

Catching bass in November

by Boyd Duckett

Shorter days, cool temperatures and buck fever go a long ways toward calming many an avid angler's desire to put the boat in the water and go fishing for trophy bass. But for everyone who already has the tarp over the boat and the rods and reels in the closet, know this: autumn - especially mid-November to mid-December - offers some terrific opportunities to catch bass. In fact, it may be one of the best times of the year. Boyd Duckett, from Demopolis, Ala., is the 2007 Bassmaster Classic champion and currently fishes the BASS Elite Series. The more the mercury dips, the tighter the schools of baitfish will be. And when baitfish schools get tight, bass feed like crazy, gorging themselves for winter. For this reason, the last bite of the year can also produce some of the year's biggest fish. Also, cold-weather bass fishing can be a numbers game: where you find one, there's bound to be more. On warm sunny days, anglers can often find fish relatively shallow, even in December. Fish will often gather on the first structure element - the edge of a weed line or a rock pile - off shore and they can be taken on all manner of motion lures such as crankbaits. Vibrating, rattling baits like a crankbait are productive when water temperatures are falling. Boat docks can also be a great place to target bass this time of year. Look for wood docks, on which algae grows below the water line. This algae is a food source for many species of prey fish. Bass, being ambush feeders, can easily lay in the shadows of the dock pilings and feed on minnows, shad and other prey as they attempt to feed off the algae. For fishing docks (fishing rip rap the same way can often yield similar results), I like to flip a jig tipped with a Berkley PowerBait Chigger Craw. I have a personal attachment to this bait since it is the one I used to win the Bassmaster Classic. The big claws of the Chigger Craw produce an attention-grabbing flapping motion as it falls and is retrieved. If flipping a Chigger Craw on a jig doesn't work, I like to skip a wacky rigged PowerBait Fat Dover Crawler. Wacky rigging simply means hooking the bait through the middle. The bait will have an incredible motion as it falls and remains in the strike zone as you fish it. Later in the month, the fish are likely to be on the outside edges and turns. But as the water temperature drops even more, the fish generally head toward deeper water and a drop-shot rig will work great. Around this time fishing becomes more vertical than horizontal as anglers fish the bottom. With steadily dropping temperatures and steady winds the norm this time of year, look for channel drop-offs where high banks give you some refuge from the wind, then work the bottom structure. Or opt for a Berkley Gulp! Jerk Shad. The powerful scent and action of the bait can be just the thing to entice a bass that has been foraging on shad. There's plenty of time left in the year for watching football and deer hunting, so don't miss your chance to cash in on the last big bite of the year. Boyd Duckett, from Demopolis, Ala., is the 2007 Bassmaster Classic champion and currently fishes the BASS Elite Series.

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