A FLORIDA RESIDENT

IN THE EARLY 1960'S, ABOUT 100,000 MIGRATORY GEESE WINTERED IN NORTH FLORIDA. NOW ONLY ABOUT 2,000 MIGRATE THIS FAR SOUTH.

RESTORATION OF A HUNTABLE SIZE POPULATION IS A QUESTION AT THIS TIME, BUT IT APPEARS THAT THE NUMBERS OF AN IMPORTANT PART OF FLORIDA'S WILDLIFE HERITAGE CAN BE MAINTAINED FOR FUTURE FLORIDIANS TO ENJOY.

BIRDS OF THE NON-MIGRATORY STRAIN OF CANADA GEESE (Branta canadensis maxima) HAVE BEEN RELEASED BY GFWFC BIOLOGISTS IN NORTH AND CENTRAL FLORIDA IN AN EFFORT TO ESTABLISH A YEAR-AROUND RESIDENT POPULATION. THERE HAVE BEEN THREE SUCCESSFUL NESTING SEASONS AND PRELIMINARY LOOK PROMISING FOR THE PROJECT WHICH HAS ITS BEGINNINGS IN 1970.

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THE COVER
Ogopogo are quite tolerant of man's comings and goings along Florida lakes and streams, so fishermen frequently get to know them well. They, too, relish fish dinners—every meal. See page 32.

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From A Painting By Wallace Hughes

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ROSE TALLAHASSEE
Our proposal to go bimonthly with color was approved by the Administrative Staff and the members of the Commission in July, and a new contract was signed.

What’s ahead for Florida Wildlife and you? Pretty pictures, yes. More pages per issue? Definitely. But more importantly, our objective is to do a better, more thorough job of bringing to the reading the kind of information that will cause him or her to appreciate and better understand the fascinating world around us—the great, unmatched world of outdoors that is the great, unmatched world of Florida. We hope to reach out to every family in our state with a magazine that may have some sort of interest in it. I know a persistent saltwater fisherman who says he’s repeatedly had an annoying rash where his pantlegs rub mud against his calves. Evidently it’s caused by something in the mud rather than in the open water. The solution, of course, is to wear waders.

The biggest danger from poisonous snakes is not out there in waist-deep water but when you brush along against a shoreline where they may be resting. That goes for rattlers and moccasins alike. It’s easy to ignore a high bush when wading in freshwater lakes and creeks, and it’s possible to meet a snake at shoulder height. I have never heard of a rattlesnake striking a wader from the surface, but I’d suggest that any time you see one looking along, floating high the way they do when in swimming, you get away from him. They often try to board anything that sticks out of the water, and I don’t want any of them staging a landing party on me.

Deep waders catch lots of bass and the problems aren’t always what they first appear.

By CHARLES WATERMAN

Lure Action and Speed

WADING FISHERMEN sometimes have problems, even in Florida, but they’re seldom the ones they expect.

There are some unfounded apprehensions about being bitten by snakes. That’s real danger but seldom under the circumstances the waders fear. There’s fear of sharks, well founded, I guess, at times. Then there are the sting rays and barracuda in salt water, and lately, some spookiness regarding tarpon.

Neither of the above is as likely as cutting a foot on a bunted bottle. The first rule for wading fishermen is to wear shoes. Canvas tennis shoes are fine, preferably with high tops. War surplus jungle boots are even better, although few bother with them. Much wading is done where you aren’t attentive to your feet and probably couldn’t see them if you wanted to.

To allow mud, sand, and other debris to escape from their shoes, many waders cut holes in the toes, opening the size of a nickel being about right. Others fasten them so tightly that little gets inside except water. I like to wear socks inside my wading shoes, as it’s easier on my feet when grit or pebbles do get in, but wet socks full of sand are not prized possessions.

Now one seldom-considered problem in wading is contact with mud that may have some sort of irritant in it. I know a persistent saltwater fisherman who says he’s repeatedly had an annoying rash where his pantlegs rub mud against his calves. Evidently it’s caused by something in the mud rather than in the open water. The solution, of course, is to wear waders.

The biggest danger from poisonous snakes is not out there in waist-deep water but when you brush along against a shoreline where they may be resting. That goes for rattlers and moccasins alike. It’s easy to ignore a high bush when wading in freshwater lakes and creeks, and it’s possible to meet a snake at shoulder height. I have never heard of a rattlesnake striking a wader from the surface, but I’d suggest that any time you see one looking along, floating high the way they do when in swimming, you get away from him. They often try to board anything that sticks out of the water, and I don’t want any of them staging a landing party on me.

Seeing a swimming rattler is rare. I don’t think moccasins are dangerous in open water.

Barracuda have been blamed for attacks which they may or may not have made, and their habit of lying in shallow water and eearing a wader like a dog watching a squirrel may make you nervous, especially if the ‘cuda is 5 feet long. I have never seen a friendly looking one. There are two things to remember when wading among barracuda or sharks. One is to avoid shiny buckles or other reflective gadgets below water. The other is to be careful about dragging strings of fish behind you. A ‘cuda or of the Florida variety will be interested in catching your string of trout might make a mistake. In any event, cloudy water is generally more dangerous than clear water.

In recent years bluefish attacks have had considerable publicity, and nothing gets more in a feeding frenzy than blues. It’s surprising that more swimmers haven’t been bitten by them. I’ve never wanted to wade where bluefish are working, and a school can move a lot faster than you can.

You can wade wet most of the Florida year, but when needed, chest-high waders are not expensive for Florida waters. Generally, light plastic stockingfoot ones are quite satisfactory and certainly aren’t as hot as boot feet. The light ones are easily punctured but easily patched. Slippery bottoms aren’t one of our problems, so ordinary tennis shoes over stockingfoot waders are quite satisfactory.
You’ll save repair problems if you wear socks with them.

Much has been made of the dangers of getting in over the tops of chest-high waders, but it isn’t as bad as reported. There’s the rumor that they’ll contain enough air to raise your head up, but it hasn’t proved that way for me. When I ran tests with waders I found that the air is quickly replaced by water. Admittedly, you won’t break any of Morton Spits’ records in waders, but you can swim in them, and if you don’t panic you can get out of them. Generally, you won’t have too far to go to washable depths if you step in a hole or simply fall down.

Veteran waders who use chesthights often wear belts over them and snug them up if the water’s deep. That offers less water resistance, not very important if there’s little current. However, a tight belt can make you considerably warmer, and many wearers get almost as wet from perspiration as they would from water.

A FISHERMAN ASKED me the other day where he could find a 4-foot casting rod, something 5 feet or under. All of the high-grade sticks he had looked at were nearer 6 feet, he said.

They’ve gotten a little longer lately. My guess is that a 6-footer takes a little less effort than a 4-footer would most of the time. Perhaps the most accurate casting stick is from 5 to 6 feet long. When you can cast 5 feet or under with it, accuracy suffers a little, although spinning rods have always averaged longer, 7 feet being pretty common for lures in the quarter-ounce class.

You’ve seen and heard the advertising for “pocket rods” that are only a foot or two long. Sure you can cast with them. Since they require considerable arm motion, however, and won’t work very well with only wrist movement, they aren’t noted for accuracy. In most cases you swing your whole arm with one. The short wrist snap is still the move that makes for accuracy.

