

I think the 60s-70s rock group Grateful Dead best summed up the spring of 2017 on Ky and Barkley Lakes with the line "What a long, strange trip it's been."

We have endured about every condition imaginable and if you don't like the conditions today, just wait till tomorrow when they will be different. The code words for this week have been "High Water."

We are seeing the crest of around 364 and now a SLOW drop back to summer pool of around 359.5. The sudden rise of the lakes and water temps in the mid to high 60s put fish in a feeding and spawning mode for the most part, but really put fishermen in a seek-and-deploy mode.

So much to cover, where do I start? I guess the best place for me to start is where the white Excel Bay Pro has spent the most time this week: seeking bluegills and redears.

## **Bluegills and Redears**

I am seeing some great catches for medium sized gills but very few redears. The newly submerged cover is a mecca for redears and they have been tough for most everybody to figure out. They are prowling the cover. Those who do hit them right are catching them on red worms, crickets, and popeye jigs tipped with wax worms.

I've seen some decent size redears at the cleaning tables but redeer fishermen are the most tight-lipped of the fishing fraternity. Ask one where they are catching the redears and you might get a general, vague answer at best.

The bluegills are very fickle. One minute the large bull males are tearing it up, the next they are gone. The spawning females look like they are ready to burst. We have done our best in 7-10 feet of water, the areas they would normally be if the water was at summer pool. We caught some 9 inch spawning color males on 2 trips with new friends from the Louisville, Ky area.

We had to fan cast areas using bobber rigs with popeye jigs but our best results were on drop-shot rigs with red worms. The drop-shot rig is nothing more than a small panfish hook tied on a loop knot about 12-16 inches above a medium sized split shot. It is worked slowly on the bottom around nesting areas. That leads me to the next species...

## **Catfish**

We are seeing the spawning channel catfish right in with the spawning bluegills. They will tear up a drop-shot rig and once hooked, will give a strong fight. Make sure your panfish reel is set with light to medium drag. A 4-5 pound channel cat will rip the guts out of a small reel with the drag set too tight. It usually ends with a short run, broken line, and dreams of 3 pound redears.

We are also starting to pick up some big channels when pulling crankbaits for crappie.

## **Crappie**

Our trolling has been badly hampered by all the trash that has been floated off the banks in the high water. When we have been able to pull crankbaits, we have done very well on crappie, some with eggs, some spawned out already. The crappie we have been targeting have been on medium depth flats near deep water and break lines. We have also caught several small to medium white and black crappie in the shallower areas around bluegill beds on popeyes.

Sunday was a make-up day for dates missed by high winds. Two great ladies from the Memphis area started the day and caught some nice white crappie despite winds that hampered where we could fish. Two guys from Pontiac, Michigan finished up the day and we found some nice white crappie willing to slam a crank.

We used Arkie 350s, Bomber 6As, and 200 and 300 Bandits in a variety of colors. If a color is not getting bit, put it back in the box and try something else. Changing cloud cover, wave action, and sunlight angles will make one bait red hot, another ice cold.

## **White and Yellow bass**

We are catching some impressive white bass when trolling cranks for crappie. There are tons of small yellow bass in the bluegill spawning areas that are hitting pretty much anything we drop over the side of the boat. Don't dismiss the white and yellows as table fare. They are great if you spend just a little time trimming the red areas off the fillets.

## **Bass**

I'm seeing the bass fishermen working the newly flooded cover hard. They are using creature baits and spinnerbaits. They are still some working the points and bars farther back into creeks and coves.

We are starting to catch spawned out bass on cranks when chasing crappie on ledges.

All in all, if a person is willing to tolerate the floating trash, fish are biting in a variety of ways.

Be careful out there!! Wear your life jackets any time the big motor is being used. Obey the maritime and game laws. Most of all, be courteous to those on the lake with you. A smile and a "How ya doin'" goes a long way to make somebody have a better day.

Capt. Doug Wynn  
Crappie Gills n' More  
5 Rivers Taxidermy  
157 Chase Loop  
Benton, KY 42025  
(270) 703-7600

[doug@5riversdux.com](mailto:doug@5riversdux.com)  
[www.crappie-gills-n-more.com](http://www.crappie-gills-n-more.com)