Florida Wildlife Scrapbook

Woodpeckers

- Those that wear stripes... how to tell them apart

**Red-bellied Woodpecker**

**Red-cockaded Woodpecker**

- An endangered species... inhabits open pine "flatwoods" of north and central Florida... living pine trees with rotten centres... which they seem to know by instinct... are chosen as nest trees... nest holes are surrounded with pine or oak carvings from chunks made in the bark by the visiting birds.

Female

Male

**Downy Woodpecker**

**Hairy Woodpecker**

- A winter resident "throughout" Florida... October to May... while woodpeckers are noisy the bird is usually silent... it often overhands a drill... stay on low... holds in live trees to feed on the occluded sap... and the insects that are attracted to the "soups".

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**

- Look-a-likes except for size... the downy and hairy woodpeckers are found throughout the state... but the only... in the country... or down in all kinds of wooded areas... in wood in dairies as: to which species you are watching... check the size of the bill... and the outer tail feathers... the downy has a smaller bill... for its biosize... and black spots on its white outer tail feathers.

The Cover

A favorite character in childhood fables as well as hunters' yarns, the red fox comes honestly by its reputation for cunning. Not native to Florida... but well established here... Reynard is highly regarded by hound fanciers. See page 2.

From A Painting By Wallace Hughes

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The Red Fox

although an "outsider," the red has found a home in Florida

There is a four-bit term that is akin to a back-of-the-barn cuss word to the professional wildlife. Anthropomorphizers, boiled down to more easily handled syllables, means giving human motives and thoughts to animals. There is a lot of that sort of thing going on these days, frequently to the detriment of the sound, scientific handling of wildlife matters. There was an incident some years back, though, that gave me pause.

Over at the old Garner place there was a tongue of brush and timber that extended partly down the slope to end abruptly at a large hickory. It was a favorite stand, with a well-worn game path angling across the puzzled syllables, means giving human motives and thoughts to animals. There was an incident some years back, though, that gave me pause.

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Down in the creek bottom, the dogs were bustling about in the underbrush, barking and yapping back close grilling, I might even admit it appeared that the fox was grinning over the situation, and enjoying the whole thing. Sometimes a fox finds the tables reversed. Although

By MORRIE NAGGIA

Ten-week-old fox pups at the entrance to their den. Commonly the area in front of the burrow becomes littered with bones, feathers, bits of fur, and other remains of kills which have been brought in by the parents to feed the young. A fulleared red fox is a strikingly attractive animal, with its rusty or yellowish-red fur that is sprinkled with white on the back and flanks, its black "stockings," white throat, chest and tail tip.

it was a good many years ago, I still remember vividly a raven that appeared to take delight in teasing a fox. It was on the Alaskan Peninsula, a wide-open, windy stretch of tundra that was richly endowed with a variety of wildlife. Sitting on top of a knoll, I watched the raven, a sort of enlarged version of the crow, play games with a gullible fox. The raven would swoop low over the red, glide out a few yards, and land on the ground. The animal would rush madly toward the bird, which delayed taking wing until it appeared certain it had waited too long. Then, at the last possible moment, it would leisurely flap into the air, avoiding the desperate, teeth-snapping lunge of the sucker, or grew tired of the fruitless game, and trotted off toward a willow thicket, escorted all the way by the low-flying raven.

Just when the red fox came to Florida is difficult to say. It does seem likely that it was not a native to the state. By inclination it appears better suited for more northerly climes, although it fares well where transplanted here. Originally, though, it was found at least as far south as northern Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. The fox hunting tradition was brought over to this country from England. In fact, some of the early plantation owners brought over English foxes and released them here. Perhaps some of the early planters moving down from Virginia and the Carolinas may have had a hand in introducing the species into northern Florida.

It is a problem to try to define, with any degree of certainty, the present range of red fox in Florida. A few years ago, it was described as occupying only the extreme northwestern part of the state. Now, with the helping hand of avid fox chasers, the red is well established in various locales at least into central Florida and perhaps even farther south.

As is apparent from their general appearance, the foxes, both red and gray, belong to the dog family, the Canidae, in the scientific scheme of things. There is frequently confusion over the identification of the two species. At the root of the matter is the fact that the gray fox shows a considerable amount of distinctly red coloration on the neck, chest, legs, and along the lower sides. However, its color scheme is predominately dark gray, with a ridge of black fur on the back of the neck, down the back, and on the upper surface of the tail. The tip of the gray's tail is black. The red fox sports a reddish—usually

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and remodeling to better suit their needs. The pups number from four to eight or nine. They remain in the den for the first few weeks of life, gradually starting to venture forth when they are perhaps four weeks old. Their growth is quite rapid so that by the end of the summer they have attained most of their body size and are ready to range out on their own.

A variety of small animals predominate in the diet of the red fox. Rabbits are a mainstay where they occur in abundance, although various species of mice and other rodents also loom large in the dietary schedule. Insects, snakes, in fact most any sort of animal material that comes its way is likely to be taken by a foraging fox. Nor is vegetable material completely ignored by red foxes, for fruit, berries, and melons especially make up a seasonally important part of their food.

Red foxes show a decided preference for more open country, hence are quite adaptable to farm lands. This is in contrast to the gray which is primarily a woodland species. As might be expected, the red is much more favored by the houndsmen, for it chooses to run rather than quickly tree or "go to ground" as does the gray. Although they do not frequently climb trees as do grays, red foxes have been known to display some ability in this direction when the situation demanded it.

There are numerous instances where red fox pups have been removed from the den and hand-reared to become interesting family pets, but the distinctly "skunk-y" odor, and the sometimes peevish disposition of some individuals, limits their popularity in this respect.

Even though there is a definite family resemblance, it is easy to tell the red fox, at right, from the gray, above. In general appearance, the shorter mainline of the gray is an obvious characteristic apparent in the two photos. The longer body fur of the red also shows well in the photographs. Notice the black tail tip and the line of black fur on the upper side of the gray's tail, contrasted with the white tip of the red's. By choice, the red is an inhabitant of more open country whereas the gray prefers the woods. The gray has copper-colored ears, cross, and black foxes are just color phases of the red fox and not a separate species.

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Fishing Rod Basics

A rod that is fashioned for your particular type of angling can certainly add a lot of enjoyment to the sport

Styles in baitcasting rods seem to change about as often as styles in women's shoes, and some of them seem to be chosen for the wrong reasons. In my time I can recall when casting was done with very stiff rods and compared to "throwing a mudball from the end of a buggy stick." There was an epidemic of very short rods started by some guides who would lay them down quickly to use oars or paddle. A 3-foot rod wasn't unusual, and since most guides were pretty handy with them, the clients tended to imitate, so quite a lot of casters were whailing away with 3-foot rods.

For a long time, 5 feet was considered a pretty good length for a plugging rod—and you could do a lot worse today. Then, when some casters went to very light lures and lines, quite a few 6-footers appeared. You could cast a quarter-ounce bait better with that if the tip was soft enough. It may be that the West Coast steelheaders had some influence on casting rod length because their sport needs a long stick, generally with a two-handed grip but with a delicate tip for feeling a lure bouncing over a rocky bottom in the current.

