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1950
Vol. 3 Issue 8
January

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Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Dear Sir:

I couldn’t help but write these few lines to voice my objections to C. M. Drew’s suggestion that you sell advertising space in FLORIDA WILDLIFE magazine.

To me one of the outstanding good points of this fine magazine is that we are not faced with numerous advertisements that don’t add one iota to the enjoyment of the reader.

I take several other sporting magazines and there has always been such monotony and wondement on my part as to how managing editors associate beer, wine, and liquor with outdoor sports and permit so much of this advertising to appear in their publications.

We should be in the best physical condition, and not doped up with alcohol when indulging in outdoor sports. So let’s keep our magazine clean and ban ALL advertising.

V. E. MITCHELL
Miami

RATTLESNAKE LORE

Dear Sir:

Recently I killed a five-foot diamond back, carrying nine rattles, which had just completed swallowing a full grown cotton-tail rabbit.

How does a rattlesnake capture such large prey? And in comparison with their own length, how far can they strike, and from what position? An answer through Sticks and Stones will be appreciated.

D. D. MILLS
Chattahoochee

(Literally, ‘Bitter can strike a distance of about three-quarters of his length, very rarely striking over knee high. He strikes from a coiled position. Having the faculty to throw his jaws out of joint, the rattlesnake can swallow a rabbit whole. He kills by striking and holding the animal struck until it dies.—Ed.)

The Cover

Bill Piper, the animal man from Bonita Springs, talks it over with “Swoofy,” his favorite bear.

WlTHOUT argument, Old Noah performed a swell conservation job when, two by two, he herded birds and beasts aboard the Ark and saved them from the big flood. However, there’s nothing in the Good Book indicating that he was ever called upon to wet-nurse a litter of baby foxes or assist in the hatching of a batch of crocodile eggs during the voyage.

In our modern age, Noah no doubt could learn a lot of tricks from Bill Piper, of Bonita Springs. For many years he has been serving as mid-wife to newly born Florida panthers, black bears, wildcats, and even elusive otters. As a sideline, he has taken an extremely important role in hatching crocodile eggs. All in all, it’s an amazing story about an equally amazing man!

Although Piper has no college diplomas decorating his walls, he’s an accomplished naturalist, zoologist, and

The Man Who Grows His Own Wildlife

By BILL SNYDER

was his classroom and Mother Nature his only teacher, but Bill Piper’s homespun knowledge of wildlife has earned the envy of many a professional biologist.

JANUARY, 1950

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Bill Piper, the animal man from Bonita Springs, talks it over with “Swoofy,” his favorite bear.
What’s more, he has registered unbelievable success in the strange venture. Last June 25th, he took three five-day-old kittens away from a mother after she started developing tell-tale signs of uneasiness. Two of the kittens tipped the scales at seven pounds and the others seven and one ounce each. The other weighed seven pounds and one ounce and were found on the ninth day and the kittens flourished on bottle feedings of a mixture of condensed milk, distilled water, and cod liver oil given at regular intervals. Three months later they’ve reached the size of grown housecats. At that time I assisted in putting one of the kittens on the scale—he weighed in at 71 pounds. (On Nov. 23 the same kitten weighed 18 pounds and was the size of a half-grown wildcat.) Each of the kittens was extremely playful—however, with their long, sharp claws and needle-like teeth they proved to be mighty rough playmates. At the age of three months, they greedily devoured large portions of horsemeat and liver at mealtime.

Over a period of years, Piper has raised numerous kittens the natural way when the mother showed no signs of nervousness. One of these young panthers elected to stay with its mother for a year and a half before it finally wandered in a cage by itself. Piper’s observations reveal that a panther’s gestation period averages 91 days, and the kittens, born spotted like a wildcat, are very dark in color. The spots disappear at the end of the first year. Long studies in the Everglades have convinced Bill that raccoons are the main item wild panther’s main meal. According to Piper’s records, panthers reach maturity and start breeding at the age of three. He has successfully raised 18 kittens since he started experimenting back in 1941. A number of them, now the “old-timers” have been successfully trained and pets that are used to the open, outside the bars confined inside a cage.

But has experienced exceptional luck in breeding, raising, and training Florida black bears in captivity. He has spent eight years despite his long experience, he trusts none of them, “Florida boys breed bears, bear hunters and trainers—but Florida has no old, bold, bear hunters and trainers.” He told me with a wry smile, Florida black bears, Piper explains, have a one-track mind and a low

Though Piper works out with his bears daily, he still doesn’t trust them. A few years ago he narrowly escaped death when one attacked him. Herpetologist, his education came the hard way. The vast, awe-inspiring Everglades was his schoolroom and Mother Nature served as his teacher. Today, Bill Piper is recognized as one in his chosen profession.

