

Dedicated to the Memory of  Commissioner Enoch S. "Inky" Moore Jr.

PLAY

Summer
2007

Pennsylvania • League • of • Angling • Youth

Let's Look at Largemouth

by Kim Mumper

When is a bass not a bass?
When it is a largemouth
bass—PA's biggest sunfish
family member!

Largemouth bass are related
to bluegills, pumpkinseeds and
smallmouth bass. You can tell
them apart by their greenish
backs and white undersides,
and the black stripe on each
side. And don't forget that
HUGE mouth that runs all
the way back beyond its
eyes, giving them their
nickname—bucketmouth!

Like their cousins, the largemouth bass
has a two-part **dorsal fin**, or back fin. The
front part is spiny. The back part is
soft. The spines in this fin aren't as
thick or spiky. These two parts of
the dorsal fin are almost totally
separate. In other sunfishes, the two
parts are joined.

Try fishing for largemouth bass in
large ponds or weedy lakes.

Early morning and evening
are the best times
during the hot summer
months. And with a bit
of luck, you'll reel in a
fighting bucketmouth!



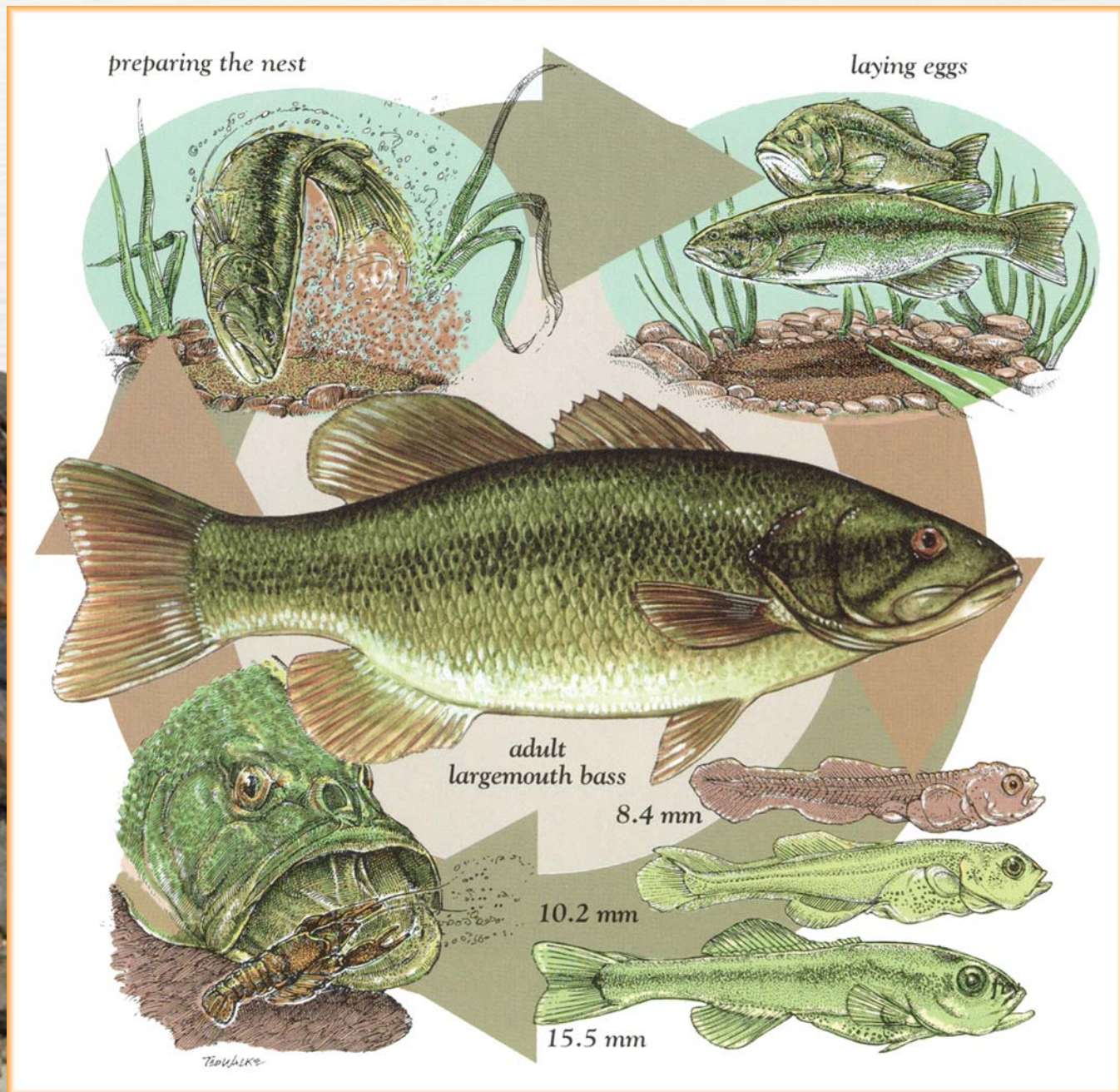
Watery Nest-Builders

You may think of birds as the nest-builders in the animal kingdom, but many fish also build nests. Like all sunfish, largemouth bass are nest-builders. Male fish fan the bottom with their tails to form a circular "nest." Nests are 2 to 3 feet across, 6 inches deep, and in water 1 to 4 feet deep. They are about 20 feet apart and within 8 feet from shore.

