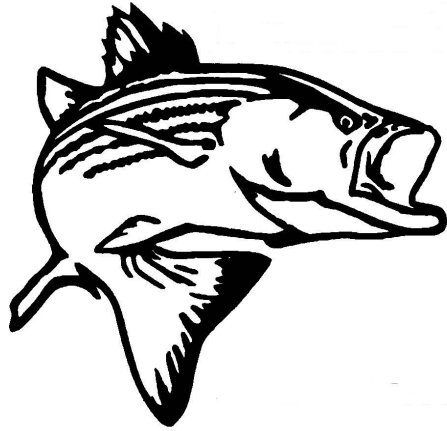


**Catch  
the  
Striper  
Fever!**

# T.S.B.A.



**Tennessee  
Striped Bass  
Association,  
Inc.  
Newsletter**

**April  
2011**



*Glenn Ogle caught a nice striper this past winter on Watts Bar Lake while fishing with Doug Steffe. See page eleven for more photos of what Watts Bar has to offer in the way of trophy stripers.*

## **PRESIDENT'S LETTER**

Hello Everyone,

I think spring is finally here to stay! This means we can lose the heavy clothing and start enjoying some explosive topwater action from our favorite species of fish. Springtime is also a reminder to pay attention while on the water. As TVA raises the water levels on the reservoirs, all sorts of floating debris, including logs, will start to float off the banks and drift into the lakes. This could cause some serious damage if you're not paying attention. This time of year also brings out the jet skis, skiers, and pleasure boaters. While many of them are responsible operators, some are not. Make sure you are aware of where they are and give them plenty of room to ensure everyone's safety.

I would like to say thank you to everyone who has been attending our meetings lately. It seems like the attendance and participation is up. I hope it only gets better through the summer. Thank you!

A couple of months ago I wrote a letter describing the incredible impact Ezell Cox has had on the life of Austin Ball through the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. You may recall that I asked fellow TSBA members, including myself, to step forward and answer the call for supporting this program in our community. The time to do so has arrived. At our April meeting, I will have some specific details on how you can volunteer to support this worthwhile organization. If you miss the meeting, you may contact me or Eric Rauch directly to schedule a trip with a young person in need of your time. Remember, donating half a day of your life could change a kid's life forever.

I hope our members will rise to the occasion and represent TSBA with a strong showing of support for the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization.

Take care and see you on the water,

— Erik Engebretsen

# May Expectations

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It's the beginning of the topwater fishing season - records are set and trophies are caught this month!

May is the month that stripers complete their spawn in Tennessee waters. Large baits continue to work great as the stripers try to recover from the stress of the spawning season. Alewife are going to be spawning most of the month, so a topwater wake-bait lure cast to the bank will be great for the night bite. All baitfish will be spawning most of May.

The water temperature is expected to climb into the 70's with a thermocline developing by month's end in reservoirs and still waters. As the water temperature reaches the 70 degree mark, stripers will begin to look for the thermal refuge of cooler water. The surface action can be great and most fish will be caught in very shallow water, ranging from the surface to a depth of 20 feet. This time of year the gulls will become less effective indicators of baitfish, but continue to look for bait-eating birds like herons, loons, egrets, and cormorants.

The warm water discharge found at the steam plants will become less effective as the fish will be moving from these areas to headwaters and major creeks. The tailrace below the dams will develop and only get better through the spring and summer. Remember - caution is needed in the spring as the reservoirs and rivers are on the rise. Be careful and keep a look out for floating debris that could injure you or your boat.

— *Ezell Cox*

## **How to Contribute to the Newsletter:**

Please send in any pictures or news that you think would interest club members – we are always glad to hear from you. You can e-mail photos and reports to: [engebretsenerik@yahoo.com](mailto:engebretsenerik@yahoo.com)  
We usually put the newsletter together around the end of the month, but send your information any time and we will work it in.

## Minutes of the March 2011 meeting

Our club continues to do very well. We not only welcomed four new members but also had a near record number of members in attendance for the March meeting. Our featured speakers were members Allan Franklin and Ezell Cox, who joined forces to lead a great discussion on catching and keeping live bait. Ezell and Allan have always been willing to share their knowledge and experience with others, and the club really appreciates the detailed information they shared on these two key aspects of striper fishing.

