

Fishing Access Information

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission’s online interactive fishing access map provides information on more than 500 public fishing areas in North Carolina, many of which are owned or managed by the Commission. Visitors can search for public fishing areas using a variety of criteria, including location, fish species sought, specific water body, type of water body and type of access. The fishing access map is located on the “Where to Fish” section of the Commission’s website at: ncwildlife.gov/Fishing/Wheretofish.

The Commission continues to work to provide public access for fishing, on public and private lands. To help prevent the loss of public access to fishing, anglers should respect landowner’s rights by obtaining permission to enter the property and leaving no trash in the area. The Commission also provides support and partnership opportunities to landowners willing to provide angler access. For more information contact the Division of Inland Fisheries at 919-707-0220.

About the Division of Inland Fisheries

The Commission’s Division of Inland Fisheries manages, conserves and restores the freshwater, public-trust aquatic resources of North Carolina.

Sport Fish Restoration Program

Smallmouth bass research in North Carolina is supported by the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program, which utilizes state fishing license money and grant funds derived from federal excise taxes on fishing equipment and motorboat fuels.



SMALLMOUTH BASS
in Western North Carolina
Streams and Rivers



Keith Hendrickson



Inland Fisheries Division
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
ncwildlife.gov

Smallmouth Bass in North Carolina

The smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*) is a popular game fish sought by anglers throughout the United States. Recognizing the importance of smallmouth bass fisheries, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission produced this brochure to provide life history and angling information for this unique North Carolina fish, as well as summarize recent smallmouth bass research findings obtained by the Commission’s fisheries biologists.

Identification

The smallmouth bass is most often bronze to brownish green with dark vertical bars on its sides. Compared to largemouth bass, the smallmouth bass has a smaller upper jaw that extends only to the middle of its reddish eyes. Its dorsal fin is not deeply notched and three distinct dark bars radiate from the eye.

Habitats and Habits

Smallmouth bass are native to interior eastern North America west of the Appalachians but have been widely introduced elsewhere. In North Carolina, smallmouth bass often inhabit coolwater streams, lakes and reservoirs in the western part of the state that contain diverse habitats, such as logs, stumps, and rock outcroppings. In streams and rivers, such habitats with current are preferred. Juvenile smallmouth bass eat mostly insects and small fish, while adults will eat a variety of food items. Adult smallmouth bass living in lakes and reservoirs feed on shad and crayfish while stream-dwelling smallmouths eat mainly minnows and crayfish.

Fishing Techniques

Smallmouth bass are often regarded as one of the sportiest freshwater fish and are known for their stamina and fighting ability. They can be caught on a wide variety of artificial baits, including spinnerbaits, jigs, and soft-plastic lures (e.g., worms, tubes, minnows and crayfish), but smallmouth generally prefer smaller bait sizes than largemouth bass. During spring and summer months, surface lures and popping bugs presented by a fly rod are popular fishing techniques for exciting topwater smallmouth action. Natural baits such as hellgrammites, salamanders, minnows, and crayfish fished in stream current breaks and back eddies under a small split-shot weight are highly effective presentations. While anglers can fish for smallmouth bass in reservoirs and lakes, fishing streams and rivers can be productive and challenging.



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Smallmouth Bass Research Summary

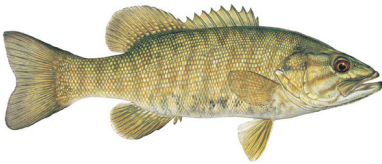
The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission recently collected smallmouth bass population data from rivers and streams across western North Carolina. During the study, Commission fisheries biologists collected more than 2,800 smallmouth bass from 42 stream reaches. Results of these surveys indicate:

- For many populations, smallmouth bass averaged 8 to 10 inches, although some fish collected were nearly 20 inches.
- In some rivers and streams, smallmouth bass take up to five years to reach 10 inches in length, while in other waters smallmouth exceeded 10 inches in just two years.
- Sizes and growth rates of smallmouth bass differed in part due to the variety of waters sampled, which ranged from streams less than 25 feet wide to rivers more than 300 feet wide. Differences among waters probably were related to varying water temperatures and nutrient levels.

From Research to Management

Size and creel limit regulations are a common method for managing fisheries. Using length, weight, condition, mortality and growth data collected during these surveys, Commission biologists evaluated the effects of several potential harvest regulations on river and stream smallmouth bass populations. The results indicated that a more protective length limit for smallmouth bass was appropriate. Find more information on smallmouth bass and other sport fish by visiting ncwildlife.gov/fish.

