

Seasons

You may fish any time of the year in Lake Hartwell

License

You may fish anywhere on Lake Hartwell with a valid license from either Georgia or South Carolina. Youth under 16 are not required to have a license.

South Carolina licenses are available by phone or online, see: <http://outdoorlicenses.com/southcarolina/>

Georgia licenses are available by phone or online, see: <http://georgiawildlife.dnr.state.ga.us/content/display-content.asp?txtDocument=30>

To catch or possess Trout a Trout stamp is required and other rules apply.

Fish Common to Lake Hartwell

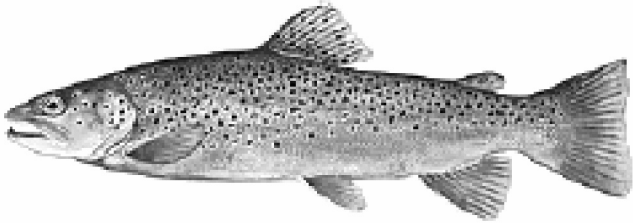
BREAM - Bluegill, Redbreast, Shell cracker, Pumpkinseed - Bream congregate under docks, around piers and in submerged brush. They are easy to catch using worms, crickets, and other insects as bait. Bream are responsible for introducing more youth to fishing than any other fish. Common sizes range from 3 ounces to 1 pound with the record shell cracker exceeding 5 lbs. A daily limit of 30 total Bream applies.

CRAPPIE (Black Crappie and White Crappie) are one of the most popular sport fish in Lake Hartwell. They are often caught in large numbers using minnows around piers and submerged brush. Crappie may range up to 5 lbs. with the "Typical" catch ranging from 1/2 lb to 1-1/4 lbs. A total daily limit of 30 applies.

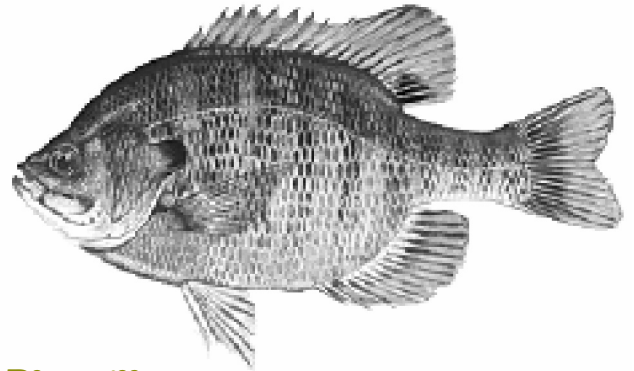
LARGEMOUTH BASS - More time and money are spent in the pursuit of this fish by anglers than any other species. They may be caught at any time of the year feeding near the shore in early morning. Most commonly fished for using artificial bait, large mouth bass range up to 16 lbs. with the "Typical" catch ranging from 1 to 8 lbs. A daily limit of 10 fish applies. Fish caught in Georgia waters shorter than 12" must be released immediately.

HYBRID BASS - A cross between a male white bass and a female striped bass, hybrids may grow to 20 lbs while the "Typical" catch is 2 lbs to 3-1/4 lbs. Hybrids are a strong and aggressive fighter making them a favorite of fishermen. Bait includes shad and blueback herring. A limit of 10 total Hybrid and Striped Bass applies.

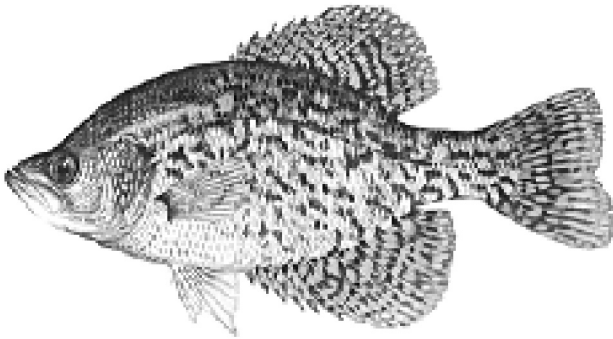
STRIPED BASS - The granddaddy of sport fish in Lake Hartwell, Stripers range up to the recent (2/2002) record of 59-1/2 lbs with a "Typical" catch ranging from 3 to 10 lbs. Fish in the 15 to 30 lb. range are routinely caught. Preferred bait is blue back herring. Striped bass will sometimes push schools of bait fish to the surface then feed in a frenzy. A limit of 10 total Hybrid and Striped Bass applies.



