

JOHN BERRY FISHING REPORT 2/18/2010

During the past week, we have had brutally cold temperatures and a minor snow event. The lake level at Bull Shoals Dam fell one and five tenths of a foot to rest at one foot above power pool of 654.00 feet. This is forty feet below the top of flood pool. Up stream, Table Rock Lake fell a foot to rest at four tenths of a foot above power pool or fifteen and six tenths feet below the top of flood pool. Beaver Lake remained steady at one and two tenths of a foot above power pool or eight and four tenths feet below the top of flood pool. On the White, we have had fairly steady levels of heavy generation. Norfolk Lake fell two tenths of a foot to rest at six tenths of a foot above power pool of 552.00 feet or twenty seven and four tenths feet below the top of flood pool. On the Norfolk, we have had several windows of no generation at night. All of the lakes on the White River system are now near power pool. We could see lower levels of generation or the possibility of wadable water in the next week. This is still contingent on no further significant precipitation.

There were significant changes to trout fishing regulations effective January 1, 2010. The Catch and Release section on the Norfolk River will be increased from its current size of 1.1 miles to a new total of approximately two miles. The new upper boundary will be the bottom of long hole and the new lower limit will be the Ackerman access. The new regulations will also allow for multiple hook points in Catch and Release sections on the White and Norfolk Rivers. Up to three treble hooks will be allowed. All hook points must be barbless. Of interest to fly fishers, is that the new regulations will allow the use of droppers, multiple fly rigs and articulated multiple hook streamers.

The Catch and Release section below Bull Shoals Dam, which was closed from November 1, 2009 through January 31, 2010 for the brown trout spawn, has now reopened. Remember that there are numerous spawning beds (redds) containing freshly laid and fertilized eggs. Please avoid dragging chains through these areas. The redds will appear as clean depressions in the gravel.

There was an incident this week where an angler was dragging a chain in this area; at the time the Corps of Engineers were running seven generators (way too much water for an angler to use a drag chain). The chain got entangled in some of the newly installed fish habitat. The boat stopped abruptly and the angler was thrown from the boat. Luckily he was promptly rescued by a guide working nearby (Ron Yarbrough).

The hot spot has been the Catch and Release section below Bull Shoals Dam. There have been some shad coming through. Brutally cold temperatures and high levels of generation are the perfect conditions for creating a shad kill. This generally occurs when the water temperature on the lake is forty two degrees or lower. Threadfin shad are drawn through the dam turbines and create a feeding frenzy in the river below. Be on the lookout for gulls feeding on the shad below the dam. The most effective flies will be white shad patterns. Be sure and have both floating and sinking versions. The hot fly during the past week has been a white marabou jig. The shad have been trickling through a few at a time. This is the best scenario for anglers. If a lot of shad come through at once, the trout gorge on them and quit feeding.

Some anglers have reported success from fishing streamers. Concentrate on banging the bank or any heavy structure where fish can escape the current. Your best bet would be to use large articulated streamers like the zoo cougar or leg spreader on heavy (300 grain or heavier) sink

tips. You will need at least an eight weight rod to cast this rig. Use a short piece of heavy mono (three feet of 2X fluorocarbon tippet) in lieu of a conventional leader to help get the fly down. This strategy targets big fish, but is a lot of work. I like to carry two rods, one that is rigged for streamers and one that is rigged for nymphs.

Crooked Creek and the Buffalo River are running fairly clear. The water temperatures are too cold for the smallmouth to be active.

The Norfolk has received some low water, but it occurred at night. On the high flows, brightly colored San Juan worms (red, cerise and hot fluorescent pink) and egg patterns (peach and orange) have been the go to flies. Long leader tippet combinations and heavy weight have been the secret to success. Work the banks and submerged weed beds. Be on the lookout for a shad kill.

Dry Run Creek has fished well. The hot fly has been sow bugs in size fourteen. Worm brown San Juan worms and egg patterns have also done well. We have had some warm afternoons that have been perfect for fishing the creek. The best technique is to high stick nymphs in heavy deep water. There is precious little room to cast. It is best to use heavy tippet, at least 4X. The newly passed fishing regulations allow the use of multiple fly rigs. This may not be a good idea here, as it will just be easier for young anglers to hook you or themselves.

The Spring River has been fishing well. The water level is still a bit high and off color. This makes for challenging wading. Be sure and wear cleated boots and carry a wading staff. There is a lot of bedrock that can get very slick. The hot flies have been Y2Ks, olive woolly buggers, cerise San Juan worms and cotton candy.

Remember that the White and Norfolk Rivers are infected with didymo, an invasive alga. Be sure and thoroughly clean and dry your waders (especially the felt soles on wading boots) before using them in any other water. Many manufacturers are now making rubber soled wading boots that are easier to clean and are not as likely to harbor didymo.

Practice water safety and always check conditions before you leave home.

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