



PEACOCK BASS TECH SHEET

PEACOCK BASS FISHING IN SOUTH AMERICA

BY LARRY LARSEN

Over the past several years, Larry has traveled the globe to fish for peacock bass. His itineraries have included more than 30 stops in South America, where the accomplished angler has caught and released hundreds of giant peacock bass. He has caught them up to 22 pounds and has set seven peacock bass world line class records and an IGFA all-tackle world record for the butterfly peacock bass specie.



Larsen, an outdoor writer/photographer specializing in peacock and largemouth bass, is a strong advocate of catch-and-release fishing. He has helped Luhr Jensen develop certain lure products specifically for catching giant peacocks. More than 1,800 of his articles have appeared in regional and national magazines over the past 30 years. He also has written and published 20 fishing titles including the peacock bass series and the award-winning Bass Series Library.

Imagine a 10-megaton hydrogen bomb going off below your giant **Woodchopper®** topwater plug. The peacock bass, by nature, is aggressive and its personality is downright belligerent. It is a fish so powerful that it can destroy tackle, straighten some hooks and tear hardware right out of some hardwood and hard plastic baits. The fiercest fighting fish in the world may mangle poorly-constructed lures and even break them apart, and then give you the battle of your life.

It is impossible to exaggerate the strike and fight of this colorful gamefish. The larger it gets, in contradiction to its North American cousins, the better it fights. The fish almost always jumps the second it is hooked, and after a head-shaking leap or two, makes an incredible run. In a long, straight run, this aerial acrobat, weighing over 15 pounds, can

rip 40-lb. test line from a heavy-duty 3:1 ratio casting reel with the drag clamped down tight.

The trophy-size peacock can easily break 20- to 30-lb. test monofilament, or even straighten out a 3X heavy-strength hook in one of its initial charges or when it sees the boat and senses doom. Designing lures to hold up to the giant peacock bass is a challenge, and this challenge has been met by Luhr Jensen's designers. In fact, no other company makes a full range of baits specifically focused on handling the toughest-fighting freshwater gamefish in the world.

THE PEACOCK AND ITS DEADLY RANGE

The peacock is not really a "bass" at all. It strongly resembles a largemouth in general size and shape but it is actually the largest American member of the *cichlid* family of fishes. The peacock, which has attained IGFA documented weights of 27 pounds, is more commonly called "pavon" in Latin American countries and "tucunare" in Brazil.

Peacock bass originate and thrive in South American waters. The real giants of the specie live in remote backwater lagoons off major tributaries in the Amazon drainage of Venezuela, Brazil and Columbia, but other countries, such as Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia all have waters that contribute to the massive Amazon watershed which abounds with peacock bass. The range of the peacock also has grown to include south Florida, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Panama and Costa Rica.

THE BEST LURES FOR THE BULLY

Choosing the best peacock lures normally depends on establishing effective patterns for the size of fish you are targeting. Schooling peacocks are so aggressive that fishing a lure with more than one hook can lead to multiple hookup excitement. In some schooling situations, the challenge is not in hooking a peacock but in landing it. If a fish misses the bait, another will blast it. Since peacocks are so aggressive, there is little need to use light tackle.

TOPWATER PLUGS

Topwater prop baits (with one or two spinners on the rear) are effective on peacock bass about 80 percent of the time, and the most popular surface lure for giants in South America is the **Big Game Woodchopper®**. More 20-plus pound peacocks have been taken on this lure than on all other combined.

The **Amazon Ripper™** and **Big Game Jerk 'n Sam™** have avid followers and both are also extremely productive on the giants. All three huge lures catch monster peacocks when

"wet". They are in their prime when cast toward shore, but they are also highly productive when cast toward shore in "open" water and when trolled!



Big Game Woodchopper®

The smaller **Peacock Bass Lure™**, **Amazon Rippers** and **Jerk n Sams™** are all very effective rear-spinner surface baits that attract all sizes of peacocks. The action of these plugs is what attracts attention. While a sharp jerk-pause-jerk technique, each time moving the bait approximately two feet, is usually most productive, sometimes a long, hard pull and



Amazon Ripper™



Peacock Bass Lure™



Jerk 'n Sam™

brief pause can be effective. At other times, a soft twitch can draw an explosive strike, particularly when near cover.

Fish the baits quickly toward wood cover; as you get close to the key habitat, slow down the plug and work it with a short rip, then pause, and rip it once again. Fish them around the tree tops, over points and along channels or roadbeds (in a reservoir).

MID-DEPTH PLUGS

Long minnow plugs, such as the **Javelin™**, wobble down a few feet and catch their share of peacocks. **White, yellow, silver and Fire Tiger** hues are generally most productive. Steadily cranking the minnow plugs or working them with short rips are both very effective. The baits can also be trolled slowly close to shore, typically in water 3 to 8 feet deep.

A fairly fast retrieve can also be hot, and as a follow-up bait, these lures have no peer. Once you have an initial strike, that fish has given itself away, and it can be caught with a follow-up presentation. When a big peacock

boils at your topwater presentation, come back at it with a minnow bait quickly retrieved through the same spot, and hang on to your rod tight!