Largemouth bass **spawn** (lay their eggs) in the spring and early summer. Several females

may spawn on more than one nest and each may lay as many as 20,000 eggs! The males defend the nests—the eggs, and then the fry—from predators. The eggs hatch in about 10 days. Not all these **fry** (baby fish) survive. Fish and other aquatic animals feed on the young.

So look for sunfish nests in the lakes and ponds where you live in spring and summer!



Is it a Largemouth Bass?

Bass (Sunfish Species)

Largemouth Bass

Micropterus salmoides



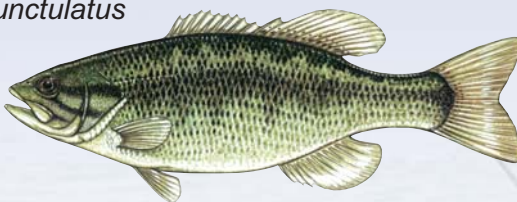
Smallmouth Bass

Micropterus dolomieu



Spotted Bass

Micropterus punctulatus



See the *Pennsylvania Fishing Summary* for seasons, sizes and creel limits for these species.

Identification

Largemouth bass has bright-green to olive-green head and back; sides are lighter green; usually has a broad black stripe or line of broken splotches running along the sides from head to tail; belly is white or pale yellow. Dorsal fin sections are deeply notched and nearly separated.

Upper jaw extends beyond the back edge of the eye.

Identification cont.

Smallmouth bass has brownish to bronze cast to its back, shading to lighter hues on the sides with dark, vertical bars on sides; belly is white or pale yellow. Dorsal fin sections are separated by a shallow notch.



Upper jaw does not extend beyond the back edge of the eye.

