

OF THE OUTDOORS | GARY HOWEY

# Don't Forget To Look For Bass

BY GARY HOWEY  
Hartington, Neb.

Well it's that time of the year when many anglers develop tunnel vision, concentrating only of walleyes and pounding the water on the larger bodies of water.

If you're one of those anglers that do this, then you're missing out on some of the finest early season fishing there is.

Many anglers at this time of the year will be running great distances when some of the best fishing available may be right in their own backyard for bass.

In the upper Midwest, there are excellent a population of both small and largemouth bass and right now is an excellent time to go after them.

Small and largemouth bass can be found throughout the Missouri River system all the way up stream into Lake Oahe, while most dams, ponds, farm & stock dams, lakes and reservoirs throughout the Midwest also contain catchable populations of largemouth bass.

Bass spawning will begin when water temps reach 55 and will continue on up to 65 degrees. Once the spawn is over, they'll move off into deeper water to rest up from the rigors of the spawn and as the water temperatures begin to warm, become more active.

As water temperature moves into the low 70's, the bass will begin to feed aggressively.

Look for bass during this time of the year spending much of the day in the deeper water and then moving into the shallows early in the day and later in the afternoon looking for an easy meal.

In the river and areas with current, you'll find bass throughout the day tucked in behind some sort of cover or current breaks.

Anything that cuts or slows down the current, creating slack water pockets, are likely to be a good holding spots for the bass.

Points, rock piles pockets in the weeds and down timber all cut the current, making them excellent locations to look for bass in the river.

Both large and smallmouth bass can be taken on spinnerbaits, crankbaits, worm rigs and jigs. Some of the finest smallmouth bass fishing I've seen can be found on the Missouri River and on Enemy Swim and Roy Lake in northeast South Dakota.

When fishing for smallmouth, it's a good idea to downsize your baits as the larger baits used for largemouth may over power a smallmouth.

## 'River Monsters' Host Likes Run-In With Miami's Peacock Bass

BY SUSAN COCKING  
(c)2012 The Miami Herald

MIAMI — It wasn't exactly a "river monster" that the host of Animal Planet's popular namesake TV show caught in the Miami Airport lakes system a couple of weeks ago. But Jeremy Wade said he enjoyed catching and releasing several peacock bass in the 3- to 4-pound range with Hollywood freshwater guide Alan Zarembo. "Very unusual," Wade said. "You're quite close to them. They're spooky but confident at the same time. They're making a point."

Wade and Zarembo were casting live shiners to peacocks bedding on the edges of the C-4 canal. Despite intermittent thundershowers and cloudy skies, Zarembo managed to locate the colorful green-and-orange, black-barred fish as they stood guard over their dug-out homes. It took several casts for Wade to hook them, but that was because they knocked the bait off the beds a few times before finally eating it.

To some creatures, Wade acknowledged, the peacocks could qualify as river monsters.

"If you're a small fish, they're pretty monstrous," he said. "A real predator, a big mouth. That's the last thing a number of small fish see in this world. If you scaled that to a human size, that's a lot of aggression."

Wade stopped in Miami on a swing through South Florida to promote season four of River Monsters, which premiered April 1 with the title American Killers. The show features a segment where Wade fishes for bull sharks in the Indian River Lagoon near Fort Pierce with local angler Mike Palmer but ends up catching and releasing a 7-foot Goliath grouper. In the same episode, Wade noodles for catfish in Oklahoma, which involves reaching into the creature's submerged hole and pulling it out by the throat.

Future show themes: hunting for a shark that lives in an Aus-



PHOTO: TEAM OUTDOORSMEN ADVENTURES  
**Enemy Swim in northeast South Dakota holds some truly large smallmouth bass like this one which was caught by Webster's Cory Ewing of Waubay Lakes Guide Service.**

In the lakes, ponds and stock dams look for bass in ambush areas that are shaded. These areas include the pockets just inside the weed line, under boat docks, next to down timber or adjacent to brush piles.

If it sticks out of the water or lies along the shoreline, chances are that sometime during the day a bass will be near it.

