



# LATE SUMMER BASS FISHING

photo-Amidea Daniel

by *Braden Eisenhower*

Parents and students anxiously await the start of the new school year as other anglers look forward to backsliding temperatures that will bring fantastic fall fishing in the coming months. But, late summer still has something to offer—spectacular Smallmouth Bass fishing.

Mid-summer fishing is a grind. We sweat through tough daytime bites in June and July with slow-moving presentations—tubes hopped and dragged across the bottom or suspending jerkbaits with plenty of hang time between twitches. Meanwhile, oversized Smallmouth Bass seem tight-lipped outside of prime conditions.

By August, conditions begin to swing in our favor with shorter daylight hours and milder air temperatures. After several weeks of drought, we may experience rain, which brings good fishing ahead of that front. Overall, water temperatures dip below 80 degrees F.

In this transitional period, a bass's strike zone expands. The same is true for our lure options. Under temperate conditions, a bass will chase moving baits. A productive lure style is a wake bait.

Wake baits look like crankbaits, yet fish like topwater lures due to the steep angle of their bill or lip.

Many anglers select crankbaits in terms of diving depth. More specifically, which lure tracks along bottom contours and ricochets off rocks. Wake baits, however, don't dive more than 12 inches and work best when bulging the surface, running so shallow that its rocking motion creates a disturbance on the surface.

Shallow running lures are at home on the famously unnavigable lower section of the Susquehanna River. The river level determines how the angler accesses the water. Although jet boats rule the roost much of the year, it may take a kayak or canoe to see the nooks and crannies. During extreme low water, wading is often the best modality.

Low flows in July and August allow bass to scatter and inhabit many areas. This does not necessarily mean locating or catching them in late summer is difficult. Current will continue to play an important role, and we find Smallmouth Bass in predictable spots, many of which provide casting to visible targets.

Riffles, pools and runs comprise the three parts of a river. Smallmouth Bass avoid riffles that are shallow and fast. However, expect to find them where the water has a



Smallmouth Bass

photo-Braden Eisenhower



A lure's physiology determines its diving depth. The wake bait is on the left. Its line tie is at the chin, and the lip has an angle near 90-degrees. In comparison, the crankbait on the right is poised to dive several feet due to the lip angle, which is closer to 180-degrees. Its line tie is on the lip.

photo-Braden Eisenhower



Under sunny skies, trigger reaction strikes with fast retrieves and bright paint jobs.

few feet of depth, and there is cover—often boulders—to break swift current.

The head of the pool that forms immediately below the riffle holds the most active fish. Less active bass lurk in the downstream sections of a pool and along the current seams where fast water merges with the pool. Smallmouth Bass in these areas position to ambush prey, so expect quick results.

Further downstream is a section of deep water with slower current called the run. Runs convey the sense of a loaf area, though Smallmouth Bass may relate to subtle changes in current or depth that permit feeding opportunities. A wake bait passing overhead is unlikely to ring the dinner bell, but it may provoke a reaction strike.

Weather influences fish activity and fishing style. Smallmouth Bass are usually active on cloudy, windy days. Be prepared to cover water. On sunny days, the best bite is often around low light hours of dusk and dawn. Expect lethargic fish under bright conditions from mid-morning through late afternoon. Fast-moving retrieves to trigger reaction bites are often the solution. Hold in place and make repeat casts. Even though the lure moves quickly, it still pays to be thorough.

The final weeks of summer can be hectic. If time allows, find some peace on a nearby river with a good population of Smallmouth Bass. ☐



painting-Jim Kent