METAMORPHOSIS of the FROG

(LIFE STAGES)

MANY THOUSAND EGGS
COVERED WITH A JELLY
LIKE SUBSTANCE ARE
LAID IN SHALLOW WATER
BY MAMA FROG...

NEWLY HATCHED YOUNG
- CALLED TADPOLES -
HAVE EXTERNAL GILLS

- ITS TAIL IS SLOWLY
ABSORBED AND THE TADPOLE
IS NOW A FROG!

ALONG WITH THE
GROWTH OF ITS LEGS
THE TADPOLE'S EARS
GRADUALLY DISAPPEAR.
AND LUNGS FORM
INSIDE ITS BODY

AND MANY THOUSAND EGGS
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In This Issue

Trotlines ---------------- Elizabeth Alexander 4
Woodfield Beagles ---------------- Gene Smith 12
Something About Stripers ---------- Morrie Naggia 16
Along the Florida Trail ----------- Sabine Ehlers 20
Meet Your Commissioners ------- 24

Departments

Fish Management Notes 6
Wildlife Officer Notes 7
Fishing 9
Hunting 25
Conservation Scene 29

The Cover

Mockingbirds and orange blossoms, the state bird and flower, perfectly convey the
delicate beauty of Florida in the spring in the cover artwork—a detail from a
painting presented to Florida. See page 29.

From A Painting By Albert Earl Gilbert
Catsfish, with its delicate flavor and firm texture, is almost as popular with Floridians as apple pie. There are several kinds of catfish, and several ways of catching them. The channel cat is number one in popularity, and if you really want sure to check the fishing regulations for several ways of catching them. The channel cat is have no idea what they look like or how to make bait on a trotline. (Before putting out a trotline, be tion; or for some distance in a lake, and sunk to fish near one. That's the subject of our story. ining line, either braided or monofilament. You will hooks are made from 12-pound test or heavier hooks (one/aught) with its delicate flavor and firm meat on the table."

Fish and enery regulations in Florida limit the number of hooks on a trotline to 25 unless a person holds a commercial fishing license, and to discourage catching game fish, you may not use live fish for bait on a trotline. (Before putting out a trotline, be sure to check the fishing regulations in your location; they may vary from place to place.) Many Floridians have heard about trotlines, but have no idea what they look like or how to make one. That's the subject of our story.

In general, a trotline is defined as a stout line bearing single hooks hung on short lines at regular intervals. The long line is stretched across a stream, or for some distance in a lake, and sunk to fish near the bottom.

The main line of a trotline is usually made of surveyor's cord. The short droplines that hold the hooks are made from 12-pound test or heavier fishing line, either braided or monofilament. You will need the following materials to make a trotline:

- Small ball of surveyor's cord (available at hardware stores)
- 50 yard spool of 12-pound test fishing line
- Box of 1/0 hooks (one/aught)
- Small rock or soft drink bottle for a weight 25 swivels

**trotlines**

*By Elizabeth Alexander*

**catfish for the family are fun to catch on easy-to-make trotlines**

Slide one swivel from its place next to the ball until it touches the first knot, then tie another knot about half an inch from the first. The knots serve to hold the swivel in place, the space giving room for a little play.

Unroll about 3 more feet of the cord, tie a knot, slip the next swivel against it, and tie a second knot as you did before. Continue this until all the swivels have been secured on the cord. The 3-foot interval isn't a critical distance, but the swivels should be placed at least as far apart as twice the length of the droplines.

Using swivels on the trotline prevents the fish from tangling them.

By now you are ready to put out your trotline. Attach the line to your selected supports, pulling it fairly taut. Tie the droplines to the free ends of the swivels as you move out into the water in your boat—with another fisherman doing the navigating and paddling. If a loop knot is used to attach the droppers, they can be removed easily and tucked back in the coffee can top when the trotline is taken up and put away until needed again. (Or, if you want to get fancy, you can buy spring clips, with swivels built on, for attaching and detaching your droplines easily.)

In the center of the main line, tie on the weight, using a 4-foot piece of cord cut earlier. This will sink the trotline so it will be about 3 feet from the bottom.

So far, you are fishing "on credit." About dusk, put the bait on the hooks.

Around the Big Bend area of Florida, where the panhandle and peninsula come together, cut bait is preferred for trotlining. Cut earthworms and shiners are the best baits. Mullet gizzards are good too, but they're hard to get and a little messy to use. Remember, live bait is illegal, and so are game fish in any form. Don't use bluegill, for example—cut, live, whole, dead, or otherwise. That's a no-no as trotline bait.

After about an hour, or as soon as it is convenient thereafter, check your trotline (we call it "running your line"). Remove the fish you have caught carefully. A jab from the sharp spike of a catfish's dorsal fin is a nasty and very painful wound. Also watch out for the two sharp spines on the sides, at the pectoral fins.

Re-bait your hooks as you run your line. If the cats are biting good, you'll want to run it again later in the evening. In rainy, windy, or cold weather, check a trotline more often. Commercial fishermen say catfish bite better in bad weather.

When you're through fishing for the night—or the next morning—remove the last catch and roll the trotline up on the board you've prepared, taking off the hooks and droplines as you go.

There are at least four kinds of catfishes found in Florida's fresh waters. All are edible, but the choicest is the channel cat. Another is the spotted cat, or brown bullhead. (Some people call the bullhead the "P.W.A. cat," mistakenly believing it was stocked in public waters in the 1930's during the days of the Public Works Administration under President Franklin Roosevelt.) The white catfish, or "shoehed," is a good eating fish, but, as its name implies, has a very large head in proportion to the rest of its body. Finally, there is the yellow cat, also called buttercut and mudcat. Some people like them and some don't.

