

Doug Wynn's Fishing Report

For March 4, 2019

Report for Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley

Hello from the Excel Bay Pro "Fishful Thinking". I guess wishful thinking would be more appropriate. A drive around the lakes area will have us all wishing for less water and a warm-up.

Most of my coffee buddies at JoJo's Cafe in Benton are eager to see spring get here ASAP. One of our group has been pumping water out from around his elderly Mother's home below Calvert City on the Tennessee River. The water hasn't gotten into her house. My heartfelt prayers go out to those who have experienced flooding and the awful clean-up that comes after the water drops.

I haven't been on the water but a few brave souls have been. What they have encountered is water the color of chocolate milk, untold amounts of floating debris, and fish that have no idea what to do next.

The crappie are buried up in brush and stakebeds that have rarely seen the amount of water that now covers them. I'm sure there have been a few crappie and bass that have ventured into newly submerged cover in pursuit of baitfish but they won't stay there once the lake starts to recede back toward pool stage.

As of this morning the lake levels reached a peak of 367 feet. The levels are expected to drop about one foot per day. Since the calendar says early March instead of early May, we can bet TVA will continue to drop the lakes (as river levels allow) until they reach winter pool--around 355 feet.

This drop is coming during a period where the surface temperatures are in the mid 40s. We should all celebrate this. Should this flooding have happened with the surface temperatures in the mid 60s, we would be looking at the loss of most, if not all, of the spawn for all game fish for the year.

This has happened much too often over the last couple of decades and the result is tough fishing 2-3 years down the road. Don't get me wrong, I'm not bashing TVA. They are very quick to tell you these lakes aren't for fishing or recreation, they are for flood control! Exactly what we are seeing now.

Let's talk about the immediate conditions and how they should affect fishing. A one foot drop daily is pretty extreme. Any fish that have taken up scouting the newly flooded areas will be forced to move out to the cover nearest deeper water and should stay there until the shrinking lake forces them out into deeper water.

Keep in mind a fish in less than 50 degree water isn't needing to feed very often but will probably welcome an offering sat on top of their nose. This is where a very slow presentation like spider rigging or vertical jigging will be very productive. I would start out with plastics and maybe tip a jig with a small minnow. There will be days a minnow will be all they seem to want. Try a handful of tactics until the fish tell you what they want.

Sunday during the short snowfall after church, my wife and I checked out some of the local ramps and their conditions. Right now the public ramp at the Jonathan Creek Bridge is just barely usable. The parking lot is in good shape. The ramps at Waterfield Park and Cherokee Park are both open but parking is at a premium. Kenlake State Park ramp is fine. Wildcat and Irvin Cobb on Blood River should be available.

I can't stress enough, be careful out there. The itch to get out is strong but discretion is advised. There are untold thousands of pieces of trash floating--some small but some the size of a boat. As the levels drop, a lot of this trash will be drawn to the mouths of bays then toward the dam. With flows at KY Dam to continue at levels we rarely see, it's scary how fast the current can pull an object on the lake.

Take extra clothes, wear that PFD, fish with a friend, and keep a close eye on the wind direction and speed. A dunking in 40 degree water will often be the last. Hypothermia kills quickly. The fish aren't being sucked out of the lake with all the current so why take a chance. There will still be plenty of fish once the lake condition calms down and spring gets closer.

Welcome to our soggy slice of Heaven!!

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