Lake Keowee fishing better after dark

BY PHILLIP GENTRY
FOR THE JOURNAL

A recent visit to Lake Keowee quickly solidified a recurring theme about summertime fishing on the lake — this is not a place you want to be during the day.

For one, the escalating daytime temperatures have begun to reach into the 90s, and with all that hot weather and the approaching July 4 holiday comes rapidly warming water, which means more people who don't fish are visiting our lakes to water ski, jet ski and generally escape the heat.

I guess it's time to become a nocturnal angler.

In theory, night fishing doesn't necessarily have to be any different than fishing during the day. However, in practice, most anglers avoid moving around excessively and tend to either tie up and fish in one location or work a smaller area.

Night fishing is a common pastime during the summer months on Upstate lakes such as Keowee and Hartwell, especially during the summer months. After dark, the crowds die down and you can have the lake almost to yourself, plus the cooler nighttime temperatures are more pleasant, and the cover of darkness can make all the difference in the world in your fishing success.

In addition, three prime species — crappie, catfish and spotted bass — will readily bite after dark.



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Escalating daytime temperatures and holiday crowds may be indicating it's time to become a nocturnal angler.

The lion's share of night fishing is done from a stationary boat tied to a bridge or anchored on a drop-off. Many anglers fish in the dark or supply battery-powered lights to light up their fishing area.

Rods are placed in rod holders, and baits ± almost exclusively live minnows — are staggered at two-foot intervals from about four feet down to the bottom to the thermocline.

A favorite store-bought bait is shiner minnows, which are 1.5 to 3 inches long and are a preferred bait for most fish at Lake Keowee. Limber fishing rods in the six-to-eight foot range combined with six-to-10 pound test will work fine for night fishing.

If you own or have access to a deepwater dock that has suitable structure around in on Lake Keowee, you already know how good the crappie fishing can be at night. For those who don't have this access, bridge crossings and public fish attractors are the next best things.

"It's a different world at night," one Lake Keowee night fishing veteran said. "I don't have to put any structure under the bridges here. There's already some there that has been washed in and fish just love to hang out under Keowee bridges at night. It's nothing to catch 100 fish on the right pattern. I guess the dark makes them less spooky in the clear water."

Carolina Outdoorsman Show host Monty McGuffin claims bridges offer a number of attractions for nighttime fishing.

"A bridge is a natural bottleneck that funnels everything through it, especially baitfish," he said. "Keowee has a pretty decent population of threadfin shad in it, and that's one of the main food sources for all sorts of fish. There's also some cover for hiding around. Anytime you have deep and shallow water come together in a small area, you can expect it to attract fish."

Bridge crossings over Lake Keowee can be found at Hwy 11, Hwy 130, Hwy 133, Hwy 183 and Hwy 188.