Javelin™

SEARCHING THE DEPTHS

The best baits for submerged operation include spoons and vibrating plugs. The **Pet® Spoon** and the **Sugar Shad®** both go into the depths to attract the fish. For giants from the depths, a #18 Tony Accetta Pet Spoon is most productive. When the big peacocks are not on the surface, trolling one will draw strikes. A large **Krocodile®** spoon in a bright orange color can also be effective.

Buzz baits are effective on peacock bass



Pet® Spoon

(particularly in the hottest months on lakes and lagoons). The **Big Game Buzz Bait** can be extremely productive. When fishing water between visible trees or other such cover, the **Sugar Shad® Brute Bait** can be deadly. These lipless crankbaits can be cast or trolled productively. Good colors are silver with black or blue backs, yellow or gold, white and green.



Krocodile®

TOP PLACES AND TACTICS FOR TROPHIES

The larger peacock bass in the pecking order always get their choice of habitat. Little fish have to get out of the way or be eaten. As a result, you won't generally catch little fish alongside big fish. In most cases, the trophy-size peacocks want to be in relatively deep



Sugar Shad Brute®



Big Game Buzz Bait

water, near cover or in a bottom trench in a lagoon. Casting to such places is the best way to attract big peacocks.

Another way to check out the larger lagoons in South America is to troll down the middle. Once you've found the peacock's hangout, there should be others in the area. You can

stop and cast in the same vicinity (middle of that lagoon) and catch plenty of big fish. It's been my experience, however, that midsize and smaller peacocks generally are not in the middle, they are hiding under cover along the bank.

An angler and his or her alert partner can utilize the "team approach" to catch more peacocks. Whoever is not fighting the fish should make a quick cast near the battling peacock, and often, a second fish will be hooked. Peacocks school, and members of that school will often follow a hooked fish right to the boat. The hangers-on will be after the bait or lure hanging from the unfortunate fish's jaw. It's a tactic I've often used successfully.

The lagoons and lakes with a lot of cover in the form of standing timber or giant boulders are prime places for big peacock. While most look more like little reservoirs, they are natural lakes off rivers. They offer numerous features such as points and humps which attract peacock bass. They also have "cuts" from the river that are likewise productive.

Most shallow areas have some vegetation, and such spots may hold a few smaller peacocks. The best areas, though usually have a relationship to deeper water; the thickest bush or tree in a bunch is often the best spot; two growing close to each other is often good; an isolated bigger tree or bush away from a group also has a lot of potential, especially if it lies near deeper water. The edge of the woods, timber around a depression, and the edges of fairly large openings in thick wooded areas also can be very productive.

As elsewhere, water conditions are critical when fishing peacocks. Both clarity and water level affect these fish. In most South American tributaries, waters are clear and dark. Turbid water which flows into an area as levels rise may cause peacocks to actively feed. How fast the water level rises also significantly affects the ability to catch peacocks. Regardless of its color, high water makes catching them more difficult. With the jungles beside lagoons flooded, fish are widely dispersed.

Casting a lure to the deep water off a shallow point or "saddle" that drops quickly can be very productive. Waters without the benefit of a sharp drop or other defining structure that are over six feet deep, should generally be trolled. Waters of less depth and more obstacles (whether boulders or submerged trees) should be cast.

WHEN AND WHERE TO GO

There are several peacock bass fishing operations in South America and numerous

agents selling their trips in the United States. Some have access to the remote waters that are most productive and others don't, so it is wise to do plenty of research before hooking a trip with anyone. Accommodations may vary from tent camp, to fixed-base lodge, to a comfortable barge, to a mobile houseboat or yacht.

The prime times to catch peacock also vary,



WORLD RECORD PEACOCK BASS

Luhr Jensen "Peacock Bass Lure" holds the current IGFA all-tackle world record peacock bass of 27 lbs. This fish, held here by a guide, was caught by Gerald "Doc" Lawson of Purcell, OK from a shallow lagoon off the Negro River in the state of Amazonas, Brazil.

depending on the area, and in general, the low water times are the very best. On a majority of trips, these occur between September and April.

I call the peacock bass the "World's Greatest Gamefish" because it is attracted to cover, strikes topwater lures regularly, jumps when hooked, never gives up a battle, is powerful enough to tax angler skills and tackle, has a physical appearance that looks exciting and obtains an average size of 15 to 25 pounds (a very respectful weight).

Check it out!!!

REFERENCE - SUGGESTED READING

PF1 - PEACOCK BASS EXPLOSIONS (\$16.95 postpaid) details when, where and how to catch the Americas' greatest gamefish! Top tactics from around the world help you catch more and larger peacocks. This comprehensive reference source with info on the variety of peacock species, including numerous photos and maps, is invaluable to all anglers with a sense of adventure or yearning to battle the explosive peacock bass!

PF2 - PEACOCK BASS & OTHER FIERCE EXOTICS (\$17.95 Postpaid) covers the exciting peacock bass, payara and rainbow bass of Latin America. This detailed book reveals the very latest techniques, lures and patterns that fool the provocative fish, along with over 80 informative illustrations and photos. The majority of strategies are focused on peacock bass.

Both titles by Larry Larsen are available by sending check or money order to the author at Dept. "PF-LJ1", 2640 Elizabeth Place, Lakeland, FL 33813. Please add \$3 for priority mail.