



The Bass Pond

In Ontario we have two native species of bass which have been stocked in farm ponds. They are smallmouth and largemouth bass. The natural habitat for these bass differs somewhat because smallmouth bass prefer waterbodies that have rocky shore lines, underwater ridges and in general hard bottom [like sand or gravel]. Largemouth bass on the other hand prefer an environment where there is a lot of cover in shallow areas of lakes and very slow moving streams. These areas usually have a soft muddy bottom which allows for weeds and water lilies to grow that gives this bass a place for hiding to ambush its prey.

Although both species of bass have been stocked in ponds for a long time, largemouth bass is in most cases the better choice. Largemouth bass can tolerate a wide temperature range from 3 degree Celsius in the winter to 30 degree Celsius in the summer. Bass are most active, grow best and feed most at temperatures above 15 degrees Celsius. During the cold season when temperatures are below 15 degrees Celsius they will slow down or cease feeding altogether and go into a stage of semi hibernation in the deeper parts of a waterbody.

Bass may thrive in a pond the size of a large room to ponds of several acres. A bass pond should be at least four feet deep and one third of the pond should be eight but better yet ten feet deep. This will insure that the pond warms up early in the spring and the deeper part will help the bass to survive the long winters. Most ponds suitable for bass have no flow through of water, meaning the water level is kept constant by the surrounding ground water table or intermittent rain water runoff. Bass have a need for well aerated water. This constitutes no problem when the pond is ice free but under ice cover in the winter and if the pond is overstocked with fish and a lot of decaying weed is present a deficiency of oxygen may ensue usually in late February or March. The sad result if no action is taken is winterkill. As a preventive measure a submersible pump on a timer or a windmill with an air pump can alleviate this problem.

Bass are highly visible in the warm time of the year and interesting to watch. They are curious by nature and come quite close to be observed. They can be trained to take feed and rush to the site where it is offered to them.

To be continued:

Karl Dickob and Steve May operate Kinmount Fish Farm. They have many years experience in fish farming and consulting.

Telephone [705] 488-2660

Fax [705] 488-2835



12 August 1998

The Bass Pond cont...

After discussing in general terms the requirements of large and small mouth bass to live and survive in a pond we will now explore what could and should be done to ensure their well being.

Habitat: We discussed that.

Stocking rate per hectare.

We will use as a reference a pond of the size of one hectare, if your pond is larger or smaller you may adjust accordingly.

A hectare is 2.5 acres or 100 meters by 100 meters or about 300 feet by 300 feet in size.

The average natural fish production of a pond is about 300 lbs per hectare if a healthy ecosystem has been established. To stock a pond with bass where there are no other fish are present, you may consider using fingerling bass of 1 to 3 inch length at a rate of 300 to 500 fish per hectare. The survival rate of such small fish is very unpredictable. Bass of a length of 6 inch or larger is in most cases a more economical way of establishing a bass population. The stocking rate may be 100 or 200 bass per hectare but is best discussed with a qualified person on a case by case situation. Overstocking should be avoided because in most cases bass will reproduce in a pond at length over 12 inches. It may be suggested to stock some larger bass in future years to prevent inbreeding and a stunted bass population.

Ecosystem for Bass

Bass, like every living creature need food. This can be provided to them externally in the form of prepared feed or live or dead small fish. The long term effect will be that you enrich your pond with nutrients that may create excessive algae blooms or weed growth. These problems occurred in many trout ponds. You should let your pond feed your fish.

Bass feed on a wide variety of living things in a pond. In their first year mainly from zooplankton, insect larva or fish fry. In their second year they will feed on anything they can swallow like crawfish, small fish, frogs, leaches etc.

Therefore we recommend that you stock in your pond fresh water shrimp, pumpkinseed, blue gills, perch, crawfish and maybe a few suckers or catfish. In addition to feed your bass in stocking the above your pond becomes more colourful and interesting. Once your bass have reproduced don't be afraid to fish out some and have a pond side barbecue.

Karl Dickob and Steve May operate Kinmount Fish Farm.

They have many years experience in fish farming and consulting.

Telephone [705] 488-2660

Fax [705] 488-2835