At first, a worming rod was soft for casting a light weight; then worm fishermen found that they needed a lot of backbone for setting a hook with considerable slack, and they went to some of the stiffest casting rods ever used in fresh water. A stiff rod and muscular hook setting requires heavy line. When the new breed of bass fishermen started to notice there were times when fish turned away from big stuff, they began to use lighter monofilament and smaller lures. Most of them used spinning gear for that, but a few who had special love for the turning spool simply put light monofilament on their free-spoolers and used lighter rods.

I may make it sound too cut and dried, but you can put down some pretty obvious facts about plugging rods. Heavy lures require stiff rods if you're to get distance. A stiff rod, within reason, is better for fighting large fish. Light lines are easily snapped with stiff rods. Loud surface lures require some backbone if they're to work properly. The best one-hand accuracy is had with a rod that bends considerably on the cast; somewhere around 5 or 6 feet seems to be the optimum length for accuracy. A rod that bends well with the lure is less work to cast with.

Now and then you'll see something that looks like a paradox in rod requirements, but it's probably a special case. For example, there'll be a character catching little Spanish mackerel or bluefish from a pier but he's using a stiff rod. The reason is that he's throwing a country mile and pinpoint accuracy isn't necessary. Because he needs a lure that will stay down below the surface as he whips it in from high above it, the lure is quite heavy, so his stiff rod matches his tactic rather than the size of his fish.

Short-range, accurate casting demands relatively soft rods. For example, if you're working a shoreline from a boat, you will probably be happiest with a rod that's pretty limber for the weight thrown. Since you're using a boat, you can get as close as you like, and since the shoreline is supposed to hold the fish, a long cast results in some wasted retrieve. My "snook rod" has drawn some snickers because it's the same thing I'd use for bass, since most of the casting is done at a shoreline. Most people think of a snook rod as something you can stretch his jaw with and throw big plugs. Most of my snook baits weigh about 1/4-ounce, which is a pretty typical bass lure size.

And when fishing a shoreline, I use the ordinary offleet reelcast, which gives a more convenient thumb position for me. My hands are about medium-sized. Anyone with really small hands will find the "straight" reelseat very tiring—but nobody can argue that a rod which runs straight through it's reelseat and handle isn't more rugged. For really heavy saltwater casting, it has great advantage in strength, and offset reelseats are noted for all sorts of problems. Maybe that's why there seems to be no standard design.

Why not use a spinning rod for all light work? A lot of fine fishermen do, but there are many who prefer turning spools, and for most of us they have advantages in accuracy and lure control for shoreline fishing.

There are specialists who can perform marvels with gear that's unsuited for most of us. I have seen pluggers who could do a fine job with quarter-ounce lures and a casting rod stiff enough to vault with. If this sounds complicated, it is.

St. Johns river shad fishing is such a social pastime that few fishermen wander very far from the trolling patterns at places like Lemon Bluff. If you see somebody catching fish, you know they're (continued on next page)
terily, one being to build a bridle that will keep the bow from hooking the water and swinging far off to one side. The other is to simply pull the bow up against the transom of the towing boat or to fasten it above the transom, keeping the stern rigid so it can't swing.

I never liked to carry much gear or any personnel in a rapidly-towed canoe, but if you keep the speed down, it's safe enough. Then, of course, you travel no faster than you would with a small motor attached to the canoe itself.

One method of transporting the rig is to stack it aboard your bigger boat, a place where it doesn't often fit well. It does work all right aboard a trailer skiff, but most of the time I cart it. Cartopping a canoe is relatively simple, although the lack of gutters on many modern auto top carriers is hard to strap on an efficient cartop carrier.

I have a friend who is a fine fisherman and conservative in other things but wildly exaggerates the length of his fish. In describing the length of a 5-pound bass, he nearly dislocates his shoulders, and even a medium-sized crappie comes out about 2 feet long when he tells you about it. On the other hand, he's very conservative about weights. It is confusing to see him hold his hands a yard apart and say his bass weighed about 2 pounds. He just doesn't know how far to stick out his arms, and I have learned to accept this little idiosyncrasy and make mental reservations.

But most of us are less consistent, and a set of scales and a tape should be used now and then, even on fish you know won't set any records. Last summer, I kept putting back what we considered peewees. After a bit I measured one of these and it was the same size I'd been hooking all along. The scales say 3 1/2 pounds. We kept putting back what we considered peewees. It had a bite that was gone nothing. Generally, mistakes are made in the other direction. Hardly anyone measures or weighs the smaller fish.

I've found a canoe good news in the Everglades mangrove country. I can't quite agree with the man who told me it was the only way to go down there, because I think the distances are often too great for comfortable 1-day canoe trips, even with an outboard motor attached. I've found that towing one to small creeks where the larger boat won't go is highly satisfactory, and since outboard boats have been getting bigger and bigger, such isolated spots are likely to be without fishermen. In other words, although there are more and more anglers on the Southwest Coast there are fewer and fewer of them back in the boondocks where big engines are a liability.

There are two ways of towing a canoe satisfac-

Fishermen live up to their reputation for exaggeration, but much of it is a matter of honest mistakes. You run into trouble when you quote some honest sizes to a fellow who uses freewheeling estimates and obviously scorns your puny catches. Maybe the best course is to be vague in such cases.

Bonnet water scares off some fishermen who don't like to throw right into the stuff, grumbling that they'll hang up and couldn't land a fish from the lily pads even if they hooked one. Last year I was in some wind-blown bonnet stretches with a friend who hadn't had experience in such a mess, and I noted that although he's probably a better caster than I am, he hung up a lot more. Eventually, while trying to get him loose from a monumental hangup, we managed to break his rod and he was a little distressed with the whole thing. Then it occurred to me that experience teaches you to guide your lure through the best spots, and I realized that I was watching the course of the line as well as the course of the lures. Other fishermen do it better than I do, but experience has certainly changed my tactics—subconsciously.

If there's advice for this it's simply to make your casts as short as practical, to try to keep your lure ahead of a drifting boat, and to remember that casts at right angles to your course are more likely to lasso the obstructions. A wader generally does better because he isn't moving much and can throw his lure through narrow strips of open water without pulling the line off to one side.

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After a period of fishing for 9-inch trout in little northern brooks, I got into some busters that ripped off line on a larger river. I told my friends I had caught and lost a bunch of 3-pounders and some that refused to show more than 2 pounds. It was a case of blatant untruth, even though it was accidental. I've found a canoe good news in the Everglades mangrove country. I can't quite agree with the man who told me it was the only way to go down there, because I think the distances are often too great for comfortable 1-day canoe trips, even with an outboard motor attached. I've found that towing one to small creeks where the larger boat won't go is highly satisfactory, and since outboard boats have been getting bigger and bigger, such isolated spots are likely to be without fishermen. In other words, although there are more and more anglers on the Southwest Coast there are fewer and fewer of them back in the boondocks where big engines are a liability.

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Blackwater Wildlife Management Area

Although not the largest nor most popular, the Blackwater Wildlife Management Area, in northwest Florida, offers a year-round diversity of recreational opportunities not available on many areas. It is an area equally suitable to the casual sportsman or to the "do-or-die" hunter. It is ideal for men-only trips or for family out-of-doors vacations. It is, in short, an area for all seasons.

Blackwater is located in Santa Rosa and Okaloosa counties, on the western end of the Florida panhandle, just 30 miles east of Pensacola. Its northern boundary is the border of Alabama. Still, access is easy for sportsmen. East-west Interstate Highway 10, which crosses north Florida, passes along the southern boundary of the area.

