

# BASS: More bites when temps drop

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come with rattles for more enticement. Suspending jerkbaits work particularly well when schooling bass target shad.

“I prefer suspending jerkbaits,” Howell advised. “When the angler stops the retrieve, it just hovers in the strike zone giving fish a chance to eat it. When it’s moving, fish often trail it. When it stops in their face, bass eat it reactively. To get really good with a jerkbait, fish it with a ‘pop, pop, stop -- pop, pop, stop’ cadence. Pause a couple seconds between the fall and the start back. That causes the bait to go side-to-side with kind of a walking motion similar to the action of a walk-the-dog topwater bait, but under the water.”

Among the oldest and most versatile baits on the market, spinnerbaits can entice bass from the surface to the bottom all year long. Although a spinnerbait doesn’t really look like anything a bass might naturally eat, the whirling blades do mimic the flash made by shad and other baitfish. The blades also send vibrations pulsating throughout the wa-

ter column, provoking reaction strikes.

The ultimate shad imitation, a swim-bait looks almost exactly like a baitfish. Some baits almost look good enough to filet, making them excellent lures to throw in clear water like at Big Creek Lake. Some swimbaits come equipped with internal weights that cause the lure to wobble. With others, soft-plastic tails slip over jigheads.

“A swimbait is so lifelike that it works very well in clear water,” recommended Kevin VanDam, a four-time Bassmaster Classic champion. “In really clear water, fish might shy away from a jerkbait or a spinnerbait, but swimbaits are so natural looking that they don’t scare fish.”

Anglers can work swimbaits almost like topwater baits by buzzing them just below the surface or running them at any depth. In deep water, slow-roll them just off the bottom during cold weather.

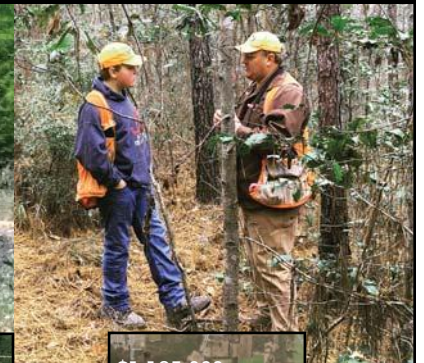
What a bass wants frequently changes throughout a day. Try several techniques from top to bottom to see what works best at that time.



Photo by John N. Felsher

Kevin VanDam, a four-time Bassmaster Classic champion from Kalamazoo, Mich., shows off a bass he caught on a swimbait. A swimbait looks like a baitfish, a prime forage species for bass in the fall.

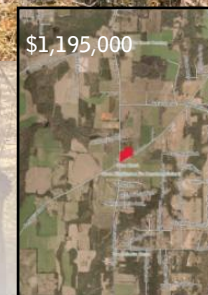
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