
Subject: : Warm Water & Salt Water Fly-Fishing

Topic: : Smallmouth Bass Techniques

Re: Smallmouth Bass Techniques

Author: : RLeep2

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URL:

Most of the larger SMB I take, especially mid-day, come to a dead drifted simple chenille/rabbit fur leech tied on a 3X long nymph streamer hook. These are good size flies, measuring up to 3" from the eye to the end of the trailing rabbit fur tail. Black seems to work best, but dark brown is also very good. A variation I've had real good success with is to palmer black hackle on a dark brown dubbed leech yarn body in a standard length ring eyed hook (like a Mustad 3366) in size 2 or 4 and then tie in a black zonker fur strip off the tail about twice the shank length. Ostrich herl also works well for the tail.

When I first started targeting these fish, I tried retrieving the fly in a dozen different ways until my eyeballs were about ready to pop and caught little. But once I started sort of guiding the fly on a dead drift (to keep it from hanging up all the time) through the pockets and runs, my success rate quadrupled.

It can be surprising (at least I was surprised) how heavy of a flow the bass will be in, especially in hot weather. Especially in the deeper sections and any place where there is a pocket of calm water at least the size of the fish where he can hang in ambush.

While a lot of the takes will be pretty decisive and easy to detect, smallmouth in slower water will often simply inhale the fly and all you'll get is a vague feeling that something is there. That and maybe a light "tunk". Often a good deal more subtle than a trout.

So, I use an indicator in slower water and often simply cast and slowly creep the fly back towards me by slowly raising the rod tip, pausing now and then.

Another thing that works well for me is to work the banks with these same flies. The bass often like to lie in little depressions along the bank, even if the water is fairly shallow and especially if it is a shady bank. I still fish these areas with the same weighted flies I use in the faster pockets. I just flip it up tight to the bank and then immediately begin to move it slowly away at a speed that keeps it from hanging up, but not so fast that it looks unnatural. Often, the takes in these situations are pretty dramatic. You'll cast, barely get a chance to move the fly and the water will boil and you'll be hooked up.

I've also been doing well on Murray Marauders in sizes 4 and 6, especially in black. Got a 19" smallie and a 21-22" inch channel cat on a black Marauder yesterday out of a creek in SC Wisconsin. These are pretty versatile flies. They can be dead drifted or actively retrieved or a combination.

I should add that all the above presumes pretty good water clarity. If the water is off color some, I'll strip Clousers in smoke/white, blue/white and yellow/smoke and white/pearl Marauders through the runs and forget the dead drifting stuff.