

Fishing the peak days and times

By Marvin Mitchum

It has always been said that the most excellent time to go fishing is when you can. I would be of the same mind; but is that always the best time that the fish will be on the bite? How often does the angler look for an advantage that will put the odds in his favor?

Keeping a good fishing log is a great way to start. By keeping records of date, time of day, weather, barometer, water temperature, wind, moon phases, and sunrise and sunset times; you will soon realize that you have obtained a lot of valuable information. Referencing your log will expand your catch rate.

I have learned over many years of fishing that the sun and the moon have a great amount of effect on fishing activity. Sunrise and sunset are my favorite times to fish. During the summer months fishing for bass, I have caught big numbers of small-mouth early in the morning from 5:00 am 'til 7:00 am. Most of my big bass have been caught during this period. Once the sun hits the water, the fish go deeper and you will have to change your technique. Usually, I try to find some feisty panfish in the coves. As the morning fades, I'll go in for a rest and escape from the heavy boat traffic that comes with the summer heat. I like to get back out on the water for evening fishing from 5:00 pm until

sunset. This is truthfully the golden hour. The bass will head into the shallow water and become very active chasing baitfish and top water imitations.

I also observe the moonrise and



Photo by Marvin Mitchum

moonsets during new and full moon phases. The moon has a strong influence on fish activity. If you talk to the most successful striper fishermen in the San Francisco Bay and the California Delta, they will tell you they watch for the right tides caused by full and new moons. These incoming and outgoing tides produce a large volume of running water carrying an abundance of baitfish.

Weather is another factor that could make the difference between a great day and an average day. Watch the barometer as it will fall the day before a storm. The wind will calm down and the fish become very active. One of my best memories under this condition was on New Melones Reservoir on a New Years Eve. A storm was coming in and the morning was calm and cold. Big trout were hitting streamer flies in the top ten feet of water all afternoon, until the heavy rains came in. It was one of those fishing days we all dream about! I was sorry to see it end, but once the cold front hits, the fish go deeper and off the bite.

The transition periods from winter to spring and summer to fall are also times when fish will become active. As outside temperatures start to heat up and water temperatures rise, many species will start their spawning cycles. Spring is especially a favorite time of mine - a lot of good fish are caught this time of the year.

Water temperature and clarity are very important. Temperature need fluctuate only a few degrees to influence whether fish will become active or inactive.

Remember, all fish seek food and protection. If fishing is slow, move fast. Don't spend time fishing unproductive water. On the other hand, when fishing is fast, move slow and enjoy!

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