Everybody knows about fried catfish, hush-puppies, and cheese grits, but not everybody has been introduced to a good catfish stew. That's another story, though.

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The white catfish, left, is a good eating fish, but the choicest of the "whiskered clan" is channel cat below.
Fish Management Notes

The battle of, or for, the Withlacoochee is shaping up, according to Fishery Biologist Gray Bass, of Lake City, leader of the Commission’s Suwannee-Santa Fe River federal aid study project.

“Our Withlacoochee River (a main tributary of the Suwannee) is polluted by papermill effluent from a plant across the state line in Georgia. The plant is within the state to do this, but they do not have one from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, although an after-the-fact Corps permit has been applied for.

“We objected,” says Bass, “but were stunned to learn that the Bureau of Sport Fisheries & Wildlife does not object to the permit even though the crud flowing down the Withlacoochee, which, points out, also noting that the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (the Florida cabins) have now taken the matter under consideration.

From the Everglades Region comes a report that a major victory was won on a proposed dredge and fill operation when the State Supreme Court recently upheld a lower court ruling against the City of West Palm Beach, thereby blocking potentially damaging shoreline development.

“The city had leased 5.4 acres of submerged land to a private developer for the construction of several condominiums,” relates Dr. Gobio Goforth, regional biologist, who points out that the problem was handled at the local level, before it reached the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund Trustee’s of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (the Florida cabins) have now taken the matter under consideration.

The next loud, profane voice you hear above engine noise on some other equally tranquil Florida lake or canal may not belong to a frustrated fisherman who has just lost a 25-pound bass; it might be a Commission fishery biologist who has ‘flipped his lid.’

In concluding a discussion of the merits of various electric generators he has field tested, biologist Vernon Oglevile, of West Palm Beach, an innovative type who has personally designed and built much of the equipment he uses in his work, including electro-fishing devices for collecting live fish, writes:

“The Model ER460 Honda generator weighs 41 pounds, is well constructed, starts easily, and runs very quietly, which enables the boat operator and the ‘shocker’ operator to talk out the overboard and the generator noise quite easily. (It) is powered by a four-cycle gasoline engine which operates at low r.p.m.’s and is well muffled. My personal 350-watt Tiny-Tiger generator is two-cycle and turns up 64,000 r.p.m.’s and requires noise suppressing ear protectors to keep one from going insane around it. There is little chance of the operators communicating while the machine is running, but you can hear them screaming and cursing for about 10 miles.”

Discarded cans and bottle tops are frequently used in con structing fish attractors—artificial ‘reefs’ that the same fish use for cover and shade. This attractor was recently installed by the Commission in Compass Lake, Jackson County.

Photos By Bob Lynn

Fish attractors made of hay bales have worked well in stimulating growth of invertebrates—fish food. This experimental attractor is being sunk in Compass Lake. Round together bales were arranged on bottom, mashed with a float.

They aren’t ‘feeding’ hay to the fish in west Florida, but some 48 bales of it were tied into variously shaped units and sunk in the northern sector of Compass Lake recently to create fish attractors—and it seems to be working.

Compass Lake is a 600-acre, circular lake in southwest Jackson County. It was selected by fishery biologists John Crew and Charles Knight, of DeFuniak Springs, as a study lake for the try-out of two types of attractors.

Using SCUBA diving gear, their crew also sunk nearly 200 vehicle tires, bound and arranged in groups, over a quarter-acre area of lake bottom on the south side.

Periodic surveys are expected to reveal the congregation of fish around one or both attractors,” says Crew, the regional biologist. “This will in turn not only offer fishermen in Compass Lake a better opportunity for harvest, but will lead to a selected attractor for other lakes.”

Both structures are well marked with floats and signs so area fishermen can locate and utilize the artificially enhanced fishing grounds.

“Mych has already been learned about hay attractors in Bear Lake Fish Management Area, in Santa Rosa County,” says Knight, “where a series of hay bundles have been sunk to form a ‘reef’ along several hundred yards of shoreline heavily utilized by bank fishermen. Routine surveys continue to reveal increases in the growth of macro-invertebrate life in association with hay.”

Wildlife Officer Notes

For the second time in less than a year, undercover investigators of the Commission’s law enforcement division exposed large-scale market hunting operations within the state.

An early morning raid on December 12, 1972 resulted in the arrest of 13 persons in the Tallahassee area on charges of illegally killing, buying, and selling venison.

“More than 50 charges were filed initially and others were pending,” said Lt. Col. Brantley Goodson, chief of law enforcement, Tallahassee, who indicated that this is adding to marketing deer, violations included hunting at night with gun and light, hunting during closed season, and the illegal taking of alligator and wild turkey. There were also incidental charges of trespass and possession of narcotics.

“The deer were sold by the hunters in field dressed condition for an average of $40 each. A Tallahassee retail merchant was buying and butchering them for resale,” Goodson said.

During the course of the investigation, Commission undercover officers discovered an organized burglary operation that involved breaking and entering of many plantation homes in north Florida and south Georgia. Evidence including stolen guns, silverware, and works of art were turned over to the Leon County Sheriff’s Department, which assisted in the roundup of accused violators.

Total bonds were set at $15,000, and one of those arrested was placed under a bond of $6,300. He faced 18 separate charges of violating the wildlife law.

In February 1972, a similar market hunting operation was cracked in central Florida, resulting in the arrest of 13 persons who were charged with 47 game law violations.

The breaking of the north Florida operation was the result of an 8-month undercover investigation.

