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## **Fall fishing tournaments focus on largemouth bass**

By Bobby Peoples Lake Oconee Breeze

LAKE OCONEE — A full slate of fall tournaments for anglers targeting largemouth bass is now underway on Lake Sinclair and Lake Oconee. Some of those fall tournaments actually began a few weeks ago and will continue into December when the winter season arrives.

I pointed out in a recent article that the fall fishing season is defined by water temperature and not by the calendar. Once the water temperature falls into the 70s, we are into the fall fishing season. Both lakes have now seen the water temperature fall into the upper 70s so the fall fishing season has officially begun.

The shad are on the move to shallow water especially into the larger creeks and that movement will only intensify as the temperature continues to drop. All species of fish in the lakes begin a fall migration to shallow water with one purpose in mind and that is to feed up on the abundant shad that have moved to shallow water.

That fall migration fits well with a large number of fishing tournament trails that specifically target largemouth bass. There was a time not many years ago when the majority of largemouth bass tournaments only occurred in the spring and early summer but now those tournaments have become year round events.

Nothing like cool fall weather to get anglers to the lake and a bonus occurs when some of the diehard anglers have an opportunity to compete for some money in fishing tournaments. Entry fees vary from tournament to tournament and the payout to anglers also varies from tournament to tournament but all offer good competition.

During the summer, anglers have to compete when boat traffic is heaviest and that can sometimes cause friction between folks who use the lake for multiple purposes and it can also make for uncomfortable fishing conditions at times. Fishing during the fall is absolutely great since boat traffic from recreational boaters is at a minimum.

The best thing about fall fishing whether you chose to fish tournaments or you just enjoy angling is that all the fish species feed heavily during the fall. I primarily fish the lakes during the Monday through Friday period during the fall and on most days I might not encounter another boat all day. Fall is just a great time to be on the water.

Now if you like to compete and like to target largemouth bass, you have many opportunities on Lake Sinclair and Lake Oconee to fish this fall. As I said earlier fall tournaments are already occurring but many more are on the schedule.

One of the more popular tournaments on the lakes is the Berry's Fall Tournament Trail. The trail features four tournaments on Lake Oconee and four on Lake Sinclair. For those tournaments, two each on Sinclair and Oconee were completed back in August and September but four tournaments remain on the schedule.

The Berry's Trail will have remaining tournaments on Lake Oconee on Saturday, Oct. 12 and Saturday, Nov. 9. The Berry's Trail will have remaining tournaments on Lake Sinclair on Saturday, Oct. 26 and Saturday, Nov. 23. The entry fee is \$120 for each boat and that includes a big fish pot.

Other tournaments upcoming in October include the HD Marine Couples and Kids at Lake Oconee on Oct. 13, Oconee Marine at Lake Sinclair on Oct. 19, Anglers Warehouse/C&R at Lake Oconee on Oct. 27, and a Thursday Anglers Warehouse/C&R at Lake Oconee on October 31. In addition to those largemouth bass tournaments, Georgia Slabmasters will hold a crappie tournament at Lake Oconee on Oct. 26.

All the largemouth bass tournaments mentioned above on Lake Oconee will take place at Sugar Creek Marina. All the largemouth bass tournaments mentioned above on Lake Sinclair will take place at Little River Park. The Slabmasters crappie tournament at Lake Oconee will take place at the Sav-A-Lot on Highway 44.

One other largemouth bass tournament that I want you to place on your calendar whether you fish or just want to be witness to a live tournament weigh in is the Junior Collis Memorial Bass Classic scheduled for Nov. 16 at Lake Sinclair and Little River Park. The tournament is in memory of longtime Lake Sinclair angler Junior Collis who passed away earlier this year.

More information about this special memorial tournament which will raise funds for the Georgia Cancer Support organization will appear in this column at a later date. You can also contact Bobby Berry at 770-787-6179 for additional information. Good fishing and see you next week.