

Giant Bass!!! When and where are your best chances?

By Terry Battisti

The quest for the world record bass still continues at a strong pace, especially since it could possibly mean up to million dollars to the person that catches this elusive fish. Anglers from Southern California to Florida, Mexico, Cuba, and recently Japan are coming closer each year to surpassing the 22 pound 4 ounce benchmark posted by George Perry on June 2, 1932. A few fish have tickled this goal with three reportedly surpassing the mark. But, none have actually been officially certified as real contenders due to a variety of different reasons. So when and where are your best chances to catch this elusive record? The following paragraphs will hopefully shed more light on this quest.

For quite some time, I have kept records on the largest bass weighed in this country and abroad. Twenty years ago it was because I had hopes of catching a bass that pushed the set mark. Since then, I have moved from the trophy bass haven of Southern California and now keep my records out of both curiosity and stubbornness.

Earlier this year, after another large fish had been caught and submitted for record status, I began to look deeper into my data and securing more from anglers and fish and game departments. The culmination of that time is what makes up this article. Scanning over my updated list of trophy bass, i.e. registered bass weighing over 16 pounds from across the country and abroad, I set forth to analyze the data provided to determine whether or not any trends could be distinguished. The results of this exercise are presented in this article.

A table or list, as used by others to present the largest fish caught, does little but “list” the fish. In order to determine what type of trends can be found within these data, the data must be analyzed. My list of data consists of over 100 trophy bass dating from 1923 to 2004. Although I am sure there are others that have been caught during this time, either the data was too sketchy, I was unaware of the fish, or I was unable to obtain concrete confirmation. Another requirement I placed on fish was that they had to be recognized by the respective state or country Fish and Game as fully verified or, as in the case of the 22 pound bass caught by Bob Crupi, had to have an extremely good pedigree. So, there are some fish that have been omitted from this analysis. The fish used in this study can be seen in Table 1.

The initial piece of data I was interested in determining was the month spread of when the trophy bass have been caught. Eighty-Two of the 106 bass were used in this analysis due to the fact that the specific month the fish was caught was unavailable at the time of the study. On another note, the locale in which these fish were caught was not taken into consideration because all locales in which a 16 pound or larger fish have been taken possess relatively the same year-round weather conditions. Figure 1 shows the distribution of fish relative to what month they were taken. As would be expected, springtime is the best season to be on the water in search of a record class fish. These months being January through April with March producing the highest number of trophy bass caught. In fact, over 80% of the fish analyzed are caught during these months with nearly 35% caught in March.

Another interesting set of data was the actual number of fish taken from each state or country over the benchmark weight. Figure 2 shows the distribution of fish per state/country. California had an overwhelmingly higher number of fish over 16 pounds at 83 with Texas holding second with 16. One reason for this could be due to the fact that the Florida Bass stocking programs are more mature in this state and have given rise to healthy populations of Florida hybrids which appear to grow faster and larger than their pure-strain cousins. Bass in these lakes also have more temperate weather conditions, good trout stocking programs, and at some lakes, limited daily access.

Yearly trophy catches were then plotted in order to determine how angling pressure has affected catches. As seen in Figure 3, although there have been some ebbs in the catches of these fish, for the most part, catch rate has increased over time. Cycles of low fish catch rates could have something to do with low or high water years, bait fish cycles, or other anomalies. On the other hand, the increased catch rate overall could be explained by the higher use of swimbaits by the anglers, or anglers becoming more adept at chasing lunker largemouth.

In order to help determine which lakes are kicking out 16+ pound bass, the data was plotted for both California and Texas. Figures 4 and 5 reveal these results. In order to understand the figures fully, one must look at the raw data presented in Table 1 to determine whether some of these lakes are currently producing big fish. For example, Lake Castaic and San Vicente in Southern California have produced large number of bass over 16 pounds in the past but nothing for quite some time. On the other hand, there are some lakes in Texas that are beginning to produce lunker largemouth other than Lake Fork. For more information on Texas Trophy lakes, please visit the Texas Parks and Wildlife website at www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

The data presented above will hopefully add to the knowledge of those anglers wishing to tie into that fish of a lifetime. Anglers should again, pay attention to the raw data in Table 1 when looking at any of the figures.

Acknowledgements: The Author wishes to thank Larry Bottroff of the San Diego Parks Department, Mike Long, and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for some of the data collected. Some data used in the study was not complete but all was duly certified by the associated Department of Fish and Game or Parks Department.