At present, the management area encompasses the entire 183,000 acres of the Blackwater State Forest, which is operated by the Division of Forestry of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. In 1962, when the forest was obtained as a management area, the size was only 85,000 acres.

Since its beginning, the Blackwater has been used for a number of experiments with plantings and habitat manipulation for wildlife. The forestry people cooperate in a controlled burning program which calls for an average of 45,000 acres to be burned every year.

Six thousand acres of the area have been set aside for a quail improvement program which is now in its second year. The effort has included controlled burning of the area, clearing of "runs" in conjunction with the bird dog field trial portion of the site, food plot plantings, and the installation of mechanical quail feeders.

Initially, 180 feeders were installed, to accustom birds to the area and to help sustain the population. This number has been reduced, and all feeders will eventually be removed. Simultaneously, perennial food plots have been cleared and planted throughout the tract. Last year, 400,000 lespedeza plants were planted and 1,000,000 are planned for next year. These will grow, cast seed, and reproduce and increase on an annual basis, providing an ever-expanding natural food supply for quail and other bird life.

Almost unique to the management area program is the field trial area located on the Blackwater. This is a tract set aside and planned to accommodate the growing number of field trial participants. The Division of Forestry has constructed and maintains a field trial headquarters which includes campsites, showers and rest room facilities, a dining and kitchen cabin, a stable facility for 24 horses, and kennels and runs for dogs.

All in all, the Blackwater Wildlife Management Area program should provide Florida sportsmen with an increasing opportunity for quail hunting during the season and an opportunity for year-round pleasure in field trial competition. It is an excellent example of interagency cooperation and resource use. The Blackwater, however, is equally attractive to other sportsmen. The entire area is in gently rolling hill country that is cut through by four major waterways. Each of these, in turn, has numerous smaller tributaries winding through scenic hardwood hammocks and tiki stands. Other areas of the forest are

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about equally proportioned with stands of longleaf pine, scrub oak, swamp, flatwoods, and farmland. In these areas is a standing population of turkey, whitetail deer, squirrel, and dove. Drifting down one of the innumerable branches can be a relaxing way to gather the materials for several squirrel dinners. And if the hunting is slow, the streams offer some of the best panfish and catfish habitat to be found—year around.

For the dove enthusiast, there are two dove fields located on the management area, one of 29 acres and one of 38 acres. Both fields receive intensive management as a result of their being planted in corn by local farmers under an agreement with the Commission. Turkey, too, are considered, and this year some 12 acres will be planted in chufas, to provide food for this popular game bird.

Blackwater is planned to be of interest to most Florida hunters. The major portion of the area is open to use by dogs during the season, but there is also an area set aside for the use of the growing number of still hunters. The still hunt area lies west of State Road 191 and south of State Road 4.

Foxhunters, too, have been included in the overall plan for the management area. They may hunt in that portion lying east of SR 191 and south of SR 4, from June 1st through March 25th. Possum, bobcat, and raccoon hunters may also hunt and take their quarry in the same area during the same time period.

If the hunting lags, or for an off-season weekend, there are three fish management areas located on the Blackwater. Hurricane Lake is a 400-acre manmade lake located in the northeast corner. Fish population sampling there during 1975 indicated an excellent bass spawn. Fishing success is anticipated to be extremely good for the next two or three years. Bear Lake, 107 acres, is another manmade lake, and is located just off State Road 4 near the middle of the Blackwater. Karick Lake, the smallest of the three, with 58 acres, is located just east of Hurricane Lake.

All three lakes are limited to electric-powered boats or those powered by oars or paddles. All have concrete launching ramps and adjacent picnic and camping facilities.

Hurricane Lake boasts a middling duck population in winter, and is open to duck hunting, except for specific portions which are posted as closed. Hunting is prohibited in other Blackwater lakes.

Blackwater has drawn down in 1975 to alleviate marginal weed growth. The water level will be down through February. Based on past experiences with lake drawdowns, Commission biologists anticipate continued good fishing for bass as well as panfish.

Camping is permitted throughout the area all year long. It is limited to tents, trailers or camper vehicles; that is, there can be no permanent or semipermanent structures built for camping. Most folks hunting the Blackwater do camp, as motel and hotel facilities are limited. There are some facilities in the vicinity, however, and there is a ready source of groceries, fuel, and staple goods.

In addition to those attractions and recreational opportunities, the Blackwater also hosts other programs which make it interesting for a hunting vacation or a family weekend. The Commission operates the Blackwater Fish Hatchery in the forest. It is located just out of the town of Holt and is an open hatchery of earthen ponds. Here, bluegill, largemouth bass, and striped bass fry are raised. These fry are then transported throughout the state for use in fisheries improvement programs. The hatchery is open to the public for visits weekdays, except holidays, from 9 to 4.

On another part of the forest, the Division of Forestry maintains a nursery for the supply of trees in its statewide program. The nursery, located in Mamou, grows such trees as pine, cottonwood, green ash, catalpa, and sycamore, from seeds obtained at the nursery and at select "seed plantations" throughout the forest.

Central and south Florida sportsmen will notice one outstanding feature of the Blackwater: low hunting pressure. To local sportsmen, used to seeing few hunters in the field, it seems heavy. But to those from other parts of the state, Blackwater always seems remarkably free of other hunters. The average hunting pressure last year was 588 man-days per week. During opening week, there was an average of 1,000 man-days.

The Blackwater is an "open area"; there are no established check stations, so harvest figures are based on field reports and estimates. Last year, some 95 deer were taken off the area, and over 720 squirrels, as well as an estimated 1,828 quail.

All in all, the Florida sportsman who is looking for a "different place" will be well pleased at the possibilities of Blackwater, one of Florida's most unique management areas.
AFTER A CHILL MORNING, the temperature had edged up to a more comfortable level. Before midday, I lolled back in the duck boat and gazed drowsily out over the bay. Under the magnification of the 7x50's, a long, dark line a mile offshore resolved itself as bluebills. They appeared as motionless as my reflections in the still water in front of the blind. Not no telling, but suddenly I was jerked awake by the open, silent expanse of blue water, blue sky, and faded brown vegetation. Behind me. The world was a bright, glittering, wide-open, silent expanse of blue water, blue sky, and faded brown vegetation.

How long I nodded and drowsed in the boat there’s no telling, but suddenly I was jerked awake by the winnowing of rapidly beating pinions. A flock of pin-tailed woodcocks circled wide over the blocks, giving them a careful once-over, circled another time or two, and finally came in with wings cupped and feet dangling.

It was the start of a couple of hours of wild action, with birds moving back and forth over the marsh as if they had urgent business anywhere but where they were. There had been no change in the weather, nor was there any reason for the birds to suddenly start trading about during midafternoon.

On the way home, I got to thinking about that sudden surge of waterfowl activity. I could recall the usual early morning and late evening periods when you ordinarily expect the local wildlife to be on the move. I also recalled reading, during the earlier days of my interest in hunting and fishing matters, of the work of a gentleman by the name of Knight.

John Alden Knight, back around the time of the Big Depression of the '30s, was a New Yorker involved in the real estate brokerage business. He was also an avid outdoorsman. Like many another hunter and fisherman, he’d pondered these “off-time” surges of activity on the part of the furred, feathered, and finned. His first break in his search for the answer came on a fishing trip to Florida. It was on Lake Helen Blazes at the headwaters of the St. Johns. Resting in the shade on a hot July day, his guide, Bob Wall, checked his watch and then insisted they get back out on the water, despite the noonday heat and the fruitless effort of the morning’s bass fishing. When the second attempt proved a smashing success, Wall told him about the old woodsman’s “moon down” theory, by way of explanation.

