

SCDNR initiates black bass slam recognition program

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FOR THE JOURNAL

Many big-game hunting and even several fishing venues provide the sportsman with the challenge and opportunity of achieving a "slam."

The context is where the person catches or kills a number of related outdoor species. For example, harvesting an eastern wild, Osceola, Merriam's and Rio Grande would constitute a turkey slam. The naming is a reference to a grand slam in baseball, where four runs are scored in one at-bat.

Several slams are available in the fishing community, and the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources has added the latest with a black bass slam.

The SCDNR Black Bass Slam celebrates the black bass diversity throughout South Carolina while promoting angling opportunities across the state. The slam challenges anglers to seek new fishing spots and target species that they may have never caught. The idea is to introduce new habitats to anglers while promoting education and conservation of our black bass species and the waters they call home.

Anglers must catch all four black bass species to complete the SCDNR Black Bass Slam. A rundown of the species, how to tell one from the other, and a couple of tips on where to find each species is provided.

LARGEMOUTH BASS

The most common species found across the state, largemouth bass are native to nearly all of South Carolina's waterways. To distinguish a largemouth bass from other black bass species, look at the upper jaw line, which extends past the fish's eye. Largemouth also have a dorsal fin with nine spines and an anal fin with three spines.

SMALLMOUTH BASS

Smallmouth bass populations have grown in recent years thanks to stocking efforts from SCDNR, primarily in the Broad River, which traverses the state from above Gaffney and flows into the Congaree River in downtown Columbia. Fish are also frequently caught in Lake Jocassee and Monticello Reservoir. Smallmouth are distinguished by their general bronze coloration and the

three dark bars on each cheek. Additionally, the upper jaw does not reach past the eye.

SPOTTED BASS

Spotted bass were initially introduced into several Georgia reservoirs and have found their way into South Carolina waters via unauthorized relocation by fishermen. Spots are aggressive and have found homes in lakes Keowee, Jocassee, Hartwell, Russell, and Greenwood. Spotted bass have very similar coloration to largemouth, but the upper jaw does not reach past the eye. Spotted bass also have a dark patch on the tongue.

REDEYE BASS

The redeye bass is the only native black bass species to South Carolina's Upstate river systems and is primarily found in reservoirs and its tributaries in the northwestern corner of the state and the Savannah River drainage. The average size of a redeye is 6 to 9 inches. The Bartram's bass, a subspecies of the redeye, was identified in 2013 in the Coneross River section of Lake Hartwell. Bartram's may not have the red eyes ordinarily associated with redeye bass.

To qualify for the recognition program, an angler must include a photo of each fish from the side for identification purposes and a photo of themselves with the fish. Each fish submission must include date of catch, location, angler contact information and fishing license number.

Anglers are not eligible for recognition until they have caught and documented all four black bass species. Email your information and attached photos to SCBassSlam@dnr.sc.gov

In return, qualifying anglers will receive a personalized certificate, four unique stickers corresponding to each black bass species and a SCDNR Bass Slam patch.

Additional rules and conditions can be found at dnr.sc.gov/aquaticed/bassslam/index.html

PHILLIP GENTRY is the host of PG & Boatgirl Outdoors. This week's guest is Garry Mason, head bass fishing coach from Bethel University. Download the podcast on Apple, Google Play, Spotify or at pgandboatgirl.com.



COURTESY OF BUD FREEMAN

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources recently unveiled a black bass slam recognition program. Anglers who document catching all of the four black bass species found in state waters will be recognized with awards. Pictured is a Bartram's bass.