

It's cranking time on area lakes

BY PHILLIP GENTRY
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A lot of bass anglers give a deep sigh at the thought of the approaching Memorial Day and the days to follow, having to share the lake with the recreational crowd, but there is some silver lining to the dark clouds, and that lining is in the shape of a crankbait.

Late May and June are awesome times to throw a crankbait and really catch good numbers of bass doing it.

By now, largemouth bass have spawned out in all Upstate waters with the exception of Lake Jocassee. Topwater baits are a favorite — as are swimming jigs around cover and under boat docks — but to really turn on an aggressive largemouth bite, a medium-to deep-diving, wide-bodied crankbait is your friend.

Bass have been through the roughest six weeks of the season during the process of spawning, guarding nests and fry, and those activities left little time for feeding. When hungry bass are in the mood to eat, a deep-diving crankbait will fill the bill.

Another plus to cranking during the early summer is that bass tend to group up around struc-



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A deep-diving, wide-bodied crankbait is at the top of the menu when it comes to bass fishing during the early summer.

ture. Where you find one bass hanging around the shady side of a dock or a laydown, you may find a dozen or more. The good thing about this gang mentality is that when one fish grabs the bait, the fight and frenzy associated with boating the fish stirs up the others, making it possible to catch multiple fish on multiple casts — so long as you get the bait back out there quickly.

The drawback to this endless summer scenario is finding fish. Because they tend to concentrate, not every piece of good-looking structure is going to hold a double-lim-

it of bass.

South Carolina's Upstate lakes are configured as hill land or upland reservoirs. This means there is a main body of water — typically the river that was impounded — and several tributary creeks that feed into that main body.

When anglers refer to a tributary creek, the reference may be half of a mile wide at the intersection to the main body and only a couple hundred yards near the back with several miles of water in between those two points.

are preferable both to achieve longer casts and get deep-diving crankbaits to hit the bottom.

Many anglers opt for stouter line or braid to assure that they can pull the bait loose if they get it hung, but bear in mind that heavier, stiffer line will not allow the crankbait to dive to its rated depth nor achieve the right wiggle you want to seal the deal.

In some reservoirs, there are tributaries to those tributaries that may also be close to the same size and shape.

It's not exactly a needle in a haystack, but a good starting point to search for bass is to begin about midway down a tributary and work your way toward the deeper water, fishing along the bank.

The ideal depth for cranking bass is between 7 and 15 feet. That may be a little deeper in lakes like Keowee and a little shallower in lakes like Greenwood or Secession. Put a lot of miles on your crankbaits by covering a lot of water and working the bait to its maximum diving range until you hit pay dirt.

Bumping the bottom or bouncing the crank off of cover-like stumps, logs or rocks is also a good way to entice a strike from a bass that initially just follows the bait on the retrieve.

As far as crankbait colors, prevailing low-rain weather has most of the lakes clear to very clear. This means shad patterns such as blue shad, back/chrome or almost anything that has shad at the end of the color.

A final note about tackle and line for cranking — longer, stiffer rods, often referred to by manufacturers as cranking rods,

PHILLIP GENTRY is the host of PG & Boatgirl Outdoors. Download the podcast on Apple, Google Play, Spotify or at pgandboatgirl.com.