Wall’s grandfather had been a market hunter and fisherman in southern Georgia when Bob was a youngster, according to Knight’s story. From him Bob learned fishing and hunting. Among other things, the old man had told him that the time to go after fish or game is when the moon is directly overhead or directly underfoot. The man who made their livelihood selling game and fish—while such things were still legal—all took great stock in the effect the moon has on the creatures of the wild, and their hunting and fishing trips were planned according to daily moon positions.

It was the first useful hint Knight had come by in his search for an explanation for those periods of hot fishing and hunting action that alternate with stretches of inactivity.

Knight put in a great deal of time and effort during the ensuing months in an attempt to pinpoint, as nearly as possible, the precise moon position and some of the other natural phenomena that might exert an influence on the comings and goings of wild creatures. He hoped that he could discover some reliable indicators that would make it possible to plot activity periods well in advance.

As a result of his research, Knight developed a system that is essentially a refinement of the old moon position idea. He combined the words sol (sun) and luna (moon) into solunar and called his tabular predictions of the most likely daily activity periods the solunar tables.

In January 1935, Knight introduced his sun-moon effect idea in an article written for The Sportsman magazine. Another piece in The Sportsman and one each in Field & Stream and Outdoor Life provided considerable fuel for “hot stove league” discussion. Knight’s refinement of the professional hunter and fisherman’s timetable was now common property for any hunter and fisherman who wanted to take advantage of it.

He began publishing, in booklet form, his calculations of the times during each 24-hour period which would most likely see that particular day’s peak activity in fish and wildlife populations. In 1942, his book, Moon Up—Moon Down, was published by Charles Scribner’s Sons. This interesting little 163-page book detailed the development of the solunar tables idea. The original edition is long out of print, and a more recent printing is also exhausted. There should be enough copies around, however, that anyone interested in the background of Knight’s work could probably obtain one through a good used book dealer.

If it’s a current table you’re interested in, however, that is much easier come by. The Vernon Company, calendar publisher, of Newton, Iowa, puts out calendars—Sportsman’s Almanac, they call it—that have the predicted major and minor solunar periods listed for each day of the year. Various businesses distribute these Almanacs. I recently obtained a copy from a local sporting goods dealer in Tallahassee. A number of newspapers around the state carry the tables, and Sports Afield features the tables, covering a two-month period, in each issue.

An annual edition of the solunar tables, in booklet form, is available from Mrs. Jacqueline Knight, Box 207, Montoursville, Pennsylvania 17754. The cost is $1.50 plus 15¢ postage.

There are a good many outdoorsmen around who swear by Knight’s tables. Most of them will freely admit that the solunar tables are not a never-failing guide to full game bags and heavy stringers, but then, no such claims were ever made for the system. Sup- porters say the tables are “on” a lot more frequently than they’re “off,” and the misses are usually explainable by a dropping barometer or other identifiable overriding factor.

Lately, I’ve been carrying a notebook and pencil into the woods to jot down notes on the matter. It’s a belated awakening, but darned if I’m not about convinced that John Alden Knight really had something there.
Are Hunting Preserves For You?

A SHOOTING PRESERVE is a place where a hunter exchanges money for a chance to hunt stocked game.

If you have plenty of open land on which to hunt, you may have no interest in preserves. If you don't have access to hunting land, then one of the 12 preserves in Florida open to the public may be the answer for you.

Shooting preserves were first legalized in America in 1911 when New York passed the first law allowing them to operate. After World War II, they spread across the nation as the number of hunters increased. Florida has allowed licensed preserves to operate for 18 years.

The operators themselves have a campaign under way to call them "hunting preserves" rather than "shooting preserves." There's no doubt that the first sounds better, and that's what we'll call them through the remainder of this article.

In Florida, five species of game birds are stocked. Naturally, each preserve does not handle all five, and some only specialize in one. Under modern hatchery conditions, thousands of game birds can be reared in a fairly small space. In nature, you can't crowd a bird beyond its inherent territorial limitations. For instance, one bobwhite quail per acre of land in the wild is good production. The preserve operators get around this limitation by continually stocking the fields from large holding pens. Instead of one bird being harvested per acre, you can harvest more than a hundred stocked birds.

Because the preserves depend on stocked game, they are given extended seasons—October to April—and most operate from five to six months. There are no bag limits except the hunters' pocketbooks. Hunting preserves might be looked at as a form of concentrated hunting.

The bobwhite quail is the most popular preserve bird in Florida and other Southern states. The ring-necked pheasant is an excellent bird for daily or weekly stocking as it retains its wild characteristics better than any other game bird. The pheasants that escape the hunters do not reproduce, but they may survive for several months. For the many northerners who now live in Florida, the ringneck is an old friend and much welcomed.

The chukar partridge, originally imported from India and the Mideast, weighs about one pound on the hoof. Its flight is similar to that of a bobwhite, and it is becoming more popular with preserve hunters. The chukar is considered by many to be the best of all game birds for the table.

Mallards (more than two generations removed from the wild, to comply with federal regulations) are flighted over 400- to 500-yard stretches at three Florida preserves. The ducks come in high over trees and cross the blinds in full flight, offering sporty pass shooting. Four of the preserves stock turkeys, to give hunters a chance at a premium game bird.

Pointing dogs are used for hunting the quail, pheasants, and chukars. With a little field experience, a well-trained dog can handle them all. Apparently, they have a similar game-bird scent, but a pointing dog quickly learns to tell them apart. The pheasant prefers to run rather than hold, and this presents a new tactical problem to dogs and hunters who have gained most of their experience on native quail. Pen-raised quail and chukar may also run, but it usually depends on the type of cover in which the birds are found. Thick, low-lying grassy cover prevents the birds from running ahead of the dogs. When the birds see that they are not getting away, they squat and hold.

When preserves first opened in Florida in the late fifties, there was some mild opposition to them. Some sportsmen thought it might encourage paid hunting; others thought that preserves might open everywhere and close off a lot of land.

It didn't work that way at all. One way of looking at preserves is that they are a way of private enterprise helping state and federal agencies supply more hunting opportunities. Since they are operated for profit, only the number that hunters are willing to support will remain open. It has generally worked that way, as attested to by the fact that many which opened soon folded.

The explosive surprise of a flushing covey of quail, left, is as great with pen-raised birds as with those that have been hatched and reared in the wild. A popular offering at some preserves is pass shooting mallards, strong-winded and as fast-moving as any that ever came down from the northern breeding grounds. Species not occurring in the wild in this part of the country, as the ringneck pheasant held by the pointer in the photo at right, are available at some hunting preserves.

(continued on next page)
The wise operator knows that in order to stay in business he must give his hunters sporty hunting as much like the hunting of native game as possible. There are tremendous problems in running a sporty preserve. Game birds, when reared in captivity, do not usually take to the woods as readily. You must give your hunters sporty hunting by providing them to weather and flying, and rear fully-feathered birds. He must develop special feed and cover in his hunting fields and woods. At most of the Florida preserves, there is as much cutting to keep down second growth as there is planting to provide special cover strips and small feed patches.

