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Chad Shafstall of Aztec shows off the 11-pound, 2-ounce largemouth bass he caught last week at Farmington Lake.

Aztec man catches Farmington Lake monster bass

By Darren Marcy, Farmington Daily Times Outdoor Editor

FARMINGTON LAKE No, you're eyes aren't deceiving you. Yes, you heard right.

That really is an 11-pound, 2-ounce largemouth bass caught last week at Farmington Lake.

Chad Shafstall of Aztec caught one of the biggest largemouth possibly ever caught in this area in any body of water.

Shafstall was fishing with his family about 2 p.m. Friday, focusing on catfish.

They weren't having much luck in the middle of the day when he saw a couple of small bass swim by.

His 6-year-old daughter also saw the bass and encouraged her dad to try to catch one.

So he tied on the only thing he had with him he thought might work a gold Mepps spinner he uses to troll for trout at Navajo Lake.

"The only reason I was doing it was my girls kept bugging me," Shafstall said. "I told the girls, we probably ain't going to get anything with this."

His cast didn't turn the small bass, but then the big one zoomed in and the fight was on.

"She came and attacked me," Shafstall said.

After the fish was in hand, everybody immediately new the big bass was something special.

A shoreline of anglers converged on the fish, but there was one problem.

Nobody had a scale.

Finally an angler drove up with a digital scale.

When it registered 11 pounds, 2 ounces, Farmington Lake was awash with excitement.

"It was a fun time," Shafstall said.

The lake has long held bass, and some anglers regularly ply the waters for the ugly green trout.

But it's the rainbow trout and catfish that draw 99 percent of the anglers to the local lake.

And that's what Shafstall was doing there. He was essentially passing time until he could go back to catfishing that night.

"I'm a catfisherman," Shafstall said. "I probably spend 30-40 nights a year out there."

But last Friday, Shafstall was a bass angler.

And like any good bass angler worried about the future of fishing, the 31-year-old did what only a die-hard would do.

He let the fish go.

Shafstall said he could tell the big bass was about to spawn, and he just couldn't see taking her out of the water before she fulfilled her biological duty.

"Her tail was pretty raw," Shafstall said. "I felt pretty bad. I thought there's a couple hundred little bass in there. I really didn't want to mess with her too much."

The man that weighed the fish heard he was going to let it go and that raised a few eyebrows.

"He said, 'That's your fish son,' and I said, 'Yes,' and someday it'll be somebody else's. So I let her go."

The big bass wasn't Shafstall's first. He caught an 8-pound, 6-ounce largemouth in Kansas once, and has caught ocean fish that weighed 300 pounds.

But this one will be special for him.

Darren Marcy: darrenm@daily-times.com

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~Jesse

According to the odds of the gods, you get one screw up with this stuff. When you do the folks will be walking around the crater and this is all they'll find. - Dwight Yokem as Glascock in "The Newton Boys"



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