

Fishing With Bill Long

Rain, Rain, Rain

Without a doubt, July showers brought some much needed relief to our Central Florida lakes and rivers. In previous months we were battling low water levels and ramp closures due to lack of rainfall. We are back in business! Most Central Florida areas are about 12" above normal rainfall levels. Boat launching, boating safety and fishing are much better.

Navigation is much easier on the Conway, Winter Park and Butler chains. On recent trips I was able to get through all canals that connect the lakes. You will still need to raise your engine when you go through them. The canals on the Butler chain are the shallowest of these three chains. Water levels in the Clermont chain have risen some but access ramps are still closed.

The Kissimmee chain, Harris chain, St. John's River, East Lake and West Lake are much safer now as well and all are accessible.

The fishing business is still good, though it has slowed a little since our hectic spring. Our clients caught an average of 16 fish per trip this month. Twelve bass were in the six to ten pound range.

For bass in July, try fishing around moving water such as rain runoff areas. Moving water is cooler, has more oxygen and also provides nutrients for bass. Due to recent heavy rains we have plenty of discharge areas where bass, and every other fish, are congregating.

Early morning and late afternoon or evening are always more productive than the middle of the day.

TIP: for bass, try white, single blade spinnerbaits, early and late near moving water. During the day try seven-inch June Bug colored worms fished near the bottom.

The shellcrackers continue to bite aggressively and many anglers are catching their limits. The St. John's River and Kissimmee chains are particularly hot. Fish in three to five feet of water and fish with a bobber or cork so your bait is suspended above the bottom. Try to fish around a seawall, bridge or other likely hideout such as cattails or lily pads.

TIP: for shellcrackers, try



red worms, grass shrimp or small minnows. Also try and find moving water and bait-fish if possible.

The crappie action is also excellent this month. Many fishermen are catching 15 to 20 per trip. The Harris chain, St. John's River and Kissimmee are best right now. Due to recent rains fish in a little shallower water. Depths between three and 10 feet are best. Be patient, fish each likely hideout thoroughly and you will bring back quite a few for the frying pan.

TIP: for crappies, use minnows, grass shrimp and try worms or nightcrawlers this month.

The catfish are biting better this month. The rain has energized them like all the other fish. The cats are being caught in shallow water areas with strong flow or current nearby. Fish in four to eight feet of water for best results.

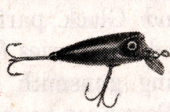
TIP: for catfish try fishing directly on the bottom with cheese or redworms.

While recent rainfall has helped make our waterways safer, be careful when boating. Greater access and fewer sandbars are good, but higher water levels cause new problems such as floating debris from heavy rain and often flooded pastures will look deep enough for boat travel when in fact they should be avoided.

Stay in normal waterways and while you enjoy Florida fishing and the Florida outdoors, remember to practice catch and release and other sound outdoor practices so our children and grandchildren can have some of the same outdoor experiences we have now.

Until next time, God Bless and Tight Lines.

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