Many years ago, the plugging rod’s action was so stiff that casting was described as similar to throwing a muskrat off a pointed stick. When I was trying to grow up, I fell in with a bunch of fishermen who preferred tubular steel rods about 3 feet long. I believe the cult developed with fishing guides who liked to keep their rods in the bottom of a skiff, ready to use when paddling or rowing duties were slack. For them the short rod was handler, but I used it because I wanted to be like the guides.

Many years ago, I have used most are 5 to 6 feet long. The longer rod gives you more leverage on the cast, and the tip moves more with a shorter motion—but you get to diminishing returns in accuracy of somewhere out past 6 feet. Perhaps 3½ feet is a good average.

A tournament accuracy caster looks at the target over his rod tip and when he snap's it back it bends so that he’s still aiming almost level with the plug. In effect, the plug is not very much higher than his head as the rod lands up, even though the rod may be more than 5 feet long. He doesn’t lift his wrist much as he casts.

MANIPULATING A LURE with your rod tip or erratic reeling has been the subject of a great deal of advice, and many casting lures are made so that none of the action is built in, especially for salt-water use. Years ago there was frequent mention of the “Florida whip,” energetic rod motion to make a lure dart or “swim.” It becomes a habit, even though there are times when it isn’t necessary, and may be a liability.

One of the outstanding examples of a lure that frequently works well in what appears to be amateurish use is the Boone Needlefish. The most popular Needlefish is a pencil-slim design with no lip for a built-in wiggle. When I found years ago that it was a killer on East Coast trout, I tried it with energetic rod whipping and was surprised to see Gary Bennett, then the oracle of Coca trout, reeling it straight and slow with no rod movement. I didn’t care for its static appearance but the trout loved it.

Actually, on close inspection you’ll find that it does wiggle slightly while being cranked, and when Gary pointed out that a live needlefish doesn’t wriggle violently unless in a great hurry, I had no argument. Last winter I saw Charlie Ernst, current fishing master of Merritt Island, with a whopping trout he’d caught on the Needlefish. He, too, cranks it slowly and doesn’t make it hop.

The lipless Mirrolure, which is noted for its erratic performance and flashing darts when whipped, is also good when reeled straight at times. The late Bob Wallace cranked it straight but was very attentive to the balance of the individual lure, and was careful to have a loop knot that would allow the nose to wobble slightly.

Completely motionless surface baits are frequently blasted by black bass and other species, although the fish has generally been attracted by some sort of action before the bait goes dead. Occasionally, the splash of its arrival is enough.

There’s an adage that it’s impossible to fish a surface lure too slowly. I don’t always agree, but it’s sometimes true. Some baits work best as fast as you can crank them—sometimes. Many a whopper has been hooked while somebody pawed over a backwater near a point, and the fish may have been attracted by something besides color. But although fish living side by side might have different coloration, there are some frequently suspended rules that give a hint about individuals.

In waters stained dark by vegetation, fish tend to become dark in color. Fish in muddy water, especially bass, are likely to be pale, but fish that live deep against a muddy bottom with clear water are likely to be darkened.

Most fish that go to sea from fresh water tend to become silvery. A freshwater trout or salmon that migrates to the salt will lose nearly all of its spots or stripes, but if it comes back to fresh water again the old colors return. A tarpon living at sea will be silvery with a gray back, but if he stays in the mangrove back country, his back become dark olive, almost black.

The irregular dark designs on a largemouth bass are often mistaken for game fish. Then, since their American range is so limited, they never gained much national interest in illustrated features such as Florida Wildlife ran on the subject in the August and September issues. The fact that a black crappie might possibly be lighter in color than a white crappie is only the beginning.

Not only is a fish colored by its surroundings; it is almost immediately tinted by what it eats. Many saltwater fish change colors when they are ready to feed, and most of them change colors instantly when they’ve been caught, the tints being altered constantly until the fish is dead and continuing to change long after that. Many species change colors during the mating season.

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Aldolph B. Jones has a reputation for catching a variety of species, but his ledger is more than skin deep. For example, he caught a tarpon at night on the Needlefish, just as he had the day before on a shiner. His record for a needlefish is a 16-inch one.

I once knew a bunch of fly fishermen who used small plugs, and they were as accurate as casting sticks. The fact is, the casting stick is just an extension of the arm and does not interfere with accurate throwing if it is applied properly.

A big saltwater trout that Charlie Ernst caught on a Boone Needlefish, reeled straight and slowly.
The Apalachicola River

More than a century ago, steamboats plied the Apalachicola River inland from its delta to what is now the Florida state line, and northwards into Georgia.

Today, the puffing sternwheelers are gone, as are the huge plantations that once lined the river in antebellum days, and the Apalach sees far less glamorous tugs and barges shuttling over its sometimes clear, sometimes tawny waters.

The Apalachicola River remains largely undamaged by the hands of man, although it has not completely escaped the U.S. Corps of Engineers. It's part of Florida's last frontier, which, oddly, a little more than a century ago was Florida's first frontier.

Today the river affords boating and fishing opportunities that are hard to match elsewhere. It's not only a commercial river, but a recreational one, although its latter potential has not been fully realized. As a result there's elbow room aplenty.

The Apalach delta is the Gulf terminus of the river that begins 100 miles northward on the state line, where the Flint and Chattahoochee rivers meet behind the Jim Woodruff Dam to form the Apalachicola. Twisting and turning, sometimes passing high bluffs, at other times flanked by dense swamps of tupelo and cypress along with the colorful-in-the-fall swamp maples, the Apalach reaches its delta and splits into numerous waterways. Some are named; some are nameless, but all eventually empty into the Apalachicola Bay and East Bay.

During its run to the sea, evidences of civilization aren't too numerous along the river, but the little town of Apalachicola, at the river's mouth, has a long history. Settled in 1813, and chartered as a town in 1831, the little settlement is hardly recognizable today as having been one of the most important seaports in Florida early in the 19th century.

Today, Apalachicola is no longer a major seaport, but is known for its production of seawoods from the rich bottoms of the bays. The area's waters are the state's largest single producer of seawoods.

The historic town, now a quaint bit of the 19th century that has been bypassed by most of the frenetic aspects of the raucous 20th century, is a good starting point for exploring the river and delta.

NOAA Chart #11401 (Apalachicola Bay to Cape San Blas) gives some information about coastal cruising waters, but provides scant information for roaming the delta or river. You're wise to either hire a fishing guide, if piscatorial pleasure is your game, or get a knowledgeable local to pilot you for the first few cruises. You could get misplaced in the delta creeks. You have to make more than one trip if you really want to explore this beautiful area.

But before shoving off, it's well worth your time to explore the little town of Apalachicola. History here goes back centuries, and unlike some historical areas, which seem to need washing behind the ears, the little town appears neat and clean despite the many time-worn buildings.

Some day a full-fledged restoration will be started, and Apalachicola could well recapture the nostalgia of the 19th century. As it is, it's a seafood port with the large fleet of shrimp boats creating a picturesque waterfront.

Undoubtedly Apalachicola's most famous citizen was Dr. John Gorrie, inventor of artificial ice making, the forerunner of today's modern air conditioning. He settled in Apalachicola in 1833. By 1839, Florida was aiming for statehood, but (continued on next page)
It was also our first cruise on the Apalach. We eased out of the canal leading to the river from the Bay City Lodge docks and headed upriver. The docks are about three miles from the harbor.

