



*New Jefferson
County parks
offer stream fishing
opportunities*

by
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Floating FLOYD'S FORK



OBIE WILLIAMS PHOTO/ICONS COURTESY OF 21ST CENTURY PARKS

TEN-YEAR-OLD Benjamin Vancleave and 12-year-old brother Aaron found themselves in a dangerous pickle as they approached rain-swollen Floyd's Fork of Salt River on September 13, 1781.

Running to keep up with people on horses fleeing the bloody horror that history now calls the Long Run Massacre, the two boys improvised as they pondered crossing the deep, swift waters. They grasped tight onto the tail of a horse and made it safely across Floyd's Fork and proceeded along Boone's Wagon Road to the safety of Linn's Station.

Their mother did not make it. A combined force of Miami and Huron warriors attacked settlers retreating from Squire Boone's Painted Stone Station in Shelby County. John Floyd, the Jefferson County militia commander for whom Floyd's Fork Creek is named, rounded up a small company of men the next day to ride back to Long Run and extract their revenge. They were soundly defeated.

Floyd's Fork Creek, which rises in Henry County and flows for 62 miles through Jefferson and Bullitt counties before pouring into the Salt River near Shepherdsville, has roots in the state's settlement history. Despite its proximity to the Kentucky's largest city, however, much of the waterway still retains its rural character.

Today, a new and brighter history is being forged around the creek, as its waters lie at the heart of the Parklands of Floyd's Fork. The Parklands, a venture headed by the nonprofit 21st Century Parks group, includes several small parks clustered along the creek.

Twenty-first Century Chairman and CEO Dan Jones reflected on his organization's goals as he paddled his kayak through the Beckley Creek Park section last summer. "This park is mostly about accessibility," he said. "We want people to come and enjoy the park."

The Parklands includes a linked string of five parks straddling Floyd's Fork running from Shelbyville Road (U.S. 60) downstream to Bardstown Road (U.S. 31 E/150). Two segments cur-



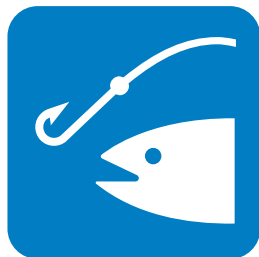
OBIE WILLIAMS PHOTO

Feisty rock bass are plentiful along the length of Floyd's Fork Creek.

rently open for the public — Beckley Creek Park and Pope Lick Park in the northernmost sections — offer excellent floating access and productive fishing for smallmouth bass, rock bass, longear sunfish and, during the colder months, rainbow trout.

The other parks in the system, The Strand, Turkey Run Park and Broad Run Park, will open next year. The Parklands of Floyd's Fork will eventually swell to nearly 4,000 acres. Visitors can go online to www.theparklands.org to see maps and other information.

The Parklands currently includes about 7 miles of pedestrian and bike trails. This will grow to 19 miles when construction finishes next year. The trail will connect to the 100-mile Louisville



Loop, a walking and biking trail that will encircle the city of Louisville.

Anglers, of course, are most interested in the fishing opportunities. Parks Director Scott Martin spends part of his time exploring those opportunities from the vantage point of his canoe.

"We'll have about 20 miles of stream to float," Martin noted as he cast an inline spinner. "We've taken a five times a year hobby and made it into a two or three time a month hobby."

Martin said paddlers can easily complete many of the floats after work in the summer. The first float in Beckley Creek Park falls into this category with a roughly two-mile paddle from the North Beckley Paddling Access to the Creekside Paddling Access.

At normal flows, this gentle, easy float is perfect for families, beginning paddlers and anglers. Floyd's Fork flows small and intimate in this section with many flowing shoals, boulder-strewn outside bends and deep holes, making perfect habitat for smallmouth, spotted and rock bass.

The shuttle from the North Beckley Paddling Access to Creekside is as user friendly as any you'll find in Kentucky. Take a right onto Beckley Creek Parkway from the North Beckley Creek Access and over the bridge near I-64. When you reach the Egg Lawn, take a left and drive around it until you reach the Creekside Center. Drive between the parking lot and Gheens Foundation Lodge on your left and the Marshall Playground and Sprayground on your right to the Creekside Paddling Access. Look for the bright yellow silo near the access.

"You can self-shuttle," Martin said. "All creek access areas have lockable structures where you can lock your bike or boat while you go and get your vehicle. You could easily do this float in summer, lock your boat and walk or bike back to your vehicle."

Floating and fishing is best when water volumes vary from 15 to 500 cubic feet a second. The Parklands website lists current conditions on the upper right corner of their page. The U.S. Geological Survey also posts data from its gauge at Fisherville, which includes weekly graphs of discharges, water levels and water temperatures.

