

South Florida's Butterfly Peacock Bass. Enjoy the thrill of having a **Butterfly** try to rip your arms out of their sockets!

### EQUIPMENT

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It does not matter whether you want to use bait casting, spinning, or ultra light any equipment that you would normally use for large or smallmouth bass will work just fine. For those who want to fly fish, if you want to have fun bring a 7 wt. rod or smaller, if you are out to catch a "Trophy" we suggest you bring a 8 or 9 wt. rod. In the way of lures a selection of topwater (both prop and stickbaits) and grubs and tube baits will cover most situations.

### TROPHY

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The word "Trophy" brings up the question. What is a trophy size Butterfly Peacock Bass? According to the State of Florida any Butterfly Peacock over 18" or 5 pounds is a trophy. The State has a program design to recognize anglers called the "Big Catch." To qualify you must catch a trophy Butterfly Peacock, they also have a Junior Big Catch program with the weight and length requirements being 25% less, 3.75 lbs. or 13" long. All you have to do is submit the completed and signed application and mail it to the address listed on the application and they will send you a real nice Citation with a special Catch and Release seal if you certify that you released the fish. You can get all the details and forms at:

<http://fcn.state.fl.us/gfc/fishing/bigcatch/bigcatch.html>

### WHAT TO EXPECT

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Depending on what time of the year you plan to make your trip will decide what kind of day you should expect. Let's break down the Butterfly Peacock Bass seasons so you can make an informed decision on when to plan your trip.

1. January through the middle of February you will be doing a lot of live bait fishing, but the fishing will be good, you will catch a lot of average size fish (between one and three pounds), but do not be surprised if you catch a trophy. You may run into a few early spawning fish or even some protecting fry.
2. Middle of February to the beginning of May, the fish will be moving up on the beds to spawn, now is the time to catch that trophy or even the World Record (the current IFGA World Record for the Butterfly Peacock Bass is 10 pounds 8 ounces as of September 1996). You should be able to catch over a hundred fish a day with a few being trophy class, actually you will begin to pass up the fish that look to be under five pounds and concentrate on the larger fish. A quick note of spawning fish if you decide to target a spawning pair you will want to target the male that will be the larger of the two and he will have a pronounced hump on his head. Only

catch one of the pair so the other will guard the nest. Take a few pictures, measure, and weight the fish then release it and will return to the nest.

3. May and June you will still find a few spawning fish but your mornings will be nonstop topwater action (there is nothing like the anticipation of a topwater strike). Your afternoons will be productive on spinnerbait and crankbaits, fifty fish days will be common.
4. July through September will be a lot like May and June except that from 11 AM to 2 PM you will switch to live bait or you may opt to do a little flipping for some big largemouth's in the grass mats. The numbers will drop down to around thirty fish a day.
5. From October until the first cold front fishing will pick up, it will mainly be average size fish, but fifty plus fish days will be common.
6. From the first cold front until January, you will be using live bait and may only catch up to twenty fish a day.

As you can see, Butterfly Peacock Bass fishing is a year around fishery. Of course the numbers are subject to change when you factor in such things as bad weather or other acts of nature. Generally you can expect to have a good time and some sore arms at the end of your trip.