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The Research Information Center of the Fish & Wildlife Research Institute

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
**Florida Wildlife Scrapbook**

**HOW TO IDENTIFY SURFACE-FEEDING DUCKS**

- Also called Puddle Ducks

FLORIDA WILDLIFE MAGAZINE • FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION

FLY DIRECTLY UPWARD FROM THE WATER

FLY DIRECTLY UPWARD FROM THE WATER

HAVE BRIGHT COLORED WING PATCH OR "SPECULUM"

LEGS FORWARD ON BODY — WALK EASILY ON LAND

TIP OVER — TAIL UP TO FEED IN SHALLOW WATER

OTHER SURFACE-FEEDING DUCKS FOUND IN FLORIDA — BLACK DUCK, FLORIDA DUCK, Gadwall, Baldpate, Pintail, Gosheller, Green-Winged Teal, Blue-Winged Teal, and Wood Duck

The MALLARD — A TYPICAL SURFACE FEEDER

FLORIDA WILDLIFE MAGAZINE • FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION

**SEPTEMBER 1970**

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- Hunting

**The Cover**

The solitary Clapper Rail is symbolic of salt marshes throughout the Southeast. Rail hunting is popular along the north Florida coasts—provides good "warmup" for bigger game. See page 16.

From a Painting by Wallace Hughes

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Tallahassee, Florida 32306

ROSE • TALLAHASSEE

SEPTEMBER, 1970

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Briny Bass

MANY BLACK BASS live close to salt water, some of them in brackish areas where they can actually reproduce and live out their days, even though there’s a bit of salt to taste for anyone who wants to dip a snoopv finger and lick it.

I don’t know just how much salinity a bass can take by choice or necessity, but I do know there are numerous spots along the Florida coasts where you can make good use of the division between salt and fresh.

When the fresh water gets low the fish keep coming down until they finally get to their limit of salinity. There they’ll bunch up, hesitant to go out into the briny but having no place to retreat. Fishing them under such circumstances isn’t taking an unfair advantage at all. If the fresh water is replenished they’ll spread back upstream. If no rains come they’ll eventually die because of excessive salt or they’ll fall prey to salt water predators. Simple as that. This type of thing has been happening ever since the largemouth bass became evolutionarily adapted.

More than half a century ago, fishing pilgrims to Florida wrote of the dying thousands of bass that had come out of the Everglades with drought. It looked like the end of bass at the heads of the Everglades rivers, they said.

It certainly is a pretty long cycle if you can call it that. If you want to get technical, a “cycle” is a measurable period, whereas drought and flood follow each other but only unevenly.

About 1961 I wrote an article for FLORIDA WILDFISH telling of fantastic bass fishing at the heads of Everglades National Park rivers on the lower West Coast. At that time dry weather had forced the fish to down to meet the saltwater species and a lot of them died when salt took over. The fresh water brought much of its own vegetation with it although the upper rivers were still lined with mangrove trees which need the brackish water to live.

Last spring drought came again but followed a long period of excellent water conditions. The upper rivers along the Mangrove Coast had more vegetation than they’d had for twenty years, according to veterans of the section. And the vegetation was pretty well filled with fish. As this is written the drought has been broken and I suspect the bass will tend to scatter and go back up into sawgrass sloughs instead of dying to the tune of tarpon strikes. However, there will be some bass fishing at the river heads as long as water stays high.

Now I can make a prediction, something that’s pretty hard to get out of me without burning matches under my fingernails. I predict that when we have another drought the bass fishing will be truly spectacular at the heads of tidal rivers and canals all along the Florida coasts. Last spring I had good bass fishing at the head of Lostmans River, most of the fish rather small but some going better than two pounds with an occasional three-pounder.

There wasn’t much competition for that’s a long way from a dock and it’s a winding way by boat. Give those bass some more high water and they’ll force them downstream again and things should be pretty exciting.

Now not everyone is going to run off to Lostmans (Continued on next page)
River but many Florida fishermen are within easy reach of rivers that are mainly tidal but have fresh water beginnings. It's a good thing to think about when major floods and sloughs get low after a long period of a high water table.

Some fishermen won't use a lure or fly unless it is tied loosely to the line for free action. Most of the time I don't think this is too important except with very small stuff, but there have been times when a short tailing to a lure has shown me the way with a distinct advantage in the knot on one that was tied tightly.

Quite a few lure manufacturers have a loose ring in the eye of their lures, allowing the fish to do a little extra wiggling, wobbling or bumping. I think this is an especially good stunt with small jig types and surface lures of small size, regardless of what you cast them with. Trolling baits are often take care of the matter nicely.

of a swivel, the best way is to fasten the hook or attached loosely too, generally with swivels that of what you cast them with. Trolling baits are often take care of the matter nicely.

Small fish in the catch. This disappearance act usually occurs when I have someone in tow and want to show him some fun with surface lures.

When the bream are bedding and you can find the right spot, things are pretty simple and sometimes they'll take any time of day. For example, during the bedding season last spring I found them easy to take on small bugs in several locations. It was obvious that those we caught were bedding fish or at least fish of bedding age. There were very few small fish in the catch.

After the main bedding season was over (they bed some the year around) the good spots seemed to be taken over by very small fish, hardly big enough to take the bug. When we first went to work on them and found there were plenty around, we figured it was a simple matter of getting the big ones gone on but it didn't work that way. We kept catching the little ones.

I suspect that the little fish are simply chased away by the big ones during bedding season, but where the big ones go after that I'm not quite sure.

I suppose it's a general scattering that makes fishing tougher.

Surface feeding bluegills generally give themselves away by late evening popping along the shoreline. I have seen periods when you could do nothing with surface bugs or spiders during the bright part of the day but could catch fish with underwater stuff, especially with small spinners.

Then when evening came on the spinners went

viceable when used in line that won't be strained. It is not hard to untie, which indicates it doesn't cut itself badly.

To tie the doubled bowline, simply use the line doubled and then split off the ends left over. Don't cut the ends too short for the knot may work a little. I don't say this is a perfect tie but it works well with either braided line or monofilament.

You need a pretty large hook to fasten the doubled line through. Any such fancy do-up should be checked from time to time to make sure it isn't working loose.

Monofilament tightens much better with liberal applications of saliva. Burning the ends after tying knots is another safeguard, but you must be careful not to hurt the knot itself.

Bluegills or bream have the reputation of being beginners' fish and easy to catch almost any time anywhere. Sometimes they're easy and sometimes I wonder where the blamed things have gone. This disappearance act usually occurs when I have someone in tow and want to show him some fun with surface lures.

The striped bass just may be the biggest fish news of the century. It's always been a big thing with coastal fishermen but its current invasion of fresh water is even better news. Stripers have grown hale and hearty in inland lakes, even in "completely" fresh water. There are some places where they will reproduce in fresh water. The Santcooper Reservoir of South Carolina is best known for that—a matter of a dam shutting off spawning fish from the sea but leaving them their traditional upstream spawning streams. They tell me that there are a few other fresh water impoundments where there's some spawning. Most of the fresh water fishing will be put, grow and take.