Rank	Pounds	Location	State	Angler	Date
1	22.25	Montgomery Lake	Georgia	George Perry	06/02/32
2	22.01	Lake Castaic	California	Bob Crupi	03/12/91
3	21.75	Lake Castiac	California	Mike Arujo	03/05/91
4	21.70	Dixon Reservoir	California	Jed Dickerson	05/31/03
5	21.19	Lake Casitas	California	Ray Easley	03/04/80
6	21.01	Lake Castaic	California	Bob Crupi	03/09/90
7	20.94	Lake Miramar	California	David Zimerlee	06/23/73
8	20.86	Lake Castaic	California	Leo Torres	02/04/90

9	20.75	Dixon Reservoir	California	Mike Long	04/27/01
10	20.25	Lake Hodges	California	Gene Dupras	05/30/85
10	20.25	Lake Miramar	California	Johnny Garduno	03/25/90
12	20.13	Big Fish Lake	Florida	Fritz Friebel	May, 1923
13	19.88	Dixon Reservoir	California	Mike Long	2004
14	19.63	Lake Baccarac	Mexico	Bruce Knutsen	01/17/93
15	19.50	Lake Miramar	California	Keith Gunsauls	03/07/88
15	19.50	Lake Casitas	California	Randy Crabtree	04/09/02
15	19.50	Dixon Reservoir	California	Mac Weakley	05/20/03
18	19.40	Ikehara Dam	Japan	Kazuya Shimada	04/22/03
19	19.25	Lake Miramar	California	Chris Brandt	03/22/98
20	19.19	Lake Wohlford	California	Steve Beasley	02/03/86
20	19.19	Lake Morena	California	Ardon Hanline	02/17/87
22	19.06	Lake Miramar	California	Sandy DeFresco	03/14/88
23	19.04	Lake Castaic	California	Danny Kadota	01/08/89
24	19.03	Success Lake	California	Larry Kerns	01/27/01
25	19.00	Lake Tarpon	Florida	Riley Witt	06/21/61
26	18.94	Lake Isabella	California	Keith Harper	April, 1984
27	18.86	Lake Castaic	California	Danny Kadota	02/12/88
28	18.81	St. Johns River	Florida	Buddy Wright	04/12/87
28	18.81	Lake Isabella	California	Joe Weaver	Feb, 1984
30	18.75	Lower Otay Lake	California	Bob Eberly	03/09/80
30	18.75	San Vicente Lake	California	James Steurgeon	02/26/81
30	18.75	Lake Castaic	California	Manny Arujo	01/25/91
30	18.75	Lake Kaweah	California	Nai Seathan	03/15/01
34	18.70	San Pablo	California	Victor Barfield	03/22/01
35	18.69	Lake Casitas	California	Bill Beckum	01/15/80
36	18.63	San Vicente	California	Doug Crandall	1979
37	18.62	Delta	California	Galen Jensen	02/10/02
38	18.56	San Vicente	California	Bobby Sandberg	1976
38	18.56	Lake Castaic	California	Bob Crupi	01/27/92
38	18.56	Don Pedro	California	Rod Martin	04/09/03
41	18.55	Lake Murray	California	Mike Long	Dec-01
42	18.25	Dixon Reservoir	California	Mike Long	2004
42	18.25	Lower Otay	California	Unknown	Mar-80
44	18.18	Lake Fork	Texas	Barry St. Clair	01/24/92
45	18.15	Natchez State Park	Mississippi	Unknown	12/31/92
46	18.13	Dixon Reservoir	California	Mike Long	2003
46	18.13	Lake Poway	California	Mike Long	2002
48	18.10	Lake Poway	California	Mike Long	1998
48	18.10	Lake Murray	California	Mike Long	Feb-99
50	18.00	Perris	California	Will Steel	12/29/02
50	18.00	San Pablo	California	Rob Belloni	05/03/03
50	18.00	Lake Murray	California	Mike Long	2000
50	18.00	Mission Viejo	California	Mike Long	2002
54	17.95	Lake Murray	California	Mike Long	Mar-99
55	17.75	San Vicente	California	Unknown	Mar-82
56	17.69	Lake Hodges	California	Unknown	Mar-85
57	17.67	Lake Fork	Texas	Mark Stevenson	11/26/86
58	17.64	Lake Fork	Texas	Stan Moss	04/01/89
59	17.63	Lake Fork	Texas	Jerry New	08/28/90
60	17.50	Lake Poway	California	Mike Long	2000