In the main river channel, which here is part of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, we headed upstream. Shortly we left the Intracoastal, which swings to the left some two and a half miles upstream, and proceeded to Lake Wimico and on westward. (Wimico, which I visited later, is a beautiful lake and a good bass fishing area in the spring and summer.)

Sticking to the main river, we zipped inland towards Fort Gadsden. Six miles above the Wimico junction, we passed the entrance to Brothers River and continued up the Apalach. The river banks are wild. There were few if any signs of civilization, and the calm of the wilderness was broken only by the roar of our motors.

Swamps intermingled with slightly higher ground. Sandbars were frequent, and we stayed strictly in the channel to avoid the groins that have been erected in an effort to keep the river channel at the 9-foot depth. Soon we were at Fort Gadsden.

We went ashore briefly to explore the site of this fantastic incident in American history. Twenty miles above what is now Apalachicola, the British erected a crude fort in 1814. It was situated on a bluff commanding a mile view of the river each way, and from this outpost the British planned to control river traffic.

Eventually they abandoned the fort to Indians and Negroes who hijacked river boats and aided runaway slaves from upriver plantations. Although the boundary was 50 miles to the north, the United States took a dim view of these actions, and U.S. forces were ordered to destroy the fort.

What resulted was probably the world's shortest battle and also one of the most horrible. On July 12, 1815, Col. Duncan L. Clinch, commander of the U.S. expedition, ordered two gunboats to attack the fort. When the gunboats came within range, the fort's defenders opened fire with a 32-pound cannon. The gunboats replied. Several hot shot landed in the fort's powder magazine, causing a terrific explosion. Of the 300 Indians and Negroes in the fort, only 30 survived.

Later the U.S. built a fort on the site under the direction of Lt. James Gadsden, who later became famous for arranging the Gadsden purchase from Mexico in 1853. General Andrew Jackson, who ordered the fort's construction, was so pleased with Gadsden's engineering that he had the outpost named Fort Gadsden.

During the Civil War, the fort was controlled by Confederate forces, and then lapsed into oblivion until the State of Florida obtained the present 78-acre site in 1961, and established a historic memorial.

Today you can reach the old fort site by road, or land at the floating dock as we did. All that remains of the fort are the underbrush-covered trenches. Now it's a peaceful place with picnic tables and rest rooms. There are plans to develop the site further and to add interpretive exhibits.

Although it was interesting to cruise the main river, the smaller waterways are the most intriguing.

One day with Ralph Richards, a fishing guide, we twisted and turned down Little St. Marks River through Chipley Creek into Chipley Lake. It was far different from cruising the main river. It was beautiful, primitive country with a dense jungle of underbrush on the banks, sharp turns, narrow places, and what appeared to be an abundance of fishing holes. We didn't have time to try them, but I'm going to one of these days. There just have to be bass in there.

On another trip with John Cooper, another delta-wise guide from Bay City Lodge, we proved there was plenty of largemouth black bass by catching 18 in a few hours under conditions Cooper said were far from ideal. I wonder what the fishing would be like if conditions were right?

This trip was the most picturesque of all. We ran up the Little St. Marks River, through the East River cutoff, then down East River to the "Jungle," a canal-like waterway through a tunnel of trees, to reach Montgomery Slough.

Cruising this spot reminded me of roaming the mangrove back country creeks with the trees and bushes arching overhead. It's not big boat cruising waters, but a 16-foot, fishing boat has no trouble casting or fly-casting tackle, matching your lines to your rods.

Fishing is simply beautiful in the Apalach area. Largemouth black bass are abundant, and are caught in the marshes of the brackish water area as well as inland. Bronzebacks up to 10 pounds are common. You can catch them with live baits or with standard bass lures. You can use spinning, bait-casting or fly-casting tackle, matching your lines to your rods.

In the bay and offshore is excellent saltwater angling with a large menu. In season you can catch redfish (channel bass), sheephead, grouper, red snapper, Kingfish, Spanish mackerel, bluefish, cobia, tripletail, and even tarpon, although not very many people fish for the silver kings. It's no wonder that many term this area Florida's last fishing frontier.
on the verge of extinction, this rare Florida reptile may yet be saved

COUNT DOWN for the CROCODILE

DIFFERENT FROM ITS COUSIN, the American alligator, in habitat, personality, and appearance, the American crocodile is facing its most significant difference from its relative: survival.

Because the gator has responded to protection and management, and shown a marked increase in population, Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission officials recently switched it from the endangered species list to the threatened category. Estimates of Florida’s alligator population place it as high as 500,000.

With approximately 12 breeding females and a total population of under 300, the American crocodile is near extinction. Having been placed on the list of endangered species only last year, the fate of the crocodile now rests largely with a recently-formed Crocodile Recovery Team.

The five-man team is represented by biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, and the National Audubon Society. Howard Campbell, who heads the team and is chief of the National Field and Wildlife laboratory in Gainesville, outlines the urgency of the team’s work:

“The basic decrease in habitat and animals is clearly down. It’s going down, and going fast. We’re talking about maybe two or three hundred animals left in the United States, and perhaps a dozen breeding females. So we’re talking about a species that’s in the same category as the whooping crane,” he said.

In appearance the crocodile has a more pointed snout and more prominent teeth than the alligator, and thus the world has been given the famous "crocodile smile." Historically the olive-green crocodile grows larger than the blackish-colored alligator, but Campbell cautions that this comparison is only historical. Few crocodiles grow to their 10 to 20-foot potential.

In recent years, many adult crocodiles have fallen prey to what Campbell calls "people pressure." Some have been killed maliciously and some accidentally. He notes that several have been run over by automobiles in Key Largo, when they have wandered onto highways. "In general," Campbell says, "people don’t like big reptiles."

That observation may be working in reverse, however, as Tommy Hines, the team member from the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, seems to feel that alligators are losing their fear of people. If nothing else but because of sheer numbers, the alligator is certainly a more visible animal than the crocodile. And contrary to many published reports of their being vicious and aggressive, Campbell feels that the crocodile is a more retiring, shy and timid animal than the gator. It is an animal that people will rarely see, he says.

Having passed the organizational stage, the Recovery Team is now in a management planning phase, from which they will soon recommend priorities for action. Campbell estimates a minimum of 10 to 15 years for restoration of the crocodile, and maybe 50 years to rebuild the population.

But before any management plan can be implemented, emergency measures will have to be taken in order for research to be done. In recent years, no replacement of young crocs has been evidenced, which is due largely to the marginal habitat of the nesting areas, and raccoon predation, Campbell says.

Unlike the temperate-zoned alligator, which thrives in fresh and, occasionally, brackish water, the crocodile is a tropical animal that lives in salt water and needs the brackish water for rearing.(continued on next page)

FLORIDA WILDLIFE

PHOTOS BY LYNN STONE

Despite the formidable appearance of this toothy saurian, field workers insist that the crocodile is more retiring, shy and timid animal than the alligator. It is estimated that less than 300 American crocodiles survive, a dangerously low level for any species.

By JACK ABSTEIN

OCTOBER 1976
DUCKS OF CHASSAHOWITZKA

The fast-flying wigeon's had caught us by surprise. The birds had come pouring in low, seven of them, barely above the tops of the tall needlegrass behind our marsh blind.

