

# Kayak bass fishing provides relief from summer heat

BY PHILLIP GENTRY  
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As the sun rose to treetop level, the summer heat was ominous. For bass anglers, August fishing is a first-light, last-light affair, or a nighttime foray. There are precious few places where anglers dare hope to endure the daylight, much less catch bass throughout the day.

However, this is one of those places.

With his fishing kayak pointed downstream, Brandon Barber from Seneca quietly slipped his paddle and allowed the boat to drift with the current. Off to his right, the flowing water edged between two flat shoals that created a parking space-sized pool along the steep tree-lined bank.

With a quick flick of his wrist, Barber shot a bright pink trick worm—rigged wacky style—to the edge of the pool, then eased the bait into the current. A quick flash of bronze erupted, and the worm disappeared.

His 9-foot kayak rocked slightly to the side as the angler set the hook. With a powerful thrust of its broad tail, the smallmouth bass vaulted from the water, swam clear of the shoals and headed downstream from the boat. Three zig-zagging runs later, and Barber eased the 3-pound fish to the surface and slid it to hand.

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources began stocking the Broad River drainage in the early 1980s. According to SCDNR fisheries biologists, Kings Creek—a York County tributary—was the initial smallmouth destination, as it was thought to be a more suitable habitat for smallmouth bass. Shortly after, the fishery expanded into the Broad River.

Over the years since, the Broad River has turned into a phenomenal smallmouth bass fishery.

Unlike their large-mouth cousins, smallmouth bass prefer flowing water and hard bottom to the slower, deeper pools that are found along the

Broad. The grass-lined mudbanks that drop off into chest-deep water littered with stumps and old wood may look like a bass angler's dream, but in truth, it holds very few smallmouths.

"The first thing I look for is rocks, and the second is current," Barber said. "Pretend you're looking for good trout water rather than bass water, and you're going in the right direction. The river has stretches of both, and that's what makes this such a great place to float fish. You can paddle through the deeper spots and then either fish the rocky areas from the boat or get out and wade fish."

The choice to wade or fish from a boat is a personal one. The wading angler can beach the boat on a flat rock and work a shoal-strewn stretch of water in detail. Flowing waters are normally shallow enough to wade across, and getting in the water is more than comfortable on a hot day.

"If running water is feasible for wading, it's probably a good smallmouth stretch," Barber said.

"However, the boat has the advantage of allowing the angler to present a lower profile. I don't think the kayak spooks fish like an angler tromping along, stirring up the bottom does. You can also position yourself better in a boat than you can just by wading, especially when working a stretch of swifter water."

Like any kind of bass fishing, different baits work better on different patterns and at different times of the year. Barber suggests that when the water is cooler, it's time to slow down and fish soft plastics and finesse baits on the bottom. Barber's summer pattern, however, is to run and gun.

"I have not found a bait that smallmouth won't hit in this river" he said. "I've used jigs, crankbaits, topwater lures and soft plastics. I've even caught smallmouths on a homemade lure my father made for me out of an old .270 shell casing."

**PHILLIP GENTRY** is a freelance outdoor writer who has been writing a wide variety of outdoor articles across the Southeast since 2004.



Float fishing for smallmouths on the Broad River is a great way to beat the August heat and catch fish.

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