

January 7, 2011

Written by Wayne Gustaveson

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Striped bass and a few shad are spending the winter in the backs of most canyons where bottom depth is between 45 and 70 feet. Shad are not abundant so stripers are more than eager to enjoy any shad that gets in range. These conditions are ideal for anglers to catch large numbers of stripers.

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Schools are large and easy to see on the graph. My first choice is to drop spoons to the waiting fish. Spoons are good shad imitators and will often light the fire under a school. Hook one striper and the others rise off the bottom in pursuit of the one with food in its mouth. Stripers in search mood are very anxious to feed and will chase the next shad imitating spoon as soon as it is presented. This week striper schools have been turning on and staying lit for hours at a time. Catches of 100 stripers per boat have been reported in Bullfrog Bay and duplicated in Warm Creek near Wahweap.

Last week stripers were more likely to respond to bait fishing and copious chumming. Find the school. Broadcast finely cut bait around the boat. Then put a one-inch chunk of bait on a hook and start catching fish. It's wise to chum a few more pieces of bait each time a fish is caught to keep the school interested and under the boat.

There are two layers of stripers residing in the 60 foot zone of the canyon. The 2-3 pound adults are on the bottom but will come to the surface when the school is excited. Then they retreat back to the resting zone. The second layer is made up of yearling stripers feeding on plankton at 15-25 feet. The small ones are just as glad to see a shad swim by so they will respond to spoons or bait. Expect to catch both size classes in the same area. Put the bait near bottom to catch a large fish or stop it short at 15 feet to catch 3 small ones.

I am surprised to see stripers as active as they are right now as the water temperature has dropped into the high 40s. But fishing is good and mid day weather is sunny and calm.