

Taking a look at fall bass fishing

BY PHILLIP GENTRY
FOR THE JOURNAL

Nearly every bass angler across the globe utters a little sigh of relief when the hottest days of summer begin to temper, heralding the beginning of the fall season.

Unfortunately, one of the results is that water that has stratified over the long summer is about to turn and go the other way.

The resulting “turnover” period occurs when the hottest water at the surface begins to cool and sink, blending with the remainder of the water column and dissipating thermocline layers that have been the summer hangout for a lot of bass.

Not all water turns over at the same time. Just like stratification in the late spring, not all turnover occurs exactly at the same time, so the best course of action is to move if you find yourself in water that is turning over.

The question is, where do you move?

HIT THE SHALLOWS

Shallow water not deep enough to stratify is a good option. Shallow water doesn't mean adjacent to deeper water, given that bleed-over is a possibility. Look for a long stretch of shallow flat or the far back end of a shallow cove, cut or bay.

The problem with fishing extreme shallows is anything other than a stealthy approach can spook fish. Ideally, a long, shallow flat with a slight drop-off at the water's edge is a good bet.

Moving water doesn't stratify. The most typical long, shallow flat with deeper water or a slight drop-off on the other side is a creek channel coming into the back of an area. Moving water is typically cooler than the surround-



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Fall bass fishing can be feast or famine. The key is to stay on the move until you find fish willing to cooperate.

ing area, and the current will prevent mixing of water, so it's a double plus.

If you consider that a shallow flat drops off into a creek channel with some moving water, then you have very likely found some stellar potential bass holding water.

LOOK FOR SIGNS OF LIFE

A body of water with considerable marine life in and around it is seldom dead still and calm. Look for baitfish flipping on the surface or showing up on the graph. Scan the lakeshore. Are there wading birds out hunting? Waterfowl in the area? The occasional fish breaking on the surface?

Of these various signs, the presence of baitfish is the most important. As water temperatures moderate, the metabolisms on not just bass, but all fish species will resume to normal from a lethargic, hot-water state. Expect feeding activity to increase, particularly early and late in the day.

FOLLOW THE WIND

Another good strategy when combatting the fall turnover is to fish windy points, especially those that stick out into the main lake. Just like flow current,

wind current will stir up the water and make the conditions more comfortable for bass and bait and stimulate feeding. The unfortunate side is that windy days during the fall — unlike the spring — can be few and far between. You may have some discernable air flows, but the more wind, the better during the fall.

Approach these areas from the leeward side so that you can cast your bait into the wind and work it back in the direction of the current. Since bass will typically face into the current when looking for food, this will make the odds of connecting even better.

A final thought about the turnover is to look for vertical structure — typically manmade where fish can adjust up or down over deep water. Bottleneck bridge pilings are the No. 1 choice here since the bottleneck typically means a creek channel which directs water flow, as well as wind, so water in these areas should be adequately mixed and oxygenated.

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