

Doug Wynn's Fishing Report

For May 18, 2018

Report for Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley

Hello from the Excel Bay Pro 203.

I spent the day Thursday at the Excel manufacturing plant in Mountain View, Arkansas. To be surrounded by Bay Pro boats of 3 sizes and every color imaginable was like Christmas to a kid. I have found Excel to be a company that listens to its customers and makes changes if the customer has an idea that will make a boat more functional or safer.

Excel is coming out with some new models that will be at the top of the aluminum market. They are in the process of building a state-of-the-art \$9 million plant near Reelfoot Lake, Tenn. that should make their production times much shorter. The next time you have a new fishing or hunting boat in mind, do yourself a favor and look at the Excel boat line.

Crappie

The last week has been great for pulling crankbaits. The Picos have been deadly as usual. The colors that have worked best have been Simply Awesome, Mudbug, Zombie and a custom color that will be in production soon.

Beverly and Charlie from Frankfort were in town last Thursday and Friday. Right off the dock they felt like family and took to the crankbaits like ducks to water.

We didn't put up huge numbers of crappie but the size was impressive, with Beverly boating one that was well over 2 pounds. It was almost 17 inches long. It completely inhaled a Simply Awesome. Not to be outdone, Charlie landed a female redear that was probably 1 1/2 pounds on a Mudbug.

I personally release every female redear I catch that isn't deep hooked and bleeding and encourage my clients to do the same. After pictures, this one was dropped back in to continue the cycle of life. Most of our catch came from 15-20 feet near structure.

We topped our catch both days with several keeper sauger. I consider these wonderful tasting fish to be a huge bonus and they are showing up in numbers this year for us that we haven't seen in a couple of decades.

My favorite fishing buddy, my beautiful wife Vicki, got to share OUR boat with me Tuesday. Her skills with the crankbait tactics are rivaled by very few. She also loves fishing with the trolling set-up. We found a good concentration of crappie in 15-25 feet of water suspended in the center of a large creek. There are brushpiles and stakebeds in the area but the fish didn't seem to be very close to the cover. We made sure our baits

were running 10-15 feet deep. Here again, the Picos were by far the best bait but we did catch a few on other brands.

I am starting to see more and larger catfish hammering the cranks. The small, non-keeper largemouth bass are making life miserable in some locations.

Bluegills and Redears

Vicki and I caught some pig bluegill males in 15-18 feet of water. It takes a good gill to take on a 3" crankbait. I happened to put a waypoint on the locations of these catches.

Anglers chasing the panfish are fishing in a wide variety of depth but the standard crickets, waxworms on a jig, and redworms under a bobber are what they are being caught on. We are still over a week from the full moon on the 29th and the bluegill/redear catches should improve as we get closer.

Check out sandy/pea gravel bottom areas in small coves off the main bays and creeks. I always start out with at least one bait on a drop-shot rig that can be fan cast over the area to locate the best bedding areas. The redears will be in the same vicinity as the bluegills but usually slightly deeper.

I fancy myself as a conservationist in many ways. While it is a legal thing to do, I don't personally see the need to show up at the cleaning station with 2-300 small bluegills to clean just to show your buddies how great your fishing skills are. Redear beds can easily be cleaned out by over fishing. Thankfully, after much pressure from fishermen, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife put a 20 fish limit on redears a few years ago.

Catfish

With the warmer water, the catfish spawn has started. Find rocky areas, especially those around rip-rap or pea gravel, and use worms or cut baits on or near the bottom. The channel cats will be shallower than the blue cats.

While on the subject of catfish. When you clean catfish and are at a station where the remains will be thrown back into the lake, learn where the swim bladder is on the catfish and cut or pierce it so the carcass won't float back up later to stink up the area.

The guys at Sportsman's Marina spend a lot of time recovering the floating remains. Not an appealing job. The swim bladder is up in the rib cage area and is a white, reasonably tough membrane. One cut or a stab to the bladder should allow the carcass to stay on the bottom where all the creatures that live there can feast on the remains.

Boat traffic is picking up. There is a huge FLW tournament out of Kentucky Dam Marina this weekend so the traffic in that area will be insane.

Be careful out there! Watch out for the folks who won't watch out for you. We experienced the tragic drowning of a young soldier last week. Let's use that tragedy to keep us vigilant all summer. Wear your PFD when the big engine is running.

Welcome to our slice of Heaven.