Put and take is a little different from "put, grow and take." The former has a bad name among some fishermen because of its expensive history in fresh-water trout. Many trout streams have been kept going by the introduction of hatchery fish with the opening of the season. Most of the fish are caught almost immediately and the rest won't make it far. They may still have merit if not too expensive but it generally costs plenty.

In most of the striped bass programs (and Florida has an ambitious one) the bass are introduced while quite small and are expected to live and grow to old age, even though they won't reproduce. Modest success seems assured. Such programs are being tried over a large part of the country and working in many places.

There seems little danger of an imbalance. Fish that don't reproduce can't fou!l up anything permanently, and fish that live and grow aren't wasted if they can be caught.

The striped bass isn't a jumper but he has power and hits hard. Shortly after the Civil War there were rich men's bass clubs along our northern Atlantic coast—so exclusive they made most trout fishing clubs look like slum projects. Then the bass mysteriously disappeared from the northern coast about the time Dewey boiled up in Manila Bay and the clubs disappeared too. The striper came back more than 30 years later (how's that for a cycle?) and have remained popular with surf fishermen as well as bay and river anglers. The striped bass in the open sea is a tough one to figure. When you get him confined to a lake it's somewhat different.

Some years ago a publicity-loving Florida fly fisherman made the northern papers by catching small alligators on flies. The achievement to the uninformed was the sport equivalent of a bull running through the Boston Common, although those who have fished around Florida for a while know that it's quite possible for ordinary mortals. Don't know about the legality but I'm not interested in knowing too.

I have had some interesting experiences with them, usually small sprouts around three feet long.

The other day a friend of mine hooked a bass and the splashing attracted a small gator who came steaming out looking for an easy meal. When my cohort landed the bass the gator dug deep into his minuscule brain and tried to figure where the fish had gone. He came over to the boat and glared at us, unwilling to leave for a while. When he did go he gave us one of those little gator squawks and disappeared into a brushpile.

The worst time I had with a little gator was many years ago when I was fishing a shoreline with Winpy Steerman. That little varmint chased the plug on every cast and would follow it clear to the boat—then open his pug and hits at me when I'd pick up the lure. We didn't want to hook him so I pushed an oar into his mush. He didn't want to chew the oar but he didn't want to leave either so we started the motor and went a hundred yards down the shore where there would be no gator to scare the fish away. You guessed it! About on the fifth cast we saw a determined wake and here came Junior. Next time we went a quarter of a mile without stopping.
VOTE!

WATER POLLUTION

THOUSANDS of Floridians ask themselves almost daily, "What can I do to help curb water pollution?" I'm just one individual and the problem is gigantic! It's a good question and an accurate observation, but there really is a great deal the individual can do. In fact, there is one thing only individuals can do. Here is at least a partial answer to the question.

On November 3, 1970, Floridians will have the opportunity to strike a tremendous personal blow in the war against the state's mounting water pollution problem. It will take only a few moments of sober thought and the effort needed to move a small lever in a voting booth to the "yes" position.

The amendment would provide a valuable financial assistance program for sewage treatment plant construction. It would also provide loans to local governments to build sewage collection and treatment facilities. A lot of hands-on work by individuals, local governments, and the State is necessary to meet this need. The amendment fills a void thus far unfilled by federal or local funds. It is important, too, that approval of Proposition 4 will increase Florida's eligibility for federal financial assistance.

"I urge you to vote for this amendment," said Nathaniel P. Reed, chairman of the Florida Water Pollution Control Board, "as evidence of the importance of this concept for Florida. Strong support is also being offered by the Florida League of Municipalities, by county and city governments, and by business and civic leaders throughout the state. It's the need for new or expanded sewage treatment facilities in Florida?

The near-unanimous passage of the amendment in both houses of the Florida Legislature is good evidence of the importance of this concept for Floridians. Strong support is also being offered by the Florida League of Municipalities, by county and city governments, and by business and civic leaders throughout the state. What is the need for new or expanded sewage treatment facilities in Florida?

It is critical. For example, Duval County heads the list with a minimum total new sewage enforcement office and a local fees to meet its present sewage treatment needs. The figures, developed by the DAWP, are based on 1970-71 rates.

Amendment Number 4 will provide a valuable tool to help Florida's cities and counties—large and small—meet their needs. One hundred million dollars, along with increased federal assistance, will go a long way toward solving the problem. If sewage treatment progress is not made, these costs will undoubtedly continue to rise.

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Leon V. Walker
Wildlife Officer
Columbia County

Wildlife Officer Notes

The proposed legislation introduces a new provision for the issuance of licenses to those engaged in the capture, use, and sale of wildlife. This provision is designed to ensure that only individuals with a valid license are able to engage in such activities. The amendment also includes provisions for the enforcement of the new regulations, including the appointment of additional wildlife officers and the provision of additional resources to support their work.

The amendment is expected to have a significant impact on the state's wildlife population and the economy. It is hoped that the new provisions will help to protect the state's valuable wildlife resources and support the development of sustainable wildlife management practices.
Dave's Day on Doves

The area appeared perfect for hunting—late afternoon was "contest" planned.

It was one of those fall days when, seemingly, the weather could not definitely make up its mind.

Daybreak and a rising sun had spread the usual warmth over Florida west coast farmlands and communities, but patches of dark clouds hung ominously low overhead. At times they merged, forming a solid, silent gray blanket. Then, just when rain seemed inevitable, the cloud cover would break in places and the sun would shine through. It had been that way all morning.

Now, at 1:00 o'clock, there was no doubt about the weather's dominant mood; rain was coming down—not in mere drops, but literally in buckets. It didn't look likely at all, yet the very intensity of the downpour hinted of early stoppage.

I had made plans to go dove hunting with a friend, Dave Curry, that afternoon. Our hunt didn't look likely at all, yet the very intensity of the downpour hinted of early stoppage. I had not given up hope when Dave phoned.

"Still plan to go?" he asked.

"What do you think?" I countered in noncommittal tone.

"I think it's going to stop before long," Dave said. "I'd like to go, even if it is still raining a little."

"I feel the same," I told him. "Pick me up at 3:30 as planned."

The mourning dove nests in 48 of our states, but is not a game bird in all, nor does it stick around northern climes when winter really sets in.

There are usually two migratory flights into Florida—one in October and the other in late November or early December, depending on how soon lasting cold weather grips northern states.

Hunting actually affects dove populations very little. Disease—primarily trichomoniasis, common to doves and pigeons—takes a heavier toll, as do predators and extreme weather conditions, mostly the latter. Mourning doves are fragile creatures.

