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Anglers expect big things this fall

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Grab your fishing equipment for this fall season because the big ones will be hitting.

According to Potomac River Fishing Guide Mark Kovach, big fish will strike more than smaller ones because of their higher metabolism, which stays cranked up into January. "It's the classic season for large bass, as they feed to prepare for winter."

However, you won't have as many strikes. Kovach adds that fish activity slows as it gets colder. And because of the low water level, the river will get cold quickly.

Fish don't fight as much in the fall either, he says.

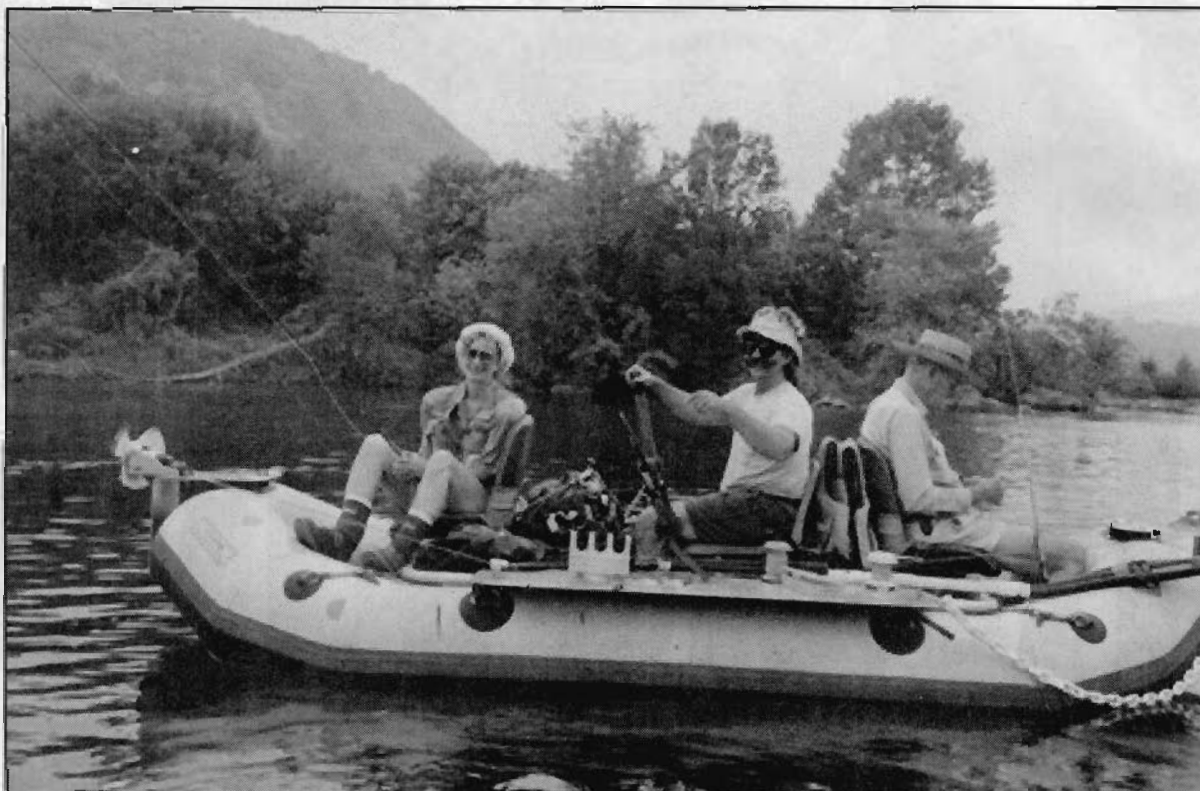
So what type of bait is hot in the fall? According to Kovach, your deep water lures: crankbaits, heavy grubs, jig-n-pig and mid-level repallas.

Bryan Bursey of Sparks Sports Center in Martinsburg says Cabin Creek tubes and Yamamoto grubs are selling fast.

"When the water is below 40 degrees use jig-n-pig," he says, "above 40 degrees, use tubes and grubs."

When you're out there watching the fall foliage perform its annual masterful color change, remember that fish are going to feed cafeteria style. "That means," explains Kovach, "fish will be hanging out waiting for food to come down the line."

"They're like people," he says, "in that they like to hang out by a structure. Think about it. We don't like to stand out in the open, we'd rather be on a street corner near a building."



Photo, above, courtesy of Mark Kovach
The Paper photo at right by Todd Harless

Above, Mark Kovach guides clients down the Potomac River on a fishing trip. Kovach says big fish will strike more than smaller ones because of their metabolism. He also says fish don't fight as much in the fall. However, he suggested using deep water lures this fall.

To the right is a variety of lures that can be used to catch the big one this fall.

Kovach continues that big bass can be down deep by a rock or around classic four-foot holding spots.

Kovach and his team of guides use float-fishing boats that bounce off rocks, concentrating on the Potomac from Dam No. 3 to Brunswick. Though this stretch is too hard to maneuver for a flat-bottom boat, a canoe would be no problem.

Wading, he adds, is effective, especially above the W.Va. 340 bridge at Harpers Ferry. Not much time though, considering a comfortable wade is around a 65-degree water temperature. In

colder weather, wading boots work well.

Kovach believes the confluence where the Potomac and Shenandoah meet provides a lot of depth and should be a hot spot this fall.

A resident of Silver Spring, Md., Kovach was a close friend with Shepherdstown fishing legend Ben Schley. "He was the epitome of a true gentleman/sportsman," professes Kovach, remarking on the great stories told by Schley concerning people, policy and government.

"He was a terrific fly rodder with a wealth of knowledge."



Speaking of fly fishing, Kovach's specialty, the season still ripe because of the low, clear condition of the Potomac. Expect the Potomac to produce some really good fishing this year and next, says Kovach. The flood of 1996 became a survival of the fittest, allowing stronger, tougher fish to take over the population.

In 1997, there was a terrific spawning due to an abundance of foliage and food, with no competition.

According to Kovach, bass spawned that year will be around nine inches this fall; imagine their parents!