Doug Steffe assured members that new hats will be available soon. The 2011 hats will be forest green with tan lettering. Doug also informed members that the TSBA will submit a request to the Norris Lake Advisory Committee asking that a study be conducted to investigate the idea of increasing striped bass stocking levels. Norris Lake is currently stocked at 3 fish per acre, which is lower than other fisheries in the area that are stocked at 5 fish or more per acre.

TSBA will be sponsoring the Watts Bar tournament on April 23. On display were some very nice trophies and prizes that will be awarded to tournament winners. See page 8 for details on this tournament. Allan Franklin reminded members that the Striper Bowl is coming up soon. It will be held on Cherokee Lake at Grainger County Park on May 7. This event is the annual fund raiser for the TSBA Kids Day event, which will be held on May 21. Alan will coordinate both events and would like to see a good turnout. We hope you can attend the Striper Bowl, as your participation will be greatly appreciated.

Lloyd Malone, a fishing guide for a 5-star lodge in Alaska, announced that anyone interested in a trip of a lifetime should call him at (865) 599-3014. Erik Engebretsen closed the meeting with the 50/50 drawing. One lucky member won \$82 and another member won the \$20 gift card.

After the meeting closed, the group moved outside for a cast net demonstration by Allan and Ezell.

— **Bud White, Secretary**



Members enjoyed the food and fellowship at the March meeting. TSBA would like to thank everyone for the outstanding attendance at the last few meetings.

## **ATTENTION: April meeting**

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TSBA's monthly meeting will be held on April 18, 2011 at the Flatwater Grill restaurant in Oak Ridge. TSBA members will benefit from hearing two long-time professional fisherman speak about their areas of expertise. Captain Mack Farr, an expert striper fisherman who is well known for his umbrella rigs and jigs, will be speaking about umbrella rigs. Mack will also have tackle available for purchase. Captain Bill Carson, a field representative for Lowrance, is also an expert on gps/fish finder equipment. Bill will be sharing some advice on how to read the graphs on your electronic equipment.

Our meeting will be held in a private room, which is best entered through the side door near the railroad bridge. Dinner will start at 6:30 p.m., with the meeting to follow at 7:15 p.m. The dinner is a special buffet that owner Dean Russell is organizing for us. The cost is \$15, which includes a drink and gratuity. (Note that payment is cash or check only).

# TSBA requests study to investigate stocking levels on Norris Lake.

The annual meeting of the Norris Lake Fisheries Advisory Committee (NLFAC) was held on March 22, 2011 at the Eagle Bend Hatchery in Clinton, TN.

The NLFAC is a community-based group of advisors to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission on fishery management for Norris Lake. TSBA represents one of five subgroups that make-up a diverse group of stakeholders with differing goals regarding the management of this fishery. This committee was founded in 1998 to resolve long-standing conflicts related to the management of the lake's sport fishery, with the purpose of communicating with anglers to mediate disagreements between groups regarding how the fishery was being managed. When the committee was formed, TWRA had stopped stocking striped bass in Norris Lake entirely. TSBA worked to reach an agreement amongst committee members to restart stocking striped bass at a rate of 3 fish/acre.

At these meetings, TWRA presents an annual report on the status of the Norris Lake sports fishery. Several years ago their studies, with input from the NLFCA, had identified a declining number of walleye being caught and sampled. At this year's meeting it was announced that the stocking number of walleye was being increased to 10/acre to help with this decline. This process has been helping the lake.

The striped bass stocking density of 3 fish/acre has not been discussed since the committee agreed on this number in the early years. The officers of our club, along with the 5 TSBA members on this committee, agreed that this year was the right time to raise a concern regarding the number of striped bass being stocked annually in Norris Lake.

