How Much Do They Weigh?

Lesser Scaup
1 1/2 to 2 1/4 lbs.

Ring-necked Duck
1 1/4 to 2 lbs.

Canvasback
2 to 3 1/2 lbs.

Red-breasted Merganser
1 1/2 to 2 3/4 lbs.

Redhead
1 1/2 to 3 lbs.

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The Cover
Rabbit hunting is "the ticket" to a long, enjoyable hunting season in Florida, and those who love to hear beagles make music take full advantage of this happy situation. See page 10.

From a Painting by Wallace Hughes

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Tallahassee, Florida

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The Shotgun Slug

Shotgun slug hunting is here to stay, but many hunters aren't getting what they should out of this fine sport.

Most hunters who use slugs aren't putting much effort into proficiency, and it shows in their skill and enjoyment of the hunt. The shotgun slug is, by design, a potent, high-powered, short range, big game cartridge, and, like the flèche arrow, its design purposely limits its range. Through its use, game may be hunted in heavily populated rural areas where high-powered rifles are prohibited.

The hunter who lays out a lot of cash for a high-powered rifle and then practices with it for the flu-flu arrow, its design purposely limits its range. Through its use, game may be hunted in different bullet weights and at various distances of bullet travel.

Also, he can rattle off foot-pounds of energy and knows the maximum range for a clean kill of the game hunted. Quite likely, he can discuss half a dozen calibers and their capabilities.

Yet, despite all this rifle orientation, his real meat stick is probably his shotgun. The good ol' taken-for-granted shotgun that may be confined to paper and clay targets. The truth is that a good sportsman who knows his guns wouldn't even use a 20 gauge for deer hunting. Proving skill with minimum loads should be confined to paper and clay targets.

The 12 gauge slug leaves the gun with almost the same amount of energy and killing power as a 30-06 rifle bullet. As the slug loses velocity, it loses accuracy, as it is designed to do. A 12 gauge slug weighs 1 ounce, or 437 grains, which is almost twice the weight of a 220-grain 30-06 bullet. It leaves the muzzle at 2,480 feet per second and with 2,480 foot-pounds of energy. The 220-grain 30-06 bullet has a muzzle velocity of 2,830 feet per second and 2,830 foot-pounds of energy at the muzzle.

The 220-grain 30-06 bullet will lose 12 per cent of its velocity in the first 100 yards while the 437-grain slug will lose 40 per cent of its velocity in the first 100 yards. If it didn't, we couldn't use it. The shotgun slug is all lead. It is not hardened with an alloy. It will not wear out the choke of your gun (Continued on next page)

For example, one commonly hears that the 20 gauge slug is more accurate than the 12 gauge, and that on distant shots the 20 gauge does not lose its killing power as quickly as the 12 gauge. This has led to the belief that the 20 gauge can kill a deer at greater distance.

The economy of using one's shotgun for big game hunting makes the sport possible for many who simply could not afford a special gun to be used only once a year and for a short period of time.

The maximum distance that a 12 gauge slug will travel is 170 yards; 16 gauge, 830 yards; 20 gauge, 740 yards; and .410, 300 yards. The maximum effective accuracy range would be 100 yards, and for some individual shotguns, 150 yards. By this I mean a 12-inch or smaller group. The 12 gauge and 16 gauge have enough wallop to kill at this effective accuracy range, but the 20 gauge and .410 do not. With them, a marginal hit will only wound. Limit the 20 gauge to 75 yards and the .410 to your gun rack.

There should be no temptation to take the 200-yard shot, much less 400 yards, because the slug can land anywhere in the pasture at these distances. Besides, identification of game is more positive at 100 yards than at 300 yards.

The slug has a broad, blunt nose, where most of the slug's weight is located. The sides taper inside, and the interior is hollowed out in a conical shape similar to a thimble. The heavy nose gives it flight stability. The lighter sides follow the heavy nose to prevent tumbling. The broad front end is designed to slow the slug rapidly.

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Bore with little or no choke are best for shotshells, but full choke barrels handle them solely and satisfactorily too. Always range test your gun for accuracy and sight adjustment before you start going after deer and wild hogs.

It's a harder hitter, and far more accurate, than most hunters realize.
If a choice of barrels is possible, take the one with the least choke restriction. The less choke the barrel has, the less choke can affect the flight of the slug.

If full choke is the only choice, do not despair. Full chokes should give good accuracy—6-inch groups or less at 50 yards.

Accuracy must be determined for each individual barrel. Some barrels won't even launch shot well, much less a single projectile. You shoot to determine how small a group, or cluster of hits, a barrel will fire. Then, through the use of sights, you can move the group into the bullseye by proper sight adjustments.

Once this is done, the same sight picture will give the same results.

Too many hunters think that you shoot a shotgun with slugs the same way you shoot it with a rifle. Unfortunately, most shotguns afield during the deer season do not have accurate sights. If any rotation is given to the slug by the rifling, it will fire. Then, through the use of sights, you can move the group into the bullseye by proper sight adjustments.

If the slug should be forced through an uneven bore, the rifling is quite differently when shooting at a deer. Too many hunters think that you shoot a shot gun with slugs the same way you shoot it with a rifle. Unfortunately, most shotguns afield during the deer season do not have accurate sights. If any rotation is given to the slug by the rifling, it will fire. Then, through the use of sights, you can move the group into the bullseye by proper sight adjustments.

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One detachable slug sight, right, is available from the manufacturers of NHU University. Des Moines, Iowa 50311. Attach it to barrel with adhesive—it doesn’t mar metal when removed. With this device mounted and adjusted, you aim as with a rifle. Texters say it won’t interfere with slug shooting.

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I once read years ago—a claim that fish like the human odor and are attracted by it. This claim has been a source of controversy among anglers for years. Some believe that fishers use special concoctions to attract fish, while others think that the natural smell of fish, such as plastic lures (generally worms), is enough to entice them. It's important to note that the effectiveness of these lures can vary depending on the species and conditions of the water.

