

BAIT
BASS ANGLING INFORMATION TEAM
1986

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES



GAME & FISH

64 NORTH UNION STREET
MONTGOMERY ALABAMA

Introduction

Reservoirs are an important natural resource in Alabama. Nationally Alabama ranks fifth in reservoir acreage and tenth in number of reservoirs 500 acres and larger (Jenkins et al. 1985). Forty-five reservoirs in the state have a total surface area of 482,700 acres.

These reservoirs are important to Alabama anglers. A survey of 1981-82 anglers conducted by the Fisheries Section, Alabama Game and Fish Division, indicated that 55% of the fishermen surveyed preferred to fish in reservoirs and rivers (Tucker 1984). Since very few unimpounded river miles remain in Alabama, most of the fishermen surveyed were fishing reservoirs.

Of all the fish species available in Alabama reservoirs, bass were most sought by the anglers surveyed (34%). Bass fishing is not only important recreationally to Alabama fishermen but also economically to wholesale and retail businesses and to tourism statewide. Data generated from the angler survey indicates that Alabama anglers spent in excess of 100 million dollars on fishing trips alone in 1981-82. This table only includes bait, tackle, food and travel expenses.

Increased pressure on reservoir bass populations in recent years requires a greater effort on the part of state fisheries biologists to maintain and whenever possible enhance existing fisheries. Most sampling techniques available to fisheries biologists provide information on a particular species or the fish population as a whole. Data from these techniques, as valuable as they might be, provides no information about the fisherman's experiences on the reservoir. However, surveys of what fishermen catch can provide this information. These creel surveys are too expensive to conduct on all major reservoirs every year. But surveys

of bass club tournament catches, where the club members submit tournament results to the State Game and Fish Agency, can provide useful and accurate data on tournament catches. Indices for catch, harvest, success and quality can be generated from the data provided by the clubs. These data are not only valuable to the professional fisheries manager but it also provides the sport fisherman with an excellent guide from which to plan fishing trips.

METHODS

All bass clubs in the state were encouraged to support the B.A.I.T. program through several statewide newsreleases during the year. State officers for BASS affiliated clubs were contacted for support of the program. These officers solicited the support of individual clubs. Club officers or members who indicated interest in the program, either by phone or letter, were sent 12 pre-addressed post cards (Fig. 1). Clubs were asked to fill out one card following each tournament. The tournament data received at the Fisheries Section office were entered into a computer database. Compilation and analysis of the data was performed following receipt of the last December tournaments.

The structure of the reporting format and data categorization followed that of the 1983 Texas tournament survey (Shaw 1983). A minimum of five tournaments for an individual reservoir were considered necessary for minimum confidence in each reservoir dataset. To rank reservoirs, five categories were used as indicators of quality fishing: percent successful fishermen, bass average weight, number of bass per fisherman, pounds of bass per fisherman, and hours per bass five pounds or larger. Percent success is the percent

of fishermen weighing in at least one bass in a tournament. Bass average weight reports the average weight of bass for reservoirs, clubs and statewide. Catch rates for fishermen are indicated by the categories number and weight of bass per fisherman day. A fisherman day was defined as 10 hours of fishing. These values were developed for reservoirs, clubs, and statewide. Hours per bass, 5 pounds or larger, is the average number of hours fished by club or by reservoir to catch one bass five pounds or larger.

All reservoirs with five or more tournaments were ranked for each of the five categories. Arbitrary values from 20 to 1 (high to low) were assigned to each reservoir within each category. The five values for each reservoir were summed and the total value represented the final "overall" rank of the reservoir.

Results and Discussion

Two hundred and sixty (260) tournament reports for the period January through December 1986 were submitted by bass clubs. A total of 5,212 fishermen spent 52,161 hours on 28 reservoirs statewide. They caught 10,481 bass that weighed 16,005 pounds (Table 1). Trophy bass, 5 pounds and larger, accounted for 137 fish of the total. The largest bass recorded weighed 9.25 pounds and was caught in West Point during June by a member of the Auburn Bassmasters.

Tournament reports from 42 clubs were used to develop the data set. Sixty-nine percent of the clubs provided 90% of the data. If every club participating in B.A.I.T. this year had provided a complete year of tournament reports, over 500 reports would have been available for analysis. Ten percent of all reports received were rejected because of incomplete or

erroneous information. The most common information lacking on the cards were the total number of bass caught and the total weight of bass caught.