So far as is known, he is the only person ever to successfully breed and raise Florida panthers in captivity. However, the feat isn’t as easy as it sounds. He experienced many a disappointment and heartbreak before Augie Lassie started smiling his way. Take last year for instance, two newly born panthers were promptly killed by their mother simply because of Piper’s act of kindness. Although he had constructed a darkened den for the mother in anticipation of the “blessed event,” the female gave birth to her litter on the bare floor of her cage instead. In a thoughtful effort to offer kindly assistance, Piper carefully moved the two babies to a soft nest inside the man-made den. Demonstrating an inherent, vicious distrust for the intrusion, the mother killed both kittens within 30 minutes. On another occasion, a mother panther promptly killed her three newly born babies after several were peering inside the darkened cage, thrilled with delight at the strange sight of the tiny kittens. However, instances such as theirs, likely explain why Piper is succeeding in his panther-raising activities. He has stubbornly refused to allow failures to cool his ardor. As a result, he has more successes than failures to his credit.

On many instances, Piper himself “hand raised” the baby panthers once a mother shows signs of nervousness after she has given birth to a litter. They are naturally dreamimg of the day when they have gained your full confidence. That’s the day they’ll try to grab and kill you. You can believe Piper’s theory too—he speaks from blood-curdling experience. It was an experience that resulted in an emergency trip to the hospital and 27 stitches to close up his slashed arms and face. For many months Bill had been rearing an act with one of the bears he had raised in captivity. The act was staged outside the cage and eventually the bear learned to dance, rollover, and turn somersaults. At the end of the routine, the bear comically would suck milk from a rubber-nipped bottle, and then politely return it to Piper before galloping to its cage. Suddenlly one day the bear developed stubbornness and resentment—he started biting the rubber nipple in two before returning the empty bottle. Two or three days later, Piper decided to break the aggravating habit.

Unexpectedly, he grabbed the bottle from the bear’s mouth an instant before it had been emptied. Within a split second, the infuriated bear grabbed him in a death-grip and started slashing and tearing at his arms and face. Fortunately, the bear’s bad disposition and the fight ended simultaneously. Throwing Piper to the ground like a piece of paper, the bear nonchalantly walked to his cage door and waited for his bleeding trainer to let him in.

Bill’s bear-raising program actually started on Feb. 25, 1941, when he acquired three tiny cubs that were found stranded on a floating log after several hunters killed the mother in a Collier county forest. Piper paid the hunters $45 for the cub trio and later carried his purchase home in the very bottom of a puny sack. Since that time he has succeeded in raising 20 cubs in captivity.

One of the original bears, now weighing nearly 350 pounds, gained national prominence during the filming of “The Yearling.” Under Bill’s direction, the bear appeared in the role of “Slewfoot” who apes the big bear actually was chasing Piper who ran far enough ahead to stay out of the film while the “taken” were made. “I had the scare of a lifetime once during the filming when something happened that we hadn’t figured on,” Piper recalls. “I was running full speed ahead and looking backward over my shoulder at the bear when, all of a sudden, I felt flat in a big mud puddle. I felt certain Slewfoot would grab me when he caught up.”

Continued on Page 13
"Reindeer, mama, Santa Claus' reindeer!" excitedly shouted a ten-year-old Louisiana Cajun in a Baton Rouge service station.

"Nonsense," said mama, "they're going to have a deer shoot and give away venison prizes for Christmas dinner."

"Waal," quipped a red-faced Alabaman in Mobile. "Won't the hunters shoot 'em as fast as you turn 'em loose?"

"Are you going to put them in a park?" queried a short, stocky man at Houston, Texas.

Those are typical comments the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission got from residents of other states last month when they saw the year's first truck load of Texas white-tail deer enroute to Florida's understocked and shot-out deer ranges.

And surprisingly most Floridians are no wiser. Few indeed have any inkling that the game department has quietly begun work to convert the state's nearly 24,000,000 acres of good and habitable deer lands into the top hunting country in the south.

The possibilities are enormous. Competent biologists estimate the deer population can be upped from the present approximate 32,000 to an eventual 400,000. This can be accomplished, they contend, by releasing 200 animals a year to breed in protected areas.

Visionary Chamber of Commerce people are beginning to preach the Florida gospel of beaches, sunshine, fishing, and DEER HUNTING. They theorize, backed up by sound soil opinion, that a great portion of Florida lands are unfitted for ordinary agriculture. But not deer farming. So why not grow a bumper deer crop and at harvesting time each year let the state's businesses figure to deer hunting dollars?

However, the game commission is moving cautiously. Although the rewards look great, so do the pitfalls. The biggest bug-a-boo facing advocates of the plan is the historical and mutual distrust between hunter and landowner, with the State Game Commission in the middle.

If the landowner will support a long-range restoration program, if the sportsmen will observe the hunting rules and help curb illegal hunting in the stocked areas, and if the state can keep enough competent wildlife officers in the field to nab the game hogs, then the plan might work.

Last experiences, though, make the state reluctant to forecast immediate success. Several years ago it restocked a South Florida county at the request of its sportsmen. The very next year those same sportsmen were back in Tallahassee demanding that the section be opened to deer hunting again so they could go back and shoot the few breed stock.

Deer were also released in a neighboring county in the same district that year. And in less than a month two of the imported deer were found dead, shot by poachers.

