

BASS, CRAPPIE AND CATFISH BITE HOLDS UP...DECENT SUMMER ACTION CONTINUES

By Steve McCadams

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Bass and crappie action has held up pretty good this week as has catfishing along the main river channel thanks to a slow, steady current that has stimulated activity.

Anglers continue to enjoy nice fishing conditions as August mornings have been cooler than normal with several cloudy days that helped diminish the summer sun's rays. A few foggy mornings also made it feel nice out there and everyone is still talking about the unusual summer weather, although warmer temps returned at midweek.

Surface temperatures this week were still a bit below the norm for the third week of August. Readings were in the 81 to 83 degree range the last few days. Water color has been clear throughout most of the Big Sandy area with a slight stain showing up in the main Tennessee River channel but the overall color is good for fishing.

Lake levels are projected to be in the 357 range at Kentucky Dam by this weekend. Upstream around New Johnsonville a reading of 356.9 is expected. Elevation has been falling slowly throughout the week and about a foot below last week at this time. Readings are returning to normal after a mid-summer surge.

TVA will continue a slow, gradual drawdown in the days and weeks ahead barring any more heavy rains across the watershed.

Bass action has been pretty good again this week as a variety of patterns are paying off. Lots of boats are venturing south toward the New Johnsonville sector in search of aquatic vegetation. Some milfoil is showing up there and bass have been relating to the grassbeds where schools of shad are hanging out.

Here in the Paris Landing sector bass fishermen are working the main lake drop-offs with big deep diving crankbaits and scoring some nice catches. And, slowly working Carolina rigs with worms and craws have continued to score as have the big Texas rigged worms work around the ledges.

A few anglers are casting swim baits, Alabama rigs at times or altering to a jig and craw combo hopped around the deep water venues.

Some big schools of shad are showing up along the river channel ledges and meandering out on flats as well where a few schooling bass have been busting them on the surface at times.

Other boats have focused on shallow areas where the back of creeks, shallow gravel banks, roadbeds, boathouses and bridge piers have produced a few bass when minnows were located. Working smaller crankbaits and spinnerbaits have produced a few fish with some topwater action underway in the early morning and late afternoon low light periods.

Catfish were back on the prowl this week too as the slow current is the cat's meow for boaters working their bottom bouncing rigs along the edge of the river channel. Depths of 30 to 40 feet are holding some good numbers as anglers continue to work nightcrawlers, chicken livers, and cut shad along the submerged river bank and play the current.

Summer has been kind to crappie anglers as well. Decent stringers have been taken this week with most of the fish relating to the edge of the main lake ledges or holding on the deep sides around the 17 to 22 foot depth range.

A few scattered fish remain in midrange stakebeds and brushpiles too. Depths of 11 to 15 feet are holding on to some crappie these last few weeks, especially if you catch a cloudy day with light winds. Seems the fish have had plenty of forage in the midrange areas as shad have meandered along the secondary flats and inside the bays for several weeks now.

Live minnows have been producing well for crappie fishermen but jigs tipped with minnows have done alright. A jig tipped with Berkley Power Bait has been appealing too but expect to encounter lot of annoying yellow bass and small bluegill using this presentation.

Mayfly hatches rebounded last week as a big hatch occurred south around Lick Creek and down toward the Danville area for a day or two. That brought a few bass and bluegill up shallow to feast on the natural buffet too.

August is about to lose its grip and the late summer bite has held up well courtesy of an unusual August that has paved the way for an early fall transition.