My wife, Lou, and I tensed as the cupped wings made a sudden whoo-woo-oo of disturbed air above our heads. The nervous, pinkish-brown ducks were already over our decoys, with webbed landing gear lowered and reaching for the water.

We jumped up and began to shoot. Whaam!! My first load of No. 4 steel shot merely blew a hole in the air where a plump, white-crowned drake had been an instant before.

I followed the now frantically climbing duck upward, waiting. When he leveled off, my first shot was fired. Whaam!!

We were hunting on the 30,000-acre Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge, on the Gulf coast, about 65 miles north of St. Petersburg. This refuge seems to be largely overlooked by Florida duck hunters. Yet, I have enjoyed better wildfowl sport here than I have at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, on the east coast, at Cape Canaveral.

A blue-winged teal flashed in over the decoys, making a twittering call, and was gone again—the way it had been here, on and off, since daybreak.

"That fellow's going somewhere nonstop," Lou muttered.

"From Manitoba to the Matto Grosso, maybe," I guessed.

Suddenly the sky was busy with moving ducks again—the way it had been here, on and off, since daybreak. One flight peeled off and slanted abruptly downward toward us. Those black and white birds flew with the fast wingbeats characteristic of diving ducks—and the water in this marsh was much too shallow for divers.

The powerful fliers had been approaching in an irregular V pattern. Now they suddenly swung away in a wide circle, turning and tipping on air currents of their own making as they briefly looked us over.

"Cans! Don't shoot," I whispered to Lou, telling her something she probably already knew. I was surprised at the size of the flock, a couple of dozen birds. Canvasback have proven scarce in recent years. And the season has been kept closed accordingly.

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Then, as abruptly as it had filled, the sky was barren again. We both heard and saw the reason why. Our guide, Curtis Head, was approaching in his airboat to pick up our three dead ducks.

"There were some pintail looking you over, too—up high," Curtis announced when he had finished. "They probably would have come in if I hadn't started up the airboat."

"How many ducks would you say we've seen so far?" Lou asked him.

"I thought you'd already gotten two, you fellow's going somewhere nonstop," Lou muttered.

"From Manitoba to the Matto Grosso, maybe," I guessed.

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"How many ducks would you say we've seen so far?" Lou asked him.

The veteran guide looked thoughtful. "About a couple thousand—with maybe 500 of those within shooting range."

Five hundred ducks... and we had left the dock at Homosassa Springs hardly an hour before! If our guide's estimate sounded somewhat high, we didn't question it. Curtis Head has spent 28 years guiding duck hunters in this part of Florida. Many consider him the best in his field.

Curtis had been waiting for us, before daybreak, on the dock before the Sugarmill Woods Club. Lou and I have found this quality motel, with dining room, to be a convenient headquarters while hunting and fishing in the Homosassa-Crystal River area.

Our sticky guide had seated himself in the big airboat's elevated control seat. Then we had thun­dered away into the night, red-blue flame licking from the exhaust ports of the perfectly screened 150-horsepower Lycoming that whirled the propeler at our backs.

We followed the winding river for perhaps half a dozen miles through golden grass savannas, still roadless and hence unspoiled, that was broken here and there with tree islands of tall, graceful palms. The bright stars were beginning to dim when, about 20 minutes later, we left the river and en­tered the maze of salt creeks and bays that form the northern boundary of the federal refuge—and the 2,500-acre portion of it that is open for hunting.

We arrived at a small, shallow bay that was about 200 yards across. Here Lou and I fashioned a blind in the tall marsh grass on one shore while Curtis proceeded to put out the decoys. Then he left us and took up a watchful position several hundred yards away.

It had been several years since I had hunted (and caught redfish) here, and I was glad to return. This still relatively unsettled portion of the Florida Gulf coast has long been famous as a wintering place for ducks and coots. The Chassahowitzka Refuge win­ters the most southern flock of the Atlantic Flyway population of pintails. The shallow bays that sur­rounded our blind support an abundant growth of muskgrass (known locally as burrgrass) which, ac­cording to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is fed upon by peak populations that exceed 20,000 ducks and nearly that many coots.

Nearly all these ducks are migratory. They in­clude wigeon's (baldpates), gadwalls, mallards, redheads, canvasbacks, and pintails, to name some of the species. This shallow, saltwater area where he'd put us was "all big duck" country, according to Curtis Head. Scap, teal, and other smaller ducks (although many of the mallards and wigeons, too) were attracted to the widgeon grass, wild celery, and other duck foods that grow in profusion in the brackish creeks and ponds found inland from the (continued on next page)
The refuge proper is accessible only by boat from along the Homosassa or Chassahowitzka rivers or Mason Creek. The north boundary of the preserve includes much of the Homosassa River, then extends southward for 12 miles across the Chassahowitzka River, to the south boundary at Racecoon Point. Because most of the refuge water is shallow—often but 3 or 4 inches deep—the federal government permits the use of airboats. Several entrance and exit trails are clearly marked for use by such craft.

I am of the opinion that airboats, although their use may be justified elsewhere, do not benefit the Chassahowitzka Refuge, save for law enforcement use. Not only do these noisy craft disturb wildlife, there is a constant temptation for hunters to use them illegally—to keep birds in the air. When I stated my position to our guide, he readily agreed.

Curtis Head was concerned about that, too. He came roaring up and we made a quick tally. Lou and I had nine birds between us—barely under our limit.

The guide could understand our broad grins as we boarded his airboat to return to the Sugarmill Woods Club for lunch. My wife and I had gotten our Hunting on this federal refuge is permitted only on Wednesdays through Sundays. A National Wildlife Refuge Hunting Permit is required for all persons. There is no charge for this permit. It may be picked up at refuge headquarters, on U.S. Highway 41, about 41/2 miles south of the village of Homosassa Springs. Or you can write to the Refuge Manager, Rt. 2, Box 44, Homosassa, Florida 32646. Only temporary blinds can be constructed while hunting ducks at the Chassahowitzka Refuge. Decoys must be retrieved by owners at the end of each hunt. No Wildcats under age 17 must be accompanied by an adult. The use of retrievers is encouraged, provided such dogs are kept under control.

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I swung past her to another drake that was highballing straight away from us. As I pulled the trigger, this target tumbled end-over-end into the stook.

My gun was empty and I turned expectantly to Lou. She was staring at the disappearing pintails and shaking her head. "You're kidding!" I said. My wife is a very good shot.

She wasn't kidding, however. "Oh, well, maybe it's just as well," I consoled her. "We must be pretty close to our 200 point limit."

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A second way to discover an animal's diet is to examine the remains of its meals—remains in the form of droppings, uneaten portions, or regurgitated pellets. For example, the droppings of the gopher tortoise often contain recognizable plant remains. For sometimes this vegetarian reptile does not chew up leaves; it simply "wads" them up in its jaws and then swallows them. At a locality near Ocala, tortoise droppings consisted almost entirely of wiregrass stems and turkey-oak leaves, along with gopher-apple and winged sumac berries in the fall.

Back in the 1950s, a pair of bald eagles nested every year in a tall pine near the shore of Orange Lake in north-central Florida. I frequently examined the ground under the nest, to see what food the eagles had been bringing to their young. I was surprised to find many shells of the striped mud turtle, along with numerous vertebrae of the green watersnake.