It's a long Kentucky-mining shot and success rates on landowner-hunter opinion which is the making now. One day soon, the commission figures, Florida sportsmen will realize that some equitable conservation plan must be accepted if there is to be any hunting left. Empty bags and pellucid days afield will bring this about if nothing else does. Then, and not before, the courts throughout the state will be as tough on game laws violators as they are on other criminals now. For this the commission patience waits.

Realizing the pitfalls of a state-wide program, the game agency is confining its first deer restocking experiment to the Myakka River Area in South Florida's Sarasota, Hardee and Manatee Counties. The deer habitat there—and particularly, the landowner-hunter attitudes—is ideal.

Last year the sportsmen of the section, faced with consistent bad luck in the woods, invested their counties be closed to the taking of deer.

(Continued on Page 16)
Archery is no sissy sport—not when wild game is the target. Florida is made to order for this new kind of hunting thrill, yet few of our sportsmen have given it a try.

The wounded black bear had one of Lester Lang's two arrows in him when he took off through the woods. After three hours of tracking, Lang finally caught up with him and loosed the other arrow, hitting him in the rump. Out of arrows, Lang ran by the 300-pound bruin and pulled an arrow out of him as he passed. He fitted it to his bow and let fly. The shaft caught the bear between the eyes and killed it.

This isn't the recommended way to hunt with a bow and arrow, but it is only one of the thrilling kills that make bow and arrow hunters sweat by their weapons.Florida is ideal for this kind of hunting but only a few adventurous souls have tried it. It takes skill, woodsmanship and just plain guts. It definitely isn't a sport for sissies.

Why Floridians haven't left the country when it comes to hunting with the bow and arrow is a major mystery. Floridan terrain is exceptionally well suited to this kind of hunting. The heavily wooded areas, heavy brush and frequent proximity of such areas to farmland all combine to make an archer's heart beat in wild anticipation of good hunting prospects. But the sport has been sadly neglected in the Sunshine state.

Not so in other states. Bow hunting is most prevalent in the West and Midwest. Back in 1944 over 20,000 hunters were using bows. In the past six years the number has increased tremendously. As an example, the number of archery permits issued for the 1948-49 season in the state of Washington increased 66 per cent over the 1947-48 season.

In 1958 Allegan County in Michigan had a mere 228 bow hunters but by 1945 the number had swelled to 2010 licensed archers in this county alone.

Many states either set aside special bow hunting areas or provide a special season for archers. In the states of Utah, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan the bow season is separate from the gunning season. Washington has reserve set aside where only the feet of bow hunters may tread.

The winged shafts have found their marks in reserves in Vermont, New York, New Jersey and other northeastern states. Georgia has been the scene of bow hunts with the wise wild boar as the quarry. North Carolina and Tennessee have had their share of this brand of hunting, too, as have dozens of other states.

Florida hasn't been left out by a long shot, but the sport has few followers here and these appear to be mostly in the northern part of the state. The capital city of Tallahassee, in particular, is well populated with bow enthusiasts. But Florida could use a lot more such hunters.

What holds those archers to their sport? Why do they persist in using such outlandish weapons when there are lots of good guns available? Al Williams can probably answer that one.

"It's the sense of satisfaction I get when I make a kill," says Al. "I've hunted a lot with shotguns and rifles but it never feels as good to bring home a rabbit or squirrel I've killed with a gun as it does to bring back one I've managed to put an arrow through. I guess it's because you've got to be a better hunter to get the same amount of game if you want to get it with a bow and arrow. I've put to my first deer with a bow but I'm going to keep right on trying until I succeed—and that'll be just the beginning."

Al went on several deer and bear hunts this season in the Tallahassee area and he's going to keep right on the trail till he brings home the venison.

Al bought the arrows he uses; but he did as many archers do—he made his own bow. From a state of

(Continued on Page 19)
**TALLAHASSEE ELE LODE**

has perfected a recipe that is certain to produce a satisfactory growth of good citizenship and respect for Florida's wildlife conservation program. The ingredients are commonplace but carefully mixed to produce the desired results.

To a 'teen-age youngster's vacation, add a crystal-clear lake, the pungent odor of the Apalachicola forest, comfortably equipped cabins, plenty of substantial camp meals, numerous fishing trips, and daily jaunts on secluded, winding nature trails. While the main ingredients are being mixed, carefully sift in the advice and counsel of a qualified camp staff. Give the finished product away absolutely free—and await the results.

That recipe in effect is the one that will be used by Tallahassee Elks this coming summer when they entertain numerous groups of youngsters at the Silver Lake Organization Camp, just 12 miles from the State Capitol building! It's a plan that deserves the conscientious study of other organizations—sportsmen's clubs, civic bodies, church groups.

First credit for the plan goes to John E. Montgomery, former FBI agent and present Tallahassee Chief of police. He dreamed it up three years ago and then refused to forget the vision. Sometime, he reasoned, he'd find the way to provide free summer vacations for deserving kids. For years he had detested the term "underprivileged" when used to describe certain groups of children.

"It won't work," one hard-shelled businessman told him several years ago when he sought funds for a deserving kids' summer camp.

"I'll take more finances than you can find," another told Montgomery. Despite this type of opposition, his dream refused to fade.

