

# Tennessee Striped Bass Association

Get Hooked !



March/April 2021



Cory Malabey loves him some big girls!

## In-Person Monthly Meetings are resuming!

(Details on May meeting are inside this issue)

TSBA web site <http://tnstripedbass.com/> for the latest news.

Submit news items to [tsba.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:tsba.newsletter@gmail.com)

Join us on Facebook [Tennessee Striped Bass Association](#)

# March & April Virtual Meetings Were Recorded

Good news for those who couldn't attend the March and April virtual club meetings! They were recorded, and can be viewed on the members-only Facebook page. If you have not yet joined the page you can contact Allan Franklin (striperallan@aol.com) or Steve Nichols (kidchevy@comcast.net) for access.

## May 2021 Club Meeting

We'll be resuming in-person club meetings in May! On **Thursday, May 6**, we will meet at the Shoney's at 315 Emory Rd in Powell. Dinner will begin at 6pm, and the meeting will start at 7pm. Keith Shannon will be the featured speaker; his presentation will be about keeping your live bait lively. Come join us!



The fish are biting!



James Pierce with a nice striper from below Watts Bar Dam.



Steve Nichols with a Chickamauga striper.

# Bucktails in the Spring

## Captain Clay Cunningham

Casting bucktails in early spring can be one of the most effective techniques for catching striped bass. On some days, bucktails will out produce live bait. That is hard for some to believe, but it is very true. The biggest reason bucktails are so effective in the spring is the ability for you as a fishermen to really saturate the prime shallow water. The shallow water will most likely be warmer and as a result this is where the bait will be and the stripes will not be far behind. Furthermore, bucktails allow you to really keep the boat out of the shallow water and avoid spooking the fish. Bucktails also allow the fishermen to work the lure perpendicular to the fish. Most of the time they will be cruising the bank when they are actively feeding on the baitfish. If ten boats are pulling the bank with planer boards, a meal coming from a different direction might look a little more appealing to the fish. Stripers will eat bucktails all winter into the spring but the strongest part of the pattern will be when the water temperature reaches 55 degrees. At this time, the stripers will most likely commit to the shallow water unless you have some kind of severe weather pattern come through the area. Here are few things to keep in mind when casting bucktails in the spring:

**Pay attention to line size** An important factor that is often overlooked is line size. Remember the lighter the line the deeper the bucktail will run. During the early part of the spring, smaller bucktails typically better “match the hatch” when it comes to threadfin shad which are most often the bait of choice just about anywhere you go during the last part of winter going into spring. Remember threads are slow swimmers and an easy meal without burning unnecessary energy. If you increase the size of the jig to get to the right depth, many times you will decrease your bites sometimes significantly. Stay with the smaller jig and go to a lighter line to get the appropriate depth.

**Two jig colors rule the market** Next is the color of the jig. Two colors rule the market when it comes to bucktail colors. As you would expect, it is white and chartreuse. These two colors have worked since the beginning of time. In clear water use the white and in murky stained water go with a more chartreuse color. If the water color is just slightly stained go with a white bucktail with a chartreuse back or a white bucktail with some sort of chartreuse flash. Another consideration is the color of the head and the thread of the jig. Personally, I most often use red thread on my bucktails. If the bucktail uses white thread, which is also common, try getting a red permanent marker and make the bottom part of the thread of the bucktail red. This is a trick many use during the hot summer months while trolling big bucktails on leadcore that works all year long. A bucktail that has a red head can also be very productive. At one time, this was one of the most popular jig head colors on the market. It has tapered off over the years in some areas but lures with a red head are as popular as ever especially on the salty side.

**Keep several different shaped jigs on hand** Another factor that often gets overlooked is simply the shape and design of the jig. In different years, a slightly different shaped jig will many times get much more action. Different shaped jigs track differently through the water. A striper has a very finely tuned lateral line, which picks up on these slight variations in resistance coming through the water. Also, some head designs have a different rate of fall for the same giving weight. A slower fall in cold water typical of early spring can be a big plus.

**Modify the bucktail tip** What you tip your bucktail with is also important. Be sure to take into consideration the movement of the trailer and the color. A good rule of thumb is the colder the water the less movement in the trailer. If the water is below fifty degrees a good trailer to begin with is the Zoom fluke trailer. The fluke trailer comes in many sizes to help match the size of the bait. Typically the fluke Jr. is a good starting point. If the water is clear and the fish are feeding on one inch threads do not be afraid to trim the bucktail with a pair of scissors and use a fluke size trailer or even the tiny fluke trailer if the hook is small enough. Paddle tail trailers have become the rage the last several years and look like they are here to stay. Paddle tail trailers have always been on the market but the recent success by bass fishermen have caused a multitude of companies to produce paddle tails of every shape and size. Many of the smaller paddle tails now being produced have proven deadly to stripers. As the water temperature rises in the spring, the trailers with more movement like standard curly tails tend to produce more bites. A good one to start with is the Zoom Fat Albert Grub. Another good curly tail grub is the six-inch grub by Capt. Mack. This six-inch grub is especially productive late in the spring as the fish move deeper and their metabolism increases with the increase in water temperature. As always in fishing, this is only a rule of thumb. Some years the fish do not know the rules.