60	17.50	Lake Poway	California	Mike Long	2001
60	17.50	San Vicente	California	Unknown	Mar-79
63	17.25	Dixon Reservoir	California	Mike Long	2003
63	17.25	Lake Hodges	California	Unknown	Mar-85
63	17.25	Lake Poway	California	Mike Long	1999
66	17.19	Lower Otay	California	Unknown	Jan-85
67	17.13	Lake Poway	California	Mike Long	1998
67	17.13	Lake Poway	California	Mike Long	1999
69	17.11	Lake Murray	California	Mike Long	Mar-99
70	17.08	Lake Fork	Texas	Troy Coates	02/26/91
71	17.06	Lake Miramar	California	Mike Long	2000
71	17.06	San Vicente	California	Unknown	Feb-79
73	17.05	Lake Murray	California	Mike Long	Mar-00
74	16.89	Lake Fork	Texas	Bryan Turner	02/08/93
75	16.88	Lower Otay	California	Unknown	Feb-81
76	16.75	Lake Fork	Texas	Steve Trepkus	03/08/90
77	16.63	Lake Fork	Texas	Flo O'Brien	02/28/99
77	16.63	Lake Poway	California	Mike Long	2000
77	16.63	Lake Poway	California	Mike Long	1999
80	16.56	San Vicente	California	Unknown	Jan-80
81	16.54	Lake Fork	Texas	Bill Reed	02/27/91
82	16.50	San Vicente	California	Unknown	May-81
83	16.45	Lake Murray	California	Mike Long	Mar-01
84	16.44	Lake Fork	Texas	Chris Adams	03/10/96
84	16.44	Lake Miramar	California	Unknown	Apr-73
86	16.41	Lake Murray	California	Mike Long	Mar-00
87	16.38	Lake Poway	California	Mike Long	1999
88	16.25	Lower Otay	California	Unknown	Feb-82
88	16.25	San Vicente	California	Unknown	Nov-79
88	16.25	San Vicente	California	Unknown	Mar-82
88	16.25	Sutherland	California	Mike Long	Apr-01
92	16.19	San Vicente	California	Unknown	Jan-79
92	16.19	San Vicente	California	Unknown	Mar-81
94	16.13	Gibbons Creek	Texas	Troy Johnson	01/15/88
94	16.13	Sutherland	California	Unknown	Apr-89
94	16.13	Lake Poway	California	Mike Long	2000
97	16.12	Lake Fork	Texas	Jim Harrell	03/22/02
98	16.06	Lake Fork	Texas	Tom Hallum	03/09/88
98	16.06	Lake Hodges	California	Unknown	Apr-85
100	16.04	Lake Fork	Texas	Gasper Cardinale	02/29/92
101	16.02	Possum Kingdom	Texas	Scott Tongate	10/13/89
102	16.01	Caddo	Texas	John Merck	04/13/92
102	16.00	Cuyamaca	California	Mike Long	2002
102	16.00	Lake Poway	California	Mike Long	2002
102	16.00	Lake Poway	California	Mike Long	1999
102	16.00	Mission Viejo	California	Mike Long	2001

Table 1. Data used in Article.