Wildlife Officer W. C. “Whit” Myrick, 55, of Tampa, died suddenly on December 11, 1972. He was a veteran of nearly 25 years service as a wildlife law enforcement officer in the South Florida Region. His death was attributed to a heart attack.

Myrick was widely known and respected in Hillsborough and surrounding counties. His fellow law enforcement officers and many friends were saddened to learn of his untimely passing.

He was employed by the Commission in May 1953.

Retiring recently after over 20 years as a wildlife officer was Joe Pickles, a native of Madison County, who was 65 last July.

Pickles, a native of Madison County, was recognized as one of the best law enforcement officers in the state.
NINE WILDLIFE OFFICERS and two enforcement sergeants were recipients of special honors and awards in late 1972 and early '73.

Sgt. Joe Pierce, of Deland, and Officer Jan Spangler, of Bunnell, received Distinguished Service Citations conferred by the Office of the State Attorney, Seventh Judicial Circuit, Daytona Beach, "for exemplary application of the arts and sciences of criminology and law enforcement."

Their certificates, signed by State Attorney Stephen L. Boyles, read, "From such loyal, faithful and conscientious attention to duty issues to (each officer) eminence in his profession and to his community, state and nation the surety of the safeguards of justice."

Five officers received the Commission's highest honor award, the Distinguished Service Citation, for "risk of life in service to others," and two, the Award of Merit, "for unusual service to others."

The seven were cited for their respective roles in saving the lives of four persons following a highway accident that occurred near Wakulla Springs last September while they were students at the Wildlife Officer Training Academy and quartered at the Springs hotel.

Officers Richard Fowler, Glenn Lee, Dave Thompson, Ron Walsingham, and Floyd Ware were commended for removing the injured driver from the cab of his burning truck—loaded with liquid hydrogen—at great personal risk to themselves. Officers George Smith and Lang Strickland were recognized for aiding the injured and directing traffic at the scene.

The seven received framed award certificates and copies of a Commission resolution commending them for their service, at the December Commission meeting at Tallahassee, Commissioner William Blake, Tampa, acting chairman, presiding.

Commissioner Blake presented the award to Davis, speaking on behalf of Hugh Corrigan III, president of the club.

Sgt. James K. Davis, of South Bay (Palm Beach County), was honored by the Belle Glade Jaycee at their annual distinguished service awards banquet in January '73, at which he received the Outstanding Law Enforcement Officer Award.

Davis is an enforcement supervisor with 19 years service with the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.
(Continued from preceding page)

water and he only hits the important part at the beginning of each retrieve. So he gets only three feet of practical use each time.

Now pushing a boat along next to a bank and casting ahead of it so as to take the important edge is nothing new, but it's often difficult on a bank with irregularities and trees. You often hang up your boat, paddle, ears, or fishing motor on the eids and ends that show or don't show. Besides, the water is going to be pretty shallow in many cases, and that gives you boat trouble.

But the hyacinth line is a perfect setup for fishing ahead of the boat. If you want to use the plants as a ploy you can simply pull yourself along with a paddle stuck into them, and drag the side of your boat right against them, casting almost straight ahead and working your lure over every foot of cast to the stern or out to one in the bow it's almost a perfect setup, providing he can avoid rapping his associate with a lure on potent art of jiggerbobbing (using a constantly pole) .

That isn't so if the plants haven't matted so highly productive bait fishermen catch a lot of war­
ning, even when conditions are right otherwise. This kind of fishing is best done with a cane pole can work a minnow or worm very well.

Now and then you may be a little startled to find a fisherman fishing a hole in the hyacinths with an oar. Others use some kind of a hook for that pur­pose. Now the hyacinth whipping stunt is said by some anglers to knock enough water loose from the dangling roots to attract more fish, although one veteran told me he thought it scared away too many fish.

Much of my experience with bass near hyacinths has been on broad flats near spawning areas. The bottom vegetation is likely to be eelgrass, a very important plant for spawning fish. Even when the eelgrass is too thick or otherwise unpopular for nest building it's a popular area for bass feeding up just before spawning.

There are many years when an eelgrass flat is ruined by hyacinths. If they cover the grass for a long period of time, the grass simply dies out. If the hyacinths are sprayed over eelgrass there's sometimes too much sedge down there for spawning, even when conditions are right otherwise.

Hyacinths floating on moving water often locate fishing areas you wouldn't spot otherwise. In sliding along downstream, or with the wind the plants

by gouging a hole in the carpet and lowering bait such as worms or crawfish down into the unknown. The warmth is one of the most ardent lovers of heavy shrunbery, and you often hear his bassy blogs a long way from open water.

This kind of fishing is best done with a cane pole from either shore or boat, and there is a whole tackle box full of tricks to it. One of the neatest is attachment of a sinker directly to the hook shank so the bait will go through a tiny hole without hanging up on the plants. That's especially good when the fisherman prospects for tiny openings without making his own.

Now then and there you may be a little startled to find a fisherman fishing in the hyacinths with an oar. Others use some kind of a hook for that purpose. Now the hyacinth whipping stunt is said by some anglers to knock enough water loose from the dangling roots to attract more fish, although one veteran told me he thought it scared away too many fish.

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Hyacinths floating on moving water often locate fishing areas you wouldn't spot otherwise. In sliding along downstream, or with the wind the plants lodge in places where there's grass or weeds you wouldn't notice without them. Remember that the rats are likely to hang down a foot or so, even with plants of small or medium size—so a small patch of stationary hyacinths on an otherwise clear surface probably marks a good spot for bass fishing.

