

Corps Lakes Fishing Action Turning On

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Although it's been a long time in coming, anglers are now finally enjoying excellent success at each of Illinois' three big Corps of Engineer reservoirs.

Though water levels remain high at each location, reports from these lakes indicate fishing action has greatly improved for a variety of species. While action has began several times, it hasn't kept going. This time, it appears to be here to stay,

Despite the rains of the past two months, many dedicated anglers have been enjoying fishing success. Good catches of white bass, largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie and catfish have been reported from each lake.

At Carlyle Lake, white bass action is finally turning on. Most of the successful anglers are fishing all of the usual hotspots, and some are trolling.

Carlyle Lake anglers are using a variety of small tail-spin lures coupled with jigs to catch the white bass. Some of the best fishing is currently being found in the lower reaches of the lake. However, some success is now reported near Boulder, Keyesport and at the railroad trestle and silos.

Similarly good white bass action is being found in the Carlyle tailwaters. Anglers are using inline spinners, tube jigs or minnows during the day. Improved action is also reported by the night fishermen.

Catfish, too, continue to provide excellent fishing action. Reports of good catches continue to pour in from Carlyle Lake.

Catfish anglers are fishing with simple hook, sinker and bobber and fishing throughout the lake. The catfish have now moved off the rip rap shorelines and can be found in deeper water. Using any of a variety of popular live baits, a large percentage of these fish are being caught anglers drift fishing in the main lake.

Good reports are also coming from Lake Shelbyville. At one point, the lake was nearly 10 feet above normal, but is now falling slowly. Thus far this year, Lake Shelbyville has produced some of the state's finest fishing for many species.

Like Carlyle, water temperatures here are running near the 80-degree range. And, white bass, crappie, walleye and sauger action has been superb.

Reports indicate the white bass and other species are currently holding on the steep dropoffs running from ten to 20 feet deep. Most anglers are trolling with their electric motors and pulling bottom bouncers and spinners.

As the water levels begin to stabilize, the whites will begin feeding on the large schools of shad in this lake. Once that happens, surfacing white bass can be found most any time during the day.

Due to a relatively late spawn, the shad are quite small and the hungry white bass and crappie simply continue feeding on them. Many of the crappie and white bass are quite large. It's merely a matter of locating a feeding school and catching plenty.

Some fishermen are also trolling small crankbaits for them, but they are scattered. The best success seems to come for the anglers using bottom bouncers and spinners. The bigger fish seem to prefer this method.

The walleye and sauger bite has also been good. These fish are also currently located along the drop offs. Here, too, the bottom bouncers and spinner rigs tipped with

nightcrawlers are working exceptionally well.

Crappie fishing action remains good for anglers using the same method, only with small minnows on their rigs. And, don't be surprised to catch a few quality Lake Shelbyville largemouth bass while using this method.

Catfish and crappie are currently the top catch at Rend Lake in southern Illinois. Here, anglers are catching good numbers of these fish using a variety of baits and methods. Boaters are drift fishing for catfish throughout the lake using shrimp, cut shad or leaches and finding superb success. Shoreline anglers are using similar baits, along with commercial catfish baits, and enjoying good action. Recently, the Waltonville Dam, Bonnie Dam and Ina boat ramp have been hotspots for shoreline catfish action. Largemouth bass continue to provide fair to good action for Rend Lake anglers. Quality bass are falling for chartreuse and shad colored crankbaits in six to eight feet of water along the rocks.

The Jackie Branch has produced some of the better bass fishing in recent weeks, as well as areas around the big island.

The crappie bite is rated good with much of the better success coming for anglers using minnows and fishing the deeper stake beds. However, anglers must sort through large numbers of smaller fish before putting together a respectable catch.

Weather forecasters are calling for a return of the warmer weather this week. This could mean even better fishing ahead and even though fishing conditions may be a bit less comfortable.