

# WILD for WARMWATER

*Bass, pike, panfish and more –  
exciting year-round action awaits in  
New Hampshire’s sustainable  
warmwater fisheries.*

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BY GABE GRIES, ANDREW SCHAFERMEYER AND MICHAEL RACINE

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**W**hile New Hampshire has long been known for its outstanding coldwater fish (trout and salmon), warmwater fish species like bass and panfish are becoming just as popular with anglers – and with good reason. We have fantastic warmwater fishing throughout the state, coupled with successful year-round fishing for naturally reproducing species that can be relatively easy to catch for all ages, even with limited experience and gear. Read on and you’ll see what we’re talking about!

## **DON’T WORRY, BE HAPPY**

New Hampshire offers many opportunities for all types of warmwater anglers, from those serious about catching fish to those less concerned with fishing than with relaxing and spending quality time with the family. Our waters are regularly visited by everyone from bass tournament anglers to grandparents with their grandchildren. Regardless of how serious you are, and whatever your true reason for fishing may be, New Hampshire has warmwater fishing opportunities for you.

Even better, it doesn’t matter where you live in New Hampshire – from Pittsburg to Nashua, Portsmouth to Lebanon and everywhere in between – warmwater fish abound. We would wager that most New Hampshire residents can find warmwater fishing opportunities within a 20-minute drive of their home. There’s no need to drive to the seacoast, no need to hit the “big lakes” and no need to worry if the waterbody has been stocked yet. Matter of fact, anglers wanting to give warmwater fishing a try have few worries at all, except maybe “Who brought the bait?” “Did you ask for onions on my grinder?” or “Anyone bring the sunscreen?”

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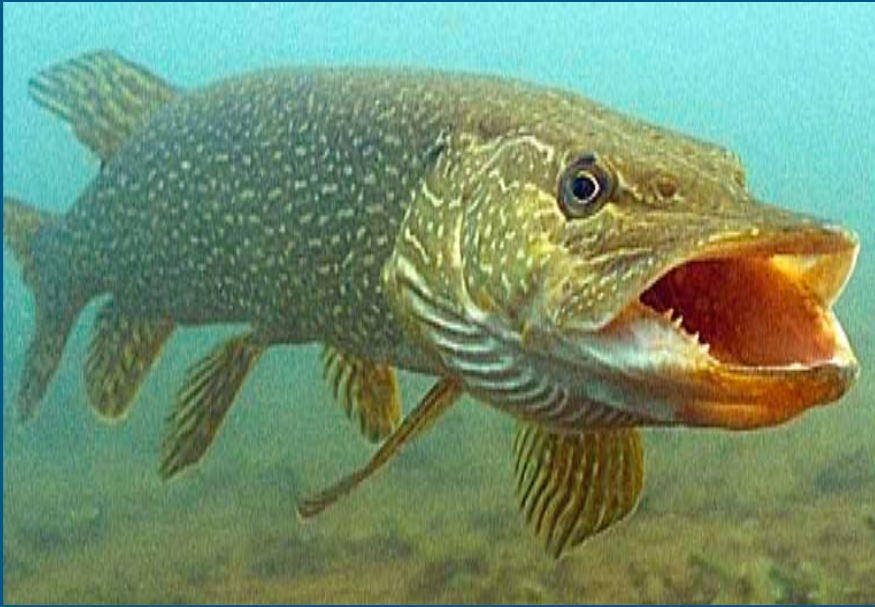
## Warmwater Fishing Is Hot

Largemouth and smallmouth bass rank among the top four fish species fished for by anglers in New Hampshire, with yellow and white perch ranking in the top ten. In fact, in recent years, the number of people fishing for bass in New Hampshire has increased, while the number of people fishing for brook trout and rainbow trout declined. A U.S. Fish & Wildlife survey found that 116,000 anglers fished 1.4 million days for bass and panfish species in New Hampshire in a single year! This level of angler participation in panfish and bass fishing represents 52% of New Hampshire's freshwater anglers and 49% of the total days of fishing in the Granite State.



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*Imagine the thrill of catching a largemouth bass like this whopper caught by Travis Drudi of Fitzwilliam, from a lake in southwestern N.H.*



The black crappie (above) is a popular game fish for N.H. anglers using bait or artificial lures. Pike (above center) have a mouth full of knife-edged teeth, making them a worthy opponent.

