

Seven



Southeast PA



Bass Lakes

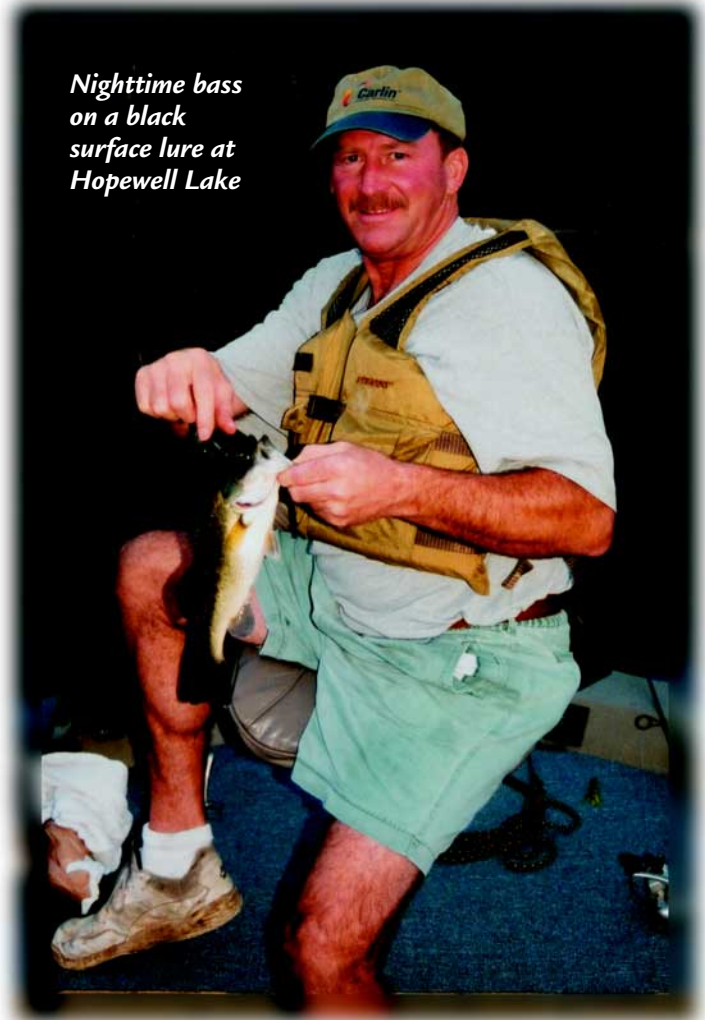
by Ron Steffe

photos by the author

It is a predictable occurrence. New lakes open, which allow boats with unlimited horsepower. When these waterways open, like a magnet they draw boaters from a large area. Similarly, certain lakes become well-known for producing large numbers of good-sized fish. Like lakes with fast boating, they also become a drawing card, luring anglers instead of boaters. For those who are willing to seek out the lakes with less pressure because of the attention the new and well-known lakes create, the endeavor may very well become a rewarding experience.

With fewer anglers, older lakes have the ability to become very good fisheries, even if they weren't before. With bass and the food chain they need to become large and healthy, a forgotten lake becomes a wonderful place. In southeastern Pennsylvania several lakes through a three-county region fit this condition.

Starting in Lehigh County and heading south through Berks and Chester counties, a short review of seven lakes provides guidance in finding a welcome place for the solitude and good fishing any bass angler wants.



Nighttime bass on a black surface lure at Hopewell Lake

Leaser Lake

Leaser Lake is located in Lehigh County, only one mile north of Berks County along PA Route 143 at Wanamaker. This Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission lake lies at the base of Blue Mountain. It is surrounded by farmland that stretches to the mountain's scenic woods. Leaser is currently drawn down because of a leaky dam breast. That leaves the lake with a 40-acre fishing surface. The lake is under Panfish Enhancement regulations and it's in the Select Trout-Stocked Lake Program, which closes the lake to fishing from April 1 until the opener of trout season.

Fish & Boat Commission Area 6 Fisheries Biologist Dave Miko says Leaser Lake is experiencing a change in its bass fishery. "Through the 1990s this lake had dense populations of bass that appeared undernourished and small. Then when drawdown came, the fish became concentrated and easier for anglers to catch. During the last four years, because of angler success at removing some of the legal 12-inch fish, the entire population has been growing in overall size of the fish. The obvious reason is access to more food because of less compe-

Leaser Lake



tion. Some large bass are present, but most are still 9 inches to 13 inches long.”

Leaser Lake allows only electric motors and its two accesses have large parking lots. The lake is open from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Kaecher Creek Lake

This lake is located just outside the town limits of Hamburg in Berks County, along State Street. It is a 32-acre Fish & Boat Commission lake that allows only electric motors.

Miko says that historically this lake has had high bass numbers with marginal size. However, Big Bass regulations were initiated here during the 1990s. It was sampled by the Commission in June 2001, with 140 bass per hour electrofished. The state average in the southeast is 50 per hour. For bass over 12 inches, biologists averaged 37 per hour, with a Southeast Region average of 12. Bass 15 inches and longer averaged six per hour with a southeast average of 3.5. “I would call this a good bass lake,” Miko said.

I recently fished this lake in the early morning hours of a hot summer day. Of all the lakes I have fished in southeast Pennsylvania, this is the best lake to catch bass with plastic worms. Dark brown and watermelon seed seem to work best.

Boyertown Water Works System

Two lakes here serve as the drinking water for Boyertown in Berks County. The lakes are less than a mile apart and both

sit along Powder Mill Hollow Road. They are about 3 miles from Route 73 north of Boyertown.

