

January fishing heats up

PUBLISHED IN: SPORTS

Overall, the action at Lake Norman rates among the best ever at this time of winter.

The catch at midweek included limits of striped bass, good numbers of largemouth and spotted bass, crappie and plentiful white perch.

A strong, unusual winter-time bite for largemouth and smallmouth bass continues at Fontana Lake in the Great Smoky Mountains.

On the coast, limits of blackfin tuna are being boated off Hatteras Village. And anglers are finding great schools of reds, or spottails, on the backwater mud flats in the Charleston area.

LAKE NORMAN: Striped bass from Skipper's Cove uplake to Marker 20 and in the Davidson Creek arm near Marker D-7. Up to 30 per boat a day have been reported. They're hitting live baits, Ice Flies and bucktails, plus spoons and swim baits trolled on Alabama Rigs.

Largemouth and spotted bass are mixed in with the striper schools. Smaller spotted bass are being taken around docks on shakey head artificial worms. Crappie around very deep cover down to 50 feet on minnows. White perch 30-40 feet deep around humps on minnows. Catfish 10-30 feet down in the coves on cut baits.

LAKE WYLIE: Good for crappie and white perch mixed together 15-20 feet deep on minnows. Excellent for white perch on minnows worked 25-30 feet deep. Largemouth bass very shallow in the backs of coves and creeks near schools of shad on crankbaits. Catfish near the Plant Allen hot hole and along main channel ledges on cut bait.

MOUNTAIN ISLAND LAKE: Good action continues in and near the Riverbend hot hole.

HIGH ROCK, TUCKERTOWN, BADIN, TILLERY AND BLEWETT FALLS: Crappie rate good to excellent on the Yadkin-Pee Dee River reservoirs, especially at Badin and Tillery. They're hitting minnows and also Sassy Shad lures "slingshotted" under piers. Some largemouth and stripers at Tillery on lures trolled on Alabama Rigs.

SMITH LAKE (ROCKINGHAM): Fine catches of crappie.

LAKES JAMES, HICKORY, RHODHISS: Good at James for smallmouth on shiners worked relatively deep off the points. Crappie at Hickory and Rhodhiss, mostly on minnows.

FONTANA LAKE: Excellent for largemouth on the Nantahala and Tuckasegee River prongs on spinnerbaits cast to the shoreline. The lower portion of the reservoir continues to yield limit catches of smallmouth, hitting crankbaits, Gulp! lures, spinnerbaits and shiners.

LAKE WATEREE: Very good for crappie from Dutchman's Creek uplake. The fish are being found 12-20 feet deep along the old river channel and taking minnows and jigs worked a foot or so off the bottom.

LAKE MURRAY: Striped bass, mostly along the north shore, on free-lined live herring, trolled bucktails and cut bait fished on the bottom. Crappie on baits and lures trolled in the Big and Little Saluda River arms. Shellcrackers in surprisingly good numbers around the points on earthworms. Blue and channel catfish 30-40 feet deep on cut baits.

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LAKE THURMOND: Good for crappie around and over brush piles 25-35 feet deep. Stripers, hybrids uplake around Big Heart Creek, Germany Creek and Holiday Park on live herring fished in 30 feet of water.

SANTEE COOPER LAKES: A surprisingly strong bream bite over brush piles in the 25-foot range on crawlers and crickets. Good numbers of catfish on cut baits worked 55-60 feet deep. Largemouth around shallow structures on a variety of artificial lures.

LAKE HARTWELL: Sporadic striper and hybrid action in the river arms on large live baits. Fair largemouth in the major creek arms on artificial worms, crankbaits and jigs.

LAKE KEOWEE: Largemouth and spotted bass over the main channel points at the lake's lower end on artificial worms fished 25 feet deep.

LAKE JOCASSEE: Trout in the river arms on lures and shiners trolled from the surface down to 50 feet.

OUTER BANKS: Manteo/Nags Head area: Little activity; Oregon Inlet: Blackfin tuna offshore when sea conditions are favorable; Hatteras Island: Excellent for blackfin tuna offshore. Speckled trout to 3 pounds in the surf near Hatteras Village; Ocracoke Island: A few speckled trout in the surf. Excellent "shelling" for Scotch Bonnets and big whelks; Morehead City area: Scattered speckled trout along the beach and in the backwaters.

SOUTHEASTERN N.C. COAST: Scattered reds and trout in the Brunswick County backwaters, mostly on shrimp-type lures.

S.C. COAST: Grand Strand area: Some reds and trout at the Little River and Murrells Inlet jetties. They also are hitting back in the creeks. Very big red drum off Garden City, Huntington Beach and Surfside along the ledges on cut baits. Whiting at the piers, mostly at night; Charleston area: Reds in schools of up to 100 fish on the flats at low tide, hitting a variety of lures, mud minnows and cut baits. Sheepshead 8-20 feet deep around bridge pilings and jetties on fiddler crabs and barnacles. Sheepshead also are hitting at the near-shore artificial reefs, along with black drum and speckled trout.



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