There are many obvious advantages to hunting preserves. For instance, 1,000 acres of prime native quail habitat will at best produce 1,000 quail. But take the same acreage and you can stock 10,000 to 20,000 quail on it during a season. With stocking, the same amount of land provides more man-days of hunting.

Hunting preserves are a convenient way of hunting. The sportsman knows that birds are in the field, although it’s still up to him to bag them. Preserve operators guarantee you chances, but they don’t guarantee your shooting ability.

The busy man who does not have much time for hunting often finds preserves an ideal place to hunt. If he lives near a preserve, he can go hunting in the morning and be back in his office in the afternoon. Doctors—and most of them are outdoorsmen—find preserves particularly attractive. They are always short of time, but with a half or full day on a preserve they can get more field action than they might in a week on other land.

I once ran into a doctor at a preserve who hunted there every Wednesday. He explained that it was cheaper that way than trying to own dogs, keep a hunting vehicle, and travel a considerable distance to public land on his day off. Then he smiled, “The manager will call me out of the field on a severe emergency, but at least I’m away from the telephone for awhile.”

Many of the preserves have clay-target facilities such as hand traps, practice traps or target games. It’s an ideal place to teach a youngster or a wife how to shoot. When they go into the field, they are assured of getting some opportunities on game. There’s nothing that builds the hunting fever and confidence like a newcomer quickly bagging a bird.

Preserves have a variety of cover, some of it easy walking and some of it as tough as you’ll find anywhere. For the aging hunter whose legs are not what they used to be, preserves are ideal. They’ve assigned the easy-walking areas. In addition, some preserves provide special field vehicles, so the elderly or handicapped can ride from point to point.

Most of the preserves provide dogs, guides, trailer transportation, and a clubhouse. For an extra charge, they also dress and package the birds. No one ever complains about the dressing fee. It takes the sting out of arriving home late all tired out and having to clean several birds in a kitchen not designed for it, while a wife hovers around telling you not to mess up her newly-waxed floor.

A few of the preserves have special areas for training dogs. They simply sell you X number of birds, stock them as singles or however you want them, and let you work dogs on them. They’ll let you use your own dog in the hunting areas as long as you can keep it under control. Obviously, they can’t allow untrained dogs to go crashing all over the preserve flushing birds.

Another advantage to preserve hunting is that the number of hunters at one time is limited. The operators only let so many hunters go in the field at the same time, and they are kept well spaced. You and your party are generally assigned an area of your own for a half or full day of hunting. Also, once you’ve paid your fee, you don’t have anyone running out and yelling at you to get off of his posted land.

The operators provide everything! Even if you forget your shotgun, they’ll lend you one. For regular hunters, some provide locker space where they can leave their gear until the next hunt. The one thing you must remember to bring is your money or a credit card.

Each preserve is a little different from the others. If you don’t find what you want at the first one you try, you could still find it at another. Some of the Florida preserves are on a membership basis only.

If you’ve never hunted at a preserve, the only way to find out if you will like this type of hunting is to try it. Services and rates vary considerably. Each preserve is a little different from the others. If you don’t find what you want at the first one you try, you could still find it at another. Some of the Florida preserves are on a membership basis only.

The operators provide everything! Even if you forget your shotgun, they’ll lend you one. For regular hunters, some provide locker space where they can leave their gear until the next hunt. The one thing you must remember to bring is your money or a credit card.

The chukar partridge, an Asian import, is available only to the preserve hunter here in the South. The covey rise, lower left, is as exciting on the hunting preserve as it is on any other hunting ground, and the game is as easy to miss. Time bomb. The dogs have a bird tied down, below, in ideal grassy cover, but it is still a long way from the brush to the pan and there is plenty of room for slips in between.

The general attitude of Florida sportsmen towards hunting preserves probably breaks down this way: For the hunter who has land on which to hunt native game, he recognizes the value of preserves to others, but he has no need for them. He doesn’t pay any attention to them. For the hunter who has a need for preserves, he’s glad they are around and hopes the operator makes a reasonable profit and will stay in business.

Hunting preserves take a little pressure off of public land. With Florida’s booming population and changing patterns of land use, preserves offer an answer to the loss of wildlife lands, sportsmen need every program they can get to provide hunting for the future. Certainly, hunting preserves will play a more important role in these plans.

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The Indian Hammock Hunt and Riding Club near Okeechobee is part of a development designed for family recreation. In addition to riding and hunting, plans are under way for trap and skeet fields plus a rifle range. Cedar Key Resorts, Inc., has a similar variety of outdoor recreation near the town of Cedar Key.

The Bonnette Hunting and Fishing Club at Lake Park, 12 miles north of Palm Beach, is one of the oldest and best-known quail preserves in the South. It has elaborate facilities and has entertained such celebrities as Kathy and Bing Crosby. When a yacht comes in for Gulf Stream and Keys fishing, it’s obviously not a club for the average working man. However, it may be just what the affluent sportsman is looking for.

Rex Yates, who has operated El Rancho Lake and Lodge near Chipley for 18 years, offers a modest price for hunters who want to see if they like flighted mallards. You can get supper, sleeping, breakfast, and three mallards for $30.00 at his Gold Medalion Lodge, certainly a price range which the average-income hunter can afford—and cheaper than belonging to a club which hunts migratory ducks.

John Titus operates a typical day-shooting preserve near Gainesville. His Hatchett Creek Hunting Preserve, within the price range of medium-income hunters, gives you a limit of both quail or pheasants or a combination. He gets a lot of Florida hunters who have never hunted ringnecks in native range and are anxious to try the big bird. It’s much cheaper than a trip to Nebraska or Pennsylvania.

Several of the preserves stay open through March and some run well into April, providing hunting long after the regular season has closed. If you’re interested in trying flighted birds, the following is a list of preserves which indicated they wanted to be listed and are open to the public on a day basis or membership. All of the preserves have free brochures and other information which they will furnish on request. You may wish to write two or three. Remember that prices and accommodations vary greatly.

(continued on next page)
This ringneck cock pheasant breaks its cover with thrashing of wings and an unnerving cackle. In spite of their large size, a ringneck under full power is not simple to down, as any honest bird chaser will readily admit. Well established in the more northerly parts of the country, the Asian import was brought to this country during the turn of the century and is one of the most popular of all game birds.
To most Florida sportsmen winter means hunting. But to a dedicated group in the northwest part of the state, winter also means sucker season. What’s a sucker? Some folks call him a trash fish; these in the know call him the best eating critter ever to come out of fresh water.

Florida is home to several species of suckers, and while the panhandle outdoorsmen are most familiar with the fish, they are found in nearly all of Florida’s freshwater streams. Suckers are members of the widely distributed family - the Catostomidae - which are fishes of carp-like appearance that have very prominent scales and usually have protruding mouths.

Pond suckers are found throughout Florida while the spotted and redhorse suckers are restricted to waters west of the Suwannee River. The spotted is the larger of the species, averaging 18 inches in length, compared with a 12-inch average for the other two species. All are equally delicious and, properly prepared, can provide the main course for one of the most delightful fish dinners imaginable.

The secret of successful sucker cooking lies in the proper handling of the fish prior to cooking. One of the main reasons many people have rejected the sucker as food is because of the numerous small bones that just won’t yield to the usual methods of fish preparation.