The following statement was read at this year's meeting:

*While striper fishing on Norris Lake is okay, and the hard core, well-informed anglers are catching fish, success is better on other east TN lakes where the fishery is managed by TWRA. We are finding that our TSBA members are fishing Norris less and less. Instead, they are going to Cherokee Lake which is fantastic for numbers; and to Watts Bar Reservoir and its headwaters for larger, quality fish. Clearly the average striper fisherman on Norris is struggling to catch fish.*

*Ever since the 2003 striper die-off, we have been waiting for the return of this once great fishery. We are seeing changes in the locations and quality of our striper catches. Surface feeding breaks, throughout the year, are a rarity. Summer catches are getting deeper and deeper, most likely due to the abundance of alewives and the above-average water quality of the past few years. Striper boats on the lake, both from Tennessee and other states, appear to be reducing in numbers year after year.*

*We feel as a club and users of the lake that improvements to this once great striper fishery are needed. Norris has the lowest stocking number of all the local striper lakes. Looking back at this number of 3 fish/acre, it was arrived at as a compromise rather than as a scientific number of what the lake system can support. We also believe that the debate over the presence of striped bass in Norris has lessened over the years and a more mutual respect between the parties involved now exists. It is understood that Norris has and will continue to change in its composition of nutrients and forage fish. Alewives which may have caused the walleye problem are in other east TN lakes and their striper stocking numbers are considerably higher. Could increased stocking of stripers in Norris help reduce the increasing alewife population? While we do not know the answer to this question, we certainly have opinions.*

*TSBA members recognize and agree that TWRA biologists are experts of fisheries management. We believe that they have the best judgment based on science, as to what the best stocking level is for Norris Lake. We therefore request that TWRA*

*study this issue to determine what striped bass stocking number is needed to improve Norris Lake for use by all fishermen. We lastly believe that there is not a need for petitions or letter writing by our members. Although we feel strongly for the need of improvement, this resource can be revived by TWRA studies and science, not public pressure.*

Submitted by;  
Doug Steffe, Kyle Rutherford,  
Mike Davis standing in for Eric Rauch,  
Allan Franklin, and Ezell Cox

As the statement was read, the room of 70 plus became dead silent. We were not sure if it was the calm before the storm. At the end a positive statement, "We can do that" (the study), was given by TWRA Fisheries Division chief Bobby Wilson. Our Region 4 biologist Jim Negus, then suggested the idea of involving Dr. Phil Bettoli of Tennessee Tech University in the study. He also retrieved a presentation slide on the declining creel catch numbers of striper. A non-TSBA member on the committee spoke in favor of the study. Only one negative comment was made concerning a study made back in the 90's that led to the 3/acre number. The 5 TSBA/NLFAC members were pleased by the acceptance of this request and are hopeful that Norris striper stocking numbers in the future can be based on need and not on public emotions of the past.

— **Doug Steffe**

### Save the date Striper bowl is on May 7, 2011

The striper bowl is an individual club tournament for members and their immediate family or guest. The entry fee is \$16 and \$4 for big fish. 100% of the entry proceeds go to purchase door prizes for the Kids Day Out event.

Come out and enjoy a day of fishing that will also benefit local kids. They are the future of our sport!



## **Outlook for current fishing spots**

---

### **CHEROKEE LAKE**

The striper/hybrid often feed on the surface in May. The bait-eating birds will help indicate where these fish are going to show up for the all-you-can-eat buffet. They can be scattered all over the lake, ranging from the John Sevier steam plant to all the major coves with baitfish. Night fishing with the alewife spawn in progress is at a premium this month.

### **NORRIS LAKE**

The Loyston/Lost Creek area around point 19 is excellent upstream to the headwaters. On the Powell River side, the area above point 15 and in most of the major coves including Cove Creek, Big Creek, Cedar Creek, Davis Creek and Sycamore Creek are good places to fish this time of year. Look for the bait-eating birds and the warmest water that is attracting baitfish. Artificial lures are still very effective. Pull the live bait along the shallow, sun-warmed banks and shallow humps with planner boards.

### **WATTS BAR & MELTON HILL**

The steam plants at Kingston and Bull Run Creek will become less effective as many of the stripers will move to the headwaters and major creeks. The Emory River will also have some spring spawn run. Shallow warm-water flats that are attracting baitfish are also good place to try.

