

# Tennessee Striped Bass Association

**GET HOOKED!** }  
August 2014



*Cody Reinitz (L) and  
Jon Stanke (R)*

# Letter from the Prez

Can anyone believe the weather we had in July? It felt like we were vacationing in Michigan rather than hanging out in East Tennessee! I hope that August continues the current summer trend, but I doubt we'll be that lucky.

Keith Shannon was our speaker at the July meeting. He shared a wealth of knowledge regarding keeping bait healthy. Check out his presentation on our web site if you weren't able to attend. It will be worth your time. Mike Smith from TWRA's Eagle Bend Fish Hatchery will be our speaker at the August 18 meeting. Please join us at the Mandarin House. Don't forget to mark your calendars for the TSBA fish fry on September 13 at Grainger County Park.

Our next tournament will be August 23 on Watts Bar Reservoir. This could be a great opportunity for many of us who don't regularly fish that water body to learn something more about it. Try to participate if possible.

One of the most important aspects of having a successful organization like TSBA is for our members to step forward and volunteer for positions when they come open. Larry Nowell recently agreed to assume the Treasurer function for us and Jim Blazier agreed to be his back up. Thanks to both of them for helping us in this capacity.

We are currently looking for someone to become our Sponsor Coordinator. Also, we are looking for someone to edit the newsletter starting in January. If you are potentially interested in serving the club in either of the capacities, please let any officer know. It is really important that we fill both of these positions quickly.

— *Eric Rauch, TSBA President*

# Killing Striper For Fun?

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What is one of the most argued topics when it comes to the striped bass? It's not which lure works best, not what state has the biggest striper, not braid vs. mono. Possibly the hottest topic when it comes to landlocked Southern striped bass is post release mortality. There have been studies, articles, discussions, experiments, trials and tribulations galore on the issue and still no answer has been reached. Or has it?

The main issue with the catch and release of Southern striper is NOT an issue of survival. WHAT? Rather, it is an issue of ethics amongst anglers. The simple fact that somebody releases a fish has no bearing on the survival of said fish. The survival of the fish is imminently and profoundly affected by the methods used by the angler who caught it. There are several key components to a PROPER catch and release. If any one of these components are overlooked or miscarried, the survival rate of the released fish WILL be compromised. The vast majority of dead striper will sink. JUST BECAUSE THEY SWAM AWAY DOESN'T MEAN THEY WILL LIVE.

**WATER TEMPERATURE:** By FAR and AWAY the most critical component of PROPER catch and release is water temperature. Here in the south where summer water temperatures regularly climb to 90 degrees and our lakes stratify, the striper are at their geographical limits as far as latitude goes. Unfortunately, due to the physiological nature of these fish, striper in many southern impoundments are swimming a fine line between surviving until cooler temperatures prevail or death due to overheating/suffocation/starvation. Inducing ANY stress during this time of susceptibility will typically shift the balance to ultimately result in the death of the fish. SOLUTION: When fishing for striper in water over 75 degrees, be very cautious with larger fish (10 lbs and up) since they are the most susceptible to the heat. Either limit yourself to killing only your creel limit, find cooler waters to fish such as a river or tailrace, fish for a species more tolerant of warm water release, or don't fish for striper if you think they may be dying after release. Listening to advice of experienced striper anglers and doing your own research on this topic will make you aware of your impact on the fishery.