The St. Lucie River is one of the more inconsistent waterways of the state as far as fishing is concerned. It's best known for salt water fish which move into it and out of it with frustrating irregularity. There are several reasons why St. Lucie fishermen never know what to expect from one year to the next: development, drainage, and various forms of pollution. One student of the river comes up with an interesting opinion of the situation, saying that even when the water is pure enough for the fish to prosper, it may have a taste that keeps the salt water types away. The knowledge that certain migratory species such as the salmons are brought back to their home waters by taste and/or smell is important. There are anecdotal reports of fishers who have spent money for it have begun to buy up or lease private water such as that of Europe. Now they are the people often seen with an open-faced spinning reel on top of their rods instead of hanging down.

Some anglers feel that the water is too shallow and the hyacinths are prevalent, the exact locations of submergent cover changes. A bank of floating stuff that stays too long can shut off the sun, and some forms of vegetation simply disappear.

Fishermen have been forced to use the "other hand" in their casting when injury or illness has put them in this position. The theory about wrist casting has some pretty sound basis because even strongly right-handed people make a great deal of use of their left arms with their left hand after a lifetime of casting with his right. He said his timing goes sour when he begins to work on top or nearly on top.

Some kinds of fishing automatically cull the customers. If your taste runs to marlin or sailfish, you're going to pay for it. Generally speaking, the better the fishing more than one who takes it as a matter of course. It just isn't for everybody, they say.

If a snook comes too long the coast looking for something to eat, he was in last year and the river mouth puts back the big ones. Wulff says the bigger fish the best potential breeders. In fairness, we should remember he speaks mainly of trout and salmon, but the same argument is put forward about bass.

If you live in an area of the river he was in last year and the river mouth tastes too differently, he may just decide to stay out, my friend says. That could account for the occasional good fishing on the river's mouth while nothing much happens farther up. He says, logically enough, that this is most likely to be the case with the larger fish. The small ones may have known no other river taste and probably didn't go far so soon in the first place.

Americans are believers in public fishing. For a century they have generally disapproved of privately controlled water such as that of Europe. Now we have reached the point that persons willing to spend money for it have begun to buy up or lease many of our best streams. The big lakes remain open for the most part.

Some bass lakes under private ownership now provide some of the best fishing in the country, in Florida as elsewhere. I hear more and more talk of "secret" lakes carefully managed for a select few. Some bass lakes are operated in "trick" spots. The weeds at about the point where they should be starting, reluctant to use the kind of lures that can be pulled through the stuff. Most such baits must work on top or nearly on top. There are fewer kinds of weeds so dense that bass won't work through them. Poaching there is some open spots to be reached, and they can be under, above or right in the stuff. Usually, not always, if there's a solid mass of emergent vegetation that mats on the surface, the bigger fish aren't there but they'll work their way through it to more open spots.

In shallow lakes the vegetation is important for shade when the weather warms. The sun, and some bluegills.

One gimmick is that the fish may come from considerable distance to an area where light comes in—so the bait fisherman operating through a hole in the hyacinths may be attracting fish that wouldn't even notice his bait elsewhere. This won't work, of course, if the water is too shallow and the hyacinths have run their root systems clear to the bottom and clung tightly to the bottom.

Some of the best fishermen of shallow lakes take considerable time locating underwater grass, which is found in different locations from one year to the next. Especially where hyacinths are prevalent, the exact locations of submergent cover changes. A bank of floating stuff that stays too long can shut off the sun, and some forms of vegetation simply disappear.

Some fishermen have been forced to use the "other hand" in their casting when injury or illness has put them in this position. The theory about wrist casting has some pretty sound basis because even strongly right-handed people make a great deal of use of their left arms with their left hand after a lifetime of casting with his right. He said his timing goes sour when he begins to work on top or nearly on top.

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Tfordville, leaned against a big pine tree and smiled. He'd roused a rabbit out of bed. Their yelps of excitement were almost screams as they told us and the world that the chase was on.

Although he's a pointer man, he loves all breeds of hunting dogs.

"I knew for sure was that they were putting up two beagles I couldn't tell one from the other. All I knew for sure was that they were putting up enough sound to make the woods and fields ring like a full pack in happy agony. True to form, the cottontail was circling. While there was little chance of the beagles running down the rabbit, the quarry could not help but leave a scent that was easy to follow. The ground was still sparking with dew. Jimmy said he'd keep station near the pine tree, and suggested that we go ahead about 60 yards. The rabbit would soon be returning to his home range. Bob had a 12 gauge shotgun, and I was carrying a camera, hoping to get a picture, in the open, of a beagle hot on the tail of a rabbit.

Bob found a clear area with an old logging trail down on top of him, or a fox may ambush him from a clump of broomsedge. He has to watch out for bobcats, alligators, snakes and raccoons. To survive, the cottontail has to live in escape cover, and know how to use it.

He feels safest in his home range, where he knows every path, briar patch, and brush pile. When jumped, he may run out of his home territory to throw off the pursuer, but he soon turns and heads back to his own bailiwick. That's his undoing! Experienced rabbit hunters know of this trait, and simply wait until the cottontail comes homing in.

There was no doubt that Ruta and Queenie were coming our way. Bob said, "Keep a sharp lookout and let me know if you see the rabbit. It'll be anywhere from 10 to 50 yards ahead of the dogs."

Beagles are at their best when putting cottontails on the run, although many Florida hunters use them to hunt deer also. They are excellent family pets as well. Author, left, offers a kind word of encouragement to Bob Tola's Queenie, who didn't disappoint him. Rabbits are plentiful and can be hunted year-round.

I stood behind Bob, anxious to get him in the picture as he shot at the rabbit with the dogs also in the frame. The dogs were yelping only a short distance away, as though they were charging us. Suddenly Bob hissed, "Here he comes!" and I saw his shotgun go up. The rabbit was bounding down the trail right at us, the dogs not far behind, running by sight rather than scent.

