

# Doug Wynn's Fishing Report

**For March 22, 2019**

*Report for Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley*

Hey Y'all from the Excel Bay Pro 203 "Fishful Thinking". It finally feels and is starting to look like spring is upon us. The calendar agrees.

The lakes are settling in near winter pool for the April 1st beginning of the slow rise to summer pool. Hopefully the flooding on the lakes is in the rear-view mirror even though I expect we will see major river flooding in the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys for some time. Our prayers are with those affected by flooding.

The reports are looking up for decent fishing in the near future. With all the muddy water, many crappie fishermen are just now beginning their season. Those who have found good weather and good conditions have found numbers not up to expected levels but quality well above normal.

The same story has been told to me over and over, we didn't catch many but what we caught were big. Spider riggers and those longline trolling are accounting for most of the fish. As the water temperatures move thru the mid 50s, action will pick up and the numbers should as well.

Bass fishermen are reporting mixed bags and different catches day to day. I just got verification of a five bass catch on the south end of KY Lake last weekend that contained two largemouth bass over 10 pounds by the same angler. 10 pounds seems to be the target most bass fishermen live for. To catch TWO on one day is amazing.

My wife and I attended the Marshall County BASS Club event weigh-in last Saturday. While many teams had good catches on Friday, Saturday proved to be tough for most. A team from Calloway County High School waxed the field with the only five fish limit that weighed just short of 24 pounds!

Let me change hats here: I've received two calls lately from bass clubs who were filling out their tournament schedules for the season and wanted my take on why there were no more bass in KY and Barkley Lakes. One guy even went as far as asking if the Asian carp were eating all the game fish!!!!???

The word, however outlandish, is it is not worth coming to KY and Barkley Lakes because you are risking life and limb from Silver carp hitting every boater in the head when they jump into boats and there aren't any fish here anyway. GIVE ME A \*^\$#%# BREAK!!!! Do people really think our beautiful lakes have become a fishless desert?

That's not the case folks and there are white hatted cowboys in town who are going to save us all. They go by the names of COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN. They are some of the hardest working folks around who have a job that few of us would be willing or able to do. It is backbreaking work! They are the tip-of-the-spear in the fight against Asian carp invaders.

I've attended two meetings this week about the Asian carp battle. One was with a representative of Sen. Mitch McConnell's office, Andrew Swafford, and a group that consisted of many sides of the carp battle. There were representatives of the fishing guide community, the retailer community, the tourism community, the competitive fishing community, and the carp processing community from several states. It was hosted by KY Fish and Wildlife and US Fish and Wildlife.

We have finally gotten a national audience for our plight. The voices that have screamed unheard for years are now being listened to by more than just our state fisheries departments. Congress has heard our screams and has started to get serious about funding the fight. While the amount of funding is still well below what it needs to be, it's a start.

The second was a public meeting with KY Fish and Wildlife, the commercial fishing community and the fishing public. Let me say this - if you think our fisheries biologists aren't earning their pay, go to one of these meetings and see the amazing amount of statistics and history that is being used to back up the claims of impact on our fisheries. Vicki and I were both amazed by the information and in awe of those who put it together.

OK, we are going to be seeing some changes this season in respect to commercial fishing and how we can all get along and benefit from their hard work.

First: the carp fishermen will be allowed to fish gill nets seven days a week except on holiday weekends like Memorial Day and Labor Day. None of these fishermen willfully place nets in areas where they will be destroyed by recreational traffic but it will be up to each boater to be watchful.

Second: we will start seeing large yellow buoys with flags attached on net locations. These nets are free to licensed commercial netters and are voluntary for now. There will be signage at launch ramps about the flags and to warn boaters to avoid them. There are severe penalties for willfully destroying nets.

It is understood that accidents will happen but nets set shallow or on the surface **MUST** be attended at all times. If you are motoring along at plane speed and realize a net is present **DON'T SLOW DOWN OR STOP** - keep on going. Much less damage to a net will be done at high speed than at idle speed.

Third: bow fishermen will be allowed to sell carp taken. Those fish won't bring top price but it might pay gas money.

These netters are our only defense right now. There are sound barriers that will be tried at Barkley Dam later this year. There is a large amount of state and private dollars being spent on infrastructure to market the carp commercially BUT the goal of everyone involved is to rid Kentucky and Barkley Lakes of the invaders and stop them for entering through the locks at the dams.

Asian carp are wonderful to eat. They are bony but videos on YouTube will show you how to dress and prepare them. I much prefer them to catfish. The meat is very firm, white and flaky. The taste is very mild. If one does decide to visit you in your boat, consider cleaning and eating it. Never throw back an Asian carp without killing it. I know that will terrify the bunny lovers out there but that is one less carp to create more little carp.

Kentucky and Barkley Lakes still hold great numbers of game fish. Populations have always been cyclical and we have good spawns and bad spawns and those directly affect the fishing success. Visitors may never even see a jumping Silver carp but if they do, the chance of one jumping into ones boat is very slim. We must be observant and cautious in shallow water areas and around bridges like the Hwy 68 bridge in Jonathan Creek.

Get your boat ready to go and make sure it is running and all batteries and such are good to go. You don't want to be THAT GUY! You know the one who is blocking the ramp while he tries to figure out why his boat won't start or is loading his gear while the truck blocks everyone else from launching.

Be careful out there! Wear your PFDs. Watch out for those who won't watch out for you.

Welcome to our slice of Heaven. Carp or not!

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