I'm going to regurgitate a flat that's partly covered by hyacinths it's wise to examine them pretty closely and learn if they're temporarily lodged or have been fish-hunter for years. The open water you look like a pasture this year. It's especially con­fusing after high winds. On a creek or river you'll find the entire picture changing when the water comes up. Here current keeps most of the hyacinths moving, but some sluggish canals or creeks are clogged for years if there's no spraying.

A WHILE BACK I wrote some stuff about the things that cause lines to break, especially when used for casting artificial...
The ingredients were all there for a storybook hunt—a rabbit hunt in the best Old World tradition right in Florida Wildlife’s own backyard. We had an invitation to take to the brush with the Woodfield beagles.

It was a sunny February morning, but there had been a hard freeze during the night. The temperature was in the 20’s, the sky was unbelievably blue, and the air at hunt time was perfectly still. A heavy frost lay and the air at hunt time was perfectly still. A heavy frost lay down in the state of Florida. They are also registered in Ohio, where they live and hunt in the summer, and where their second kennel is located. The Woodfield beagles are all entered in The British Association of Masters of Harriers & Beagles.

With the arrival of Huntsman Douglas Little and his wife—Doug is the professional trainer of the Woodfield beagles—we learned we’d be hearing the music of “15½ couple,” or 31 hounds, on this outing. As we were being introduced to the Littles, most of the handsome beagles were at the glassed fence, or “cafe-teria” offerings served up, as it were, just for the game.

There were even green strip plantings of oats and rye; there were fields of sedge and wire grass and other native vegetation, all irregularly shaped and well interspersed with woods and small creek bottoms; and there were fallow fields and weedy corners around an old house and a hay shed—ideal cover for cottontails and quail. Brushy strips broke the lines of last year’s peanut fields, now planted to winter grasses, and there was a big oak tree lying where age and the elements had felled it, providing still more homes for wildlife.

In summary, everything about Woodfield suggested game and hunting.

When the tailgate of the van was opened, all the beagles bounded down and began bustling about Doug Little’s and Louise Humphrey’s feet. They didn’t stray because they’re bred and trained to move and to hunt as a pack. Only when Mrs. Humphrey sounded her venerable hunting horn did the beagles move off into the roadside cover, their tails waving and their muzzles to the ground in typical beagle style.

Within minutes the first cottontail was jumped, and the traditional “ta-llyho!” went up as the race began. The rabbit arrowed from a clump of grass near the two-rut road and headed for a swampy bottom off down the hill. It was a short race, but the thrill of listening to that many hounds at once certainly whetted our appetites for more! Unable to sort out the trail in the dense briars and witness of the bottom, the horn was sounded and the pack moved up the hill in search of the next quarry.

A short distance away stood the weathered hay barn. As we approached it one of the beagles spoke and the others immediately turned in his direction as if pulled by a great magnet. That rabbit, like the first, jumped in plain sight of the party and the hounds, and he was carried for a merry ride as the chorus of 31 beagles in full cry cut the morning chill!

(Continued on next page)

Woodfield Beagles

By GENE SMITH

Woodfield beagles are all entered in The British Association of Masters of Harriers & Beagles.

With the arrival of Huntsman Douglas Little and his wife—Doug is the professional trainer of the Woodfield beagles—we learned we’d be hearing the music of “15½ couple,” or 31 hounds, on this outing. As we were being introduced to the Littles, most of the handsome beagles were at the glass of the kennel van, obviously just as excited as we were about the prospects or a fine, invigorating hunt. It showed in their faces and urgent barking.

To an outdoorsman, just the drive through the plantation to the area over which we would hunt was enjoyable. There was birdlife everywhere. The Humphreys, in the lead vehicle, had to stop once to allow the quail to move out of the road, and great numbers of wintering warblers and robins added their special flavor to the scene. When we stopped, it was evident that even the resident crows and the bluejays were enjoying life that crisp morning. Their familiar, far-carrying calls complemented the occasion quite nicely, I thought.

Everywhere we looked, carefully protected wildlife habitat was much in evidence. The briar patches and brushy wooded areas had firebreaks plowed around them, and these tangles provided perfect cover for small game. But there was more than cover; there was food, of natural varieties and “cafe-teria” offerings served up, as it were, just for the game.

A short distance away stood the weathered hay barn. As we approached it one of the beagles spoke and the others immediately turned in his direction as if pulled by a great magnet. That rabbit, like the first, jumped in plain sight of the party and the hounds, and he was carried for a merry ride as the chorus of 31 beagles in full cry cut the morning chill!

(Continued on next page)
It had been sitting tight at the corner of a cornpatch. This one, too, provided great but short-lived excitement as the singing hounds moved him along briskly in a slight race.

True to the habits of other rabbits, this one traveled in a wide are that might have brought it back approximately to the point of beginning. But it got a little lead on the hounds after having passed through a thin pine woods and back out into an open field below us. There, the rabbit parked.

Even Doug couldn’t be sure, but this may have been the same rabbit that Paddy, a two-year-old hound, spoke to a few minutes later in the same vicinity. Then, again, it could well have been a fresh one, we decided, for it ran a fine race after getting off to a tricky start by heading in precisely the opposite direction from which the pack had come when Paddy first spoke.

Soon was approaching, and the Humphreys had one or two more spots they wanted to try. With the energetic huntswoman in the lead, her horn to her lips, and her short blond hair tossing in the wind, we swept an area parallel to one of the oat patches. But no bunnies were home.

Then we came back to that old fallen oak at the end of the field. Briars were growing up around that tree. It looked like a good place as any to begin the last race of the morning.

