

Fishing Lake Keowee without a Boat

- Bill Walker, Tournament Director of the Keowee Anglers

If you are looking for seasonal fishing hints for Lake Keowee for the May-June timeframe, read 201905 Crack of Dawn Spring Bass on Lake Keowee.

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After fishing Lake Keowee by boat for going on 14 years, I was recently taken by surprise by a number of questions I received that generally went like this: "I have a 13-year old child and would like to take him or her to Lake Keowee for a day of fishing and bonding. I don't have boat. Where can I go on the lake to fish from shore?"

My first gut response was to pass on 3 locations where I very often see people fishing from shore. I figured since I regularly see people fishing there, they must be catching something. But those 3 locations are not particularly user friendly, and so I thought I would look around a little bit for other more user-friendly places. This article lists first those three non-friendly sites, and then adds 4 other much more user-friendly sites that I found when I looked around. Hopefully you anglers out there without boats will find this useful!

Before I talk about sites, let me say that if I were fishing from shore, I would not use expensive artificial lures, as I would expect to snag and lose many rigs because, without a boat, lure retrieval along a rocky shore near sunken trees is very difficult. I would focus on using live bait like night crawlers or minnows or even crawfish on a bobber. That way if I snagged and broke off a line it wouldn't cost me very much!

[Yes, crawfish! In my 14 years on the lake I have never turned over a rock on the shore of Lake Keowee and found a live crawfish. However, I have found two crawfish in the stomachs of fish I have cleaned, so the fish definitely like to eat them! Since crawfish are nocturnal, and so are catfish, and since there are plenty of catfish in Lake Keowee and a lot of the bottom is bare, I theorize that the catfish are extremely hard on the crawfish population! That doesn't keep crawfish from being a good bait.]

So, here are some sites where you can try fishing from the shore. The first three are places where I often see people fishing from shore, but locations further down on the list are much more user friendly and in my opinion much safer for children. Definitely use the first 3 at your own risk! (Be careful wherever you go to fish!)

The rocky shore on the west side of the hot hole. The hot hole is the place where the cooling water from the Duke power plant is released back into the lake. To get there you descend an unmarked, steep, treacherous, rocky path from the Nature Trail by the Picnic Area at the World of Energy. People who have fished there in the past have littered it, and if you go there, please take some extra trash bags and haul away some of the trash! There is current there by the rocky shore, and small baitfish swimming, so bass are probably there. And there is shade in late afternoon, but the climb in and out is very difficult, and you shouldn't wait until dark to leave because the trail up and out is dangerous and hard to follow even in daylight. No swimming is allowed here.

The route 130/183 bridge. There have been signs posted on bridges around Lake Keowee for years saying NOT to fish from bridges. The signs come and go, but all the bridges are narrow and do not have sidewalks, so you should NOT fish from the bridges. That is too dangerous. However, at this bridge there is a parking area on the West end and a path down to a sand beach. Someone could watch small children swim here while adults walk a path over to under the bridge to fish in the current caused by the operation of the power plant. There are fish there, but the bridge structure makes casting under the bridge difficult. Also, I have seen poison ivy along the path and the rocky shore under the bridge is a great place to turn an ankle and then fall sustaining more serious injury. In addition, this is another place that people have left a lot of trash. If you use this place, please bring empty garbage bags and haul away some trash making it better for the next people.

The pipes at upper Crooked Creek. Crooked Creek Road, running between Ebenezer Road and Keowee School Road, crosses Crooked Creek on an earthen dike that has two pipes running through it. One pipe is above the water surface and obvious, while the second pipe is submerged and hidden. While traffic on the road is light, the shoulders at each end of the guardrails have deep ruts, and it's not easy to get a low road car far enough off the road to be safe. People do fish around the obvious pipe on each side of the road, but it's not a good place for small children. And again, I've seen poison ivy there. Again, not a place for swimming.

There, now that I've gotten the commonly used but undesirable choices out of the way, let's look at some of the choices that I suggest people prefer.

Stamp Creek Landing Fishing Pier. This area has recently been developed into a nice, free, user-friendly recreation area. Drive past the boat ramp and past the signs that say, "No trailers beyond this point." There is a new parking area back there with restrooms, an ADA accessible fishing pier, and further back in the woods a collection of picnic tables. The fishing pier has been carefully designed with some low places in the railing so people in wheelchairs will have places to fish without reaching over a high railing. Some Christmas trees have been sunk in the water at the East end of the pier. When I was there about 3:30 in the afternoon, I saw a 2-lb largemouth suspended a couple of feet below the water surface in the tree branches rocking back and forth with the wave motion. Another place to fish there is back in the woods beyond that last picnic table on the rocky point. I have caught bass off that point while fishing from my boat. There is comfortable shade there on hot sunny afternoons, but the boat traffic rounding the point tends to stir up the water, especially on weekends.

South Cove Oconee County Park Fishing Pier. This park, which does have a two-dollar-a-day charge for parking, has recently installed a new fishing pier. You can also go out on this one by wheel chair. This pier also has some Christmas trees anchored to the bottom around it. When I was there several people were fishing from the pier. One gentleman had a live minnow on his line. He was letting it swim around near the pier above the sunken trees. Several times, as he lifted his minnow up from the depths, I saw a spotted bass follow it up. He said he'd seen larger bass there earlier, however the bass kept bumping his minnow, but not biting it. Also, all around South Cove Park there is a lot of riprap shore which likely holds small fish and attracts bass at some times of day. So someone could walk along a lot

of shoreline there casting out to see if anything is interested. There are probably more things for small children to do here if they aren't going to fish, including a gradual beach and swim area (no lifeguards), and of course bathrooms!

High Falls Oconee County Park Fishing Pier. This park has a huge fishing pier, also accessible by wheel chair. I have not walked out onto it, but I have seen it from the water. Again, this park has a two-dollar-a-day parking fee and does have bathrooms, a picnic area, and a nice swimming area for non-anglers. Please note that as part of the Habitat Enhancement Program (HEP), FOLKS is having fish attractors installed under the fishing piers at both South Cove and High Falls Parks. The installation should be completed by the middle of May.

Fishing Pier at the World Of Energy. At the Duke World of Energy, down beyond the Picnic Area on the point by the helicopter pad, is a fishing pier. Access is over a gravel footpath that may be difficult for wheelchairs with narrow wheels. And along the edge of that grassy area there are some portable toilets. When I visited there, some people were fishing on the pier and didn't report catching anything. The whole grassy point surrounding the helicopter pad has riprap along the shore. One day, off that point fishing from my boat, I caught my biggest bass this year so far: a 21-inch spotted bass. So you could walk along that shore casting out to deeper water and seeing what you could entice to bite. Swimming is not allowed here.

I recommend the last 4 spots if you are looking for a safe place to take a youngster for some fishing bonding without a boat. As with every place on Lake Keowee, the fishing is great whenever the weather is suitable, but the catching is often difficult. So go prepared to have a good time even if you don't catch fish!



The approach through the picnic area to the Fishing Pier at High Falls Park.
Photo courtesy of Judy Koepnick



Fishing Pier at Stamp Creek Landing. Note the zigzag approach ramp for wheelchair access and the dips in the far railing where a person in a wheel chair can fish more easily over the railing. Photo courtesy of Judy Koepnick.



Two friends sharing a fishing experience on the fishing pier at High Falls Oconee County Park. – Photo courtesy of Ben Turetzky