

# 3 patterns for fall bass fishing

BY PHILLIP GENTRY  
FOR THE JOURNAL

**M**ost descriptions of fall bass fishing patterns start out talking about how changes in the weather will affect the bite.

This is not one of those stories.

In fact, according to two-time FLW Angler of the Year Bryan Thrift, who lives in Shelby, N.C., it's often hard for Carolina anglers to tell when summer ends and fall begins.

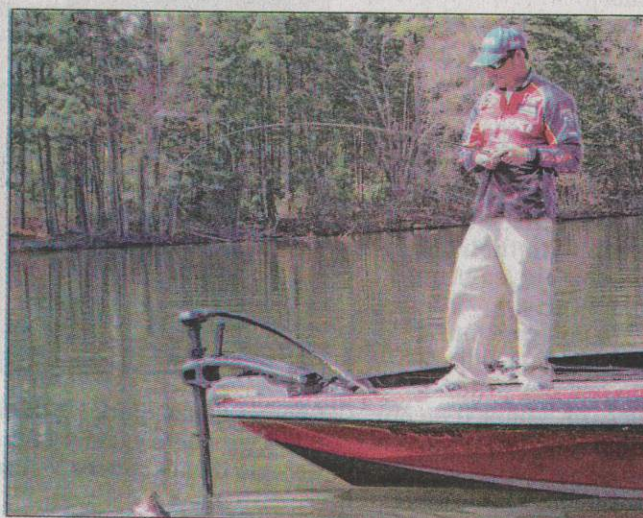
Thrift, who has fished the Carolinas extensively throughout his professional career, said most years, the weather just goes right from being hot and miserable into the fall pattern, yet every year he still sees and believes that bass transition into a "fall bite."

"The days start getting shorter," Thrift said. "I think this signals to both bass and bait that it's time for a season change, whether the weather cooperates or not."

Thrift's biggest indicator that bass are or should be moving into the fall pattern is seeing signs of life back in the shallows. For most of the summer, both bass and baitfish — primarily threadfin shad — reside in offshore, deep-water haunts, but start making a definitive move back into shallow water as September turns to October.

"The water can cool off a degree or two at night — that's all it takes — but I really believe that happens because the duration of sunlight is less now than it was a month ago," Thrift said.

To test his theory, Thrift will motor to shallow-water areas — which might be near the mouth of a tributary or further back in a tributary — then cut the motor



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**Pro bass angler Bryan Thrift suggests looking for fall bass using three shallow-water strategies.**

off and spend five to 10 minutes observing the area around his boat.

Once he's convinced the fall baitfish migration has begun, he will approach it with three patterns in mind — two for shallow water, and one for offshore.

## TOPWATER/SHALLOW

Thrift's typical scenario is to start in the shallows near the mouth of a tributary creek and work his way back. He said the bass he catches on the topwater lures are often fickle fish but also bigger fish.

## SUBSURFACE/SHALLOW

The pro angler said he's still targeting shallow water near the bank, except he's going to target bass that are holding on structure, like a laydown or a boat dock.

"I believe these are the same fish that are following the baitfish to the bank," Thrift said. "Maybe they're just resting or waiting for the baitfish to wander past them, but they're usually about the same size bass as what I'd expect to catch on top."

## OFFSHORE/MID TO SHALLOW

Thrift makes the distinction here between shallow water on the bank and shallow water away from the bank as his offshore tactic.

"It's not necessarily deep water — it's just away from the bank," he said. "It's not that I think all the bass have moved shallow yet. I know they haven't, but in deep water, you've got issues wondering if the water is turning over or if the fish have moved up or stayed down in the water column."

"The shallow water bite is more predictable — no turnover, no guessing at depth. Not all the bass are going to move to the bank, and that's why I call this an offshore pattern rather than a deep-water pattern," he added.

Baits are the same as Thrift's subsurface pattern. He's going to look for stumps, brush piles or even ditches that are away from the bank, and most likely toward the back of a creek, that are holding bass.

**PHILLIP GENTRY** is an outdoor writer and the host of PG & Boatgirl Outdoors. Download the podcast on Apple, Google Play, Spotify or at [pgandboatgirl.com](http://pgandboatgirl.com).