Douglas Little was nearest the tree. He had just told me that with luck I might get an action photograph of the rabbit when it jumped, but before I could get around him into position, the rabbit had bounded almost from beneath our feet, with Mariner and Poetry in hot pursuit. Of course, I didn’t even come close to getting a picture.

As for the indefatigable Humphreys, they’ve been breeding beagles since 1956 and have hunted for much longer than that.

“Actually, it was the children who got us started hunting,” said Louise Humphrey. “We wanted to take them to hunt, and it led to a great family interest in hunting dogs and hunting traditions.”

She recalled that the very first hunting they did with hounds was for bobcats.

Of the Woodfield beagles, she pointed out that the British prefer the 14- to 16-inch hounds, while Americans breed smaller ones, the 13- to 15-inch beagles.

“We liked the larger hounds, so we chose British lines of stock,” said Mrs. Humphrey.

As we were assessing the morning hunt, interest turned to the well-polished but obviously well-used hunting horn the lady was holding. In reply to our query, George Humphrey smiled and told us it had quite a story.

“Yes, that horn has been in the family quite a while,” he said. “It was a present on my sixth birthday. It has been in use ever since, except for a year or so that it was lost. We found it in my pony’s stall.”

Just before we left Woodfield, I brought up that first bobcat hunt and asked Mrs. Humphrey if they still hunted ’cats or other game besides rabbits.

“Oh yes,” came the quick reply. “We also breed fox hounds, pointers, and Labrador retrievers. We just enjoy good hunting of all kinds, and good dog work. Then she added as an afterthought, ‘You might say we’ve just gone to the dogs.”

Photograph: William Greer
Something About Stripers

By those relatively few Floridians who have a hook and line acquaintance with him, he is most often known as rockfish. Up North, along the Atlantic seaboard, however, where Morone saxatilis is a glittering star in the sport fishing firmament, he goes by the much more descriptive moniker striped bass.

But whatever you call him, old linesides has a lot going for him. For one thing, when he decides to take your bait or lure, you know for a fact you've got something down there in the watery depths. It is a glittering star in the sport fishing firmament, a species that even the most casual observer will recognize as worthy of further attention.

The striped bass is by inclination a salt water fish. If, by chance of nature or the intervention of man, the fish finds itself cut off from access to the sea, it can get along nicely in a completely fresh water environment. In some of the larger fresh water impoundments where favorable conditions exist, striped bass have been known to complete their entire life cycle. Here the mature fish run up feeder streams to spawn, then drop back to the reservoir to spend their time until the succeeding spawning season sends them upstream again. This ability to thrive in a totally fresh water environment is the key to the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission's experimental program to establish striped bass in selected Florida lakes, mainly outside the natural range of the species.

It is their restrictive spawning requirements that have kept the striper from becoming more widely distributed in the state. Unlike the largemouth bass, bluegill, redear, and other familiar fresh water fish, the striped bass does not fan a bed on the stream bottom. When the reproductive urge sends these fish upstream, a group of both males and females gang up in a suitable area, and in response to some spontaneously generated stimulus the eggs and milt are released into the water simultaneously—in a mass spawning effort.

Fertilization occurs when a sperm cell encounters one of the free-floating eggs. With a fair-sized female carrying a million eggs or more, the chances of this occurring are not as haphazard as it may seem.

Since the eggs are slightly buoyant there must be at least enough current to keep them from settling to the bottom, where they would soon smother. Also, there must be a long enough stretch of river to keep the eggs moving for the 50 hours or so required for them to hatch.

Water temperature is also a critical consideration. For successful spawning the temperature must be somewhere in the narrow band between the high 50's and the mid-60's. During their first 10 days or so of life the fry also require water temperatures pretty well within this narrow range—and in Florida only a few natural streams in the panhandle meet the striper's exacting requirements.

Once the young fish are past the critical period they are able to tolerate about any normal water temperature they are likely to encounter. This is a key point in experimental work that has been con-

(Continued on next page)
ducted on the striped bass in Florida for the past several years. As a result of this effort, lakes Griffin, Juliana, Mattie, and Hunter in the Lakeland area, and Lake Talquin near Tallahassee, now support striped bass. Lake Gibson in Lakeland, and Buckeye Lake in the Winter Haven area, are as yet unknowns as far as striped bass are concerned, but their striped populations appear to be developing well.

A 12½-pounder, in its 4th year of life, is the prize Commission-stocked striper thus far recorded. This fish was taken from Lake Talquin. As the program hits its stride, even bigger stripers are sure to be landed.

Biologist Forrest Ware, of Lakeland, himself an avid sport fisherman, emphasizes the fact that successful striper fishing requires a different technique than is usually used on largemouth bass. In fact, some highly successful local largemouth bass fishermen have been disappointed when they turned their attention to Florida's stripers. Thus far, the plastic worm, frequently deadly medicine on largemouths, has proven to be entirely ineffective on the lake dwelling stripers.

One technique that has scored well is fishing shiners on or close to the bottom. Both live shiners and dead ones have turned the trick. Time of day appears to be the key, with very early morning or late evening hours most productive. Night fishing has been good on some of the Lakeland area lakes. Light seems to draw stripers. A lantern set up so its rays fall on the water, as in after-dark crappie fishing, has been the ticket for some striped bass fishermen.

Plugs made to resemble a shad—the popular "Spot" plug is an example of this type—fished very fast in 6 to 8 feet of water, have also been good producers.

A lead worth investigating by the enterprising stripers' fisherman is suggested by findings at Richloom Hatchery. When a sample of the larger sized stripers being reared in hatchery ponds is required for examination, a small No. 2 silver finish Indiana or Colorado spinner with a gob of earthworms on the hook has been a sure-fire method of securing the specimens in short order.

