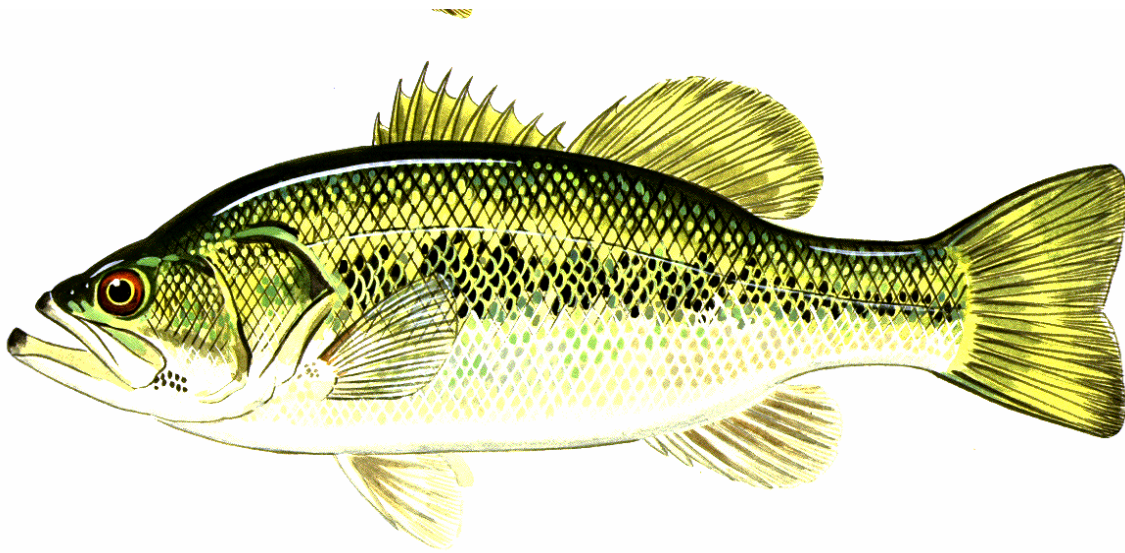


# LARGEMOUTH BASS

*Micropterus salmoides*



## Fishing for Largemouth Bass in Illinois

Largemouth bass are sight feeders. After hatching, the bass fry feed largely upon tiny crustaceans called Cladocerans and Copepods. The primary food items of fingerling and adult bass are: insects, crayfish, frogs, and other fish, especially the gizzard shad. Young bass frequently school-up to feed but once they reach a size larger than a pound, they appear to be more solitary in nature.

Largemouth bass fishing is generally best from early April to mid-June and again from early September to mid-October when the water temperature ranges between 55 and 75 degrees. The best spots to fish in the spring or fall are shorelines, rock riprap or shallow, brushy or weedy areas that are utilized either for spawning or protective cover.

When daytime summer water temperatures approach the 80° mark, bass generally move to the deeper, cooler water along steep banks, in river and creek channels or old pond beds and spring seeps that also have protective cover. Plastic worms, spinner baits and the deep diving plugs are the best baits to use under these conditions. However, they will move from these areas into the shoreline shallows to feed during the early morning or late evening hours, which are prime times to fish. During the winter, largemouth bass can also be caught by using the ice fishing methods described briefly under crappie and bluegill.

Although it is impossible to describe all the ways to take bass (many books and magazine articles have been written on this subject), a few may be pointed out to hopefully increase your success. It is difficult to catch largemouth bass consistently, but they can be caught on a greater variety of baits and lures than practically any other fish. Casting with bait, spincast or spinning tackle is probably the most popular method of catching "Mr. Bigmouth".

During the spring, when most lakes have periods of murkiness, the single or tandem spinner baits, wobbling and flashing spoons with pork rinds, spinning lures and light colored sub-surface lures are the best artificials to use. Live bait fishermen use a 3 to 6 inch minnow or a fat nightcrawler with a cane or fiberglass pole, and only fish the stickups when the lake is murky.

In the summer, especially during the heat of the day, diving or deep running plugs and plastic worms are usually the most productive. If the water is clear, top water plunker, buzzer, crawler or diving baits fished along shoreline cover early in the morning or late in the evening, frequently yield limit catches. When bass are feeding on shad schools, any surface or sub-surface lure that imitates a crippled minnow is very effective. This is also the time to use a fly rod with large poppers, streamers, wet flies or hair bug lures. Other summertime fishermen use stout fiberglass poles with 25 to 50 pound test line and a weighted plastic worm, large jigs or shiners to take bass from their cool shady hideouts.

During the cooler fall months, largemouth bass generally feed from mid-morning to mid-afternoon. Again depending on water turbidity and temperatures, type of cover or time of day, one can frequently use any lure in the tackle box to catch a mess of bass.

The fisherman, who likes to use live bait such as crayfish, nightcrawlers or minnows, can frequently catch more bass than the man using a \$75 rod and reel and the large boxes of artificial lures. These natural baits are usually fished around and over hanging banks, submerged brush, logs, stumps or on hard mud and sand bottoms. At other times, live baits are more effective if they are worked slowly over the bottom, or drifted with the wind or current into pockets, holes and riffles, or jigged over good cover.

Because of their temperamental moods, diverse habits and tendency to move from one area to another, catching bass can be a frustrating, mind boggling situation. To become a good bass fisherman, one must learn to be patient, adaptable and determined to be successful. Probably the best advice to give a budding bass fisherman is to learn all about the bass' habits and habitats, fish as frequently as possible, and go with someone who has developed a degree of expertise in catching this species.

