

Summertime Largemouth Bass

by Mike Bleech

photos by the author

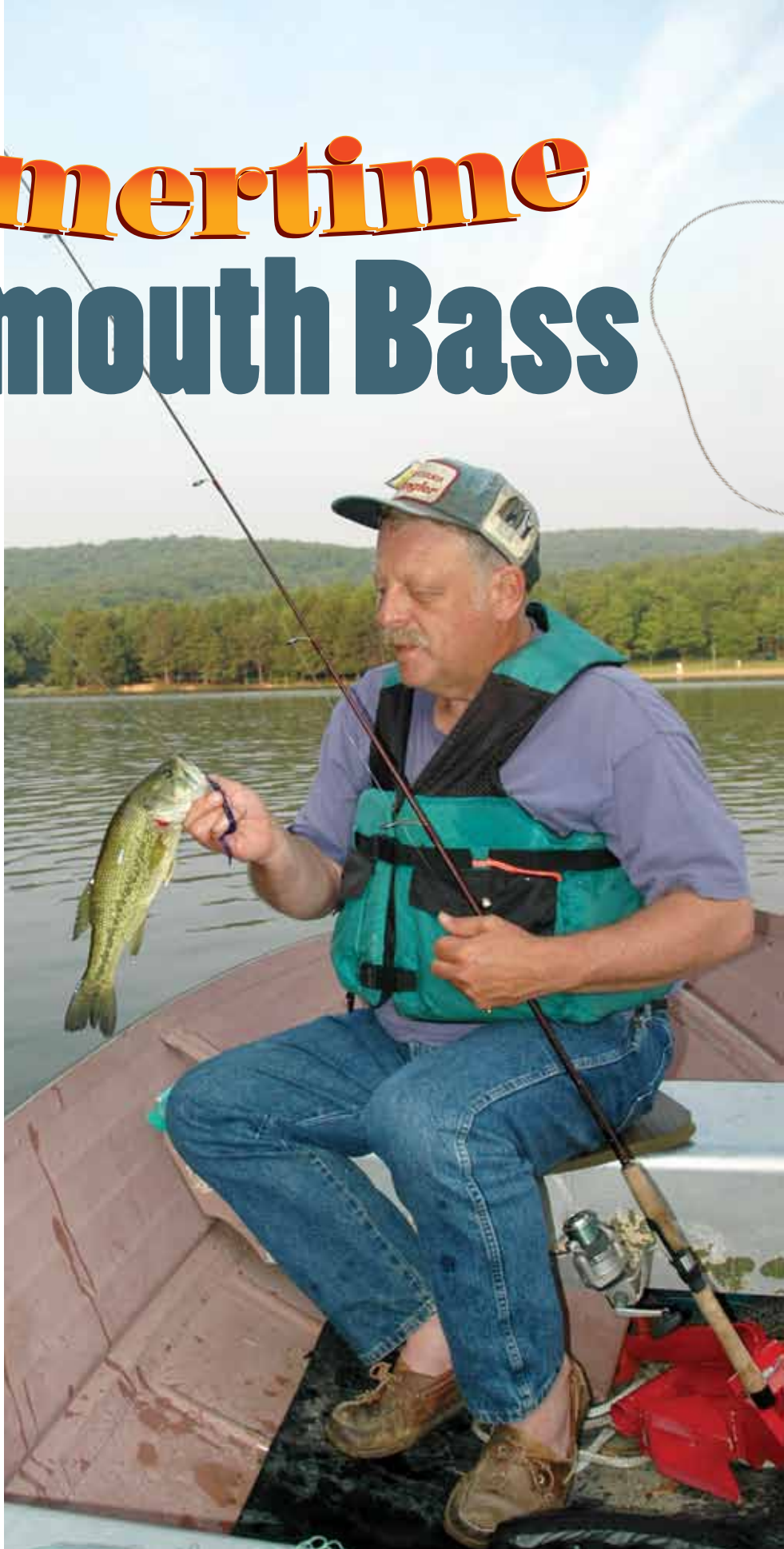
When the sonar screen showed pyramid-shaped humps on the bottom of the lake, I cut the electric motor. The artificial cover, which had been placed in the lake, was right where the map I found on the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission website said it should be. But, was the artificial cover performing as intended?

To find out, I tossed a plastic worm behind the boat, where I had just passed the cover, leaving the bail of my spinning reel open so the rig would drop straight down. The water was only moderately deep, about 8 feet. It took a few seconds for the plastic worm to reach bottom, because I was using little weight, a small splitshot, allowing the semi-buoyant plastic worm to move in a lifelike manner.

The first time I lifted the rod tip to move the plastic worm, it hit something solid, which I presumed was one of the porcupine cribs. Then, I crawled the rig to the top of the crib and over where it sank again toward the bottom. It never reached the bottom though, because a nice bass sucked in the worm and swam to the right. As soon as the line tightened, I set the hook.

It was a bulldogged fight for a while. When I started gaining line, the bass headed for and broke the surface in a classic, cartwheeling jump.

I was fishing this water, because catching bass in deeper water is more difficult than it is in shallow water. Huh? They get less attention from anglers, so they are less likely to have been caught.





A plastic worm rigged with a splitshot is preferred for fishing deep cover and structure.

Largemouth bass may not be the geniuses of the water world, but they start to get a little more wary after hooks have pricked them a few times.

Weeks earlier, I may have caught that bass close to the bank. During the spring, that is where largemouth bass often hide. But by midsummer, many of the bigger bass are relating to deeper cover.

The actual movement process, call it relocation, is the movement of the fish away from spawning areas where they were congregated. Typically, the larger females go first while the males guard the nests. Males follow later. The result is that they spread out into all or most of the suitable habitat.

What is suitable habitat?

Largemouth bass in any given lake do not all behave in the same way. As we know, largemouth bass are quite adaptable. They can live in a wide variety of habitats. Food is the main requirement for bass to inhabit any particular place. More or better food means more and bigger bass. This is really quite simple, except we cannot see what is happening underwater without help.

Sonar and underwater cameras are the common tools used by anglers to see what is underwater. Good advice for anglers using either sonar or a camera is to look for baitfish. Baitfish are essential to find gamefish. Another important clue is the nature of the habitat, because sonar or underwater cameras do not normally see many things largemouth bass eat. For example, when is the last time you saw a crayfish in deep water?

Look for underwater vegetation, sunken logs and sunken creek channels in manmade lakes.



Largemouth bass are relating to deeper cover by midsummer.

My preferred lure for fishing deep cover and structure for largemouth bass is a plastic worm rigged with a splitshot about a foot up the line. This gives the worm slack to do its semi-buoyant shimmy.

Just because bass are in deep water, it doesn't necessarily mean they are at the bottom. Sometimes, they suspend. They may do this to feed on baitfish, or they may suspend when they are in a nonaggressive mood. So, it becomes necessary to keep a lure at about the same depth as the bass. Use a rig, which causes a plastic worm to sink very slowly.

Plastic worms can be rigged to fall slowly by using less weight and a more buoyant worm. Or, put a smaller worm on a flat jig head. Flat jigs will slip sideways, or any direction, while dropping. This is probably their appeal.

Now, get out there and catch some bass. ☐