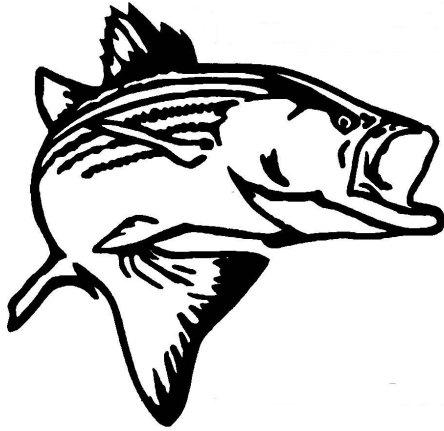


**Catch  
the  
Striper  
Fever!**

# T.S.B.A.



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

**March  
2011**



*The tackle shop comes to you when you attend a TSBA monthly meeting! Jim Farmer of Cast Away Baits brought a sampling of his custom made tackle for show, sale, and door prize give away at the February meeting. This month's newsletter features advice from Jim and another well respected angler, Captain Clay Cunningham. Their lure of choice for this time of year? The bucktail jig. Read on to learn why these avid fisherman think this lure could be your best bet for early spring fishing.*

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The TSBA offers two ways to stay current with the club: our website and the monthly meetings. Because our membership distribution is widespread over eight states, it is not possible for all of our members to attend our monthly meetings. This makes the TSBA website an especially important tool for keeping members connected. This open letter from Eddie Crouse, originally posted on the TSBA website, demonstrates how important your contributions to the website and newsletter are in not only keeping TSBA members informed but also providing advice and tips for anglers new to the sport of striper fishing.

Eddie wrote:

*I would like to thank members for all the info provided on this site. I have been striper/hybrid fishing for three years now, mostly with my son Dylan, and we LOVE IT!! I live in Tazewell, VA so attending meetings is tough. I work 5 to 6 days/week so my fishing time is limited. I have 6-8 friends from this area who all fish TN. Their fishery is so far ahead of other states (certainly VA's). We try to keep in touch and help each other with info. Most of our spring/fall fishing is on Boone Lake since it is a 1-1/2 hour drive. Our summer fishing is at Melton Hill/Fort Loudon dams and rivers below. We try to go to Cumberland River 1 or 2 times annually (spring and fall). We quickly found that the big fish are tough!!! to find and catch. We've caught several low 30 pounders, but no 40's. We practice catch/release and try to be very gentle with our precious catch. Last year I kept 4 hybrids while fishing with my mother (who loves to fish) and released the rest. We fish bait and plugs only, so I normally quit fishing in mid to late November and start back late Feb./early March. I found out this type of fishing is tough after water reaches mid 40's. We have a 1995 Stratos 278 FS boat that we will be selling soon. We're upgrading to a SeaArk Bayfisher with 115 ProXS. I met Ezell on Cumberland and like everyone says, he was open to all questions about fishing. A fishing friend of mine, Ronnie Shrader, said he has always been helpful to him and he was right. Looking forward to meeting other TSBA members. I plan to post fishing reports in near future. I am ready to fish!!!!*

*Thanks again,  
Eddie Crouse*

Keep those website and newsletter contributions coming!

—— Erik Engebretsen

## The bucktail jig: An old faithful in the tackle box

TSBA members who attended the February meeting were treated to an outstanding presentation by Jim and Lisa Farmer, owners of the custom tackle shop Cast Away Baits. In his presentation, Jim identified the bucktail jig as his favorite overall lure, which he prizes for its versatility. Jim has found early spring to be a good time of year to try this jig. In an on-line article posted on his website ([www.castawaybaits.com](http://www.castawaybaits.com)) he wrote, "casting bucktails in shallow water at dawn is an effective way to hook up with a nice striper or two. I like working points with bucktails in the spring. A lot of times when a striper is on a point, he becomes very territorial and will strike a passing bucktail just for trespassing on his turf. The outer edge of grassy areas will often hold an early morning striper waiting for a bait or two to leave the confines of the grass line. I try and cast just into the weed line and work the bucktail back to the boat with a quick but steady retrieve." Some of his favorite bucktail casting tactics include:

- When casting to top-water feeding stripers, I like to cast beyond the fish and burn the bucktail through the strike zone. Occasionally I'll stop or slow the jig and then burn again.
- When blind casting points I use a steady retrieve casting across or along the ridge. Know where your jig is in the column.
- I like casting to weed beds in the spring very early in the morning. Basically cast and retrieve with a steady retrieve at the edge of the weed bed.
- Size matters. Remember this rule of thumb: small in the coldest part of winter and as the weather warms the baits get bigger.