I couldn't get the rabbit, beagles and Bob lined up in the viewer. I shouted, "Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" I could see Bob balking, and then he tensed again. The rabbit was only a few feet away, too worried about the dogs to pay any attention to us. Bob yelled, "He's going by us." He turned around and I tried to get behind him, telling him to wait a second. The rabbit and beagles had run right by us as though we were trees.

As I got my camera lined up, Ruta and Queenie were only a few yards behind the rabbit. Bob had his gun mounted and was gritting through his teeth, "I've got to shoot. He's getting out of range!"

"Just a second," I pleaded.

That's when the rabbit leaped, turned in midair, and landed in blackberry brambles, totally out of sight in the thick cover, as though we were trees. When I got my camera lined up, Ruta and Queenie were pouring at the rabbit, the dogs not far behind, running by sight rather than scent.

Bob turned slowly toward me, and with a great effort at self-control asked, "Wouldn't you rather carry a gun than that camera?"

Just as I was telling him it was a good idea, we (Continued on next page)

When we got in sight, Ruta and Queenie were sniffing at the dead rabbit, as if they wanted to make sure it was the one they had heard our way. They must have been satisfied with the identification, for they quickly lost interest and lay down to take a breather.

Jimmy had a sneaky grin. "Didn't that rabbit pass right by you?"

Before Bob could say anything, I replied, "Let's go back to the truck. I want to exchange this camera for a shotgun."

We did, and I did. Jimmy suggested driving to another area where there was a late garden.

Florida's regulations on rabbit hunting are about as liberal as you can have and still call them regulations. A hunting license is required, but the hunting season is open all year, and the daily bag limit is 10, with a possession limit of 20. The limits were put on this year for the first time in Florida's history, not because of any shortage of rabbits but to curtail any idea of market hunting during the beef scarcity and high prices.

From a practical hunting standpoint, not many hunters will go afield for rabbits during the hot months. The cover is too thick and the heat is too hard on dogs and man.

The first principle of game management for any species is to insure its survival. When a game species is in good supply, seasons and limits are set to allow hunters to harvest a surplus not needed for replenishing in the breeding season.

For many reasons, the rabbit has always been able to hold its own. Vegetative cover in Florida grows lush and in great variety. Much of it is ideal rabbit habitat. The cottontail, as well as the marsh rabbit, eats a great variety of food. If one type of food is short, there are other choice foods handy.

Rabbits are adaptable, and survive with some habitat changes, not all. Also, they've learned to live with man. It's not unusual for several rabbits to homestead near farm homes despite man, dogs and vehicle traffic. In fact, they're too adaptable for some gardeners, who have problems with rabbits that move in to feed on vegetables and flowers. The suburbs, with open space and green areas, nearly always have a supply of rabbits. The little animals learn to avoid cats, dogs and humans.

In addition to the above factors, the rabbit is well known for its reproductive faculties. As with other prey species, it has a large capacity for bouncing back when its numbers have been reduced by predators or disease.

The rabbit population is cyclic, having its up and down years. When in great supply in a given area, rabbits may be hunted hard for a while. But as their numbers decrease, so do the number of hunters. When it's hard to find game in a certain area, hunting pressure slackens off, and this gives the rabbits a chance to multiply and refill available habitat.

Compared with turkey or quail, the rabbit is not a glamorous species—one much coveted by Florida sportsmen. However, in many northern states the rabbit holds a higher appeal, partly because those hunters don't have the wide choice of game and hunting land that Florida offers.

In sections of Tennessee, North Carolina and other states farther north, changing agricultural patterns and higher human populations have reduced hunting chances for quail. Many sportsmen have bought beagle packs and turned to rabbit hunting. This could eventually happen in sections of Florida. In fact, many northern sportsmen who've retired to Florida have brought beagles and continue hunting. When intending to hunt on private lands, some hunters have found they can get access for rabbits but not quail or turkey.

Rabbits now offer more potential man-days of hunting than any other game species in Florida. On any given day, it's unlikely you'll have to quit hunting because you have your limit of 10. They're not that easy to bag, as I found out with Bob and Jimmy.

At the next area, it didn't take the two beagles long to pick up a trail. Rabbits do most of their feeding and rambling at night. They bed down during the day, in or very close to a variety of escape cover. They depend on their large "sounding board" ears to warn them of approaching enemies. Also, they have sharp vision and are camouflaged to blend in with the deer or any cover.

Rita and Queenie were gleefully yelping on the heels of the cottontail, and the race was turning our way. Bob, Jimmy and I spread out, cautiously marking each position, and waited for a shot.

Suddenly I saw a brown blur scooting over the leaves and pine needles. Bob stood motionless, waiting for the cottontail to come in range. It was zigzagging, trying to throw the dogs off, and wasn't concerned with what was in front of it.

At the exact instant Bob raised his gun, the rabbit saw him and swerved. It made a mighty leap, and I could see the white powder puff glisten in the sun. Bob swung his shotgun and pulled the trigger, and the rabbit collapsed in the air, much like a flying bird.

Bob walked quickly towards his kill, his gun ready just in case the rabbit was down but not out. Rita and Queenie came panting up to the rabbit, sniffed, and lost interest. The chase was over. All they cared about was finding another cottontail to put to flight.

As Bob put the rabbit in his game bag, I said, "You shoot a lot better when I'm not looking down your back with a camera."

He grinned broadly. He had made a fine shot and there was no way I could ruffle him. There are few things more satisfying in the outdoors than pulling off a good shot with someone watching.

The morning air was warming, and the beagles were panting. Jimmy suggested working towards a marsh where the dogs could get a drink of water. It was a good idea except that they hit a fresh trail halfway down the sloping hill. They were off and running!

As the frantic yelping got farther away, we paused to check the sand for rabbit signs. There were numerous tracks and droppings, and the sand was scratched up as though there had been a rabbit convention during the night. Evidently, the area had ideal habitat: a wide variety of cover, open space, and food—all intermingled.

