

BIG FISH

LEON BROOKS HINES LAKE OFFERS GREAT FISHING

By Joe Zolczynski

Nestled in the Conecuh National Forest about 25 miles east of Brewton, Alabama, Leon Brooks Hines Lake sparkles like an emerald in the pines. In a setting that the whole family can enjoy, this scenic state-operated public lake boasts unmatched fishing for bass, bream, and catfish. Leon Brooks Hines, the late Escambia County state representative, envisioned the lake we have today and worked with the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to create this wonderful fishing destination.

Amenities

The lake was impounded in 1985 and opened to the public in September 1989. The 184-acre reservoir is the largest of the 23 state lakes operated by the Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries. The lake was originally stocked with bluegill, redear sunfish, and largemouth bass. Channel catfish are stocked annually in the reservoir for anglers to enjoy.

A good fishing destination also needs good facilities, and this lake has them. Several hundred yards of shoreline near the concession building are well groomed and maintained as a bank fishing area. A fishing pier is also available near the concession building. Rental boats and a boat launch with a courtesy dock are also provided for those who prefer to fish from a boat. Picnic tables and grills give anglers and families a place to relax for lunch at the lake. The lake manager, Clyde Chandler, operates the concession building that is well stocked with drinks, snacks, bait, and tackle. The lake manager also sells fishing and hunting licenses and fishing permits.

Great Fishing

The largemouth bass fishing in this reservoir can best be described as phenomenal. Large numbers of big bass are harvested each year. During the last two years, almost 250 bass weighing five pounds or larger were harvested. Of these, more than 25 weighed 10 pounds or more. Many more large bass are caught each year by anglers who just take a picture of the fish and then return the lunker to the lake. The

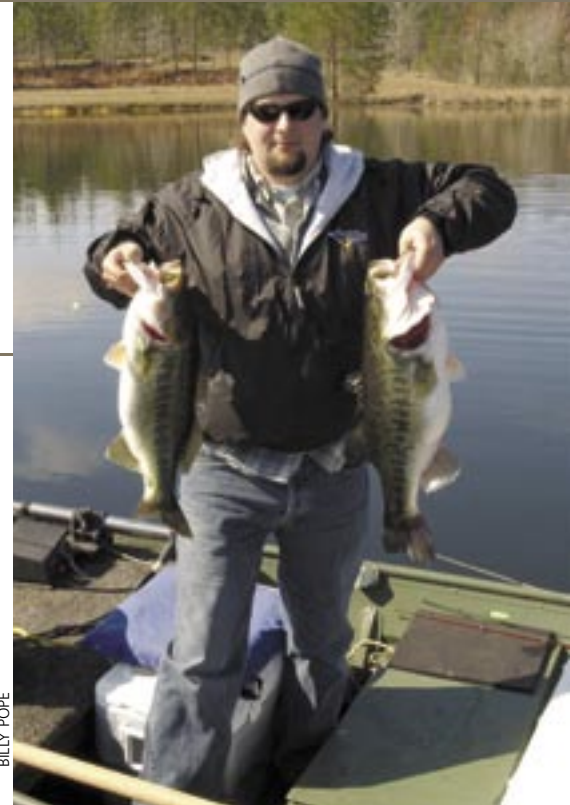
largest recorded bass from the lake was a 14.6 pounder caught by Karl Williams in March 2003.

Bass fishing is good throughout the year, but the peak fishing time for large bass is in the spring when these fish congregate in shallow water to spawn. During the spring, some anglers ease along the shallows in boats with towers and sight fish for large bass. Most of these anglers are using either live bait or soft plastic lures.

The bream fishing in Leon Brooks Hines Lake is also excellent for both bluegill and redear sunfish. In 2004 more than 2,000 bream over three-quarters of a pound were harvested from the lake. Crickets are the bait of choice for most anglers who are bream fishing. Since March 2003, three anglers have harvested bluegills weighing 2 pounds each.

Channel catfish are a popular species at most of the public lakes, and Leon Brooks Hines Lake is no exception. While they are easily caught during the day, many people like to take advantage of night fishing. Night fishing is allowed from the bank fishing area and from the handicap-accessible fishing pier until 10 p.m. every Saturday from May through August.

Good fishing is the result of sound management. Fisheries Section biologists review the harvest records and make regular biological checks of the lake to monitor the fish population, fertility of the water, and other factors that may affect the quality of fishing. This information is used to make management decisions for the lake such as fish creel and size limits, need for fertilization, or fish stocking.