Whether hunted or not, only about 30 to 100 doves now living will be alive this time next year, game biologists have learned. Yet there will likely be as many doves as ever next season, so adaptable and prolific are the surviving breeding birds. Such is nature's way with doves.

It was the eleventh day of the dove hunting season. Our chosen hunting spot was dairy acreage chosen hunting spot was dairy acreage—chosen hunting spot was dairy acreage not as many as on other days, probably because of the rain.

A gun boomed in the distance, then again. As we looked in the direction, we saw three distant doves leaving the area. Evidently, they had left one of their companions behind—a hunter emerged from a clump of concealing brush and ran out to retrieve a downed bird. We could see him reach behind and stuff his kill into the back compartment of his hunting vest as he walked back to the spot from which he had shot.

After several minutes of studying the field and spotting hunters already in position, Dave and I decided to take stands at the north end, where a narrow band of tilled soil separated the parallel stands of pines.

The hard rain had almost stopped by the time we reached our hunting spot. In the emerging afternoon sunlight, undried drops on the grass and low brush sparkled as if the area had been set with a million tiny diamonds.

There were hunters already in action, although not as many as on other days, probably because of the rain.

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Another influencing factor in our decision to start late was that prior hunting had scattered flocks. These haraused resident birds would likely continue to fly in to favorite feeding and watering locations, but cautiously and probably late in the afternoon. This proved true.

Our effective killing ranges overlapped slightly after we separated and took respective shooting positions, but our firing lanes were safe in relation to each other.

I quickly set up a folding Kamo stool, sat on it, and stuffed low base No. 7½ shot loads into the magazine of my 16 gauge Ithaca Model 37 pump. A glance in Dave's direction showed he was carrying out similar preparations. His gun was a Browning 12 gauge, two-shot autoloader. We were both attired in camouflage clothing and caps.

While a dove hunter can stand or kneel inconspicuously behind brush or low grass, or alongside a fence, hunting will prove more comfortable if he sits on a camp stool while waiting for birds. Sometimes waits are long.

(Continued on next page)
(Continued from preceding page)

Also, most stocks now come with handy underslung storage compartments for carrying extra shells, rainjacket, food and beverage, or other paraphernalia.

Dave took the first bird, a single that came in on his side.

"Nice going!" I called.

Watching him retrieve his kill, I almost missed seeing a dove that came my way on swift, silent wings. He was over me and passing before I could swing, but I dropped him going away.

Dave waved approval.

We had downed only three or four birds each when a lone hunter came in and took station about 60 yards north of us. He evidently started shooting as soon as he saw birds, with total disregard—or ignorance—of effective shotgun range. His gun boomed two or three times every time there was a flight, no matter how high or wide.

Inability to judge distance is a primary reason why dove hunters burn up 7% of all the shotshells purchased annually. Considering the hundreds of thousands of shells fired at trap and skeet ranges each year, that 7% represents a lot of ammunition— and a lot of missing.

In this case, though, whether hits or misses, the fellow’s ambitious shooting served to accelerate the speed and dodging of flying birds, already aided by a tailwind.

From what was probably normal dove cruising speed of 30 to 35 miles per hour, the birds were hitting better than 40 by the time they reached us seconds later. I missed two straight shots before I judged the increased lead needed to hit the fast fliers.

A lone bird came over. It was really pouring on the fuel—stimulated by two misses by the "skybuster" we had for a shooting neighbor. Like a grey streak it flew through the slot between the stands of tall pines.

When the bird glimpsed our gun-shouldering movements it sidleslipped abruptly, made a deceptive little dip, then set its wings and turned on our gun swing slightly behind the point of front bead placement on the target paper.

This precisely adjusted peep sight has proved very deadly on upland game. If I can find my selected bird target in the field of view through the peep hole, with the bird appearing slightly above the front sight, a hit is reasonably certain.

The bird's wing speed and elusive tactics had left us awed and a little chagrined. We both know that ducks can be more comfortable, right, when the hunter sits quietly waiting for the bird to arrive.

"Boy, that was a tough one!" Dave exclaimed.

"My gun muzzle never did catch up with him.

"That was my trouble, too," I admitted.

The bird’s wing speed and elusive tactics had left us awed and a little chagrined. We both know we should start our gun swing slightly behind the bird, catch up and pass it, and fire when the lead appears to be correct for the range, angle, and speed of the target. But this time we both had missed clean. Doves can be great ego deflators. I am familiar with the technical tenets that a shotgun is pointed rather than aimed; that, correctly, the shooter must be more target conscious than gun conscious, and that either preshouldering or supporting face, means error in aiming (or pointing) and muzzle alignment.

In order to get shot pattern center consistent with point of aim, and to likewise help lining eye take the same sighting plane shot after shot, I have been using a Williams peep sight with special large shotgun aperture on my favorite field gun. This is the same sight model that Elmer Keith, renowned shooting authority, likes for both wing shooting and shotgun slug hunting.

After installation, I targeted the gun and its adjustable rear peep sight at 49 measured yards until the shot pattern centers were registering about three inches above the point of front bead placement on the target paper.

Doves are inclined to take a midday slumber, above left, during which they perch for protracted periods on wires or in trees until a second warm up strikes them. When they become wary of hunters afield, concealed in high bushes or cornfields or over tall crops, they will prove tough. Hunting doves can be more comfortable, right, when the hunter sits quietly waiting for the bird to arrive.

Probably because I have used a peep sight on a .22 rifle for more than 40 years—and on such small, moving targets as tossed-up steel washers and aspirin tablets—a peep sight on my shotgun seems to come to eye naturally.

I simply bring my shotgun up quickly to shoulder, between aiming eye and target, concentrating mostly on the target. My aiming eye, close to peep sight, instantly finds the hole, correct sighting place, and field of view. In the final analysis, the firing can be accurately compared to snapshooting, except for the applied lead and gun swing involved. Admittedly, successful use of a peep sight on a shotgun demands much practice. The shooter must be accustomed to it. When you can hit the clay targets of trap and skeet using a shotgun peep sight, you will be able to hit doves and quail.

At first, fast-moving aerial targets will be most difficult to even find through the peep sight’s aperture, much less to hit. But skill comes with practice, and with skill comes pleasurable results.

A friend who hunts turkey once experimentally tried a peep sight on his shotgun. On still or slow-moving targets he vowed he never misses a shot. But use of the same gun on doves stymied him.

(Continued on next page)
Of two birds.

Thirsty birds came in unsuspectingly, often in long, blowing a bird to bits with a too-close direct hit.

Faces uncamouflaged, birds would likely detect downward glides. Shooting was at close range—downing a target that had sailed over the ditch.

I said to Dave after we had made featherbuger.

Along the big ditch to catch flights coming in for a last drink before seeking roost.

A Remington 16 gauge autoloader.

New Remington 16 gauge autoloader. We also picked up camouflage face nets to add to our outfits.

