

June 08, 2009
Hayward Lakes Area Outdoor Report
Steve Suman

Our cool spring continues, but we are finally receiving some much-needed rain. As often happens, a change to a hot and sunny summer could occur almost overnight. If the change happens this week, it should create fantastic bluegill fishing opportunities.

DNR fisheries biologist Frank Pratt says with recent weather changes dropping water temperatures six to eight degrees, bass and bluegill are moving in and out of the shallows. Fishing is either very good ... or not good at all. That aside, largemouth bass appear to be doing quite well on the Chippewa Flowage.

"Some electrofishing stations on the west side of the Chippewa Flowage recently showed bass catch rates of 30-60 bass per mile," the biologist says. "Twenty years ago, those catch rates were about one bass per mile!"

During Friday and Saturday afternoon of Musky Festival (June 25-28) make a point to visit "Family Fishing Days" at Shue's Pond, presented by the DNR and Park Service. They will offer tackle making, casting, fishing, plus more, and Pratt invites all families to participate.

Big Musky Resort on the Chippewa Flowage will host Double G's Big Chip Fish Fest June 21, an event targeting the selective harvest of 14- to 19-inch largemouth bass and northern pike less than 32 inches. Fishing runs from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m., and the fish will be cooked on-site and served with potato salad and cole slaw. The first 125 kids 12 and under will receive a rod/reel combo. Raffle tickets and event T-shirts will be available. The Grand Prize is a \$1000 gift certificate from Hayward Home Center. Entry is \$5 for adults; \$3 for youth 16 and younger. For more information, call event coordinator George Greenbank (715) 634-9929.

Muskies:

Musky action is fair but improving. Anglers continue to report good numbers of sightings and follows, but the fish just aren't hitting the baits as they should. Or as anglers wish they would! The fish are moving out of their spawning areas, though not far, so target nearby points, weeds, and weed beds - emerging green weeds in particular. Bait selection is up for grabs, though twitch and glide baits appear to be getting the most attention, and there are reports of some hooking success on smaller bucktails, crankbaits, rubber, and surface baits, as well as on live suckers.

Walleye:

Walleye fishing is fair to good, and anglers continue to catch fish throughout the day, though a mayfly hatch on some lakes is not helping matters. Depending on the lake, you will find walleyes in 4-28 feet or deeper water, around weeds and weed edges, rocks, cribs, and on the flats. The switch from minnows (fatheads, walleye suckers) to crawlers and leeches is in progress, but you can't really rule out any of them at this time. In early morning and evening hours cast or troll Rapalas or other crankbaits over shallow weeds and shoreline areas.

Northern:

Cool water is keeping pike shallow and they are generally aggressive, with some days better than others. You will find them in 4-18 feet of water, around weeds and areas where bluegills are spawning. Spoons, spinnerbaits, Rapalas, Rattlin' Raps, buzz baits for artificials, and northern suckers and fathead minnows, will all catch northern pike. This is a great time of year to use those "bottom of the box" baits you might otherwise not throw ... and that might otherwise not catch fish.

Bass:

Bass season in the North Zone is catch and release only until June 20 when it switches to daily bag limits. Spoons, spinnerbaits, and soft plastics are working well.

Crappie:

For all practical purposes crappies have finished spawning, though they are still moving in and out of the shallows. This will make finding them more difficult, as they are both scattering and heading to deeper water, but fishing remains fair to good. Best action is in the early morning and late afternoon hours. Look for weeds, weed edges, wood, and cribs.

Best live baits are crappie minnows, waxies, and small leeches on jigs and/or under slip bobbers; best artificials are small Mini-Mites, tube jigs, plastics, and spinners.

Bluegill:

Bluegills are in pre-spawn, but they are starting to "circle the wagons" and move toward shallower water. Spawning could start any day now, particularly with warm, sunny weather. For now, look to shallow weeds, structure, and along break lines in 3-8 feet of water, and especially in warmer water bays. Waxies, worms, crawler chunks, leeches, and plastics on plain hooks or dressed jigs, and surface baits/poppers will all catch the 'gills.

Upcoming Events

June 20: Northern Zone bass season goes from catch-and-release to daily bag limits.

June 21: Big Chip Fish Fest at Big Musky Resort on the Chippewa Flowage (715-634-9929.)

June 25-28: Musky Festival (715-634-8662.)

June 26-27: Hayward Lions Musky Fest Fishing Contest.

July 24-26: 50th Annual Lumberjack World Championships (715-644-2484.)

Through July 31: Illegal to run dogs on WPA lands. (See regs.)