If there is no apparent structure along the shoreline, look for bass to be located in the deeper water areas adjacent to the shallows.

Because bass have a tremendous appetite, they'll eat anything they can get their mouth around. Bass can be taken on livebait such as crawlers, minnows, waterdogs and salamanders. Slip sinkers behind a large hook tipped with any of these live baits will take bass in any body of water.

Many bass fishermen use only artificial baits for bass and match their baits to the time of the season that they're fishing.

In colder water period or when a front has moved through, slow down their presentation, using a jig and pig or plastic baits such as Power Bait worms or the new Gulp.

These plastic baits when Texas or Carolina rig are an excellent choice

when bass have lockjaw and won't take another bait.

By slowly working these baits through or adjacent to the structure, they'll be able to entice a few of these slow moving bass to bite.

As the weather warms, bass will become more active and fishing will improve.

Anglers using spinnerbaits, buzzbaits and crankbaits during this time of the year will pick up good numbers of bass.

You can bounce these baits off of the logs, rocks or boat docks that the bass will be hiding near, taking the more active and aggressive bass.

One problem that anglers will face as the water warms; especially in the clear water lakes will be weeds.

If you're going to fish these areas, you'll need to adjust your methods in these weedy areas or spend much of their time snagged up or pulling weeds from your baits.

If you're fishing these weedy bodies of water, your going to have to use some type of weedless bait or a bait that will run through, over or under the weeds.

Because most of the weeds either lie just below the surface with open pockets scattered throughout them, there are several baits that will pro-

duce in these salad bowl areas.

If the weeds aren't grown up, covering the surface, top water baits worked slowly across the top of the weeds work well. You'll want to work it slowly across the top, stopping occasionally to give the bass a good opportunity to look your bait over or to locate it through the weeds.

If you're fishing weeds that come up to the surface a spinnerbait or buzzbait works well. You'll need to start your retrieve before the weeds, getting the bait working along the surface over the open water.

If you're using a buzzbait, you'll need to keep it on the surface all the way across the weed bed. If there are larger open pockets, you can slow down the retrieve; you'll still need to keep the bait up on top, by raising your rod tip high in order to keep it up on the top and by slowing the bait down, bass following the bait may be triggered into striking.

With a spinnerbait, once you've got it working along the top, you keep it moving until you roll over open pockets that might hold fish.

This is when you'll want to pause and let the spinner bait helicopter or slowly drop into the pocket. This will give bass hiding in the pocket an opportunity to strike.

To bring the bait back up on the surface, bring your rod tip back up high and crank pretty aggressively bringing your bait to the top allowing the blades to start spinning again.

You're going to need some pretty tough line like Berkley Big Game, a longer medium heavy or heavy rod and a reel with a ratio that allows you to pick up a lot of line with every crank of your reel handle.

In weeds, the bass are going to hit hard and then dive deep into the weeds, so it won't be a finesse type bite.

In order to win this battle you're going to have to set the hook hard and muscle him onto the surface or he'll break you off in the weeds.

The transition from the post spawn to warm season fishing is a numbers game.

You throw your bait at as many snags, stick-ups and weedy spots that you see and eventually you'll be rewarded with an aggressive strike and the hard fight of the bass.

This is the time of the year when bass fishing can really be good and some real trophies can be taken, so don't develop tunnel vision and chase only one species. Give early season bass fishing a try, you'll be darn glad you did.

*Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is a former tournament angler, hunting/fishing guide and the President of Outdoorsmen Productions, Producer/Host of the Outdoorsmen Adventures television series and Co-Host of the Outdoor Adventures radio program. For more information on the outdoors, go to [www.outdoorsmenadventures.com](http://www.outdoorsmenadventures.com).*

### TROPHY SPOTLIGHT



SUBMITTED PHOTO  
**Byson Andrus caught this Largemouth Bass at Lake Yankton on April 14.**

## Briefs: Law To Help Address Nebraska's Invasive Species Issue

LINCOLN, Neb. — Gov. Dave Heineman earlier this month signed LB 391 into law, giving the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission a tool to help control and prevent the spread of invasive species in the state.