I changed guns, replacing the Ithaca pump with a Remington 1100. It wasn’t that I found fault with the reliable Ithaca; I simply wanted to try out my new Remington 16 gauge autoloader.

Our intention was to move to a shooting location along the big ditch to catch flights coming in for a last drink before seeking roost.

A wire fence on one side of the ditch offered an ideal place to set out our decoys. When in position, the long line of unevenly spaced decoys looked impressive and lifelike.

The headnets were needed because we would be looking over the edge of the ditch to catch early sight of any approaching birds. Were our upturned faces uncamouflaged, birds would likely detect us, flare, and veer off before coming into gun range.

The nets and the decoys served us well. The thirsty birds came in unsuspectingly, often in long, downward glides. Shooting was at close range—which insured the double disadvantages of having to swing our guns faster and also sometimes blowing a bird to bits with a too-close direct hit.

“Take ‘em while they’re still thirty yards out,” I said to Dave after we had made featherburger of two birds.

“Or let ’em get by and shoot ’em going away,” he finished for me, demonstrating by pivoting and downing a target that had sailed over the ditch.

When there is plenty of action, time seems to quicken pace. Suddenly, even though doves were still flying, our hunting was over for the day. It was sunset. The hour had come to cease firing. As if by tacit agreement, hunters began to appear from their stands and walk toward the road and their parked cars.

Dave and I paused to count our birds and our remaining unfired shells. He had his limit of birds, as he had informed me when he downed his last fired-on target. I had one less than the legal limit.

But from the single box of shotshells that each of us had carried into the field, I had four more unused shells left than he did!

Except for a different time, place, and type of shooting, the day had ended for me like one some 38 years prior, when I was firing in the International Running Target Championship Matches.

Official scoring showed that I had far more close-to-center, tie-breaking hits than the winner—but his numerical score totaled one point more than mine.

I didn’t try to figure out individual shooting supremacy for the afternoon. Simply, Dave had one more bird than I, and a full legal limit. I had one bird less. You don’t argue with cold figures and success.

Undeniably, it was Dave’s day on doves.

**DOT’s Diapers for Dredges**

Pollution control may have caused the world’s biggest diaper change in the Florida Department of Transportation’s continuing efforts to combine construction of needed transportation systems with preservation of natural beauty and good conservation practices.

One of DOT’s most recent innovations in the anti-pollution field is a weighted filter designed to prevent extensive sifting of waters downstream during dredging operations.

Department engineers devised the anti-polluant screen—affectationally termed “the big diaper”—after silt from a dredging operation in the Indian River polluted the river for a distance of three or four miles downstream.

Concern voiced by conservationists and health officials caused temporary stoppage of the operations until DOT State Highway Engineer P. W. Ekey and District Construction Engineer Charles Sylvester, Jr. designed and constructed the ingenius, inexpensive “diaper.”

Installed in mid-May, the original diaper was built of heavy, untreated canvas. It was suspended on the surface with large lobster trap buoys and weighted at the bottom with a series of simple weights—quart-size tin cans filled with concrete.

Following final placement of the diaper, turbidity above it was measured, using an instrument called a turbidimeter. The reading was 2100 on a scale of 5000. Turbidity below the filter registered 300 just 24 hours after the installation of the diaper. Later, the figure dropped to 35—well below the 50 set as a safe level by Florida’s Department of Air and Water Pollution Control.

Engineers were elated with the success of the diaper—and with the economy. The original diaper cost less than $1,000. Constructing a bridge to replace the proposed elevated causeway would have added $3.5 million to construction costs.

Although its inventors first feared the diaper might require heating and shaking like an old-fashioned rug, the silt, after accumulating on the canvas, dropped to the bottom on its own. In mid-June, however, it became apparent the untreated canvas was deteriorating from the effects of the current and silt.

Ekey and Sylvester decided to experiment with a heavy plastic sheet similar to those used to cover concrete on outdoor construction work.

DOT crews, resembling fishermen more than construction men, hauled the diaper to shore for the “big change.” Weights and floats were removed from the silt and algae-encrusted canvas and hooked to the new plastic material.

Extended durability is expected from the plastic, which should prove as sound a filtering screen as the canvas, say the engineers.

Only one day after the diaper change, the turbidity—while still high—was down to 50. Engineers estimated the diaper would reduce turbidity 90 percent.

Already ordered for additional anti-pollution tests is a heavy nylon material now used to form bags which hold sand or gravel and are used for shoreline erosion control. Many of these bags have been in use for four years or longer. Ekey expects maximum durability from the new material.

“Durability, weighting against wind and current, and positioning are our only problems,” he said in evaluating the diaper. “We know now that untreated canvas is not durable.”

When dredging begins on the east side of the Indian River, the new nylon diaper will completely encircle the dredge and is expected to contain the silt entirely.

Assessing future use of the economic diaper, Ekey said, “Whenever possible, the Department of Transportation will avoid dredging. Wherever economy or other conditions dictate the use of dredging, we will use the barrier to control silt.”
**the Clapper Rail**

**If you have listened** for very many seasons to the discordant cheeps, chirps, quacks and squawks that together produce the matchless music of the marsh, you should be able to pick out from somewhere on the back row of the chorus the far-carrying, staccato notes of the Clapper Rail. Although its steady *kek* *kek* *kek* *kek* sounds more mechanical than bird-like, it is in perfect harmony with the wetlands—and it beckons the rail hunter.

The seduction-loving Clapper, with its colorless call, is, to me, symbolic of Florida's coastal marshlands, at least during fall and winter, for of the several species of rails touring the South at this time of year, the Clapper Rail is the most numerous.

Actually, five rails and two species of gallinules are commonly lumped together under the name marsh hens. These are the Clapper, King, Sora, Virginia and Yellow rails and the Florida and Purple gallinules. All are migratory game birds that have for a couple of hundred years provided fine shooting sport along the entire southeastern seaboard and gulf coast. Some marsh hens use freshwater areas; some accept brackish situations. But the Clapper Rail, which, to most Florida hunters, is the marsh hen, haunts the salt marshes.

Although the Clapper is not a web-footed bird, it swims very well. With head a-bobbin' it can be seen crossing tidal creeks and sloughs in its continuing search for goodies among the reeds and rushes. It feeds on worms, fiddler crabs, shrimp, minnows, and various marine mollusks and insects. Long slender toes enable it to walk on partly submerged grass and even along the bottom—a trick it accomplishes by clinging to underwater grass and other materials. An uneasy rail is most likely to disappear temporarily in this manner in order to elude an enemy. But occasionally a rail may simply choose to bottom-walk for a short distance in preference to swimming.

Besides its longish legs and toes, the Clapper's other dominant physical feature is its long, stout bill, curved downward ever so slightly. It's an ideal poker.

The Clapper Rail's plumage is gray-brown above with lighter buff below, white at the throat and under the short, upturned tail, and with varying amounts of dark and light barring on its flanks.

