

November 11, 1931

Report No. 101

IDENTIFICATION OF SPECIMEN OF BLACK BASS
FROM BLUE LAKE, NEWAYGO COUNTY

A request for the identification of a supposedly peculiar type of black bass occurring in Blue Lake, Newaygo County, was received from R. G. Fortney, overseer of the State Fish Hatchery at Paris, under date of November 7. The statement follows:

"Under separate cover I am mailing you a head from a black bass which was forwarded to this office by Mr. Don Walganott, Bitely, Michigan, R. F. D. 1. Mr. Walganott says that he has been catching both the smallmouth bass and the large mouth bass for a great many years and swears that this specimen is radically different from either the small or large mouth bass. I doubt very much whether you can identify the specimen from the head alone but it is rather interesting in view of the fact that you have identified the third member of the black bass in Kentucky. Mr. Walganott describes this bass as being very gamey and it rather fits in the description of a new bass that I understand you have discovered in Kentucky. The bass was taken in Blue Lake, Newaygo County, and fishermen claim they have just commenced to take this bass very recently out of this lake. It is rather interesting and I am submitting this information to you thinking perhaps in some time you would like to investigate whether or not this bass is something different than the large or small mouth bass native to Michigan."

The head arrived on November 11 and was examined at once. It has every appearance of being an example of the small mouth bass, Micropterus dolomieu. The characters of the small mouth as shown by the dried head are, in addition to general appearance:

1. The small mouth--the upper jaw extended backward only to below middle of mouth (in the Kentucky bass the mouth is a little larger, and in the large mouth bass it is much larger).
2. The small size of the cheek scales--these in about 19 vertical rows on the cheek (more than in the Kentucky bass and decidedly more than in the large mouth bass).

3. The large number of rays in the pectoral fin--these are 17 in number in the head, as usual in the small mouth bass. The number of pectoral rays characteristic of each of the three described species of black bass is 16 to 18 in the small mouth, 15 or 16 in the Kentucky bass and 14 or 15 in the large mouth.

4. The deep triangular shape of the head, especially unlike the almost pike-like head of the Kentucky bass.

This specimen came, we suppose, from the Blue Lake in Lilley Township, Newaygo County, which is reported by Langlois as almost filled with weeds and as being only 10 feet deep in the small central open area. Large mouth bass but not small mouth are reported for this lake, and it is of course a large mouth type of lake. A peculiar appearance might be taken on by the small mouth in a habitat so foreign to its usual abodes. The gaminess of this type of bass is sufficiently explained by its being a small mouth.

The fish may have come instead from Blue Lake in Monroe Township, but even if so, the same remarks apply.

The Institute for Fisheries Research will be glad to see black bass, from any part of the state, which seem different from the two recognized species. There is almost no chance that the third species, Kentucky bass, occurs in the state, as its range seems to stop in the southern part of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. However, there is a chance that somewhere in the state the two local bass species may hybridize, or that somewhere there may be a superior strain or race, of either species, which it would be advantageous to propagate.

The bass head is being returned to Mr. Fortney.

INSTITUTE FOR FISHERIES RESEARCH

Carl L. Hubbs
Director

CC TO Department of Conservation