

North Carolina Sport Fish Profiles



Largemouth bass

Scientific Name:

Micropterus salmoides

Other Names:

black bass, chub, green trout, bucketmouth, big-mouth



Illustration by Duane Raver

Identification:

A member of the sunfish family, the largemouth

bass gets its name from its large mouth, which is a good way to distinguish it from other species of bass. When the mouth is closed, the upper jaw extends well beyond the eye, whereas the jaws of the closely related smallmouth and spotted bass do not extend beyond the eye. The color of largemouth bass varies depending on the clarity of the water it inhabits. In relatively clear water, it has a dark green upper body fading into a whitish belly, with a series of dark marks forming a dark horizontal band along the middle of the body. As water clarity decreases, the colors become more muted and the fish tends to be more silver in appearance.

Habitats and Habits:

In North Carolina, largemouth bass are found in lakes, ponds and sluggish streams and rivers. They prefer locations with lots of structure, such as submerged vegetation, brush piles, stumps, boat docks and standing timber. Underwater points, humps, drop-offs, bridge pilings and old road beds are also favored haunts, particularly in reservoirs.

Largemouth bass are most active at 77 F to 86 F, but can be caught in water temperatures well below this range. Feeding slows as temperatures approach 50 F, and they cannot survive long periods where water temperatures exceed 98 F.

Largemouth bass spawn in the spring as water temperatures reach 63 F to 68 F. A female lays eggs in a saucer-shaped nest constructed by the male, usually found in one to four feet of water. The male guards the nest from predators and keeps silt and other debris off the eggs.

Juvenile largemouth bass eat insects and fish fry when young. As they get older, they primarily eat sunfish, shad and crayfish but will also feed on amphibians, reptiles and small mammals.

Fishing Techniques:

Use a wide variety of fishing methods to catch largemouth bass. Artificial baits such as crankbaits, spinnerbaits, topwaters, jigs and soft plastic lures imitating minnows, crayfish, salamanders and worms are good choices. Live baits such as minnows, nightcrawlers and crayfish also can be effective.

As the most popular game fish in the United States, largemouth bass receive a good deal of fishing pressure, often making them difficult to catch in popular fishing areas. Local tackle shops and other anglers are good sources of useful information on what is working for a particular body of water. *(continued on next page)*

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Largemouth bass (continued)

Good Places to Fish:

In the Coastal Plain, the best fishing places to catch largemouth bass are the numerous blackwater rivers found throughout the region. In the Piedmont and Mountains, the best places are ponds and reservoirs.

Other Information:

NCARP Minimum Requirements: 8 pounds or 24 inches

State Record: 15 lbs., 14 oz., from a farm pond in Union County, March 29, 1991

World Record: 22 lbs., 4 oz., from Montgomery Lake, Ga., June 2, 1932*

** Anglers provide information on their potential world-record catches directly to the International Game Fish Association, which maintains the world records for sport fishing.*