**DEPTH OF FISH:** Not the depth where you hooked the fish, but the depth the fish was prior to it reacting to your lure or bait. Bringing fish up to the surface from depths below about 30 feet will begin to result in a condition called barotrauma. This is due to the pressure difference at the surface vs. the depth from which the fish came. For every 32 feet of depth in water, the pressure increases one atmosphere. A fish balances itself by increasing or reducing the amount of gas in the swim bladder. As they go deeper, they must increase the amount to stay neutrally buoyant so they don't sink. When reeled up from the depths (in some extreme cases striper are being caught 90 -100 feet deep, THAT'S 3 ATMOSPHERES PRESSURE), the swim bladder expands uncontrollably because it takes time for them to reabsorb the gas. This expansion rips and tears at the internal organs of the fish and often results in the stomach being expelled out of the fish's mouth. Unfortunately, barotrauma and summertime fishing go hand in hand. **SOLUTION:** Keep your limit and **STOP**. Fish caught and released at this point will most likely die from injury. Forcing a fish downward into the water "torpedoing" is a less than desirable option. When torpedoing, allow the fish to only drop from a few inches above the water's surface. The idea is to start the fish's natural swimming motion so it has a chance to propel itself. Often the fish is thrown into the water head down with too much force causing the disoriented fish to pop back up to the surface. There are devices designed to lower the fish back to the depth it was caught which are supposed to let the fish revive at the temperature and pressure where it started. This is a better alternative to a surface release, but there are no studies to show it is effective. A technique called fizzing, or decompression, or gassing in which a needle is stuck through the side of the fish to allow some of the gas to be expelled is thought by some to be a successful alternative to just killing the bloated fish. The fact remains that the internals of the fish are damaged, it struggled on the line during the fight, was likely reeled through hot surface waters, and has now been overhanded by its would-be savior. This fish will at least die out of sight.

**OVERHANDLING:** Third on the list of improper catch and release for good reason. Striper are majestic fish and enthusiastic anglers like to admire their catch. Unfortunately, they are unwittingly admiring their fish to death. Have your scales and cameras ready for action **PRIOR** to landing the fish.

DO NOT allow the fish to touch anything that will disturb or remove its slime coat. We are all guilty of this, but minimizing the handling will result in better survival for the released fish. Nets are a big problem when it comes to this issue. The only net that is remotely release-friendly is a rubber or rubber coated net. Nets without coatings or with knotted mesh against the slime of a striper are like a cheese grater on YOUR skin. Disturbing the slime coat in any way will open a fish to many kinds of infections which could ultimately kill the fish. SOLUTION: Use a smooth-tipped lip gripping device like a Boga Grip or plastic lip gripper to subdue and lift the fish. Support the belly of the fish. Snap a quick picture or two and get the fish back in the water. If you are alone, you cannot possibly accomplish this in a timely manner. Having a video camera already recording would be a great idea and you can capture still images of a quick pose from that.

**DEEP HOOKING:** This issue is mainly from using bait. Sometimes a hungry striper will inhale the bait so quickly, you cannot possibly hook it in the lip. However, there are a couple of tricks you can employ to help prevent this. Circle hooks are designed to hook a fish in the lip. Offset circle hooks where the point is bent slightly outward will still deep hook a fish, but not nearly as often as a normal “J” hook, octopus or a khale style. If you must release a deep hooked fish, make a judgment as to whether or not the hook appears to be removable. Have your hook remover nearby. If it is too deeply embedded, cut the line as short as you can, usually at the lips, and release the fish quickly as usual. The hook will eventually rust away and as long as it’s not in a compromising area, the fish should survive. Try shortening your leader on downlines. Keeping your bait closer to the weight will result in a quicker positive hookup and less swallowing of the bait. Don’t allow striper to “run” with the bait. The old Roland Martin shiner fishing “Count to ten and then JACK HIS JAW” doesn’t apply here. Striper don’t have suitcases or armpits to hold the bait in or under, it will be in their mouth so apply pressure immediately.

**FIGHT TIME:** Keep fight time to a minimum. The longer fish struggle, the more tired they become. The more tired they become, the more lactic acid is released into their muscle tissue. Lactic acid in a striper is no joke. It makes them stiff, and after the fight, if they do not get swimming right away, they often die from a condition called LACTIC ACID ACIDOSIS.

