On The Water: Turning to grass for bass

by Larry_Nixon

After the warmth of summer, there's no doubt that your favorite fishing hole has some vegetation built up in it. In summer, when the water warms, the different aquatic vegetations are able to bloom. And if you are a bass angler, there's nothing that makes you happier than grass in a fishery.Grass is important to a fishery for a multitude of reasons. First, young fish (called fry) are able to retreat into the dense aquatic vegetation and escape predation. These fry could be young bass or any other species, but because they are able to get some refuge in the grass, there is more likely to be a better survival rate - meaning more bass or bass forage in the future. Secondly, when there is grass in a fishery, these aquatic plants will provide forage for baitfish like minnows. If there's a healthy minnow population present, the bass benefit, as well.As a professional angler, I can tell you that the presence of grass excites me when I get on the water. Mostly, I am excited because I know I can start my fishing efforts around grass; employing techniques that typically do well near this vegetation. There's no shortage of ways to attack grass in the late summer, but here's three that are very productive.If you like to catch largemouth bass, then you're already acquainted with flipping and pitching. It's an amazing effective way of getting a bait into a small area, putting it right in the bass's face and delivering it with accuracy and without disturbing the fish with a big splash. One of the best ways to attack grass is to scope the grass beds through your polarized sunglasses and look for holes in the vegetation.Once I find such a hole, I like to pitch a Berkley PowerBait Chigger Craw into the hole. Rigged on a 4/0 wide-gap hook with a 1- to 1 Â½-ounce weight using 20-pound Berkley Trilene 100% Fluorocarbon line, I put a Green Pumpkin-colored Chigger Craw in the hole and let it sink. Often, bass will hit these baits on the fall. If not, I drag it through the hole. Pulling bass out of heavy vegetation requires tough line and a rod with a lot of backbone. If flipping and pitching holes doesn't work, I like to Texas rig a Berkley Gulp! 5-inch Watermelon Jerk Shad on a 3/0 weighted hook. I like to use a smaller weight on the weighted hook - like Â¼-ounce or smaller - to help that Jerk Shad stay up in the water column. I twitch this bait and let swim past the edges of the grass line and hope that a bass will come and attach. For this technique, I use the same rod and reel set up but drop down to 12-pound Trilene 100% Fluorocarbon to give the bait more action.Finally, if the bite is really tough, I will turn to a shaky head. For this set up, I use 10-pound Trilene 100% Fluorocarbon. With a 7-inch Gulp! Shaky Worm on a Â¼- or 3/8-ounce shaky head jig, I cast parallel to the grass line, letting the jig head fall to the bottom. Very slowly, I drag the jig along the bottom, careful to keep it from dragging into the grass. This is a very slow technique and not much fun when you are used to more active fishing patterns, but when the fish are only feeding in the morning and evening and spending all day hiding in the grass, this can be very effective.After working so hard to keep the grass in your yard looking good, why not let a little grass work for you? Try focusing your efforts around aquatic grasses when you hit the water and try to put together a pattern that will keep fish tugging on your line through the end of summer.Larry Nixon is a former Bassmaster Classic champion with more than $1.5 million in career earnings on the BASS Tour. Nixon lives with his wife and three children in Bee Branch, Ark.