On one occasion near Blountstown, I examined the bed of a bobcat in the soft sand beneath an abandoned cabin. The bed was littered with cardinal and towhee feathers, the hind limb bones of rabbits—and the skulls of several house cats! Apparently the bobcat is no friend of its domestic cousin.

However, droppings or leavings reveal only a portion of an animal's diet. A gopher tortoise may chew up soft leaves so thoroughly that they cannot be identified in the droppings. Bald eagles surely bring to their nest more kinds of prey than the ones whose remains are conspicuous on the ground beneath. And bobcats surely eat a wide selection of mammals, birds, and reptiles.

Regurgitated pellets often give a good idea of an owl's diet. Thus, some years ago I found the Florida burrowing owl to be breeding in the open ranch country between Ocala and Dunnellon. Here these birds lived in gopher tortoise burrows. The owls' pellets could be picked up around the burrow mouths and atop fence posts. The pellets contained the remains of grasshoppers and beetles, but no mice whatsoever. Apparently the burrowing owls were insectivorous, at least in this locality.

A third way to investigate an animal's diet is to watch the animal in the wild and see just what it feeds on. But this way often has its drawbacks. A fisherman may see a banded watersnake eating a leopard frog, or a brown watersnake eating a catfish; but how often does a hunter see a diamondback rattlesnake eating a rabbit or a fox squirrel?

A Florida red-tailed hawk may occasionally be seen to swoop down upon a snake and fly off with it; but from a distance, who could say just what kind of snake it was?

The fourth and best way to study an animal's feeding habits is to examine and identify the contents of its digestive tract. This is often done by biologists or wildlife technicians in national forests or other public hunting grounds. For example, the

(continued on next page)
investigator may stay at a checking station where hunters bring out the deer they have killed. He studies of Ed Tyson, who at that time was a biologist investigating the white-tailed deer herd of the National Forest. He found the deer to be feeding heavily on wild mushrooms (or toadstools, if you prefer that name). When the mushrooms sprout a long distance away; for on several occasions, as shown by tracks in the sand, a deer would suddenly change direction to make a straight line toward a distant mushroom. This it would eat, leaving only a bit of stem. Chemical analysis revealed our wild mushrooms to have an exceptionally high protein content in proportion to dried weight. It is worth a deer's time to seek them out and eat them.

Tyson made another unexpected find in the Ocala National Forest. A large black bear ran out into the road between Salt Springs and Silver Glen Springs, and was hit by a loaded logging truck. The bear was killed, and Ed opened its stomach. This turned out to hold about a gallon of stick insects; not the innocent little green or brown "walking sticks" but a blackish kind that squirts a blistering fluid when molested. Even a catfish will not eat one of these insects—but evidently a bear will.

Snakes often reveal their stomach contents by regurgitating when disturbed. On one occasion a huge eastern diamondback rattlesnake was caught on Little Talbot Island, in northeastern Florida. It had two large bulges in its body, and I guessed these to represent much burbot, which is exceptionally numerous on the island. But when I disturbed the rattler to the point of regurgitating, the two bulges turned out to be young raccoons. This episode, which I reported in a journal called Everglades Natural History, is the only recorded instance of raccoons in the diet of a rattlesnake.

Curiously enough, the examination of stomach contents sometimes raises one problem while solving another. This is particularly true when the identification of a food item is not absolutely certain. As an illustration of this point, I once investigated the biology of the worm lizard, a little burrowing reptile found only in peninsular and northeastern Florida. Every digestive tract of a predator.

As an illustration of this, the alligator often snaps down on turtles or crayfishes that are hiding in a submerged growth of eelgrass, and in so doing accidentally ingests a mouthful of the plant's ribbonlike leaves.

Even trickier is the problem of "secondary ingestion." A herpetologist (professional student of reptiles and amphibians) once opened up some baby indigo snakes and found them to have many beetles in the digestive tract. Further investigation showed that the snakes actually had been eating toads, which in turn were packed with beetles. The snakes' digestive juices had dissolved the toads' flesh almost into unrecognizability, but had not much affected the beetles' hard shells.

Another herpetologist studied the feeding habits of snakes at Fort Benning, Georgia. There, most of the pygmy rattlers had eaten a salamander (or perhaps a frog, if you prefer that name). When the freshwater turtles are laying their eggs, the alligator often snaps down on turtles or crayfishes that are hiding in a submerged growth of eelgrass, and in so doing accidentally ingests a mouthful of the plant's ribbonlike leaves.

Furthermore, at New Port Richey, Florida, I often find these snakes in the same places that yield big, bluish-gray caterpillars.

Incidentally, the rattler-centipede problem is one that could be solved by laboratory studies. For a pygmy rattlesnake soon adjusts to life in captivity, and once "cage-broken" it would accept centipedes if these were a natural part of its diet in the wild.

Of course, any approach to the study of animal diets is welcome. Observations on feeding behavior, in both the laboratory and the wild; analysis of droppings, food remains, and the like; examination of digestive tracts—all may contribute, at times, to our knowledge of what animals really eat. In most instances, fuller knowledge of what an animal's diet is acquired only through the combined efforts of many workers in various parts of the country. These workers' findings are published in journals issued by scientific societies, game and fish commissions, museums, universities, various governmental agencies, or other organizations concerned with wildlife research.

Popular beliefs about an animal's feeding habits are often incorrect. Thus, there is no truth to the belief that certain freshwater turtles, commonly known as cooters, sliders, terrapins, or "streakheaded," will eat daffodils or fishes. Actually, they are vegetarians, feeding on elcgas and other water plants.

In the fall of the year they may leave the lakes to go back under the live oaks and the turkey oaks. There they stuff themselves on the recently fallen acorns. Indeed, a good acorn crop will lure eight kinds of reptiles—deer, bear, wild hog, wild turkey—for a short while.

An animal's feeding habits may change temporarily for reasons not directly related to the cycle of the seasons. Florida kingsnakes prey on rodents, birds, eggs, snakes, lizards, and frogs. They even tackle venomous snakes such as the crotalus moccasin and the diamondback rattlesnake. But when the freshwater turtles are laying their eggs, the kingsnakes raid the nests. For a month or so, these snakes find so many nests that they do not need to hunt for other foods. As a matter of fact, several kinds of animals, especially the raccoon (continued on next page)
Feeding behavior may have complexities that are easily overlooked. An adult alligator often will stalk a great blue heron, and remains of this bird are not uncommon in gator stomachs. But in the heron-alligator relationship, the bird is more often the predator than the prey; for when baby gators hatch, they are fed upon frequently by the big herons. Back in the days when baby alligators could be collected and sold legally, knowledgeable collectors concentrated their efforts on ponds and marshes where many of the herons were seen wading about; for these were the places where the little alligators would be most numerous.

A predator is not necessarily an enemy of its prey, or a vegetarian animal an enemy of the plant species on which it feeds. The panther may prey heavily on deer, but it usually pulls down only the sick or injured ones, and so helps to keep a deer herd healthy. The gopher tortoise devours the soft white fruits of the gopher apple, a low-growing plant of the sandhills; but the tortoise also deposits the plant's seeds in its droppings, and they soon sprout. Gray squirrels burry far more hickory nuts than they eat, and the buried ones grow into more hickory trees.