According to Dave Tunink, Game and Parks fisheries division assistant administrator, the legislation introduced by state Sen. Ken Schilz of Ogallala prohibits the possession, import, export, purchase, sale or transport of aquatic invasive species. It also allows Game and Parks to adopt and promulgate rules and regulations governing the inspection, decontamination, and treatment of watercraft capable of containing or transporting aquatic invasive species.

Rules and regulations are being drafted and will be available for public review later this year, including a listing of aquatic invasive species. The bill outlines penalties for boaters who refuse to submit to a boat inspection by an authorized inspector or refuses to allow watercraft decontamination. This summer, the Nebraska Invasive Species Project and Game and Parks will have authorized inspectors providing information at reservoirs across the state.

Karie Decker, Nebraska Invasive Species Project coordinator, said the new law also created the Nebraska Invasive Species Council, which will serve as an advisory council for state invasive species policy. It also will coordinate invasive species management and research across the state for the prevention and detection of invasive plant and animal species.

### Neb. Pheasant, Quail Groups To Hold Habitat Meeting

KEARNEY, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska's 65 Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever chapters will host their annual state habitat meeting on April 28 in Kearney.

The daylong event is designed for landowners, conservationists and hunters interested in improving wildlife habitat.

A Landowner Help Desk also will be available where wildlife biologists will advise landowners regarding conservation program eligibility for USDA, state and Pheasants Forever habitat programs, as well as provide technical assistance in wildlife planning and development.

Advance tickets for the event, which includes lunch, are \$30 apiece. Beginning April 25, ticket prices increase to \$40.

### Southwestern North Dakota Bighorn Sheep Herd Stabilizes

MEDORA, N.D. (AP) — The bighorn sheep population in southwestern North Dakota has stabilized, thanks to the mild winter.

The state Game and Fish Department's annual sheep survey in the southern Badlands found 283 bighorns, the same number as last year and a figure just 3 percent below the five-year average.

"We monitored 71 radio-marked bighorns last winter and didn't have a single mortality," Big Game Biologist Brett Wiedmann said. "Although spring lamb production was low in 2011 due to the severity of (the 2010-11) winter, lamb survival through this past winter was exceptional."

Wiedmann said 83 percent of lambs counted last summer survived the winter, and a "bumper crop" of new lambs is expected within a couple of weeks, with adult ewes in good condition.

"Overall, we're quite pleased with the results of this year's survey," Wiedmann said. "Following three epic winters our bighorn sheep population is only 10 percent below our record count in 2008."

Four bighorn sheep hunting licenses will be issued this year. Three of them will be doled out through a lottery drawing. The fourth was auctioned last month, raising \$42,000. North Dakota has auctioned one bighorn license each year since 1986 to raise money for sheep management in the state. Bighorn licenses are once-in-a-lifetime licenses, meaning the lucky hunters get only one chance at a trophy kill.


## Winners Crowned At Youth-Adult Shoot

Over 20 archers of all ages took aim at the Shannon Trail Spring Archery Youth-Adult Shoot, held April 14 at the Easton Archery Center in Yankton.

- Winners included:
- Recurve 12-15: Faith and David Jeffcoat, Yankton
  - Bowhunter Freestyle 12-15: Hunter and Lee Kathol, Crofton, Neb.
  - Freestyle 11-Under: Broden and Beau Lesch, DeSmet
  - Bowhunter Freestyle 11-Under: Emma Harris and Kevin Pitts, Yankton
  - Freestyle 12-15: Matt Cooper and Bill Hewes, Yankton
- For more information and for complete results, visit [shannontrail.com](http://shannontrail.com).




COURTESY PHOTO  
**Youth and adult archers take aim at the Shannon Trail Spring Shoot, held Saturday, April 14, at the Easton Archery Center in Yankton. Winners were crowned in five divisions. For more information and to see full results, go to [shannontrail.com](http://shannontrail.com).**



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