While on the subject of fishing, it will be well to mention that there is a minimum size limit of 15 inches on the striped bass. This is six fish. These regulations apply statewide.

During the initial stages of the striped bass experiment the South Carolina Wildlife Resources Department was extremely helpful in providing an abundance of newly hatched fry. It was on these that Florida's striper project personnel, under Fisheries Biologist Forrest Ware, assisted by the Richloom Hatchery crew, ironed out some of the rough spots in their technique of rearing striped bass under hatchery conditions.

Since it was obviously desirable for Florida to locate a reliable source of brood fish somewhere within the state, efforts were turned in that direction. As a result, the runs of adult stripers up the St. Marys and Nassau rivers, in northeast Florida, have been tapped for brood stock. In 1971, several thousand fry produced by St. Marys River brooders supplemented those acquired from South Carolina. In 1972, for the first time since the current project was launched, sufficient fingerlings were reared at Richloom Hatchery, in Sumter County, to take care of Florida's experimental stocking requirements—and a limited number of the fry produced were returned to the waters of the St. Marys and Nassau rivers, from which the brood stock was taken.

More than a quarter of a million fingerlings were produced at Richloom. Several thousand of them were reared at Blackwater Hatchery, in west Florida, as part of the striper stocking program in that part of the state.

For those fisheries specialists involved in this effort it has been an extremely interesting but trying experience, and one fraught with many setbacks and hazards, jury-rigged equipment failed, the river spawning run faltered, and the weather seemingly conspired against success. Now, with expanded hatchery facilities, more sophisticated equipment, and the confidence inspired by the past season's success, project personnel are looking forward to even greater fry production in 1973 than was achieved in '72.

Ware emphasizes the fact that the striped bass being produced by Commission hatcheries are not available for stocking private lakes or ponds. They are being used solely for the experimental stocking of public waters.

To thrive, striped bass need an abundance of suitable forage fish—the small fish on which game fish feed. In general, this means releasing stripers in good-sized bodies of water containing high populations of gizzard and threadfin shad.

"It appears certain at this point that the program is going to meet with some degree of success, but we still have some problems to solve," Ware cautions.

Another phase of Florida's striped bass program is a cooperative undertaking between the Game and Fish Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This part of the project is directed toward hatchery-rearing striper fingerlings to supplement remnant natural runs in the St. Johns River.

Florida Wildlife plans to have a report on this program in a future issue.
the appeal of a wilderness experience can border on the ethereal, or be as earthy as spry hands andaching shoulders.

Along the Florida Trail

"Several newspapers publicized the event, and the Miami Herald was especially generous in its coverage," says Kern. "We received 25 letters from various people, and it was a membership of 35 people at our very first meeting."

The newly organized Association felt Florida could well develop a long-distance hiking path similar to the Appalachian Trail, a 2,000-mile-long trail beginning in Maine and ending at Georgia's northern tip. The group envisioned that someday the Florida Trail would run the length of the peninsula and westward through a good portion of the panhandle. They calculated it would need to cover approximately 700 miles.

At that time, backpacking and hiking were fast growing in popularity in other parts of the country, but in Florida they were practically unknown. No state or federal agency expressed any particular interest in promoting this kind of recreation. It took the Florida Trail Association to interest the U.S. Forest Service. Five Association members approached the forest rangers to discuss the best location for the trail, held several meetings with them, and cleared everything through the office of the supervisor of national forests in Florida. Together, the Association representatives and the forest spokesmen agreed upon tentative trail rights-of-way, and members of the young organization began constructing a hiking trail across the Ocala National Forest in 1967, continuing in the Osceola National Forest, in northeast Florida, in 1968. (See "The Florida Trail," by Art Hatt, FW, August 1969, page 10.)

William S. "Bill" Craig, of Tallahassee, the Forest Service's recreation staff assistant, worked closely with the group, and, being keenly interested in hiking and camping himself, joined the Association, together with his family.

"At first, the Forest Service left the group alone," says Bill, "but in 1970, seeing the enthusiasm of the members and the exceptional growth of the organization, we realized that with limited funds and lack of experience and manpower, trails could not properly take advantage of the most scenic and desirable locations. In order to do so, trails would need to be constructed through swamps and lowlands.

"So that year the Forest Service began construction in the Ocala National Forest. That trail should be completed this year. We met the problem of high water with a combination of boardwalks through swamps and an elevated earthen trail through wet flatwoods. A large disc plow pulled by a crawler tractor was used to throw a ledge of soil 6 to 10 inches higher than the surrounding wetlands. This has worked quite well, and after about six months of growing over by natural vegetation, it looks quite nice.

"When complete, the section of the Florida Trail across the Ocala Forest will be one of the most scenic trails in the country, providing a very nice" (Continued on next page)
contrast to the high country trails of the West and North.

"Work began on the Ocala National Forest section of the trail in '72, and it should be completed early in 1974. Hopefully, the trail will begin on the Apalachicola National Forest section," concludes Craig.

The Trail Association reports that long stretches of the trail are already open—about 250 miles. Included are approximately 85 miles of national forest land. Trails already open are: north from the Tamiami Trail; from the Ocala National Forest to Goldheed Branch State Park; and from the Ocala National Forest along the banks of the Suwannee River to Suwannee River State Park. Work is also going on in other parts of the state.

The Association has divided the Florida Trail into 24 sections, each about 25 miles long. Each section has a group leader who schedules trips and leads them, including trips for maintaining and marking trail routes. (Names of section leaders actively blazing trails are available from the Association, as are maps of the sections already open.)