Boyertown Reservoir is only 8 acres and the Commission has no information regarding sampling of this lake. The other lake, Trout Run Reservoir, is 42 acres. Last sampled in 1995, bass over 12 inches were found at the rate of 13 per hour of electrofishing. Bass 15

inches and over were found at the rate of 3.5 per hour. There are plenty of bass in these two waterways, and obviously some are over the 15-inch minimum.

Shore fishing only, dawn until sunset, from the second Saturday in April until November, with no ice fishing, are all that is allowed on these waters. One must also obtain a seasonal permit. That permit is free and may be secured at the Boyertown borough hall.

Hopewell, Scott’s Run lakes

About 4 miles south of Birdsboro, where Park Road branches off PA Route 345, are two lakes bass anglers should visit: Hopewell and Scott’s Run lakes, in French Creek State Park. Scott’s Run is 22 acres. It is also a trout lake with the same trout regulations as Leaser Lake. But this lake also has bass. Last sampled in 1994, there was a 50 bass-per-hour total. The fish sizes ranged below average for fish over the 12-inch

Boyertown Reservoir





Trout Run Reservoir

and 15-inch ranges. This is another lake where local anglers promise plenty of fish to catch during bass season, but just do not expect a lot of large fish. Scott's Run is not in the Big Bass Program. It allows only electric motors, but has very small parking facilities.

Hopewell Lake is under Big Bass regulations. This lake has benefited from that program and less pressure. In 1984, a Fish & Boat Commission sampling produced 1.5 bass per hour 15 inches and over. By 2001, that number increased to 6.0. The southeast PA average is 3.5.

"Hopewell is a good bass lake with a self-producing population. There is a good population of panfish and a good natural shiner base. Add the enactment of the Big Bass Program along with the food base, and you have all the makings of a good bass lake," Miko said.

About 70 percent of this lake is weed beds, but there is little surface congestion. Bass are found in this growth during the hottest part of summer. Fish in the shoreline weed beds in the early morning and mid-lake in early evening. Besides bait, 4-inch tube lures in green pumpkin and 7-inch worms in black and purple work well. For me, the best fun on this lake occurs at night. Using black surface lures under a hazy moon and black summer sky, you can listen to the strike as you feel the pull of a bass on the end of your line. And it will happen often if you do not mind fishing in darkness.

Hopewell is 68 acres and it allows electric motors. There is ample parking in the state park for visitors who wish to walk to the lake's edge, but the boat launch area is small, and parking for vehicles and trailers there is limited. Of course, there are never many boats found here anyway. Fishing for the most part alone on waters that harbor bass is the reason to try Hopewell.

Struble Lake

Of all the lakes on this list, Struble is the largest at 146 acres. It is also a Fish & Boat Commission lake that lies just south of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. It may be reached by

taking the Morgantown exit of the Turnpike. From there the lake is 7 miles away on Morgantown Road.

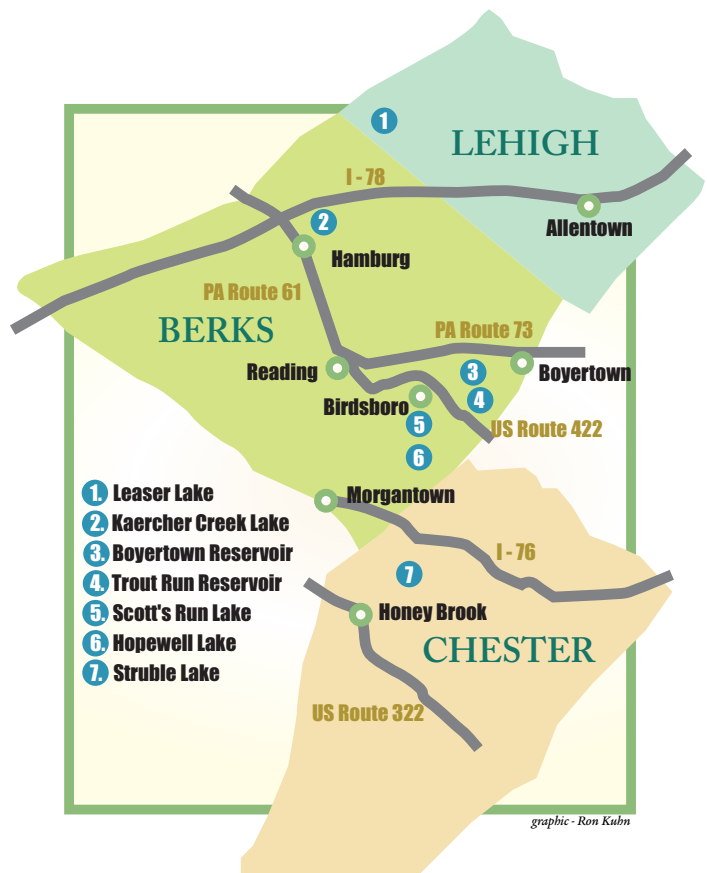
It was last surveyed by Commission biologists in 1993. It had a below-average electrofishing catch rate of 30 bass per hour. "This survey was performed during daylight hours," Miko said. "Surveys performed at night do somewhat better in the number of fish found. In Struble we had an above-average rate of 12-inch fish and bigger, at 16 per hour. The average is 12 per hour. Fish over 15 inches were found at 4.5 versus

a southeast PA average of 3.5 fish per hour. This is what I would term a low-density and high-quality bass population."

Struble allows only electric motors and has one large parking lot.

The essence of a bass fishing trip should be a quiet encounter with nature and water. If that's what you want, visit one of these seven lakes. ☐

Seven Southeast PA Bass Lakes



graphic - Ron Kubn