

Success Through Simplicity

By Christopher Smith, Principal Fisheries Biologist

Introduced to fishing at an early age by my dad, I grew up targeting mostly saltwater species including striped bass, bluefish, weakfish and flounder. I didn't catch my first largemouth bass until I was 10 years old—on a purple Mann's Jelly Worm. That fish weighed 4.5 pounds. Immediately, I was "hooked" on bass fishing. I had much success using that little worm. It worked nearly everywhere in South Jersey.

Fast forward about 30 years and many, many fishing tournaments later, the bass fishing obsession still has a grip on me. I've acquired quite the collection of rods, reels and tackle, most of which goes unused. It took a while but I finally realized that fishing success does not come from how much stuff you have. Having the right lures and using them at the right time are the keys to success. Understanding bass behavior during a given season, along with knowledge of the primary habitat within the waterbody you intend to fish, are also necessary before you tie on the first lure.

Tackle Tips for Each Season

Largemouth bass behavior changes with the seasons. Some lures are particularly effective during certain times of year and will work at most waterbodies. Two or three colors of each lure is all that's necessary for successful bass fishing in most New Jersey waters.

Winter is the most overlooked season to target bass. Bass do not become dormant during the winter; they feed all winter long. This is often the best time of year to catch a trophy-sized largemouth. Mild winters when lakes are not ice covered are great times to go fishing. Frequently, bass feed actively on shad, alewives and golden shiners during the winter. Jerkbait that suspend 3 to 4 feet plus ¼ oz. and ½ oz. rattle traps that mimic these forage fish are very effective during the colder months. When bass are not actively feeding, a small black-and-blue or green pumpkin finesse jig dragged along the bottom is a best bet.

Spring can be the most difficult time to catch bass due to fluctuating water temperatures and spawning activities. Rapidly changing water temperature initiates bass migration to shallow water in preparation for the spawn. Fishing may become difficult if the water warms too quickly. Bass are then focused on spawning and have little interest in feeding.

During the pre-spawn period (March and early April) red crawfish or shad-patterned rattletraps, Z-man chatterbaits (white or black/blue) or soft plastic stick baits like Yamamoto Senkos (green pumpkin or black and blue) work the best. These lures work well fished slowly around shallow submerged vegetation, woody debris, rocks and stumps near where bass will eventually spawn. Once bass begin to spawn, soft plastic creature baits and Yamamoto Senkos in black

and blue and green pumpkin are the ticket. Fishing extremely slow is necessary during the spawn.

Summer is one of my favorite seasons for bass fishing. The hot summer sun puts bass in very predictable locations seeking out shade and cooler water. In shallow waters bass will be found on the deeper banks near overhanging branches, downed trees or by spatterdock and lily pads. In deep water bass can be found near standing timber, submerged aquatic vegetation or on main lake points. Dammed impoundments (most of South Jersey waters fall into this category) have feeder creeks that are usually wadeable or navigable with a small boat. These creeks provide both shade and cooler moving water in the summer.

Summer bass like topwater lures (buzzbaits, zara spooks and whopper ploppers) early in the morning and late in the evening. Black or white are usually the best colors. Soft plastic Texas-rigged worms or wacky rigged Senkos, chatterbaits and spinnerbaits are all effective lures during the summer months. Summer bass have the widest diet consuming crayfish, bluegill, perch, golden shiners and shad.

Fall, when waters are cooling down from October to December, is when bass are actively feeding on gizzard shad, alewives and golden shiners. Fast-moving baits such as rattletraps, crankbaits, spinnerbaits and swimbaits are all very effective when bass are actively feeding. If not actively feeding, Senkos, jigs and suspending jerkbaits can entice a strike.

Year-round bass fishing proves that a simple change in color, or lure type in the same color, can make a huge difference in fishing success—especially when you match bass behavior with their preferred seasonal habitat.

