



Small Pond Kayak Fishing for **LARGEMOUTH BASS**

by Jeff Woleslagle

photos by the author

It was a beautiful Sunday afternoon in late June when I pulled into the spot next to the barn where I normally park and could already see fish working on the surface. Hustling to unload the kayak and my gear, I had to force myself to slow down, so I wouldn't forget anything. As I dragged the kayak down the bank, I flushed some ducks, and I knew it was going to be a great time on the water.

After easing my kayak into the 2-acre pond, I quietly paddled to the first weed line I saw and flipped a wacky-rigged stick worm to the edge where it dropped into deeper water. The offering sank about 2 feet, and I saw my line move hard to the right. Reeling up the slack, I set the hook into a solid 2-pound Largemouth Bass that surged for the sanctuary of the weed bed. After a few runs around my kayak, I landed my first bass of the day on my first cast of the day. Continuing to work my way down the weed line, I missed two more strikes. However, I could see fish rising across the pond, and my gut told me to switch to a surface lure, something I would normally tie on later in the evening. I changed to a 2-inch floating minnow in a silver perch pattern, which I casted toward overhanging brush and branches. I let the minnow settle on the surface after the cast. The very first time I twitched it, the water exploded. This was

a better fish, probably close to 3 pounds, and I had to lean hard to keep the bass out of a submerged brush pile. By the time the sun had set, I landed 15 bass, three large Bluegills and two Black Crappies, making for a great afternoon on the water, like many I have had on small ponds.

Within a 20-minute drive from my house, there are about six ponds that I have permission to fish, and I often use a kayak. A kayak lets you cover water that would often be impossible to fish from the shore, especially if bank vegetation is thick. It allows an angler to reach holes in the weed beds that always seem just out of casting distance when fishing from the bank, and it lets an angler spot fish holding in cover that cannot be detected from shore.

The kayak I use for small pond fishing is 10 feet long and has a flat bottom for stability while fishing. When kayak fishing, my general rule is to try to keep everything within easy reach, so I can focus my attention on positioning the kayak and casting. I have two rod holders flush mounted and a drink holder in front of the seat. I normally wear a fishing vest underneath my life jacket to carry extra hooks and baits, and I keep a small tackle box under bungee cords on the front of the kayak. I like to keep a pair of hemostats clipped on the bungee cord as well to make unhooking fish



Fishing a small pond from a kayak lets you see weed edges, brush piles and other good fish holding cover that you may not be able to spot from the bank.



Weedless frogs can be deadly small pond baits. You will increase your hook-up percentage greatly if you bend the hooks out slightly with a pair of pliers.

quick and easy. If you are new to pond fishing from a kayak, start small. You can always add items as you go. For starters, I recommend a paddle holder, an eight foot length of rope for tying off if it gets windy and a couple of rod holders either flush mount or deck mounted. Consider packing a milk crate or tackle bag for your gear, a dry bag with a first aid kit and some rain gear.

As for my fishing gear, I like a 6-foot, 10-inch to 7-foot medium to medium-heavy action rod with 10- to 12-pound-test monofilament line. I prefer monofilament line for this type of fishing, but I will occasionally use a braid or super line. The longer rod gives me increased leverage for setting the hook from the low angle to the water that a kayak provides when fishing. I keep my bait selections simple when I am kayak fishing on small ponds as these fish normally are not heavily pressured. For fishing deeper around weed edges, I like 4- and 5-inch stick worms that I rig 'wacky style' on a size 6 octopus style hook and small creature baits. For fishing the surface, I like to throw weedless frogs, popping plugs and floating minnow type baits. If you discover a pond that has very heavy weed growth, there is almost nothing as exciting as seeing the strike on a topwater frog. Your hook up percentage will increase greatly if you take a pair of needle-nose pliers and bend the hooks out slightly from the body of the frog. Try to wait until you feel the weight of the fish before you set the hook. This is easier said than done when a hungry bass erupts on the bait.

Many farm and residential ponds go virtually untouched, and it can be well worth the effort to stop and strike up a conversation with the landowner and ask permission to fish. Several of the ponds that I have permission to fish have different rules, and I always respect them. Some are strictly catch and release fishing. In others, I am permitted to keep Bluegills but not bass. Sometimes, I may keep both Bluegills and bass. Even after you have secured permission to fish a small pond, make sure you take the time to thank the landowner. It goes a long way

toward ensuring that you are welcomed back, and if they allow you to harvest some fish, it's a nice gesture to offer up some fresh fillets. If you have permission to fish a private pond in your neck of the woods or have some public ponds close by, try bass fishing from a kayak. ☐



When bass fishing from a kayak, the author looks for weed edges to target.