

# New Castle angler catches – then releases – new state-record largemouth bass weighing more than 11 pounds



Angler A.J. Klein shows off his state record largemouth bass.

**DOVER** – A partly cloudy and unseasonably warm Saturday, Feb. 20 seemed to fishing buddies Andrew “A.J.” Klein and Joe Lattis of New Castle a great day to cast a line, so they headed downstate to launch Lattis’ boat on Wagamons Ponds near Milton. Four hours later, their efforts had yielded only a couple of smaller fish, and they were preparing to pack up and go elsewhere when Klein made one last, fateful cast into what he would later recall as the pond’s surprisingly clear water for the time of year.

The treble-hook on Klein’s new spinnerbait caught on what he thought to be either bottom or structure, but it soon became obvious that something big at the end of his line was making a run on him. “It was a very subtle hit. I set the hook and thought I was snagged,” Klein said, “and then it just took off – it was crazy!”

After a brief but intense tussle, Klein reeled in a new state record largemouth bass – an 11-pound, 1.6-ounce lunker 27 inches long with 20.5-inch girth, as measured at Bill’s Sport Shop in Lewes and certified by Fish & Wildlife Natural Resources Police Sgt. Troy Trimmer.

Klein, for whom fishing has become a serious hobby the last

year and a half, was quick to credit his fishing buddy and mentor Lattis, a seasoned angler, for helping him not only land the trophy but also to secure his prized catch in a water-filled container for the trip to Lewes. "He's a great fisherman, and he's caught a lot of big fish," Klein said.

Their gentle handling of the new record largemouth through the certification process proved later to be of importance to the two anglers and Delaware's freshwater fishing community. After the excitement from having it certified had subsided, they took the big bass back to Wagamons, where Klein released it back into the water, alive and well. "I watched it swim away," Klein said, noting that they fished two other areas that afternoon before calling it a day. "It was an awesome day. Nothing could dampen our mood."

Fisheries Administrator John Clark applauded Klein's good sportsmanship in releasing his record catch. "We encourage catch-and-release fishing in Delaware, especially with larger fish like this one," Clark said. "Not only will this fish be back out there for other anglers to enjoy, it should also see another spawning season to pass on its good genes to another generation of largemouth bass and thereby improve our bass stock."

The previous state record was set in 2012 – a 10-pound, 10-ounce largemouth bass measuring 26 inches long and 18.75 inches in girth, also caught in Wagamons Pond, by James D. Hitchens of Georgetown, and which Mr. Hitchens also released back into the pond by [the increasingly popular sporting gesture of catch-and-release of trophy fish](#).

For more information on state-record fish, both fresh and saltwater, please see the [2016 Delaware Fishing Guide](#). The guide also is available in printed form at DNREC's Dover licensing desk in the Richardson & Robbins Building, 89 Kings Highway, Dover, and from license agents throughout the state.

The annual **Delaware Sportfishing Tournament** is sponsored by DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife to promote recreational fishing opportunities and recognize anglers for outstanding catches in Delaware waters. The tournament's origins date back to the late 1930s, when the Board of Game and Fish commissioners set up a state fishing contest to increase interest in fresh and saltwater fishing. Today's tournament includes 14 freshwater categories and 29 saltwater categories, plus a live release award for conservation-minded anglers who choose to release their catches, unharmed, immediately after landing. Each species must meet a minimum weight or length (live release only) designated by the tournament director in order to receive recognition. For anglers who want to enter a big catch in the tournament, nearly 40 participating weigh stations are located throughout the state. For more information, including rules, species, record holders and participating weigh station locations, click [Delaware Sportfishing Tournament](#) or call DNREC Fisheries at 302-735-2960.

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