It was easy to tell that the rabbit was circling back, from the frequent yelps of Queenie and Rita. They were headed our way when suddenly the yelping stopped. As we walked toward the dogs, we could see them urgently sniffing the ground, their noses right on the sand. They'd give short whines and halfhearted yelps and make little circles, trying to pick up a hot scent. Something had happened. Br'er Rabbit had pulled a sneaky.

We never did figure out for sure how the dogs lost the trail. It was getting warmer and the dew was gone. There were many signs of other rabbits from the night before. Perhaps this one did some fancy tight circles and then gave a huge leap out of

[Continued on next page]
Rabbits have a mortal flaw: They almost always point back to the point at which the poisons begin. Bob Tolo, seen right, used this to advan-
tage and waited for beagles to send the rabbit to him. He made them "wring shot" on this one.

By an effort to help anglers put more crappie in the creed, regional fisheries biologist Bob Schnei-
der and crew recently completed construction of 40 fish attractors on Little Lake Harris, near Pa-
vans. Departing from the more conventional brush pile, old auto tires, and cement block attractors, the new structures consist of panels of 7-foot-long sticks joined into a framework driven into the lake bottom. The 4x8-foot beds are located in some 13 feet of water adjacent to the fishing catwalk on the Howey Bridge (State Road 19), a popular speck fishing spot.

Tennessee fisheries biologists testing the stake bed idea in that state found an increase in angler success from 1.8 crappie per man-hour of fishing in a control area to 6.6 per hour in the vicinity of the attractors. Schneider is hoping for similar results on Little Lake Harris. The Lake County Improve-
ment Association contributed the $1200 required for the material to construct the stake beds, and Commission personnel provided the expertise and muscle power.

The white amur, or grass carp, has been the subject of a great deal of interest in the press and otherwise during the past months. Controversy over the species revolves around the amur's reported usefulness as a control of aquatic weeds and the possible ill effects its "straight chute" digestive tract may have on water quality. Other questions involve its competition with other species and its desirability as a game fish.

In a cooperative project with the Department of Natural Resources, Commission fisheries biologists have launched an investigation aimed at getting some answers to many of the questions about the grass carp's potential impact. The cross may have promise if it should be introduced into the state's waters.

Experimental ponds, selected on the basis of secu-

ity against accidental escape or intentional re-

lease of the test fish, as well as other factors, are located in Broward, Madison, Pasco, and Suwannee counties. Among the plants eaten by the amur, Hydrilla, an especially troublesome plant, appears to rank high. The amur shows some promise at this early stage of the evaluation, but it is much too early to make even a guess as to its impact should it become generally distributed in Florida waters.

There is a continuing effort by the Commission to evaluate various fish species that could offer more productive angling in some Florida waters where changing water quality has cut a swath through native fish populations. Among the fish currently being investigated is the flashled catfish, Pilodictis olivaris. In general, the native range of the species is the middle third of the country from South Dakota into western Pennsyl-
vania, south in the Mississippi Valley to Alabama, and on down the Rio Grande system into Mexico. It is essentially a fish of the larger rivers in its natural range.

In an exchange with Texas for some Florida largemouth bass, male striped bass were delivered to Richloam Hatchery during early November. Most of these fish are destined for a rearing pond in the northeast region, although some will be retained at Richloam to provide future brood stock should rearing efforts be successful.

Recent Gill Net Sampling at Lake Hunter, in the Lake area, shows a thriving population of striped bass. As might be expected, fish of the 1973 year class were predominant in the sample. These fish range from 6 to 18 inches in length. However, there is a very substantial number of 16- to 20-inch stripers. Biologist Forrest Ware says it is difficult for him to understand why area fishermen are not taking advantage of what could be a red hot hot.

"I don't believe we could squeeze another stripper into the lake," Ware says. Maybe there is some truth in the old cliché that Florida fishermen are spoiled by abundance and habit.

At Lake Gibson, near Lakeland, fishermen are continuing to take hybrid striped bass introduced into the lake a year and a half ago. The fish, a cross between a female striped bass and a male white bass, are running from 16 to 18 inches in length at the age of 19 months. The chunky-bodied hybrids average about a quarter of a pound heavier than a striped bass of the same length.

Another crossbreed fish—the biologists call it a reciprocal hybrid—is doing well, with 7-month-old specimens ranging up to 11 inches in length. This is a "new" fish, the cross of a male striped bass with a female white bass that had not previously been successful in producing stock-sized fingerlings. Hatcheryman Wayne Pennington, Richloam Hatch-

ey, takes a bow for being the first to nurse this "homemade" cross to stocking size when "the book" said it couldn't be done.

The reciprocal hybrid shows considerable prom-
is. At the present age, it appears the growth rate is intermediate between the striped bass and the original female-stripe white bass cross. One obvious advantage as far as hatcherymen are con-
cerned is the fact that female white bass and male stripers are a lot easier to come by than female striped bass. Collecting eggs for the northern Florida streams where striped brood stock is ob-
tained have been confounded by an overabundance of male stripers and a serious dearth of females of the species.
There are still bears in the big woods. You can find their signs if you know where to look and what to look for. With luck you may even see a bruin in the wild if you scout the outdoors long enough, and chances are it'll pop up when least expected.

Six of us from Tallahassee had been on an overnight campout at Rock Bluff, on the east bank of the Ochlockonee River, in May 1972. We had fished, swum, hunted frogs, and generally enjoyed ourselves, but it had been just another campout—until we saw the bear.

The boys had loaded their gear and we were headed home on Forest Road 305 through the Apalachicola National Forest. It was 3:00 p.m.—broad daylight—when up ahead some 500 yards, a fine big bear stepped into the road and looked intently at our oncoming camper bus.

"Bear!" I yelled, scaring my half-dozing young companions half to death, I'm sure. Then as we craned forward for a better look, a cub appeared! And another! And another! We could hardly believe it! A wild bear and three cubs... just like that.

