

Doug Wynn's Fishing Report

For April 16, 2019

Report for Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley

Hey y'all from the Excel Bay Pro 203 "Fishful Thinking".

It's been a busy and productive couple of weeks. The fish are biting, weather is warming up (I could do without all this wind), I've turned the TV news off, and all is well with the world.

We've been from Kentucky Lake to Grenada Lake in Mississippi to Crappie USA on Lake Barkley. I've been running 100 mph in circles with what hair I have left on fire.

Grenada

We had a ball with Crappie.com friends from Indiana and Mississippi. Grenada was 10+ feet above normal and we fished minnow rigs along willow and ironwood trees that were blooming at water level. It took me back to a time that my crappie fishing was much simpler.

Crappie fishermen who have some years on them will remember the times we had buck brush and buttonball bushes in flood waters. We broke out the cane poles or fly rods to fish minnows along the cover. The sight of a big red and white plastic bobber disappearing into the muddy depths will stay with me forever.

We didn't use bobbers on Grenada but we did pull some huge crappie out of the edges of the cover. Sometimes that tug on the line was a hybrid striper that would proceed to tangle every line up. Running in the Skeeter Bay at 40 mph through standing timber and brush made me hope our host knew what he was doing. He did and we made the best of it until storms ran us off the lake and we headed back to Kentucky a day early.

Crappie USA Lake Barkley Super Event

I have resisted the temptation to fish competitively for decades. I burned myself and my family out while fishing bass tournaments years ago. With companies sponsoring me now, I need every opportunity to promote their products and crappie tournaments give me that chance. My back is now to a point that I feel great and I felt I was ready to try the Crappie USA tourney on Barkley.

My partner, Justin from Evansville, IN, is a prize student. He hired me to teach him how to troll crankbaits for crappie on Kentucky Lake two years ago. I guess I taught him well. He finished high in an ACT tourney last year trolling crankbaits on Kentucky Lake. He was also at Grenada with us.

I fished by myself last Wednesday to practice. 40-plus mph winds were forecast for Thursday so Wednesday had to be it. I finally found a few keepers in an area I thought they would be Friday morning. I was correct.

We started Friday and by 9:30 had our tournament limit of seven crappie, all caught on PICO cranks. Four of the fish were big and we hoped to be able to cull out the other three with larger crappie. I broke my strictest rule of never leaving biting fish to go find other fish.

We did and we didn't. The wind prevented us from fishing the area we wanted to so we went back to our first spot a while later. We managed to cull out the three small fish with larger crappie. We headed back to the scales early due to one of the big crappie having bled a bunch when caught. A dead crappie at the weigh in would be disastrous.

We were the second team to weigh in. The tournament was broken into two divisions. The Amateur Division is for those teams that won less than \$2000 in tournaments the year before. The Pro Division was for those who had won over \$2000.

We were in the Amateur Division even though I felt far from being an amateur. Our weight was the heaviest of the day in our division. We were in the lead in a tournament that I had hoped I wouldn't be embarrassed in!

We did pretty much the same thing in the same place on Saturday. We dropped the PICO's into the water at 6:30. By 9:30, we had three keepers and none were of the quality of the day earlier. I decided to tweak our pattern a bit and the larger fish came to the boat - one at a time. We fished right up to the last minute before we had to make the 30 minute drive to the scales. A really nice white crappie bit a PICO in the last minute and we culled out a smaller fish.

When we got to the scales and got into the weight line, the second place team from New York state got right behind us. We could see they had a large catch. We weighed our catch and watched as the New York father and son team sat their basket on the scales.

They tallied less than a pound more than we did and dropped us to second place for the tournament. Second place felt pretty dang good!! We proved that we could catch good crappie on a technique totally different than the rest of the field. We got nice plaques and a nice check for our efforts. Most of all, we hadn't embarrassed ourselves on the big stage.

The weight of the huge number of crappie caught in this tournament should prove to any skeptic that our lakes are still producing big numbers of big crappie. It took 14 crappie that weighed about 1 pound and 13 ounces EACH to win the Pro Division. The Amateur Division was close behind as we finished 4th in the entire event. That's some nice fish folks.

Crappie

If you want to catch nice crappie, now is the time to be out there. The water level is rising toward summer pool and the surface temperature is in the mid 60s. Wind is causing lots of us to change locations but most everywhere, good crappie are being caught anywhere from two feet to 22 feet deep. Minnows, plastics, crankbaits are all catching fish. Find structure in medium to shallow water and the crappie will be close by.

Bass

The bass guys have the same weather to deal with that us crappie fishermen do. Try spinnerbaits, shallow crankbaits, or plastics fished around cover or wood. Some really nice bass are being caught.

The reported demise of Kentucky and Barkley Lakes has been seriously overstated. We fished two days on Barkley and the only carp we saw were on our electronics. They played no part in our fishing. The netters will be here for many years to come but the Asian carp problem will start to lessen each year. The new processing plants at Wickliffe should drive the price per pound up to where the hard-working fishermen can make good money once and for all.

Be careful out there as well as courteous to all those boaters and commercial fishermen around you. Help those who need help. Wear your PFDs and leave the alcohol on the bank.

Welcome to our slice of Heaven!

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