The major groups of animal life differ among themselves, on the average, in the degree of dietary specialization. By and large, and with some exceptions, mammals tend to be comparatively unspecialized. Birds often are specialized feeders, as we have already seen. Reptiles, or at least the snakes, are perhaps the most specialized of all backboned animals when it comes to feeding behavior. No snake is a vegetarian. All are carnivores that swallow their food whole, and many will accept only a few kinds of prey, perhaps only one kind. The rainbow snake, mud snake, Florida brown snake, and southern hognose snake have already been mentioned in this connection. The green watersnake, as an adult, is nourished almost entirely by a diet of pig frogs. The glossy watersnake and its close relative the queen snake eat nothing but crayfishes — mostly crayfishes that have just shed their shells and so are still quite soft.

In contrast with reptiles, the amphibians—the frogs, salamanders, and their kin—are un-specialized feeders. They tend to snap up any moving object that is small enough to be swallowed. On one occasion, a captive river frog even managed to choke down a baby diamondback rattlesnake! This sampling of the wildlife journals could be continued at great length. But suffice it to say, in summary, that the subject of animals' feeding behavior is complex, fascinating, and full of surprises. And it is very necessary if populations of wild animals are to be effectively managed and conserved.

Food habits studies reveal some rather surprising items in the diet of various wildlife species. An egret as witnessed by the photo above, made short work of a small bird, believed to have been a sparrow, certainly not a common item of food in the egret's diet. At right, a frog in the set of putting away a small rattlesnake.

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The brothers grew up in an outdoor-oriented family, with hunting playing a prominent role in their activities. Both Lane and Carey and their friend, Sam Keene, Jr., had spent a great many hours afield on the trail of various game both in their section of central Florida as well as in some pretty far distant pastures. They were discussing some of their forays after game one day when the idea popped up that there must be plenty of hunters who would welcome the opportunity to hunt a Florida boar. This type of hunting, the trio agreed, is about as exciting as any you can readily come by. It does require some special equipment and know-how, to be sure, in addition to good hunting grounds. This the Lightsey’s have. The upshot was the decision to set up a hunt camp. The rustic building has been refurnished to hold some of their friends. And too, as in some pretty far distant pastures...

The island has been a bit of judicious stocking. The result is that you’d be hard put to sort of evolve. The brothers grew up in an outdoor-oriented family, with hunting playing a prominent role in their activities. Both Lane and Carey and their friend, Sam Keene, Jr., had spent a great many hours afield on the trail of various game both in their section of central Florida as well as in some pretty far distant pastures.

The idea of operating a boar hunting camp just sort of evolved. The brothers grew up in an outdoor-oriented family, with hunting playing a prominent role in their activities. Both Lane and Carey and their friend, Sam Keene, Jr., had spent a great many hours afield on the trail of various game both in their section of central Florida as well as in some pretty far distant pastures.

...if you prefer, a somewhat more leisurely passage in a more conventional outboard-powered boat may be arranged. Hunt headquarters on the island is an old cow camp. The rustic building has been refurbished somewhat to better accommodate hunting guests, but not so much that the atmosphere is lost. The camp sits in a beautiful oak hammock edged by an improved pasture which makes a convenient small plane landing field. The usual hunt starts out from the camp at a convenient hour—no rolling out before dawn. That is, unless the hunter wants it that way, or the weather dictates it.

A high-clearance, 4-wheel-drive vehicle is used to carry hunters around on the island. The high open seating arrangement gives a good view of the country. A dog box occupies a prominent place on the rear bed of the rig. The Lightsey brand of boar hunting centers around the use of dogs. A special crossbreed known as the cur is favored. The term cur is not to be confused with mongrel, which implies an indiscriminate mixture, “a Heinz 57 varieties” hodgepodge of no special talent or value. The boar hunting cur is a carefully controlled cross, with a strong infusion of pit bull blood. The law holds that wild hogs are game animals on specified wildlife management areas and are there subject to regulations on taking, as with any wild game. On private lands, such as Brahma Island, wild hogs are considered private property and may be taken at the discretion of the landowner. On this basis, Brahma Island boar hunting may be conducted at any time of the year. Details of the hunt vary with circumstances, which is true, of course, with any kind of quality hunting. But from our recent visit to the Lightsey camp, FW editor Gene Smith and I agree that all the elements of a good hunt are there—friendly, knowledgeable guides, good camp food, adequate accommodations, and a full measure of a hunter’s anticipation and excitement. This, plus a chance to bag a good trophy head and a load of barbecued meat, makes an attractive package.

If you’re interested in looking into the matter further, address a note to Lightsey Cattle Company, Route 1, Box 342-C, Lake Wales, Florida 33853.

The brochure describing the Brahma Island hunts says you get your bear or you get your money back. You can’t beat that kind of an arrangement.


1976

Hunting Season Information

Mourning Dove

Open Season: October 2 through October 31
Shooting Hours: 12-consecutive hours before sunrise until sunset.

Limits: Daily bag 12, possession 25.

During the October 2-October 31 period, that portion of Franklin County lying west and south of U.S. Highway 98, including Alligator Point, will be closed to the taking of doves.

Rails and Florida Gallinule

Open Season: September 1-November 9

Shooting Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Limits: Rails—Daily bag 15, possession 30; singly or in the aggregate.
Virginia and Sora—Daily bag 25, possession 50, singly or in the aggregate.

Snipe

Open Season: November 13-February 27

Shooting Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Limits: Daily bag 8, possession 16.

Licenses and Permits

Resident Senior Citizen Certificate—No charge

Resident Annual

Series A—Hunting/Fishing Combination
Statewide 5.10
Series K—State
7.50
Series I—Home County
11.50
Non-Resident
Series L—State Annual
28.50
Series M—10-Day Continuous
11.50
Series M—County, Annual, Owners of and province license at least 3000
11.50
Non-Resident
Series L—State, Annual
28.50
Series M—County Annual
11.50

Waterfowl—Ducks and Coots

Seasons:
1. November 24 through December 6
2. December 7 through December 23
3. December 24 through January 31, daily bag limit—5, possession limit—1


Possession Limit: Two and one-half hours before sunrise to sunset.

Waterfowl Stamp (U.S. Post Office)
5.00

Special Duck Hunting (Florida residents only)

Statewide 10.00
Special Duck Hunting (Florida residents only)
5.00

Tougher Skeet Preferred

By EDMUND MC LAURIN

our shooters would have more fun, better shots, and bag more game when hunting if they shot under international skeet rules

H OW COME NO MEMBER of the American Olym- pic skeet competition team could record a higher cumulative average score than his or her American team member placed among the six high in the International Skeet finals? " a Florida skeet shooter has asked me.

There is good reason.

In Olympic competition, International Skeet Association rules are strictly observed. These require that the shooter be off the shoulder, held entirely in hands, with the gun close to the shooters hip when calling for a target. Not until the target is in flight can the gun be put to shoulder for aim, gun swing, and firing. The action closely simulates the gun handling demanded by successful upland game shooting.

Also, targets in International Skeet achieve approximately 100 miles per hour peak velocity, compared to visably slower American Skeet target releases. International Skeet targets travel faster, too—between 77 and 87 yards—and may take to close to ground or high-arc flight.

International Skeet targets are not subject to instantaneous release on shooter command of "Pull!", but may be optionally released one to three seconds after the shooter on station has called for his target.

These imposed difficulties require an International Skeet shooter to possess and apply more instantaneous delay intervals. Skeet targets require faster gun handling, than is demanded of his American Skeet counterpart.