Anglers should also note the special

regulations for largemouth and smallmouth bass in the section of Floyd's Fork Creek from U.S. 60 south to U.S. 150: The creel limit is one fish over 15 inches of each species.

BECKLEY TO CREEKSIDE ACCESS FLOAT

The first section of the float downstream from the North Beckley Paddling Access makes a long bend to the right. Paddlers may find a few golf balls in Floyd's Fork as

the creek snakes around the Midland Trail Golf Course. Sunken tree branches along the banks make good cover for spotted bass and largemouth bass. A 4-inch black finesse worm, rigged weedless on a ⅛-ounce lead-head jig, works well for these fish.

The creek takes a hard bend to the right as it flows into The Oxbow. A rocky bank on river left greets paddlers and holds smallmouth bass. Green pumpkin, beaver-style creature baits rigged on ⅛-ounce leadheads and probed among these rocks draw strikes,

as does a medium-running crawfish-colored crankbait.

The Oxbow has a braid that cuts the corner to the left during high flow periods. Paddlers should avoid this shallow channel and bear right at the fork.

Anglers should target undercut banks and root wads along the outside bend of The Oxbow for bass. A white, 3-inch soft plastic jerkbait fished without a weight is deadly on fish lurking under root wads and in undercut banks.

Let the jerkbait fall slowly after it hits the water. This imitates the death spiral of a shad. Use a slight jerk of the rod tip to repeat the process. Any bass hiding nearby simply can't resist this presentation. You can often watch bass dart out of cover to engulf this lure. Wait until you feel the weight of the fish before setting the hook, however.

After the shallow cut-off channel re-enters the creek on the left, paddlers will likely drag over the shallow bars during summer. One of the new bridges on Beckley Creek Parkway soon comes into view and the ears fill with the noise of trucks and cars rumbling by on I-64.

"The two trout stocking sites for the Parklands of Floyds Fork are on that first float in Beckley Creek Park," said Dane Balsman, urban fisheries biologist for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. "One stocking site is the North Beckley Paddling Access and the other is on the Beckley Creek Parkway Bridge near I-64."

These sites are stocked with a total of 3,600 rainbow trout in October, March and April.

The Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission recently approved a seasonal catch and release trout regulation for Floyd's Fork Creek. The new regulation, scheduled to take effect in fall, would require anglers to release all trout caught from Oct. 1 through March 31 annually. Anglers could still keep trout caught in the winter from the nearby William F. Miles Lakes, located near the North Beckley Paddling Access.

Louisville area trout anglers are frequent and successful visitors to the bridge stocking site in spring.

For fly anglers, a three-colored egg pat-



OBIE WILLIAMS PHOTO

The gentle summertime current of Floyd's Fork Creek is ideal for a variety of paddleboats.



tern is hard to beat for trout. Another option is a lightly weighted black, brown or olive marabou jig suspended under a strike indicator. Adjust the strike indicator until the offering drifts about 6 inches above bottom. This method produced a world record for brown trout in Arkansas that stood for many years.

Anglers using spinning equipment should spool on 4-pound fluorocarbon line and toss an inline spinner. Good colors to try include red and silver, chartreuse, pink or black. Anglers using spinning or fly gear can score many trout casting chartreuse Trout Magnets suspended under a small bobber or strike indicator.

As Floyd's Fork flows under the I-64 bridge and bends to the right around a 22-acre field known as the Egg Lawn, the creek braids and flows through a series of chutes. These chutes wind through stands of water willow during the warm months. Kayakers and canoeists may drag bottom in several areas due to numerous shallow gravel bars.

The area also features several deep plunge holes located below gravel bars or willow-lined chutes. Fish these holes for smallmouth bass with a green pumpkin creature bait or a black 1/8-ounce jig tipped with a 2-inch piece of black finesse worm. An unweighted, soft-plastic jerkbait also works well when cast into the frothy water just after these drops.

Floyd's Fork flows slightly stained even during the low water conditions of summer. These are perfect conditions to work an inline spinner, especially in current seams. Martin recommends inline spinners in combinations of orange, chartreuse, black and white.

"They are one my favorite baits for Floyd's Fork and they work throughout the entire creek," he said. "You can catch smallmouths, spots, largemouths, rock bass and sunfish on them."



DAVID BAKER PHOTO

The appearance of the Thornton Bridge over the creek signals the last of the float. Continue downstream past the Gheens Foundation Lodge and look for the takeout on the right. The large tan-colored stones leading to the parking area indicate that you've reached the Creekside Paddling Access site.