Top 10 Lures for Largemouth Bass

- Z Man Chatterbait – black and blue or white
- 3/8 oz. black and blue jig – any brand
- Spro Frog – black or green
- 3/8 oz. Buzzbait – black or white
- 3/8 oz. spinnerbait – white
- 5-inch Yamamoto Senko – black and blue or green pumpkin, rigged weightless
- 1/8 oz. Shakey Head – 5-inch Zoom Finesse worm (black or green pumpkin)
- ½ oz. Strike King Red Eye Shad – red or shad color
- Whopper Plopper or Zara Spook
- 3/16 or ¼ oz. Drop Shot – Jackall Crosstail shad or Roboworm
- Jackall Squad Minnow (suspending jerkbait) – shad color



DEP Action Line, 24 Hrs.

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- Wise management of fish and wildlife populations
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- Preservation of traditional outdoor sports

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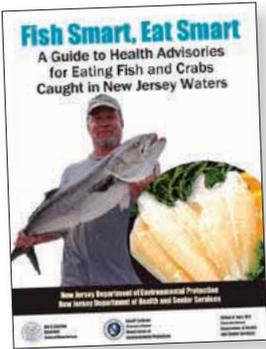
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Eating Fish And Crabs Caught In New Jersey Waters



Fishing provides enjoyable and relaxing recreation. Fish are an excellent source of protein and other nutrients and play a role in maintaining a healthy, well-balanced diet. Many anglers enjoy cooking and eating their own catch. However, elevated levels of potentially harmful chemical contaminants such as dioxin, polychlorinated

biphenyls (PCBs), pesticides and mercury have been found in certain fish and crabs in some New Jersey waters. Fish consumption advisories have been adopted to guide citizens on safe consumption practices.

To reduce exposure to harmful chemical contaminants when preparing and eating the fish species taken from the identified waters, it is essential to follow the guidelines provided. The DEP encourages you to consult the Fish Smart-Eat Smart Fish Advisory Guide or www.FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org when making decisions about eating recreationally

caught fish and crabs.

The current list of fish consumption advisories consists of statewide, regional and water body-specific warnings for a variety of fish species and fish consumers. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Department of Health have prepared new "how to" electronic pamphlets on cleaning and cooking your catch to reduce your exposure to these harmful chemicals. These e-pamphlets are downloadable in multiple languages.

For a complete list of state and federal marine fish consumption advisories visit: www.FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org.

The fish consumption advisories and Fish Smart-Eat Smart website are updated periodically and are available online or from the Division of Science, Research and Environmental Health at

(609) 984-6070 and through the Department of Health at (609) 826-4935.

Check online for fish consumption advisories on the local water body in which you fish! Go to www.FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org 



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A special thanks to our 2016 donors: Bass Pro Shops, Coastline Surf System; Costa Del Mar, Inc.; Chestnut Neck Boat Yard; NJDFW Hooked on Fishing Not on Drugs; Jenkinson's Aquarium; Legal Limits Co.; Manns Bait Co.; Silver Horde; and Stanley Jigs.



Matt Henchek/NJ Div. Fish and Wildlife

Sedge Island Field Experience Programs — Summer 2017

- **Sedge Island Fishing Experience:** A 4-day, 3-night marine fishing intensive program. Open to students going into grades 8 and 9 in the fall of 2017.
- **Sedge Island Field and Research Experience:** A 7-day, 6-night program focused on conducting field research. Open to high school students.
- **Sedge Island Field Experience:** A 4-day, 3-night program that has students work alongside biologists in the salt marsh field. Open to students going into grades 7, 8 and 9 in the fall of 2017.
- **Bay to Bowl:** A 3-day, 2-night program open to adults interested in harvesting food from the bay and learning preparation and cooking techniques.

For more details, dates and cost visit NJFishandWildlife.com/sedge.htm or contact Karen Byrne at Karen.Byrne@dep.nj.gov.



