

# Largemouth Bass

*Micropterus salmoides*



TPWD PHOTO

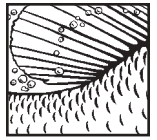


Two subspecies of largemouth bass exist in Texas: the native *Micropterus salmoides salmoides* and the Florida largemouth bass, *Micropterus salmoides floridanus*, which has been introduced into many Texas lakes.

Northern Pineywoods

# Largemouth Bass

*Micropterus salmoides*



## APPEARANCE

**Length:** Adult average around 14 inches (35.5 cm)

**Weight:** Adult average around 4 or 5 pounds (2.3 kg)

### Distinguishing Characteristics

- Greenish with dark blotches forming a horizontal stripe along the middle of the fish on either side
- Underside ranges in color from light green to almost white.
- Nearly divided dorsal fin with the anterior portion containing nine spines and the posterior portion containing 12 to 13 soft rays
- Upper jaw reaches far beyond the rear margin of the eye.

## LIFE HISTORY

**Range:** Native to the mid-west and southeast United States and north central Mexico, including many rivers and lakes in Texas

**Diet:** *Fry* (young) feed primarily on zooplankton and insect larvae. Adults feed almost exclusively on other fish and large invertebrates such as crayfish.

**Predators:** Larger fish prey upon smaller bass. Except for humans, adult largemouth bass are the top predators in the aquatic ecosystem.

**Sexual maturity:** At two to three years

**Spawning season:** Between February and May, depending on location

**Nests:** Males build the nests in two to eight feet of water. They prefer to nest in quieter, more vegetated water than other black bass, but will use any substrate besides soft mud, including submerged logs.

**Eggs:** 2,000 to 43,000

**Incubation:** Five to ten days

**Young:** Fry remain in a group or "school" near the nest and under the male's watch for several days after hatching.

**Life span:** Average 16 years

## HABITAT

Largemouth bass seek protective cover such as logs, rock ledges, vegetation, and man-made structures. They prefer clear quiet water, but will survive quite well in a variety of habitats.

## BEHAVIOR

Immature largemouth bass may tend to congregate in schools, but adults are usually solitary. Sometimes several bass will gather in a very small area, but they do not interact. After breeding, males will chase the females away and guard the eggs and the fry himself. Largemouth bass hide among plants, roots or limbs to strike their prey.

## NOW YOU KNOW!

- At about two inches in length, largemouth bass become active predators.
- Largemouth bass grow 4 to 6 inches (10 to 15 cm) during their first year, 8 to 12 inches (20 to 30 cm) in two years, 16 inches (40 cm) in three years.

## LARGEMOUTH BASS AND PEOPLE

The largemouth bass is by far the most sought-after fish in Texas. Because of the strong interest in largemouth bass fishing, there are hundreds of bass angling clubs in Texas devoted to fishing and conservation. Bass fishing adds greatly to the Texas economy each year and largemouth bass are highly prized for their value as food. Because of the species' popularity, it has been introduced into many waters in which it did not originally occur. As with nearly all aquatic species, pollution and drought are the biggest threats to the largemouth bass population.

