



TECH BULLETIN

CALIFORNIA

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S BIG BASS

CASTAIC LAKE

Compiled from the Diaries and Logs of the Luhr Jensen Fishing Research Team.



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V-shaped Castaic Lake basically is separated into two sections; one for water skiing and another for fishing, although anglers are permitted to try their luck from either boat or bank in the ski arm as well as in the fishing arm. However, water-skiers are not allowed in the fishing arm, where boat speed is strictly monitored and limited to 20 mph.

Bass anglers from all over the west come to sample Castaic's world-class largemouths. Each season, numerous double-digit-weight fish are caught here. The current lake record stands at a whopping 22.01 pounds! Some real veterans firmly believe that a world record fish is waiting to be caught in this small reservoir.

Bassin' at Castaic is a year 'round proposition, with five-fish daily limits common for the experienced angler. Follow-



ing are the details on the seasonal patterns that persist at the lake and the specific strategies used to key in on its largemouth population.

SPRING BASSIN'

If it's sheer quantity you like, Castaic kicks out plenty of bass in the 1 1/2- to 4-lb. range from March through June. Look for fish to be holding near the bank and particularly off shallower outside points in the early morning and late afternoon. This is prime crankin' water!

I like to start with medium- to deep-diving plugs to probe these points for larger fish. Luhr Jensen's *Hot Lips Express*® and 1/4- or 1/2-oz. *Brush Baby*® plugs are perfect for these conditions. The big trick is to work your plugs not only across the submerged points, but also along the outside edges. These lures will reach the proper depth when fished on 8- to 10-lb. test mono. Small diameter line also works well in Castaic's relatively clear springtime water.

For spring crankin' with the Hot Lips or Brush Baby series, *Tennessee Shad* and

Crawdadd finishes are the most effective.

Moving inside the covers, stay with shallow-running baits such as the *Speed Trap*™ and 1/4-oz. Hot Lips. The same colors used for exploring the deeper outside points are effective inside shallow coves. Another option is to rhythmically "twitch" or "jerk" a *Floating Power Minnow*™ over the 3- to 10-ft. depths in both the fishing and ski arms at Castaic. The object is to "twitch" the lure with your rod tip to make it dance and dart below the surface when retrieved in the shallows. Then, use long exaggerated sweeps with your rod to pull this minnow-shaped lure down deeper. Let it barely start to rise to the surface and "jerk" it down again.

Always be prepared for strikes when the *Power Minnow*™ is allowed to rest motionless for that split second. This is frequently when bass sense a bait is "wounded" and when they will attack it. Work the lure in either *Silver*, *Silver/Blue Top* or *Metallic Perch* finishes during the spring at this lake. Early season largemouths at Castaic also key in on smaller 2- to 3-in. long crayfish near the bank. This is a perfect

TOPWATER / TWITCH BAITS



situation to use the **Klawdad™**.

Springtime is serious spinnerbait time, especially when worked along the banks in the numerous shallow coves. Springtime also is popular with dedicated plastic worm anglers. The largemouths readily strike small 4-inch worms in earth-tone colors such as **pumpkin-pepper**, **cinna-mon/blue blood line**, **green** and **brown "weenie"** and **"cinnamelon"**. These baits should be fished either Texas-rigged and slow-crawled with a sliding bullet sinker or split-shotted slightly suspended above the bottom. Worm anglers may find bass anywhere from next to the bank to all the way down to 40 feet, March through June.

Split-shot aficionados should also slowly retrieve 2-in. feather reapers or 3-in. curly-tail grubs in **salt-and-pepper** shades from a variety of depths during the spring here.

SUMMER

Castaic's bass range from shallow-to-deep during summer. In the morning, key in on the shallows with the Speed Trap or Brush Baby. **Tennessee Shad** is a proven color for the summer bite.