DISTILLERY BEND TO FISHERVILLE FLOAT

The next float is 4.5 miles long. It begins at the Creekside Paddling Access and concludes at the Fisherville Paddling Access site on Old Taylorsville Road.

If you're planning a shuttle for this segment, drive away from the Creekside Center and take a right onto Beckley Creek Parkway. Take a right onto Echo Trail then a quick left onto South English Station Road. Stay on this road until you reach Old Taylorsville Road, and then take a right. Pass

Left: Smallmouth bass prowl rocky shoals and banks of the creek.

Below: Some sections of the creek feature abundant stands of water willow.



OBIE WILLIAMS PHOTO



underneath the KY 155 bridge. Look for the Fisherville Paddling Access on the left.

Start your float back at the Creek-side Paddling Access. Beckley Creek joins Floyd's Fork immediately downstream of the launch on river right, adding slightly more volume to the creek at the beginning of this float.

Creek mouths, such as the Beckley Creek confluence, are good places to catch spotted bass or largemouth bass in spring or summer. Use an unweighted soft plastic jerkbait to draw strikes in these areas.

This section contains shallow gravel bars that boaters will need to walk through at low water. The creek next takes a hard bend to the right. Downed trees and branches in this bend hold spotted bass.

Spotted bass love the color black. To draw strikes from them, fish a black finesse worm or black 3-inch curly-tailed grub. Rig the grub weedless on a 1/8-ounce lead-head jig.

Floyd's Fork becomes more riverine and entrenched as it flows through the elbow known as Distillery Bend, named for the long defunct Grosscurth Distillery located along the creek here.

Originally built by John Dowling in 1933, the plant was known as Waterfill and Frazier until the Grosscurth family bought it in 1948. They produced the 8-year-old Kentucky Supreme label, bottled at 86 proof.

Residents living near the distillery reported hearing an explosion on April 25, 1968. Flames shot 200 feet in the air as 5,000 gallons of premium bourbon burned in two warehouses. The fire permanently ended production at the distillery.

The water deepens in Distillery Bend, likely because of the hydrological remains of the long gone Grosscurth distillery dam. Woody cover in this deeper stretch holds a pleasantly surprising number of largemouth bass. A topwater chugger fished during the low light hours is a great choice here.

From Distillery Bend downstream to the Echo Trail Bridge is the most picturesque stretch of this float, with exposed rock and impressive bluffs. After the bridge, the creek bends sharply left. Long Run Creek soon pours into the main creek on the left, adding more water volume.

Prospect the gravel bar at the mouth of Long Run with watermelon tube jigs rigged on 1/8-ounce lead-head jigs. Any lure that imitates crawfish can work here for smallmouth.

The creek now begins to gain depth from the influx of Long Run; the next stretch includes several long holes.

Probe around fallen trees submerged in deep bends with a soft plastic lizard for largemouth or spotted bass. Chose a 4-inch lizard rigged Texas style; black or green

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pumpkin are good colors to try.

Several shallow bars punctuate the deeper water throughout this section, and smallmouth bass locate on the gravel above and below the shallows. For bass on the gravel, fish a 3-inch, green pumpkin grub rigged weedless on an 1/8-ounce lead-head.

As Floyd's Fork bends back to the right, a railroad trestle comes into view and the noise of traffic from Taylorsville Road brings paddlers back to civilization. The gravel bars under the railroad trestle and Taylorsville Road Bridge hold smallmouth bass.

As the creek flows by the once vibrant community of Fisherville on river right, Floyd's Fork deepens for a spell. This deep hole holds nice bluegill and longear sunfish as well as spotted and largemouth bass. The gravel bars at the end of the hole where Floyd's Fork constricts is a good spot for smallmouth bass.

The creek meanders gently a few times and grows shallow before flowing under the KY 155 Bridge. The take-out is immediately after the KY 155 Bridge on river right.

One of the underlying missions of the Parklands of Floyd's Fork is to save this precious resource from encroaching development so future generations can enjoy it. Jones, the CEO, said much streamside work will be done in the future to upgrade the water quality by protecting stream banks from erosion and the resulting siltation.

Fishing will be better in the future than it is now on Floyd's Fork as a result.

There are stretches of Floyd's Fork Creek on these floats where the paddler forgets that the largest metropolitan area of Kentucky is just a few miles away as the crow flies. Future generations will find the same escape from this ground-breaking and inspiring park. ■



OBIE WILLIAMS PHOTO

Gheens Foundation Lodge signals the end of the upper float.