

Tennessee Striped Bass Association

Get Hooked !



June/July 2021



Joe Asher with a beauty of a striper!

In-Person Monthly Meetings have resumed!

(Details on August meeting - inside this issue)

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

Submit news items to tsba.newsletter@gmail.com

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

May & June Meetings Were Recorded

Good news for those who couldn't attend the May and June 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.

August 2021 Club Meeting

No club meeting in July, but we will meet in August. You'll get an email with more info on when and where to meet. Stay tuned, and we hope you can join us!



Ezell Cox's cousin Clayton from Arizona and Ezell's new fishing dog, Taz

Asian Carp Barrier Research Update

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is coordinating a multi-year evaluation of an invasive carp deterrent technology at the Barkley Lock on the Cumberland River in Kentucky. The bio-acoustic fish fence (BAFF) is an experimental deterrent designed to slow or stop the movement of invasive carp through our rivers and waterways. If successful, it could provide another tool to help fight invasive carp.

Preliminary results suggest a reduction in silver carp movement through the BAFF when it is turned on. Specifically, of the 254 silver carp tagged in the area during our study period from November 1, 2020 through February 13, 2021, 57 fish crossed the BAFF when it was turned off whereas only 4 crossed it while the BAFF was on. In addition, we counted 3,181 times silver carp approached the BAFF when it was off but only 612 times when it was on, suggesting possible avoidance behavior when the system is on.

This news is promising and a critical first step in understanding the technology, but more time is needed to complete the study. We still need to observe the effects on fish behavior over different seasons of the year and over longer periods of time to determine if they become acclimated to the deterrent. We will also be working with our partners to tag more silver carp to ensure we have a large sample size and statistically valid results. Until that work is done, these preliminary results are in no way final or assured to hold through the remainder of the study. We anticipate the study will conclude in 2022, and we plan to share final results at that time. We are hopeful that this study will continue to show positive results for deterrent systems like the BAFF to help us achieve our goals in the continued fight against invasive carp.

We'd also like to acknowledge that the BAFF evaluation project is a partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Nashville District, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Fish Guidance Systems and University of Minnesota.

- Wade White, (County Judge Executive, Lyon County, KY)

Tailwater Fishing for Striped Bass

Much of the finest striped bass fishing in Tennessee occurs in tailwater portions of rivers, immediately downstream of hydroelectric dams. Many anglers associate tailwater striper fishing only with the spring, when fish run out of the main bodies of the reservoirs to spawn near the dams. However, stripers can be caught at the dams all year. In the heat of the summer, cool, well oxygenated water discharged from the dams provides thermal refuges for stripers.

Striper fishing in all tailwaters have some things in common. Fish feed in, or just out of, the current. Live bait such as gizzard or threadfin shad is usually most productive. Swimbaits and bucktails that imitate shad are also effective. Fishing tends to be best when the water is running and more current tends to be better than less current. When fish are sparse in the tail race, they will usually hold close to the bottom in the choicest ambush points. Getting your bait into these spots is required when fish are not plentiful. It will take a bit of experimenting on your part to determine the correct amount of weight to get to the bottom. When fish are plentiful, it is often not necessary to get your bait into these locations.

However, each tailwater is unique. Striped bass seek out current breaks from which to ambush baitfish. The current breaks and therefore the fish will change locations based on the number of generators running and which generators are operating. Moreover, each tailrace's bottom contours and obstructions are unique. If possible, thoroughly graph the first few hundred yards below the dam when the water is off to identify fish-holding structure.

While I've fished all the tailwaters in East Tennessee, the remainder of this article will focus on the two I fish most often on Watts Bar, Fort Loudon and Melton Hill Dams.

Fort Loudon Dam

The first dam on the main stem of the Tennessee River, Fort Loudoun Dam creates a first rate tailwater for striper fishing. The tailwater is the head of Watts Bar Lake. The dam has four turbines and a maximum discharge of approximately 30,000 cubic feet per second. The area directly downstream of the turbines is free of propeller-wrecking rocks but to the right of the discharge several rocks lurk just below the water's surface. Exercise caution in this area when the lake is below full pool and/or when the generators are off.

When multiple generators are on, look for the "seam" created by the current of adjacent generators. Run your boat to about fifty feet of the dam, put the boat in neutral, make a short cast into the seam and let out about twenty feet of line. If your bait gets pulled down toward the bottom, you are in the magic spot. Be aware that the magic spot is magic because it is full of rocks and sharp construction debris left in place when the dam was built. If you are doing it right, you will break off many rigs on the bottom. To reduce break-offs and maximize hook-ups, try to fish as vertically as possible. As you drift downstream and feel the sinker tap the rocks, lift the rod

tip and reel in a turn or two to walk the bait up the rocks. This takes a bit of practice. Stout tackle is the name of the game here. Heavy baitcasting gear and 30 pound test is required to pull fish off the bottom quickly. If you attempt to "play" a fish here, you are only playing yourself. The fish will run to the bottom and break off.