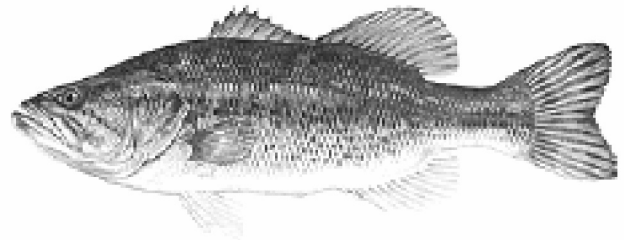
Brown Trout



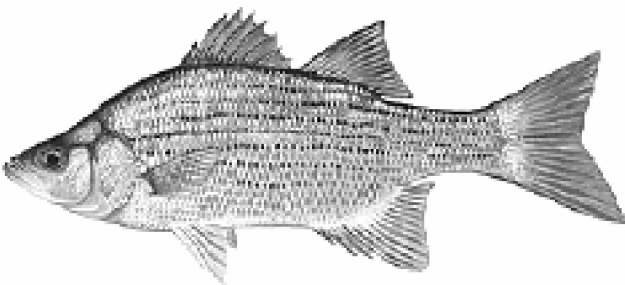
Bluegill



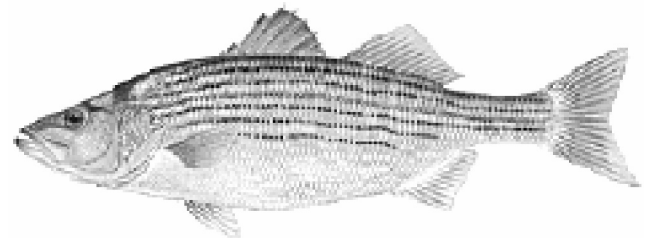
Black Capped



Largemouth Bass



White Bass



Striped Bass

Fishing Tips

The Corps of Engineers and the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department have each placed ten fish attractors in Hartwell Lake. These artificial reefs, made of trees and brush or discarded tires, attract large schools of fish, especially crappie. All of these attractors are marked with buoys.

Boaters and fishermen are reminded not to tie up to fish attractor buoys or any navigation buoys on the lake. From the late spring to early fall Hartwell Lake, like all large lakes in the southeast, becomes stratified, in layers based on water temperature. Each of these layers behaves relatively independently and has different water qualities. These qualities affect the distribution of fish and therefore fishing success. There are three distinct layers or zones:

- The epilimnion is the top layer. Although there is plenty of dissolved oxygen in this zone because of its frequent contact with air, fish are generally not found here because the temperatures are too warm. Fish may briefly move into this zone during early morning or late afternoon to feed when light is decreased and food is abundant, but most of the time fish will be in deeper, cooler waters.
- The hypolimnion, or bottom zone, is the coolest layer. However, because this layer does not come into contact with air, the dissolved oxygen is used up by natural processes and soon depleted. Fish therefore cannot survive in this zone and fishing at these depths holds little chance of success.
- The thermocline, or middle zone, is the most important zone to the fisherman. It offers a wide range of temperatures, including those preferred by many fishes. During summer the thermocline will often produce good fishing, but remember that the factors of cover and available food also have an influence.

At Hartwell Lake, thermal stratification begins near the dam, the area of greatest depth, in late April and early May of each year. The thermocline is established at a depth of about 30 feet and stays at this depth through early August. At that time it moves to a depth of about 40 feet and then in mid-September to about 50 feet. In late October or early November, the thermocline moves to a depth of about 70 feet and shortly thereafter the water becomes mixed.