Last September the three-year-old vision started taking form. Due to lack of finances, the Florida Park Board was compelled to drop its issue on the Silver Lake property. This situation became the signal that set Montgomery's plans in motion.

At the termination of several conferences, Montgomery had succeeded in convincing officials of the U.S. Forest Service that the camp property would be the means of fostering good citizenship if it was turned into a summer vacationland for youngsters.

"I'll keep the kids off the street corners," he told the group. "It will be the means of supplying 'em with a good, clean vacation—likely the first real vacation many have ever had."

As a result of Montgomery's convincing salesmanship, he wound up

Up Tallahassee way, the Elks Lodge has taken a police chief's idea and an abandoned park site, and parlayed them into a great civic venture.

Ten youthful vacationers will be accommodated in each of the camp's 16 rustic cabins. When there are no-youth groups in camp, the buildings will be available to regular vacationers at $12 weekly.

with a two-year lease on the property —and an option for as many future years as he wanted.

Next came the most important problem of all—financing the project! The camp's 16 cabins needed urgent repairs. Toilet rooms needed refurbishing. The kitchen required new equipment. Floodlights had to be installed throughout the camp area. Outdoor ovens had to be built. The water system needed repair.

It all added up to a lot of money—and Montgomery didn't have a dime in the camp fund! Even this situation failed to throw him off his charted course. Within two weeks the Tallahassee Elks Lodge agreed to finance the project, and Montgomery had at last been given the signal to go ahead with his plans.

First of all, he reasoned, he needed a qualified camp superintendent to take charge of the necessary camp repairs and improvements. He was fortunate in meeting and hiring Haines B. Mead, former superintendent of Indiana's famous 17,556 acre

Picknickers are charged 15 cents a head for the privilege of cooking outdoors, and enjoying full use of the camp's bathing facilities. Funds from this source will help provide free vacations for worthy youngsters.
HE GROWS HIS WILDLIFE

(Continued from Page 1)

but instead he stepped heavily on my back and kept right on going.

He's never cut royalties to carnivals and circuses, he explains, because his audience would bother me too the rest of my life once I started that the snaker I sold likely weren't cut the price of the flooring grocer and sufficient food out on the road.

No, Piper's interest in Florida snakes and animals has been prompted by a desire for money. Only a young college student approached him in an effort to acquire a collection of living snake specimens. He learned that the collection was necessary before he'd be granted college credits necessary to graduate as a zoologist.

"I'll have to buy 'em pretty cheap because I haven't got market money," the student confided earnestly.

Three days later the happy student

Piper provides expectant mother otters with eyes focused on empty oil barrels and covered inside with rubber rafts. Approximately the size of half-grown rats, the baby otters usually weigh two pounds when born in December or January. Most mothers proudly lead their family out of the oil barrel and give them their first look at the world in general.

Piper's records show that otters give birth to two babies at the age of three to four weeks in the fall, or to the first time they are with the babies away from a string and regular diet of warm milk mixed with cod liver oil. Eventually water is added to the mixture. Once the cubs attain sufficient size, they consume all meals daily. Pablum is served for breakfast and consists of chunks of chicken, meat, the youngsters gobble down along with portions of fish, horse shoes, frog's, and crayfish.

Otters, Bill has learned, are extremely intelligent and easy to train. Many of his hand-raised otters have been taught to retrieve sticks and other objects, to secure a few easy jobs follow him like a family dog. One fellow in particular follows Bill to a nearby river bank for a few hours and obediently trails at his heels when he goes fishing. Raising crocodiles in captivity likely will go down in the books as being Piper's most interesting and interesting and effective. A few years ago, Bill expressly the opinion that less than 50 crocodiles remain in the Everglades as a reminder of a species nearing extinction—Piper has more than 200 in his little farm at Boca Raton. They range from mere babies to one giant specimen that may weigh about 800 pounds and is still growing!

For years Piper's efforts to hatch crocodile eggs resulted in plenty of heartbreak and not a single baby croc. After months of study he eventually discovered the cause of all his failures. He learned from observation that mother crocodiles return to their hidden nests on the 60th and 705th days and begin uttering a low, constant sound. Almost immediately, according to Piper, the babies answer the call and begin their way out of the eggs.
National Wildlife Federation has announced a musical fest for the annual National Wildlife Week observance, March 19-25. It has enlisted the cooperation of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America, Inc., for the observance of the event throughout the nation.

If you don’t have a good barbershop quartet in your community, there is plenty of time to enlist volunteers and start practicing some of the old bad tunes suggested by the national organization. Prompt a meeting to celebrate Wildlife Week and win some lively publicity for your club.

‘‘NEW WAY TO HARMONY’’

Recently I observed an experiment, amongst sportsmen’s clubs in a certain county, that has resulted in drawing them into close harmony than ever before. These clubs figured out a rotating visiting schedule, and representatives from all of them started attending the scheduled meetings of all the country’s sportsmen’s organizations. The visitors were invited to speak on subjects of interest to them and their own clubs, and to offer suggestions for various actions that could be taken by all—for the good of all concerned.