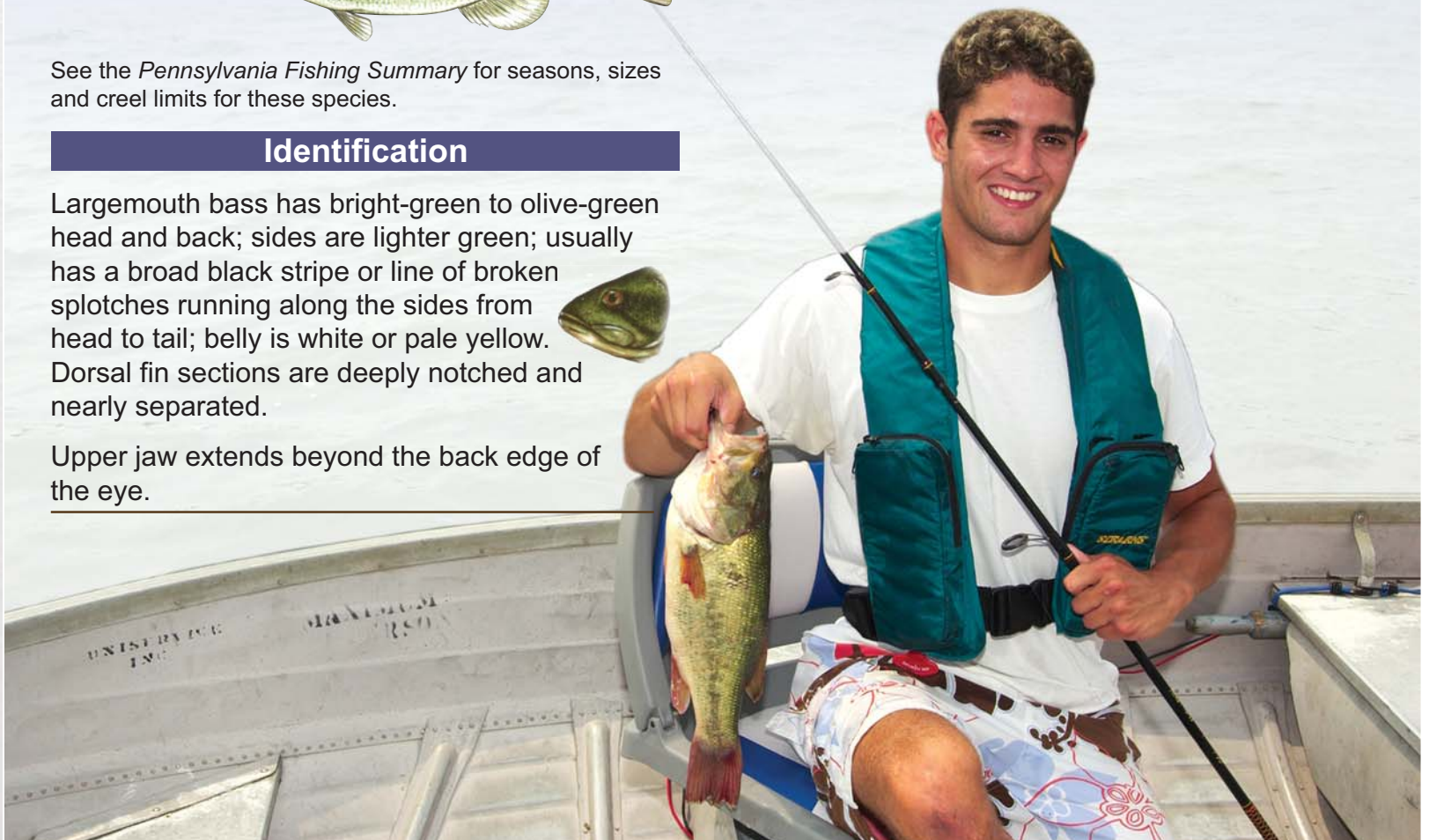
Spotted bass has light to dark olive-green back with silvery green sides and diamond-shaped spots on its sides above a splotchy dark band that runs from head to tail. Scales below the band have black bases that form a pattern of horizontal small spots.



Upper jaw does not extend beyond the rear portion of the eye.

For more information about largemouth bass and their place in the sunfish family, enter this address into your browser:

http://sites.state.pa.us/PA_Exec/Fish_Boat/pafish/fishhtms/chap22.htm.



To Catch a Bass



Bass are bigger and feistier than many of the other fish you'll find in a pond, lake or river, so be prepared for some big fun! Check your gear to make sure you can handle these big fish.

Make sure you have 6- to 14-pound-test line on your reel. Lighter line won't cut it. And you'll want a size 3/0 to 4/0 hook.

Largemouth bass are **predators**. That means they hunt and eat other animals. So use imitations of their **prey** (the animals they eat) as bait. Largemouth bass really go for frogs, nightcrawlers, crayfish, minnows and leeches. In the summer you can find lots of these critters around your yard or nearby waterway.

Artificial lures work great, too. Use imitations of any of the live baits. You can get a bass's attention with jigs, diving crankbaits, floating lures and poppers. Use these offerings in 1/16-ounce to 1-ounce sizes.

Whether you use live bait or a lure, or search a pond, lake or river, you are sure to have a great time fishing for largemouth bass!



Boats and Bass

It's fun to fish from a dock or from the shore for largemouth bass—or any fish. But you can reach more fish if you have a boat!

You don't need a fancy boat. A small rowboat, kayak or canoe will work well to get you

to the fish in a pond or small lake. Some people have john boats—a flat-bottomed boat with a small outboard motor—and they work great! According to boating regulations, kids 11 years old and younger may not operate a boat with a motor greater than 25 horsepower, and kids 12 years old and over must have a Boating Safety Education Certificate before operating a boat with a motor that's greater than 25 horsepower. Anyone can operate a boat with a motor of 25 horsepower or less. To find approved boating education courses in your area, visit the Fish & Boat Commission's web site, www.fish.state.pa.us. Before you go, make sure you know how to operate your boat properly. Always have an adult go with you and always wear your life jacket—it's the law if you are 12 years old or younger!



