



**Kentucky Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet  
Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Kentucky Afield Outdoors: FINs Lakes Stockings Began This Month, Offering Productive Late Winter Fishing**

*(Editors: This is the first installment of the “Spring Fishing Fever” series of articles, detailing productive fishing techniques and opportunities across Kentucky. The series will continue until early summer. An archive of past articles is available on the department’s website at [www.fw.ky.gov](http://www.fw.ky.gov)).*

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (Feb. 21, 2019)** – The long train of heavy rain in 2019 has Lake Cumberland at its highest level since April 1998. Barren River Lake is 35 feet above winter pool while Rough River Lake is a little more than 30 feet above winter pool.

Late winter fishing is one of the most overlooked, but often highly productive, times of the year to catch trophy fish. This year, however, the fishing on many of the larger reservoirs along with rivers and streams will likely suffer until stable conditions return.

A Fishing in Neighborhoods (FINs) lake provides excellent fishing for trout, catfish, largemouth bass and sunfish. Kentucky boasts 44 FINs lakes in 28 counties, with many of them in or near urban areas. Those looking for a FINs lake should not have to drive far.

As of this week, more than 30 FINs lakes received trout ranging from 10 to 11 inches with the remaining lakes scheduled for trout stockings next week.

“March will be our final round of trout stockings this spring at the FINs lakes,” said Dane Balsman, FINs program coordinator for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. “Trout are stocked during the cooler months starting in October and November, with additional stockings in February and March at most lakes.”

To check the trout stocking schedule for a FINs lake near you, visit the [trout stocking](#) page at the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife website at [www.fw.ky.gov](http://www.fw.ky.gov).

Stocked trout in the FINs lakes bite readily. In-line spinners in white, red and silver and silver with sparkles all produce strikes. Redworms fished on the bottom also work well. Fly anglers can toss bead head prince nymphs in red or lime green in size 12 to 14, as well as size 10 white woolly buggers. Let these flies sink a few feet and strip them back.

Balsman cautions anglers fishing on a FINs lake to practice beneficial catch and release practices if they do not keep their trout, especially as the water warms. Inexpensive fish grabbers prevent touching or squeezing a trout when removing the hook. These devices prove valuable when handling fish that may cause injury, such as catfish or fish with teeth, such as walleye or sauger.

“We will start in March and stock catfish through July at FINs lakes,” Balsman said. “The stockings in March, April and May will be hybrid catfish, while the stockings in June and July will be channel catfish.”

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife began stocking hybrid catfish a couple of years ago in FINs lakes, the only waterbodies in Kentucky that receive them. “They are a cross between a blue catfish and a channel catfish,” Balsman said. “We are getting good feedback from anglers about them.”

Balsman said hybrid catfish grow quicker and are more disease resistant than channel catfish. “They average about one pound and all catfish come from Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery,” he said.

Several FINs lakes hold respectable numbers of catfish 20 inches or longer. Jacobson Park Lake in Fayette County, Camp Ernst Lake in Boone County, Three Springs Lake in Bowling Green and Alexandria Community Park Lake in Campbell County grant anglers a chance at catfish larger than four pounds.

Largemouth bass are one of the most popular fish in Kentucky and the FINs lakes hold surprisingly large ones.

“We see some exceptional largemouth bass in the FINs lakes, many of them big bass,” Balsman said. “We routinely see 6- to 8-pound bass during spring population sampling. I also receive pictures of really big bass anglers catch from FINs lakes.”

Balsman recommends early spring as the time to catch these brutes. “We stock these lakes with trout for anglers, but the bass also eat them and grow big,” he said. A white spinnerbait with a silver Colorado blade works well for trophy pre-spawn largemouth bass in small lakes, especially when rains color the water a touch. A large soft-plastic swimbait in trout or shad colors also works well in these lakes.

Balsman said Alexandria Community Park Lake in Campbell County, Panther Creek Park Lake in Owensboro, the Parklands of Floyds Fork lakes and Fisherman’s Park Lakes in Jefferson County and Kingdom Come State Park Lake in Harlan County all hold trophy-sized largemouth bass.

“Some of the FINs lakes have really good bluegill and redear sunfish in them,” Balsman said. “Three Springs Park Lake near Bowling Green and Madisonville City Park Lake South have great populations of redear sunfish. We saw a 13-inch redear sunfish during population sampling at Lake Mingo in Nicholasville a couple of years ago.”

Balsman said most FINs lakes hold good numbers of bluegill that should provide a lot of action, perfect for teaching kids to fish. “The biggest mistake I see are anglers using too big a hook and too big a bobber,” he said. “They limit themselves to just catching catfish if they use too big a hook.”

A piece of redworm on a size 6 or size 8 Aberdeen hook suspended under a thin balsa bobber makes an excellent choice for bluegill. “A 1-to 2-pound catfish bites the same rig,” Balsman said.

While the FINs lakes provide productive fishing opportunities for the public, the department receives complaints about overharvest of fish and littering. “If you see people breaking the law, call the 1-800-25ALERT number and report them,” Balsman said. “Please pick up after yourself. No one likes to see trash when they go fishing. Discarded fishing line and bait containers seem to draw the most complaints.”

The FINs lakes provide quality fishing close to home. Visit one soon if you are suffering from intensive cabin fever and need to catch a fish.

Remember, current fishing licenses expire Feb. 28. It is a good idea to buy your fishing license soon.

*Author Lee McClellan is a nationally award-winning associate editor for Kentucky Afield magazine, the official publication of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. He is a life-long hunter and angler, with a passion for smallmouth bass fishing.*

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