

## FISH WE REMOVE FROM THE LAKE

### Crappies.

Crappies come in two varieties – black and white. You would think with descriptive names like that, telling the two species apart would be as easy as, well, black and white.

The most conspicuous difference is the pattern on the sides of the fish. The white crappie has dark blotches arranged in bars. The black crappie wears his blotches in an evenly distributed pattern. Body shape is another ID cue. Black crappies have a more round silhouette. White crappies are more “stretched out” and have a little more of a snout.

The most analytical identification characteristic is a count of the rigid spines of the dorsal fin, A white crappie will have 5 to 6 spines. A black crappie will have 7 to 8 spines. When in doubt, a quick count of the spines will provide a near certain identification.

The range and preferred habitats of the two species overlap quite a bit. In my area, the black crappie is the dominant species. In other areas, the white is the dominant crappie. In either instance, it is still quite common to run into both species during the course of a season, or even in a single day. With these three methods to differentiate the two species, you will always be sure of a proper ID.



The round body and an overall mottled color pattern signifies a black crappie.

An elongated profile and mottling arranged in bars identifies a white crappie.

## Fish we keep in the Lake

### Bluegill.



The **bluegill** (*Lepomis macrochirus*) is a species of freshwater fish sometimes referred to as "bream", "brim", "sunny", or "copper nose" or "perch" as is common in Texas.<sup>[3]</sup> It is a member of the sunfish family Centrarchidae of the order Perciformes. It is native to North America and lives in streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds. It is commonly found east of the Rockies. It usually hides around and inside old tree stumps and other underwater structures. It can live in either deep or very shallow water and will often move from one to the other depending on the time of day or season. Bluegills also like to find shelter among aquatic plants and in the shade of trees along banks.

Bluegills can grow up to 12 inches (30 cm) long and about 4+½ pounds (2.0 kg). While their color can vary from population to population, they typically have a very distinctive coloring, with deep blue and purple on the face and gill cover, dark olive-colored bands down the side, and a fiery orange to yellow belly. The fish are omnivores and will eat anything they can fit in their mouth. They mostly feed on small aquatic insects and fish. The fish play a key role in the food chain, and are prey for bass, other (sunfish), northern pike, walleye, muskies, trout, herons, kingfishers, snapping turtles, and otters.

## Large mouth bass.



The largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) is a carnivorous freshwater gamefish in the Centrarchidae (sunfish) family, a species of black bass native to the eastern and central United States, southeastern Canada and northern Mexico, but widely introduced elsewhere. It is known by a variety of regional names, such as the widemouth bass, bigmouth bass, black bass, bucketmouth, largies, Potter's fish, Florida bass, Florida largemouth, green bass, bucketmouth bass, Green trout, gilsdorf bass, Oswego bass, LMB, and southern largemouth and northern largemouth. The largemouth bass is the state fish of Georgia and Mississippi, and the state freshwater fish of Florida and Alabama.

The largemouth bass is an olive-green to greenish gray fish, marked by a series of dark, sometimes black, blotches forming a jagged horizontal stripe along each flank. The upper jaw (maxilla) of a largemouth bass extends beyond the rear margin of the orbit. The largemouth is the largest of the black basses, reaching a maximum recorded overall length of 29.5 in (75 cm) and a maximum unofficial weight of 25 pounds 1 ounce (11.4 kg). Sexual dimorphism is found, with the female larger than the male. Average lifespan in the wild is 10 to 16 years.

### Feeding

The juvenile largemouth bass consumes mostly small bait fish, scuds, water fleas, copepods, small shrimp, and insects. Adults consume smaller fish (bluegill, banded killifish, minnows), shad, worms, snails, crawfish (crayfish), frogs, snakes, salamanders, bats and even small water birds, mammals, turtle hatchlings, and alligator hatchlings. In larger lakes and reservoirs, adult bass occupy deeper water than younger fish, and shift to a diet consisting almost entirely of smaller fish like shad, yellow perch, ciscoes, suckers, shiners, other cyprinids, freshwater silversides, and sunfish. It also consumes younger members of larger fish species, such as catfish, trout, walleye, white bass, striped bass, and even smaller black bass. Prey items can be as large as 50% of the bass's body length or larger.

Studies of prey utilization by largemouths show that in weedy waters, bass grow more slowly due to difficulty in acquiring prey. Less weed cover allows bass to more easily find and catch prey, but this consists of more open-water baitfish. With little or no cover, bass can devastate the prey population and starve or be stunted. Fisheries managers must consider these factors when designing regulations for specific bodies of water. Under overhead cover, such as overhanging banks, brush, or submerged structure, such as weed beds, points, humps, ridges, and drop-offs, the largemouth bass uses its senses of hearing, sight, vibration, and smell to attack and seize its prey. Adult largemouth are generally apex predators within their habitat, but they are preyed upon by many animals while young, including great blue herons, larger bass, northern pike, walleye, muskellunge, yellow perch, channel catfish, northern water snakes, crappie, common carp, and American eels. Multiple species of kingfishers and bitterns feed on this bass, as well. Both the young and adult largemouths are targeted by the bald eagle.