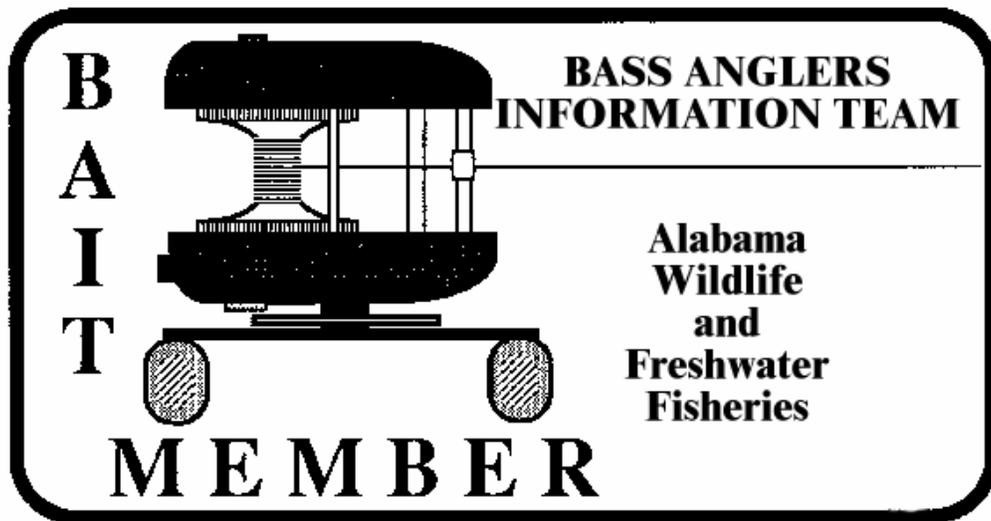


B.A.I.T.

**Bass Anglers Information Team
2005**



Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries

Fisheries Section

64 North Union Street
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

**B.A.I.T.
Bass Anglers
Information Team
2005
Annual Report**

By

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Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

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INTRODUCTION

The printing of the 2005 B.A.I.T. annual report marks the twentieth year of the B.A.I.T. program. The objective of the program since its inception has been to gather information on bass populations by combining the efforts of bass club members and state fisheries biologists. The B.A.I.T. program summarizes catch data on reservoir bass populations that are collected and provided to us by participating clubs. This information is used by state fisheries biologists in combination with data from other sources as a basis for fisheries management decisions. Bass anglers use the report to establish future tournament sites or to locate a reservoir that provides a particular type of fishing.

Through 2005, we have summarized 9,901 tournament reports. Anglers have spent 2,262,473 hours collecting data for this program. They have contributed data from 517,401 bass that weighed 875,007 pounds.

METHODS

Every year we attempt to maintain the support of the previous year's clubs and to enlist the support of new clubs through public meetings, news releases and letters. Participating club officers or tournament directors are sent the previous year's annual report, with tournament report postcards to be completed following each tournament. Clubs are assigned individual numbers to insure confidentiality. As tournament cards are received, they are checked for accuracy and entered into a computer database. Club officers are contacted when data are suspected to be erroneous. We compile and analyze the data following receipt of December tournament reports. Statewide tournament results are sorted by reservoir and by club.

To rank reservoirs, five "fishing quality" indicators were used: percent of successful anglers (percent of anglers with one or more bass at weigh-in), bass average weight, number of bass per angler-day, pounds of bass per angler-day, and hours required to catch a bass five pounds or larger. Since the length of a fishing day varies between tournaments, an angler-day is defined as 10 hours of fishing effort. A minimum of five tournaments for an individual reservoir is considered necessary for minimum confidence in each reservoir dataset. Reservoirs with five or more tournament reports are ranked for each of the quality indicators. Values are assigned to each rank and an overall rank is determined for each reservoir by summing the values of the five quality indicators. This ranking system is intended to be a quick reference for club tournament