What's What in Your Boat

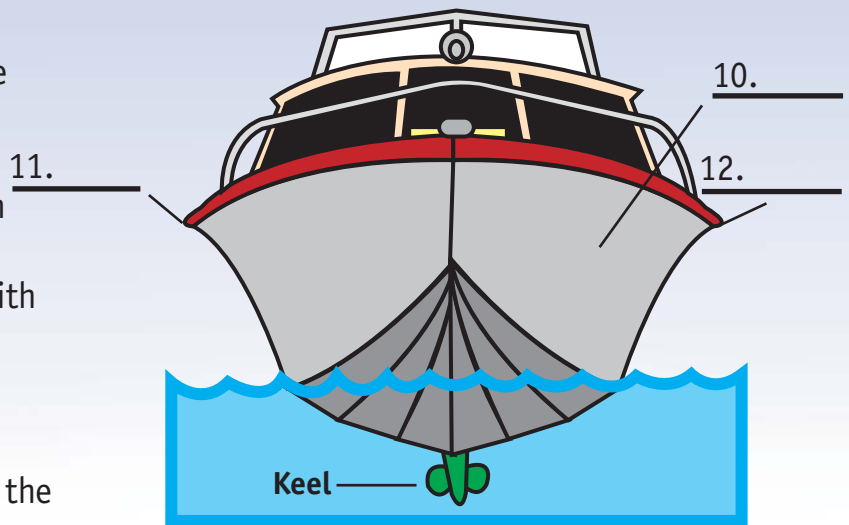
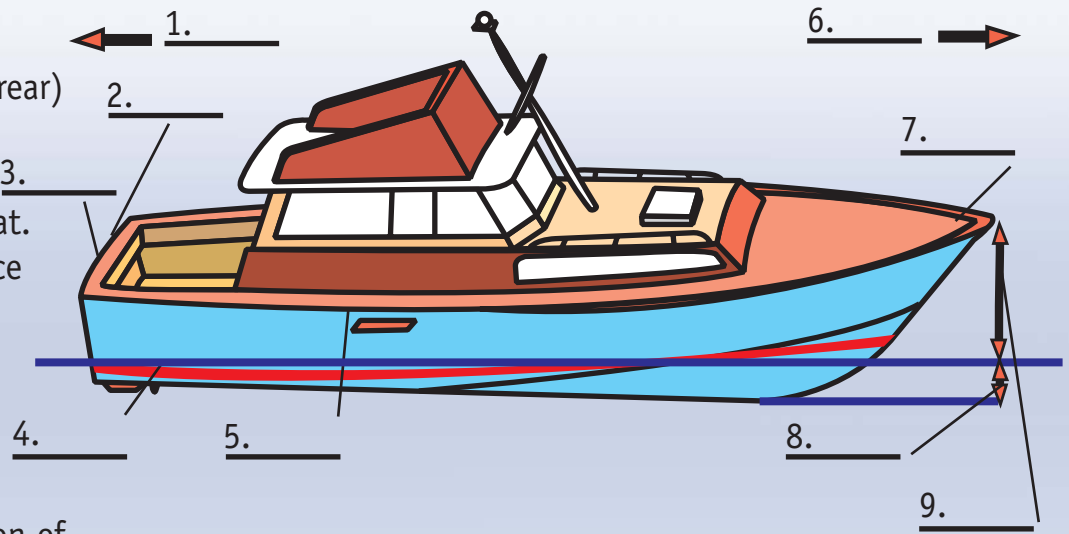
Write the letter of the definition below on the line next to the the correct part/direction of the boat.

Boat Parts

- A. **Stern** - the after (back or rear) portion of the boat.
- B. **Bow** - the forward part (toward the front) of a boat.
- C. **Draft** - the vertical distance from the water line to the lowest point of the keel; the minimum depth of water in which a vessel will float.
- D. **Waterline** - the intersection of a boat's hull and the water's surface.
- E. **Freeboard** - the vertical distance from the waterline to the gunwale.
- F. **Hull** - the structural body of the boat
- G. **Transom** - the transverse part of the stern (where an outboard motor is attached).
- H. **Gunwales** (pronounced gun-uls, rhymes with tunnels) - the upper edge of the side of a boat

Directional Words

- I. **Forward** - aboard a boat, the direction to the front, to the bow
- J. **Starboard** - the right side of the boat
- K. **Aft** - near or at the stern of the boat
- L. **Port** - the left side of the boat



For more on boating, enter this address into your browser:
http://sites.state.pa.us/PA_Exec/Fish_Boat/boatcrs/03boathandbook/intro6.htm

Answers: 1. K; 2. G; 3. A; 4. D; 5. H; 6. I; 7. B; 8. C; 9. E; 10. F; 11. J; 12. L

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