During midday heat, try cranking the sheer granite walls in the ski arm and deeper outside points in the fishing arm. You will need a deep-diving plugs such as a Hot Lips Express or Power Dive Minnow. These baits have pronounced diving lips which allow them to reach the 20- to 30-ft. level where Castaic's bass population often is suspended, feeding on schools of shad minnows.

You may also encounter some unexpected summer midday action in the crowded ski arm. Work shallow-running plugs such as the Speed Trap or Brush Baby along the mud lines formed parallel to the bank. Baitfish gravitate to this stirred up water as reduced clarity means less harsh light penetration. Cast **Silver/Black Stripe**, **Crystal Crawfish** and the more optically intriguing **Clearwater Flash** finishes. Bass are aggressive in this shallow, muddy water so you can crank lures fairly fast to cover a lot of shoreline until you locate them.

Summertime also can usher in some limited surface action for knowledgeable topwater enthusiasts. The key is to look for stretches of calm water in both arms before the summer crowds churn it up.

Some of the more subtle surface lures such as the **P.J. Pop™**, **Jerk 'n Sam™** or **Nip-I-Diddee®** prop baits generate strikes

in the backs of quiet coves during summer months.

Split-shottin' with small plastic worms, grubs or reapers continues to produce during the summer. Drag these baits along outside points from 10- to 30-ft. depths. Slow-crawling larger 6- to 8-in. worms also works at times in the same depth range.

Another effective ploy is to bounce a 1/2- to 1-oz. **Chrome Kroc®** or **Nickel/Neon Blue Back Crippled Herring®** spoon along the deep outside ledges and rocky cliffs. It is not uncommon for largemouths in the lake to be concentrated near schools of threadfin shad. Tip: Putting a slight "C" bend in a 1-oz. Crippled Herring will result in a slower fall.

These fish often strike the flashy **Chrome** spoon as readily as a worm or grub during the summer heat. Also, don't be surprised if one of Castaic's monster striped bass attacks the **Kroc®** or Crippled Herring suspended over deep undercut ledges.

FALL

As Castaic's water surface temperature cools, look for a limited amount of topwater action through October. Continue to twitch or jerk Floating Power Minnows, walk the dog with a P.J. Pop or work the backs of coves with a **Woodchopper®**.

Most fall cranking and topwater action occurs in the early morning hours. However, don't overlook suspended bass frequently found in the center of the long narrow coves, some distance off the bank. The 1/4-oz. Brush Baby is an excellent lure choice for this situation. **Silver/Black**

Stripe and **Clearwater Flash** finishes are productive colors to toss at these suspended fish.

In addition to cranking and sporadic topwater action, a slow-crawled or split-shotted plastic worm continues to generate strikes in the autumn months

As bass move further off the bank onto deep outside ledges, be prepared to use a more vertical "doodlin'" presentation with a worm. Simply, gently shake a compact 3- to 4-in. long worm over deep structure rigged Texas-style with a sliding sinker.

WINTERTIME

Strangely enough, some of the largest Florida-strain bass of the season routinely are caught at Castaic from late December through mid-March. These fish typically make a transition from 40- to 60-ft. depths to mid-range depths between 20 and 40 feet. A majority of these jumbo specimens are tallied by bait anglers using live crawdads while anchored off deep outside points. Still, it is not that uncommon for a trophy double-digit-weight largemouth to fall for a well-presented crankbait.

Vertical doodlin' small worms continues to account for bass catches in the dead of winter at Castaic. Occasionally, a slow-crawled jig, with either a plastic or pork rind trailer also is effective as it plods over deep outside terrain. To round out the deep water attack, drop a Crippled Herring spoon all the way down to sixty feet if necessary if the fish are metered with deep schools of bait.

Whatever your fancy, Castaic offers year-round action for the Southern California bass angler. Be flexible in your lure selection and, similarly, be prepared to move until you find a concentration of bass. *The lunker of a lifetime may await you at this little city lake.*

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MEDIUM-TO-DEEP DIVING LURES