Unlike the American Skeet enthusiast, the Olympic Skeet competitor and others who shoot under International rules likewise face more physical and mental shooting range variables. There is always that factor of having to shoot with the gun off the shoulder, and the additional handicap of not knowing exactly when (within optional three seconds maximum delay interval) a target will be released after calling "Pull!"

Actually, American Skeet shooters would be better shots, have more fun, and bag more upland game hunting season if they altered their clay pigeon throwing trap speeds and range rules to those of International Skeet. Originally, American Skeet shoots such as current International Skeet, except that the targets usually were not as fast.

Because they can shoot higher scores with gun

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held at shoulder in readiness for slower-moving targets, many shooters of American Skeet, unfortunatetly, stubbornly oppose local club adoption of special club range days for shooting International Skeet. (The same clay pigeon throwers can be used; only heavier throwing spring power, for faster and longer flight target releases, need be substituted.)

It all depends on whether one wishes to become truly expert, as high scores in International Skeet demand, or merely run up impressively high scores in now notably mechanical American Skeet.

FOR CLOSE TO 60 YEARS, since 1878, to be exact, the Lyman Gun Sight Company, at Middlefield, Connecticut, has been producing practical gun sights.

The company’s mechanical and scope sight models of the 1930s had great influence on my shooting successes.

Brand name came largely as a result of Lyman family development and trade introduction of close-to-aiming-eye, tang-style peep sights and flat-face, many Essay and gold bead front sights.

Other items that enhanced company fame included the fine Lyman Model 48 receiver peep sight, in 1910, to become the Lyman-Cutta counterpart.

As new gun models appeared on the market, metallic sight production increased as new sight models were created. For many years Lyman metallic sights have been in vogue with shooters’ preference, production emphasis on scope sights.

My early Lyman metallic peep sights were of tang type. A Model 2A, with removable disc, was won on a Remington Model 12C slide-action .22 caliber rifle, in combination with a Lyman ivory bead front sight. Second acquisition was combination of lock-up, micro-meter-click-adjusting Model 103 tang peep sight, and multiple insert-design front sight mounted on a Marlin 39.

Later, becoming seriously interested in competitive target shooting and big game hunting, I matched the Lyman 48 receiver peep sight to bolt—(continued on next page)
By virtue of the objective lens being set a good 1/4-inch deep from the front end of the scope tube, the "All Weather" had the equivalent of a built-in sunshade that proved advantageous when making shots toward the sun. The Winchester Model 52.22 caliber rifle I used as a member of the United States Rifle Team had a Lyman 48 sight. So did a Selke & Sons .22 custom sporter used for prairie dog hunting. In a metallic receiver peep sight of assured performance, I still prefer the Lyman 48.

The Lyman firm began making scope sights in 1928. Its first model was the No. 438, followed by a 3X "Stag" model hunting scope and ultimately improved successors. My first big game model hunting scope was a Lyman Alaskan "All Weather", circa 1938, which was an improved version of the original Alaskan. Lynams were made by Bausch & Lomb. The 2X fixed power was ideal for hunting in brush country. Field of view was 40 feet at 100 yards, and the optical system was universal for use at all practical brush country hunting ranges without specific distance focusing.

The scope tube itself was pretty small. The steel tube's body diameter was about 22mm or .866 of an inch, which is smaller diameter than the full 1-inch-diameter scope body tubes now common on hunting scope models. The diameter of the free aperture of the front, or objective, lens measured 19mm (.709 of an inch), and the eye lens into which I looked to take aim was about 11/16 inches in diameter. Overall length was 10 inches. The scope weighed 11 ounces without its Griffin & Howe ring mount.

How do I know? I made and kept written record of the technical and performance data, and now give the information from an age-yellowed note book. Aiming reticule was a blunt post with single horizontal crosswire. It proved a good reticule choice and showed up well under a variety of hunting conditions.

Initially mounted on a Winchester Model 54 bolt-action .30-06 caliber rifle, and later on my Soglia Model 200-206 custom sporter, the scope gave long eye relief, with its full field of view obtained without aiming eye was 2% or 6 inches from rear of eyepiece. This generous, useful eye relief meant that, even when snapping rifle to shoulder hurrily, with variable placement space of sighting eye from end of scope tube, there was little chance of firing recoil causing painful eyebrow contact with eyepiece.

Shooting was done from bench, with rifle resting across a sand bag topped with small pillow. On target examination, first bullet impact was found to be slightly high and about 3 inches to right of point of aim. I cut two equal length teardrop-shaped tape and formed the pieces into a cross (+) centered over the bullet hole.

Again aiming at the target paper's bullseye, but without firing any more shots or disturbing duplicated first shot aim, the windage and elevation adjustments were clicked until the crosswires of the scope's reticle intersected the visible target-formed cross. (To assure nonmovement of rifle during this critical adjustment sequence, a companion helped to further hold rifle steady on its cushioned sand bag rest.)

With accomplished sight adjustments, I was theoretically sighted-in for hits on the target's conventional bullseye. The sight corrections I made proved so accurate that only two clicks elevation change were needed for desired zero, after firing a 5-shot test group.

Next test was that of determining whether or not the 3X-9X Lyman "All American" scope would hold its zero on making various magnification changes. The only way one can be certain a variable power scope is truly holding established windage and elevation zeros is to very carefully bench rest fire at least three shots at each magnification, without making any elevation and windage changes. This testing calls for expenditure of expensive ammunition, but it is the only way to test scope performance. Comparison of the bullet hole groups formed will show whether increasing or decreasing magnification causes variation in the bullet group. The Lyman 3X-9X "All American" scope I used tested satisfactorily.

Besides checking bullet group formation quality at various magnifications, I also deliberately clicked teamed elevation and windage to extreme end adjustments left and right and down, to see what happens. A zero shift of bullet group. The Lyman 3X-9X "All American" scope I used tested satisfactorily.

Periodically throughout test firing, the one-shot sighting-in technique was repeatedly staged, to see if mechanical operation of the scope's optical system was consistent. The Lyman firm, now preferring to be known as "Lyman Products For Shooters" rather than "Lyman Gun Sight Products For Shooters" and making one-piece Bore Sighter. I used a Bushnell Boreights to bring rifle bore and scope reticle to same collimation before firing. My purpose was to make certain the first shot fired would register somewhere on a target placed 100 yards distant. A Bushnell Boreights is a great ammunitions-saver if used prior to first firing of a rifle just fitted with a new scope sight.

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Bushnell Boreights

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Lyman 3X-9 Variable

1½ inches in diameter. Field of view at lowest (3X) power is 59 feet at 100 yards, 13 feet at 100 yards when given highest (9X) magnification. 

Eye relief at 3X is 3 inches; at 9X it is 3½ inches. Consequently, the scope must be precisely positioned in holding rings for maximum obtainable eye relief, no matter what magnification the shooter uses. (Precise scope tube positioning is important in correct mounting and use of any hunting scope.)

Elevation and windage adjustment click value is 1/4-inch change per click per 100 yards of range. Choices of either standard crosswire or 4-Center Range-style aiming reticule are available. I much prefer the latter, with its combination of thick and thin crosswires.