As the first step, scale and fillet the fish. Then, with the fillet laid out skin side down, make a series of parallel cuts an eighth of an inch apart through the upper, fleshy back portion of the fillet and extending the length of the rib bones. This cuts into short lengths the many fine bones in the back area of the fillet. The prepared fillet is then generously salted, coated with cornmeal, sprinkled with black pepper, and deep-fried. The finely cut bones cook up crisp and offer no problem to the eater.

Many of the experienced hands hold that the main problem with would-be fish cooks is that they do not get their oil hot enough. Traditionally, the cooking oil should be considered hot enough for frying if a match tossed into it will ignite. If you try this stunt, however, it would be a wise move to have a tight-fitting cover at hand to clap over the pan if the oil itself ignites.

Basket traps (where permitted), gigs, and nets are the commonly used gear for harvesting suckers. Gill netting is probably the most popular and most productive of the various techniques. However, rules governing methods of harvest vary in different waters throughout the state. Before going after the fish, you should contact one of the offices of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission to determine what rules apply to the specific waters you’re interested in.

In northwest Florida, the sucker season opens on November 1 on some waters and January 1 on others. The season runs until April 15. There are some waters where the sucker may be taken year round. There is no bag limit on any of the suckers. But, as with any wildlife resource, good judgment dictates that you take only what you can use.

But be prepared! Once you’ve tried this dish - one of Florida’s best kept secrets—you’ll be back to try it again and again.
famed as the heart of citrus
country, Central Florida
also has prime cruising waters
and fish galore . . . .

Cruising
Among
The
Orange
Groves

By MAX HUNN

With an abundance of lakes and thousands
of miles of cruising waters, it's not surprising
that some excellent boating areas in Florida are over­
looked.

Such is the case with the high ridge country of the
Sunshine State's backbone, widely known as the heart
of the citrus belt but which is also picturesque
boating terrain.

Within only a couple of hours or less drive of such
population centers as Orlando, Lakeland, Tampa, and
St. Petersburg, there are lakes that actually afford
opportunities to cruise among the orange groves that
march in regimented ranks up the hills from the
shorelines to the horizon. During the blossoming
season, it can be fragrant cruising indeed, amidst the
state's greatest concentration of citrus.

The most extensive citrus cruising waters are in
Lake County, so named because of 1,400 lakes, most
of them easily accessible either directly from launch­
ing ramps or indirectly via twisting streams from
other lakes. You could spend years sampling all of
the citrus boating waters, and yet each cruise would
be different.

Some of the cruising waters are famous, such as the
Mount Dora Canal, often called one of the most beau­
tiful waterways in the state known for its beautiful
waterways. However, there are other cruising waters
that are less publicized, although equally accessible
and picturesque. These a trailers a boatman should
explore, and also take time to wet a line, for the lakes
are not only scenic; they also harbor largemouth black
bass, broom, and shellcracker.

The chain of lakes near Clermont is an example of
little publicized yet beautiful cruising waters. Lo­

cated in the heart of the citrus belt, the little town is
named for Clermont in France, because one of the
Florida town's fathers was born in the French city.

Clermont boasts two lakes, and you can glimpse the
cruising possibilities there from the 226-foot Citrus
Tower, which affords a bird's eye view of 16 lakes, all
noted for their cruising and fishing.

This chain of lakes is actually part of the Palat­
lakaha drainage system, which originates farther
south in the Green Swamp area. The river with the
tongue-twisting Seminole name eventually empties
into Lake Harris. From there, the waters flow north
to link up with the Oklawaha River, already partly
destroyed by the controversial Florida Cross-State
Barge Canal, and eventually into the St. Johns, which
empties into the Atlantic at Mayport.

We discovered the chain of lakes when Wesley
"Sonny" Jones of Orlando, a marine dealer, invited us
to sample the beauties of the area.

And we did it in style, Sonny providing the ideal
in luxury cruising, a pontoon boat with a canvas
 canopy. We've boated many waters, but never in this
manner. For just plain, comfortable, relaxing cruis­
ing, a pontoon boat could get to be a habit.

Sonny picked us up at the dock at Vacation Village
on Lake Louisa, a popular family resort located four
miles south of Clermont, where we were staying dur­
ing a not-too-successful fishing trip. We did catch
a pair of bass on purple worms, but the action defi­

ditely was meager. That the fish had lockjaw was just
one of those things. One of these days we're going
back to see if we can unlock the lunkers' jaws. The
fish are there; the terrain just screams of fishing.
But like bass anywhere, they can be temperamental.

Lake Louisa is a beautiful, black-water, cypress
(continued on next page)
rimmed lake of approximately 2,000 acres. It has a locally famous landmark, the lakeside home of Captain Brockway, who, oddly, was not a seafarer but a retired Army captain. He first came to Clermont with a survey party in 1910 and, after military service, returned in 1934 supposedly with only two years to live. However, he died in 1973 at the age of 88, having outlived all of the doctors on the Army board who recommended his medical discharge.

Because he and his wife loved the water, they built a house—actually designed also to serve as a boat house—extending out over the lake. When we viewed it from the lakeside, it did appear to be an oncoming apparition to a newcomer on the lake.

Lake Louisa is linked to Lake Susan by a cypress-lined waterway as picturesque as you'll encounter on any cruise, and from there we cruised onto Lake Minnehaha, a larger lake of approximately 2,600 acres, also black water.

From the names they gave the lakes, it's obvious that some of the early Florida settlers were from the American north woods, or they were well acquainted with Longfellow's famous poem Hiawatha. There's also a Lake Hiawatha. Minnehaha and Hiawatha definitely are not Seminole Indian names.

From Lake Minnehaha we made side trips into Lakes Williamina and Crescent and into Lake Winona. The first two are reached from the south shore of Minnehaha, while the latter is reached via a short waterway on the north shore.

Then, resuming our main cruise, we left Minnehaha via a short waterway in the northwest corner which led to Lake Palatlakaha, not a big lake, and soon we were entering the connector leading to Lake Hiawatha, another small body of water, which in turn is linked to Lake Minneola, 2,000 acres.

Minneola was the turn-around point of our cruise, although we could have gone farther to visit lakes Wilson, Cook, and Cherry. However, Cherry is the end of the line unless you have a light, portable outboard boat. A dam north of Cherry Lake precludes further cruising unless you make a portage. If you do, you can continue cruising into lakes Hunt, Stewart, Lucy, and Emma. For cruising these lakes, however, it's easier to use a launching ramp off Florida State Road 10.

Cruising this picturesque chain of lakes shouldn't be a hotrod affair, although there is plenty of deep water for high-speed running. But to really enjoy the trip, you should take time to savor the unusual terrain, to admire the strange beauty of the cypress trees, and to study the regimented precision of the orange groves marching away from many of the shores. It's doubtful that you'll find a greater contrast anywhere—cypress and orange trees are a strange combination.

Some of the lakes have dark water, and are blessed with few hydras, which apparently don't care for the tannic acid waters of some cypress lakes. Other lakes in the chain are gin-clear, with sandy bottoms. Both types are noted for their good fishing for bass, bream, and shellerackers. And it's a happy combination for anglers. Usually, when a black-water lake isn't producing, a sand-bottomed lake is, and vice versa. Fortunately, it's no great problem to move from one lake to another, for the interconnecting streams are well marked and the distances are short.

