

Largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*)

Do they have any other names?

Largemouth bass are also called bigmouth bass, widemouth bass, bucketmouth, Florida bass, and Florida largemouth to name a few.

Why are they called largemouth?

They are called largemouth due to the fact that they have a large mouth in comparison to other black bass, with the upper jaw extending past the eye.

What do they look like?

The largemouth is generally olive green in color and cream colored on the belly with a series of black blotches that form a line along the side of the bass. Its upper jaw extends beyond the rear part of the eye and has no tooth patch present on the tongue. The dorsal fin (fin along the back bone) is nearly separated and has spiny and soft sections. In small bass the caudal (tail) fin is bi-colored (yellow with a black edge).

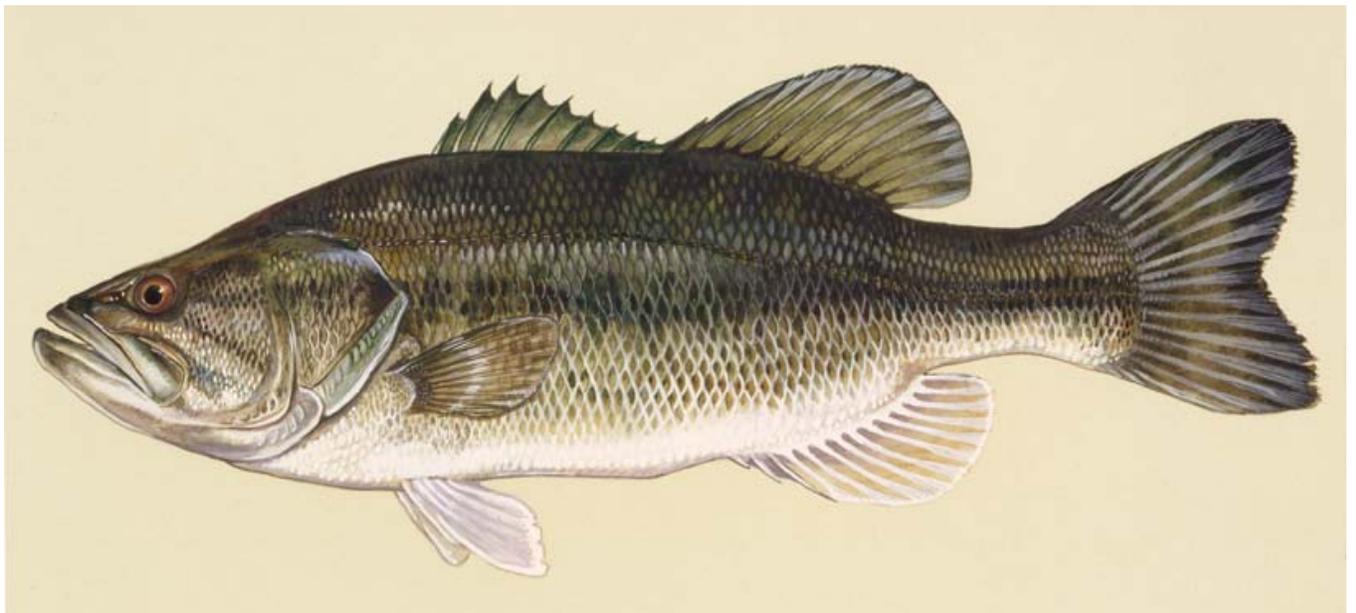


Photo Credit: Duane Raver, USFWS

Where do they live in Indiana?

