

Estimating the Weight of “THE BIG ONE”

By Rozlynn Orr

Part of the fun in fishing is when you land that large fish. Excitement begins with the feel of the fish on the line and builds, exponentially, as the fish runs and takes your line. As you strip line to retrieve the fish, your imagination swells and conjures up visions of ‘THE BIG ONE’. Visual inspection sometimes crushes your dreams but occasionally you will find “THE BIG ONE” attached to your fly. As fly fishers, most of us practice catch and release and go on to relay stories of the fine catch and estimations of its weight. Deep down, I think we always wonder the true weight of our catch.

To help in estimating the size of your bass, you simply need to carry a cloth or waterproof tape measure with you. Measure from the lips of the bass to the tip of the tail, pinching the forks down for the outer most measurement. Also measure the girth of the fish or the circumference at the widest part. You may push the top fins down when you make this measurement. With the help of the Internet, there are several sources that you can use to calculate the weight of your catch. There are also small scales that you can carry with you in which you catch the lip of the fish on the hook of the scale and then take the weight reading of the fish. These tools are a little larger or bulkier than a tape measure but perhaps more accurate. There are also several large fish lippers with scales that are made for saltwater fish with razor teeth. These tools assist with ‘lipping’ or picking up the fish by the lips and with weighing them.

If using a tape measure, there are several different formulas for accessing the weight of your fish. One formula is length x length x length divided by 1600 equals the poundage of the fish. Another is total length squared x girth, divided by 1200. One more equation is girth squared x length divided by 800. These all produced fairly accurate weight estimates.

Whichever measuring device you use, tape or scale, be sure and measure quickly, accurately, and release the fish unharmed and in a timely manner. If you’re thoroughly entrenched with pursuit and acquisition of “THE BIG ONE”, take some photos to go with your measurements and have a taxidermist recreate a replica of your fish. Whatever the circumstances, it’s a lot of fun to know the weight of your catch especially when it is a personal best for you.

The table on the next page is provided by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for estimating the weight of a large mouth bass.

Instructions

- Measure the bass to the nearest eighth of an inch.
- Go down the first (left-hand) column and locate the row corresponding to the length of your fish in whole inches.
- In the “Fractions” columns across the top of the table, find the nearest eighth of an inch that matches the length of your bass.
- Read down the column to find the estimated weight in pounds.

For example, you want to find the weight for a bass that is 18¼ inches long. Find 18 inches in the first column, then move across the table to the 1/4-inch column. Read the estimated weight of 3.46 pounds (3 pounds, 7.4 ounces).



Length-weight Conversion Table for Texas Largemouth Bass

Inches	Fractions							
	0	1/8	1/4	3/8	1/2	5/8	3/4	7/8
10	0.48	0.50	0.52	0.54	0.56	0.58	0.61	0.63
11	0.66	0.68	0.71	0.73	0.76	0.79	0.81	0.84
12	0.87	0.90	0.93	0.97	1.00	1.03	1.07	1.10
13	1.14	1.17	1.21	1.25	1.29	1.32	1.37	1.41
14	1.45	1.49	1.54	1.58	1.63	1.67	1.72	1.77
15	1.82	1.87	1.92	1.97	2.02	2.08	2.13	2.19
16	2.25	2.31	2.36	2.42	2.49	2.55	2.61	2.68
17	2.74	2.81	2.88	2.95	3.02	3.09	3.16	3.23
18	3.31	3.39	3.46	3.54	3.62	3.70	3.78	3.87
19	3.95	4.04	4.13	4.22	4.31	4.40	4.49	4.58
20	4.68	4.78	4.87	4.97	5.08	5.18	5.28	5.39
21	5.49	5.60	5.71	5.82	5.94	6.05	6.17	6.28
22	6.40	6.52	6.64	6.77	6.89	7.02	7.15	7.28
23	7.41	7.54	7.68	7.81	7.95	8.09	8.23	8.38
24	8.52	8.67	8.82	8.97	9.12	9.27	9.43	9.59
25	9.75	9.91	10.07	10.23	10.40	10.57	10.74	10.91
26	11.09	11.26	11.44	11.62	11.80	11.99	12.17	12.36
27	12.55	12.74	12.94	13.13	13.33	13.53	13.73	13.94
28	14.15	14.35	14.56	14.78	14.99	15.21	15.43	15.65
29	15.87	16.10	16.33	16.56	16.79	17.03	17.26	17.50

Source: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/fish/recreational/catchrelease/bass_length_weight.phtml; (accessed 9/9/2010).

Alternatively, if you hit the mother lode of fishing, landing a 13 pound-plus large mouth bass, you may donate her to the Texas Park and Wildlife Department, ShareLunker program. This program studies DNA and oversees a spawning program for these big girls at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens, TX. For more info, visit: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/visitorcenters/tffc/sharelunker/>.

