

LARGEMOUTH

by Ralph Ferrusi III

BASS

The Largemouth Bass....quite possibly the most popular freshwater gamefish in the country, even the world. I know the trout guys will argue this, but hey, you can go to almost any farm pond, lake, creek, reservoir, or river in the Hudson Valley and catch Largemouth Bass.

Largemouth Bass are actually the largest member of the Sunfish family, (they're not a true Bass) and are a warm-water gamefish. They prefer weeds and fairly shallow cover, but can be caught in 40'+ at certain times.

The World Record Largemouth was caught by George Perry on June 2, 1932 in Montgomery Lake in Georgia. It was entered in the Field and Stream Contest, then taken home and eaten!! There have been several unofficial "record" Bass caught in Southern California, and one officially to "tie" the record in Japan a few years back. One well known Bass, "Dottie", was over 25 lbs., but was never officially caught....she was "foul hooked", but never took a bait. She had a dark blotch on her side, hence the name, Dottie.

You can catch Largemouth's year round. Right after "ice out" is an excellent time for a HUGE Largemouth. The big females come into the shallow, North-facing coves....all through Spring they stay in shallow cover, near spawning areas and emerging weed beds. All Summer and Fall, they're pretty much everywhere....docks, rocks, wood, points, coves, ledges, fallen trees, shallow, deep, inside & outside weed edges....as long as the bait's nearby. They also can be caught through the ice. Some of my biggest Largemouth's have been caught ice fishing in farm ponds. Bringing in an 8 lb. Largemouth, hand over hand, on a tip-up is pretty darn cool!!

Largemouth's can be caught on a large variety of baits and lures. Soft plastic, Texas Rigged baits are the most popular, due to the weedless presentation you achieve by lightly skin-hooking the offset hook into the soft plastic. Spinnerbaits, Buzzbaits, Topwaters, and Crankbaits are also good choices. Spinnerbaits/Buzzbaits in and around weeds...Crankbaits, not so much....try these around wood, rock, and outside edges of the weedlines....points are key spots too. Probably the most exciting way to catch Largemouth's are with Topwaters and Plastic Frogs. A giant Bass exploding on your Frog and loading up your Flippin' Stick will NEVER get old!! HA! Your heart may jump a few beats!! Just remember.....count to 3.....then SET THE HOOK!!

As for colors...a trip to a Bass Pro Shops could intimidate anyone!! For Soft Plastics, stick to the tried and true, more natural shades... Watermelon, Smoke, and Green Pumpkin with your favorite color "metalflake", will always work....all these colors mimic Minnows, Perch, Crayfish, and Sunfish, with the proper flake colors. Bright colors, like Chartreuse, and good old plain Black or White, can be very good at certain times and situations too. Experiment...soon you'll have your very own favorites!

For Spinnerbaits, White or White/Chartreuse with Gold/Silver blades are the standard, but try more subtle Minnow-like hues in clearer water and All Chartreuse or Chart./Black in stained/muddy water. Reel faster in clear water and try to bump objects in muddy water.



Part of my 18 lb winning bag on the Hudson River.

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For Hardbaits, the Shad/Minnow hues get the nod, but Crayfish colors are HOT too...just look in your livewell after every Tournament....Crayfish claws and shell pieces....the Bass give you hints on occasion, always be on the lookout for these subtle things...Another "piece to the puzzle".....

For tackle, start with a mid-priced, Medium Action Graphite rod, and a GOOD, quality Reel. As you get better and more into it, you'll want better rods when you can afford them, but get the BEST possible Reel you can afford, to begin with...you WON'T regret this decision.

For line, start with 8,10,12-20 lb. Monofilament line. It's more affordable and will fit most situations. Monofilament line floats, the larger the diameter, the better it floats. It will affect your lure depths too....something to remember.

Fluorocarbon is a lot more expensive, is crystal clear and it sinks. It's an excellent choice for "Dropbaits", like Tubes & Jigs, Flippin', Crankin', and my favorite, Dropshotting.

Then there's the Braids and Superlines, excellent, low-diameter, floating lines...but you'd better learn the "Alberto Knot"! It's pretty much the only non-slip, Braid to Fluoro knot there is... especially for smaller diameter lines....learn itGoogle it....I did....it changed everything!!

Spinning tackle will suffice to begin with, until you "Educate your Thumb" and master Baitcasting tackle. Even with all the magnets and anti-backlash features, your thumb is The Boss here! Time and practice will have you skipping Senkos 30', under

docks 6" above the water. Even Spinning tackle gets loops. Remember to close the bail with your free hand and give the line a quick tug to make it taut....again....time and practice, and it'll be second nature to you, and you won't get those loops!

Back to the Thumb thing again, even Kevin Van Dam (K.V.D.) gets "woofers", as he calls 'em....Educate your Thumb, because nothing ends fishing quicker than a backlash all the way to your spool!!

Once you really get into it, you may want to join a Bass Club. I joined the Ulster County Bassmasters, in Kingston, N.Y. in 1997 and it literally changed my life. There are several clubs in the Hudson Valley area and there's also the New York State Bass Federation, that's an excellent Pro/Am circuit to try out.

The Club level is a great way to find out if you're into "Tournament Style" Bass Fishing. Then you can try the "Non-boater" division in the N.Y. State Federation and see where it takes you. If you're really good and competitive, you can become a "Boater". Then obviously you'd need a Bass Boat, and that's where the big money comes into the equation...well.... that's another discussion, for another time....

Largemouth Bass....most popular ?? Maybe they are...Maybe they're not.... But whatever they are, they're certainly popular around here!

And as they say....."Get Tight!"

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Practice Day on Oneida Lake"