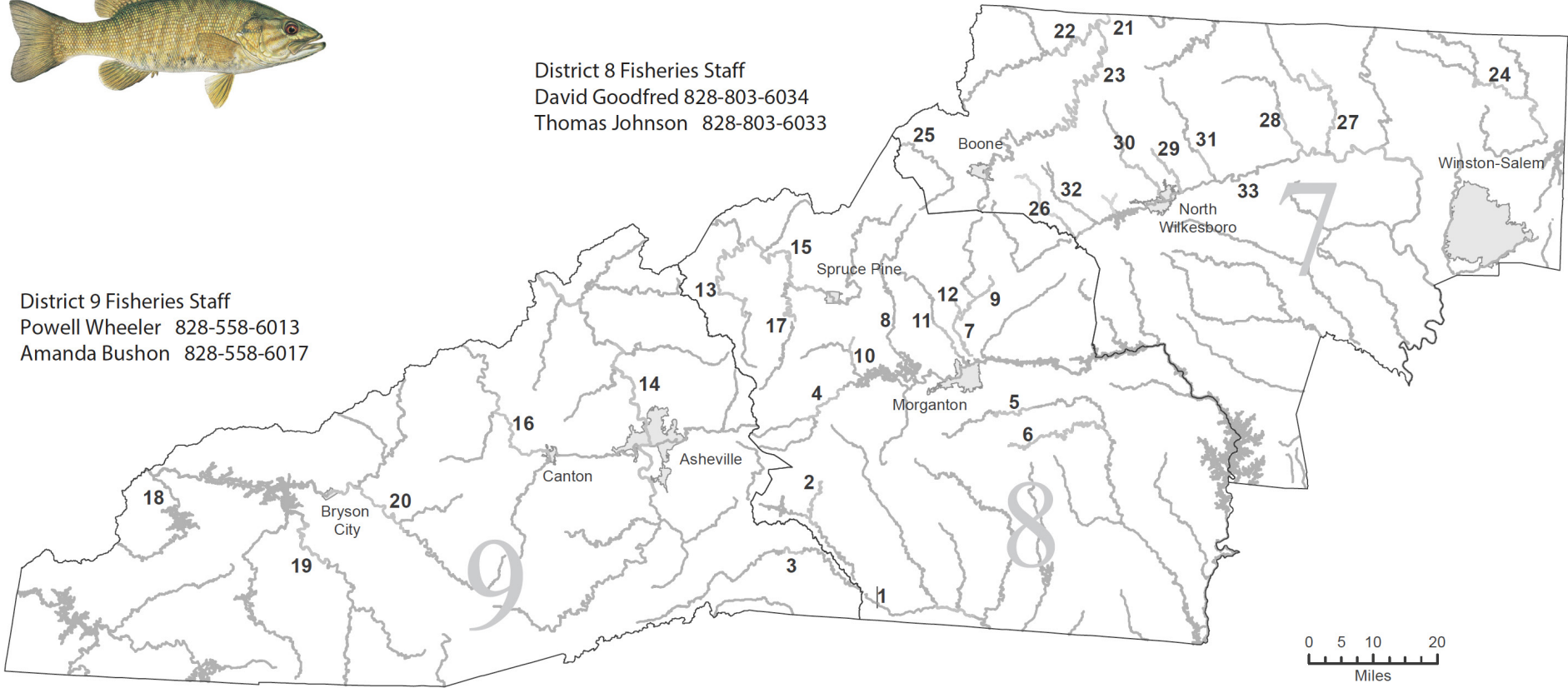
Smallmouth Bass Streams in Western North Carolina



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Stream Name	Stream Name	Stream Name	Stream Name	Stream Name
1 Broad River	8 Linville River	15 North Toe River	22 North Fork New River	29 Mulberry Creek
2 Cove Creek	9 Mulberry Creek	16 Pigeon River	23 South Fork New River	30 Reddies River
3 Green River	10 North Fork Catawba River	17 South Toe River	24 Dan River	31 Roaring River
4 Catawba River	11 Upper Creek/Warrior Fork	18 Cheoah River	25 Watauga River	32 Stony Fork
5 Henry Fork River	12 Wilson Creek	19 Little Tennessee River	26 Elk Creek	33 Yadkin River
6 Jacob Fork River	13 Cane River	20 Tuckaseegee River	27 Fisher River	
7 Johns River	14 French Broad River (Lower)	21 New River	28 Mitchell Creek	

Smallmouth bass image by Joe Tomelleri