

Largemouth vs. Smallmouth Bass

It's time to cover two of the most popular sport fishes of the Middle River: largemouth and smallmouth bass!

Both are in the sunfish family—*Centrarchidae*— and are considered “black basses.” (There is another family— *Moronidae*— of temperate basses that include white perch, striped bass and white bass—but they are not in Middle River). All sunfish family fish have a distinguishing feature of their dorsal fin –the fin on top of their back—that separates them from other families of fish. Their dorsal fins are spiny and rigid on the half closest to the head, and the half closest to the tail is soft.

An easy-to-remember distinguishing feature between large and smallmouth bass is that largemouth bass have upper jaw bones that extend well beyond their eye towards the gill. Largemouth bass are greenish with white bellies and a ragged dark stripe of blotches running lengthwise from head to tail.

Smallmouth bass are darker and green-bronze, and the corner of their jawbone just about lines up with the inside edge of their eye. They also have spotty dark blotches, but rather than run lengthwise down the body, they form blotchy vertical bars on the body.

Other differences include:

<u>Smallmouth Bass</u>	<u>Largemouth Bass</u>
Ave. 1-2 pounds, up to 7 pounds	Ave. 1-5 pounds, up to 12 pounds
12-15 inches long	15-18 inches long
Swim in groups	Swim alone
Like faster, cooler, open water	Likes warmer, slower water with logs and weeds
Puts up a big fight when caught	Takes bait from the top of the water then dives
Trophy size= 2" or 5 lbs.	Trophy size= 22" or 8 lbs.

Smallmouth bass don't tolerate sediment in water well. For a river to have a good population of smallmouth bass, it has to be a pretty healthy, clean river.

With both species of bass, the male guards the nest of eggs until the fry are old enough to leave the nesting area. Both species can live to about 12 years.

Both are great sport fish. And it may be possible to find either one at some place in Middle River. Send us your pictures and we'll post them!

About Fish School: Watershed Administrator Kate --certainly no angler-- but wants to know what is under her kayak. She figures there may be other Friends who would benefit from some beginner fish introductions, too. She is likely to make mistakes or silly statements about fish along the way so, anglers, feel free to gently inform her when her scholarship goes astray! Or, if you have a good picture of a fish you caught in the Middle River—even better if you are in the picture— send it on we'll either use it as a basis for a Fish School blog down the line, or we'll post your picture on our Facebook page! Send pictures to info@friendsofthemiddleriver@gmail.com with Fish School in the subject line.

Citations:

Celine. "Difference Between Smallmouth and Largemouth Bass." DifferenceBetween.net. July 14, 2011 < <http://www.differencebetween.net/science/nature/difference-between-smallmouth-and-largemouth-bass/>, viewed 6/2/18.

Rohde, C., Arndt, R., Lindquist, D., and Parnell, J. (1994) *Freshwater Fishes of the Carolinas, Virginia, Maryland and Delaware*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press.



Friend of the Middle River, Jason Hallacher, of DGIF displays a largemouth bass at Riverfest in 2018.



Smallmouth bass