site selection. It does not constitute a “best and worst” list of Alabama reservoirs and should not be interpreted that way.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bass clubs submitted 490 tournament reports during 2005, a slight increase from the 471 received in 2004 (Tables 1 and 3). Club representatives did an excellent job filling out the cards and few reports were rejected due to incomplete or erroneous information. We want to again, thank all of the participants of the B.A.I.T. program and urge them to keep up the good work! One hundred and ten clubs or tournament organizations provided data in 2005. Two hundred and seventy reports from Alabama waters were received from Dr. Carl Quertermus of the University of West Georgia, who summarizes tournament data from the Georgia B.A.S.S. Federation. Without their support, several Alabama reservoirs would not have been well represented in the quality indicator rankings (Table 2). Once again we must stress that reports from more locations increase the capability of the summaries to reflect actual fish population conditions and not just a good or poor day's fishing by one or two clubs. In 2005, tournament reports were received for 32 bodies of water that were fished 80,799 hours. B.A.I.T. anglers caught 19,526 bass that weighed 34,921 pounds (Table 1). A total of 252 bass five pounds and larger were reported for an overall catch rate of one bass five pounds or larger for every 321 hours of fishing. Tournament anglers weighed in eight bass 8 pounds and larger in 2005 (Table 5). From 2001 to 2004, as few as four and no more than seven bass 8 pounds or larger were reported. The largest bass caught in 2005 came from Upper Bear Lake and weighed 10.50 pounds. With 59 bass weighing five pounds or larger, Guntersville led this category, followed by Weiss with 43.

The average catch rates in 2005 for both number (2.42) and pounds (4.32) of bass per angler-day were substantially higher than in 2004, and both were above their respective 20-year averages (Figure 1). Compared to 2004, fifteen lakes improved in overall fishing success in 2005, only five lakes declined and three lakes remained about the same (Appendix A).

More tournament reports in 2005 were received from Guntersville (55) followed by Weiss with fifty-four. Eufaula (47) and West Point (47) tied for third. Martin, Jordan, Neely Henry, and Logan Martin each had 20 or more tournament reports (Table 1). A good distribution of reports provides more representative catch statistics from which meaningful summaries can be

prepared. All club representatives should understand that every tournament report is important if this program is to continue to be successful.

Of the 32 reservoirs from which reports were received, 23 had five or more tournament reports (Table 1). The following comments deal with these 23 reservoirs, which are ranked by quality indicators in Table 2. The percent of successful anglers (those with one or more fish) ranged from 60% at Demopolis to over 88% at Logan Martin. The average weight of bass caught ranged from 1.31 pounds at Martin to 2.74 pounds at Guntersville. (Table 1). Catch rates expressed as bass per angler-day ranged from 1.53 at Guntersville to 3.31 at Logan Martin and Wilson. Catch rates as pounds per angler-day ranged from 2.51 at Warrior to 5.50 at Wilson. The statewide average weight for bass caught on all 32 reservoirs was 1.79 pounds.

Overall, Weiss Reservoir accumulated more quality indicator points (94) than any other reservoir in Alabama. Weiss battled its way to the top spot in 2005 after finishing second to Millers Ferry in 2004 (Table 4) and settling for third place in 2003. Wilson (88) placed second while perennial contender Logan Martin (87) came in third. Readers should note that the primary intent of Table 2 was not to determine the overall “best” reservoir, but to characterize the fishery of each reservoir. Anglers should first review the quality indicator that is most important to them. The overall rating would be used to narrow choices. Bass data as expressed in the B.A.I.T. report from reservoirs with harvest restrictions or length limits will be biased since the data is a function of the restrictions. Length limits are imposed to increase the number of fish below a minimum length or within a specified length range (slot limit) which should eventually result in a greater supply of bass above the limit. Because all minimum lengths and length ranges will be above the 12-inch limit fished in most tournaments, the restrictions will reduce the total harvest in numbers and possibly pounds. However, those fish weighed in will be larger (longer) by virtue of the minimum length or slot limit. In the B.A.I.T. report, length limit lakes should rank high for average weight and near the bottom for percent success and bass per angler-day. For instance, bass per angler-day averaged 2.42 statewide in 2005 but for Demopolis it was 1.68. Statewide average weight was 1.79 pounds for all 32 reservoirs but at Demopolis, Guntersville, and Eufaula average weight was over 2.0 pounds. These average weights were higher primarily because the fish weighed in are larger due to the imposed length limits.

