

Largemouth Bass



The **largemouth bass** (*Micropterus salmoides*) is a freshwater [gamefish](#) in the [sunfish family](#), a [species](#) of [black bass](#) native to North America. It is also known by a variety of regional names, such as the brown bass, widemouth bass, bigmouth bass, black bass, bucketmouth, Potter's fish, Florida bass, Florida largemouth, green bass, green trout, gilsdorf bass, linesides, Oswego bass, southern largemouth and (paradoxically) northern largemouth; however, it is not a member of the bass family but actually a member of the Sunfish family.^[3] The largemouth bass is the [state fish](#) of [Alabama](#)^[4] (official freshwater fish), [Georgia](#),^[5] [Mississippi](#),^[6] Florida^[7] (state freshwater fish), and [Tennessee](#)^[8] (official sport fish).

The largemouth is an olive green fish, marked by a series of dark, sometimes black, blotches forming a jagged horizontal stripe along each flank. The upper jaw ([maxilla](#)) of a largemouth bass extends beyond the rear margin of the [orbit](#).^[9] In comparison to age, a female bass is larger than a male.^[10] The largemouth is the largest of the black basses, reaching a maximum recorded overall length of 29.5 in (75 cm)^[11] and a maximum unofficial weight of 25 pounds 1 ounce (11.4 kg).^[11] The fish lives 16 years on average(give or take a few years).^[12]

The juvenile largemouth bass consumes mostly small [bait fish](#), [scuds](#), small [shrimp](#), and insects. Adults consume smaller fish ([bluegill](#), [banded killifish](#)), snails, crawfish ([crayfish](#)), frogs, snakes, [salamanders](#), [bats](#) and even small [water birds](#), [mammals](#), and baby [alligators](#).^[13] In larger lakes and reservoirs, adult bass occupy deeper water than younger fish, and shift to a diet consisting almost entirely of smaller fish like [shad](#), [yellow perch](#), [ciscoes](#), [shiners](#), and [sunfish](#). It also consumes younger members of larger fish species, such as [pike](#), [catfish](#), [trout](#), [walleye](#), [white bass](#), [striped bass](#), and even smaller black bass. Prey items can be as large as 50% of the bass's body length or larger.

Studies of prey utilization by largemouths show that in weedy waters, bass grow more slowly due to difficulty in acquiring prey. Less weed cover allows bass to more easily find and catch prey, but this consists of more open-water baitfish. With little or no cover, bass can devastate the prey population and starve or be stunted. Fisheries managers must consider these factors when designing regulations for specific bodies of water. Under overhead cover, such as overhanging banks, brush, or submerged structure, such as weedbeds, points, humps, ridges, and drop-offs, the largemouth bass uses its senses of hearing, sight, vibration, and smell to attack and seize its

prey. Adult largemouth are generally [apex predators](#) within their habitat, but they are preyed upon by many animals while young.^[14]