

# Lake Keowee, spotted bass and topwater: all you need

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FOR THE JOURNAL

Of all the ways to catch fish, throwing topwater plugs at surface-feeding fish has got to be the most fun. Sometimes the bite can be more subtle, with just a little slurp before the line goes tight, and sometimes the bite can look like someone dropped a concrete block in the lake from an airplane. No matter how it shakes out, it's all topwater action, and folks who live or fish around Lake Keowee can get in on their own version of this exciting fishing.

Lake Keowee is home to a ton of spotted bass. Spotted bass are closely related to largemouth bass, but have a bit more aggressive disposition, presumably because they don't grow as big as largemouth. For all of Keowee's beauty above the surface, the landscape below the water line is pretty much devoid of cover. A lot of rocks, a couple of humps, and the footings

of manmade structures pretty well sum it up.

The lack of places to hide in the lake has created nomadic tendencies among the lake's bass populations. Small packs of spotted bass roam the open waters in search of baitfish to ambush. This makes these bass a prime target for topwater fishing.

Seasoned bass fishing anglers in the Upstate love to fish topwater for spotted bass at Keowee. Many claim it's one of the top producing and most reliable tactics and places to fish topwater.

If you can find a few hours and some uninterrupted water to yourself, you can generally count on some type of topwater bite year-round, but especially during the summer. From June through the end of summer, that bite may only last for an hour first thing in the morning and again the last hour or so before dark, but it's a great time to catch fish.

Despite their pelagic nature in Keowee, seasoned anglers concentrate their



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**One of the most exciting, and consistent, ways to catch fish during the summer on Lake Keowee is topwater fishing.**

topwater efforts around long, shallow points,

mid-lake humps and any other area that pairs

shallow-water terrain with nearby deep-water access. Keowee bass will use vertical drop-offs to their advantage to corral baitfish. When those baitfish decide to flee by swimming away just under the surface, bass are quick to react.

It's not unusual to see spotted bass schooling on the surface when a school of baitfish happens by. What is happening is baitfish are trying to escape by swimming up and away. That leaves them vulnerable to attack from below, and what you see are fish erupting on the surface as they feed.

To mimic this situation while fishing, bass anglers cast topwater surface lures designed to create a splashing commotion while retrieved across the surface. Most fish tend to feed in an upward position, so a bait-imitating lure clumsily splashing across the surface means an easy meal for the fish.

Most bass anglers find it easier to cast and work topwater baits using bait casting gear. The higher

## Need to know

retrieve rates on most modern baitcast reels help keep tension on the bait when retrieving the bait so the hook can be set as soon as the fish is felt on the line.

Another tip is just that. In the excitement of the surface commotion, some anglers will haul back on the rod upon seeing the splash. Being surface feeders, many times bass will swipe at the bait to kill it, then swing back around and engulf the stunned bait in its mouth. When you can feel the fish is when it's time to set the hook.

Topwater fishing may be the most addictive fishing there is. Sometimes the fish might take a little time to locate, but everybody on the boat perks up in a hurry when retrieving lures across the surface and the fish suddenly start blowing up everywhere.

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