Every bass club participating in B.A.I.T. this year had a self-imposed 12-inch length limit. The only deviation from this restriction were the clubs fishing Harris and West Point under 14-inch and 16-inch limits, respectively. The 14-inch restriction on Harris was removed in May 1986. Most bass clubs followed the state creel limit of 10 bass/man/day. However, a few clubs used a reduced creel limit of 7 fish/man/day. A tournament summary for all clubs is presented in Table 3. Each club was assigned a number to protect confidentiality. These numbers are indicated on the cover letter accompanying this report.

Of the 28 reservoirs for which tournaments were reported, Millers Ferry had the most reports (26). Martin (18), Weiss (17), West Point (16), and Demopolis (16) ranked immediately below Millers Ferry (Table 1). These five reservoirs accounted for 35% of all tournament reports received. For reservoirs where 5 or more reports were received, percent success ranged from 39 to 85%. West Point was the lowest reservoir for this quality indicator. However, care should be observed in interpreting this information since West Point is the only reservoir with a 16-inch minimum length limit, so only bass 16 inches or longer were included in tournament results.

The average weight of bass harvested per reservoir ranged from 2.94 to 1.12 pounds. The statewide average was 1.53 pounds. West Point produced the highest average weight bass. Here again, care should be taken interpreting the data for West Point. No bass 12 to 16 inches were included in tournament results for West Point. Therefore, the average weight of bass from West Point is artificially high when compared to the other reservoirs. Since

tournament results at Eufaula included all bass 12-inches or longer, it should possibly be considered the reservoir with the best average weight fish.

Catch rates in terms of bass per man ranged from a high of 3.52 at Martin to 0.60 at West Point with the statewide average holding at 2.01 fish. Pounds per man catch ranged from a low of 1.76 at West Point to a high of 5.27 at Guntersville. The statewide average was 3.07 pounds. Guntersville outdistanced second ranked, Lake Martin, by 1.26 pounds. Without a doubt, Guntersville is in a category by itself.

Guntersville was judged the top ranked lake in Alabama in 1986, accumulating a total point value of 81. Wheeler ran a close second although it was never top ranked in any single category. However, Wheeler was among the top ten reservoirs in each category. Care should be used in the interpretation of this information. It is not intended to be a "best and worst" list, but to characterize the fishery of each reservoir. Choice of location and expectations are highly personal matters, which vary greatly between fishermen.

Bibliography

- Jenkins, R. M., Aggus, L. R., and Ploskey. 1985. Inventory of U. S. Reservoirs. USFWS, Washington, DC.
- Shaw, Charles E. 1984. A survey of black bass tournament fishing in Texas, 1983. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. 82p.
- Tucker, W. E. 1984. Alabama angler survey 1981-82. Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. 33p.

FISHING TOURNAMENT REPORT	
Club Name _____	Mailing address _____
1. Tournament Lake _____	
2. Tournament dates(Start) _____	(End) _____
Mo Day Yr	Mo Day Yr
3. Tournament type- Day()Night()	4. Total hours tournament time _____
5. Access area used _____	6. Tournament bag limit _____
7. Minimum size limit (inches) _____	
8. Number of fishermen in tournament _____	
9. Number of fishermen at weigh-in with 1 or more bass _____	
10. Total number of bass at weigh-in _____	
11. Total number of bass released after weigh-in _____	
12. Total weight of bass at weigh-in _____ lbs. _____ oz.	
13. Number of bass over five pounds _____	
14. Weight of biggest bass taken during tournament _____ lbs. _____ oz.	
_____	_____
Club Representative's Name	Phone Number

Figure 1. The tournament report postcard used by bass clubs in the 1986 BAIT survey.

Table 1. State-wide summary of reservoir tournament results for all bass clubs participating in the 1986 B.A.I.T. program.