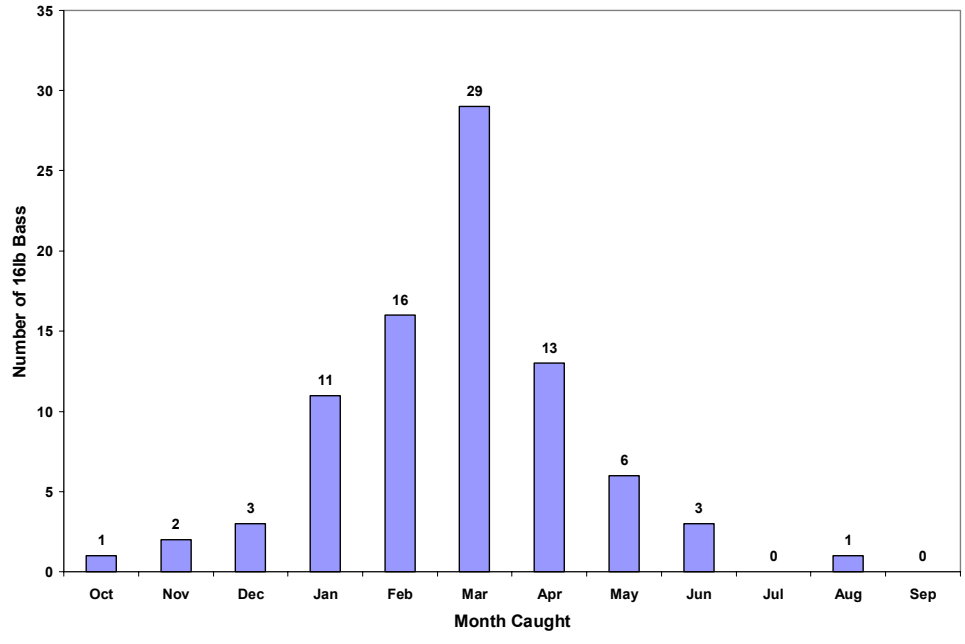


Figure 1. Number of 16-pound-plus bass caught in respective month.

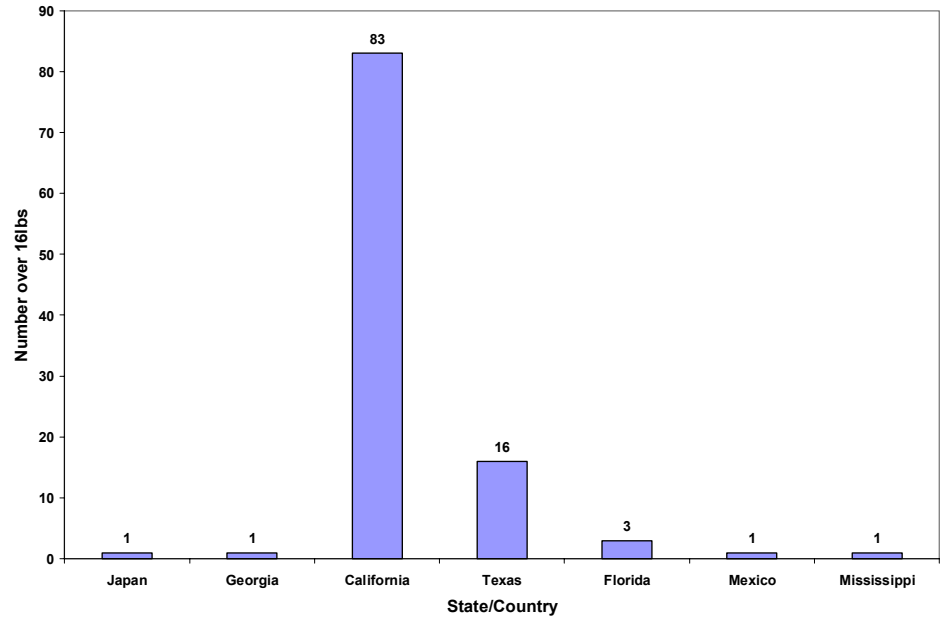


Figure 2. Number of 16-pound-plus bass caught per state or country.

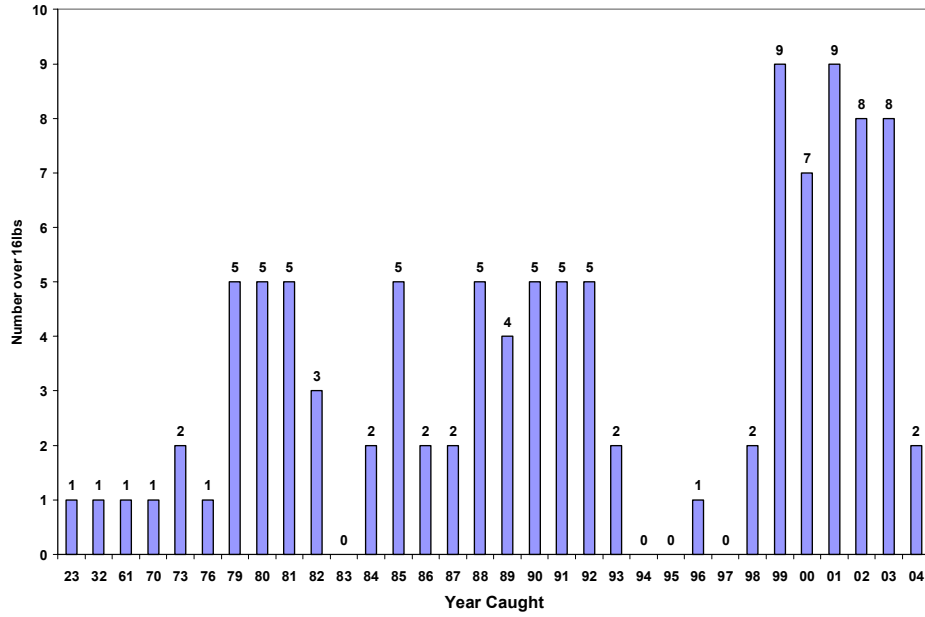


Figure 3. Number of bass caught over 16 pounds per year.

