

North Carolina Sport Fish Profiles



Smallmouth bass

Scientific Name:

Micropterus dolomieu

Other Names:

bronzeback, red eye,
black bass



Illustration by Duane Raver

Identification:

The smallmouth bass is most often bronze to brownish green with dark vertical bars on its sides. Unlike the largemouth bass, the smallmouth bass has an upper jaw that extends only to the middle of its reddish eyes. Its dorsal fin is not deeply notched. Three distinct dark bars radiate from the eye.

Habitats and Habits:

Smallmouth bass are native to the upper and middle Mississippi River drainage and have been introduced throughout North America. In North Carolina, smallmouth bass often inhabit coolwater streams, lakes and reservoirs in the western part of the state. They are rarely found in small ponds or lakes less than 25 feet deep or in any water that is continuously murky or polluted.

Insects and small fish comprise the bulk of a diet for juvenile smallmouth bass while adults will eat a variety of food items. Smallmouth bass living in lakes feed on shad and crayfish while stream-dwelling smallmouths eat mainly minnows and crayfish.

Fishing Techniques:

Smallmouth bass are often regarded as one of the sportiest freshwater fish and are known for their stamina and fighting ability. They can be caught on a wide variety of artificial baits, but they generally prefer smaller sizes than largemouth bass. Artificial baits in orange and brown patterns that resemble crayfish are a popular choice. When fishing in moving water with live bait, such as crayfish, minnows or nightcrawlers, cast upstream and let the bait drift into pools and behind boulders and snags that break the current.

Other Information:

NCARP Minimum Requirements: 3 pounds or 19 inches

State Record: 10 lbs., 2 oz., from Hiwassee Reservoir on June 1, 1951

World Record: 11 lbs., 15 oz., from Dale Hollow Lake, Tenn., July 9, 1955*

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