Reservoir	Tournaments	No Men	Success	No Bass	Wt Bass	Bass>5LB	Tot Hrs	% Success	Avg Wt Bass/Man	Lbs/Man	Hrs/Bass>5LB
Aliceville	2	34	27	62	85.82	1	342.00	79.41	1.38	1.81	2.51
Bankhead	2	35	27	52	78.94	0	406.00	77.14	1.52	1.28	1.94
Columbia	1	26	15	23	45.19	1	286.00	57.69	1.96	.80	1.58
Demopolis	16	363	292	800	1279.20	14	3722.00	80.44	1.60	2.15	3.44
Eufaula	13	261	104	196	426.07	3	2381.50	39.85	2.17	.82	1.79
Gainesville	5	92	63	167	228.13	3	822.00	68.48	1.37	2.03	2.78
Gantt	1	18	8	15	26.31	0	162.00	44.44	1.75	.93	1.62
Guntersville	13	152	129	502	784.57	6	1490.00	84.87	1.56	3.37	5.27
Harding	6	101	78	215	304.29	1	1026.00	77.23	1.42	2.10	2.97
Harris	9	155	92	158	288.44	8	1556.00	59.35	1.83	1.02	1.85
Holt	4	66	51	144	201.08	0	648.00	77.27	1.40	2.22	3.10
Jones Bluff	12	251	160	457	658.82	3	2305.50	63.75	1.44	1.98	2.86
Jordan	4	73	49	170	296.31	0	623.00	67.12	1.74	2.73	4.76
Lay	9	496	256	712	1195.33	8	5143.00	51.61	1.68	1.38	2.32
Logan Martin	15	326	257	756	1142.21	6	3175.00	78.83	1.51	2.38	3.60
Martin	18	391	334	1412	1611.95	0	4016.00	85.42	1.14	3.52	4.01
Millers Ferry	26	394	314	1213	1767.90	13	4589.00	79.70	1.46	2.64	3.85
Mitchell	7	133	103	244	387.75	1	1338.00	77.44	1.59	1.82	2.90
Mobile Bay	3	77	53	167	198.75	0	769.00	68.83	1.19	2.17	2.58
Neely Henry	11	263	165	465	752.01	6	2341.00	62.74	1.62	1.99	3.21
Pickwick	9	117	83	241	379.88	3	1182.00	70.94	1.58	2.04	3.21
Seminole	3	41	17	26	48.76	1	425.00	41.46	1.88	.61	1.15
Tuscaloosa	9	218	173	499	559.27	3	2087.00	79.36	1.12	2.39	2.68
Warrior	7	221	150	342	612.58	14	2204.00	67.87	1.79	1.55	2.78
Weiss	17	345	209	650	1041.46	7	3158.00	60.58	1.60	2.06	3.30
West Point	16	289	113	182	534.45	22	3037.00	39.10	2.94	.60	1.76
Wheeler	14	168	132	377	648.90	7	1655.00	78.57	1.72	2.28	3.92
Wilson	8	106	84	234	420.32	6	1272.00	79.25	1.80	1.84	3.30
Statewide	260	5212	3538	10481	16004.69	137	52161.00	67.88	1.53	2.01	3.07

Table 2. Ranking by quality indicators for all reservoirs with five or more tournament reports in the 1986 B.A.I.T. program.

Rank	%Success	Avg Wt	Bass/Man	Lbs/Man	Hrs/Bass>5LB	Overall	Value
1	Martin	West Point	Martin	Guntersville	West Point	Guntersville	81
2	Guntersville	Eufaula	Guntersville	Martin	Warrior	Wheeler	77
3	Demopolis	Harris	Millers Ferry	Wheeler	Harris	Demopolis	72
4	Millers Ferry	Wilson	Tuscaloosa	Millers Ferry	Wilson	Millers Ferry	70
5	Tuscaloosa	Warrior	Logan Martin	Logan Martin	Wheeler	Wilson	70
6	Wilson	Wheeler	Wheeler	Demopolis	Guntersville	Martin	62
7	Logan Martin	Lay	Demopolis	Wilson	Demopolis	Logan Martin	61
8	Wheeler	Neely Henry	Harding	Weiss	Gainesville	Warrior	55
9	Mitchell	Weiss	Weiss	Pickwick	Millers Ferry	Pickwick	52
10	Harding	Demopolis	Pickwick	Neely Henry	Neely Henry	Weiss	51
11	Pickwick	Mitchell	Gainesville	Harding	Pickwick	Neely Henry	50
12	Gainesville	Pickwick	Neely Henry	Mitchell	Weiss	Harris	46
13	Warrior	Guntersville	Jones Bluff	Jones Bluff	Logan Martin	Tuscaloosa	45
14	Jones Bluff	Logan Martin	Wilson	Warrior	Lay	West Point	43
15	Neely Henry	Millers Ferry	Mitchell	Gainesville	Tuscaloosa	Gainesville	41
16	Weiss	Jones Bluff	Warrior	Tuscaloosa	Jones Bluff	Harding	41
17	Harris	Harding	Lay	Lay	Eufaula	Mitchell	39
18	Lay	Gainesville	Harris	Harris	Harding	Jones Bluff	33
19	Eufaula	Martin	Eufaula	Eufaula	Mitchell	Lay	32
20	West Point	Tuscaloosa	West Point	West Point	Martin	Eufaula	29

Table 3. Tournament summary for all bass clubs participating in the 1986 B.A.I.T. program.