Jim shared that he usually starts trolling bucktails on the downrig-

*continued on page 13*

## Minutes of the January 2011 meeting

2011 continues to be another great year for the TSBA. With over 40 members in attendance at the February meeting, the room was filled with knowledge and laughter during discussions before the meeting. Our President, Erik Engebretsen, introduced our guest speaker, Jim Farmer, who provided an outstanding presentation entitled "Tackle and Tactics".

Jim began fishing over 30 years ago. He has fished the NSBA tournament trail and gained experience and knowledge about striped bass from big names like Mike Maddalena, Tim Adrien, Mack Farr and Bill Carson. He has had great success specializing in artificial baits and chasing stripers through the seasons.



*TSBA members really enjoyed being able to check out Jim's products first hand. These products are available for purchase at [www.castawaybaits.com](http://www.castawaybaits.com).*

Jim custom makes all of his own lures and tackle, which he offers for sale on his web-site [castawaybaits.com](http://castawaybaits.com). In the tackle portion of his presentation, Jim spoke to the group about making tackle as a rewarding hobby. He described techniques for melting lead and plastics and how to select color combinations. He also shared some of his favorite suppliers and on-line resources for learning about making your own lures. After providing

an overview on how to make artificial bait, he discussed his preferred tactics for casting, jigging, and trolling with downriggers and u-rigs.

On April 23, 2011 TSBA will be sponsoring a striper tournament below Melton Hill Dam on Watts Bar Lake. We will be launching at 7:00 a.m. from the boat ramp just below Melton Hill Dam with weigh-in at 1:00 p.m. Todd Asher will coordinate the event. See

page 6 for more details regarding this event.

TSBA gave away \$52 to the 50-50 winner and Cast Away Baits donated nine nice door prizes. Sammy Robinette won the \$20 gift card.

Bill Ballou expressed concern about the membership renewal deadline. It was agreed that TSBA directors would try to contact and renew these members for 2011.



*TSBA sincerely appreciates the wonderful presentation and door prizes provided by Jim Farmer and his wife Lisa.*

Thanks everybody for another great turn out.

— **Bud White, Secretary**

## **ATTENTION: March meeting**

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TSBA's monthly meeting will be held on March 21, 2011 at the Flatwater Grill restaurant in Oak Ridge. Members Alan Franklin and Ezell Cox will discuss methods for catching and keeping live bait.

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).

## **Its Tournament Time!**

TSBA will be hosting a striped bass tournament on Watts Bar Lake below Melton Hill Dam. This event will take place on April 23, 2011. We will be launching at 7:00 a.m. from the boat ramp just below Melton Hill Dam with weigh-in at 1:00 p.m. Todd Asher will coordinate the event.

Tournament details:

- The entry fee is \$20 cash, due at check-in
- Two longest stripers wins
- Big fish side pot – over all longest
- All fish must be measured, photographed and released quickly
- You may trailer to any part of Watts Bar Lake
- Payout will be based on entries.

Prizes will be awarded for first, second, and third place for the main tournament. There will also be one winner for the big fish pot. The exact payout will be determined by the number of entries, and will be distributed as follows: first place - 70%; second place - 20%; and third place - 10% of total entry fees.

First Place: Trophy, cash award, planer boards, hat, sticker

Second Place: Trophy, cash award, hat, sticker

Side Pot: Trophy, cash award, sticker

If you have never fished Watts Bar, our tournament will present a great opportunity to learn about one of Tennessee's great fisheries. Watts Bar Lake is one of the heaviest stocked lakes in the area, with 30 and 40 pound monsters frequently caught in this river system. We hope you can join us for this event. If you need more information contact a TSBA staff member, check out the forums on the website or attend our next meeting.

# April Expectations

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April is still considered a transition month in the life cycle of the striped bass, as they will switch from pre-spawning to spawning behaviors during this month. Early in the month, large-sized bait will begin to be very effective as the stripers continue to gorge on baitfish in an effort to complete the weight gain required for spawning. The water temperature is expected to climb from high 50's to the low 70's in some areas, and this will trigger spawning runs for striped bass. Baitfish will also begin to spawn this month. Alewife will start to spawn late in the month, creating some great nighttime fishing.

The surface action can be great and the gulls are still very much worth following. Most fish will be caught near the surface to 20 feet depth and often in very shallow water. The area around the steam plants will continue to attract bait fish and striped bass if warm water discharge continues. The tailrace below the dams will develop and only get better through the spring and summer. Records and trophies are caught this month.

CAUTION is needed more in the spring as the reservoirs and rivers are on the rise. Rising waters create a lot of floating debris that can damage, injure, or worse.

— *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.

# Bucktails in the Spring

By 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.



*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).*

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

*continued on page 9*



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.

*continued on page 10*

### **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

*continued on page 12*

## **Outlook for current fishing spots**

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### **CHEROKEE LAKE**

The stripers and hybrids often feed on the surface in April. 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 & MELTON HILL**

The steam plants at Kingston and Bull Run Creek will have the most predictable catches if they have warm water discharge. The Emory River will also have some spring spawn run. Shallow warm water flats that have attracted baitfish are also good.