After a few such meetings, committees were appointed, with a balanced number of members from each club, to confer at state and national level and work out means for achieving their mutual goal. Eventually, five clubs joined in staging a big barbeque—with each one providing its share of the food. It was a definite success and everyone attending came away with a new feeling of fellowship.

It is my belief that if our clubs in all Florida counties would adopt a similar plan, stronger interest would be developed in conservation problems and community sports activities. Then when the problems are actually faced, these organized bodies will be so well united that decisions for concerted action can be easily made.

In most counties such a program would have far-reaching effects. The publicity resulting from large and successful get-togethers would naturally create a new membership interest. All sportsmen would eventually become aware of the benefits available to them if they signed up with their local sportsmen’s club.

Why not take the initiative and give this plan a try? Invite your neighboring clubs to attend your meetings. Soon you will receive reciprocal invitations and from then on you will have better social programs—more true results—more fun. Give it a whirl.

WILDLIFE POSTER ENTRIES

Dozens of Florida children have entered the National Wildlife Federation annual poster contest this year. The Florida Wildlife Federation reports that more than 600 applications for contest rules have been received from elementary and junior high school students throughout the state.

Prizes amounting to $500 will be awarded to the student submitting the most original ideas in the wildlife posters. The judging will take place in Washington during January, 1950, and the winners will be announced February 1.

NEW CONSERVATION STAMPS

Now available in books of 30 attractive colored glossy prints of birds, fish, and game, the 1950 wildlife conservation stamps will sell for 20 cents each. The year complete with descriptive data under each stamp sells for 50 cents. And the 11 colored glossy prints of birds, fish, and telephone number of目 subject received from each club, to confer at state and national level and work out means for achieving their mutual goal.

During the recent turkey shoot, operated especially by club officers and members, 66 turkeys were awarded to lucky marksmen while the club was raking in a total of $1,662.43. These proceeds include $700 including the cost of the turkeys. Ten marksmen competed for each gobbler, and 12 went to the firing line for hens. Regular target distances were used at 30 yards.

The event was given wide newspaper and radio publicity in advance which accounted for much of the success. The TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT, local evening paper, and radio stations WTLT and WNTN cooperated greatly in attracting huge crowds to the turkey shooting range.

Due to the success of the venture, club members voted on an amendment at a meeting on December 21.

J. D. Turnerville is club president, Eugene Kelley is a secretary.

FLORIDA WILDLIFE FEDERATION NOTES

President: E. A. Markham, Gulfport

Treasurer: — — William Fainville, St. Petersburg

Executive Secretary: — — Mrs. Helen Silliman

OFFICERS

Recording Secretary: George A. Speer, Sanford

Executive Secretary: Mrs. Helen Silliman

Lady Anglers Cop Jackpot Then Donate Winnings To Club Building Fund

ST. PETERSBURG—Feminine members of two sportmen’s clubs in this county recently banded together in staging what is believed to be the first all-women’s deep-sea fishing party.

Under the chairmanship of Mrs. George Benton, of the St. Petersburg Rod and Gun Club, 24 sports-women from her organization staged a two-day fishing trip for all-day trip to the fishing grounds many miles at sea.

Two new club members proved their fishing abilities by tying for the jackpot awarded for the biggest fish caught. Picking their good sportsmanship, the two lucky anglers, Mrs. Gay White, St. Petersburg Publicity Department, and Mrs. Flo McKibbon, former Zigfield Follies star, contributed their winnings to the building fund of the St. Petersburg Rod and Gun Club clubhouse on Lake Magoon.

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MORE DEER FOR FLORIDA

(Continued from Page 7)
been built-up — at least five years. Then the landowner will issue permits to hunt.

How many? The minimum requirement is one hunter for every 200 acres for a four day hunt period. Or, if in other words, four hunt-days for each 200 acres per season. The maximum, however, is merely the minimum. The owner could, and usually will, allow more hunting. But it will be up to him, not a state commission, to decide.

He will not be permitted to allow just his friends to hunt. The contract specifies at least half the permits must go to natives of the county. The rest may be issued to anyone. And one-third of his land must always be closed as a refuge to insure future hunting.

The game commission’s part in the program is to furnish the seed stock and see that its game officers nab any and all game spoilers out of it. He hopes the courts will back him up by meting out stiff sentences to the violators. The courts do, or so he says. And so do the landowners.

Gaining the approval of a few key landowners and sportsmen, the hunt went to work. He organized the wild-life officers into salesmen groups and went out to sell the unique idea. And in short time they had the bulk of good deer land in the Myakka River section under the agreement.

Then at high noon one day last December, Cranberry and an office personnel gathered at the Diamond T truck out of Tallahasse and made Bay St. Louis, La., before the following day. Hardly done off the truck, they drove straight to the Mississippi delta to Victoria, a little town in south Texas. There they bought a herd of 500 deer from theering is to be shown to the county’s schools, sportsmen groups and various civic

THERE’S no doubt the deer releases are bringing harmony between sportsmen and landowners. Whether this mutual faith will hold up over the years it will take to build up a sizable deer herd is yet to be seen. Meanwhile, Fred Stanberry is fast becoming the deer expert. He’s learning this from the Texans. Because the Texas hunting program, climate and size of their deer are similar to Florida’s the commission is looking to her for help. And they call the official deer man.

