

How to Catch

Bluegill Sunfish and Largemouth Bass

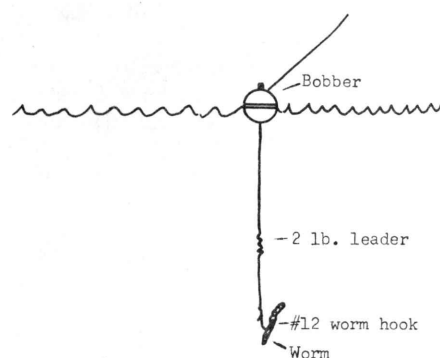
Prepared by ANDREW S. LANDFORCE
Extension Wildlife Management Specialist, Oregon State University, Corvallis

Bass and bluegills are plentiful and widely distributed in our state. Fishing for them is genuine outdoor recreation. Oregon's season on bluegill and bass is open 24 hours a day, all year.

Catching Bluegills

Bluegills, at one time or another, will bite on angleworms, grubs, grasshoppers, crickets, and artificial flies. Large bluegills will take small spinners and wobbling spoons, too. Bluegills can be caught from early spring until cold weather arrives in the fall, with May probably the best month.

- **Using bobber and worms.** When fishing with worms, attach a No. 10 to No. 14 eagle-claw type of worm hook to about 18 inches of 2-pound test leader, tie the leader to your line and use a float to support the bait at the right depth. Use a small shot or sinker if fishing at a depth greater than 3 feet.



One type of float or bobber arrangement used in fishing with worms, grasshoppers, crickets, or grubs for bluegills, or with live bait for bass.

The right depth to fish a baited hook changes with locations in the lake and weather conditions. For a starter, try a depth of 2 feet and keep an alert eye on the lake

to locate feeding fish. If you have not seen any bluegills or have not had a bite in 15 minutes, move to shallower water or try fishing deeper. Keep changing until you find the right depth and locate the fish.

Bluegills travel in schools searching for food along shorelines and in weed beds. Members of a fishing party should spread out and try different places. When someone starts to catch the fish, the entire party should join the successful fisherman and share the fun.

- **Using artificial flies.** Flies can be used either with a fly rod or a spinning rod and a hollow bubble. Flies can be either dry or wet—fishing with wet flies is faster and easier, but not quite as much fun.

With a spinning rod, trail the fly about 2 feet behind a hollow spinning bubble and pulsate the fly very slowly through the water. With a fly rod, cast and retrieve with a pulsating or short jerking motion. In fishing with a dry fly with either fly rod or bubble and fly, cast to a likely spot and let the fly rest on top of the water.

Take about 2½ feet of 2-pound test leader and tie a barrel swivel or split ring to one end and a favorite fly to the other end.

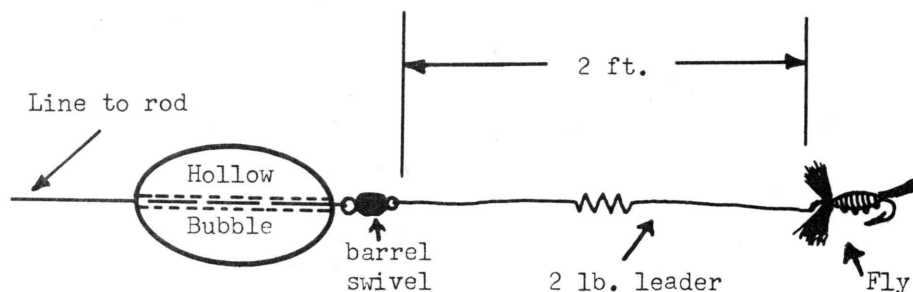
Thread line from the rod through a hollow bubble and tie to the barrel swivel. The line is free to travel through the hollow bubble, making it easier to feel the bite and set the hook.

Use small flies—size 12 and size 14 are suitable. Two favorite patterns are the brown hackle and the yellowbodied gray hackle. However, most of the time the pattern of the fly does not seem to make much difference; size and shape are more important.

Cast the fly where the bluegills are accustomed to feeding—this area is usually in shallow water along the banks. Fishing may be good at any time of the day, with evening usually best.

A good time to catch bluegills is when they are on their spawning nests—they spawn in colonies—and when so concentrated they can be caught readily. It is good conservation to catch and use the larger bluegills from the nests. Catch and save only the amount of large bluegills that you can use. Kill the undersized ones and take them home to feed the cat or bury them in flower beds or in the garden. Removing them from the pond or lake will leave more food for the ones left in the lake, promoting faster growth and larger size.

Spinning rod and bubble arrangement used in fishing with a wet fly for bluegills.



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Catching Bass

More people in the United States fish for largemouth bass than any other species of fresh water fish. The sport is becoming more popular in the Northwest and can provide many pleasant hours of fishing.

Although largemouth bass occasionally refuse to bite anything, timely use of one of the live baits, surface lures, floating-diving lures, or underwater lures usually will get them to bite.

