



TECH BULLETIN

ALABAMA

NEELY HENRY

Compiled from the Diaries and Logs of the Luhr Jensen Fishing Research Team.

By Carol Ferrell / Coosa Tackle

Nestled near the towns of Rainbow City and Gadsden in north Alabama lies Neely Henry, a lake of many characters. Big creeks downriver, plenty of residents, rock bluffs, huge spawning flats, standing timber, weedbeds and stump rows make up the lower end fed by a half dozen major run-ins. Along with all of this visible cover, unseen beauty lies below as witnessed by any good topographical map. Old roadbeds line the mouths of major creeks such as Beaver, Canoe and Shoal Creeks, all located on the lake's lower west side.

House foundations, submerged islands, old lakes and ponds, all require some searching. But what better time to fish and explore while huge schools inhabit these areas unmolested and waiting to be discovered by some wise angler.

On the eastern shores, feeder creeks aren't as big but still hold some large resident bass. The back ends of Ottery Greens and two big nameless creeks across from Canoe Creek are crossed by bridges or culverts with stump flats, standing timber, weedbeds and running water. Weedbeds also hold some big bass in these areas and, being on the lake's east side, are shaded longer during the morning hours.

"Upriver" starts at riverside in the lake's midsection where the Highway 77 bridge crosses the lake. Although very popular with recreational vehicles, the patient angler can worm or deep crank using *Hot Lips Express*® or *Brush Baby*® in the huge stump rows along main river ledges for some big largemouths, spotted bass and occasionally, stripes. Small pockets and islands also have deepwater access and year-round action. Upriver islands with standing timber and stump rows deserve a few casts with topwaters such as a *Woodchopper*® or *P.J. Pop*™ crankbait.

Just before entering the big bend at Gadsden City launch is a huge creek bed next to three smaller creeks. Black Creek, Big Willie's and Horten Creeks all empty into a huge stump flat with a winding creek channel. This is an excellent place to fan cast rattling lipless lures such as a *Sugar Shads*®.

JULY, AUGUST SEPTEMBER

Carolina- and Texas-rigged plastics also help locate some huge summertime schools. Look for schooling activity too for some fast and furious action. The main river, crossed by three bridges, hold some piling-hugging spots and large heads. Thoroughly fish each one facing upriver for a natural presentation. Many unnamed creeks feed the river-type terrain from here on up to Weiss Dam. All deserve some exploring in the 10-ft. or deeper water along entrances which are loaded with wooden cover. Always include some flipping too!

During the dog days of summer, fishing Neely Henry's upper half has many distinct advantages. First is a little peace and solitude, far from the maddening crowd. The narrower the river, the less it is used for "circling ceremonies"! Sadly, second is the bass, most of which go undisturbed during the week and your offerings are sometimes their first bites.

With water generation, these narrow, river-type areas funnel a lot of current, baitfish activity and slight stain to the water compared to down-river's much filtered clear water. Added to all this is the usual rise of a few inches in water levels. This sudden influx of water quickly fills the river and small creeks. Rising water always stimulates baitfish and enhances predator instincts.

Not only the Coosa River, but many lakes and other rivers are very crowded during vacation time. So the further you are from any

major launch, the better off you are. You must have a combination of lures to offer the bass at a glance from different holding areas. Or you can flip a jig all day.

Crankbaits (including lipless crankers), spinnerbaits and some form of bottom-dragging offering cover all these depths and will get a few bites. Crankbaits fished around creek mouths, the end of blowdowns, deep riverbends and along the edges of standing timber are definitely in the strike zone. Experiment with shape, size, color and diving depths in order to decipher the day's big-bite strategy. A *Speed Trap*™ and a few jerkbaits such as the *Jerk 'n Sam*™ are excellent shallow-water choices.

Mid-runners and deep-divers should be alternated around deeper banks. The 1/4- and 1/2-oz. *Hot Lips Express*® and 1/4-oz. *Brush Baby*® are excellent medium-depth choices while the 3/4-oz. *Hot Lips*®, 1/2-oz. *Brush Baby*® and *Fingerling*™ are great for deeper places.

Spinnerbaits in 3/8- to 1/2-oz. sizes slow-rolled around wood cover and rock bluffs, especially during generation, get vicious strikes. The old "jig-and-pig" get the nod for big bites whether flipping or just casting. Good colors are black/blue, brown/orange and pumpkinseed.

OCTOBER

The lake is experiencing a constant water level change. Areas such as upriver creekmouths and downriver creek and river points are very dependable for a few good bites. Until water levels stabilize, the bass will be hard to pattern. Other than these areas there are deeper banks on the main river along with ledges and dropoffs that have their year-round residents.

With winter water levels usually reaching a low of about four

BAITS FOR NEELY HENRY



feet, watch for another upcoming drop during this month. Until then, with water at full pool, the bass could make a move to shallow water and this means the back of creeks or pockets up and downriver. But this will only happen with a stable water level of full pool. If so, the fish will be very shallow due to cooling water and the urge to fatten up for the winter. Spinnerbaits such as the *Buzzer'd™* buzzbait cover a lot of water fast and can get anxious bites from some very aggressive and huge bass.

When covering a lot of water is necessary, crankbaits and rattling lipless lures will always get the job done. Deep divers such as the *Hot Lips Express®*, *Brush Baby®* or *Fingerling™* are all good choices to reach the depths that these bigger, unmolested bass call home.

Coosa Tackle will outfit you for fishing anywhere. They carry a good selection of bass, crappie and stripe lures plug flies, rods and reels for salt or fresh water. They will mail out maps and provide a guide service and live bait.

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