If you ask him, though, he’ll scratch his head and say: "There’s no such thing as a deer expert. Game management and especially deer management is in its infancy, and no one knows how well things are going."

Although the state is now buying Texas and Wisconsin deer to stock in Florida’s depleted ranges, it plans some day to trap its own from deer country here and spread them over the state.

That’s where Texas comes in. They have the best deer trapping program in the country, and it’s adaptable to Florida conditions. One man, Guy Cobath, old time Texas trapper, taught young Stanberry facts on deer trapping that aren’t found in textbooks. Cobath, Stanberry claims, is one of the few experts. The records show he has trapped more than 10,000 deer in the last five years of service. So we’ll agree.

Texas deer trapping is something like the old-fashioned roundups. The traps are wooden, or aluminum, oblong boxes set in a clump of woods usually attracting 250 acres in the vicinity. The doors are raised at each end and held open by a trigger release buried in the ground under the trap. The traps are baited with salt on the inside, a particularly appetizing morsel to deer. When the deer goes into after the critters take the bait, it steps on the door which releases the doors and their weight slams down, springing the trap. The deer, as it encounters the aluminum ones, are exceptionally light and give when the deer gets his head stuck and he usually dies. So the deer are released and it only takes a few to be captured.

The traps are highly successful. On the night before the Florida delegation arrived, the Texans had set 64 baited traps. They netted 32 deer on the trip around the trap line the next morning. Only one trap was found sprung and empty. A wild bear had wandered in, tripped the trap, then broke out.

An estimated 150,000 deer were killed in the 5-day Wisconsin hunting season this year.

CALM COUNTY

Fishing is good everywhere on the Apalachicola, Chipola and Ochlockonee Rivers in Calhoun County. Crappie, chain pickerel, small mouth bass, and bass are hitting early this year and late in the evening. Each worm is the favorite bait for everything except bass and they are taking live bait and annual minnows.

ST. JOHNS RIVER

If you can’t catch your limit of 8 lb. of the fightingest game fish black bass, you can always find the St. Johns River but you’ll need the correct tackle. They’re in plenty, from Green Cove Springs down to the river the fish are biting to such an extent that it rates the “best fishing ground around” award for January.

Bass are biting in Clay County, St. Johns at the mouth of the Palatka, Clark’s Creek, Cove, Silcox Creek, and Little Black Creek. From County ool ing folk are bragging about the best catches in years along the main body of the river as well as in Daneel Creek, Crescent Creek and Lake George near Palatka. Fishermen along Seminole County that are using long for live bait and lures in a big way on the remains in Lake Jesup.

Down in deep South Florida this river below Lake Wimini is the perfect fly fishing area. Everybody is catching their limit.

The warmouth perch and bream are also giving everyone who tries his luck with them an interesting test. Live bait and worms are still the prize drawing card. When you “score off” with this fellow something is going to take a licking.

More luck has been had early in the morning and late in the evening than any other time. Shiners are top baits for bass, although artificial lures have been attracting some fine specimens. Worms are standard for warmouth perch and bream.

(Continued on Page 21)

ST. LUCIE RIVER

The St. Lucie River near Fort Pierce is the place to go if you’re looking for fishing variety. Salt water snook, snapper and tarpon vie for consideration along with fresh water bass and bream found in these waters. A good bright top water plug will bring you plenty of action with salt and fresh water fish. Flyrodders are giving the bream a merry time sometimes they get more than they bargain for when a larger fish from the deep river takes their bait.

PANASOFFAKEE LAKE

If you hunger for the spices of tasty panfish, your best bet this month is Panasoffakee Lake in Sumter County. Shellcrackers and blue gills dominate that lake, and red drum are fairly plentiful. On this small body of Florida water they bite all day. The fish are willing to take the bait because they have few distractions other than the occasional fly fisherman.

CLEMONT CHAIN

Fishing is hitting a rip high on the picturesque Clemons Chain of lakes sprinkled throughout Okeechobee County’s Lake Okeechobee. Although scrapping bass are providing the main action for Lake Okeechobee fishing enthusiasts, deep and shallow pickerel, bass and warmmouth perch are giving anglers a chance to fish in other than the normal blue gill frequency. Old time fishing wacks guarantee the break of a year and limits if you wet your line around the grossly points, bream ponds, and bream sloughs. Anglers are getting in again and again.

January, 1950

FLORIDA WILDLIFE
FIRING LINES

REACTION TIME IS A QUARTER OF A SECOND

by NICHOLAS CURTIS

Who are America’s fastest scattershot shooters? The answer: Skeet shooters between 13 and 19 years of age. These youngsters are faster than older skeet shooters, faster than trap shooters, or for that matter duck, goose, quail, pheasant and rabbit hunters.

There’s no argument about it anymore because it’s now been tested scientifically. Before you start writing letters contesting this statement, fortify yourself with the following facts:

How fast a scattershotter reacts when he sees his bird or clay target and then gets off his shot makes up one of the decisive factors in scoring a hit.