Length limits remained in effect during 2005 on West Point (14-inch minimum on largemouth bass), Wilson (14-inch minimum on smallmouth bass), Guntersville (15-inch minimum on all black bass), Eufaula (14-inch minimum on largemouth bass), Demopolis (14-inch minimum on all black bass), Pickwick (14-inch minimum on smallmouth bass), Little Bear Creek (13-16 inch slot on largemouth bass), and Harris (13-16 inch slot on all black bass). Effective June 1, 2005, the Smith Lake slot limit was reduced from 13-16 to 13-15 inches for all black bass.

At Demopolis, the two most important quality indicators to anglers (pounds and number of bass per angler-day) steadily dropped in 2004 and 2005. Strong recruitment had bolstered these quality indicators in 2003. Since then however, recruitment and growth rates of largemouth bass at Demopolis have fallen. These same two quality indicators fell in 2004 at Wilson, but rebounded very strongly in 2005. Since 1999, there has been a significant upward trend in the number and pounds of bass weighed in at tournaments on Wilson. Additional sampling and more B.A.I.T. information will be needed to determine if the length limits at these two reservoirs will be effective. At Guntersville, the pounds and number of bass per angler-day steadily dropped in 2003 and 2004. In 2005, all five quality indicators improved. Every year since 2000, the average weight of bass has improved. The number and pounds of bass per angler-day slipped in 2004 at West Point but rebounded nicely in 2005. Though somewhat erratic at times, these two indicators have been on an upward trend since 1999. Fisheries biologists have noted a marked decrease in the fertility of West Point and an increase in the proportion of spotted bass to largemouth bass in this reservoir. Continued improvement was demonstrated in 2004 and 2005 for Harris with pounds and number of bass per angler-day and average weight somewhat higher than previous years. The length limit on smallmouth bass in Pickwick is continuing to help sustain an excellent fishery for this species; however declines in the average weight and pounds and number of bass per angler-day were reported in 2003 and 2004. In 2005, most quality indicators dramatically improved and the number and pounds of bass per angler-day reached all-time highs.

A trend that first appeared in the 1998 B.A.I.T. data that has been a major concern ever since is the dramatic decrease in angler's catch rate of bass over five pounds from reservoirs throughout the State. The average number of hours (effort) needed to catch a five-pound and larger bass dramatically increased beginning in 1998 and reached its peak of 837 the following

year. Beginning in 2000 the amount of effort has steadily decreased (Table 2). In 2005, it took 321 hours of fishing effort to catch a bass five pounds and larger or about 25% more effort than it did prior to 1998. It appears now that this trend is continuing to show improvement. The decrease in large fish in Alabama occurred regardless of the river system, reservoir size, reservoir location, or type of management. Regionally this phenomenon was also documented in Tennessee, Georgia and Oklahoma. It is now generally accepted among fisheries biologists and researchers that this decrease in the number of larger fish being caught by anglers can be attributed largely to the impact on bass populations of the Largemouth Bass Virus Disease (LMBV). We are continuing to cooperate with researchers at Auburn University and other agencies to assess the presence of this virus in Alabama bass populations and to monitor any further fish mortalities caused by this pathogen. The decreasing amount of effort required to catch large bass in Alabama since 1999 is a hopeful trend and this has been interpreted by many of the researchers monitoring this disease as an indication that our bass populations are beginning to adapt to this new pathogen. There are still indications that this disease is continuing to impact our bass populations by elevating natural mortality rates above what was observed prior to its introduction but it is hoped that in time our bass populations will develop a greater resistance to this disease. In addition, fisheries management biologists and fisheries pathologists from across the country are now working together to learn more about this disease as quickly as possible in hopes of determining strategies to minimize its impact on our largemouth bass fisheries. To aid us in this effort please report any unusual bass die-offs to your district fisheries office.

Graphs in Appendix A provide you with a historical record of how your favorite waters have performed in the B.A.I.T. program. A few words of caution, these graphs are not restricted to bodies of water with five or more tournaments. Data points for some years may be represented by only a few tournaments. However, those situations are restricted to those water bodies that generally have not been included in the quality indicator rankings in Table 2. Secondly, when comparing water bodies, be aware that the scale on the vertical axes have maximum ranges that vary. You can use these graphs to predict future fishing by looking for trends.

