Corps Lake's Fall Fishing Action Already Underway

by Lee Keck
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This is typically the time of year when fishing at each of Illinois three large Corps of Engineers lakes begins to heat up. This year, however, the fire began in early spring and has continued to get hotter each week since.

Water temperatures at Lake Shelbyville have now dropped to the mid 80s and the lower reaches of the lake are very clear. Crappie action has been good, to say the least. In fact, it may be better than it has been all year.

In addition, the white bass they are beginning to show up on the flats and can be found close to the shoreline when the wind is blowing. If little or no wind present, merely back off to slightly deeper water and concentrate on the edge of the sand bars where they meet the channels.

At this point, anglers will need to move quite often to locate the schools of whites. The gulls are now frequenting the lake and help anglers find feeding fish. Much of the better crappie action has been found at the middle and south ends of the lake.

Walleye action has slowed with some small ones caught shallow by anglers fishing for the whites, but not many keepers. Some of the better success is coming from the sand, gravel and rocky banks.

Largemouth bass and muskies are being caught deep and shallow on the main lake and back in the creeks. There have been some good-sized bass caught by anglers fishing for whites. The muskies are also shallow on the flats with the whites.

White bass action is also heating up at Carlyle Lake. Fair to good numbers of these fish have been caught recently from the humps near the trestles. Occasional action has also been reported from the spillway area.

The sauger fishing in the spillway continues to be a hit-and-miss affair. Occasional catches are coming on jigs tipped with minnows and by anglers trolling small crankbaits in the tailwater area.

Catfish are likely the best catch at Carlyle at this time. Here, anglers are using a variety of commercial catfish baits and finding success in the spillway and the main lake.

Though crappie action is typically nonexistent at this time, anglers continue to find fair to good success fishing near some of the deeper brush piles.

Catfish and crappie are also the top catches at Rend Lake in the state's southern reaches. Anglers are finding catfishing success with a variety of commercial baits in the subimpoundment area, along rip rap shorelines and by drift fishing near Gun Creek and the Jackie Branch.

Largemouth bass are rated only fair at this time with some anglers finding success in the Jackie Branch, and in South Sandusky cove. A variety of lures are working for these fish.

Good to excellent crappie action is also reported from Rend Lake. Anglers are using minnows or jigs tipped with minnows and fishing both ends of the lake. Top spots have been near the various fish attractors, along the rip rap near the Jackie Branch bridge and near the Ina boat ramp.

Though it is hard to believe, most veteran anglers feel that cooler water temperatures are the key to even better fishing action this fall. Once the temperatures tumble into the lower 70s or upper 60s, excellent fall fishing can be expected from each site.