Big Mama lingered only moments before shuffling off into the pine woods, followed by her cubs in single file. But as each cub reached the center of the road, it too paused briefly to look our way.

After making sure the bears had gone on about their business, we piled out to examine their tracks in the clean road sand. Judging from the size of the adult's prints—and from her looks—I'd say she weighed at least 200 pounds. She appeared to be in excellent condition. As for the cubs, I estimated they stood no more than 15 inches high at the shoulder. They were 2 or 3 months old, I guessed.

That was indeed a memorable camping trip. The bears made it so.

Like the panther, the bear is now backed into an environmental corner in Florida. The land squeeze is on, and neither can vote. The only extensive bear habitat remaining is found in the three national forests and in portions of the Everglades, notably inside the national park, where only seven bears have been sighted since 1965. Yet, in the nearly impenetrable swamps and thickets of the Okefenokee and Apalachicola national forests, good bear populations continue to support annual bear hunts without detriment to the breeding stock.

Bears are omnivorous, intelligent and extremely hardy. They will make it if given a sporting chance and a little room.
try fishing

Orange Lake for Topwater Fun

WILL WILLIAMS is a dedicated bass fisherman—

worn that is. But he's changed his mind a

bit about one of my favorite fishin' holes, Orange Lake.

He probably won't admit it, but I've a sneaking

suspicion he's decided there are lakes that just

aren't too well suited to normal worm fishing tech­

niques, and Orange Lake is one of them.

I know why. The Orange Lake bass showed him,

and while it cost him only a quarter, no dedicated

angler likes to lose the tiniest bet.

Orange Lake, between Gainesville and Ocala,

is one of my favorite central Florida fishing lakes.

Not only do I admire the rugged beauty—the bull­

dozers of the real estate developers haven't chewed

it up yet—but I also like the topwater action. I've

never been one of those dyed-in-the-wool worm

fishermen, although admittedly the ol' plastic worm

is surpassed only by live bait when it comes to

tangling and criss ­

crossing of water lily (spatterdock) roots starts

like roots are filled with gases from decomposing

vegetation. When these mats are shaken loose by

water action, they surface, bringing with them

tremendous quantities of black, humus-ladened

muck. The rich masses quickly develop vegetation,

and more gas is produced by additional plant de­

cay. The gas also provides additional buoyancy.

Those islands—some several acres in size—soon

support a growth of fragrant waxmyrtle, vibrant

brown-eyed susans, papyrus, cypress trees and

water maples. Some of the trees reach heights of

25 to 30 feet.

These wandering islands are excellent fish cover.

as Will was to learn.

We shoved off near McIntosh, and I headed the

boat up the lake to the islands at the north end

where I'd had my best luck on previous trips.

"Want to make a little side bet?" Will queried

as I cut the engine in order that we could move

into casting distance with our electric trolling

motor.

"What've you got in mind?" I replied.

"Quarter for the first fish. Quarter for the

largest, and quarter for the most," he answered.

"O.K. with me," I said. "Don't think you'll go

broke over 75 cents, but it won't do your ego any

good to lose," I jokingly added.

(Continued on next page)
"You look out for your own ego. I can take care of mine," he replied laughing, as he tied on a 6-inch, purple plastic worm. "I'll show these fish who's boss with this!"

I didn't say anything, although I didn't agree. I'd told him en route that in my book, Orange Lake was a topwater lake. But to each his own. Always had produced there in the past.

I rigged a 4-inch, balsa topwater (Finlandia) that first half hour. Then I flipped the balsa near a likely looking spot at the edge of one of the lined, floating islands. I twitched it a couple of times and began a slow, twitching topwater retrieve. Bang! I was in business, and shortly brought him and putting him in the live well, adding, "He's worth a quarter," I remarked, unhooking him and tying on a 6-inch, plug. He wasn't gaining a bit; didn't seem to be getting as many strikes, although he was fishing hard.

Finally, I put number five in the boat. They were all in the 2-pound class, but they were full of fight. Then Will asked, "Hey, do you have another of those plugs with you? I'd like to try it."

Rummaging through my tackle box, I found another silver colored one and tossed it to him. That was my mistake. A few casts later, Will coaxed a 4-pounder into hitting, and after quite a tussle brought it alongside for netting.

"Um," he remarked. "You're going to have to go some to beat this one the way these bass have been running in size. Looks like a Mexican standoff. Guess I'll have to settle for taking a quarter away from you with the most fish."

At last he connected. A slightly larger bass gobbled up his plastic worm, and he put this one aboard with professional skill. "See, I told you," he chortled. "They will hit a worm."

Before I could answer, I connected with another in the 2-pound bracket. Then I replied, "Sure, but who's ahead?" He had no answer.

We continued fishing, and Will got another bass on his worm, and I added another on my topwater plug. He wasn't gaining a bit, didn't seem to be getting as many strikes, although he was fishing hard.

Finally, I put number five in the boat. They were all in the 2-pound class, but they were full of fight. Then Will asked, "Hey, do you have another of those plugs with you? I'd like to try it."

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"Better catch up first," I replied. "You're still trailing." He was down five to three.

Meanwhile, I put my sixth one in the boat, and then almost met disaster. In the fight, the bass broke one of the hooks on the front treble, and the lip broke. The plug had to be retired, and when I searched my tackle box, I found I didn't have another silver colored balsa plug. With no other choice, I put on a gold colored one, although I didn't think it was right for this gin clear water, which is characteristic of Orange Lake.

I was correct. Will slowly began to gain on me. In the fight, the bass broke one of the hooks on the front treble, and the lip broke. The plug had to be retired, and when I searched my tackle box, I found I didn't have another silver colored balsa plug. With no other choice, I put on a gold colored one, although I didn't think it was right for this gin clear water, which is characteristic of Orange Lake.

I was correct. Will slowly began to gain on me with my plug! While I seemed to be practicing casting with the gold colored balsa, I tried other plugs, but none could match the balsa's action, and eventually I went back to the gold colored one in desperation.