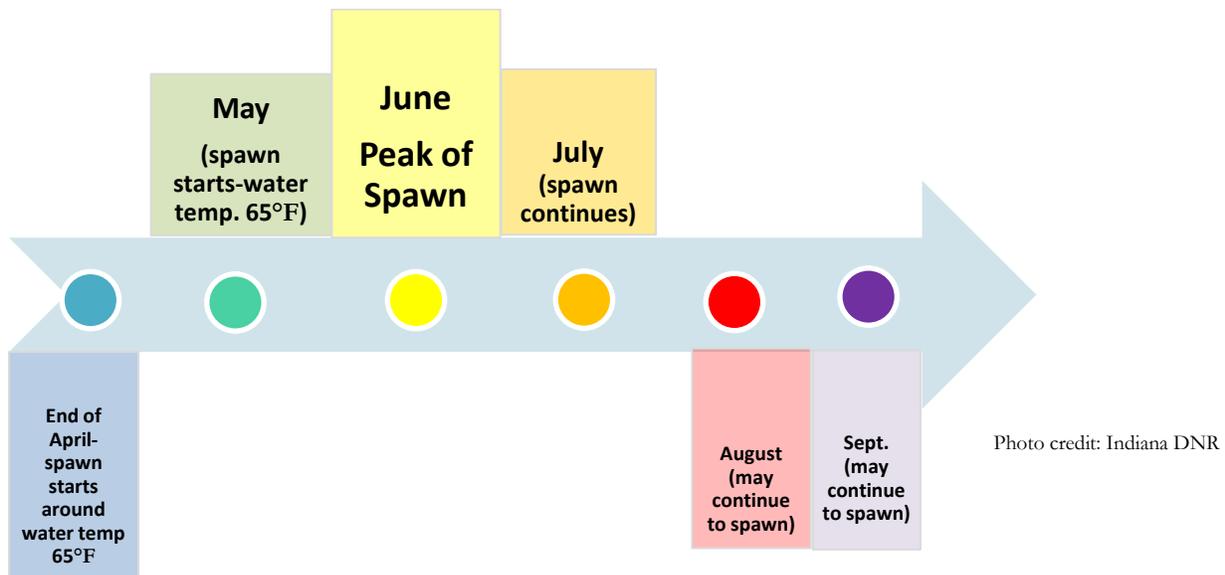
Largemouth bass are found almost everywhere in Indiana from ponds to large rivers. They are most abundant in lakes and man-made impoundments but can also be found in deep, quiet pools of streams.

What kind of habitat do they need?

They prefer warm, moderately clear waters that do not have a noticeable current.

How do they reproduce?

Largemouth bass begin nesting in the spring after the water temperature has reached about 65 °F.



Nests are built by the males in water anywhere from 1 to 15 feet deep. Almost any type of bottom may be used for nesting but gravel is preferred. In reservoirs the nests are usually located in inlets; in streams they are located in sloughs or the deeper and quieter parts of pools. Largemouth bass never nest where there is a current or wave action. The eggs are fertilized by the male as they are deposited onto the floor of the nest. The eggs hatch in three to four days depending on water temperature. The fry begin to feed five to eight days after hatching and remain in a tight school until 26 to 31 days after hatching (when they are about one inch long). The male largemouth bass remains with the schooling young a little while for protection.

How old are they when they reproduce?

Largemouth bass can reproduce when they are 2 years old.

How long do they live?

Largemouth bass on average live up to 10 to 12 years but can reach ages of around 14 years.

How fast do they grow in Indiana?

Growth is variable depending on location and population conditions. In turbid or overpopulated waters, bass 4 years old could still be less than 10 inches long as opposed to well-managed waters where a bass can grow around 5.5 inches in the first year alone. Largemouth bass in favorable conditions can reach lengths of about 16 inches in their fourth year. Adults are typically 10 to 20 inches long and weigh 0.5 to 4.5 pounds. They can reach sizes of 8 pounds, however.

What do they eat?

Largemouth bass spend the day in deeper waters or lurking about logs and other cover and move into the shallows in the evening to feed. Young bass eat crustaceans, insects, and insect larvae. Adults mostly feed on fish, crayfish, and large insects. They will also eat frogs and other small animals that fall into the water. Largemouth depend on forage fish populations, mainly bluegill, redear sunfish, and gizzard shad, and a delicate population balance exists between the predator and prey species.

What eats them?

Largemouth bass are eaten by other fish, herons, osprey, eagles, raccoons, and humans, to name a few.

Are they safe to eat?

Largemouth bass are one of the tastiest fish you can find in Indiana but you may be wondering if they're safe to eat. Wild caught fish are just as healthy for you as most commercially bought fish and in many cases are healthier. You have probably heard about the fish consumption advisories and wonder if any Indiana fish are safe to eat. *The fish consumption advisories that are posted are based on a model that people are consuming 8 oz. of fish on 225 days each year over 70 years.* Most people do not eat fish anywhere close to that amount. However, any meat you consume will have some risk associated with it.

If you are in a high risk group such as a pregnant woman or a child please consult the fish consumption advisory at: www.in.gov/isdh/23650.htm . You can also see which waterbodies have advisories on them (most lakes and reservoirs are lower risk than rivers and streams).

How do I fish for them?

Natural baits that are effective on largemouth bass are minnows, crayfish, worms, hellgrammites, and frogs. Artificial baits that imitate any of the live baits, as well as flies, popping bugs, plugs, and spoons are used for catching largemouth bass. Both surface lures and underwater lures can be used.

How is Indiana managing largemouth bass?

Largemouth bass are managed by the state. Fisheries biologists evaluate data collected during fisheries surveys to determine the type of management (for example, size regulations) a specific body of water needs for good largemouth bass fishing. Fisheries research and management reports can be found at: fishing.IN.gov/3352.htm