Good luck fishing and don't forget to take a child with you and introduce him or her to your sport. Our children are our future anglers and stewards of Alabama's resources. To obtain

more information on Alabama's fisheries resources visit the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Internet Homepage: www.outdooralabama.com

Table 1. Statewide summary of tournaments for bass clubs participating in the 2005 B.A.I.T. Program.

Reservoir	Number of Tournaments	No. of Anglers	No. of Success	No. of Bass	Total Weight	Number of Bass > 5 LBS	Total Hours	Percent Success	Average Weight	Bass per Angler-day	Pounds per Angler-day	Hours per Bass > 5 LBS
Aliceville	1	14	10	19	27.6	0	126	71.43	1.45	1.51	2.19	
Bankhead	5	94	60	187	280.3	0	810	63.80	1.50	2.31	3.46	
Cedar Creek	2	121	68	125	180.6	2	991	56.20	1.44	1.26	1.82	495
Coffeeville	1	6	3	4	7.1	0	48	50.00	1.77	0.83	1.47	
Demopolis	7	350	211	606	1,381.5	17	3,616	60.29	2.28	1.68	3.82	213
Eufaula	47	665	488	1,258	2,738.9	24	6,956	73.38	2.18	1.81	3.94	290
Gainesville	2	28	21	42	59.6	0	240	75.00	1.42	1.75	2.48	
Guntersville	55	848	564	1,451	3,983.0	59	9,503	66.51	2.74	1.53	4.19	161
Harding	17	269	200	527	777.9	5	2,319	74.35	1.48	2.27	3.35	464
Harris	12	218	182	474	710.0	3	1,802	83.49	1.50	2.63	3.94	601
Holt	6	105	86	211	308.5	0	900	81.90	1.46	2.34	3.43	
Jones Bluff	10	114	98	310	498.4	0	1,011	85.96	1.61	3.07	4.93	
Jordan	22	333	234	761	1,467.1	5	3,023	70.27	1.93	2.52	4.85	605
Lay	16	229	159	491	891.2	4	1,984	69.43	1.82	2.47	4.49	496
Little Bear	3	119	94	216	282.2	2	1,055	78.99	1.31	2.05	2.68	528
Logan Martin	35	597	526	2,078	3,390.5	9	6,271	88.11	1.63	3.31	5.41	697
Martin	27	481	411	1,747	2,296.6	8	5,351	85.45	1.31	3.26	4.29	669
Millers Ferry	13	170	141	501	752.4	3	1,742	82.94	1.50	2.88	4.32	581
Mitchell	11	145	116	378	623.2	2	1,298	80.00	1.65	2.91	4.80	649
Mobile Delta	17	293	238	525	816.5	0	2,709	81.23	1.56	1.94	3.01	
Neely Henry	24	390	325	903	1,693.5	8	3,421	83.33	1.88	2.64	4.95	428
Pickwick	10	138	118	407	598.4	1	1,262	85.51	1.47	3.23	4.74	1,262
Point A	1	12	6	18	25.9	0	96	50.00	1.44	1.88	2.70	
Smith	1	7	6	31	40.4	0	119	85.71	1.30	2.61	3.40	
Tuscaloosa	1	21	18	53	62.1	0	168	85.71	1.17	3.15	3.70	
Upper Bear	7	261	176	386	810.1	19	2,166	67.43	2.10	1.78	3.74	114
Warrior	6	113	82	193	263.4	2	1,050	72.57	1.36	1.84	2.51	525
Weiss	54	911	771	2,397	4,560.6	43	8,802	84.63	1.90	2.72	5.18	205
West Point	47	683	563	1,801	3,122.7	30	7,178	82.43	1.73	2.51	4.35	239
Wheeler	14	226	188	742	1,133.4	1	2,697	83.19	1.53	2.75	4.20	2,697
Wilson	15	233	193	642	1,067.0	4	1,939	82.83	1.66	3.31	5.50	485
Yates	1	15	14	42	70.8	1	150	93.33	1.69	2.80	4.72	150
Grand Total	490	8,209	6,370	19,526	34,921.2	252	80,799	77.60	1.79	2.42	4.32	321

Table 2. Ranking by quality indicators for all reservoirs with five or more tournament reports in the 2005 B.A.I.T. program.