It was late in the afternoon when we pulled into a little cove not far from the entrance channel to Mike's Fish Camp from where we'd started in the morning. Time was running out. The sun was getting ready to dip below the trees, and the score was six-all.

Will made a cast, retrieved a few feet, and got into an angling brawl on his 8-pound line. For a moment, we thought he'd hung into a real lunker bigmouth. Then we got a look at the fish.

"Damn!" he exclaimed, as I chortled with glee. "Garfish don't count!" I repeated over and over again to remind him we were bass fishing, while he wrestled the trash fish. Finally, he whipped the gar, netted him, and retrieved his plug.

"I'd have broken him off if this wasn't your plug," he remarked, "and if I didn't need it to beat you."

We continued casting, but darkness was now falling rapidly. I flipped my jinx-colored balsa into a likely looking spot, retrieved it a few feet, and felt a solid strike.

You can be certain I played this one carefully. Wouldn't you have with that big money—all of 25 cents—riding on the fish? I boated the bass—another 2-pounder, and my seventh.

We had time for a couple more casts and that was all. Will didn't get another strike, nor did I. Final score: 7 to 6, to Will's disgust. He paid the quarter, promising to get it back sometime when he could get me in his waters. Does he believe Orange is a topwater lake? I rather suspect he does. I'm going to frame the quarter appropriately as a souvenir.

However, this one trip isn't the basis for my opinion that Orange is basically a topwater lake. I've never been skunked there while fishing with topwater lures, and, under normal conditions, I don't think you will be. There's a lot of fish and, just as important, fish cover.

Orange is not a deep lake, probably being 15 to 20 feet at the deepest point, although it's no
(Continued from preceding page)

Two happy fishermen are ready to head to the landing after a day of bass plugging in Orange Lake—tote for fishing surface lures, says occult. It's between Gainesville and Ocala in north-central Florida.

HUNTING

Gun Doctoring

when hard field use over many seasons has made a favorite firearm look and perform below par, consider remedying the situation.

By EDMUND MCLAURIN

SOME RIFLES and shotguns look absolutely sick, generally as a result of neglect. A scared stock, rusty spots, and worn places in the bluing contribute to the effect.

Dented shotgun barrels are commonly seen. They get that way primarily because they are thin-walled tubes, vulnerable to dropping or hard knocks.

Removal of dents in a shotgun barrel is best left to a gunsmith. While it is no great job to remove shallow dents, technical knowledge and reasonable skill are required. Professional gunsmiths remove barrel dents by forcing expanding plugs into the shotgun bore, then judiciously pounding the dent on the outside with a rawhide-faced mallet, in cooperation with the tight fitting plug inside the bore. The job is one that an inexperienced home gunsmith can easily botch.

I've fished Orange Lake other times, too—in the heat of summer and during cold weather—all with success on topwater lures. I'm convinced, and so is Will Williams, that Orange is an excellent topwater lake. But if I take him fishing again, I'm going to make certain I have several silver colored bass plugs in my tackle box.

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of several commercial stock finishing preparations. The stock should be cleaned thoroughly with mineral spirits, until the gunstock will no longer absorb the cleaning solvent. After allowing an hour’s drying time, wipe down the wood, by hard rubbing with a clean cloth, until every bit of surface gum has been removed.

The achieved gunstock finish will be extremely durable as well as beautiful. It can be kept both dry and beautiful by periodic light applications of the raw linseed oil turpentine mixture and more hand-rubbing. I consider this type of stock finishing far superior to a paint job since spraying on any of several commercial stock finishing preparations. While gun action and stock are separated, give the action a thorough cleaning with mineral spirits and brush. Give particular attention to coil springs and recesses. Incidentally, heavy oil or grease should never be applied to a gun spring. Invariably the deposit will slow down shooting action—of its own accord or as it collects dirt. In really cold weather, oil or grease can make a spring totally inoperable.

Instead of applying oil or grease after cleaning dirty spring coils, spray working surfaces and the stock several times with a clean cloth damped with turpentine.

The next step is to apply a good wood filler to the stock, taking care to apply it generously with a circular motion, to work the filler into the open pores of the wood. After allowing an hour’s drying time, fill any gouged-out spots with plastic wood or walnut-colored epoxy. Sand the stock with the grain with successively finer grits of abrasive paper, to 400-grit or finer, until exterior surfaces are glass smooth. Then wipe the stock several times with a clean cloth dampened with turpentine.

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Next, raise unsightly dents by placing wet thick solid filler, you are ready to proceed with final finishing. Use manufacturer’s specifications and precure instructions to the letter. Cold chemical gun blues are all right for touchup repair jobs, but for a complete gun blue job, put your own live shooting skills and ends-either detachable or permanent type.—can be had to fit almost any make and model of rifle or shotgun. As long as they do not actually break, gun springs can often be made to function reliably by simply replacing the main operating spring.

If you need a spring for a firearm model for which parts are no longer available from the manufacturer, W.C. Wolff Company, P.O. Box 232, Ardmore, Pennsylvania 19003, can furnish a replacement. It is recommended that cold or broken spring be sent to Wolff, along with complete information about the make and model of firearm in which it is to be used.

Marred gun screw heads usually reflect carelessness or thoughtlessness on somebody’s part. In almost every instance, the burred screw heads are the result of using the wrong size and shape screwdriver blade. Some burred screws can be refinished by careful filing or polishing and rebluing. Others must be replaced. Fortunately, replacement screws aren’t expensive.

Since you are already doing some elementary gunsmithing, consider adding sling swivels and gun sling. A sling is a gun accessory that can be used to keep clean screw threads and screw holes with a Q-Tip dipped in alcohol.

