

A look at where to find and catch some

BY PHILLIP GENTRY
FOR THE JOURNAL

Have the dog days of summer got you in a slump? It's that time of year when you think, "If I can just hang on a few more weeks until the weather cools off, I can go fishing again."

Fish, be they bass, crappie, catfish or whatever, swim and eat year-round, and the only way to catch them is to go fishing. To help you find catchable fish, even during the heat of summer, check out these three locations on your home lake.

DEEP, SUBMERGED TIMBER

During the summer, fish will move into submerged timber because it provides shade, cover and access to deeper water near a main river channel. In addition, surface temperatures reaching into the upper 80s on large reservoirs will dictate what depths the crappie will hold at because of the thermocline.

Most big bodies of

water will stratify in the summer, as cooler oxygenated water sinks to the lower levels, leaving the upper water column too hot for most fish's preference. At the lowest levels, decomposition of organic material on the lake floor consumes the usable amounts of oxygen and renders much of this cold-water layer to be unusable. What's left is a narrow band of cooler,

well oxygenated water that is referred to as the thermocline.

Finding an area where standing, submerged timber reaches into that level of the thermocline is a great place to find catchable fish.

MOVING WATER

Finding areas where freshwater is flowing into a lake, pond or reservoir is like finding an air-con-

ditioned room during the heat of summer.

Any time you have current — either from a recent rainstorm with a good amount of runoff, or just a natural creek where you've got water coming into a lake — you'll have better water quality. That moving water, especially if it tumbles coming into the lake, will have more oxygen, and fish will always gravitate to

summertime fish

the better water quality during the summer.

Generally speaking, don't fish directly in the flow of water like you would when you're fishing for cold-water trout. Instead, look for shady areas with overhead cover in the vicinity of the area the moving water is regenerating.

Most gamefish don't like having to fight the current, but they do like to eat, and that's another reason they'll head to moving water. Baitfish migrate into the backs of creeks, as they're looking for better water quality just like the gamefish.

Quality fish won't spend much time in fast-moving water — they typically like to hide behind a current break or find some slack water with some shade right out of the current and dart out there and eat baitfish that are swept by.

BOAT DOCKS

While fishing boat docks can be a year-round tactic, hot weather and warm water like we have now

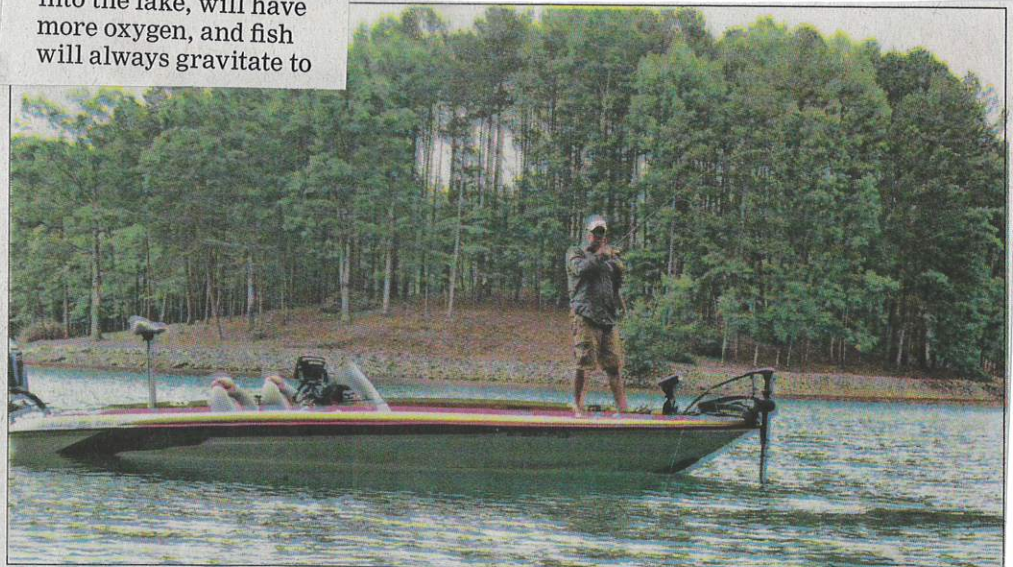
will have fish seeking the three Ss — shelter, safety and shade.

Look for boat docks that provide access to deep water. Docks that are at least 12 feet deep at the front end are ideal. Boat docks with large roof coverings or canopies create a large area of shade. Substantial shade will provide cooler water, sometimes as much as five degrees' difference from surrounding water hit by the sun.

The third ingredient is shelter, which comes in the form of cover such as brush piles, dock supports or other vertical cover under the dock. Check for the existence and location of these using your onboard sonar.

Present the appropriate live or artificial bait for the species you are trying to catch in any of these three locations and you'll be rewarded with better success, even in the heat of summer.

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



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Like retail sales, the key to catching fish in the summer is location, location, location.