

Kentucky Afield Outdoors: Fish Hit Close To Home At FINs Lakes

by **KEVIN KELLY**
Ky. Dept. Fish & Wildlife Resources

Heavy rain and a break from sub-freezing temperatures earlier this week melted snowpack still lingering from the last major winter storm to hit Kentucky and caused flooding just as another potent system took aim on the state.

The Weather Channel dubbed it, "Winter Storm Thor." Anglers itching to grab a rod and reel cursed it as they reached for snow shovels again.

The arrival of March is the start of a new license year in Kentucky and reassurance that spring is near. One of the best places to put a 2015-16 fishing license to use in early spring is at a Fishing in Neighborhoods (FINs) lake.

"As soon as you get the first couple of warm days in March, take full advantage of the nice weather and break that cabin fever," said Dane Balsman, urban fisheries program coordinator with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

FINs lakes provide good fishing opportunities close to home.

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife stocks these 40 lakes with rainbow trout and catfish. The largemouth bass

and sunfish populations are closely monitored and supported with stockings as needed. This year, the department plans to stock a total of 148,750 rainbow trout, 113,900 catfish and 30,000 hybrid sunfish in FINs lakes, Balsman said.

Catfish and trout are scheduled to be stocked this month. Hybrid sunfish will be stocked in early June.

Stocking schedules are posted online and updated frequently. On the department's homepage at fw.ky.gov, click on the "Fish" tab and choose "Recreational Fishing" from the dropdown menu. A link to the FINs page is listed under the section, "Where to Fish."

A prolonged period of extreme cold in Kentucky iced over many FINs lakes and delayed some February trout stockings. In northern Kentucky, for example, Camp Ernst Lake in Boone County, Southgate and Alexandria Community Park lakes in Campbell County, Middleton Mills Long Pond and Shelterhouse Pond and Prisoners Lake in Kenton County will receive their February and March trout stockings this month because conditions prevented stocking last month.

Fish stocked before the deep freeze set in this winter will be primed once the ice

melts.

"We stocked a lot of these lakes the first week or two of February, right before they froze," Balsman said. "As soon as this ice comes off, there are going to be a lot of those trout that are going to be hungry and ready to feed."

Daily limits for FINs lakes remain five rainbow trout, four catfish, one largemouth bass over 15 inches and 15 bluegill or other sunfish.

Trout may find brightly-colored dough bait, corn or red worms fished on the bottom or beneath a bobber to their liking. A small in-line spinner may entice a trout into biting as well. In the spring, Balsman sees catfish anglers having success using worms and chicken, shrimp or hot dogs marinated in strawberry-flavored drink mix. Try a small feathered jig, commonly called a Pop Eye in Kentucky, tipped with a wax worm fished under a bobber for hybrid sunfish.

Anglers ages 16 and older will need a statewide fishing license, unless license exempt. Licensed anglers who intend to keep their trout must also purchase a trout permit. The permit is included in the Sportsman's and Senior licenses. Holding a trout in a livewell or fish

basket or on a stringer and later replacing it is considered culling, which is illegal.

Anglers are encouraged to exercise care when handling a fish that they intend to release.

"These lakes do get a lot of pressure and a lot of anglers fish them," Balsman said. "From the creel surveys that we've done, we see the harvest almost mirrors the number of fish that we put in. But the number caught actually exceeds what's been stocked. We think these fish are being caught multiple times before ultimately being harvested. If you're serious about catch and release, practice good technique and leave the fish in decent shape."

An outing to the nearest FINs lake in spring is a great way to get the family outdoors, or for novice anglers to gain some experience. Best of all, it's a surefire way to forget the cold and the snow.

Author Kevin Kelly is a staff writer for Kentucky Afield magazine, the official publication of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. Get the latest from Kelly and the entire Kentucky Afield staff by following them on Twitter: @kyafield.



An angler holds an albino channel catfish caught last October from Upper Sportsman's Lake at the headquarters of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources in Frankfort. Upper Sportsman's Lake is one of the 40 Fishing in Neighborhoods (FINs) lakes scattered across Kentucky. All of these lakes offer excellent fishing for catfish, sunfish, largemouth bass and trout in the cooler months.