Rank	Percent Success	Average Weight	Bass per Angler-day	Pounds per Angler-day	Hours per Bass \geq 5LB	Overall	Value
1	Logan Martin	Guntersville	Logan Martin	Wilson	Upper Bear	Weiss	94
2	Jones Bluff	Demopolis	Wilson	Logan Martin	Guntersville	Wilson	88
3	Pickwick	Eufaula	Martin	Weiss	Weiss	Logan Martin	87
4	Martin	Upper Bear	Pickwick	Neely Henry	Demopolis	Neely Henry	85
5	Weiss	Jordan	Jones Bluff	Jones Bluff	West Point	Jones Bluff	73
6	Harris	Weiss	Mitchell	Jordan	Eufaula	West Point	72
7	Neely Henry	Neely Henry	Millers Ferry	Mitchell	Neely Henry	Pickwick	68
8	Wheeler	Lay	Wheeler	Pickwick	Harding	Mitchell	67
9	Millers Ferry	West Point	Weiss	Lay	Wilson	Jordan	65
10	Wilson	Wilson	Neely Henry	West Point	Lay	Millers Ferry	64
11	West Point	Mitchell	Harris	Millers Ferry	Warrior	Martin	62
12	Holt	Logan Martin	Jordan	Martin	Millers Ferry	Lay	60
13	Mobile Delta	Jones Bluff	West Point	Wheeler	Harris	Eufaula	59
14	Mitchell	Mobile Delta	Lay	Guntersville	Jordan	Guntersville	59
15	Harding	Wheeler	Holt	Harris	Mitchell	Harris	59
16	Eufaula	Harris	Bankhead	Eufaula	Martin	Wheeler	57
17	Warrior	Millers Ferry	Harding	Demopolis	Logan Martin	Upper Bear	56
18	Jordan	Bankhead	Mobile Delta	Upper Bear	Pickwick	Demopolis	52
19	Lay	Pickwick	Warrior	Bankhead	Wheeler	Harding	38
20	Upper Bear	Holt	Eufaula	Holt	Bankhead	Holt	32
21	Guntersville	Harding	Upper Bear	Harding	Holt	Mobile Delta	30
22	Bankhead	Warrior	Demopolis	Mobile Delta	Jones Bluff	Warrior	28
23	Demopolis	Martin	Guntersville	Warrior	Mobile Delta	Bankhead	25

Table 3. Statewide summary of tournaments for bass clubs participating in the 2004 B.A.I.T. Program.

Reservoir	Number of Tournaments	No. of Anglers	Success	No. of Bass	Total Weight	Number of Bass > 5 LBS	Total Hours	Percent Success	Average Weight	Bass per Angler-day	Pounds per Angler-day	Hours per Bass > 5 LBS
Aliceville	1	28	11	19	43.4	1	224	39.29	2.29	0.85	1.94	224
Bankhead	2	71	67	230	319.9	0	592	94.37	1.39	3.89	5.40	
Claiborne	4	75	62	211	358.4	6	752	82.67	1.70	2.81	4.77	125
Coffeeville	10	294	202	456	785.7	8	2,579	68.70	1.72	1.77	3.05	322
Demopolis	16	601	476	1,334	2,701.3	12	5,564	79.20	2.02	2.40	4.86	464
Eufaula	69	1,000	604	1,566	3,499.6	45	10,809	60.40	2.23	1.45	3.24	240
Gainesville	1	14	7	26	44.3	1	133	50.00	1.70	1.95	3.33	133
Gantt	1	24	17	72	126.6	0	252	70.83	1.76	2.86	5.03	
Guntersville	41	659	407	953	2,569.4	39	6,997	61.76	2.70	1.36	3.67	179
Harding	16	227	173	463	640.9	2	2,017	76.21	1.38	2.30	3.18	1,009
Harris	14	248	208	525	735.6	6	2,079	83.87	1.40	2.53	3.54	347
Holt	1	54	15	45	81.4	0	432	27.78	1.81	1.04	1.88	
Jones Bluff	3	48	35	80	156.0	1	458	72.92	1.95	1.75	3.41	458
Jordan	12	268	192	515	1,022.0	6	2,386	71.64	1.98	2.16	4.28	398
Lay	19	328	263	731	1,177.6	5	3,058	80.18	1.61	2.39	3.85	612
Little Bear	1	21	19	42	73.8	0	168	90.48	1.76	2.50	4.39	
Logan Martin	38	646	547	2,067	3,268.9	3	7,020	84.67	1.58	2.94	4.66	2,340
Martin	16	234	208	1,043	1,376.9	1	2,764	88.89	1.32	3.77	4.98	2,764
Millers Ferry	12	275	216	686	1,313.3	12	2,497	78.55	1.91	2.75	5.26	208
Mitchell	9	217	152	451	754.1	3	1,869	70.05	1.67	2.41	4.04	623
Mobile Delta	23	322	245	709	1,124.2	4	3,147	76.09	1.59	2.25	3.57	787
Neely Henry	16	262	209	628	971.0	4	2,348	79.77	1.55	2.68	4.14	587
Pickwick	23	537	328	683	1,169.6	2	4,609	61.08	1.71	1.48	2.54	2,304
Smith	5	126	69	165	210.4	0	1,072	54.76	1.28	1.54	1.96	
Tuscaloosa	1	70	49	173	229.1	1	560	70.00	1.32	3.09	4.09	560
Upper Bear	3	40	26	63	230.9	4	342	65.00	3.67	1.84	6.75	86
Warrior	3	57	35	67	111.5	1	545	61.40	1.66	1.23	2.05	545
Weiss	28	443	347	1,040	1,877.6	15	4,201	78.33	1.81	2.48	4.47	280
West Point	56	807	575	1,615	2,598.1	38	7,977	71.25	1.61	2.02	3.26	209
Wheeler	19	282	212	656	980.8	3	2,827	75.18	1.50	2.32	3.47	942
Wilson	6	89	48	81	191.1	2	772	53.93	2.36	1.05	2.48	386
Yates	2	22	18	73	103.7	0	253	81.82	1.42	2.89	4.11	
Grand Total	471	8,389	6,042	17,468	30,847.3	225	81,298	72.02	1.77	2.15	3.79	361

