

ANGLERS EMBRACE COOL SPELL...IS FALL ARRIVING A WEEK EARLY?

By Steve McCadams

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All week anglers have been wiping sweat, awaiting the cool snap now in progress. The change now underway suits Kentucky Lake anglers just fine. No doubt the nip in the air will put a glide in the stride of bass, crappie and catfishermen that have been negotiating heat and humidity for over a week.

The weatherman indicates nighttime temps will fall into the low 50's as the weekend approaches with low 80's during the day, which is a significant change as the last week of summer fades away to fall. The autumn season officially arrive on Sunday, September 22nd.

Fishermen can expect some foggy mornings if winds die down as the cooler air resting over the warm waters of Kentucky Lake will likely produce such conditions.

Surface temperatures this week climbed up to the 86 degree for a day or two but will be dropping throughout the weekend in the wake of the cool snap and north winds. Look for surface temps to fall back into the upper 70's by early next week. Several thunderstorms passed through the area this week but runoff has been minimal and water color remains clear throughout most of the reservoir. A little stain was present in the main Tennessee River channel but Big Sandy embayment is relatively clear.

Lake levels were falling on a gradual basis throughout the week and down several inches from last week at this time. Projections for the weekend at Kentucky Dam will be 356.1. Upstream at New Johnsonville readings will be in the 355.9 range.

Kentucky Lake's fishing scene has been pretty decent for crappie anglers who continue to find decent stringers in the 9 to 13 foot depth range where submerged stakebeds and brushpiles are located.

I've had decent catches this week but found fish to be somewhat scattered in the midrange depths. Landing two or three fish at a spot was the pattern with an occasional bed producing 6 or 7 but it took several stops on a route to rack up hefty numbers.

Tipping red and chartreuse jigs with Berkley Power Bait seemed to work best for me, although a few fish took a jig and minnow combo now and then.

I dropped back to some deeper ledges a midday and found improved action from structure residing in the 17 foot depth range but near deeper water. Using double hook bottom bumping rigs armed with shiner minnows seemed to appeal to the deeper fish once the sun was straight overhead and cloud cover melted away.

Watch for crappie to take on a more aggressive attitude by next week as the cooler surface temperatures will bring more shad to the shallow areas. Fish will transition toward midrange depths in greater numbers once surface temps back into the mid 70's.

Bass were still chasing shad in grassbeds this week, a fall pattern that will likely hold up for several more weeks. Lower lake levels will continue to expose more aquatic vegetation, providing anglers ample areas to toss topwater, spinnerbaits, and weedless frogs or floating worms.

The outsides of island rims and grassbeds on flats will be good places to work Texas rigged worms too or rip a Rattle Trap style lure now and then.

The summer patterns of big crankbaits, Carolina rigged craws, big Texas rigged worms, and jig and pig combos are still producing too. Gravel banks will soon be more appealing to topwater presentations in the early mornings and late afternoons.

Catfishermen were enjoying some nice catches this week as the slow current was playing their song. Depths of 30 to 40 feet were accounting for some hefty blue and channel cats along the main Tennessee River channel.

Working those submerged feeder creeks and indentions were the cat's meow for boaters using nightcrawlers, chicken liver, and skipjack for bait.

Summer is saying goodbye next week but it feels like fall may have slipped in the door a week early. Ah, the jacket mornings and shirt sleeve afternoons are here already!