Photo courtesy of KDFWR

UK COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

University of Kentucky - College of Agriculture



Estill County
4-H Youth Development
Isaac L. Hollon
Estill County Extension Office

Thursday, Friday, Saturday, March 26th, 27th & 28th

Hunter's Education Class (Orange Card)

There will be a Hunter's Education Class (orange card) at the Estill County Extension Office. The 3-day class will be Thursday and Friday, March 26th & 27th from 6-9 p.m., and Saturday, March 28th starting at 9 a.m. at the Estill Co. Sportsmen's Club. You must attend all 3 classes to obtain your orange card. Ages 9 and older (as of March 28). **Effective March 1, 2014, KY Dept. of Fish & Wildlife requires online pre-registration for all hunter education courses statewide.** Following is the registration link for the Estill County class: <http://www.registered.com/events/view/57999>

For more information, call the Estill County Extension Office at 606-723-4557.

Educational programs of the Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.



Tony Ricketts and Mike Cockrell laying down the law on some fawn eaters!

Spay/Neuter Funding

We are happy to announce that spay/neuter funds are again made available to our great county via the KY Spay/Neuter license program. Citizens throughout KY have elected to purchase the spay/neuter license plate to help reduce our pet overpopulation. If you have a pet that needs to be fixed, please contact: the Humane Society's Angels of Estill County at <ellenfrederick@windstream.net> or Peaceful Paws at <peacefulpawsky@aol.com>. Please act now as funds, as always, are limited! Thanks for your support.

NOTICE: Please do not call the Estill County Animal Shelter as they are not connected to this spay/neuter funding nor the groups.

Estill Church League Volleyball

Estill County Church League Volleyball starts on May 16th. There will be a girls league and a boys league. Each team will set their own age limit. Deadline for new team entry is April 16th. Contact Ricky Harris at 606-723-6682.

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Bathing Beauty
Spring migration is such a fun time of year for backyard birders. Don't just watch feeders for visitors, keep an eye on your birdbath as well. Some birds are only interested in fresh water, like the female summer tanager that hung out in my yard a few days ago.

E-mail: birdingbits@cflrr.com
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Fresh Fruit
I know it's cold out there, but if you can put some apples, oranges, grapefruit, grapes, raisins, cherries, cranberries or blueberries out on a paper plate or a tray feeder, crows, mockingbirds, warblers, robins, woodpeckers, cardinals, catbirds, tanagers and orioles will thank you.

E-mail: birdingbits@cflrr.com
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Rising Water And Mudslides Cause Problems For Recreation Areas

The rising water of Cave Run Lake is flooding recreation areas in the Daniel Boone National Forest. Some boat ramps are currently unusable, and some camping areas are under water. These sites are currently closed.

"Along with the snow melt, rain is in the forecast for the next several days," said Acting District Ranger Tim Eling. "As a result, additional recreation areas and some roads could potentially close later this week, depending on the amount of rainfall received.

"The ground is so saturated right now that the soil cannot absorb any more water.

"Mudslides are another concern. Trees could easily uproot and fall, and large boulders could also break away and slide downhill, especially along steep slopes."

Drivers should use caution and watch for rushing flood waters and debris on roadways. Flood waters can be powerful enough to roll vehicles, destroy bridges and tear out roads.

Forest Service roads in the Red River Gorge are closed at this time due to ground saturation. These roads were closed last week to prevent further damage to the road surface and promote public safety.

Campers are encouraged to avoid low-lying areas. Creeks and rivers can rise quickly, and water depth can be difficult to determine after daylight hours.

"To determine if Forest Service roads or recreation areas are closed due to flooding, visitors are urged to call the office of the district where they wish to visit," added Eling.

Daniel Boone National Forest visitors may call the following offices for more information.

- Cumberland Ranger District (Cave Run Lake) 606-784-6428
- Gladie Visitor Center (Red River Gorge) 606-663-8100
- London Ranger District (Laurel River Lake) 606-864-4163
- Redbird Ranger District 606-598-2192
- Stearns Ranger District 606-376-5323