A young buck is supposed to have quicker reactions than an old timer which explains why aerial gunners have usually been youngsters. Although the target of a duck hunter or a trap or skeet shooter doesn’t streak through the air as fast as an enemy plane, the shotgunner must still be fast because his targets have speeds up to 60 miles an hour.

The speed with which you see your target and pull the trigger is called human reaction time. The average time for this entire operation was given as 376 seconds. In the brief interval of time, two thirds of a second was given as the figure for human reaction.

The death of a second has been regarded generally by psychologists as average. Shooters have accepted the same figure because it had been established, or rather cunrded, by a test of 280 shooters in 1932. However, in 1948, although many individuals were tested whose reactions were remarkably fast, the average of 376 seconds was established. The 1932 figure had been 382 seconds.

Thus, instead of having an average reaction time of about two thirds of a second, shooters have a reaction time of about a quarter of a second. The difference between the 1932 and the current figure is probably due to the larger sample used, the improved equipment and the improved techniques employed.

Ages Make Difference

In 1932 there was a notable difference between the reaction of the 45 to 49-year-old shooters and the 10 to 15 year olds. Seventeen years ago the kids were slower, and you weren’t fast until you were at least 40 years old when you were about five hundredths of a second faster than the kids.

Today, it’s the 30 to 35-year-olds at which we are the fastest, but their difference in speed has now been cut down to thousandths of a second.

In the past seventeen years it seems that the big differences between age groups have been pretty much locked up and there are probably more shooters of all ages who average a fast gun than ever before.

The test has also shown that skeet shooters as a class are faster than trap shooters. The average for the 908 shooters, and we may take that as representative of the country’s scattershotters, was 35119 seconds.

As a class, the fastest gun-handlers in the country today are the five-year-old skeet shooters who average 22200 seconds. Yet, taking both trap and skeet shooters, the average for a six-year-old group have the fastest reaction time: 24332 seconds.

The difference here is so small that it virtually doubles the average faster than the average.

While only 908 tests are used to produce our figure, the group of 1948 was tested. Of this group the fastest average for any individual was .6926 seconds estimated by instructor Walter F. Siegmead of Alton, Illinois.

The results were within such a close average figure that the difference is practically purpose except to corroborate further the validity of the average figure for all shooters.

Men Faster Than Women

To keep the record straight, here are some of the trivia differences:

Men are .00873 seconds faster than women.

Skeet hunters are thousandths of a second faster than geese, duck, pheasant and rabbit hunters who are separated from each other at the start by the number named by other thousandths of a second.

Also in thousandths of a second—

Bird shooters are faster than rifle shooters.

Revolver shooters are faster than pistol shooters.

Vets of World War II are faster thanvets of World War I.

Right-handed men outlast left-handers.

Those who have shot from 11 to 15 years are faster than those who have shot 16 to 20 years.

And those who have shot less than a year are faster than those who have shot 10 to 15 years.

The fact that the reaction time of American scattershotters has slowed up about 25 seconds since 1932 could mean to some people that as a nation we have begun to slow up a little or that we are graduating learning the more slowly approach. This, however, would require that you consider five hundredths of a second more important than ever before.

This isn’t to say that we can’t compete with the world’s best, but it does mean that we can’t be as good.

The test of discipline to which a bow and arrow is subjected is a perfect test to the young man who wants to enter the field of duck hunting. He may ask, “How do you improve your reaction time?”

A great deal of practice can be done in simulating the reactions of the expert gunner. Even the casual gunner can improve his reaction time simply by reading and familiarizing himself with the data on the subject.

The results of the tests so far indicate that they can be done extra plates to the average hunting technique.

The data given here italicized to the young gunner. He will learn the same as the expert gunner if he follows the same course.

This is why the young man should study the data on the subject and work at it. He will then be better prepared to meet the competition.

There’s no way to learn to shoot a bow and arrow. It must be a matter of practice. After about a year of steady raving—that’s shooting at trees, stump, crows and other objects —an archer can be pretty certain that if he can cross a deer at 200 yards within range he’ll be able to hit it with an arrow. Straight target shooting at measured distances will give him this skill. When game shows up it isn’t going to be just so many yards away and it isn’t going to wait for you to sight in on it. After sufficient practice shooting an arrow becomes a second nature to the archer, and he doesn’t even have to think about it when he releases it. It is an amazing how accurately the hunter can place his arrow.

A lot of gun hunters think that a bow is something used at a girl’s school or as a boy’s plaything. It isn’t true. You couldn’t be “wheeler.” Women’s bows have a light pull, usually not over 20 pounds, and they are used to push 30 pounds of force that must be exerted in the string to draw the bow back fully. Men’s bows usually pull no more than 45 pounds. But hunting
Ocala Hunt Records Show High Deer Kill

This year's deer kill in the Ocala National Forest public hunting which ended Dec. 21 totaled 362, exceeding the 297 killed in 1949 by three animals. Four bears were also bagged.