### **FISHING REGULATIONS**

There are some seasonal striped bass CREEL AND SIZE limit changes that take place April 1, 2011. Make sure you are aware of these changes, as it is each fisherman's responsibility to know the rules and stay legal. It is the law, and a good one at that, which requires boaters to wear life preservers below the dams in the tailrace.

— *Ezell Cox*

The TSBA web site has been rebuilt by Keith Shannon.  
Access it at **[www.TNStripedBass.com](http://www.TNStripedBass.com)**, logging in with your  
real name to register and your own unique password.

## It's Tournament Time!

TSBA is sponsoring our club's first catch and release tournament below Melton Hill Dam. This event is open to nonmembers. We have already had quite a few teams commit to fishing in this tournament. There is still time for you to register to take advantage of this opportunity to gather with fellow TSBA members for a great time.

**What:** Catch and release tournament

**Where:** Starting at the boat ramp below Melton Hill Dam  
You can fish anywhere on Watts Bar Lake

**When:** April 23, 2011

**Time:** 6:30 a.m. Registration  
7:00 a.m. Tournament starts  
1:00 p.m. Tournament ends

**Fees:** Entry fee is \$20.00 per boat

**Register:** Sign-up at the April 18 club meeting.  
Register the day of the tournament

### The Fine Print:

Overall length (not weight) determines the winner. You will need to take a picture of your fish with some sort of measuring device large enough to be seen in the photograph of your fish. The tournament card issued to you must be in the photograph with the fish. Members not back to the boat ramp by 1 p.m. will be disqualified.

And if a day spent fishing on Watts Bar Lake was not reward enough, there will be cash, prizes and trophies awarded to the top three winners. We hope you can join us for this event. If you need more information contact Todd Asher at [www.shadnastyfishing.com](http://www.shadnastyfishing.com), check out the forums on the website or attend our next meeting.

## Trophy Shots: Watts Bar Lake

Watts Bar Lake is one of the most heavily stocked lakes in the area. It is not uncommon for 30 and 40 pound monsters to be caught in this river system. If you have never fished Watts Bar, our tournament will present a great opportunity to learn about one of Tennessee's great fisheries.



*TSBA members share some photos of great catches they have made on Watts Bar Lake. Clockwise from upper left are Ken Eaker; Bill Ballou; Jim Moseley and Allan Franklin.*

*Register for the upcoming tournament and try your hand at catching a trophy striper on Watts Bar Lake.*

# Catching and Keeping Live Bait

At the March meeting, members Ezell Cox and Allan Franklin gave a presentation on catching and keeping live bait. Their presentation was very informative, and is being featured as an article in this month's newsletter.

Most all Tennessee rivers and reservoirs have abundant numbers of bait fish. The species targeted most frequently by striper fisherman are in the herring family (*clupeid* genus). Examples of fish in this group include gizzard shad, threadfins, alewife, skipjack and moon eye.



*Ezell and Alan didn't hold back any secrets. Besides teaching members about the tricks of the trade for catching and keeping live bait, they also shared information about their favorite bait holes. Specific places mentioned included the China Restaurant Cove, the culvert, I.C. King Park, and the wing wall at Melton Hill Dam.*

## **Species specific information**

Gizzard and threadfin shad can often be found in warm, shallow water at the back of calm coves and creeks. They prefer stained water because it has an abundance of microscopic organisms like algae and plankton, which is their food source. These fish can be caught with a cast net. The preferred size is a minimum of 3 inches to a maximum length of around 10 inches. Most find these bait fish are easiest to capture after being attracted to lights at night. The reason these two species make such excellent live bait is that

they are extremely active and fast. Unfortunately, this characteristic makes them hard to close a cast net around in order to fill your bait tank!

Alewife are most commonly caught under lights at night. Alewife like cooler, deeper water and have a slim body shape. Because of this, you will need a heavy, small mesh size (  $\frac{3}{8}$  or  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch) net to catch them. A favorite tactic used by experience fishermen is to leave the lights on to draw the alewife and just before casting the net turn off the light to disorient the alewife. After each cast let everything return to normal under the light for another cast. Alewife can also be caught during the spawn at night near the bank.