**Marsh hen hunting is a short sleeve sport. Hot weather normally keeps the activity slow and easy. A good dog, chosen, helps flush the reluctant rails and also locates downed birds. The Clapper Rail, of left, is predominant species and most hunted in Florida. It ranges throughout state's coastal marshes. The King Rail, similar but larger, inhabits fresh water marshes, with gallinules. All are early season “marsh hen family,” collectively.**

By GENE SMITH

It breeds on the Atlantic coast from New England to Florida. The downy young may number up to 12. Like the young of all rails, they are jet black and can swim and feed virtually from the moment of hatching.

**Rail hunting is sometimes an endurance test, mostly because the bird prefers walking to flying, sensing—and correctly so—that greater safety lies in the grass than in the air. Hunters quickly learn the Clapper is approachable within a few feet before it will literally resort to flight as a means of escape.**

One look at a rail on the rise tells why. In a poorly coordinated flurry of floppy wings, dangling legs, and earnest effort it appears barely to clear the tallest grass and keep airborne! Aerodynamically speaking, a canvasback or a mourning dove it is not.

More proof the Clapper doesn't like to fly is its sudden landings. After a short flight it usually plops back into the thicket, where it pierces its way along through the grass, neck outstretched, body compressed, with matchless grace and in absolute silence.

A downed rail is most difficult to locate, dead or alive, because (1) it blends so well with the vegetation and (2) tends to slip clear through the salt to the soil or water level. One has to carefully mark the fall and part the grass to make the retrieval.

A good working dog saves the day when the rubes are thick, the birds plentiful, and the shooting good. When two rails are down the average hunter fails to mark the fall of either very well.

The traditional Atlantic coast rail hunt takes place on incoming and high “rail tides” when the birds are pushed up into the higher grass clumps. A flat-bottomed boat, paddled or poled, is usually employed in areas like Nassau, Duval and St. Johns county marshes, which are wider and deeper than gulf coast offerings.

Along all the panhandle's coastal counties, rail hunting is more often done on foot, so the tides are not quite as important in planning a shoot on the Gulf of Mexico as on the Atlantic side. When the tide is part way in or out in Franklin or Wakulla county, for example, most of the birds can be reached in a fairly narrow zone of vegetation in which visibility and shoting are pretty good. Hunting at high tide might call for a boat for moving from one grass island to another or to get you across those tidal creeks too deep to be waded safely. A hunt at low tide is good even though more territory has to be covered to find the rails and flush them. They then have the run of wider flats. But at least, the hunter can see exactly where he's slopping and avoid stepping into a hole.

A Clapper Rail in the hand doesn't feel like much, but with its clothes off it'll surprise you. The thighs, though still slender by drumstick standards, are quite meaty, and all the bird's flesh has good flavor. To prepare them for the pot just draw, skin, and season. One look at a rail on the rise tells why. In a poorly coordinated flurry of floppy wings, dangling legs, and earnest effort it appears barely to clear the tallest grass and keep airborne! Aerodynamically speaking, a canvasback or a mourning dove it is not.

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And when the hunt is history and the stomach is full, there is still the enjoyment of sights and sounds well remembered—the rails and other marsh dwellers in outdoor concert rendering their own kind of September Song... not exactly melodious, granted, but, to those who have an ear for it, stirring just the same. **Marsh Hen Season: September 5 through November 13.**

**FLORIDA WILDLIFE**

SEPTEMBER, 1970
Developed with the boating public in mind, unique Hontoon Island State Park beckons water travelers to land and relax.

Island in the Sun

BOATING IS CONSIDERED Florida's fastest growing recreational activity, and a new state park has been designed especially to help meet the needs of the vast boating public.

With more small boat owners per capita than any other state, Florida has long recognized the need for more public facilities to accommodate the millions of boating enthusiasts drawn by her unique water resources and warm climate. (Florida ranks sixth in the nation in the number of registered pleasure boats but does not register boats powered by motors of 10 or less h.p., sail craft, or rowboats.)

Pioneering an innovative program in public recreation, the state has acquired and developed Hontoon Island, a beautiful island in the St. Johns River near Deland, as a state park planned for major use by boaters. The park is accessible only by water craft, and all facilities were designed with its boating visitors in mind. Full advantage has been taken of the island's natural assets to offer complete marina facilities, restaurant dining, camping, swimming, picnicking, fishing, and the enjoyment of nature.

State park planners have long sought to ease the demand for more boating facilities by finding suitable property for a park designed with the boating public in mind, but were unable to do so until Hontoon Island became available.

It is considered "ideal" for recreational use by pleasure boat owners because of its location, potential for development and unspoiled flora and fauna.

The entire island covers 1,800 acres, but the park occupies 1,650 acres on the north and central portions of the island. Hontoon Island extends from Lake Beresford to Blue Springs, bounded on the east and south by the St. Johns River, on the west by Snake Creek and on the north by the Hontoon Dead River. It is located approximately 16 miles west of Deland and south of S.R. 44.

Although there are plans to eventually develop the entire park property so that boats can put in at several locations around the island, at present visitors enter at the large marina on the north. The marina, with floating docks to accommodate 54 boats, is part of the park's visitors complex. The complex also includes a boaters contact station, park offices and a terraced restaurant from which diners have an unequalled view of the river and boating traffic.

The restaurant is operated by a concessionaire, who also runs a ferrying service from the Hontoon Peninsula mainland 100 yards across the river. A parking area, located adjacent to a commercial development named Hontoon Marina and Resort, accommodates visitors who prefer to drive their cars instead of their boats to the park.

Cruising pleasure boats or visitors who cross on the ferry from the mainland will find an abundance of activities awaiting them within Hontoon Island State Park. A riverside picnic area on a point north of the park marina offers shaded picnic tables, barbeque grills, playground equipment and a restroom building—all the ingredients needed for a day's outing.

After a picnic lunch, the cool waters of the Hontoon River invite you for a swim. Change in the nearby bathhouse and soak for a few hours in the developed swimming area or lounge on the sandy beach.

But there is no need to just stay a few hours on Hontoon Island, if a vacation is what the boating enthusiast has in mind. One of the park's most unusual features is its camping area with 30 camp-

(Continued on next page)
(Continued from preceding page)

Volkswagon at a cost of $16,000. The money for the purchase was provided by the Volkswagon Board of County Commissioners.

In 1963, this trust, known as John Bartram State Park, was needed by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and the Park Board was awarded $200,000 by the court in condemnation proceedings. It was stipulated by the Board that the money received would be invested in state park property in or near Volusia County for the benefit and use of people in that area.

In 1967, after a thorough search for suitable property, Hontoon Island was purchased by the Park Board with the intention that it would remain free from vehicular traffic, its flora and fauna preserved for future generations to enjoy.

Park superintendent Keith emphasized that present and future development will not interfere with the natural resources of the island. All landscaping will feature only those plants native to the island.