While the best fishing is usually within one hundred yards of the dam directly downstream of the discharge, fish can be found for a half mile or so below the dam and off to the side of the discharge. When fish are off to the side of the discharge in shallow water, topwater baits can be very effective at dawn and dusk.

A word of etiquette; let the bank fishermen fish the current break closest to the bank. Don't drift over their lines. We all gotta share the water. However, some bank fishermen are equipped with surf fishing rods capable of 100+ yard casts and are not fond of sharing the lake. They intentionally cast at boat fishermen in an attempt to intimidate. I like to keep my trolling motor down and running at a low setting so I can snag their lines. I hit the "jackrabbit" button on the remote to spool them and end their day at the lake. So sorry..... I think MinnKota engineers had this in mind when they put the otherwise good for nothing jackrabbit button on the remote.

Another word of etiquette; don't run upstream in the discharge when there are other boats fishing it.

Please be aware that while the Fort Loudon Dam tailwater holds fish all summer long, water discharge temperatures can be too warm for ethical catch and release fishing from July through September.

Melton Hill Dam

Melton Hill Dam is on the Clinch River arm of Watts Bar Lake. The dam has three turbines and a maximum discharge of approximately 21,000 cfs. There are no prop-wrecking rocks below the discharge or off to the left side of it.

When multiple generators are on, fish it as described as above. However, Melton Hill Dam frequently has only one generator running. When this is the case, fish the current seams close to the bank and directly downstream of the wing wall. Don't forget to fish the eddy that forms along the lock wall. Stripers frequently ambush baitfish along the wall.

Fishing is often good for miles below Melton Hill Dam. For this reason, if you don't catch fish quickly in the tailrace, fish downstream with planer boards and downlines.

Water discharge temperatures at Melton Hill Dam rarely exceed seventy degrees and ethical catch and release is possible all summer.

- Keith Shannon

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:

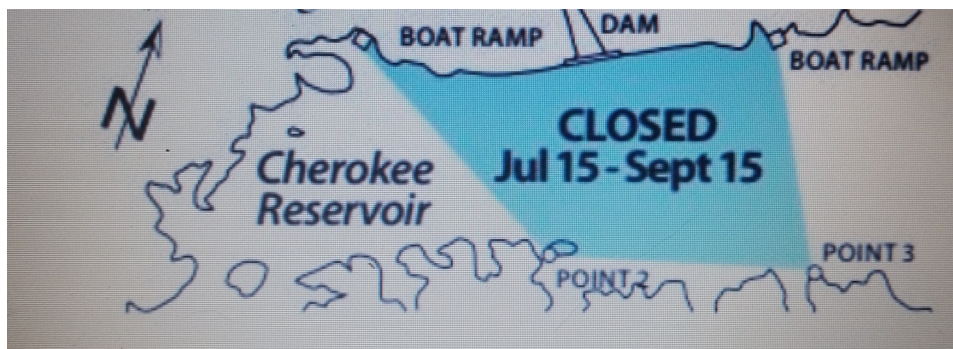
32–42 inch PLR; only one fish may be over 42 inches

July Expectations

The migration downstream toward the dam has started in the reservoirs. The stripers will be a little easier to locate as the temperature in the coves and creeks pushes them into the deeper, cooler main channel. The thermocline will continue to get deeper with the fish staying just below it, and surface feeding in the reservoirs is over until October. A good topographical map now becomes a great fishing tool. The tailraces will continue to improve. They will be a good place to find some action while also still allowing successful catch and release in the hot summer. Working the "boils" will become very effective in July. It is your life and money, so remember to wear your life jacket at the dams. It is also the law.

Cherokee Lake - Good

Stripers will not go back well in July. Catch your limit and quit. Released fish will not survive for the most part. Hybrids are more tolerant of the warm water and can often be caught in schools in shallow water. They can also be released normally without mortality. The no fishing zone is in effect again starting July 15. The humps and islands near the dam up to Point #21 normally become excellent.



Norris Lake - Fair

Best fishing is from Point #26 on the Clinch and Point #14 on the Powell to the dam. Most of the stripers will move into the main channel out of the shallow warm coves. Down lines and downriggers work well over marked fish.

Below Ft Loudon & Melton Hill Dams - Good & Improving

The law is you must wear your life jacket in these dangerous waters. Put your sinker and hook close to the bottom with plans to lose a few for the most catches. Pulling side planer boards down the banks can also catch fish for miles downstream.



Doug Cheek on Cherokee.



George Cheek on Cherokee.



Larry Scott.



Larry Scott's brother Gary fights a hog!

YOUR 2021 TSBA OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AND STAFF

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Vice President: Steve Nichols

Treasurer: Eric Rauch

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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 ____

Your name _____ -- _____

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E-Mail address _____

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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