New Jersey's Stocking Programs

NJFISHANDWILDLIFE.COM

WARMWATER STOCKING

Raised with pride at New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Hackettstown State Fish Hatchery

Muskellunge: 9–11" (11,855)

- Carnegie Lake (480)
- Echo Lake Reservoir (414)
- Furnace Lake (250)
- Greenwood Lake (3,881)
- Lake Hopatcong (2,692)
- Manasquan Reservoir (1,480)
- Mercer Lake (563)
- Monksville Reservoir (1,040)
- Mountain Lake (250)

Northern Pike: 6" (27,489)

- Budd Lake (3,040)
- Cranberry Lake (1,988)
- Deal Lake (2,714)
- Farrington Lake (2,912)
- Millstone River (2,284)
- Passaic River (2,897)
- Pompton Lake (2,354)
- Pompton River (2,846)
- Spruce Run Reservoir (6,454)

Tiger Muskellunge: (3,490)

- DOD Lake, 12" (300)
- Greenwood Lake, 9" (1,878)
- Little Swartswood Lake, 6" (1,212)

Walleye: 2" (127,925); 4" (28,175)

- Canistear Reservoir (3,162)
- Delaware River (27,840 — 2")
- Greenwood Lake (3,443)
- Lake Hopatcong (11,566)
- Monksville Reservoir (7,028)
- Swartswood Lake (2,976)

Hybrid Striped Bass: 4" (43,696)

- Lake Hopatcong (23,819)
- Manasquan Reservoir (7,243)
- Spruce Run Reservoir (12,634)

Largemouth Bass: 2–4.5" (26,618)

- Arbor Lake (2,570)
- Assunpink Lake (2,013)

- Lake Hopatcong (6,295)
- Indian Lake (210)
- Mercer Lake (2,000)
- Pompton Lake (5,005)
- Sunset Lake (6,500)
- Surprise Lake (2,025)

Landlocked Salmon: 12" (2,000) and 15.4" (1,405)

- Lake Aeroflex (809)
- Tilcon Lake (740)
- Wawayanda Lake (1,856)

Channel Catfish: 6" (22,485)