Standard lures are successful for largemouth bass, with plastic worms being the number one artificial. Topwater plugging is good, particularly in the spring and fall. The lakes are surprising fishing terrain. In many instances, the shoreline is often behind the cypress trees, and it's possible to fish in five and six feet of water around the cypresses. Some of the best fishing is at the base of the trees. Then, at times, the fish are found in very shallow water. Bluegills and shellerackers are both abundant, and when they bed, the panfish brigade scores readily.

Marine facilities are limited. There are only two marinas on the chain, but they carry basic supplies, provide a limited number of storage slips, and, of course, have launching ramps. In addition, there are several public launching sites.

There are numerous other interesting lakes not connected by water to the chain, but launching facilities are limited. To fish or explore many of these, a two-man, car-top boat is necessary.

From the standpoint of an out-of-state boatman who wants to combine boating with sightseeing, the chain of lakes is ideally located near some of the most famous attractions in the state. Clermont is 52 miles south on U.S. 27 from Ocala, site of Silver Springs, granddaddy of all Florida attractions. Disney World is 23 miles to the south of Clermont, and Clermont is 50 miles from the winter Haven-Lake Wales area, location of famous Cypress Gardens and Bok Tower. It's easy for a vacationing boatman and his family to combine fishing and cruising on picturesque waters with a tour of some of the famous Florida attractions.

The quickest way to orient yourself concerning the lakes is to obtain the map published by the Lake County Chamber of Commerce (402 W. Main St., Tavares, Fla., 32778) titled "Lake County Florida's Roads and Waterways." Copies can also be obtained from the chambers of commerce at Clermont, Eustis, Groveland, Leesburg, Mount Dora, Tavares, and Umatilla.

It's indeed a different experience to cruise among the orange groves.

No trophy by any stretch of the imagination but a keeper bass nonetheless, judging from the grin on this successful lake fisherman's face. A solitary bass fisherman, right above, eases along the shoreline of Lake Louisa. Emery Jones and Kit Hume, in photo at right below, beach the pontoon for closer look at the shoreline. Author says for comfortable, relaxed cruising, this type of craft is hard to beat.

PHOTO BY WALLACE HUGHES
HOW RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES GET THAT WAY

(Compiled by John L. Schmidt, Wildlife Extensionist)

PROPERTY OF STATE OF FLORIDA

LETS NOT ATTACK THE HUNTER! THE SPECIES HE HUNTS ARE SOME OF THE MOST COMMON WE HAVE, MAINLY BECAUSE HE HAS PAID FOR THEIR MANAGEMENT, HABITAT ACQUISITION, RESEARCH, AND FOR WILDLIFE LAW ENFORCEMENT.

LET'S GET AT THE REAL PROBLEMS:

- PESTICIDES
- DRAINAGE OF MARSHES
- INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
- ALL OTHER LAND USE CHANGES THAT ARE ALTERING OUR ENVIRONMENT AND DESTROYING ITS ABILITY TO PRODUCE WILDLIFE

Know Your Gun

A missed shot at a long-awaited buck or some other game is a tough price to pay for lack of a little preparation

TO ANY SERIOUS STUDENT of the human race's occupation of this planet, it would seem that history has a peculiar way of repeating itself, often within relatively short time spans.

This seems to hold true in regard to history's wars, natural disasters, and plane and gun accidents.

In the May 1978 issue of Florida Wildlife, Tallahassee sportman Jim Lee reported how he was seriously hurt in a home gun accident that occurred as he was preparing for a deer hunting trip during the 1974-75 season.

According to his published story, Lee decided to take along his .44 Magnum caliber Ruger "Black Hawk" single-action revolver. The handgun, fully loaded, had been placed in the top drawer of a chest. Presumably, the half-cock lock position of the revolver's hammer rendered it safe until manually activated. The revolver was in a loose-fitting holster.

Lee slid open the drawer and removed the gun, but as he turned to go, it slipped from its holster, the hammer struck the lip of the drawer, and the handgun fired.

The heavy bullet passed through Lee's left arm, separating from its jacket as it released energy and tore away some 4 inches of flesh, muscle, and bone before creating a 24-inch circle pattern of blood and bone fragments on the bedroom ceiling.

Lee is still experiencing both physical and psychological aftereffects of the accident, despite passing months of recovery time.

A subsequent and somewhat similar handgun accident, in September 1975, had a more tragic ending for a Lakeland housewife.

According to a firearm accident report filed by Lt. Jim Robinson, firearms safety program coordinator attached to the Lakeland regional office of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, a young Polk County couple were unloading their car after a trip. Included among the variety of articles being removed was a borrowed handgun, loaded with .38 caliber ammunition. It was--like Lee's--a Ruger "Black Hawk" model single-action revolver but chambered for optional use of .357 Magnum or standard .38 caliber cartridges. Also like Lee's, the handgun's cylinders were fully loaded, and the exposed hammer had been placed on half-cock, the supposedly "safe" position. The gun had been placed on top of an armful of clothes being carried into the home by the husband.

As he pushed open the door of an apartment with his left foot, the loaded revolver fell to the floor and discharged on impact. The bullet struck the wife, who was sitting on the bedroom floor folding clothes. It entered her neck and partially severed the spinal cord. Her injuries ultimately proved fatal.

Legally, it was an accidental shooting. Simply, the husband was unfamiliar with handguns, but understood that the revolver had to be manually cocked to fire, after hammer placement in so-called "safe", half-cock position.

In the December issue of Outdoor Life magazine, a hunter related the sad results of his own single moment of carelessness, also decisively influenced by dependence on the so-called "safe" half-cock hammer position of a hammer-style hunting rifle, as commonly found in the Winchester Model 94, in older version Winchesters of hammer type, and in the venerable Marlin Model 336.

According to the hunter's story, he had thoughtlessly placed his chamber-loaded Model 94 lever-action Winchester .30-30 caliber hunting rifle between his knees as he attempted to focus a pair of binoculars. The loosely-supported rifle inadvertently slipped from between his knees, the hammer hit a rock in the hunter's descending slide, and it fired.

The 170-gram, lead bullet virtually severed a tough price to pay for lack of a little preparation

Tough

By EDMUND McLaurin
therefore should be outlawed. We sportsmen simply cannot afford to give the antigun voices basis for resulting firearms accidents that somehow get far shooting sports suffer.

In such instances, the I seem to be.

loaded firearm in a car or boat, even with precaution share transportation with a companion carrying a one of us doesn't go!

If first one over the fence. When alone, open, on the other side of the fence, then walk down retrieved and reloaded as I continue on my way.

within short seconds, for possibly needed home

protection.

I definitely will not, for example, carry a chamber­loaded firearm in a car or boat, even with precaution

nately tied in with presence of mind to hold on to

and pointing ahead or to one side. The other times cold-numbed hands when moving to a new stand or

is doing much to educate the public about safe

hunters afield.

real firearms safety begins with you-and me. Let's

(continued from preceding page)

found a beer can and set it up in front of an earth mound that bulldozers had pushed up.

Moving back an estimated 50 yards, I assumed a steady sitting position and carefully fired two shots. Each time, an explosion of sand and dust developed directly behind the upright can. Seemingly, I had missed both shots.

“See?” I told the fellow the rifle doesn’t shoot straight!”

I wasn’t as convinced. My hold had been steady, my aim equally so, and my trigger pulls smoothly executed. Also, at the second shot I was positive that the upright can had moved slightly, even though it did not fall over.

