

Largemouth Bass in Onondaga Lake



- **Scientific Name:** *Micropterus salmoides*
- **Habitat:** Lakes and rivers, most often shallower than 10 feet near submerged cover and aquatic vegetation.
- **Spawning Time:** Spring, in late May through June.
- **Spawning Locations:** Sandy, gravel or mud bottom in one to six feet of water.
- **Age at Maturity:** Largemouth bass usually become sexually mature at ages 3-4, when they are about 8-12 in long. They will continue spawning every year for as long as they live.
- **Spawning Behavior:** The male prepares a nest about two to three feet in diameter by sweeping away rocks and sand with its tail. He defends the nest from other males and attracts a series of females into the nest to spawn. After spawning, the female leaves and the male remains to guard the nest and fan the eggs. The male protects the young as they absorb their yolk sac and continues to guard them for up to several weeks until they begin to leave the nest.
- **Number of Young Produced:** Adult females carry 2,000-20,000 eggs in their ovaries; the number of eggs per female is largely a function of size. The eggs are 0.06 to 0.07 inches in diameter and stick to stones in the bottom of the nest. An average of about 3,000 fry per nest are produced, but survival is highly variable. Sudden changes in temperature or water level can cause the eggs to die from shock or cause the male to abandon the nest, leaving it open for predators.
- **Larval Characteristics:** When they hatch in 4 to 7 days, young largemouth bass are transparent and about 3 mm long. They begin feeding on plankton (tiny animals suspended in the water) and switch to larger prey like water insects, and other fish as they grow. Two year olds are about six inches long.
- **Life Span:** May live up to 20 years.
- **Size in Onondaga Lake:** Three to four pound largemouth bass are relatively common in Onondaga Lake, often being caught by anglers in shallow water weedbeds and nearshore structure. A 6 lb 12 oz. largemouth bass was recently captured in the lake during a monitoring survey conducted by Onondaga County.