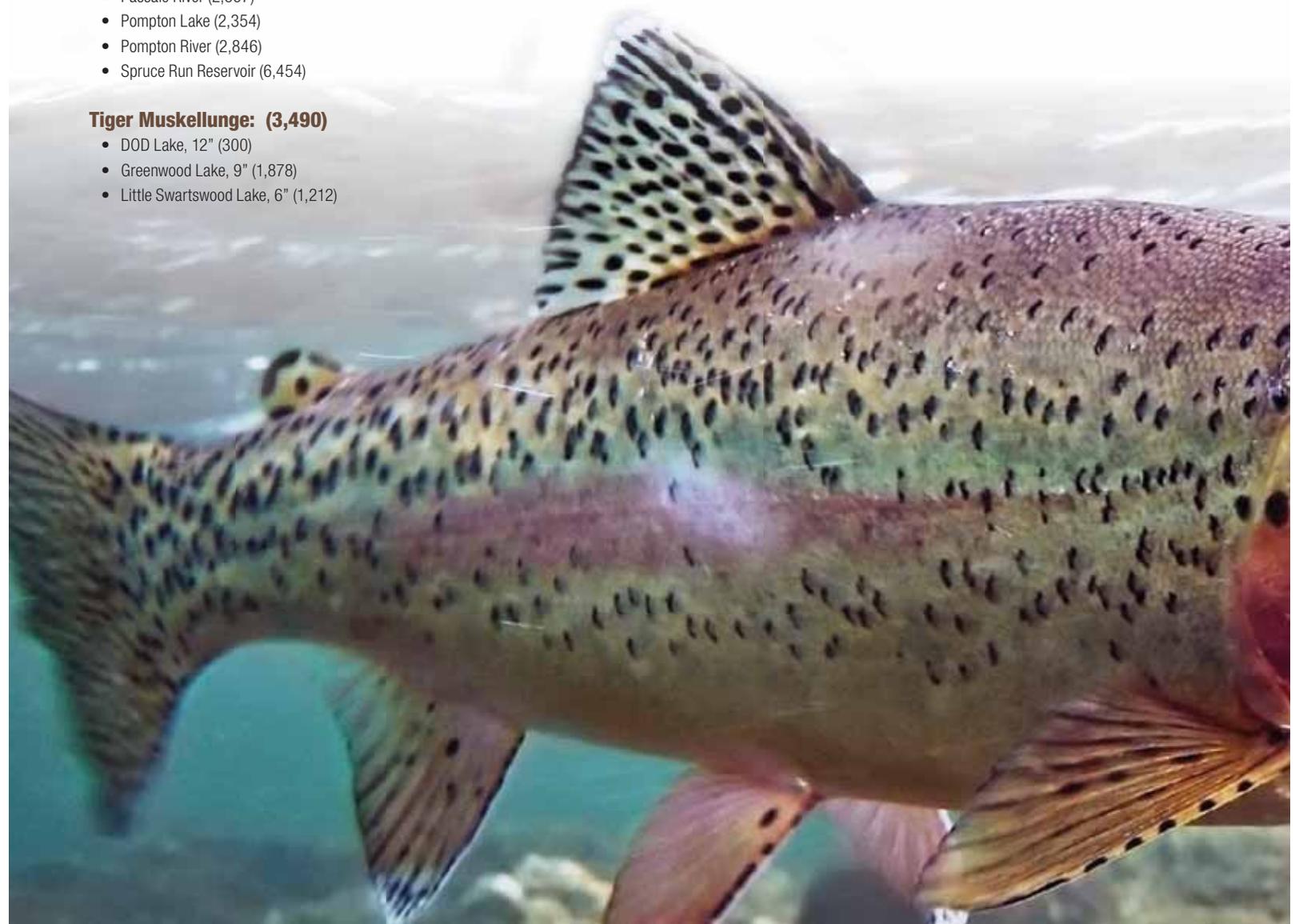
- Seven waters

Channel Catfish: 14"

- Ninety-two waters (13,713)

Plus thousands of black crappie, bluegill sunfish and brown bullheads stocked in over 100 waterbodies throughout the state!

The Hackettstown Hatchery is located in the heart of Hackettstown. It encompasses over 230 acres, consisting of over 65 extensive culture ponds, and a large intensive culture building. The hatchery raises and distributes over 3 million fish each year, representing 15 species.



TROUT STOCKING

Raised with pride at New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Pequest Trout Hatchery

Spring

- Over 570,000 brook, brown and rainbow trout
- Average size: 10.5 inches and ½ pound
- An additional 6,000 breeders 15–21 inches (3–6 pounds)
- Most waterbodies stocked at least three times
- 100 streams and 80 lakes stocked statewide
- All 21 counties stocked
- 180,000 trout released for Opening Day—April 8, 2017
- Stocking continues for seven weeks following Opening Day

Winter

- All large two year olds, measuring 15–16 inches
- Over 4,000 trout
- 18 lakes and ponds
- Great fishing all winter long!

Fall

- Second and third weeks in October
(fall stocking begins October 10, 2017.)
- All large, two year old trout, measuring 14–16 inches
- 21,000 trout stocked
- 37 streams, lakes & ponds
- 1,000 rainbow trout breeders, averaging 20 inches
- Best chance to catch big trout

Fall and Winter Trout Stocking Schedules

Fall Stocking:

Begins Oct. 10, 2017

Second and third weeks
in October

Winter Trout Stocking:

November
20 and 21, 2017

Trout Stocking Schedule — 2017

Scan this QR code with your mobile device to view New Jersey's 2017 trout stocking schedule or go to NJFishandWildlife.com/trinfo.htm



Warmwater Fish Stocking List

Scan this QR code with your mobile device to view New Jersey's warmwater fish stocking list or go to NJFishandWildlife.com/fish_warmwater.htm



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