"It's a winter trail," says Kern, "meandering through pine woods, cypress stands, and sloughs. There is always a good variety of hikes during the season—from October through April. Many families have joined and enjoy the activities together.

Twice a year the members get together—for a camping weekend or a number of other events, depending on the region.

The Association has been of great benefit to me personally," says Jim Kern. "The people who have come along to lend support have been wonderful people. I don't know whether it is just a coincidence or whether such people are attracted to the outdoor life. The officers and board members have been tireless in their efforts. Many people have told me of the lasting friendships they have made.

Membership in the Florida Trail Association is nominal, costing $3.00 for an individual membership or $5.00 for a family or organization such as the Boy Scouts. Many families have joined and enjoy the activities together.

The Florida Trail eventually connect with the Appalachian Trail in the high country of the West. The interest in them has been increasing. Many people have told me of the lasting friendships they have made.

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E every serious riflemen-hunter should own and use good binoculars. Besides providing positive target identification and detailed study, high grade binoculars enable a hunter to see through small openings in the distant brush and pick out targets beyond it, thereby extending his effective killing range. This is a special advantage when hunting deer, since they habitually rely on concealment as a primary means of protection.

But the binoculars chosen must be of correct magnification and other equally important optical qualities if their owner is not to be disappointed. It is easy to make a mistake on a binocular purchase.

Many years ago, when selecting my first binoculars for sporting use, I did not possess even a basic technical knowledge of the properties of different binocular power and their practical application to hunting. So I purchased binoculars of 9x, falsely believing that the higher the magnification the better I'd be able to see.

Things didn't work out that way at all! The 9-power magnification made hand-held use of my glasses virtually impossible. Objects seen through the lenses appeared to bounce around and jiggle no matter how hard I tried to hold them perfectly still.

I later learned that 8x is just about as high a magnification as the average person can control and use satisfactorily without some form of artificial support.

My second pair of binoculars, acquired primarily for hunting, was a 7x50 Navy-type glass. The optics were superb, especially for detailed viewing in the dim light of dawn and dusk. But it's a long time between dawn and dusk, and my binoculars proved bulky to carry all day afield.

This second costly mistake made me realize that I needed to make an extensive technical study of binoculars.

Unfortunately, informative articles on the subject were rarely to be found in sporting magazines of the day. The local public library was the source of most of my technical references. Extended correspondence with various binocular manufacturers, who patiently answered questions and sent technical literature, helped clarify abstruse points. The basic knowledge acquired was then passed along to the readers of FLORIDA WILDLIFE.

"Get A Closer Look"—an illustrated feature story that appeared in the May 1958 issue.

As any hunter will surely agree, the ideal hunting binoculars should fill viewing needs AND be light in weight and fairly small.

Binoculars of 7x5, designation, with housing made of aluminum-alloy or magnesium, probably come closest to being the ideal hunting and general use glass.

But in our typical Florida thick brush hunting country, smaller and usually lighter 8x25 binoculars will do a creditable job over generally short viewing and shooting ranges. Also, during hunting season it is not uncommon for ground level early morning fog to temporarily nullify attempted far viewing, even with powerful Navy-type glasses.

When my first pair of binoculars appeared on the market, I acquired a pair of Bushnell 8x25 Custom Compact binoculars. From the start, they proved to be a joy to use. I liked them even better than the fine Custom 7x50 model—a larger, heavier instrument, but one of proven performance.

Small and light enough to be carried in the pocket or hung around the neck all day, the Custom Compact model also featured turn-down type eyecups needed by eyeglass wearers for full field of view, plus incorporated optical element coatings and lightweight frame for frequent or prolonged use without eyestrain.

However, there were one or two features I didn't like. The carrying strap emerged from the bottom of the center focusing shaft. Every time the binoculars were lifted from idle hanging-from-neck position to eye level there was considerable arm movement—audible movement during moments of serious deer hunting can easily spook an already naturally alert quarry! Also, when placing the binoculars to the eyes, there would sometimes be a faint but audible click on contact with eyeglass lenses.

In experimental modification, I rigged an elastic neck strap that enabled me to carry the binoculars high on my chest and in such upright position that they could be placed to eyes with minimum hand and arm motion. To eliminate the audible click of touching binocular eyecups to eyeglass lenses, I purchased a pair of Desmaris adjustable neck straps that eliminated both audible and visual click.

By EDMUND MCLAURIN

FLORIDA WILDLIFE

(Continued on next page)
small pieces of bicycle tire inner tubing were cut and shipped to the trade to incorporate the improvements. Scientists for use in American spacecraft. These sections of tubing, when attached, are considered logical and were favorably received.

Custom Compact model binoculars now being shipped to the trade incorporate the improvements. The suggestions were considered logical and were favorably received.

Now a hunter can put a pair of binoculars to the case to fit the sales clerk, who can then be sure to supplement the transaction by telling the buyer of the dangers.

A shotgun or rifle, for example, that is stored in the back seat or in a sideward or truck bed, and from underneath other equipment can fail in any of several different ways. For instance, water can get in the case and cause rusting. Moisture can also reach the gun through the seams of the case. This can cause the gun to rust, even though it is not end-bound protectively. Also, the gun case is undeniably better than any gun case give protection.

A shotgun, rifle, or any other nonporous, plastic material as many Florida hunters know who have placed a tightly encased gun in their car. It is a good idea to have the open section in the case with "Moisture Guard" treated lining, the lab technic i ans found that minute particles of moisture-as might have occurred during the "Moisture Guard" treatment had minute particles of moisture-as might have occurred during the tests. The Gaynes Laboratory report substantiates my own experience with Kolpin cases.

