

# Cabela's®

## Outfitter Journal

The Magazine

# Sizzling SUMMER FISHING

■ Largemouth Bass

■ Smallmouth Bass

■ Walleye

■ Crappie

■ Salmon

■ Redfish

■ **And  
More!**



GRAND VIEW MEDIA GROUP

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## Arizona's Lake Pleasant

Tony Mandile

This reservoir serves up great fishing for largemouths, stripers, white bass and more.

**Sitting** among saguaro-studded hills with a backdrop of the rugged Bradshaw Mountains to the north, Lake Pleasant serves as the main attraction of the



*Ben Koller shows off an above-average 2½-pound white bass.*

Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department's 14,000-acre regional park. Because of its proximity to the Phoenix metropolitan area, the lake, fed by the

Agua Fria River, has become Arizona's most popular recreation area. Fishing and camping draw visitors during cooler months, and boaters add to the mix in summer.

### Bigger And Better

The completion of the New Waddell Dam in 1993 tripled the lake's size to about 10,000 surface acres, making it the second largest in the state behind Roosevelt. When Pleasant eventually filled, water inundated hundreds of once-dry acres and provided a rich flow of nutrients. The lake now contains lots of excellent bass habitat with enough jutting points, shallow flats, brush stands, steep cliffs, rocky shorelines and underwater islands to keep fishermen happy.

At the time, Pleasant already contained myriad fish species, including largemouth bass, channel and flathead catfish, black

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and white crappie, green and redear sunfish, bluegill and carp. Plus, it served as the only home for the white bass in Arizona. Now, thanks to the completion of the 330-mile Central Arizona Project, a very fishable and reproducing population of striped bass also prowls the lake after many made their way up through the canal's pumping system from Lake Havasu on the Colorado River. Although most striper

currently average 1 to 3 pounds, anglers have already landed several between 14 and 20 pounds.

## Bassing Opportunities

The largemouth draws the most anglers, however, and bass over 7 pounds are common. Pleasant also has yielded a few over 12 pounds, including one 13-pound, 13-ounce monster that came close to the state's 14-pound, 2-ounce



This largemouth hit a surface plug in Lake Pleasant's Humbug Creek Cove, record at the time.

For anyone who enjoys catching a largemouth on a topwater plug, the hot summer months are the times to do it, according to Ben Koller, who operates The Hook Up Outfitters and Guide Service.

"The best surface action occurs at either end of the day — right at dawn or just before dark," Koller said. "Concentrate on the brushy areas in the coves, especially in the shallows along steep drop-offs into deeper water. If you're not into surface fishing, try a spinnerbait with a white or chartreuse skirt.

"When the lake begins to warm in midmorning, the bass seek out structure in deeper water. Fish plastic worms with a Texas or drop-shot rig. Darker colors like black, red, purple or blue attract the most fish."

Among game fish, the prolific white bass is Pleasant's most populous species, and finding a school containing fish that average 2½ to 3 pounds is not unusual. The white's favorite menu

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entrée consists of threadfin shad. Some fishermen locate white bass by trolling shad-type lures. Because the schools concentrate at various depths, depending on the time of the year, finding them depends on how deep or shallow

a lure runs and how fast or slow the boat goes. It pays to experiment with both.

For stripers, Koller suggests night fishing during summer.

"We take out clients after dark and drop down crappie lights in

the creek channels," he said.

"Then we have them fish frozen anchovies. Although most of the fish are less than 2 pounds, on a good night, we often catch 100 or more over a few hours." ■

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**Want To Go?**

**Getting There:** Take I-17 north to AZ 74 (Exit 223), go west 11.5 miles on AZ 74, turn north 2.2 miles on Castle Hot Springs Road, then turn right into the park. The north entrance is 3 miles farther on Castle Hot Springs Road. To reach Lake Pleasant from Sun City, head north 15 miles on 99th Avenue to AZ 74 and follow the signs.

**Launching Facilities:** The 10-lane launch ramp has parking space for 480 vehicles, 355 vehicles with trailers and 125 for small cars. The four-lane ramp at the lake's north end has parking for 112

vehicles with boat trailers. Daily vehicle entry fee is \$5, plus \$2 for a trailered boat.

**Camping:** The Desert Tortoise Campground and the Roadrunner Campground and Picnic Area contain 148 first-come, first-served sites for RV and tent camping. Each site offers a covered ramada, picnic table, barbecue grill and fire ring. The RV sites also provide water, electricity and dump stations. Both campsites have centrally located restrooms and shower facilities. RV sites are \$18 per night; semi-developed sites are \$10.

**Other Services:** The Pleasant Harbor Marina is a full-service facility providing boat storage, rentals and buoy service; restaurant and restrooms; gas, ice and minimal tackle.

**Park Information:** Lake Pleasant Regional Park, (602) 372-7460.

**Fishing Information:** Arizona Game and Fish Department, (602) 942-3000; [www.azgfd.gov](http://www.azgfd.gov).

**Guide Services:** The Hook Up Outfitters and Guide Service, (888) 899-HOOK UP; [www.thehookupoutfitters.com](http://www.thehookupoutfitters.com).

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