If you combine a long fight with high water temperatures and barotrauma, you'd better be getting that fish in, off, and down in a hurry! If the fish is over 10 pounds in the above scenario, it is more than likely a dead fish whether you put it on ice or not. **SOLUTION:** Use heavier rods, reels, line and tighter drag settings to bring fish in quickly. This is always a good idea, even in cooler weather and colder water.

**METHOD OF FISHING:** To a lesser degree, the way you fish for the striper will have some effect on the releasability factor. Trolling umbrella rigs, leadcore, or even spoons, spinners and plugs typically results in a lip hook, and a more releasable fish. Using small bait will usually result in catching smaller, more releasable fish. Fish smartly and you can reduce your "death footprint" on the striper population.

**ETHICS:** This is the most difficult component of catch and release. Many anglers, and unfortunately the ones who pose the greatest impact on the fisheries, will **CHOOSE** to turn a blind eye to all of the studies, experiments, advice, and pressure from other anglers regarding poor release tactics. One such angler's death footprint on any given striper population can be 10-50x greater than a typical weekend angler. For example, some fishing guides choose to ignore their own conscience and bad practice of releasing striper to swim off and die. This is usually done with clientele aboard their vessel who unwittingly participate in the slaughter themselves under the false veil that the fish they are releasing might actually survive to be caught again. **SOLUTION:** None known at this time; perhaps education?

**CREEL LIMITS:** Sometimes at the root of the issue are outdated regulations and laws regarding the number of fish which can legally be taken on a per state basis. For example, in Georgia, there is a 15 fish (under 22 inch) limit on any combination of striper and hybrid striped bass per person. Only 2 may be over 22 inches. This regulation promotes a high kill number, especially on boats with a few people on board. Fortunately there is a 50 fish limit per boat. This is still a lot of dead fish. In Tennessee, this same regulation is 2 fish per person with a minimum length of 15 inches. Some special regulations apply to a few other lakes in the state, but this seems to preserve fish numbers much better than Georgia's high limit. If there was a 7-8 fish compromise, it would secure a greater holdover population of fish from year to year.

This would give more anglers a chance to catch not only more, but larger fish each year.

**LAKE SIZE AND STOCKING NUMBERS:** To a far lesser degree, the number of fish added to a lake each year needs to be considered. Striper are a stocked fish in nearly every landlocked impoundment with a few exceptions like Santee Cooper in South Carolina, Lake Weiss in Alabama and Texoma in Texas. Minimal natural reproduction occurs in other lakes, but usually not enough to generate viable catchable populations. Larger lakes like Hartwell and Clarks Hill on the Savannah River system receive several hundred thousand to a million striped fingerlings each year. Smaller lakes like Allatoona and Sinclair may receive less than a hundred thousand in some years. Yet the fishing pressure remains just as high on the smaller lakes. In fact, Allatoona is one of the most visited lakes that is controlled by the Army Corp of Engineers. That is out of 694 lakes! **SOLUTION:** Conserve the striped bass population by using proper release techniques and keep only what you plan on eating.

In summary, if you make the choice to release a striped bass with the intent for it to survive to continue growing, you must follow the proper guidelines. If you are releasing fish solely to make you or your clients feel better about catching and killing so many fish out of deep OR near 90 degree water, please think twice about what you're actually taking away from everybody else. Your living may depend on catching those fish, but then again, your living depends on catching those fish! Keeping some striped to eat is recommended, but needless slaughter is severely frowned upon. Alternative species like catfish or bass make for good fun and good eating while not doing damage to a stressed out striped population. So, if it's hot, or the fish are deep, or if you mishandle, or deep hook, or even worse: you just don't care, then the chances of a striped living post release will go down. **ENJOY** the resource, be an ethical angler, reduce your death footprint and practice **PROPER** catch and release.