Table 4. Ranking by quality indicators for all reservoirs with five or more tournament reports in the 2004 B.A.I.T. program.

Rank	Percent Success	Average Weight	Bass per Angler-day	Pounds per Angler-day	Hours per Bass \geq 5LB	Overall	Value
1	Martin	Guntersville	Martin	Millers Ferry	Guntersville	Millers Ferry	86
2	Logan Martin	Wilson	Logan Martin	Martin	Millers Ferry	Weiss	74
3	Harris	Eufaula	Millers Ferry	Demopolis	West Point	Demopolis	73
4	Lay	Demopolis	Neely Henry	Logan Martin	Eufaula	Logan Martin	65
5	Neely Henry	Jordan	Harris	Weiss	Weiss	Martin	63
6	Demopolis	Millers Ferry	Weiss	Jordan	Coffeeville	Neely Henry	62
7	Millers Ferry	Weiss	Mitchell	Neely Henry	Harris	Harris	61
8	Weiss	Coffeeville	Demopolis	Mitchell	Wilson	Jordan	60
9	Harding	Pickwick	Lay	Lay	Jordan	Lay	59
10	Mobile Delta	Mitchell	Wheeler	Guntersville	Demopolis	Guntersville	58
11	Wheeler	Lay	Harding	Mobile Delta	Neely Henry	Mitchell	53
12	Jordan	West Point	Mobile Delta	Harris	Lay	West Point	49
13	West Point	Mobile Delta	Jordan	Wheeler	Mitchell	Eufaula	47
14	Mitchell	Logan Martin	West Point	West Point	Mobile Delta	Mobile Delta	45
15	Coffeeville	Neely Henry	Coffeeville	Eufaula	Wheeler	Coffeeville	44
16	Guntersville	Wheeler	Smith	Harding	Harding	Wheeler	40
17	Pickwick	Harris	Pickwick	Coffeeville	Pickwick	Wilson	36
18	Eufaula	Harding	Eufaula	Pickwick	Logan Martin	Harding	35
19	Smith	Martin	Guntersville	Wilson	Martin	Pickwick	27
20	Wilson	Smith	Wilson	Smith	Smith	Smith	10

Table 5. Bass eight pounds and larger from 2004 and 2005 B.A.I.T. tournament reports.