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.

*Bucktails in the spring, continued from page 10*

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*



*Doug Steffe and Ezell Cox took TSBA guest speakers Jim and Lisa Farmer fishing on Cherokee for small hybrids before the club meeting.*

gers in the early spring. Some of his tips for downrigger bucktail trolling include:

- Start trolling small bucktails (1/2 to 3/4 ounce) on main lake humps, main lake points and creek mouths in April as the fish start to relate to deeper water.
- White and chartreuse are my main color selections.
- My baits are generally 50-100 feet behind the ball. The balls are at 20 and 30 feet deep.
- I use 30-lb test monofilament with a 30-ft, 17-lb test fluorocarbon leader.

Jim Farmer has other advice to offer when it comes to fishing for stripers during early spring. To read this article in its entirety, see "Hints of Spring" posted on Jim's blog at [www.castawaybaits.com](http://www.castawaybaits.com).

— Sherry Wehner, Editor



*These 1/4 and 3/8 - ounce egghead bucktails are an example of the type of artificial lure Jim and Lisa Farmer like to use for catching a nice early striper or a pre-spawning bass.*

## Protect your marine engine from E10 fuels

Ethanol is a domestically produced product, primarily from corn, that is a renewable fuel. The gasoline that we usually purchase is E-10 (10% ethanol) and is widespread across the country with some stations even offering E-85. The use of ethanol does present some problems for boaters that car and truck owners usually don't have to deal with. Most car and truck fuel tanks will be refilled weekly or bi-weekly, so the fuel is much fresher when it is used by the engine than it would be in a lot of pleasure boats.

The problem with using alcohol/ethanol for boating is that it is hygroscopic nature. Hygroscopic means that it likes water and it attracts and couples with water in the air. This ethanol/water mixture will be heavier than gasoline causing it to settle in the bottom of the fuel tank. Over time the ethanol/water level (in a boat tank) will continue to grow larger than it would in a car tank since the average boater will not refill the tank as often as a car (truck) owner. This is called "phase separation" and over time the water/ethanol phase will reach a level that will be drawn into the fuel delivery system and if there is no fuel/water separator in the system the water will go to the carburetor or fuel injectors and the engine will not run correctly. There is no quick fix for phase separation. Once it occurs the only way to solve the problem is to pump out the gas/ethanol/water mixture from the tank.

There are other problems with using E-10 fuel due to its solvent properties. Since ethanol is a powerful solvent it will breakdown the tars and organic sediment that is usually present in marine fuel tanks. The ethanol/water mix will also act as a stripping agent for old varnish and gum accumulated from many years of gasoline being stored in the tank. If these organic contaminants are loosened from the fuel tank walls they can plug filters and injectors, possibly disabling your engine. In cold weather the ethanol/water phase can also freeze or turn into a syrupy mix that will plug filters.

Now after telling this horror story about ethanol problems, let me stress that the majority of the fishermen in our club will not find it difficult to

avoid the above listed problems. Most of the articles about ethanol problems were written about boats with large inboard tanks and the boats usually went through long storage periods in the winter. Since it is not practical to completely drain your boat's inboard fuel tank before it is stored for the winter, I will list some of the guidelines and tips I found that should help us avoid "BAD GAS" problems.

#### **DO.....**

Fill your tank to approximately 95% full to reduce the flow of air into the tank thereby reducing the amount of condensation.

Try to find a station that sells 100% gasoline instead of E-10 if possible. The internet says that they can still be found.

Use a fuel stabilizer such as STAR BRITE STAR TRON, which is advertised to help prevent water contamination in fuel tanks.

Use a good water separating fuel filter and carry a spare cartridge, such as Racor Filter.

#### **DON'T....**

Leave your tank partially full.

Let your boat sit idle for long periods.

If you have MTBE blended gas in your tank do not add ethanol-blended gas until the tank is almost empty.

—— *Jim Blazier*

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

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----------------	--------------

#### **Tournament Coordinator:**

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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>).

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| Mar. 21 | Monthly Meeting: dinner 6:30 p.m., meeting 7:15 p.m.<br>The Flatwater Grill in Oak Ridge.<br>Topic: Catching and Keeping Live Bait<br>Speakers: Alan Franklin and Ezell Cox |
| 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 Bare Lake below Melton Hill Dam.<br>Registration at 7a.m., weigh-in at 1 p.m.   |
| May 7   | Tournament: Striper Bowl at Grainger Co. Park. Details TBA  |
| 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**



**March 21, 2011: Monthly Meeting  
Flatwater Grill  
100 Melton Lake Drive, Oak Ridge  
Dinner at 6:30 p.m.; meeting at 7:15 p.m.**