

## *Smallmouth Bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*)*

An invasive with a mouth to match an appetite.

Despite the name, the Smallmouth Bass has a mouth large enough to match its voracious appetite. Smallmouths are a favourite of anglers, who illegally stock bass in lakes and rivers. As ambush predators, bass wait for prey to approach, then swallow it whole. When bass attack, their mouths and gills expand rapidly to suck in vast quantities of water. Their prey is sucked in with the water, and the small teeth lining their jaws make escape very difficult.



### **Impact on Communities and Native Species**

Smallmouth Bass are aggressive and out-compete native fish such as Cutthroat and Rainbow Trout for habitat and food. Bass also eat any bite-sized native fish they encounter—even the prickly Threespine Stickleback—as well as aquatic insects, crustaceans, amphibians, young snakes and turtles. Even small mammals swimming on the surface are in danger if a sizable smallmouth is lurking nearby. This species is a threat not only to freshwater biodiversity, but also to fishes that support commercial and recreational fisheries.

Smallmouth Bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*) Credit: Douglas Watkinson, Fisheries and Oceans Canada

### **Invasion History**

The first Smallmouth Bass arrived in British Columbia in 1901 as fry or fingerlings introduced to lakes on Vancouver Island and on the mainland. Now the species is established on Vancouver Island, in the Gulf Islands, and in the Kootenay, Okanagan, Thomson-Nicola and Cariboo regions on the mainland. The Smallmouth Bass has spread both naturally, moving on its own through rivers and streams to new lakes, and with the help of fishermen, who release bass into lakes to establish private fishing opportunities. Smallmouth Bass have spread rapidly in British Columbia thanks to human assistance.