

North Carolina Sport Fish Profiles



Rock bass

Scientific Name:

Ambloplites rupestris

Other Names:

redeye, goggle eye

Identification:

A member of the sunfish family, the rock bass has a short, robust body with an olive-green top and gold or brassy-colored sides. The scales along its sides have a dark spot, often forming a striped-like appearance. The anal fin has five to seven hard spines, and on adult rock bass, this fin has a dark outline. There is a dark spot on the ear flap, and the cheeks are scaled. The Roanoke bass, found with rock bass in some rivers of the northern Piedmont, is similar in appearance but does not have cheek scales or a dark margin on the anal fin. The warmouth is also similar in appearance to a rock bass but has only three hard anal spines.



Illustration by Duane Raver

Habitats and Habits:

Rock bass are native to the Mississippi River drainage and northern Atlantic drainages, such as the Connecticut and the Delaware rivers. In North Carolina, rock bass are native to rivers in the western part of the state that flow to the Mississippi, and they have been stocked into numerous rivers draining to the Atlantic Ocean. Rock bass are usually found near sheltered pool areas around rocks and woody debris in rivers in the mountains and foothills. They are occasionally found in lakes.

Rock bass eat primarily aquatic insects, crayfish and small fish.

Fishing Techniques:

Rock bass are often hooked by anglers fishing for smallmouth bass. They usually bite readily and will take almost any lure they can fit in their mouths. Good artificial baits include spinners, small plastic worms, jigs, small crankbaits and flies. Productive live baits include minnows, crayfish and worms.

Good Places to Fish:

The coolwater rivers in the western part of the state, such as the New, Nolichucky and Little Tennessee rivers, are great places to fish for rock bass. Rock bass are also common in many smaller foothills streams, such as the Mitchell River and Reddies River.

Other Information:

NCARP Minimum Requirements: 1 pound or 11 inches

State Record: 1 lb., 14 oz. from the Deep River near Carabonton, April 29, 1998

World Record: Tie: 3 pounds from Lake Erie, Pa., June 18, 1998; from the York River, Ontario, Canada, Aug. 1, 1974*

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

N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
www.ncwildlife.org/fishing
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