Club	Tournaments	No Men	Success	No Bass	Wt Bass	Bass>5LB	Tot Hrs	% Success	Avg Wt	Bass/Man	Lbs/Man	Hrs/Bass>5LB
1	10	242	207	786	1037.33	3	2262.00	85.54	1.32	3.47	4.59	754.00
2	14	133	93	226	330.82	1	1200.00	69.92	1.46	1.88	2.76	1200.00
3	6	122	68	223	365.69	7	1199.00	55.74	1.64	1.86	3.05	171.29
4	7	402	196	581	958.57	8	4110.00	48.76	1.65	1.41	2.33	513.75
5	11	153	112	311	540.19	6	1618.00	73.20	1.74	1.92	3.34	269.67
6	3	61	56	237	346.07	1	790.00	91.80	1.46	3.00	4.38	790.00
7	3	66	46	110	154.81	0	690.00	69.70	1.41	1.59	2.24	
8	9	258	205	565	905.32	6	2952.00	79.46	1.60	1.91	3.07	492.00
10	4	55	50	173	280.70	1	631.00	90.91	1.62	2.74	4.45	631.00
11	13	311	230	643	916.33	6	3198.00	73.95	1.43	2.01	2.87	533.00
12	10	235	183	525	781.63	11	2383.00	77.87	1.49	2.20	3.28	216.64
13	3	67	37	103	164.51	1	1057.00	55.22	1.60	.97	1.56	1057.00
14	9	454	373	1401	2094.33	21	5248.00	82.16	1.49	2.67	3.99	249.90
15	7	113	89	276	370.76	3	1335.00	78.76	1.34	2.07	2.78	445.00
16	1	17	3	13	22.06	0	170.00	17.65	1.70	.76	1.30	
17	6	97	62	160	273.69	8	1057.50	63.92	1.71	1.51	2.59	132.19
18	7	105	79	388	668.65	7	974.00	75.24	1.72	3.98	6.86	139.14
19	7	293	152	387	646.50	7	2344.00	51.88	1.67	1.65	2.76	334.86
20	2	33	22	44	54.44	0	330.00	66.67	1.24	1.33	1.65	
21	4	65	21	32	70.50	1	738.00	32.31	2.20	.43	.96	738.00
22	6	121	82	179	248.51	4	1187.00	67.77	1.39	1.51	2.09	296.75
23	9	242	139	363	542.94	2	1936.00	57.44	1.50	1.88	2.80	968.00
24	8	53	50	217	337.45	3	588.00	94.34	1.56	3.69	5.74	196.00
25	6	115	62	164	257.13	1	1100.50	53.91	1.57	1.49	2.34	1100.50
26	1	18	1	4	8.44	0	126.00	5.56	2.11	.32	.67	
27	11	173	114	329	565.64	11	1746.00	65.90	1.72	1.88	3.24	158.73
28	7	99	41	75	102.47	0	977.00	41.41	1.37	.77	1.05	
29	9	84	68	120	164.78	2	602.00	80.95	1.37	1.99	2.74	301.00
30	5	47	28	48	117.63	1	376.00	59.57	2.45	1.28	3.13	376.00
31	3	49	24	44	61.31	0	472.00	48.98	1.39	.93	1.30	
32	8	108	71	154	231.27	2	864.00	65.74	1.50	1.78	2.68	432.00
33	1	6	3	15	18.50	0	60.00	50	1.23	2.50	3.08	
34	5	90	49	134	193.19	1	829.00	54.44	1.44	1.62	2.33	829.00
36	8	213	145	467	696.83	6	2130.00	68.08	1.49	2.19	3.27	355.00
37	1	16	15	31	55.44	0	192.00	93.75	1.79	1.61	2.89	
38	1	8	5	9	21.31	0	64.00	62.50	2.37	1.41	3.33	
39	1	18	11	41	56.75	0	180.00	61.11	1.38	2.28	3.15	
40	3	68	40	100	152.62	1	624.00	58.82	1.53	1.60	2.45	624.00
41	6	55	48	127	191.76	1	540.00	87.27	1.51	2.35	3.55	540.00
42	3	77	53	167	198.75	0	769.00	68.83	1.19	2.17	2.58	
44	12	153	114	303	480.82	4	1430.00	74.51	1.59	2.12	3.36	357.50
45	10	117	91	206	318.25	0	1082.00	77.78	1.54	1.90	2.94	