

Warm Water Fish



Largemouth bass

The largemouth bass is olive-green in color on the upper side of its body, with a dark broken stripe along its sides. Largemouth bass, spotted bass, and smallmouth bass are quite similar in color and shape, and the group that includes them is sometimes referred to as the black basses. In adult largemouth bass, the upper jaw extends far behind the back of the eye, but not in the other species of black bass. The spawning season of the largemouth bass is anytime from March through July depending upon the latitude—the farther north, the later the season. The diet for adult largemouth bass is varied and seems to depend on opportunity more than choice. The diet is mostly composed of fish, crayfish, and large insects, but any small moving animal is fair game—frogs, salamanders, insects, and even mice and birds. Since fish are the main part of the largemouth bass diet, bass can be used to keep other warm-water fish from becoming too numerous. In winter, the fish move to deep water and become inactive.



Spotted Bass

The spotted bass is very similar in appearance to the largemouth bass . The main distinguishing characteristic is the row of small dark spots on the lower sides of the spotted bass. The mouth of the spotted bass is also slightly smaller—the upper jaw doesn't extend behind the back of the eye. The spawning season of the spotted bass varies with latitude, but is generally from April to June. For larger fish, the diet is similar to that of the other black basses, with preferred food items including crayfish and small fish. The spotted bass prefers sluggish flowing waters of streams and rivers, but can also be found

in reservoirs



Smallmouth Bass

This species of black bass has a distinctive bronze color overall, with a greenish back and a whitish belly. The sides are typically plain, or at least not as darkly marked as the other black basses. The eyes are pink or red, a characteristic missing in the largemouth or spotted bass. Smallmouth bass can always be distinguished from largemouth or spotted bass adults by the fact that the lower jaw extends at least to the center of the eye, but not beyond the back of the eye. Spawning and nesting for smallmouth bass is similar to that of other black basses, except that they need clean gravel or rubble. They usually spawn in clear, boulder-strewn streams with large pools, or on rocky shoals in lakes. Adult fish get up to 80% of their food from small fish. They eat more crayfish than largemouth bass do, probably because they share waters with crayfish. In some regions, crayfish may be the most important component of the diet of adult smallmouth bass. Insect larvae make up less than 10% of the adult diet.



Bluegill

Sunfishes, such as the bluegill, are in the same family as the black basses, but they're more round than long when viewed from the side, and have smaller mouths. The bluegill has a dark olive-green back and sides, with a white to light orange breast and belly. There are often dark vertical bars along the sides, most prominent in young fish. There's a definite spot at the base of the dorsal fin, and at the edge of the opercle (or gill cover) there's a dark flexible region called the earflap. The common name bluegill refers to a bluish color on the lower part of the gill cover. This species may be confused with the green sunfish, but bluegills are more round and have distinctly smaller mouths. The bluegill can be found in almost any type of aquatic habitat because of its high tolerance to various environmental conditions, its sports value to anglers, and its food value for several other species of game fish. It does very well in ponds and lakes. Bluegills spawn a little later in the year than do black basses. Adult fish depend heavily upon aquatic and land insects that fall into the water, but they'll also eat small fish and other aquatic invertebrates.

