



Fly Rod Bassing

By Steve May

I have to admit, I am a smallmouth junkie. No I don't own a Ranger ass boat and compete with Bob on the tournament circuit, but I do love my bass fishing. I am a fly rod bass addict.

River smallmouth bass are abundant in most medium to large rivers in southern Canada. Pound for pound they fight better than most any fish in freshwater and they take a variety of fly patterns with gusto. In my books this makes them the ultimate fly rod fish.

Bass are most active when things are otherwise slow on the fly-fishing calendar. The heat of the summer is when many of the more "traditional" fly rod species, like trout, are looking for cool water. Steelhead and salmon are usually still out in the lake or ocean awaiting their spawning ventures into coastal rivers.

During July and August bass metabolism is at its peak and they are on the feed. Smallmouth in rivers have a much shorter growing season than their lake bound counterparts so they really have to take advantage of the short growing season.

Taking your trout tackle and flies to your local river in July can be a lot of fun. Smaller flies and presentations that will fool trout can be equally effective with bronzebacks.

Smaller bass are especially eager to attack trout patterns. These feisty fish could tow an equal-sized trout around the river, but they are often ignored. Small bass get no respect because they come with no bragging rights. But catching them two at a time with a double fly rig or landing over a hundred fish in an afternoon can be a ton of fun.

For bigger bronzebacks, you need to think major food items! Over the years I have hooked up with several monster river bass while chasing musky with giant fly patterns. You don't need to use ten-inch long flies for

bass, but four to six inch flies are a good place to start if you are looking for the big boys. Remember to take extreme care of these larger river bass. Due to their slow growth a 20" river smallmouth could be well over 20 years old. Catch and release is especially important to conserve our special river bass fisheries.

Bass are opportunistic feeders and making a fly look vulnerable and alive is a good recipe for success. Matching common foods like minnows, insects, crayfish, frogs and leeches is a good idea. Fly patterns built with materials that move in the water are also more effective than stiff lifeless looking flies.

Don't overlook dry flies. Bass are opportunists and if a



good hatch is present they will take advantage of it. Large warm rivers can be incredibly productive and have some phenomenal insect hatches. It is pretty spectacular to be surrounded by rising bass that are just as picky as trout and put a much bigger bend in your fly rod once you hook up. Even medium-sized bass will be all that you can handle on a trout rod.

It is a delight to spend a lazy summer day on a quiet river hooking up with a couple of dozen eager fish. Isn't that what fly-fishing is all about? So give river bass a try and you may just have a new favorite season to be on the water with your fly rod.



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