Permits sold to 3,575 hunters — 3,353 adults and 323 youths — brought total revenues of $16,909 to the U. S. Forest Service and the State Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. Last year 3,922 permits were issued.

In addition to the deer and bears killed, hunters took out of the forest 443 small game, including quail, ‘possum, skunk, and beech.

Of the hunt spent $72.50 for 700 pounds of dog food, a free service offered at checking stations. They also took in $30 in $2 bills paid by hunters for permitting their hounds to run in the refuge.

In the north end of the management area 230 deer were bagged while 70 were killed in the south end. Successful hunters came from 85 cities and towns in Florida, while seven came from other states. Out-of-state hunters came from Alabama, Georgia, Illinois and Tennessee. Georgia hunters led the list with five kills. Tennessee came second with three.

The State Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission recouped over a million pounds of fresh water fish from dried up pot-holes last year.
Lucky Sailor Bags Four Bears With Four Shots On Deer Hunt

Four shots, four bears, and one astonished but happy sailor!

That’s the bear story unfolded on a deer hunt near Mandalay in Jefferson County last month. Nineteen-year-old James Thompson, of Chattahoochee, flushed a moose and three cubs from his deer stand and killed all four with four gunshot blasts.

Two Million People To Witness Wildlife Show

The Sport Commission’s portable 50-foot wildlife exhibit likely will be viewed by nearly two million people during the next three months, Director Coleman Newman revealed recently.

The exhibit, he explained, has been toured with 10 south Florida fairs. Last fall it was shown at eight north and northwest Florida fairs and expositions.

The south Florida itinerary will include the Pasco County Fair, Pinellas County Fair, Tampa State Fair, Winter Haven’s Florida Citrus Exposition, Orlando Fair; Broward County Fair, Highlands County Fair; St. Petersburg Rod and Gun Club’s annual pier exhibition; Estero Sportsmen’s Show; and the Sanford Fair.

STRAYING DOG CURE

How can you keep your hunting dog at home?

Fred Jones, outdoor writer down Lakeland way, comes up with this answer:

To keep your dog from wandering and to bring him back after the hunt, just clip off the tip of its tail and bury it under the front steps! They’ll always come back to the spot where the end of their tail is buried.

Then he gets his information from an alderman of Polk County.

World’s Largest Boat Show Set For Chicago

The largest display of small boats and camping equipment ever to be shown at one exhibition will be staged at the 17th annual Chicago National Boat Show, which will open February 10th at Chicago Navy Pier.

Every type of small boat will be on display from rowboats and dories to trims outboard runabouts in the entire range of construction types. Outboard motors from the smallest pushers to the most powerful kickers will also be on exhibition in addition to all the essential equipment and bulky items pertinent to the sport of small-boating.

Here’s how it happened. While on his stand awaiting the deer which never came, Thompson was attracted by a commotion in the brush nearby. Going to investigate, he came face to face with a half grown bear cub, which he shot. Then out pounced Mama, full grown and intent upon destroying the thing that had killed her cub. A well-placed shot in the head killed her too. Two more cubs appeared in rapid succession. The boy had a plugged gun and had to reload to kill the fourth and last bear. Incidentally, the Jefferson County “cubs” weighed 150 pounds apiece and the mama bear over 500.

Oldtimers of the district declare the young sailor’s feat was remarkable. Usually they say, when a hunter has to reload, the bear, not the man, takes the trophy.

Powell Puckett, host to the three-day deer hunting party, said eight deer, four bears, and many squirrels were taken during the successful hunt.

The State Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission has revealed that hunters are bagging bears all over Florida this year. Fourteen were killed in northwest Florida alone during the latter part of October and early November. Eleven of these were taken on controlled hunts in the Osceola and Apalachicola National Forest.

Bud “Bear” Dowling, of Taylor County, is top contender for the state record with nine to his credit. And Taylor County is rated best bear country. Twenty-eight have been taken in this section since June, 1948.

Glades Club Disbands After Interest Wanes

BELLE GLADE—The Glades Sportsmen and Wildlife Club, local organization, disbanded last month. Announcement that the club had become inactive was made by W. R. McClatchey, the president.

Lack of interest and poor attendance at meetings brought about the decision to disband, McClatchey revealed.

OLDTIMER GUN STILL KILLS

Mrs. J. H. Herrig of DeFuniak Springs, killed a ten-point buck deer last month near her home town. That’s not unusual here; she shot him with a double-barrel shotgun credited to be over a hundred years old.

Each year forest fires burn an average of 30 million acres of woodland in the U. S. equal in area to Maine and Louisiana. People cause most of these fires—careless people with campfires, matches and cigarettes, and even malicious people too.

Today we need trees more than ever before in our history because wood is used in more than 4,000 different ways in our daily lives.

Fires destroy standing timber, growing trees, and the potential tree seed crop. They destroy wildlife, deplete water reserves, and damage the soil.

Do your part to help Keep Florida Green by keeping fires out of our woods.

GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION

FLORIDA WILDLIFE

YOU DON'T NEED A SPY GLASS...

... to see our Billion Dollar Blaze

In 1944, more than 16,000 wild fires burned nearly 2,309,600 acres in Florida.