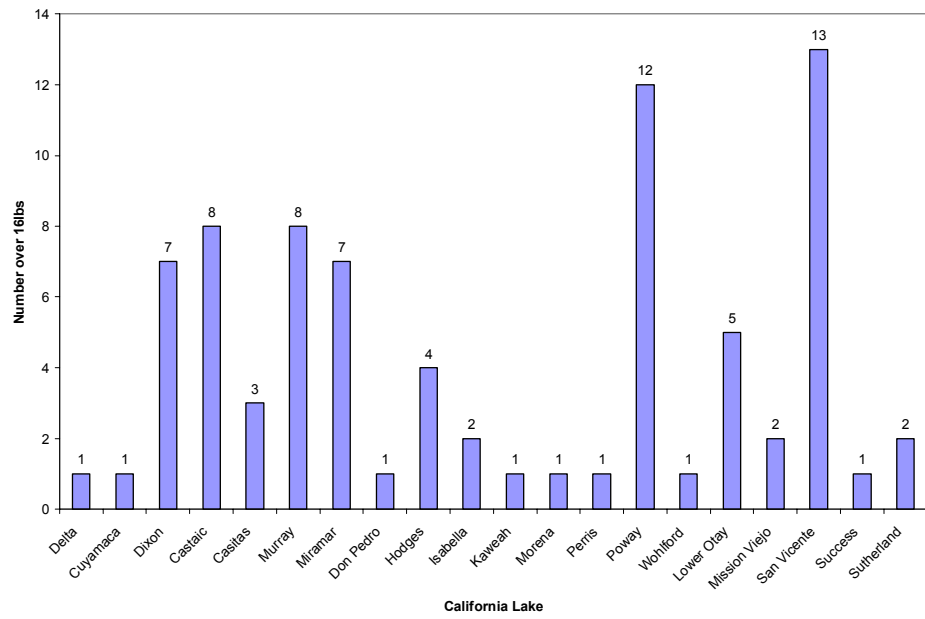


Figure 4. Number of bass caught over 16 pounds per California Lake.

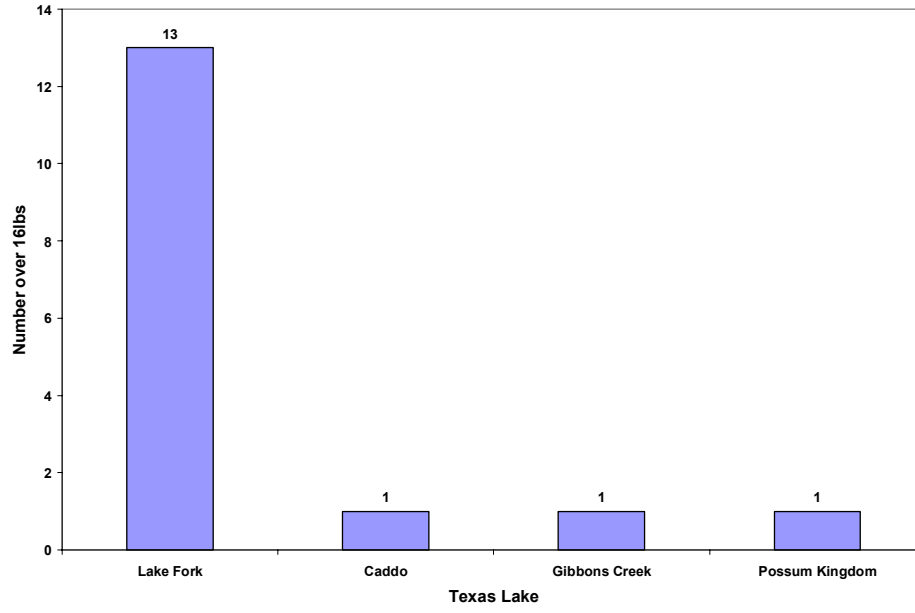


Figure 5. Number of bass caught over 16 pounds per Texas Lake.