lake crested on Wednesday and began falling several inches each day. Projections for the weekend indicate readings of 358.3 at Kentucky Dam and New Johnsonville but that elevation will be changing on a daily basis as the lake has about a foot to go before returning to TVA's curve for this time of year.

Anglers can expect plenty of current for the next few days in the main Tennessee River channel. Water color there has significant stain but the upper ends of bays that were dingy will be clearing fast as falling water pulls the dingy color out. The upper portion of Big Sandy remains stained as is the West Sandy sector.

Down around the Paris Landing area water color is relatively clear. Surface temperatures this week reflect the unique series of summer cool snaps and have been resting in the 81 to 83 degree range. It's not unusual to see surface temps climb to the upper 80's and low 90's in mid to late August but that has not been the case this year.

With falling lake levels in the equation bass, catfish and crappie anglers will have current to deal with in the main river channel area but by this weekend it could slow down and be quite beneficial for the summer fishing scene.

Bass fishermen were holding on to a pretty good summer bite that saw an increase in shallow activity this week when rising water seemed to trigger more baitfish activity over shallow grassbeds and around some boat docks. Tossing chartreuse/blue skirted spinnerbaits with gold willow leaf blades were producing well as were some topwater and Rattle Trap style baits in chrome and blue colors.

There isn't much milfoil grass in the Paris Landing or in areas to the north but some good grass mats are showing up south around the New Johnsonville sector. Several flats and island rims south of Harmon's Creek and White Oak have some exposed grassbeds and have been holding several smaller fish with a few chunks mixed in.

Drop-offs on the main lake areas continue to produce fish for anglers tossing big 10-inch worms such as Berkley, Culprit, and Zoom in a variety of colors ranging from black/blue to blue fleck, pumpkin pepper, and red shad.

Carolina rigged worms and craws have held up too on the menu of summer styles as have jig and craw combos and the always popular big deep diving crankbaits. Strike King, Rapala, Mann's, and Norman's extra deep divers have been popular choices.

As lake levels fall back more grassbeds will be exposed in the next few days and weeks. Find the schools of minnows and you'll find some schooling fish too.

Crappie action has been fair but may improve the next few days as the combination of cooler surface temperatures and falling lake levels might pull some roaming fish back to structure, making them easier to locate.

Most anglers are still using vertical presentations of jigs and live minnows in both deep water venues and throughout midrange areas where stakebeds and brushpiles are located near ledges. There have been some fish taken this week in that 12 to 15 foot zone thanks to cloud cover and cooler conditions.

Watch for action to increase on the deep sides of main lake ledges this next week as falling lake stages and warm weather will likely pull some fish back to the normal summer hideouts. Depths of 18 to 24 feet will appeal. Those double hook bottom bumping rigs baited with live minnows have worked best in deep water.

A few boats are still trolling Bandit crankbaits and scoring now and then as they work the ledges and slowly cover a lot of water. Seems there's always some fish hitting crankbaits.

Catfishing has held up pretty good and several boats are working the edge of the main river channel in depths of 30 to 40 feet. Some good numbers were taken this week by anglers using nightcrawlers, chicken liver, and big live minnows.

The late summer catfish bite is usually dependent on current and conditions are cooperating in that department.

Bluegill activity has diminished with a few still lingering around bridge piers and along the river channel ledges. Mayfly hatches have been scarce lately as well.

Although fall is officially a month away on the calendar, the fish and the fishermen on Kentucky Lake are welcoming the early arrival. It sure has been nice out there lately.

