

Annual Dogwood Bloom Marks Start of Crappie Bite

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May 7 2019 3:05 PM



Most any dedicated crappie angler knows the arrival of the annual dogwood bloom always marks the start of the annual crappie bite.

The rapidly warming waters trigger in this species an urge to begin the annual reproductive process. Hordes of hungry crappies that seemingly disappeared from our waters during the summer and fall can now be found swarming to familiar shallow water nesting grounds.

This is an event that's occurring right now in most lakes, reservoirs, streams, and rivers. The return of the annual crappie bite has droves of hopeful anglers heading to various popular area fishing waters.

With the warmer, summerlike weather of the past few days, angling action at our nearby large Corps of Engineers reservoirs is beginning to heat up.

Water temperatures at all locations have now climbed into the mid-fifties. The rapidly rising water temperatures have kick-started the start of the annual crappie spawn, with greatly improved fishing for many other species.

The recent warm weather has finally turned on the crappie bite at Missouri's Mark Twain Lake. By Thursday, many anglers at this popular crappie fishing destination were having little trouble landing limits of crappie. And, larger fish were beginning to show up in greater numbers during the past few days.

During the past week or two, anglers at Lake Shelbyville have likely witnessed the greatest improvement in the fishing. Reports by most crappie anglers range from good to downright excellent.

Crappie currently rated among the best bets at this lake. As always some anglers are reporting good catches of keeper-size fish (ten inches or longer). Others are experiencing difficulty catching keeper fish. Most of the quality crappie are coming from water depths of six to 15 feet.

Largemouth bass are providing fair action at Lake Shelbyville. Anglers have been fishing with spinnerbaits, Rattletraps and plastic worms along the main lake and secondary points throughout the lake. Local fishing guides say this indicates the spawn is about to begin.

Other species providing limited action include channel catfish and bluegill. The latest reports show that anglers are catching a few channel catfish on cut baits, leaches, and large minnows.

The fishing at Carlyle Lake looks equally promising. Unfortunately, high water is currently plaguing anglers at this lake. This, with the current release rate, could change very quickly. Many of the popular species are providing little to only fair action.

Crappie anglers are finding the best fishing in the Allen Branch, Coles Creek, and Boulder areas, and that is slow. Muddy and cold water seems to be much of the problem.

Limited numbers of flathead and channel catfish are being caught near the railroad trestle at Keyesport, Hazlet State Park, Coles Creek and Allen Branch. Bluegill and bass are providing poor action along shoreline cover throughout the lake.

Action has been equally sad in the Carlyle tailwaters. Here, anglers are reporting poor catches of crappie, white bass, sauger, and channel catfish. This is something that is usually quite productive this time of year. With the warmer weather of the recent days, this could change quickly.

Fishing at southern Illinois' Rend Lake also continues to heat up with several popular species providing good action. The latest reports show fishing continuing to improve at this lake.

Crappie are currently among the best bets for those headed to Rend Lake. Anglers are reporting good catches of fish from the shallow flooded brush in about fifteen inches of water. Some anglers are beginning to catch shallow spawners from the deeper flooded brush.

Channel catfish are providing improved fishing at this popular downstate lake. Most of the better action is coming from the traditional catfish hotspots along Route 154 and near the Route 37 bridge.

Largemouth bass is also a good bet at this time. Anglers are using a variety of lures to catch these fish from the flooded brush.

Anglers still have several weeks of prime crappie fishing before the action slows.