

FALL TRANSITION UNDERWAY FOR FISH AND FISHERMEN

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Say goodbye to summer. Autumn angling is about to begin.

While it seems like the seasons changed a few weeks ago when cool snaps put a chill in the air the official arrival of fall occurs on Sunday. Both the fish and fishermen have been slowly transcending toward the change for a few weeks now.

For those of us who have been on the water on a daily basis these last few weeks it's been a joyful occasion. The fishing has been good; the crowds have disappeared; and the winds have been light. I have a long list of reasons on why I love it out there this time of year.

Fall fishing here on Kentucky Lake is overlooked by most anglers. It's underrated too. Stable weather conditions are the norm and that helps fishing patterns hold up well from week to week.

Lake levels are predictable too and that's another feather in the cap of autumn angling. If you're fortunate enough to establish a pattern for bass, crappie or catfish then odds are you can return next week and find them in the same locale.

When compared to other seasons fall has a lot going for it. Spring is great and certainly has the cure for cabin fever when winter woes take their toll but cold fronts that time of the year can change things overnight. Gale north winds dictate fishing locations or flooding rains swell lake levels and throw a curve to spawning phases of both bass and crappie.

For me this fall gig is just fine. I'll take it over the hot and humid conditions of a sultry summer or the bone chilling winds of winter. I like it better than spring too as March can be mean and April can be awful.

Granted the best time to go fishing is whenever you can!

Now that my fall fishing sermon has touched the high spots comes this week's fishing report. And, I'm glad to say it's pretty much on schedule as to lake levels and fishing patterns.

Surface temperatures fell back into the 78 to 81 degree this week and that will help bring more shad to shallow flats and the backs of bays. Hot on their trail will be meandering bass and crappie too.

Water color remains pretty clear across most of the reservoir with a few areas of stain where winds whipped up shoreline sediments. Rain chances were increasing as this report was updated and by this weekend some dingy water could be present in the upper ends of bays from runoff.

Lake levels have been falling on a slow but gradual basis and pretty much following TVA's drawdown curve. Projected elevation for the weekend at Kentucky Dam will be 355.4, which is down several inches from last week at this time. Readings will be similar at New Johnsonville

this weekend as stability enters the picture unless heavy thunderstorms enter the picture.

Crappie activity improved this week with fish moving up toward main lake flats in pursuit of threadfin shad that were schooling. Although fish were a bit scattered at times making several stops paid dividends as stakebeds and brushpiles in 7 to 9 foot depths were holding fish as were structures in 11 to 13 foot depths.

Some of the deeper ledges out on the main lake are still holding on to decent numbers of crappie too. Depths of 15 to 19 feet were accounting for a few bigger fish that had not moved up shallow just yet.

It's not unusual to find crappie at several different depth ranges right now as they have quite a comfort zone now that surface temps are cooling and shad are on the move. In the weeks ahead watch for those shallow zones to attract great numbers of fish, especially once surface temps fall back to the low 70's.

Jigs tipped with live minnows and Berkley crappie nibbles in the white or chartreuse color have worked well this week. A few popular jig colors have ranged from black/chartreuse to red/white.

Bass activity was slow earlier in the week when a couple days of high skies with no cloud cover seemed to curtail activity. However, at midweek things improved as south breezes returned with cloudy days and that stimulated the bite.

Fish were moving up to gravel banks, roadbeds, and shallow flats where schools of baitfish were attractive. Watching for gull feeding frenzies can help you locate the baitfish activity too. Several bass were schooling when shallow flats full of shad appealed.

Tossing shad variations of shallow crankbaits and swim baits were working well as were spoons and Rooster tail style lures. A few fish were taking jerk baits in their quest to hit topwater.

A lot of bass are still coming from submerged grassbeds in behind islands and around island rims. Tossing Texas rigged worms, fluke style worms and shad colored jerk baits have been effective as have spinnerbaits and buzzbaits at times.

Watch for shallow gravel banks and points to hold some bigger fish now that surface temps are cooling. The main lake ledges are still worthy of consideration as big crankbaits, Carolina rigs, Alabama rigs and jig and pig combos are still working.

Catfish action is holding up along the main river channel again this week. Bottom bumping rigs using nightcrawlers and skipjack have produced some nice fish this week from the 30 to 40 foot depth range. Current has been steady this week but may subside by the weekend as TVA appears to be headed toward stability in the days ahead barring any drastic rains.

Fall fishing will officially begin Sunday. Some fine times await angler in the weeks ahead so hop to it before ole' man winter chases this great season away too.

