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TEXAS parks & wildlife wanderlist

5 LAKES WITH BIG BASS

BY RANDY BRUDNICKI

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

SAM RAYBURN RESERVOIR

(115,000 acres, Angelina River, Southeast Texas, opened 1965) With 400 events annually, this may be the state's most popular bass tournament destination. Even after many trips, I've barely scratched the surface of spots to try my luck. Sam Rayburn may be the most consistent bass lake in Texas.

TOLEDO BEND RESERVOIR

(182,000 acres, Sabine River, Louisiana border, opened 1966) Texas shares this big lake with Louisiana. More than 100 10-pound bass catches have been documented annually here each of the last few years. The Bassmaster Elite Series returns to this popular lake in April.

AMISTAD RESERVOIR

(64,000 acres, Rio Grande, Mexico border, opened 1969) This deep, clear lake is truly unique. Steep canyon walls vary with brush and grass. On my best trip, we caught about 200 bass in three days; many were 3 to 6 pounds. The lake crashed for a while, but happily, it's rebounding now.

FALCON INTERNATIONAL RESERVOIR

(84,000 acres, Rio Grande, Mexico border, opened 1954) The water level fluctuates, as do fish numbers, but Falcon's my favorite bass lake because I know the next cast could produce a 10-pounder. A while back we caught 40 hard-fighting bass on one spot. The glory days are returning.

LAKE FORK

(27,000 acres, Sabine River, Northeast Texas, opened 1980) The first time you get on the lake, you'll wonder where to start — it all looks so "bass-y." There's a slot (size restriction on fish kept), but when you start landing 4- to 6-pound bass (with an occasional 8- or 9-pounder), you'll think you're the world's greatest angler.