The skipjack herring is the live bait of choice for the trophy-hunting striper fishermen. Skipjacks are more common in tailrace systems, where the adults become predators feeding primarily on fish and insects. Catching them is the most unpredictable of all the members in the herring family. This species is most frequently caught on a rod and reel. To catch them, cast into a school of breaking jacks, letting your rig sink a little before retrieving quickly with a jerking motion. Lures to use include small flies, sabiki rigs, and spoons.

Skipjack are hard to keep alive, even for the most experienced fisherman. Special skills and experience are needed to keep these fish alive long enough to use successfully. Your bait tank must hold a large volume of water. It is also necessary to maintain high levels of dissolved oxygen in the holding water. Techniques anglers use to keep these fish alive include injecting pure oxygen into the holding water, treating holding water with a therapeutic dosage of salt, sedation, and cooling the temperature of the holding water.

### **Keeping baitfish alive**

The best live bait is the type you can catch and put on the hook as quickly as possible. With that being said, there are many techniques and types of equipment available to help you in your efforts to keep bait alive for the next fishing trip. Where and when you catch your live bait does make a difference in how good it is, and how well it will keep in captivity until you feed it to the stripers. Baitfish caught in cooler water are going to survive longer and

catch fish better than baitfish caught in warm water. This is especially true after long-term warm water stress has begun. The temperature of your holding water is a critical factor to keeping live bait healthy. This is due in chief to the fact that cooler water holds a high concentration of dissolved oxygen. Fish also have slower metabolic rates in cooler water, which allows them to cope better with the stress of captivity. This is the reason you can stock more bait per gallon in a tank of relatively cooler water. Remember - it is extremely stressful for freshwater fish to experience temperature fluctuations in excess of 7 to 10 degrees from where they were captured.

Bait tanks have to be capable of allowing for an adequate exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide between the holding water and the air. This is accomplished by creating as much water surface area as possible, which will naturally allow for carbon dioxide produced by the fish to escape the water while oxygen from the air enters the water. Breaking the surface tension of the water, with a battery operated airstone or a small submersible water pump that recirculates tank water for example, is a good way to improve the natural exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide in your holding water. (The Ron Vest Super Bait comes highly recommended by many TSBA members.)

Filtration is another important component of keeping fish in captivity. This can easily be accomplished by pumping the holding water through filter material at a rate of four water changes per hour or more. Filtration is important because it removes the build up of metabolic waste (ammonia) from the tank water. If ammonia levels build up too high, it will essentially "burn" the gills on the fish, impairing gill function. A slow circular motion of the water in the bait tank is also desirable.

The holding water in your tank can be treated with chemicals to improve the survival rate of your bait fish. The most common additive is just plain non-iodized salt at about one cup per 20 gallons of water. The number of bait fish in the tank is always a question asked that is hard to answer without knowing all the conditions and circumstances listed above. My best answer is to always stay within a safe measure to prevent stress. Small quantities of good bait that

will catch fish are better than any larger number of bait that won't. The number of bait the tank will keep in good condition depends on the size of bait. If all the conditions in the tank are favorable the shad per gallon could go as high as ¼ pound (approximately a 7 inch gizzard shad) per gallon of water. When bait is occasionally easy to catch, there is a great temptation to overload your holding tank. It is very hard for the angler to resist this temptation, so go ahead: overload the tank and learn this lesson once and for all.

The best live bait fishermen enjoy the catching and keeping of bait fish that make them successful at catching striper and hybrid. The learning curve can only be accomplished with experience and shortened a small amount by talking to someone else that has already "been there and done that".

### **Cast Net Techniques**

When bait fish are found flipping they can easily be caught with a good cast net. The most commonly used are 7ft to 8 ft radius with mesh size 3/8 to 5/8 inch. Memphis Net Company, <http://www.memphisnet.net/>, offers an affordable quality cast net selection. These nets are highly recommended by club members.

Some tips shared by Ezell and Alan: To properly use a cast net you don't want smaller bait sticking in it. Keep several different mesh sizes available. Use the mesh size that best suits your situation. Keep your nets in buckets and keep them wet. When purchasing a new net you can soak in fabric softener to loosen and soften it. If you shorten the rope on your nets, you can retrieve them more quickly.

