

Doug Wynn's Fishing Report

For June 25, 2019

Report for Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley

Hey Y'all from the Excel Bay Pro 230 "Fishful Thinking". It has been a couple of weeks with me running 100 miles per hour in circles with my hair on fire. Fishing has been everywhere from great to poor, depending mostly on weather conditions.

My buddy Justin and I just competed in the American Crappie Trail (ACT) Kentucky Lake tournament. Due to the timing of the event and our love for pulling crankbaits, we felt really good about our chances.

Our excitement was no less after we practiced for two days and located some concentrations of really nice crappie. We were concerned about the weather forecasts but since we couldn't do anything about the weather, we gave it our best shot.

Our best spots gave up some nice fish during the early hours of the tournament but soon the bite went from slow to non-existent. As approaching storms kicked the winds up, we decided to leave the chances to catch good fish for the protection of an area close to our launch spot.

All of our best efforts came up short and we went to the weigh-in spot at Paris Landing, TN with a bag of six crappie that weighed just over six pounds. Later at our lodging at Buchanan Resort, we experienced a severe storm that caused power outages and a total change in our second day plans. My Bay Pro 230 ended up full of small limbs and leaves from the excessive winds even though it was parked 50 yards from the nearest trees.

Saturday morning found us back on our best spot from Friday, but we were soon greeted by a severe thunderstorm, downpour rains, and high winds. My new rain suit was a welcome relief from the rains. We tried a couple of more spots on the east shore of the lake but the constantly shifting winds forced us to make a white-knuckle ride back to the west side.

We were very thankful for every inch of the 23-foot Excel while making our way west in five-foot rollers from the southeast. Once we got back to the safety of Jonathan Creek, we finished out our seven fish limit of small crappie that only added under five pounds to our total. Our first appearance on the biggest stage of crappie fishing didn't go as we had planned but we had a great time, caught a BUNCH of 3-5-pound bass and lots of catfish, experienced much of the worst of Mother Nature, and came home safely. We finished right in the middle of the pack of 92 boats.

The tournament was won by the team of Ronnie Capps and Steve Coleman from Reelfoot Lake. The top of the field used single pole techniques to vertical jig with

plastics and minnows while using the Garmin LiveScope electronics. Yes, we could have used the same equipment since Justin has and uses it but we chose to stay with what had worked so well for us in the two previous tournaments this spring, pulling PICO cranks in a variety of depths and cover.

Our pre-tournament catches gave us the confidence to stay with the cranks. Sometimes you get the bear, sometimes the bear gets you. We still had a great time. Our next tournament will be the CrappieMasters Classic on Grenada Lake, MS in September.

Crappie

The bite has been much more fickle this year and I think a lot has to do with the huge numbers of shad minnows, the fluctuating water levels (more on that later), and the severe storms and heavy rains with high winds. Our time on Barkley has been very up and down with catches varying widely. The crappie are of very good quality but over-all numbers in the catch are down for us. Kentucky Lake has mirrored Barkley. We are seeing huge numbers of crappie in cover that often refuse our offerings. Covering lots of water with cover and bait is the ticket.

I'm still pulling crankbaits but many good fish are being caught dipping minnows and jigs into deep cover. We experienced excessive current much of the spring due to the high water. We are now seeing the lake rise to 362 feet and the lack of current during the rising water may make fishing tough.

Bass

I will have a hard time believing those who say there are no bass in our lakes anymore. Our recent catches on both lakes have proved otherwise. The bass we have been catching on PICO INTs have been on ledges and cover INSIDE coves and bays where baitballs are present. Most of the fish still show the scars of spawning but they are willing, ready, and able to hit our baits and put up a memorable fight.

White and Yellow Bass

With all the shad activity in the bays, I'm seeing a lot of schooling activity or "jumps". While I'm not actively fishing for them, they still hit our crankbaits often. I have to think the same activity is happening on the main lake if one can find a spot out of the wind.

Catfish

I'm still getting very good reports from those seeking catfish on riprap, rock banks, and shallow areas near deep water channels. Cut bait, stink baits, prepared items like the Jell-O chicken chunks, and worms/leeches will all work. The blue cats will normally be deeper but some are being found in surprisingly shallow water for the 80 degree water temperatures.

If we can get some stable weather, we should see an improvement in fishing for all species. We are seeing historic amounts of baitfish and these alone have to be a bright spot for future fishing.

Water levels are on the rise again and I'm afraid we may be in for a full summer of high water. There is historic flooding in areas to our west and northwest. All that water has to make its way to the flooded Mississippi River system that has zero room for any of it now. With the high water always comes floating debris or "Gremlins". One must always be observant of these as well as other boaters who might make sudden course changes to avoid them.

I encountered large numbers of Asian carp nets last week on Barkley. Thankfully they were well marked even though none had the yellow flags on them. A mildly-observant boater should see and have time to avoid the nets. These hard-working fishermen are the point of the spear in the fight against Asian carp so watch out for them and their gear and give them plenty of room.

Be careful out there!! 4th of July is next week and while Vicki and I will be in Nashville to see Jeff Lynne/Electric Light Orchestra, lots of boaters will be out there and many, if not most, will have alcohol on board. Watch out for those who won't watch out for you. Give those who need help the help you might need next.

Welcome to our slice of Heaven!

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