

If You Can't Find Fish, Appease the Lake Gods.

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Bass are hard to find in Lake Keowee in the summer. If you're looking for tips on how to find them, check out the 201907 article, "Bass Breathe, and Eat Even in Summer. That article contains a lot of good ideas that are valid any summer .

There is no magic formula; the bass have minds of their own! Sometimes even the information in that article will not be enough. When I encounter those times, I resort to appeasing the lake gods.

"What?" you ask, "Appease the lake gods? What kind of nonsense is this?"

Well, you're right. Logically it is nonsense, but I find it productive, fun, and satisfying to think about it that way nonetheless. And let's face it, if you go fishing about 100 days a year or more as I do, and sometimes the fish are biting, and sometimes they're not, and you really can't figure out why ... well it's really easy to become a little superstitious. So I blame the lake gods.

Consider this. We're entering the summer months when the boat traffic on Lake Keowee, especially on weekends, hits its highest levels of the year. And the use of the islands also peaks. Lots of people enjoy the lake when the weather is warm.

All this traffic tends to generate a lot of floating trash that mars the pristine quality of the lake. Bottles, cups, and cans blow off of speeding boats. People forget to pick up their trash on the shore after picnicking on the beach or shore fishing. The waves generated by myriads of passing boats wash the trash into the water. Dogs swimming after thrown tennis balls sometimes don't bring them back. Kids leave air mattresses on the shore where wind and waves cast them adrift. All kinds of stuff end up in the water.

Often on summer mornings when I'm out fishing I see the bottles, cans, tennis balls, flip flops, coffee cups, beach balls, and yes, even fishing-worm containers that somehow were launched unseen upon the water. Seeing any of that trash diminishes the pleasure that I get from being out there, fishing in what I want to be a clean, beautiful lake. So, when I'm fishing and not catching anything, I tell myself the lake gods are angry about the way we're treating the lake, and if I take time to scoop out the trash I find in the water, perhaps they'll reward me with a fish or two, maybe not today, but sometime when I'm enjoying the pristine lake and least expect it.

So on those days when I'm out on the water and not getting satisfaction out of catching and bringing home some fish to eat, I create my own satisfaction but picking out of the lake the floating trash that I see, instead of simply boating right by it.

I always carry a garbage bag in my boat, and always take pleasure in gathering floating man-made debris. I actually have two goals each time I go out fishing. One is to catch 1 bass for every day of the year, on the average, or 365 bass for the year. (I've met that goal 7 out of the last 12 years and just missed it the other 5.) The second goal is, each time I'm out, to remove from the lake more pieces of trash than the number of fish I catch. I find it very hard to achieve both goals at the same time, and I take that as a challenge. If I catch lots of fish and don't see any rubbish to pick up, I'm happy indeed. And if I don't catch any fish, it only takes 1 piece of trash to achieve my second goal. And I can usually find at least one undesirable made-made item floating in the lake. So

when the fish aren't biting, I take extra pleasure in seeking out the floating trash and stuffing it into my garbage bag, thus achieving goal number 2.

During the summer I usually manage to fill a kitchen trash bag each week from the lake. I always tell myself I'm appeasing the lake gods.

So, please! I ask you to do the same. Whether you're fishing or enjoying other boating pastimes, don't simply pass by a piece of floating garbage, take just a moment to swing the boat around, pick it up and put it into your own trash bag.

Also, before you gun your engine to take off down the lake, take a quick look around your boat and make sure no cups, hats, bottle, cans, or other things on deck are in a position where they will be blown overboard as you race down the lake enjoying the wind in your face, hair, and clothing from the fast ride.

Maybe it won't help you catch any more fish, but I bet you'll feel better inside that you're taking care of our precious lake. And not catching fish won't seem quite as important. Some other time you'll catch the fish!

It's really beautiful out there, especially in the cooler morning air just before a summer sunrise. Let's keep it that way so we can all enjoy just being out there. As my father often used to tell me, "He who goes fishing and complains that he didn't catch fish forgot why he went."