The island boasts a variety of plants and trees, and naturalists from the State Park System plan to categorize its plant and bird life for nature tours. Pines, oaks, palms, cypress and magnolias may be seen in numbers. A huge live oak on the Indian mound is the largest on the island.

Wildlife includes quail, wild turkey, deer, and squirrels, all of which roam free in this protected sanctuary. Hontoon Island is noted for its varied birdlife, too. The Florida Audubon Society has designated it a bald eagle sanctuary—one of the few remaining strongholds of the national emblem of the United States.

Lt. Keith noted this is one of the best fishing spots he has ever seen, with largemouth bass, bluegill, black crappie, and other game fishes in abundance.

"The recreation potential here is tremendous," Keith said. "Since we opened last New Year's Day, we have had crowds of boating enthusiasts here. We aren't at all sure the 39 campsites already developed will be anywhere near adequate to accommodate all those who would like to utilize them."

The park staff reports heavy use of the campground and other recreational facilities—especially during the summer vacation months. A close study will be made to determine whether or not further development is warranted.

Future expansion poses some problems, though. Presently, all the park's developed areas are within easy walking distance of the marina. But eventually, as facilities spread across the island, some sort of public conveyance must be provided to get visitors from one use area to another and to remote points in the park that will otherwise be left in their natural state.

Park system authorities have ruled emphatically against allowing automobiles on the island. They plan instead to design tour trains and provide golf cart-type vehicles on a rental basis to meet the island-park's peculiar transportation needs.

Despite the minor problems involved in future development, Hontoon Island State Park promises to become a major "magnet" both for pleasure boat owners in Florida and vacationers from other states. Its success may serve as an example for other states to follow—opening up new horizons for boating enthusiasts all over the country.
there seem to be two distinct systems for packaging sporting goods to travel on public carriers. One is to make the bundle so fragile in appearance that the most hardened baggage smasher will have a touch of pity for you and handle it gently. The other method is to use containers so strong that, even though they offer a challenge to the wrecking crew, your rods or rifles come through in good shape.

If I seem a little cynical about the treatment of my luggage in the past, I am duty bound to record that there are others who could cripple an anvil on a single short trip. Unfortunately, it fishing and hunt in gear on the road or in the car and pack all items carefully.

The psychology of the thing is complex indeed. I packed four fly rods in a single heavy aluminum tube. It was of the collapsible type and I was suspicious of the possibility that it might be forcibly pushed together on the trip despite a giant set screw that resisted my strongest efforts at budging it. A friend who was watching the procedure laughed uncontrollably, feeling such pessimistic preparations were on a par with wearing suspenders and belt—with coversalls. He was wrong.

When the trip was over the tube had been battered and gouged and, somehow, had been struck or shoved so hard from the end that it had collapsed a little in spite of the pipe. The end cap of aluminum had given from the force of the pipe's thrust, and had bulged out so much that the longest of the rods was bent within the tube. However, it didn't break and I was lucky. Both ends of the tube were heavily scarred as if it had been hauled in a dump truck with crushed rock.

In all fairness I must concede that the baggage boys had extra chances at this package, however, because it was lost for a couple of days between Halifax, Nova Scotia and Tampa. On other occasions a similar tube had traveled without event.

The author's long-distance outing left with most clothing and tackle in the big bag. Rods are in the tube; sometimes go in the aluminum case and leather shoulder bag tubes odds and ends. A gun case, below, that is packed on a saddle as well as in a car. Soft leather may not be enough protection for air travel, however. Home position, right, is reach on equipment and seldom can the materials be handled with complete care.

By CHARLES WATERMAN

I am not picking on any particular airline because the one which had that tube had been very nice to my luggage in the past. Of course it is the individual handler who is responsible for mayhem. It is ridiculous to say that a particular airline is particularly rough with luggage.

I will say, however, that there are occasional nuts who take pleasure in wrecking things. I have actually watched this. Back in World War II I had the job of guarding a shipment of secret military equipment on a long railway trip and had to ride in an express car. There was a continual poker game going on in that car, and the workers considered civilian express shipments as irritating interruptions. I watched them deliberately throw packages marked "Fragile" and saw them smash others to make more comfortable seats around the box used as a card table. I have never said this is typical—simply that it can happen.

Certain types of packages are especially easy to lose in air travel. The aluminum tube I mentioned before is very frequently misplaced in transit, although usually not for very long. It seldom comes through the chute with the other stuff and I often have to inquire about it. I have never learned why it is so infrequently delivered with my bag. I do know that anyone who makes a long fishing trip on a tight schedule should have some sort of sturdy tackle which he actually carries on the plane with him. One of those little suitcase rods,
although not as good as one with fewer sections, can save your bacon if the others are lost.

When I travel by air I put my reels, lures, lines, etc., in with my clothing, and have been using one of those big soft plastic bags that folds up and can take suits with hangers. Although such a case should be easy to puncture it seems to travel without mishap, and I can’t complain about anything that has happened to it. The gimmick is to put the hard items in the center somewhere, and pack clothing around the outside so that there’s nothing to be jabbed through the side of the bag. That and the rod or gun case are checked.

I carry on a leather shoulder bag that was made for photo equipment and an aluminum camera case with my cameras enclosed in styrofoam cutouts. I have heard there is a peculiar vibration to jet planes that will work camera screws loose, but I have heard there is a peculiar vibration to jet planes that will work camera screws loose, but I have seen a lot of scoped rifles carried on a suitcases rod but haven’t worked it out. Both of the things I carry by hand can be stuffed under my right leg with the muzzle pointed forward. That way you can leave that hood on when weather looks bad. If you may need your rifle in a hurry you can leave the hood off and a snap strap holds your rifle in. Carrying a rifle on a horse is worth an entire article—maybe an entire book—but since it’s part of the transportation business I’ll go into it a little.

I have seen a lot of scoped rifles carried on a horse with the scope down and that looks like troublesome to me. All of that jostling right on the part you aim with. Lots of rifles are carried with the butt up and that’s all right if you don’t ride through the brush, but if you do it’s pretty vulnerable. I like to ride with the rifle under my right leg with the muzzle pointed forward. That way you can get the gun out pretty easily, and your extra weight to ride with the rifle under my right leg with the muzzle pointed forward.

When it comes to backpacking you’ll find the aluminum rod case can be used as a walking stick, or fastened to the pack if you don’t want anything in your hands. Backpackers usually carry their guns in their hands as the trip in is generally part of the hunt.

All of these things are very important but the whole thing is greatly simplified if you make careful choice in what you take along in the first place. There are some sensible tips that can save you lots of trouble with both fishing tackle and hunting gear.

In reels, it’s smart to carry two of the same kind. That way you have parts available no matter what happens. If your reels don’t match, a couple of minor problems could put both of them out of commission.

