

Identification of Largemouth, Smallmouth, and Spotted Bass

Kansas waters may hold one or more of the black bass species: the largemouth, smallmouth or spotted. All three are native to Kansas, but the largemouth is most common and has been stocked in most reservoirs, lakes and ponds. The spotted bass is native to the streams of eastern Kansas, mainly within the Flint Hills region and is also present in some lakes and reservoirs. The smallmouth bass is native to only a few streams in the far southeast corner of Kansas, but it has been stocked in lakes and reservoirs throughout the state.

It is important that anglers be able to distinguish between these black bass species because length and creel limits may be different. A daily creel limit is counted in aggregate, meaning that it can be single species or combination. Consult the Kansas Fishing Regulation Summary for black bass length and creel limits at your favorite waters.

LARGEMOUTH

upper jaw extends beyond the eye

dorsal fins nearly divided

cheek scales the same size as body scales

green with dark blotches along lateral line



SMALLMOUTH

upper jaw does not extend beyond the eye

dorsal fins connected no horizontal blotching

cheek scales much smaller than body scales

bronze to greenish-brown color with vertical barring sometimes evident.



SPOTTED

upper jaw does not extend beyond the eye

dorsal fins connected, horizontal rows of spots may be evident along lower belly

cheek scales much smaller than body scales.

olive green color with diamond-shaped blotches along the lateral line.