— **Shawn McNew, Owner, Striper Soup Bait & Tackle**

*Shawn holds a BS degree in wildlife fisheries science from the University of Tennessee. He has been dedicated to catching and releasing striped bass for 20 years. His guide service, Seein Stripes, operated in East Tennessee and practiced catch and release ONLY striped trips. Shawn promotes the use of circle hooks, no nets, and short fight times to allow for successful catch and release. As the owner of Striper Soup, he enjoys helping anglers succeed at their striped bass goals.*

# Hot Spots

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## **CHEROKEE LAKE**

**NO FISHING ZONE RUNS JULY 15—SEPTEMBER 15 IN FRONT OF THE DAM.** Many of the larger fish are on the lower end of the reservoir near the dam. The dissolved oxygen has been good at the discharge below the dam so the diffusers have not been in operation yet. The stripers / hybrids will remain near the lower end of Cherokee until mid September when the lake turnover / mixing begins. Look for large concentrations of bait fish & large schools on the fish finders. Catch and release is not recommended for fish exceeding five pounds so go prepared to keep them with ice and stop. Pictures and weight for harvested fish only because every second out of the water is a death sentence.

## **NORRIS LAKE**

Stripers can be found mid lake and downstream around the larger deep coves & creeks where they confluence with the main lake channel. The low water and flow is allowing the stripers to remain scattered much farther upstream than normal. Good electronics are a must as the fish begin to stay below the thermocline much more in large schools. Catch and release is not recommended & becomes more difficult as the summer progresses, so limit photo & weight of attempted release, but be prepared to harvest and stop with limit.

## **WATTS BAR & MELTON HILL**

Look for the stripers in front of the major coves or where you find the most bait fish and bait-eating birds. Flow of the cool water from the dam's tailrace improves the fishing, so the catch is spotty and unpredictable this year so far. Catch and release works good when water temp stays below 70 degrees. The fish in Watts Bar & lower Clinch Watts Bar have contamination warnings so should not be harvested. — *Ezell Cox*



# Creel and Size Limits

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## 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.

**Striped Bass:** 32–42 inch PLR; only one fish may be over 42 inches

**Hybrid Striped Bass:** 15 inch minimum length limit

# **Fishing Summertime Stripers**

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Night time action can be good to get away from the heat, storms, & boat traffic. Stripers / hybrids begin to look for cooler thermal refuge as the temperature exceeds 70 degrees by going below the thermocline or moving to the tailrace. Catch & Release becomes questionable in water temps that exceed 70 degrees.

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 bait fish concentrations that will seek out the warmest most stable temperatures with nutrient rich water that is normally murky.

— *Ezell Cox*

## **TSBA 2014 Tournaments**

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— ~~1st Event: April 26 at Norris Lake Hickory Star Marina~~ —

— ~~2nd Event: June 21 at Cherokee Lake~~ —

**3rd Event: August 23 at Watts Bar Lake**

**4th Event: October 25 at Cherokee Lake**

**5th Event: December 20 at Norris Lake (TSBA Championship)**

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Email: [david@a-plusconstruction.net](mailto:david@a-plusconstruction.net)

# Fishing Regulations

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New fishing licenses are required to fish starting each March 1. It is each fisherman's responsibility to know the rules and stay legal. NO FISHING ZONE runs July 15 until September 15 on Cherokee Lake. Changes are normal in the management of our fishing each year, and those changes become effective on March 1. Each body of water may have exceptions you need to be aware of before exposing yourself to a fine. There are some seasonal striped bass CREEL AND SIZE limit changes that take place April 1 and November 1. Go online to Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency at [www.tnwildlife.org](http://www.tnwildlife.org) or pick up a 2014 Fishing Regulations book at sporting stores or TWRA offices. Wearing life preservers are required below the dams and a good habit anytime on the water for personal safety.