Many state lands (state parks, Fish and Game Department-owned access sites, etc.) and federal areas (Army Corps of Engineers) offer anglers access to waters with warmwater fish. Some, such as Pisgah State Park in Winchester, offer the adventurous family a long hike in on rugged trails to fish shorelines scattered with blueberries. Time it right and a mix of fishing and berry picking could make for a great day. Other state parks offer picnic areas, cartop and remote access and camping facilities. Bear Brook State Park in Allentown, for example, features a remote pond, cartop access and picnic spots, plus an extensive trail network. Visit [www.FishNH.com](http://www.FishNH.com) and search for “public access” for more details on over 200 boating and fishing access sites throughout the state.

### EXCITING BASS ACTION

New Hampshire’s most recognizable warmwater fish is the bass. Large or smallmouth bass are efficient and aggressive predators with a great capacity for growth. In our fishing experience, bass behavior can be much more predictable than that of trout and salmon. Bass can exploit some very diverse habitat and most waterbodies – large rivers, small farm ponds or lakes over 6,000 acres – all can be perfect places to fish for bass.

Casting at any type of structure, like stumps, docks or overhanging vegetation, makes sense when you’re bass fishing, because that’s where these fish like to hang out. These structures are easy to identify, and a well-placed lure will usually be rewarded by a strike. Typically, anglers should look for aquatic plants or wood when targeting largemouth bass, and rocky shorelines when targeting smallmouth bass. One can imagine a largemouth bass taking advantage of a sunny day by exploring warm, weedy shallow water searching for prey, or a smallmouth bass hiding behind a boulder in hopes of ambushing a crayfish or perch. Working the perimeter of a lake or pond is

LARGEMOUTH BASS: SMALLMOUTH BASS, NORTHERN PIKE & BLACK CRAPPIE © ERIC ENGBRETSON PHOTOS



*If the corner of the jaw extends beyond the center of the eye, you've caught a largemouth bass (far left). Smallmouth bass (left) are spectacular fighters.*

a great method for bass fishing. Also, in contrast to coldwater fish, there can be an explosive strike that will get any angler's blood pumping!

Suggesting tackle for catching bass is a subject that could fill a thousand-page book. Lures can be so diverse that a well-stocked tackle bag can look more like a filing cabinet. Some favorites include crankbaits, stickbaits, heavy sinking plastic worms, skirted jigs and spinnerbaits. Uncracking the code between effective color and size can keep bass fishing interesting for a lifetime.

### **BATTLE A PREDACIOUS PIKE**

Another warmwater gamefish gaining in popularity is the northern pike. A more aggressive predator fish is hard to find, and few rival the size of an adult pike (the current state record pike is almost 25 pounds!). Pike will generally be found in shallow water at spring ice-out and during low-light summer conditions, but tend to move toward deeper water during the day as the warm summer weather becomes more consistent. Areas with lots of aquatic plants close to deep water can be successful locations year-round.

Predicting the seasonal location of these beasts may be the hardest part of the sport; pike will eat almost anything, so selecting bait is not always as important. Typical lures include large, in-line spinners with either a buck tail or grub attachment. Pike have been known to strike at schooling baitfish, worms, amphibians – even ducks! Casting surface lures at shallow water pike may be one of the most exciting things a New Hampshire angler can hope for. Aggressive strikes followed by long dogged runs make for an awesome battle. For this type of action, try a jitterbug, popper or a walk-the-dog style prop bait.

### **TASTY PANFISH = NONSTOP FUN**

The term panfish has two meanings to us. First, it describes a group of fish including sunfish, bluegill

and crappie that have a body design that resembles a frying pan – oval shaped with a fanned-out tail. This group name secondarily implies some of the best filleting fish you'll ever throw in a pan.

These schooling fish can offer some waves of high catch rates and large bag limits. Start with an ultralight rod and reel and plenty of jigs. Whether targeting fish through open water or a hole in the ice, almost any style of jig will catch a panfish. Brightly colored heads tipped with single tails, twin tails, worms or shiners are popular choices. To make it even simpler, you can catch panfish using a bobber, sinker and hook baited with a worm, regardless of your age or skill. Preferred habitat for panfish can be almost any type of structure or floating cover. They are often found in shallow water (less than 5 feet), but at times can also be found in large numbers in deeper water (20-30 feet).

