

(Updated April 16th, 2019)

MESSY SPRING STILL ANNOYING ANGLERS...CRAPPIE SPAWN STILL A MYSTERY By Steve McCadams

Dogwood winter started the week off for the Kentucky Lake fishing scene as frigid temps followed a wet and windy weekend. A quick rebound returned by Tuesday only to have cooler conditions with more rain and thunderstorms in the forecast as Easter weekend arrives.

Seems a weird spring just won't release its grip. There have been a few nice days sandwiched in-between the inclement weather but overall, anglers have battled challenging weather and this week was another example. That roller coaster was still running!

Since last week the overall crappie bite improved for some fishermen but the overall picture still has many wondering when peak spawning phases will take place.

An annoying spring has played games with fishing patterns, keeping most crappie fishermen wondering why fish haven't moved toward shallow structure to kick spawning phases into high gear. A few more fish were caught this past week and some showed signs of moving up toward shallow zones and shorelines but it has not been an aggressive blitz like times past.

Techniques such as spider rigging and long line presentations of curly tail grubs and Road Runner style jigs continue to pay the most dividends for boaters slow trolling and covering a lot of water. The bulk of decent stringers this spring in the Paris Landing and upper Big Sandy sector have been taken by these two techniques.

A few anglers have managed to take limits of crappie while long lining or spider rigging but not everyone has been catching crappie on a consistent basis. In fact, for the vast majority the spring crappie bite has been below average this year.

Crappie continued to stage in open water flats and bays this week, suspending out over midrange depths instead of heading toward shallow structure such as manmade stakebeds and brushpiles.

Since surface temperatures climbed into the mid to upper 60's last week the fish left deeper depths and moved toward 7 to 10 foot depths in some areas. Up Big Sandy and West Sandy a few crappie were taken in the 5 foot depth range this week.

Surface temps last week responded to sunny days and climbed to the 66 to 67 degree range for a day or two. Some decent stringers were taken, mostly by trolling techniques, but a few boats vertical fishing jigs and minnows over midrange structure began to pick a few prespawn fish out of submerged beds.

It was a short honeymoon with nice weather, however, as a cool start to last weekend paved the way for a cold snap that saw temps drop down near the freezing mark a few nights. That pulled surface temps back down to the 61 degree range to start the week off and had only warmed to the 63 degree range by Tuesday.

Cold fronts can play havoc with spawning phases. Dropping surface temps can back the fish off for a day or two, interrupting their path toward spawning territory. Once stability returns anglers are hoping a few fish make another attempt to transition toward shallow venues and structure.

Water color has been pretty good across the reservoir this week. Lake levels are a few inches above normal but nothing too drastic for mid-April. Elevation is projected to hang around the 357.6 range this weekend.

Normal summer pool level is 359 and TVA's target date for that each year is May 1.

Meanwhile, crappie have continued to evade a lot of anglers who have fished traditional locations and depth ranges only to find extremely scattered results.

Up Big Sandy a few fish started showing up in the New Hope and Country Junction area last week but that big push has eluded most fishermen as to the timetable and location.

It seems the long line and spider rigging techniques that covered more water have been the ticket. Fish usually stage in midrange depths and make a blitz toward structure where they broadcast their eggs around cover but that peak time frame remains a mystery for many this spring.

Some boats were casting shorelines with curly tail grubs and live minnows worked slowly beneath slip bobbers but the successful days have been few.

Hopefully weather patterns will settle down after the Easter weekend cool snap. That could see the crappie picture continue to evolve if warmer days return next week.

Bass fishermen haven't been too happy either. Finding big number of nice size bass have not been in the cards for some of the lake's veteran anglers.

Rising lake levels have now brought some bass toward shallow shorelines where dead grass is attracting them just outside of pockets and shoreline habitat most of which is still a bit too shallow.

Casting Texas rigged lizards and craws have worked well at times as have shallow running crankbaits and spinnerbaits. Still popular have been crankbaits on gravel points and roadbeds and around rip-rap banks.

Weekend tournaments continue to paint a pretty tough picture of the bass scene as catching a hefty limit of fish has not been easy for most of the field.

Now that mid-April has arrived anglers should see stability improve in the weather patterns. Hopefully these leftover March winds take their ugly mood swing and vacate the area soon.