— *Ezell Cox*

**SAFETY SHOULD BE YOUR FIRST PRIORITY WHEN FISHING AS THE WATER IS USED MUCH MORE IN WARM WATER MONTHS.**

**BE AWARE OF THE DANGERS FROM HEAVY BOAT TRAFFIC, LACK OF EXPERIENCE, AND INTOXICATION.**

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## **YOUR 2014 TSBA OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AND STAFF**

### **President:**

Eric Rauch 865-223-9788  
erauch01@gmail.com

### **Vice President:**

Eddie Dills 865-296-3743  
jeneddie@comcast.net

### **Treasurer:**

Larry Nowell 865-898-9273  
larrynowell@gmail.com

### **Secretary:**

Keith Shannon  
keith.shannon@gmail.com

### **TSBA DIRECTORS**

Bill Ballou, Jim Blazier, Greg Dee, Eddie Dills, Ron Gabler,  
Cory Malabey, Larry Nowell, David Powell (Board Chairman),  
Eric Rauch, Doug Steffe

### **TSBA STAFF**

#### **Newsletter Printing & Distribution:**

Jim Blazier & Bill Ballou  
Jim's email (jblazier@comcast.net)

#### **Newsletter Editors:**

Eddie & Jenifer Dills  
jeneddie@comcast.net

#### **Membership:**

Doug Steffe  
dougsteffe@centurytel.net

#### **Website:**

Terry Reinitz

#### **Adv. Sponsor Coord.:**

*position open*

#### **Tournament Coord.:**

Steve Nichols & John Vincenzo

#### **Co-op Supplies and Raffle Prizes:**

Greg Dee  
greg@kingdomlandscapes.com

#### **Advisors:**

Ezell Cox 423-626-9547  
Allan Franklin 865-694-8888

## **2014 Meeting Links**

### ***January Meeting Link***

<http://youtu.be/iczS2iiVIA>

Speaker: Bill Ballou

Topic: Maintaining Fishing Reels

### ***February Meeting Link***

<http://youtu.be/eltyqHoDT4w>

Speaker: Clay Cunningham

Topic: Using Artificial Lures

### ***March Meeting Link***

<http://youtu.be/9USRSC0JA-4>

Speaker: Jim Negus, TWRA Biologist

Topic: Water Quality and Dissolved Oxygen Levels at Norris Lake

### ***April Meeting Link***

<http://youtu.be/O0AeRxk3Ugk>

Speaker: Stephen Scott

Topic: Using Lake Erie Big Water Planer Board Techniques

### ***May Meeting Link***

<http://youtu.be/vcnx9-rdpBc>

Speaker: Bill Carson and Fuzzy Lambert

Topic: Humminbird and MinnKota products

### ***June Meeting Link***

[http://youtu.be/6TTv844Q\\_gk](http://youtu.be/6TTv844Q_gk)

Speaker: Allen Franklin

Topic: Secrets of Catching Bait

### ***July Meeting Link***

<http://youtu.be/GOSq7xMfxb4>

Speaker: Keith Shannon

Topic: Techniques for Keeping Bait Healthy



**TSBA Monthly Meeting  
Monday, August 18 at 7 p.m.**

**Mandarin House Chinese Buffet  
314 Merchants Drive, Knoxville**

We have a private room reserved. Join us at 6 p.m. for dinner.

***Our speaker will be Mike Smith  
from TWRA's Eagle Bend Fish Hatchery.***

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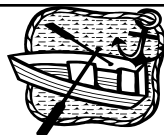
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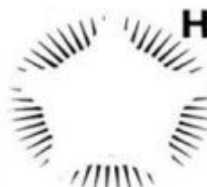
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# TSBA 2014 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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.

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

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

Please provide an e-mail address to receive the monthly newsletter:

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

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:** Returning members with no changes to their contact information are not required to fill out the application. Just send a \$20 check to the address above. Be sure to include the member's name on the check. When you send in your check, please provide TSBA with an email address where we can send your club newsletter. 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.

# Tennessee Striped Bass Association

## GET HOOKED!

The TSBA is a non-profit corporation that supports TWRA and its Striped Bass and 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 and share our knowledge with fellow Striped Bass anglers.

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



**TSBA Monthly Meeting**  
**Monday, August 18, 2014**  
**7 p.m.**