



# Freshwater Fish

of Monmouth County



Largemouth Bass, Juvenile

[www.MonmouthCountyParks.com](http://www.MonmouthCountyParks.com)

Monmouth County is home to an incredible variety of freshwater fish. Over 80 species inhabit the county's lakes and ponds, and miles of rivers and creeks. Freshwater—which is generally defined as having less than 1% salt content—is available from two sources:

1. still bodies of water such as lakes, ponds and inland wetlands
2. non-tidal portions of flowing rivers and creeks.



With its cool, running waters, the Manasquan River is a popular trout fishing site.

Some fish species such as sunfish prefer to live in warm, still waters; while others such as trout prefer cooler, running waters.

## Common Freshwater Fish of Monmouth County

- Largemouth Bass
- Smallmouth Bass
- Common Carp
- Catfish
- White Crappie
- Tiger Muskie
- Yellow Perch
- Chain Pickerel
- Northern Pike
- Banded Sunfish
- Bluegill Sunfish
- Pumpkinseed Sunfish
- Brown Trout
- Rainbow Trout

## Stocking Freshwater Fish

During the year, a variety of freshwater sites including the Manasquan Reservoir are stocked with game fish such as Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass. In New Jersey, these game fish are raised either at the Pequest Trout Hatchery in Oxford or the Charles O. Hayford State Fish Hatchery in Hackettstown, and released at locations by the NJ DEP's Division of Fish & Wildlife.

## Breeding and Nesting

Freshwater fish that are not raised in a hatchery are generally born in local waterways. Spawning, the release of eggs and sperm for fertilization, takes place in the water during spring and summer. Some species scatter millions of eggs in shallow water where they are free to float and drift to new watercourses. Others build nests underwater to care for their young.



Very young Bluegill Sunfish



Adult Bluegill Sunfish

Male sunfish, for example, build underwater nests either alone or in colonies by swishing their tails to create a depression in gravel or sand. This attracts females, who may deposit eggs in several nests. After fertilization, males use their fins to fan the nest to remove fine materials that might smother developing eggs; they will also stay to defend the eggs from predators.

## Freshwater Fishing Sites

These Monmouth County Parks provide access to freshwater fishing sites. Visit [www.MonmouthCountyParks.com](http://www.MonmouthCountyParks.com), click on "Facilities."

Crosswicks Creek Greenway  
Upper Freehold

Holmdel Park  
Holmdel

Manasquan Reservoir  
Howell

Manasquan River Greenway  
Freehold to Howell

Perrineville Lake Park  
Millstone

Shark River Park  
Neptune

Thompson Park  
Lincroft

Turkey Swamp Park  
Freehold



People of all ages enjoy fishing the lake at Turkey Swamp Park.

## Get a NJ Freshwater Fishing License

Anyone age 16-69 must have a valid license to fish the fresh waters of New Jersey. Anglers are also required to obtain a trout stamp if they want to fish for trout. Exceptions include anglers under 16, and those age 70 and over (who may use a driver's license or other acceptable proof of age/physical description).

Fishing licenses may be obtained from official license agents throughout the state or online at [www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com), click on "Licenses & Permits."



## Hybrids

Hybrids occur when closely related fish species cross-breed. In Monmouth County, these include the Striped Bass Hybrid (female Striped Bass x male White Bass) and a Tiger Muskie (female Muskellunge x male Northern Pike).

## Migration

Some waterways also contain fish that travel from the ocean to spawn in the non-tidal portions of streams and rivers, such as Striped Bass and Herring. These fish are termed to be **anadromous**, since they migrate **from salt water to freshwater** to spawn.

The American Eel is a type of fish found in New Jersey that is **catadromous**, meaning it migrates **from freshwater to the ocean** to spawn. In the fall, adult eels will begin swimming from streams and rivers out to the Atlantic Ocean. In January, they will spawn in the Sargasso Sea, a region in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean, west of the Bahamas. Their tiny offspring, called larvae at this stage,

will drift in the ocean for about 9-12 months before ocean currents carry the young eels thousands of miles back to the U.S. coast.



Eel



Tiger Muskie

## Brook Trout – The State Fish of NJ

The Eastern Brook Trout is the only native trout to NJ and the state's official fish. It is related to salmon and is a very popular game fish with anglers and fly fishermen.

The Brook Trout prefers to swim in clear, cold flowing waters with temperatures less than 68° F. The fish also favors good water quality. It is sensitive to low oxygen and changes in water chemistry caused by environmental effects such as pollution from storm water runoff or acid rain.



Young Brook Trout at the Manasquan Reservoir.

Since 2006, the Manasquan Reservoir Environmental Center (MREC) in Howell has been offering a special, hands-on educational activity called **Trout in the Classroom**. It offers students of all ages a chance to raise Brook Trout from fry to fingerlings indoors, then release them into a nearby stream or river—in this case the Manasquan River—to help expand the natural population. This program is made possible through a partnership between the NJ DEPs Division of Fish and Wildlife and the conservation group *Trout Unlimited*.

## Links in a Healthy Environment

Fish are an important ecological link in the food chain, feeding on insects and shellfish and serving as prey for larger fish, birds, and other wildlife. They are also an important indicator of water quality and ecosystem health.

## The Sunfish Family

From small to large, there is a wide diversity of sunfish species found in Monmouth County. Brilliant colors of yellow, orange, green, and red are often displayed by sunfish species such as pumpkinseed, bluegill and redbreast, making them stunning to see. In addition to the smaller, true sunfish species, there are two species of Black Bass, the Smallmouth and Largemouth—the largest members of the sunfish family. The Black Crappie is also a member of the sunfish family.



Bluegill Sunfish



Redbreast Sunfish



Black Crappie

Sunfish are usually found in warm, shallow, densely vegetated areas of lakes, ponds, or streams. They are often the first fish caught by children. Smaller sunfish can frequently be taken from shore with nothing more than a string with a bobber and worm.

Larger members of the sunfish family, such as Smallmouth and Largemouth Bass, are well-known for their aggressive behavior when hooked and challenge even the most experienced angler with the best gear.

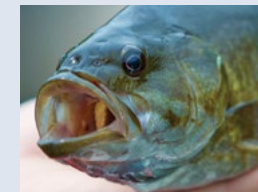
## Comparing Bass



Note the characteristic band along the side and the large mouth of the aptly named Largemouth Bass.



Adult Largemouth Bass can grow up to 26" in length (versus the Smallmouth Bass which generally reach a maximum of 17").



Smallmouth Bass have fainter, vertical stripes.



Many adult catfish feed at night. They depend on their sense of smell and taste for hunting, due to poor vision