Loose sight screws are often the reason why a rifle performs poorly. Just one loose screw in either metallic or scope sight base, or in scope holding rings, can cause erratic shooting. Coating screw threads with Devon cement or Loc-Tite will usually keep them tight, but be sure to use the right stuff. Several coats are usually necessary, and the new treads supplemented with epoxy bond, it is unlikely that you will ever be bothered with a sight base coming loose and spoiling a shot. (Should re
**Speckled Perch Fishing**

**Specks**  can be one of the hardest fish to catch. or speck, as it is known to most Florida fishermen, big game is worth fighting, and black crappie, or speckled perch, the crappie. The black crappie, or speckled perch, the crappie, is a fish that is thrilling for bass. The black crappie, or speckled perch, is a fish that is thrilling for bass. The black crappie, or speckled perch, is a fish that is thrilling for bass.

For most of the year, specks prefer deep water, but during the fall and winter months they begin to move toward the shoreline, looking for desirable places to spawn. At this time, alert fishermen can begin picking up a few.

When a suitable place is found, the male does most of the work in preparing the bed, while the female enjoys looking around and finding food. Generally, she remains some 25 to 50 feet from where the bed will be located. (More on bed fishing later.)

As the male and female are moving in and out from the shore area, good catches can be made with suitable tackle, using live minnows for bait.

Wind and drift play a most important part in speck fishing. Since you have to fish deep, using the ordinary cane pole while drift fishing sometimes presents problems in getting the bait minnows deep enough. The faster the drift speed, the more acute the problem, for regardless of how deep your cork is set, your minnow is only a few feet under the surface.

The speck fisherman has found this type rig should catch fish: Use your favorite light casting rod and reel. A good combination consists of a Zebco 33 reel with a limber 5-foot rod.

First, determine the depth you want to fish. This is sometimes very difficult to do, as the closer to shore you drift, the more weeds you will pick up. Therefore, you may want to use two outfits—one set for close-in shallow fishing and the other for deeper water. (The shallow rig may also pick up a fish in deep water.) Using this method, you only have to worry about keeping one hook out of the weeds.

After a suitable depth has been determined—say it is estimated at 10 feet—measure 11 feet from the end of your line, and tie a small knot in your line there. This extra foot is for variance and free movement of the hook. The knot will easily slip through the hole in your Zebco reel, and will cause you no trouble.

Next, slip onto your line a bead with a small hole—small enough so that the bead will not pass over the knot in your line.

When black crappie start biting, the word soon gets around

**Speck Time Again**

by IRA W. BROWN

Then comes the cork or float, and the hole in it can be larger, as it must move fast in order to prevent tangles. Do not attach the cork or float firmly to the line. This would defeat the entire purpose of this type rig.

Next, add the lead sinker, which also has to move freely up and down the line. Use sufficient lead to hold the line as nearly vertical as possible and not sink your cork.

The final procedure is to secure your hook. The No. 4 gold-plated Eagle Claw hook is preferred by many speckled perch fishermen. Remember, the speck is a game fish, and most game fishes have larger mouths than we sometimes think, so using a larger hook will result in more catches. Far too often, a small hook slips out of the mouth when a larger one would have hooked the fish.
I've usually found the best fishing approximately 15 to 18 inches off the bottom in deep water. In shallow water you only have to throw the minnow near them and they will get it. As to the length of line, I prefer it to be about 18 inches shorter than the pole. This makes it easy to retrieve, and places your fish just right for removal from the hook.

If you've noticed that I haven't given any month or time of month to fish for speckled perch, it was not an oversight. Throughout the state the bedding period of the speck is different. During the bedding season in your section of Florida, try fishing a few days before the new moon near the first quarter. This period of the month has been more productive for me than from the full moon to the last quarter.

For more successful speckled perch fishing, try these methods. I think you will find at least some of these ideas helpful. I must remind you, however, that they're my own very personal. Although these methods work for me, I've kept no records, and I do not challenge anyone or their personal records on catches or methods used. Remember to comply with all the safe boating regulations, and a true sportsman will always comply with the bag or creel limit. Carry a litter bag in your boat as you do in your car, and help keep our watersways clean. Pollution-free water begins from the bottom up.

Here's to good speck fishing this season.

CONSERVATION SCENE

With the possibility of a long, cold winter and an energy crisis looming, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced it will let more people cut free firewood in the national forests.

For the duration of the energy crisis, permits to cut firewood will be granted without regard to where a person lives, announced Forest Service Chief John R. McGuire.

Previously, only "bona fide settlers, miners, residents and prospectors" could get such permits. "Residents" had generally been defined as persons living within or very near one of the 135 national forests, he said. There are national forests in 44 states and Puerto Rico.

People who want to cut their own firewood should contact the supervisor's office or one of the ranger district offices within their nearest national forest.

"We recommend you call or send a postcard ahead of time," Chief McGuire said. "Then we can send instructions where to report for your permit and tell you where and what you should cut.

In general, he said, people will be allowed to cut only dead timber or timber not more valuable for other purposes. Cutting normally will be in areas easily accessible by roads open to the general public and in places where it can be supervised. Such firewood is for personal use only, and no one may cut free firewood for commercial use or for sale to others, he said. In a few areas in the West, a permit will not be required, but persons must check first to get cutting clearance, he said.

"We issued 64,000 free-use permits to cut firewood last fiscal year, but in the last few months those requests have increased dramatically," Chief McGuire said.

Hunting Films Reviewed

THREE RECENT FILM releases from widely differing sources demonstrate both the best and the worst that sportsmen can expect from the sportsmen's new film, "Meditations on Hunting," was produced by the National Rifle Association and is based on a book of the same name by Spain's foremost 20th Century philosopher, Jose Ortega y Gasset. The 28-minute color film traces the role hunting has played in man's development since prehistoric times and supplies an affirmative answer to the question, "Can the sport of hunting be justified from a philosophical standpoint?"

While stressing hunting as a way to demonstrate both the best and the worst that sportsmen can expect from hunting films, Chief McGuire also demonstrated both the best and the worst that sportsmen can expect from hunting films.

"The Hunters' Point of View" is available through the Office of Information and Education, Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Frankfort, Kentucky 40601.