**Color selection for the trailer** Now for what color trailer to use while striper fishing. Basically the same rules for bass fishing applies for striped bass when it comes to color choice. For the most part, use trailers that help imitate the natural forage. The most reliable color is white in clear water. Most baitfish are white in color on the bottom side and stripers tend to strike from underneath which is expected since a stripers eyes are located toward the top of the head. White has always been the standby color but each year more and more colors are becoming more popular. More realistic colors like Albino, Green Albino, Smokin Shad, and Baitfish by Zoom are all very good colors in clear water. These Zoom colors are especially popular during the dead of winter when fishermen are using the Fluke style baits. The more vibrant colors are more common in stained water or during periods of low light. This is when the good old color chartreuse shines. Another overlooked color that performs well in low light is a pink trailer. Also, don't be afraid to try different shades of pink and chartreuse. At times, clear chartreuse works better than a solid chartreuse. This is just an overview of the many uses of bucktail jigs in the spring. Do not be afraid to try something a little different. Many strange or slightly different colors have come onto the market with surprising results like the Spro Magic Bus. Also do not be afraid to throw a simple jig head tipped with a Super Fluke. Sometimes the jig head with only the trailer (no bucktail) will perform the best, especially with the more realistic colors that are now on the market.

(Clay Cunningham operates a full time fishing guide service on Lake Lanier, Georgia. This article originally appeared on his website [www.catchingnotfishing.com](http://www.catchingnotfishing.com). )

# Creel and Size limits

## CHEROKEE LAKE

### Striped Bass or Hybrid Striped Bass:

2 per day in combination, 15 inch minimum length limit

## NORRIS LAKE

### Striped Bass

April 1–October 31: 2 per day, 15 inch minimum length limit

November 1–March 31: 1 per day, 36 inch minimum length limit

## WATTS BAR

### Striped Bass or Hybrid Striped Bass:

April 1–October 31: 2 per day in combination

November 1–March 31: 2 per day in combination, only one may be a striped bass.

### Striped Bass:

April 1–October 31: 15 inch minimum length limit.

November 1–March 31: 36 inch minimum length limit

### Hybrid Striped Bass:

15 inch minimum length limit

## MELTON HILL

### Striped Bass or Hybrid Striped Bass:

2 per day in combination, including Clinch River upstream to Highway 61 bridge in Clinton. 15 inch minimum length limit

### Striped Bass:

32–42 inch PLR; only one fish may be over 42 inches

## Outlook for current fishing spots

**CHEROKEE LAKE** The stripers and hybrids often feed on the surface in April and May. The gulls and other bait eating birds will help indicate where these fish are showing up to dine at the all-you-can-eat buffet. They can be scattered all over the lake from the John Sevier steam plant to complete the spawn downstream in all the major coves with baitfish. Night fishing with the alewife spawn in progress is at a premium this time of year.

**NORRIS LAKE** Excellent fishing can be found at the Loyston/Lost Creek area around point 19 upstream to the head waters. The same holds true for the Powell River above point 15 and in most of the major coves including Cove Creek, Big Creek, Cedar Creek, Davis Creek and Sycamore Creek. Look for the gulls and the warmest water that is attracting bait fish. Artificial lures are still very effective. Pull the live bait along the shallow sun-warmed banks and shallow humps with planner boards.

**WATTS BAR & CHICKAMAUGA** The fish have begun their spawning runs by moving upstream toward the dams and feeder creeks. Prior to the spawn look for fish in deep water several miles downstream from the dams. The spawn typically takes place throughout the month of May.

**CAUTION & PLANNING** State law requires that you wear a life jacket if you are within 400 yards of a dam. Top water action is common. Artificial baits, as well as larger live baits, are very effective this time of year. Catch & Release is very successful this time of year.

A great way to find the right places to look for fish is from past history. Look at the last few years of information available on fishing websites, articles, pictures, and magazines. Many times the best clue is to find the largest baitfish concentrations that will seek out the warmest most stable temperatures with nutrient rich water that is normally murky.

— *Ezell Cox*





This Watts Bar striper ate a hand-carved glide bait.



Keith Shannon with a Cherokee hybrid.



## **YOUR 2021 TSBA OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AND STAFF**

**President:** Keith Shannon

**Vice President:** Steve Nichols

**Treasurer:** Eric Rauch

**Secretary:** Keith Shannon

**Board Chairman:** Allan Franklin

### **TSBA DIRECTORS**

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## **No Need to Renew!**

**If you paid dues in 2020, your membership has been extended through 2021. New members can still join by completing the form in this newsletter and mailing it with their payment to the address below.**

***Enclose a check for \$20.00***

***Mail to: TSBA***

***P.O. Box 7303***

***Knoxville, TN 37921***

# TSBA Sponsors

TSBA appreciates all the support we get from our sponsors. If you would like to see your business listed in our newsletter please consider adding or renewing for 2021. TSBA can provide newsletters for our sponsors to distribute. Thanks!



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# T.S.B.A., Inc. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

As a member:

- \* You'll receive a newsletter periodically.
- \* You'll help support striped bass fisheries & wildlife agencies.
- \* You'll be informed of new regulations & information that affect striper fishing.
- \* You'll develop a network of "striper friends."
- \* You'll learn new methods to improve your striped bass fishing effectiveness.
- \* You'll be able to call officers for fishing reports.
- \* You'll be able to attend monthly meetings with informative programs.
- \* You'll have access to all areas of the TSBA, Inc. web page.

Is this a renewal \_\_\_\_ or a new membership \_\_\_\_

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I have read and agree to abide by and be bound by the Tennessee Striped Bass Association, Inc. (TSBA, Inc.) Bylaws\*

\* A copy of the Bylaws can be found on the TSBA, Inc. website at <http://tnstripedbass.com/> or at the offices of the corporation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Enclose a check for \$20.00

Mail to: Tennessee Striped Bass Association, Inc

P.O. Box 7303

Knoxville, TN 37921

**Memberships extended:** Members who paid 2020 dues have no need to renew for this year. All current memberships have been extended through 2021 due to COVID. New members may still join by filling out the above form and submitting it with their payment.

Tennessee Striped Bass Association  
P.O. Box 7303  
Knoxville, TN 37921

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**S**triped  
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