Weight (pounds)	Date	Location
8.56	March 13, 2004	West Point
9.00	March 20, 2004	Guntersville
8.75	April 24, 2004	Weiss
8.06	July 9, 2004	Harris
8.63	December 18, 2004	Harris
9.50	February 5, 2005	Guntersville
8.80	February 12, 2005	Eufaula
8.38	February 28, 2005	Upper Bear
8.13	March 1, 2005	West Point
10.50	March 5, 2005	Upper Bear
8.38	March 12, 2005	Upper Bear
8.16	May 21, 2005	Guntersville
8.50	July 16, 2005	Guntersville

Figure 1. Annual catch for B.A.I.T. tournaments

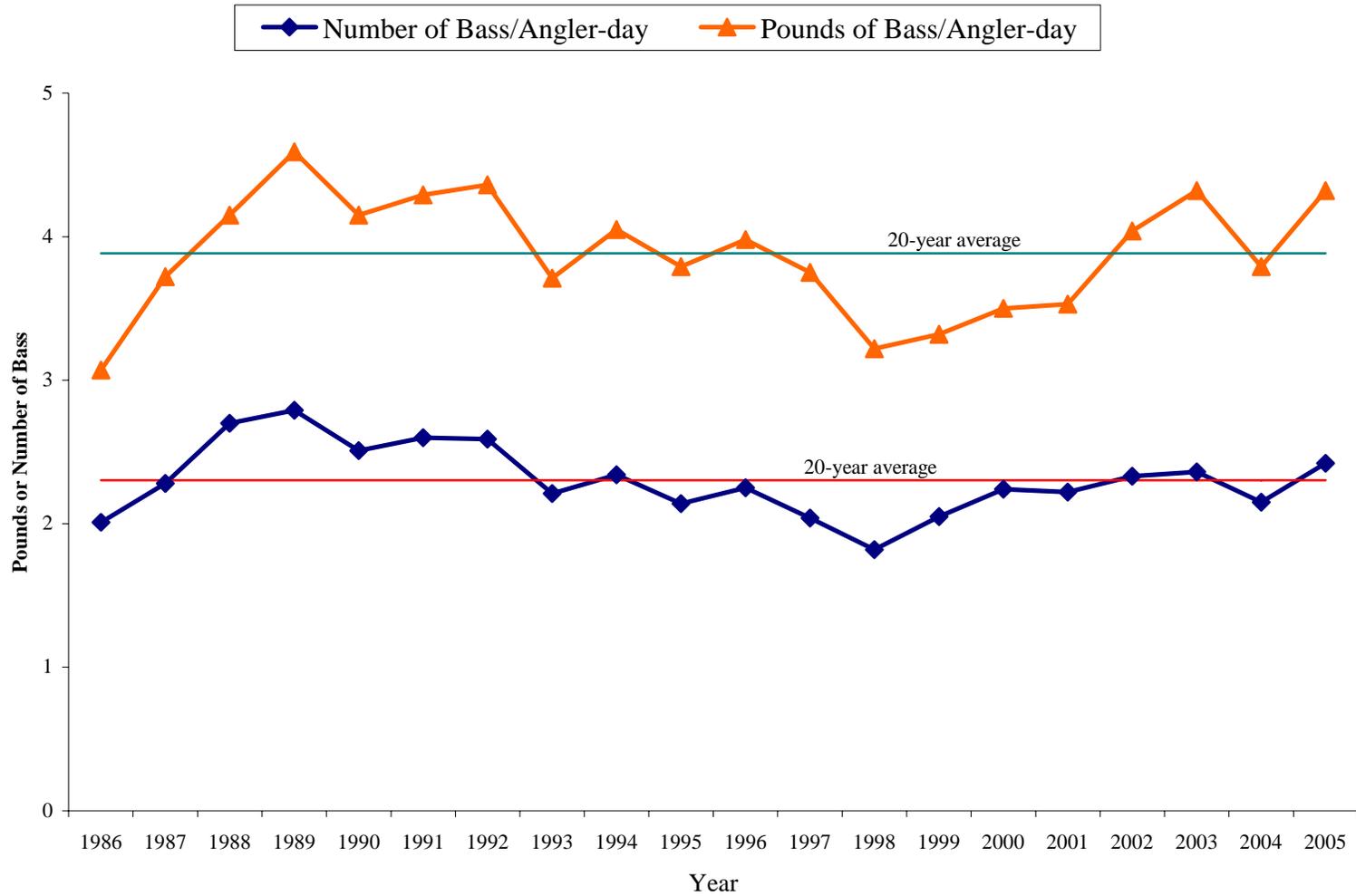
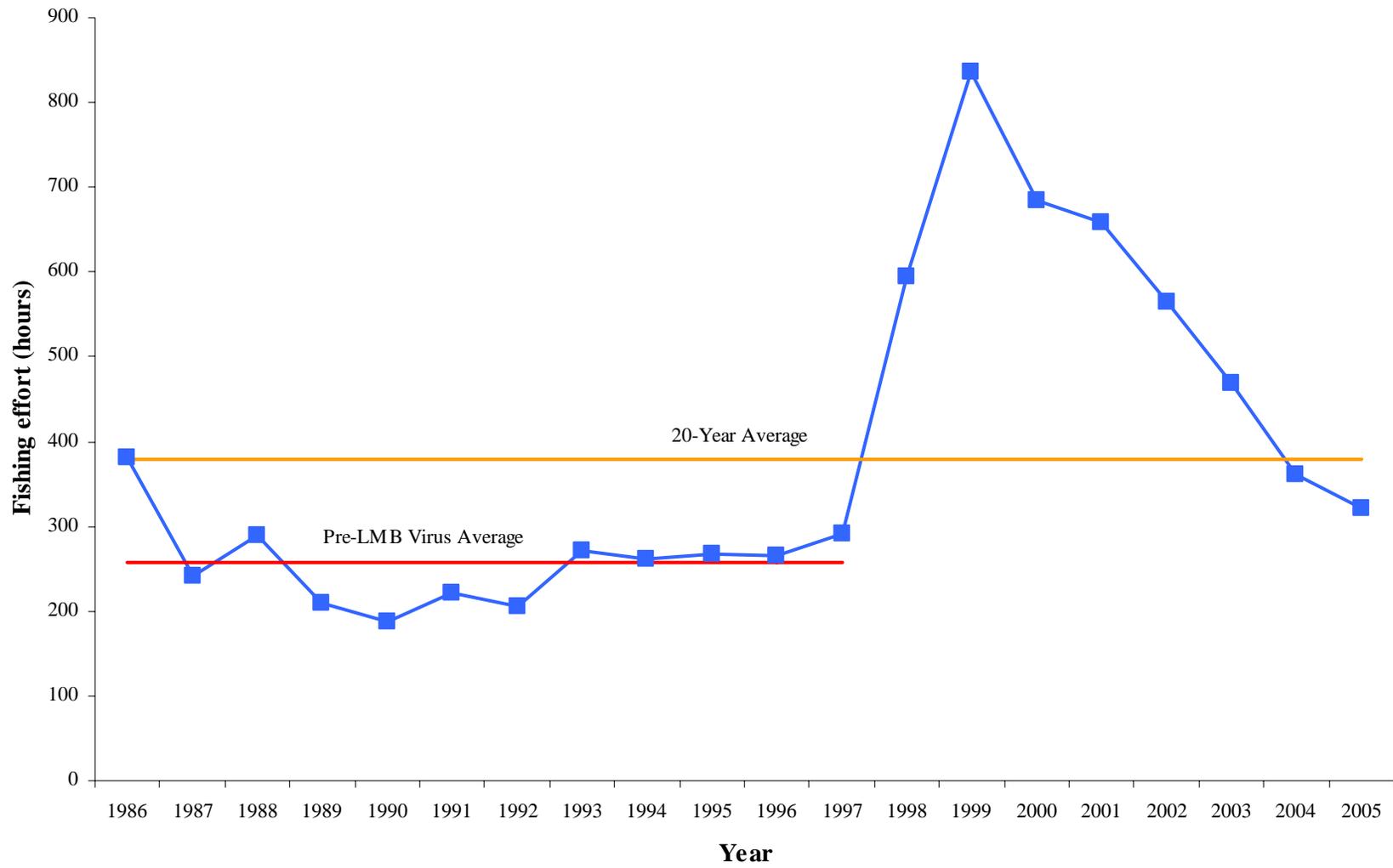


Figure 2. The average number of hours needed to catch a 5-pound or larger bass



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