



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

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## **Kentucky Afield Outdoors: Decoding The White Bass Runs**

*(Editors: This is the third 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. (March 21, 2019)** – With all of the rain we received early this year, many Kentuckians are wondering when will the white bass run.

“We are about there, 60 degrees is the magic number for water temperature,” said Mike Hardin, assistant director of Fisheries for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. “The redbud blooms are as good an indicator as anything.”

Redbud trees began displaying buds in parts of central Kentucky over the past 10 days. “We haven’t missed anything yet and the run may arrive on time this year,” Hardin said. “Last year was spotty, starts and stops with the fish as confused as the anglers. We had up and down weather and water levels.”

Reports surfaced last week of a few white bass making a headwater run in the Salt River above Taylorsville Lake, but nighttime temperatures in the 20s this week blunted that movement a bit.

“This week, the night temperatures are increasing, so you won’t get those big cool downs as much now,” Hardin said. “It will be warmer compared to what it was.”

Lakes are dropping dramatically, allaying concerns expressed by anglers about the impact on the white bass runs from the record or near record water levels in some of our major reservoirs in February. Nolin River Lake is now just below summer pool, while Taylorsville Lake is still just above summer pool, but dropping rapidly.

“Knowing when to fish is always a mystery, especially for white bass,” Hardin said. “It’s temperature, light and flow with temperature being the main thing. All you need is that trigger. If you have everything right and you get that flow, it is time to go. If you have the correct water temperature, but no flow, you still should go. You can’t catch them at home.”

Hardin explained white bass run can occur anywhere from 54 to 68 degrees. Water temperatures in major reservoirs now hover just below 50 degrees. The sunny days and huge warm up expected over the coming weekend and into next week should push water temperatures into the 50s.

“It can happen over the course of one day,” Hardin said. “Someone is going to discover they are running soon.”

The headwaters of Taylorsville Lake and up into the Salt River make one of the best bank fishing spots for white bass in central Kentucky. The best access is via a parking lot on Palmer Road.

It is a matter of walking, casting and then walking a bit more until you find fish. A 1/16-ounce in-line spinner in combinations of silver, white, chartreuse or pink are hard to beat for the Salt River. A pink or chartreuse 1/32-ounce feather jig suspended under a bobber and allowed to gently float in the current also scores white bass.

The Nolin River above Bacon Creek boat ramp and upstream to Wheeler’s Mill Road (KY 694) is arguably the best white bass run in the state. The white bass in the Nolin River Lake earned an “excellent” rating in the Fishery Division’s [2019 Kentucky Fishing Forecast](#).

A white 2 1/2-inch boot-tailed grub or 3-inch swimbait is a deadly lure for Nolin River white bass. Rig them on a 1/8-ounce head for good casting distance. Broad Ford offers good bank access at the bridge over the Nolin River on KY 1214. Boaters using Bacon Creek Ramp to travel upstream must watch the rocky shoals to prevent motor damage.

The headwaters of Green River Lake produce good numbers of white bass up to 14 inches long as does the headwaters of Herrington Lake. Bank anglers may access the Dix River just above the lake at Dix River Voluntary Public Access Area, off Rankin Road via KY 52 between Danville and Lancaster. This area drips with fishing history as Herrington Lake was a white bass mecca in the era after World War II. These waters still produce trophy white bass 14 inches and longer.

Small shad-colored topwater propeller baits make great choices for fishing both Green River Lake headwaters and Dix River.

The Kentucky River below locks and dams produces surprising white bass action. A 3-inch white curly tailed grub rigged on a 1/8-ounce leadhead makes a great lure choice for the Kentucky River. Keep probing the water column until you find fish. Lock and Dam 2 at Lockport in Henry County grants excellent bank fishing access for white bass.

All of the ingredients are now here for the white bass runs to commence. Running white bass, once located, provide as much action as any form of fishing.

Remember to buy your [fishing license](#) if you have not already. The new license year began March 1.

*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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