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Fishing forecast: Largemouth, spotted bass head for bank

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The water level at most lakes in the Carolinas is at a spring-time high, lapping at shoreline vegetation.

As a result, largemouth and spotted bass are feeding right along the banks, making them easy pickings for anglers casting a variety of lures.

Especially good catches are reported from the lower Catawba River chain of reservoirs, led by Lakes Norman, Wylie and Wateree.

Tropical Storm Beryl disrupted angling action along the coast Tuesday and Wednesday. However, the activity was excellent before the bad weather moved in, and it should pick up again when the wind and rain move on.

LAKE NORMAN: Largemouth and spotted bass are striking topwater lures and crankbaits cast to the shoreline. The best topwater action is from dawn until about 10 a.m. Crappie are taking jigs and minnows worked 15-30 feet deep around brush and bridge pilings. Bream are being caught very shallow on crickets and earthworms as the fish stage to spawn during the upcoming full moon period. Plentiful white perch in the backs of covers on jigging spoons and Sabiki rigs. Catfish continue to provide good action on cut baits.

LAKE WYLIE: A fine catfish bite is under way. The fish are hitting almost anywhere there is current, but especially around creek inflows, taking cut gizzard shad and white perch. Because of the high water level, crappie have moved back to shallow cover and are biting well. Largemouth are striking jigs and surface lures.

MOUNTAIN ISLAND LAKE: Good to excellent for bream and catfish just off the shoreline. Largemouth around the points on topwater lures, artificial worms and other soft plastics

UNION COUNTY LAKES: Excellent for largemouth bass at Lake Lee, with limits big largemouth bass reported. Lee also is yielding good catches of bream and crappie. Bream, catfish and crappie are showing in fair to good numbers at Cane Creek Park, Lake Monroe and Lake Twitty.

YADKIN/PEE DEE RIVER LAKES: Crappie are being found deep, around brush 20-30 feet down, at all impoundments – High Rock, Tuckertown, Badin, Tillery and Blewett Falls, with the latter three appearing to be most productive. Fair to good for largemouth all along the chain, mainly on crankbaits and soft plastic lures. Big catfish in the Pee Dee River just below the Blewett Falls Dam. The next several days should prove excellent for bream as they bed along the banks.

LAKES JAMES, HICKORY, RHODHISS: Walleye on crawlers along clay shoreline at James, with scattered smallmouth bass also being caught on shiners, small lures. Bream, catfish and crappie are hitting well at all three lakes. Crappie action is fair as these fish move back to deeper cover after spawning.

FONTANA LAKE: With the lake at full pond, largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass are striking a variety of lures cast right to the edge. Smallmouth, trout and walleye also are being boated by anglers trolling lures 45 feet down with the aid of downrigger devices. Limit catches of walleye are being taken from 11 p.m-3 a.m. fishing 45 feet deep under lights with crawlers. Especially large bream on crickets.

LAKE WATEREE: Excellent for largemouth around grass, docks, points, humps and ledges. They're hitting topwater lures early in the morning, then soft plastics later on. Good for crappie on Slab Tail jigs in green, melon and orange patterns worked 15-25 feet deep around bridge pilings, brush. Catfish uplake in current on cut baits.

LAKE MURRAY: Excellent for shellcrackers along the banks on crickets, bits of crawlers, earthworms and small Beetlespin lures as the full moon nears on June 4 and spawning peaks again. Striped bass at around 25 feet deep on free-lined live herring. Stripers also are being taken on cut baits fished off the points. Largemouth around rocky points on a variety of lures. Channel catfish by anglers anchoring on points and baiting with cut baits, herring and shrimp.

LAKE THURMOND: Good to excellent for crappie off the sides of the channel on minnows fished 20 feet deep around brush. Great numbers of spawning shellcrackers. Spawning catfish around rip-rap. Stripers, hybrids just below the Lake Russell Dam on live baits trolled under planer boards.

SANTEE COOPER LAKES: Striped bass on lures cast to surfacing schools. When not feeding on top, the stripers are taking bucktails and Stretch 25 lures trolled 35-40 feet down. While plentiful, only about one in 100 fish caught is of keeper size. Catfish in the shallows at night on cut baits. Largemouth on soft plastic lures worked in shaded water around cypress trees. Crappie on minnows fished around cover only 8-15 feet deep, unusually shallow for late May.

LAKE HARTWELL: Stripers and hybrids 25-50 feet deep on live baits. Largemouth around points and drops on soft plastic baits, swimming lures. Catfish around sunken timber. Crappie 12-20 feet deep around bridge pilings, mainly at night.

LAKE KEOWEE: Fair for largemouth and spotted bass on soft plastics worked around humps 10-40 feet down.

LAKE JOCASSEE: Good to excellent for trout around the intakes in very early morning on crawlers, minnows. Then, as the trout spread out, they are hitting spoons and other lures trolled 35-60 feet deep. Largemouth and smallmouth bass in the coves on soft plastic baits.

OUTER BANKS: Nags Head area: Speckled trout and whiting at piers and in the surf. Also, trout are being caught in the sounds and at the Little Bridge between Manteo and Nags Head; Oregon Inlet: Excellent offshore when sea conditions are favorable for bigeye tuna, blue marlin, dolphin and yellowfin tuna. Big bluefish, cobia, Spanish mackerel and triggerfish inshore; Hatteras Island: Limits of very large dolphin and blackfin tuna within 10 miles of the beach when sea conditions are favorable. Big blues, red drum, flounder and whiting in the surf and at Avon Pier. Cobia, flounder, reds in Pamlico Sound; Ocracoke Island: Big blues, gray trout, puppy drum, Spanish mackerel and whiting in the surf; Morehead City area: Cobia, blue marlin and dolphin offshore when sea conditions permit. Blues, black drum, whiting at piers.

SOUTHEASTERN N.C. COAST: Limits of billfish, dolphin and wahoo offshore when weather and sea conditions are decent. Good for flounder in the lower Cape Fear River and in backwaters near Ocean Isle. Trout in the Bald Head Island bays and creeks. Black and red drum around the artificial reefs. Black drum, blues, flounder, Spanish mackerel and whiting at piers.

S.C. COAST: Little River area: Black drum, blues, flounder, spadefish and whiting at the pier; Grand Strand area: Good for flounder up to 5 pounds in the surf and at piers, along with black drum, blues and whiting. Spottails, or reds, in the backwaters on live baits. Puppy drum at the Murrells Inlet jetties. Billfish, dolphin, wahoo and yellowfin tuna offshore, mainly at the Georgetown Hole; Charleston area: Good for trout around creek mouths and shell rakes on live shrimp and a variety of artificial lures. Blues and Spanish mackerel around Castle Pickney and at the jetties. Flounder in good numbers around the inlets on mud minnows. Sheepshead around pilings and sea walls; Beaufort area; Cobia in the Broad River on live eels and whiting, menhaden, squid and – for experienced anglers – streamers cast on a flyrod. Trout just after high tide on mud minnows and live shrimp.


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