

March 7, 2018 - Welcome Back!

Written by Wayne Gustaveson

Wednesday, 07 March 2018 08:31 - Last Updated Wednesday, 07 March 2018 08:52

Lake Powell Fish Report –March 7, 2018 Lake Elevation: 3615 Water temperature: 47-52 B
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Welcome back to the weekly fish reports from Lake Powell. 2017 was a banner year with high water levels that covered shoreline vegetation and provided extensive habitat for both predators and prey fish. Young fish survived in big numbers and these fat healthy fish will awake and become active as soon as Lake Powell water temperature rises above the 54-57 range. “Warm water” fish residing in Lake Powell really do like warmer water better than the 47-50 F water they are now enduring. Here is what is happening with fish in the cold conditions.

Walleye begin spawning in March, which actually makes them harder to catch because they focus on spawning instead of eating. After the spawn is over in April walleye start to feed regularly and often.

Striped bass have been resting on the bottom in deep water but with warming they will get more active and pursue shad wherever they can find them from the 100 foot depths to the shallow shoreline. Expect lots more movement by stripers with warming water in March.

Largemouth bass get very active in March with the first hint of warming (53 F). Their cousins, smallmouth bass don't really get active until the water temperature exceeds 57 but they will not have to wait long for that comfort zone.

Catfish, bluegill, and crappie wait until April before starting their spring feeding ritual.

As this report is written the weather forecast shows a quick warming period coming this weekend. That means most fish will respond to warming weather in a certain fashion. Clear blue water is beautiful but does not retain the warmth of the sun as well as colored water. The first positive fish response will be in the backs of canyons where water is cloudy or murky. Just watch the water color while heading to the back of the canyon. Do not start fishing until the clear water gives way to murky and visibility decreases to less than 5 feet. If you can see the bottom at 20-25 feet you are in the wrong spot.

Striped bass have been the most active fish over the winter and that will continue through March. Travel to the back of any major canyon. When water color change is seen, start graphing the bottom at 100 feet or less looking for 2-3 fish traces to show. This winter most fish seen in deep water on the graph have been stripers. Drop spoons as quickly and close as possible to the fish traces seen. Jig the spoons up about 18 inches and let them fall back to the bottom to imitate shad and entice stripers to bite. You may get lucky and catch fish on the first

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drop. If not, move on to the second best technique which is trolling.

After stripers quit resting on the bottom they head to the back of the canyon looking for food. They are seen on the graph as individuals or small groups of 5-10 fish. Note the depth and then deploy trolling lures that run close to the holding depth. Most flat line trolling lures are only effect down to 25 feet. If fish traces are deeper, then downriggers are a better option. If fish traces are shallower than 20 feet then casting to the shoreline may be better than trolling.

Largemouth and smallmouth bass reside in brush or rocky structure. A good plan is to target stripers in the cool March morning and then switch to bass as water temperature rises 2 degrees or more. Rising water temperature triggers bass activity. If water temperature is 52 at dawn and then rises to 54, bass respond. If morning water temperature is 57 and then rises to 60, bass behave in a similar fashion. Warming is the trigger.

Look for bass by checking water temperature. Sometimes similar coves on one side of the lake may be 2-3 degrees cooler than similar coves on the other side. Target the warmer coves. A large sandstone boulder facing the morning sun might warm the water near the rock and attract bass into the cove.

This report purposely covers general patterns rather than specific locations. We have found during the winter that a good trip to one canyon is followed by a mediocre result on the return trip. Time of day has been important but randomly swings between morning and afternoon. Now as temperature is warming fishing results will become more predictable and dependable. The first hour of daylight is another trigger but warming is the better indicator in March. Afternoons and evenings are best in March.

It is my prediction that bait fishing for stripers along main channel walls (Dam, Buoy 3, Moki Wall etc.) will not be as successful as it most years. Physical condition of striped bass is exceptional now due to the strong shad crop produced in 2017. Fat healthy stripers tend to stay in the backs of canyons rather than moving to the main channel walls looking for forage. You may try fishing bait in an old hotspot but if it does not produce then move to the back of a nearby canyon and try trolling, spooning, and casting for a better result.

When your trip is completed please share your fishing experience with us on Wayneswords.com. That way we can give each other hints on fishing success at this huge lake. If you share your results it helps the next person to fish in your spot. Then when you return in a month or two you can have the same advantage by reading a fish report on where you should try as you return.

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