• **Using live baits.** Nightcrawlers are excellent bait. Thread a large one, head first on a No. 2/0 or No. 3/0 longshank hook or hook it through the middle band and cast it near the weed beds. Let it sink to the bottom. After 10 to 15 seconds, slowly reel in about 2 feet, and let it sink again to the bottom. After a wait of 10 to 15 seconds, move it another time. The bass will frequently take the worm as it is sinking. They will take it off the bottom, especially after it has been moved slightly. If weeds are a problem, use a weedless hook.

Using nightcrawlers with a bobber and spinner is also effective, especially in murky water and on dark days. Vary the depth of fishing by sliding the bobber up or down the line to find the depth at which bass will bite.

Remove claws from crayfish, hook in the tail, and fish as with a nightcrawler.

Hook frogs either through the fleshy part of the leg or under the back skin. Two feet up the line, attach a small float and cast the frog close to weed beds or just off the shoreline. Let the frog swim and rest on the surface; its motion is appealing to bass. When a bass takes the frog, set the hook when you think he has swallowed it.

Small, live fish are legal bait in private ponds and some public waters. Before using them in public waters, check the *Synopsis of Oregon Angling Regulations* for current information.

Live fish may be used either with or without the aid of a bobber. Hook the fish through the base of the dorsal fin and cast it

to likely hangouts for bass. When the bass takes the fish, let him run with it a bit. He will usually stop to swallow it. Wait until he starts swimming again to jerk and set the hook. Sometimes a bass will swallow the bait without stopping. In that case, take a chance and set the hook when you think he has swallowed it.

• **Surface lures.** Surface lures become more effective when the surface water temperature warms to 65° F or higher. This is usually in April in southern Oregon and May in the rest of the state. It is a thrilling and interesting way to fish for bass. One good surface lure is a bass bug on a fly rod. Another good choice is a black quarter-ounce hulaopper used with a spinning tackle and a 6-pound test line.

The most effective action to give surface bugs or plugs is a sharp twitch-and-rest motion without making the lure travel. For example, when using the hulaopper, cast it close to the bank in shallow water or near a weed bed or snag; let it stay motionless until all traces of ripples have disappeared. Then give one sharp twitch—enough to make it pop and dimple the water, and again let it lie still until ripples disappear. Repeat this motion until it has traveled 3 to 6 feet, then if you have not had a strike, give it several rapid and sharp twitches just before reeling in to move to another spot. The injured minnow and other similar surface plugs are effective when you fish this way. Do not be afraid to let the plugs stay perfectly still on top of the water. Some large bass like to stalk for quite awhile before striking.

• **Floating-diving lures.** Floating-diving lures, such as the Lucky "13" have a darting, swimming action built into them after they are pulled under water. Their surface motion depends upon you. Cast in a likely spot. When ripples disappear, make the plug bounce and pop with short, sharp jerks of the rod. Stop to let the plug stay still a bit and then reel in fast enough to make it dive to swim and dart back to you. Bass strike the lure both on the surface and under water during the retrieve. Fish with hotshots and

flatfish in the same manner, but retrieve them very slowly and at times completely stop the retrieve to entice a strike.

• **Underwater lures.** Fish with underwater plugs, plastic worms, pork rind eels, streamer flies, and spoons at various depths and on the bottom. Cast underwater plugs in a promising spot, let them sink to a desirable depth, retrieve about 2 feet, stop and let sink, and again retrieve about 2 feet and repeat until reeled in. Feel for the strike as you reel or when the plug is at rest. Frequently the bass will merely take the plug in its mouth and hold it, making it hard to detect the moment to jerk and set the hook. Letting the plug settle to the bottom and rest on it between each 2-foot retrieve is an effective way to fish for bass. If a steady retrieve and rest series does not produce strikes, experiment in giving a distressed, dying, or injured motion to the plugs. Once you find the motion that gets strikes, keep repeating it until the fish stop striking.

Plastic worms are relatively new bass bait. At times the bass like them. Thread one on a No. 2/0 weedless hook in the same way as described for the nightcrawler and fish as shown in Figure 3. You can give plastic worms or pork rind eels a bit more action by twitching the tip of the rod as you reel. While fishing deep water, you may find it advantageous to pinch a split shot on the line about 18 inches ahead of the bait.

Largemouth bass are unpredictable and fickle fish. Sometimes they will strike almost any lure and at other times they will not bite a thing, including live baits. Then, again, they will bite certain lures, fished at specific depths and with a special motion. So if you do not get results, keep trying different lures in different spots or at a different time.

Artificial bass lures come in many sizes, shapes, actions, and colors. For a minimum selection of artificial lures, select the following: a surface lure (¼-ounce black hulaopper); a floating-diving lure (Baby Lucky "13" in perch finish color); and sinking lures (a Midget River Runt Spook in perch finish, a black eel, or plastic worms in any color you prefer).

Most of the time you only need a few good artificial lures to catch bass. However, if you get sincerely interested in bass fishing, you usually end up with a tackle box full of lures plus a can of live nightcrawlers for insurance.

The best time to fish for largemouth bass is before the sun strikes on the water in the morning and after the sun leaves the water in the afternoon. Night fishing for bass can be great, too, and it is legal in Oregon.

The path taken by an underwater plug when allowed to settle and rest on the bottom between short two-foot retrieves.

