

But where are the big ones?

Become familiar with your local bass marks, says BASS member Julian Fox, and you'll improve your chances of a larger fish when you venture farther afield



The other day I was talking to a well-known artist. The fact that he is an artist is probably by the by (although his paintings of bass are particularly striking), but we were discussing how to catch big bass, and that certainly is relevant.

David Miller has caught lots of bass – 2011 was a very good year in terms of numbers, but his best fish was a modest 3lb. That's a nice enough size, but he knows he is only beginning to scratch the surface and naturally he wants to know how to catch bigger ones.

The fact that he hasn't yet done so is beginning to trouble him, and when we spoke he was worried he was doing something wrong – or that he was just unlucky (that's not a good trait in an angler!)

I'm sure we have all asked ourselves the same question: how can I catch larger bass? Do I need to do anything different and what tackle should I use?

In today's technologically joined-up world, the information available on bass fishing is vast. Getting started is relatively cheap, requiring no huge amount of skill, and with so much help on tap it's pretty easy to get yourself into some fish pretty quickly.

But it's also possible to become disillusioned as larger fish fail to materialise, and that brings us back to David and many bass anglers just like him.

If he continues to catch only small bass, where will that lead him? Will he be looking to take up golf instead? Probably not, but you get my point.

For the explosion in lure fishing for bass to actually mean something I believe there has to be a measurable impact and improvement over time, and to me that means more and bigger bass. Otherwise, like David,

many bass anglers will begin to question the time and money spent on the sport. Clearly this is worrying, but there are large bass out there, and many are caught each year. So what's the real secret, and why do some anglers catch more than their fair share of these fish?

The real secret (if there is one) is to first find your bass. It is no use thrashing the water to a foam if it is barren. This is obvious but many anglers forget it, so how do you know if there are bass in front of you? Well, the biggest trick is to remind yourself time and again what you already know about these fish: that they like tide rips, structures, and feeding at night (because they don't like disturbance). If you would like to catch a big specimen then this is where to start.

In bass fishing, probably more than in any other branch of the sport, there's no magic bullet, but time spent fishing and experimenting will always bring results. Understanding

and getting to know your home water in all seasons, at all states of the tide and in all weathers is very important too. Many bass anglers fish a great many places but never really get to know any of them.

Turn yourself into a thinking bass angler, an expert on your own bit of coast, and you will put yourself in the best position to catch the bigger ones. Fish your own patch hard.

In bass fishing, as in all things in life, there is no substitute for hard work.

Of course, there are lucky anglers who catch a huge fish and think they've cracked it, but the rest of us need to put some brain as well as some brawn into it.

Hopefully David will begin to catch some larger fish this year. At least he's a member of BASS and has made a good start in his bass fishing career. I almost envy the journey he is about to take, and while I can't guarantee the larger fish he seeks, I know for sure he will enjoy trying. **SA**