In Chicago, Gaynes Engineering & Testing Laborato ries, Inc., decided to find out the truth behind the "Moisture Guard" claim. Using Kolpin’s Model #73, a medium-priced vinyl case, they found that the gun was unmarred by rust. The surface of the blued barrel section in the case with “Moisture Guard” treated case was maintained in the “Moisture Guard”-treated case was unmarred by rust. The surface of the blued barrel section in the case with “Moisture Guard” treatment had minute particles of moisture-as might have occurred during the tests. The Gaynes Laboratory report substantiates my own experience with Kolpin cases. But even gun cases can suffer short service life if purchased too short or too tight for the gun it encases. Continually force a firearm into a tight fitting case will quickly wear out and put a breaking load on the gun. But gun cases are needed because the drinking of the buggy brew didn’t hurt any of us one bit.

Quality-made porcelain enameled coffeepots, with nonburning carrying handle and a tilting hand grip on the back, were once fairly easy to find. Then, suddenly, the familiar campfire coffeepots became hard to find. The Palco Company has done something about it. Their new Palco No. 448 porcelain enameled combination coffeeboiler and utility pot meets party hunters’ and campers’ needs admirably.

Made of seamless metal for durability, the Palco product makes up to 48 cups (12 quarts) of coffee to take care of group needs, yet smaller quantities can be made as well. The coffee pot is simple to use, and water can be added before putting the coffee pot to the water, I was startled to note a good quarter-inch layer of soft bugs and gnats on top of the coffee. I turned off the fire to cool-usually with lid askew or entirely off.

About the third day of our hunt I returned to camp alone and before dark, rekindled the camp fire and prepared to make fresh coffee. When I glanced inside the pot to see the condition of the leftover coffee grounds before adding fresh coffee and water, I was startled to note a good quarter-inch layer of soft bugs and gnats on top of the coffee. I turned off the fire to cool-usually with lid askew or entirely off.

The best coffee I ever tasted was brewed in a coffee boiler of this type. Rich in flavor, the beverage was also exceptionally full-bodied—for good reason!

The story is worth telling. Fear of us had gone deer hunting at Eglint Field. It was one of those seasons when opening week’s hunting days are marked by cold weather. That season it was really cold!

Each morning we got up before daylight and had a hurried breakfast—including, of course, hot coffee. We hunted all day and did not return to camp until after dark.

To get the coffee pot going quickly each cold morning and evening, the coked soon simply threw fresh green coffee beans into the enameled pot and added water, instead of first emptying the remaining contents. After each meal’s pourings had been completed, the coffee pot was left on the doused wood to keep it hot. The coffee pot was usually removed entirely off the fire.

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Fortunately, the boiling must have killed all the germs, because the drinking of the buggy brew didn’t hurt any of us one bit.

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Painting Presented

THE ORIGINAL painting reproduced in part on the cover of Florida Wildlife this month was presented to Gov. Reubin Askew in February by the artist, Albert Earl Gilbert, a Chicago native now living in Ridgefield, Conn. Called Mockingbirds on Orange Blossom, the painting is one of a series of works by the widely acclaimed wildlife artist depicting each state’s official state bird and flower.

“I made the sketches for this painting in Florida, and have visited the state many times to photograph and enjoy its magnificent wildlife scenery,” says Gilbert. “For me, Mockingbirds on Orange Blossom epitomizes much of the beauty and spirit of this region. Let us hope that wise conservation policies will forever safeguard its wildlife and scenic beauty.”


The National Wildlife Federation has featured his work in its famous wildlife conservation stamp program. Gilbert did the Federation’s 1972 Christmas stamps, depicting 10 colorful bird species and the whitetail deer, which were used by millions of Americans to dress up holiday mail.

“Upon seeing the astonishing technical proficiency of the artist’s work, I was amazed to learn that he never attended art school,” says Ralph H. Stewart, president of the National Wildlife Art Exchange, Inc., Vero Beach. “Most of that skill was acquired by an immense amount of hard work, for he has spent most of his life observing and sketching wildlife at every opportunity.”

Gilbert’s favorite subjects are birds of brilliant plumage, the birds of prey, and large mammals such as the wild cats of the world. Mockingbirds on Orange Blossom will hang permanently in the State Capitol at Tallahassee for the future enjoyment of Floridians and visitors from other states. The National Art Exchange, Inc., P. O. Drawer 355, Vero Beach, Fla. 32960, will make available Gilbert’s original paintings in both North and South America, where he has sketched and photographed wildlife, plants, and insects in their natural habitat. He has also visited every major zoo in the U.S. in search of rare species to study and sketch. The butterfly in “Mockingbirds on Orange Blossom” is a giant swallowtail.

Thirty Years Research

Utilization of the Southern Pines, new publication of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is authored by Dr. Peter Koch, principal wood scientist at the Southern Experiment Station of the Forest Service. A first edition copy of the two-volume publication was recently presented to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz by Dr. Koch in a brief ceremony in the Secretary’s office to honor the author.

“Southern pines are now our primary softwood species,” Secretary Butz said. “Our Forest Service statisticians tell me that more than a third of the 43.5 billion board feet of softwood timber harvested throughout the Nation in 1970 came out of the South.”

Predicting that the new handbook would become a standard reference work for oncoming generations of researchers and industrial managers in the southern pine industry, the Secretary noted it should also prove an incomparable guide for forest managers, wood procurement men, extension workers, professors, and students of wood technology.

Copies may be obtained from Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. The price is $13.25.
FISHING CITATION

BIG ONE that didn't get away!

Florida Wildlife's