Unless you’re pretty sure of what the situation is going to be, don’t go too strong on lures or flies. If you’re going to make a change you’ll find yourself buying local favorites when you get to a distant scene while much of what you took along is dead weight. Not only do most of us haul more lures and flies than we’ll ever need; few of us realize how much we have invested in them and how tough it would be to lose them. A moderate size tackle box can easily accumulate $200 or more in odds and ends through the years while the owner blissfully supposes he’s throwing around forty or fifty dollars worth of baits.

The moral is to pare down the excess things you take on a fishing trip. I’ve found that tackle boxes are seldom convenient when going by air, bus or train, although they’re fine when you take your own car. The purpose of a tackle box is to keep your lures and gadgets in a way that they can be easily reached and viewed. That means they can be packed into much smaller space if need be. A lot of little bags and small containers place a premium on equipment comforts. At left are a few examples from camera cases to lantern boxes, feed cupboards and Tupperware baskets. The buttoned end of a red cases, shown, offers trip by trip by. Collapsible tube might have been shortened enough to break rods but for aluminum pipe.
boxes can hold a surprising amount of stuff when crammed into a suitcase or duffle bag. If you plan to do lots of riding on common carriers you can work out storage methods to fit your particular needs. One world-traveled fisherman I know settled on some heavy-duty aluminum boxes of the type used for photographic equipment to handle his fishing gear. Not many fishermen travel often enough to make that kind of investment as the boxes cost around fifty bucks apiece.

Whether it's hunting or fishing I find that a pee-wee repair kit is well worth while. Carry some good size pliers, some small wrenches, and several little screwdrivers.

When it's hunting or fishing I find that a peewee repair kit is well worth while. Carry some good size pliers, some small wrenches, and several little screwdrivers.

For a time I carried two rifles of the same make and caliber on hunting trips, but that was too logical. I traded one of them off so now I have misfits like everyone else. When you're going with other hunters or fishermen a single spare rifle or rod may work for everybody. If a party of hunters is going into wild country, a single spare should be enough for the whole crew and it will save a lot of weight. Outfitters sometimes balk understandably at bundles of spare rifles, especially when everything must be hauled by horse, canoe or bush plane.

Now when it comes to shotguns, the 12 gauge is so universally popular all over the United States that you can get shells almost anywhere, even service stations, making the twelve the best choice for the traveler. Nevertheless, I am a 20-gauge nut and have to carry lots of ammo with me, especially if I want heavy loads which aren't widely stocked.

The main thing is to make a list of what goes with you. In your own car the chances are you can take anything you'll want. If you fly it gets a little more complicated.

When it comes to clothing I have long since resigned from the group that feels a suit and necktie are essential for air travel. We have sneakingly figured out some fishing and hunting clothes that can be made to appear halfway decent enroute, and can be used in the field or on the water once we've arrived. I have one woolen shirt that is almost a sport jacket, and a fishing shirt that is almost a dress shirt. Add a necktie and they have to look close if some tragedy should force me into a dressy place.

And have everything insured. •

Handguns

Handguns are a lot of fun, but it makes heavy demands on the individual participant to become an expert. Verily, the shooter who chooses the handgun for his shooting sport will have a tough row to hoe before he can expect bountiful harvest.

To begin with, he must have the right kind of handgun for the particular phase of the sport followed—the best among target models if he aspires to successful competition, and one of plenty of power and accuracy if he plans to hunt big game with a handgun.

There are all sorts of associated difficulties to be surmounted.

While handguns are seemingly plentiful, some models are not. Smith & Wesson, for example, is way behind in filling orders for certain of its target model revolvers. Some dealers haven't had any Smith & Wesson K-22 and K-38 models in two years or longer.

Most of those dealers that do have them placed a series of orders long ago, and are just getting deliveries on the oldest ones. Besides the Masterpiece models, in .22 and .38 calibers, the model 41 .22 caliber autoloading pistol seems to have limited delivery distribution. Most retailers have only one or two of each of the more popular catalog listings—if that.

The S&W model 24 Kit Gun is another specific example. Although not a target model, like the K-22, the S&W Kit Gun is often desired by campers and plinkers.

The Colt line of handguns seems to enjoy more volume distribution. The Colt .22 caliber Match Target autoloader, the standard model Woodsman autoloader and the Colt Diamondback revolver, made in .22 or .22 long rifle as well as .38 Special, are not too hard to find in sporting goods stores.

About on par with Colt .22 caliber handguns, so far as availability is concerned, is the Browning Medalist autoloader. Also in reasonably fair supply at local level are the various High Standard brand .22 caliber autoloading target pistols, including the Supermatic Trophy model, often the choice of top ranking competition shooters.

Preferred target model center fires, like the Smith & Wesson K-38 Masterpiece revolver, Colt Officer's Model Match .38, and the Colt Gold Cup National Match .45 or .38 caliber autoloader, are fairly plentiful.

Hunting with a handgun—especially the taking of large game with suitable center fires—is a fast growing sport.

The late Al Geog was a pioneer. He liked to hunt with a handgun and told of his hunts, backed with reader inspiring photos, in the national outdoor magazines. The idea gradually caught on.

When Bushnell developed its now famous "Phantom" handgun scope sight and mount, and certain new center fire handguns suitable for hunting appeared on the market, interest in hunting with a handgun skyrocketed. (An intended, hopefully sighted-in scope on a handgun of the right caliber, along with correct style and weight of bullet for the game hunted, can make a handgun as deadly as a rifle at short range. Don't overlook the helpful scope sight for hunting, no matter how unorthodox it may look on a handgun. The attained improvement in aim and accuracy will be a revelation!)

Center fire handgun models suitable for hunting are enjoying good production and dealer distribution. Usually a local sporting goods store will have an array of several of the more popular models.

The Smith & Wesson model 29 revolver in .44 Magnum caliber, the S&W model 57 in .41 Magnum, the Colt Python in .357 Magnum, Colt Frontier Single Action in .357 Magnum, Ruger Blackhawk in choice of .30/30 Carbine, .357 Magnum and .41 Magnum, the Ruger Super Blackhawk in .44 Magnum caliber, and the Remington XP-100 in .22 Remington "Fire Ball" caliber are currently used.

For those who can handle it, the .44 Magnum caliber is never a wrong choice for big game. It has the stopping power.

Where a handgun of .22 caliber is used, only small game like rabbits, squirrels, bobcats and raccoons should be your targets, although, in states where it is legal, some expert handgumners have even taken treed mountain lion (same as the protected Florida panther) with a .22 handgun.

But suppose local sporting goods stores do not have a desired handgun model and don't know when they can get delivery from jobber or factory?