When casting for bait in shallow water, you should try to sneak up on it. It also helps to move 20 to 30 feet between casts. When casting for bait in deep water, locate the school with your sonar, mark it with a tennis ball and then cast over the marked school. Let your fresh catch clean up before dumping it into the bait tank. You can achieve this by dumping bait straight out of the net into a live-well or bucket or even a floating basket will work. Give it a little while to clean up before dipping into bait tank.

## **YOUR 2011 TSBA OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AND STAFF**

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### **Asst. Treasurer:**

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#### **Kids' Fishing Day:**

Allan Franklin	865-805-3120
----------------	--------------

#### **Tournament Coordinator:**

Allan Franklin	865-694-8888
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#### **Door Prizes:**

[vacant]

#### **Advisor:**

Ezell Cox	423-626-9547
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## **2011 TSBA Calendar**

*Please join us at TSBA meetings and events.* Monthly meetings are held at the Flatwater Grill at 100 Melton Lake Peninsula in Oak Ridge, Tennessee (<http://theflatwatergrill.com>).

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| Apr. 18 | Monthly Meeting: dinner 6:30 p.m., meeting 7:15 p.m.<br>The Flatwater Grill in Oak Ridge.<br>Topics: Umbrella Rigs, Speaker Mack Farr<br>Graph Reading, Speaker Bill Carson |
| Apr. 23 | Tournament: Watts Bar Lake below Melton Hill Dam.<br>Registration at 7a.m., weigh-in at 1 p.m.  |
| May 7   | Tournament: Striper Bowl<br>Grainger Co. Park on Cherokee Lake<br>Fishing begins at 2 p.m., weigh-in at 8 p.m.  |
| May 16  | Monthly Meeting: dinner 6:30 p.m., meeting 7:15 p.m.<br>The Flatwater Grill in Oak Ridge.<br>Topic: TWRA Stocking   |
| May 21  | Kid's Day: 2:00 - 8:00 p.m.,<br>Grainger County Park  |
| Jun 20  | Monthly Meeting: dinner 6:30 p.m., meeting 7:15 p.m.<br>The Flatwater Grill in Oak Ridge.<br>Topic: Artificial Baits and Fishing Tackle, speaker TBA                        |
| Jul 9   | Tournament: Details TBA   |
| Jul 18  | Monthly Meeting; details TBA  |
| Aug 15  | Monthly Meeting: dinner 6:30 p.m., meeting 7:15 p.m.<br>The Flatwater Grill in Oak Ridge.<br>Topic: Artificial Baits and Fishing Tackle, speaker TBA                        |
| Sep 24  | Annual Fish Fry, Grainger County Park   |

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## T.S.B.A. 2011 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

As a member:

- \*You'll receive a monthly newsletter.
- \* 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 web page.

Is this a renewal \_\_\_\_ or a New Membership \_\_\_\_

Your Name\_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone(\_\_\_\_\_)\_\_\_\_\_ # of minor children in family \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Referred By: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read and agree to abide by and be bound by the Tennessee Striped Bass Association, Inc. (TSBA) Bylaws. A copy of the Bylaws can be found on the TSBA website at [www.TNStripedBass.com](http://www.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 163***

***Sharps Chapel, TN. 37866***

**Simplified Renewal Note:** Membership renewals with no address or info revisions may send **just a \$20 check** with member's name, to the address above. Filling out the application is not required. Yearly dues are due in January each year. New members that sign up in Oct., Nov., or Dec. will get credit for the remainder of that year and the following year.



*The TSBA is a non-profit corporation that supports TWRA & its Striped Bass & Cherokee Bass programs. We come together to provide a unified voice for the Striped Bass & the Cherokee Bass programs in the State of Tennessee. We educate the public & share our knowledge with fellow Striped Bass anglers.*

**Tennessee Striped Bass Association, Inc.  
P.O. Box 163  
Sharps Chapel, TN 37866**



**April 18, 2011: Monthly Meeting  
Flatwater Grill  
100 Melton Lake Drive, Oak Ridge  
Dinner at 6:30 p.m.; meeting at 7:15 p.m.**