The third movie falls at the other end of the spectrum—the anti-gun, anti-hunting range. It's a 9-minute production entitled "Boys Don't Go College Without a Gun," which was produced by Bee Bostow and is being distributed through Perspective Films, Chicago, Illinois.

The film switches back and forth from scenes of a boy plinking and hunting with a BB gun to shots of cowboy shoot-outs, war, firing squads, and executions. Even though no words are spoken, the effort to associate the sport of hunting with cruel and violent death is obvious.

Comments on Conservation

"America has finally become resource conscious. As our nation approaches its 200th birthday, its citizens have suddenly been joined by 40 million Americans. Many of the seeming necessities, or (Continued on next page)
Even luxuries we have taken
for granted since birth, can no
longer be taken for granted. We
are now becoming aware that for
some of these, the well can run
dry.

"To many Americans," reports
the Remington News Letter, "heating
the home was as simple as
pushing up the thermostat. No
one worried about the necessary
fuel. It was always dependably
there—coming from a single gas
tank kept filled automatically by
the friendly local supplier.

"Nor did anyone worry about
fuel for our power-braked, power-
steered, air-conditioned, gas-gobbling
family limousines. There
were plenty of convenient service
stations to fill up the tank. Ex-
cept for several wartime periods,
there were no restrictions on our
consumption of food, clothing,
fuel, construction materials, met-
als, chemicals or anything else
we desired. We used them, wasted
them, threw them away like
there was no tomorrow.

"But tomorrow has suddenly
arrived, and the word 'conserva-
tion' is here to stay. No longer can
we accept the necessary con-
trols but paid the bill as well.

"With but the usual minor ex-
cceptions, sportmen accept and
adhere by limited hunting seasons
and limited game harvests during
those seasons. It is a frame of
mind that may now serve as an
important lesson to all Americans.

"Let us now direct our con-
servation concerns and efforts
where they belong; where the
need for new attitudes, new pri-
orities, and sounder management
of nonrenewable resources is
obviously needed."

Curbing the Poacher

In light of the alarming in-
crease in poaching noted by wild-
life management officials all over
the country, the National Shoot-
ing Sports Foundation has called
for an all-out effort by sportmen
to help curb the wave of outdoor
crime by reporting all violations
to enforcement officials.

Even with state conservation
agencies adding enforcement per-
sonnel to their staffs, it is impos-
sible to effectively crack down on
such game thievery without the
aid of concerned hunters and fish-
ermen. According to NSSF Presi-
dent Warren Page, "Heavy poach-
ing not only poses a serious
threat to the continued success of
wildlife management programs,
but the anti-hunting crowd poses
no time in depicting the 'rogue
hunter' as the typical American
sportsman."

As examples of the sharp rise
in game violations, Page noted
that poaching in Oklahoma has
evened 300 percent despite
game rangers' working as many
as 18 hours a day, and that Col-
orado's wildlife enforcement chief,
Jack Hogan, expects the number
of cases of deer and elk jack-
lighting to double in the last half
of the year.

Page emphasized that putting
the brakes on poaching will re-
quire the cooperative effort of all
hunters. "Shoulving this res-
ponsibility," he added, "is part
of the code of the ethical hunter."

Hunter's Digest

"Vary, and lots of it!" is a
trite but descriptive way to cate-
gorize the all-new edition of
Hunter's Digest, says Charles
Hartigan, general manager of Di-
gest Books, Incorporated, North-
field, Illinois.

Editor Erwin A. Bauer calls his
new Hunter's Digest the most
exciting "casserole" of stories he
has ever put together, noting that
within 32 articles there is subject
matter to whet the appetite of
every hunter.

"Hunter's Digest's impressive
assemblage of outdoor writers in-
cludes a physician who details
the importance of physical fitness
as well as the selection of proper
safety equipment in "Hints for
Healthy Hunting."

The book, with 328 giant-sized
pages, well illustrated with action
photographs, is available for $6.95
direct from Digest Books, Inc.,
540 Prestage Road, Northfield,
Illinois 60093. It costs only slightly
more at gun shops, book stores,
and other outlets.

FLORIDA WILDLIFE'S
FISHING CITATION

is available without charge, to any and all subscribers to Florida Wildlife
Magazine, and their immediate families, who catch any of the fresh-water
game fish of the prescribed species and size requirements. Citation, show-
ing 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.

Only fishing citation applications received within
90 days from date of catch will be honored.

APPLICATION FOR FLORIDA WILDLIFE FISHING CITATION

The Editor, Florida Wildlife Magazine, Tallahassee, Fla.

Please send me the Florida Wildlife Fishing Citation with the indicated date
listed below:

Name (please print).
City...
Address...
State...
Zip No.
Species...
Weight...
Length...
Type of Tackle...
Bait or Lure Used...
Where Caught...
County...
Date Caught...
Catch Witnessed By...
Registered, Weighed By...
Signature of Applicant...

CUT OUT AND SAVE THIS APPLICATION BLANK

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS SPECIES

LARGEMOUTH BASS
          8 pounds or larger

SHELLCRACKER
          2 pounds or larger

RED BREAST
          1 pound or larger

BLACK CRAPPIE
          2 pounds or larger

BLUEGILL (DREAM)
          4 pounds or larger

CHAIN PICKEREL
          4 pounds or larger

CUT BLACK
          1½ pounds or larger

BASS
          8 pounds or larger

SHELLCRACKER
          2 pounds or larger

BREAST
          2 pounds or larger

LIMITATIONS SPECIES

SHELLCRACKER
          2 pounds or larger

RED BREAST
          1 pound or larger

FLORIDA WILDLIFE'S*

*Based on size, species, method of capture and the presence of any
one of the following: (A) No license issued by this state has been
purchased by the one making the application (B) In violation of any
law of this state

For that
Big ONE that didn’t get away!
FLORIDA WILDLIFE Magazine
Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission
Tallahassee, Florida 32304

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