Target examination showed that my first fired bullet had hit the can almost dead center; the second was about three-quarters of an inch higher and a quarter of an inch right of center. The semipointed 150-grain bullets, traveling at more than 2500 feet­per-second forward velocity 50 yards from muzzle, had encountered practically no resistance on impact with the thin, soft aluminum can. They had zipped through so quickly and so close to the can’s point of balance that they caused only slight target tremor on impact and exit.

“Rifle shoots O.K. for me,” I informed its owner, offering the can for his inspection. “Now, suppose you try.”

He fired three shots. Each kicked up a cloud of dust wide of target. Obviously he had missed.

I was not surprised. Despite advice, he had tendency to cant his rifle when taking aim, but more harmful to accuracy was his obvious fear of his rifle’s

their own individual chances but missed. But far more numerous were those of us who had failed to even see a buck.

Shortly after daybreak, trailing dogs had executed a deep woods race that took course not far from my stand east of the ridge. I’m not sure how the action passed

having quite a few hundred yards north of me, and thick pine and juniper scrub growth completely concealed all movement.

However, some hunter in the area evidently was doing much to educate the public about safe

In safe handling of sporting firearms, we have a long way to come in recent years. But, as always, real firearms safety begins with you—and me. Let’s not ever forget it.

BY NOON OF OPENING DAY of the deer season in the Ocala National Forest, numerous lucky hunters were happily flushed with success. Others had had

trigger pull, and tight fitting sights. Everything seemed O.K.

FEBRUARY 1976

FLORIDA WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION SCENE

The family of any wildlife employee who has died or been killed in a job-related activity will be eligible for financial assistance from the Foundation. Assistance is not restricted to state employees, but will include federal and private wildlife organizations. The Foundation will provide application forms for financial assistance upon request.

Contributions are now being accepted for the Foundation, and are tax-deductible. All contributors of $100 or more will receive the special limited edition print of the wild turkey by Guy Coheleach. Send to National Foundation for Conservation and Environmental Officers, 44 Main Street, Clinton, N.J. 08809.

Brochure Revised

THE STATE'S SALTWATER fishing brochure, "Enjoy Florida Sport Fishing", issued by the Department of Natural Resources, has recently been revised. This brochure illustrates 48 of the most popular Florida saltwater fish in full color, gives information on their seasonal location, tips on catching them, and types of rigs and saltwater bait to use, plus many additional facts. Harmen Shields, executive director of DNR, said any interested person may receive a copy from his nearest Florida Marine Patrol office or by mail from the department's Bureau of Education and Information, 322 Crown Building, Tallahassee, Florida 32304.

CRANES HOODBOUND

SOMETIMES IT IS NICE TO fool Mother Nature. Wildlife biologists did just that in 1975 to help make it the best year ever for whooping cranes. The cranes' numbers soared to at least 85, including 12 juveniles — both records, according to the Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

On three separate fronts, U.S. and Canadian biologists fought to save the whooping cranes from extinction. And if this year's success and value of a wildlife management program as a proposition for each hunting season, taking or attempting to take deer or turkey by gun and bow, and to harvest for one season, taking or attempting to harvestwildlife is a nonrenewable resource, "Stanberr y explained.

Book for Bowmen

PUBLICATION WAS ANNOUNCED recently by officials of The Pope & Young Club of the 1st edition of their new book Bowhunting Big Game Records of North America. It was nearly 90 years ago that young Theodore Roosevelt, then just a few years out of college, suggested the founding of the now prestigious Boone & Crockett Club for hunters. Although little known by today's generation, Mr. Roosevelt was a prolific writer, and edited all of the Boone & Crockett publications prior to becoming President of The United States. The Pope & Young Club, founded in 1957, created an annual review of the Boone & Crockett concept and was created to accommodate the burgeoning numbers of bowhunters who numbered two million. The new Pope & Young Club book continues the journalistic tradition begun by President Theodore Roosevelt.

Bowhunting Big Game Records of North America contains all current bowhunting records but also offers the reader much more in bowhunting lore. Included is "The Art of Bowhunting," by Chuck Kroll; "Care of Mounted Trophies," by Wayne Harrison; "The History of The Pope & Young Club," by its founder, Glenn St. Charles; "A Remembrance of Ish," (the last wild Indian in North America), by Saxton Pope II; and complete profiles on the habits of, and how to hunt, deer, elk, caribou, pronghorn antelope, moose, moun­tain sheep and goats, the big cats, and bear.

Dr. Saxton Pope died in 1960, not before proving, with his surgeon's keen eye, that the scalp-sharp broadhead was a viable hunting tool. Art Young passed away in the winter of 1935.

The 1st Edition of Bowhunting Big Game Records of North America is available from The Pope & Young Club, 600 E. High Street, Mil­ton, Wisconsin 53563. It is priced at $17.50.

Lawbreakers Pay

BREAKING Florida's hunting and fishing laws is serious business and can result not only in losing these privileges but vehicles and equipment as well.

Colonel Brantley Goodson, chief of law enforcement for Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, said Florida law provides that persons convicted of illegal hunting and fishing lose all rights connected with their licenses to the court.

When violation occurs during the season, the license is lost for the remainder of the season. If it occurs during closed season, he said, no license will be issued for the upcoming season.

These penalties, he added, are in addition to a fine and possible jail sentence.

Persons who break certain laws, in addition to losing their licenses and receiving stiff fines and sentences, also can lose any vehicles or other equipment used in the violation.

Killing deer or wild turkey out of season, taking or attempting to take deer or turkey by gun and light, and alligator poaching can result in confiscation of equipment (continued on next page)
FLORIDA WILDLIFE

The agreement would give the Indians certain land use rights on a portion of the Everglades not included in the reservation but under state control as part of Conservation Area 3-A.

The five-member board opted for a public hearing on the proposal after agreeing there were many factors to be considered prior to approval.

At a meeting in Ocala, the Commission also approved in concept a recommendation by the Florida Association of Tax Collectors and the Governor's Efficiency Committee to eliminate some of the limited-use hunting licenses in favor of a statewide license. The non-resident fishing licenses would also be restructured. The proposal will be presented during a series of Commission-sponsored public hearings in February and March, before possible presentation to the 1976 legislature.

Park Camping

Since January 1, campers using electricity in Florida's state parks have paid 50 cents more, or $1.00 a night, which raised the total overnight fee to $4.50 (plus tax), according to Harmon Shields, executive director of the Department of Natural Resources. Shields said the increase was necessary because of rising costs of utilities and park operations.

"Campers not using electricity will have a reduction in their fee," he pointed out. "We are discontinuing our policy of charging for electricity whether it is used or not. Non-electricity users will be charged $3.50 (plus tax) a night."

The director said the annual camping permits, sold only to Florida residents, also will be increased for 1976. "We are having to raise the fee from $5.00 (plus tax) to $7.50 (plus tax), because of rising costs," he said.

Permits for a camping permit allows Florida residents use of camping facilities in state parks during the year, with only the electricity fee charged.

Application for Florida Wildlife Fishing Citation

The Editor, FLORIDA WILDLIFE Magazine

Please send me the Florida Wildlife Fishing Citation with the inscribed data filled in and signed. Only those applications received within 90 days of the date of catch will be honored.

CUT OUT AND SAVE THIS APPLICATION BLANK

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