(Continued on next page)
of THE SHOTGUN NEWS (Columbus, Nebraska), published semi-monthly, is to gun buyers what THE STREET JOURNAL is to stock market investors. Lately, the issues have been replete with dealer advertisements of brand new Smith & Wesson and Colt, in shooter's choice of model and caliber. However, since ultimate delivery to consumer involves interstate commerce, the provisions of the Firearms Act of 1968 must be observed. Any handgun ordered out of state must be shipped to a Federally licensed dealer for record and subsequent delivery to purchaser. You have to find a cooperative, licensed dealer in your area, who will agree to accept shipment for you. Usually there is either an added flat service charge or commission involved if the dealer cannot get the ordered handgun wholesale and make his usual profit.

Likewise, numerous within state gun shows attract dealers Federally licensed to do business. At almost any large gun show there are at least two or three dealers who will have hard-to-get, brand new handguns for sale—but not always at catalog prices. The point is, a brand new high grade handgun can be legally had if one will devote time and effort to acquisition. It may take some time to get the exact model and caliber you want, and you may have to pay a bit more than list price when you find it, but even limited production Smith & Wesson target handguns can be eventually acquired by a determined, ever-alert purchaser.

Wherever you purchase, insist that the seller give you a receipt showing purchase price, make, model and serial number. Also see that the dealer simultaneously enters in his Federal firearms register the information required by the Firearms Act of 1968. These purchase records are as much for your own legal protection as the dealer's.

Purchases of commercial handgun ammunition and components for reloading must also be recorded. Factory-installed handgun sights on today's models usually reflect great improvement over those furnished years ago. In fact, some are truly excellent and will not require any post-purchase alteration. But be sure that the factory-furnished sights truly meet your shooting need and eyesight. Sharply defined, easily seen and aligned sights are absolutely essential. You can't hit any better than you can see your sights and properly align them. The right ones—for you—will give improved visibility and more accurate aim.

If you're a serious hunter and don't intend to substitute a precisely adjusted scope sight for the factory sights on your handgun, you should fit it with the finest combination of adjustable metallic rear sight and front sight obtainable. Usually, the best combinations will be found among the Micro, Bo-Mar, and Elliason brands. Now, don't rush right out to buy new metallic handgun sights. Instead, first write to the various sight manufacturers for illustrated technical material that shows recommended rear and front sight combinations for the make and model handgun you own.

When you have all the facts and features of the available sight models and combinations clearly in mind, you can go ahead and purchase a new sight with minimum possibility of getting the wrong kind for your particular shooting needs and eyesight. The various available models and combinations are illustrated in THE GUN SIGHT GUIDE, a Stoeger publication—if you don't want to take time to write the various sight makers for technical information, illustrations, charts, etc., on their products. Grown a new handgun, the best of sights and the right ammunition, it would seem that accurate shooting is merely a matter of holding the handgun at arm's length, carefully sighting and then firing shots.

Unfortunately, expert gunnery is not that simple. No one can hold a handgun at arm's length and take precise aim without at least some movement. How well a handgun fits the shooter's hand has great bearing on ultimate control of his weapon. The handgun's grips must not only fit the shooter's hand size, but the handgun with its correct size grips preferably should be picked up with the non-shooting hand—every time the handgun is picked up for intended firing. Develop the habit of fitting the handgun to the gun-holding hand. It will pay off in improved shooting, especially higher target scores.

Some factory-furnished grips do not provide comfortable handle, or give firm, steady support and natural alignment to gun-holding hand. If your handgun's grips don't feel just right, send an out-of-line of your shooting hand to Steve Herrett, Twin Falls, Idaho 83301. Ask him to quote you on custom grips made to your hand size, preferably with incorporated thumb rest, and to fit the particular handgun model you use. Herrett's walnut grips are beautifully finished and checked. More important, they do the job. Most serious handgunners use custom grips.

Now you have the right handgun, the best of sights and custom grips. From this point on, expert shooting should be merely a matter of practice under safe shooting conditions. It just doesn't work that way. There are persons constantly striving to prohibit you from innocent target shooting or legal handgun hunting.

Some imbued legislators take the narrow-minded view that no private citizen should own or possess a handgun. Right now, in the Congressional hopper, awaiting Committee review and action, is proposed national legislation that—if passed by Congress—would virtually wipe out all private ownership of handguns. Known as House Bill 18250, or the Mikva Bill, the proposed enactment would make it "unlawful for any person to import, manufacture, sell, buy, transfer, receive or transport any handgun." The Bill goes so far as to prohibit you from giving a presently owned handgun to a member of your family, or even leaving it to a designated heir! Instead, on your death, your handgun would have to be surrendered to the Secretary of the Treasury by your estate. Regardless of its original cost or later customizing, all your estate would receive from compliance with the law would be a maximum of $25. Period!

House Member Almer Mikva, of Illinois, author of the pending bill, has shrewdly figured that human mortality of present gun owners will eventually remove handguns from possession of American citizens. In the interim, already owned or possessed handguns could not conceivably be swapped, given away, sold or replaced, under the proposed legislation. The Mikva Bill is so harsh in ultimate effect that it is unlikely that Congress will vote approval. However, there is no guarantee that political strategy will not get the Bill out of Committee and subsequently passed without serious thought. That's how most of the present impractical or radical anti-gun legislation came about. As example, consider the impractical, undesirable fine print provisions of certain sections of the Firearms Act of 1968, now national law. Many of the Congressmen who voted for passage of the Act now declare that they never intended provisions to be so "tough" on law-abiding sportsmen.

Fortunately, sportsmen-citizens have a voice as individual voters. They can—and should—let their elected representatives know that this country does not need more gun laws but more efficient enforcement of the few existing good gun laws that really hit at crime by imposing severe penalties for misuse of firearms. As can be seen, handgun sport comes hard in these fast-changing days. But for those who enjoy its still-legal pleasures, there is nothing like it. EXPERT HANDGUNNER DOES NOT COME EASY—HUNTERS MUST BURN PLENTY OF AMMUNITION TO ACQUISITION.
Oscar Scherer State Park

A newly developed recreation site south of Sarasota, near Osprey, the recently opened Oscar Scherer State Park offers 462 acres of numerous outdoor activities, but has also been left largely in its natural state to preserve the wildlife prevalent in the area. Within the timberlands is a large picnic area close to the park entrance. A series of marl pits and wells are scattered throughout-out the acreage. Both fresh and salt water fishing may be enjoyed.

A large manmade lake developed from one of the pits has a swimming area rimmed by a sandy white beach. A large bathing pavilion overlooks the site. Canoe-swimming area rimmed by a velopment from one of the pits has a privacy. Electrical hook ups, grills, and mailing of correspondence.

Three bedroom, shower-laundry facilities. The park, expressing her desire to enjoy the Outstanding Natural Area behind schedule. Please accept our apologies until July 4th, 1979, plus the current issue, plus the next subscription service.

ARGOSIES!

For several reasons production of Florida Wildlife Magazine, and their immediate families, who catch any of the fresh-water fish of the prescribed species and size requirements. Citation, recorded date of the catch, will be mailed to the applicant upon receipt of the following application form that has been properly filled out and signed.

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