BILLY POPE

Tony Nicholas from Mobile holds a 7-pound and 9-pound bass that he caught at Leon Brooks Hines Lake.

Popular Destination

Each year since 1999, Leon Brooks Hines Lake has averaged more than 6,000 visitors. On September 16, 2004, one guest, Hurricane Ivan, paid an unwanted visit to the lake. Fortunately, none of the facilities received significant damage; crews from the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, the U. S. Forest Service, and the Lake Manager worked to clean up the debris and reopen the lake almost immediately after the storm.

Take the short drive into rural Escambia County and enjoy the combination of a great facility and great fishing. Whether you are there to enjoy the world-class bass and bream fishing, or if you just want to enjoy a beautiful relaxing afternoon in the country, Leon Brooks Hines Lake is the fishing destination for you. **GA**

This 9.7-pound bass was caught by Hartwood McMillan, II from Atmore.

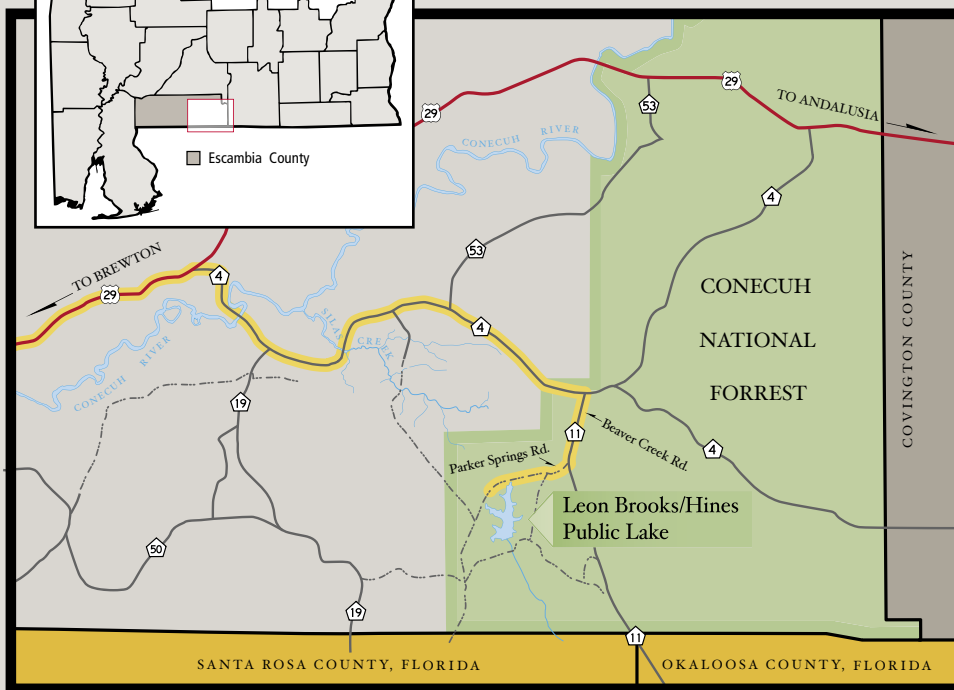
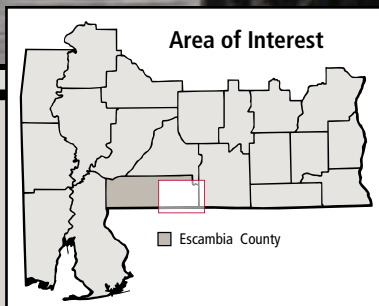


BILLY POPE

Important Information

- **Lake Open:**
 - February 1 - June 30: open 6 days a week, closed on Thursday.
 - July 1 - Mid-December: open 5 days a week, closed on Wednesday and Thursday.
 - Mid-December - January 31: closed.
- Boats are also available for rent; a launching ramp is available for anglers with their own boats. Boats may have an outboard motor attached, but anglers may not use the outboard motor, only the trolling motor.
- State fishing license requirements are in effect.
- Also needed is a daily fishing permit for ages 12 and older: \$2
- The daily creel, possession and size limits for each species are posted at the lake.
- Picnic tables and grills are available.

For more information visit www.outdooralabama.com



MAP ILLUSTRATION BY BILLY POPE

Directions to Leon Brooks Hines (Escambia County) Lake

917 Barney Road
Wing, AL 36483
(251) 809-0068

From Buddy Mitchell Bridge in Brewton take U.S. 29 Highway north for 9 miles; then right on County Road 4 for 10 miles; then right on County Road 11 (Beaver Creek Road) for 1-1/2 miles; then right on Parker Springs Road to Leon Brooks Hines Lake.