Shallower main-channel locations in both the Bugaboo and Seneca arms of the lake exhibit stratification at depths from 20 to 30 feet from late April through early September. The water in these locations becomes mixed in September about 1 to 1 1/2 months earlier than do the waters behind the dam. In 1977 the Corps of Engineers conducted a thorough study of the thermal stratification of Hartwell Lake and its affect on the vertical distribution of fish. Now every year during the summer information on thermocline depths and the preferred depths of game fish is distributed to local news media. Night fishing is becoming more popular at Hartwell Lake. For light, fishermen usually use a boat-mounted lantern or an automobile headlight attached to a Styrofoam block. These lights attract insects, food organisms, and threadfin shad which in turn attract game species such as crappie, hybrids, and white bass. Minnows are the primary bait, but jigs and small plugs may also be effective. When fishing with lights many fishermen have been successful under the various bridges that cross the lake and at the fish attractor sites. These places are worth a try during the summer months when fish are hard to locate.

Fish species found in Hartwell Lake: Crappie are the species caught most frequently at Hartwell Lake. They are easier to find and catch than other fish because they stay near protective cover and travel in schools. The most popular season to fish for crappie is the spring when they move into shallow waters (2 to 8 feet) to spawn. During the summer, night fishing and fishing around fish attractors may give good results. At other times, slow trolling or drifting in the open waters using minnows or jigs has proved productive. Bream varieties in Hartwell Lake include bluegill, redbreast sunfish, redear sunfish, green sunfish, and pumpkinseed. The most popular baits are crickets, worms, and meal worms, although some bream will strike small artificial lures such as spinners, flies, and popping bugs. As a general rule, small to medium-size bream can be located along the shoreline while larger fish will be in slightly deeper water. A good time to fish for bream is during the summer when a full moon is present because bream tend to spawn at that time.

Largemouth Bass are caught most easily in the spring. As water temperatures approach 70 degree; the fish move into shallower areas with cover in order to spawn. At this time a variety of top water and shallow running lures are effective. Although bass move to deeper water in the summer, they can still be found near the shoreline in the early morning or late afternoon. During the rest of the day, bass can be found at the thermocline depths because they prefer temperatures ranging from 65 degree; to 75 degree; In the winter, bass, especially large ones, go as deep as 40 to 60 feet. At these times, fishing with large jigs, plastic worms, and jigging spoons at underwater islands, steep drop-offs, and old creek channels can be productive.

Hybrid Bass have created quite a stir at Hartwell in recent years. They are fast becoming the most popular sport fish because they bite readily and are excellent fighters. The offspring of white bass males and striped bass females, hybrid bass are produced in state hatcheries and stocked annually in Hartwell Lake by the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Although they are not known to reproduce naturally, they still make spawning runs up tributaries in the spring. At this time, they can also be found in the open water near the dam and riprap. Surface fishing using fish bait and trolling or retrieving jigs, spoons, or shadlike lures have proved effective methods to catch hybrids. During the summer, these fish can be found in large, flat, shallow areas or between islands early and late in the day. When not in these areas, they will be quite deep: hybrids have been caught with some regularity behind the dam at depths of 60 feet. During other times of the year, schools of hybrids can be found by trolling or using depth finders.

Walleye are another fish that is not native to Georgia and South Carolina waters and is stocked by the state agencies. However, unlike the hybrids, walleye do reproduce successfully in Hartwell Lake. In the early spring when water temperatures reach 49°ree; to 50°ree;; adult females move up tributaries to the spawning areas. Here they join the males that moved to these areas several weeks earlier. The main spawning run at Hartwell is in the upper Tugaloo River arm. After spawning, walleye remain in shallow water around gravel or sand bars, rocky points, or similar shoreline areas where they can be successfully fished at dusk and during the night. As surface temperatures warm, walleye slowly retreat into deeper and cooler waters. Because they prefer water temperatures around 62°ree; and because their large eyes are very sensitive to bright light, they can usually be found near the bottom of the lake or tributary rivers. For bait, most fishermen use minnows which are the walleye's primary food, although worms (live or plastic) trolled behind a spinner blade have also proved effective.