### **SUSTAINABLE FISHERY**

There are some very important differences between how warm and coldwater fisheries are managed in New Hampshire. Coldwater fisheries are for the most part maintained by stocking trout and salmon raised at our N.H. Fish and Game hatcheries. Approximately one million of these fish are stocked annually; without stocking, most trout and salmon populations in New Hampshire would be depleted in about 3-5 years, mainly because they are targeted by so many anglers.

In comparison, warmwater fish are not raised or stocked in New Hampshire, and they do very well on their own. Warmwater fish in our state are able to rely on natural reproduction to replenish their populations for a number of reasons. Their spawning habitat is still largely intact and viable; warmwater fish generally produce more offspring than coldwater species;

*The colorful pumpkinseed is a warmwater species that lives in weedy waters.*



they are able to withstand more variable environmental conditions such as higher water temperatures; and many warmwater anglers (especially bass anglers) practice catch-and-release fishing.

This does not mean that warmwater fish and their habitats don't need to be protected or managed. In fact, fishing regulations are in place to protect warmwater species, such as daily limits for all warmwater species; reduced daily bass limits; and catch-and-release bass seasons during and around the bass spawning period. Additionally, the N.H. Fish and Game Department has ongoing management and research projects aimed at assessing warmwater fish populations around the state, improving fish habitat and examining effects of bass tournaments on bass populations.

### CULINARY DELIGHTS

Addressing the subject from a culinary angle allows us to rate fish on a scale of tastiness. One of our favorite parts of a camping trip is filleting five or six yellow perch, applying a secret-recipe batter and pan-frying them over an open fire. Also on most

people's list of New Hampshire's best-eating fish are walleye, white perch and brown bullhead (hornpout), and the black crappie is expanding in both range and popularity.

One advantage of having so many types of fish in New Hampshire is the variety that they provide when cooking them. A bass fillet, for example, seems almost designed for a hearty batter and deep fry. Pickerel, on the other hand, can be chunked up into an awesome chowder or casserole. Larger body shapes -- like that of a trophy walleye -- taste great with mild seasoning and 15 to 20 minutes in the oven.

Whether you're fishing for the dinner table or just for fun, warmwater fishing is minutes away all year long for New Hampshire anglers. You don't have to be an expert angler or have fancy gear to enjoy it. So get out and do some warmwater fishing this year -- and share the excitement by taking a kid along for the adventure. **W**

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*Fisheries biologist Gabe Gries is N.H. Fish and Game's Warmwater Project Leader and works in the Region 4 office in Keene. Fisheries biologist Andrew Schafermeyer works in the Region 1 office in Lancaster and Michael Racine works in the Region 4 office in Keene. All three enjoy pursuing warmwater fish whenever the opportunity presents itself.*

### Bass Anglers Give Back

When most of us think about bass tournament anglers we picture a nice shiny bass boat filled with lots of fishing rods and tackle, traveling very fast across a lake in pursuit of big bass. What's missing from that picture is the generosity that these anglers show every year by bringing the sport of fishing to people who would otherwise likely not experience it. Every year, bass anglers from New Hampshire bass tournament clubs donate their time and experience to help paralyzed veterans and children with diabetes spend a day on the water in the pursuit of warmwater fish.

Youth at Camp Carefree, a summer camp for children with diabetes located on the shores of Merrymeeting Lake in New Durham, are some of the lucky recipients of this kindness. For the past 13 years, more than two dozen bass tournament anglers have donated their time to take children with diabetes fishing and boating. Children are instructed in casting techniques and boat safety, then taken out on the water to fish for bass and panfish. According to Dick Smith, Conservation Director

for the New Hampshire Bass Federation, "Many of these children have never been boating or fishing, but at the end of the day they are all hooked on both."

Another volunteer effort by New Hampshire's bass tournament anglers comes each September, when the annual bass tournament for Paralyzed American Veterans

is held at Camp Robindel on Lake Winnepesaukee. Veterans are paired up with a bass tournament boat captain, and they compete against all other teams to see who can catch the heaviest bag of bass. More than 20 anglers donate their time each year for this event. Smith added, "It is a small way of saying thanks to the veterans for serving our country and for their sacrifice." People interested in this event can learn more at [www.nepva.org](http://www.nepva.org). ~ G.G.



*Smile of success: Dennis Loubier from the Sail-em Bass Club holds up a wee panfish for a proud angler from Camp Carefree.*