

Doug Wynn's Fishing Report

For July 7, 2018

Report for Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley

Hello from the Excel Bay Pro 203 "Fishful Thinking".

I guess we've already entered what used to be described as "Dog Days" even though about a month or so earlier than traditionally. The storms that chased us off the lake twice on Friday broke up a long streak of extremely hot weather.

Even with the high temperatures, the amount of current being generated hasn't seemed to be having much of an effect on crappie fishing. From the looks of most bass fishermen I've encountered lately, they are experiencing the same results.

I'm having to cover a lot of water to stay on the crappie. That in itself is a good thing since I'm also picking up dozens of new waypoints that are worthy of future scrutiny.

Let me stop here and expand on that thought. I am so used to having my Humminbird Helix Mega 12" screen in front of me constantly that I fail to realize how important it is as a tool. This week I've had three groups whose express reason for hiring me was to see how I have my boat arranged, what equipment I use, and how they can best spend their money to try to duplicate my success.

Granted, all of these groups were there to catch fish but the chance to pick my brain the whole time we were on the water was their goal. That is my goal also. As a people person, I relish the chance to meet new folks, get to know them, and pass along as much basic fishing knowledge as I can in our time in the boat. I see myself as much as a teacher as a guide. That should be the goal of any outdoor professional.

A lot of folks who get their first chance to see how I use the Helix to find the structure that might hold crappie, then find the crappie in that structure, are amazed when I tell them to watch their rods and suddenly the rods bend from strikes. They act like it is nothing short of magic. Magic has zero to do with it.

Hundreds of hours watching images on that screen has everything to do with it. Success comes to those who work the hardest. Now, I can't say for certain that a blip on my screen is a crappie or if that fish will hit that Pico crankbait that is about to zip past its nose. I can have a pretty good guess based on past experience but when it all comes together and multiple rods all bend at the same time, it makes me look pretty smart to those in the chairs behind me. They have zero idea how many thousands of times the exact same scenario has occurred with zero results.

My point, the money a pro fisherman (or a good weekend angler) spends on their fancy gear should be for nothing more than to add another tool to their tool box of available

options. Learning how to use that tool is best accomplished by spending untold hours watching and hoping for those blips to turn into fish in the box.

When I tell that client, who is soaking up as much knowledge as possible, that my MinnKota Terrova I-Pilot trolling motor costs \$2000 or the Helix several hundred more, I'm not trying to impress them with material things. I'm trying to show them what technology is out there, how it is used, and how they can use the technology and time on the water for success.

Did I catch crappie before all the technology? Yes, but I spent a whole lot more time hoping for success that often didn't come until a later trip. Whether a person is setting up Granddads old trusty 14 foot aluminum boat or a nice shiny new deck boat, knowing what technology is out there and how it can be such a huge help for better fishing, is what I'm being paid for. BTW, I receive zero from Humminbird or MinnKota for using or endorsing their products.

Crappie

Go deep and keep a bait in their face.

The Pico cranks we have been so successful with the past year will run in the vicinity of 16-18 feet +/- with 100 feet of line out. I've been targeting structure that breaks from shallow to deep with depths a few feet deeper than what the crankbait will run.

It hurts me almost as bad as other fishermen to have a stump, brushpile, gar or huge catfish leave me with a broken line but it's going to happen. Count on it and take it to the bank. You will lose baits doing this. Most of our lost baits the past few weeks are to big catfish we never see except for the tell-tale slime up the line above where it broke. This situation could be lessened with braid line but the average client has zero idea how damaging braid can be if they grab it to try to pull a crank free.

I've endured the painful cuts ever since braid came out so it's mono Trilene Big Game 12-pound test for me. Lost cranks or not.

Look for bottom contours that have cover. The more the better. My buddy Justin from Evansville was on Barkley with some friends Thursday and we crossed paths. He was bemoaning the fact he was seeing stakebeds and brushpiles full of crappie (YES, you can see the fish in the cover with the Helix) but they just wouldn't come out of cover to play. We parted ways and later that night he texted me that the fish that wouldn't play early started to bite later in the day. His persistence meant he and his buddies headed back to Evansville with 20+ nice crappie in the cooler.

YIPEEEEE!! We are seeing what appears to have been an excellent shad spawn. The "baitballs" that are our target are getting bigger and more numerous on both KY and Barkley. This can only help the health of every species that depend on shad for their food.

White and Yellow Bass

I'm seeing almost constant jumps in some large bays on both lakes. The jumps are small and don't last but just a few seconds but they are a great spot to try in-line spinners, spoons, blade baits and soft-plastic curly tail grubs. I've been releasing almost every white and yellow due to their skinny bodies but as summer progresses and they put the feedbag on, quality will improve.

Catfish

I have some dear friends who live to catfish. They are about to put their tackle in a yard sale. Even on days with high current, their catches on both lakes have been very light on traditional bottom bouncing rigs. They have tried most every bait known to man. Success below the dams hasn't been much better.

Catfish have been tearing us up on crankbaits. We don't target the cats but they are in the mix, chasing the schools of bait that the crappie depend on. Many days, blue and channel cats will make up a good percentage of the fish in the cooler.

Safety

The more hours one spends on the lake, the more you notice how very careless many boaters are. I don't know if it's alcohol induced, inattention, or just don't give a rip for those around them? I'm going to say probably upwards of 80% of the occupants of boats on both lakes don't wear PFDs at ANY time on the water.

I watched amused last Sunday while a group loaded a pontoon on Barkley at a public ramp. This group had been practicing for the "Clown Car" routine in the circus. You know the drill: Lets see how many adults we can pile on this medium sized pontoon without doing a turtle and flipping the whole shooting-match upside down.

Folks, there were some serious implications and this group was a disaster waiting to happen.

Of course, there was not a life jacket to be seen. I just shook my head and went on about my business.

Be careful out there! Watch out for those who won't watch out for you. If you aren't going to wear your PFD while the big engine is running, at least have it within reach. That will help the rescue squad know where to start looking for your body.

Keep plenty of water and sports drinks on the boat and stay hydrated as best you can.

Welcome to our slice of Heaven.

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