

THIS POPULAR FISH IS ABUNDANT IN SHALLOW WATERS

SMALLMOUTH BASS

Smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*) are one of New York's most important game fish and provide anglers with an outstanding fight. Often smallmouth bass are confused with largemouth bass. Unlike the largemouth bass, smallmouth bass do not have a stripe along their side and are brown to greenish bronze, often with two rows of narrow vertical lines. The smallmouth bass also has a smaller mouth, which ends below the middle of the eye.

Smallmouth bass live in streams with slow to moderate current and in standing bodies of water near rocky shoreline with suitable shelter. These fish live in cool, clear water and are relatively intolerant to pollution. As a result, smallmouth bass are used to assess environmental conditions.

The smallmouth bass spawns in the spring and begins nesting when the water temperatures reach 62° F to



Smallmouth bass can be differentiated from largemouth bass because they are usually brown to greenish bronze, do not have a large vertical stripe along its sides, but often have two rows of narrow vertical lines.

65° F. Nests are usually built near the shore at depths ranging from 2 to 20 feet. The nests are normally twice as long as the fish, which are constructed by the males. At the beginning of the spawning period the female will enter and remain in the nest for up to 2 hours. During which, the fish lie side by side with the male upright and the female at a 45-degree angle. The eggs are laid every 45 seconds or so. After one female leaves another may enter the same nest.

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Smallmouth Bass

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The male will continue to spawn with multiple females over several hours and usually will spawn with a minimum of three females. Males will guard the nest for the entire incubation period. The eggs will hatch in one to two weeks depending on water temperature. Initially, newly hatched fry will remain in the nest motionless, then they will eventually rise in a dense school that will be herded and protected by the male for a short period.

Historically, smallmouth bass were found in the upper Mississippi Valley and the Great Lakes Region, but were not originally found in Lake George. It is suggested that smallmouth bass were likely introduced from early stockings and have been in Lake George for quite some time.

Smallmouth bass are opportunistic predators and will feed on almost any small animal in the water that it is capable of fitting in its gape including crayfish, small fish like yellow perch, and frogs. Smallmouth bass season is open year round in Lake George, but from December 1st to the Friday preceding the 3rd Saturday in June it is catch-and-release with



Smallmouth bass like cool, clean water and are the most adapted fish in the sunfish family for coldwater conditions.

artificial lures only. From the 3rd Saturday in June to November 30th a total of 5 smallmouth bass that are a minimum of 12 inches in length can be kept. For additional information on fishing regulations please visit www.dec.ny.gov.

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