

SPAWNING CONTINUES FOR BLUEGILL/REDEAR...WEIRD WEEK FOR ANGLERS

By Steve McCadams

Updated May 15, 2014

Bet you thought nasty north winds and cold fronts were gone! Think again.

To a weird spring full of unstable weather add yet another cold front that rolled in Wednesday, putting a chill to the Kentucky Lake fishing scene. Temperatures Tuesday topped out at 89 degrees but by Thursday it struggled to reach 62 degrees after a very chilly start.

The uninvited cool snap had brisk north winds that had anglers digging the coveralls and overcoats back out. That's not supposed to happen in mid-May but happen it did, upsetting the applecart once again for fishermen who felt like they were starting out on a fall morning.

A slow rebound is supposed to arrive early this weekend as temps are forecast to reach 70 by Saturday. No doubt surface temps lost ground for a few days but should regain their loss quickly.

Bedding bluegill and redear sunfish have been hitting good this week as active spawning phases have been underway. A full moon at midweek had fish fanning beds with aggressive moods but the drastic weather change had an adverse effect and curtailed activity to some degree once the front passed through.

Surface temperatures this week were in the 72 to 74 degree range before the front and likely lost a degree or two as cool nights pulled temps well below average. However, watch for action to resume quickly as the urge to spawn will respond quickly to sunny days.

Lake levels have stayed around the normal summer pool elevation of 359 this week across the reservoir. Heavy rains at midweek could influence a slight rise in elevation the next few days. Water color is stained in several bays due to runoff from thunderstorms but showing a pretty good color overall with the main Big Sandy clearing. Dingy water is present in the main Tennessee River channel as well.

Hefty catches of bluegill were taken the last few days by anglers tossing crickets in depths of 2 to 5 foot depths. Some fish had moved into shallow bushes and parameters of grassbeds where a few redear were also biting.

Those bigger bull bream are sporting a handsome olive drab color and orange belly. The females are the pale yellow ones. The males are really territorial right now, making for ideal fishing conditions as they usually keep the smaller fish at bay.

Most anglers are using slip bobber presentations but a few are choosing to cast without bobbers and slowly drag the bait across the bottom. Both techniques have worked well and a few bluegill are bedding out on flats or gravel bars away from the shorelines.

Catfish were hitting good as well and bluegill fishermen are still catching them around the spawning areas. Catfish often seek out bluegill beds and feed on the eggs and fry hatching there.

Rock bluffs such as rip-rap and other rocky banks have been holding catfish too as they search for spawning crevices. Nightcrawlers have been the bait of choice when targeting catfish.

Bass fishermen are still finding plenty of bass using the shallow buck bushes and weed beds. Good numbers were taken this week by anglers tossing spinnerbaits, Texas rigged worms, craws and lizards. Some topwater had been working too such as buzzbaits and floating fluke style worms.

At the same time some boaters are backing away from the banks and targeting sloping points and humps where deeper water is holding post-spawn bass. Carolina and Alabama rigs have worked well as have deep diving crankbaits, jig and pig combos, suspending crankbaits and some big Texas rigged worms.

Crappie action has been slow this week as the post-spawn fish are scattered and sluggish. A few scattered fish were taken in shallow stakebeds in depths of 5 to 9 feet but numbers were low.

Action has fallen off for most drift and trolling techniques this week as fish are suspended and not too interested in striking, a scenario that isn't too unusual in the post-spawn phase. Watch for crappie action to improve later this month as fish slowly transition back to midrange depths and take on a more structure oriented mood as surface temps warm.

Meanwhile, fishermen continue to battle the wind as whitecaps seem to be consistent the last few weeks. High winds have hampered all anglers lately and dictated their day as to location and routes.

More great fishing is ahead for light tackle enthusiasts as the bluegill and shellcracker should continue for a few weeks. Most anglers are looking ahead to normal weather patterns as the weekend approaches. A few days with light and variable winds are long overdue!