Lenses of the optical system are fully coated for maximum light transmission, with all interior metal surfaces matted to reduce stray light reflections. The "All American"s" exterior is finished deep blue-black, against which adjustment markings stand out boldly. Good quality protective lens caps, connected by elastic cord, are included.

I chose Weaver-type ring mount, to match scope base already on rifle receiver. Care was taken to position the two holding rings so that neither touched a scope turret. To make sure of nonslip scope tube gripping by the tightened holding rings, the inside surfaces of the rings were smeared with powdered resin.

Once the scope was correctly focused for my eyesight, I mounted telescoping rings for correct eye relief and straightness of reticule, I used a Bushnell Boreights to bring rifle bore and scope reticle to same collimation before firing. My purpose was to make certain the first shot fired would register somewhere on a target placed 100 yards distant. A Bushnell Boreights is a great ammunitions-saver if used prior to first firing of a rifle just fitted with a new scope sight.
spotlight on some of the most favored of Florida's dabbling ducks

A Gallery of Waterfowl

In the hunter's scheme of things, Florida's ducks are divided into two main groups: the dabblers, or pond ducks; and the divers. This doesn't completely mesh with the current scientific classification of waterfowl, but is a convenient way of dividing them for ordinary conversational purposes. In body structure, the dabblers have their legs located more forward than the divers. The result is that the puddlers appear more at ease moving about on land than do the divers. Another structural difference is the hind toe: dabblers lack the lobed hind toe which characterizes the divers. Taking off from the water, the dabblers spring into the air, while the divers require a takeoff run before becoming airborne. They're a colorful lot, the dabbling ducks. They hold a special spot in the world of the Florida waterfowler. •
These can't bring home in a sack, bucket, or ice chest. Any offcut of the swamp, and sun-warmed pines after a frosty night, or the magic moment or two.

When you're on the water in a way that holds your attention for a short interval before diving on a fish, or pass on lower than that. To more promising prospects if nothing appears. When prey is sighted, the osprey plunges on half-way for an instant, but most often it only partly submerges.

When a successful attack is made, the bird rises heavily from the water, clutching the fish in its talons, shakes the water from its feathers, and laboriously toward a convenient perch or its nest.

Ospreys, like other wild creatures, are quick to take advantage of opportunities that will yield a sure-fire meal. Some years ago, during a controlled seining program on Lake George, ospreys soon learned that the operation gave them a perfect opportunity for handsome dividends. As the scene was drawn in an ever-tighter circle, fish, especially gizzard shad, were concentrated in great numbers, many of them right at the water's surface. The ospreys overcame their wariness of man to come in within a few yards of observers to pluck the hapless shad from the trapped schools. It was a fat summer for the numerous ospreys that nested around the big St. Johns River lake.

Fishing, although apparently instinctive behavior with ospreys, is a skill that requires practice with such exotica as old shoes, boots, wearing apparel, and the like to which the bird has taken fancy. A variety of sites are chosen. Where available, a lofty cypress or other tree is selected; but along the coasts, low bushes or even ground locations are not unusual. Ospreys nest on high power poles and towers, too.

Three eggs comprise the usual clutch, although two or four are sometimes noted. They are whitish of background and heavily blotched with brownish markings. The female handles the incubation duties, which last for the better part of a month. The male dutifully brings food to his mate. Occasionally she will leave the nest for a short period, to stretch and do a little foraging on her own. The young spend about eight weeks in the nest before they are well enough developed to take wing.

The osprey is easy to identify. Its loud alarm call when disturbed has been described as a loud, rich, musical, much-repeated cheap cheap. Undisturbed, its call is a weak note similar to the cheeping call of a young chicken.

The plumage pattern, dark above and white below, the black "wrist" mark at the bend of the wings, and the slow, deep wing beats are all identification points that mark the osprey.

The osprey is commonly called fish hawk, and for good reason, for the diet of the species is almost entirely fish. The osprey in photo on opposite page, its call a weak note similar to the cheeping call of a young chicken.

OSPREY

Osprey nests are bulky structures comprised mostly of sticks and twigs, not infrequently combined with such exotica as old shoes, boots, wearing apparel, and the like to which the bird has taken fancy. A variety of sites are chosen. Where available, a lofty cypress or other tree is selected; but along the coasts, low bushes or even ground locations are not unusual. Ospreys nest on high power poles and towers, too.

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FLORIDA WILDLIFE

OCTOBER 1976

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A NARROW, WEED-CHOKED CHANNEL of swamp-stained water threaded its way out of the underbrush.

It widened out a bit at the road crossing, where it dribbled over a bed of white sand. A few yards downstream, the little run ducked into a thicket of maidencane and was lost to sight, meandering off through the woods in the general direction of the distant St. Marys.

To a hook-scarred hopeful who's spent more time with fishing rod in hand than he's going to admit, it should have been no surprise. Way back there in the dim and distant, some insignificant little rills and dribbles had surrendered more than an occasional forked-twig stringer of respectable-size cutthroat trout. But this was maybe three thousand miles and better than a handful of years away.

A "big one" is not always a tackle-straining heavyweight, as any "pike" fisherman will admit.

MAXI-MINI, The REDFIN PICKEREL

By MORRIE NAGGIAR

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moved steadily upward. The mosquitoes came to life while the fish gave indications they were about to retire until evening. No matter, I’d seen enough to get the idea. By the time a few crisp-fried redfins made the scene as the center of interest at a delayed midmorning breakfast, a new kind of Florida fishing was added to my “gotta-do-it” list.

Dick has fished redfins for years. The show-me jaunt he took me on was nothing to get worked up about, he said. In fact, he called it dead slow. “Too much water,” was his diagnosis. When the creek is reduced to a mere trickle connecting the deeper holes, the fish are more concentrated, having been forced out of the swamps and tiny feeder runs. Then is redfin fishing at its peak in the little flatwood drainages. Usually in his bailiwick in the Union-Baker county area, there is an exceptionally good period in the spring or early summer before the summer rains start, then again in the late fall. But the little flatwood drains Dick favors are not the only possibilities for a stringer of grass pike. The species is well distributed throughout the state, but apparently is less common from the vicinity of Okeechobee southward. The redfin reaches its greatest abundance in shallow, weedy lakes and streams. Most anywhere you live in Florida, you’re in striking distance of redfin water.

In addition to the strip bait, other redfin pike fishermen have reported good results with earthworms, small minnows, and a variety of tiny spinners, spoons, bucktail streamers, and other artificial lures or baits in the deeper holes of the state. It’s a far cry from the vicious enthusiasm, a redfin would make a slashing attack on the bait. It was scaled-down big game yet willing to take a small strip of wiggler. Dick hooked one of the strips on his redfin outfit and proclaimed we were now like a small porkrind. Dick hooked one of the strips on his redfin outfit and proclaimed we were now like a small porkrind. Dick hooked one of the strips on his redfin outfit and proclaimed we were now like a small porkrind.

We maneuvered on down the brushy little creek, working the tiny strip bait in likely spots along the edge of the weed beds, water-logged debris, and other cover. Every now and then, in a frenzy of vicious enthusiasm, a redfin would make a slashing attack on the bait. It was scaled-down big game fishing at its best—sort of a mini-game—maxi-fun arrangement.

The sun climbed higher into a cloudless sky, the early morning breeze died down, and the mercury
The American Foxhound

Fox hunting is an American tradition that has been with us since Robert Brooke brought the first pack of foxhounds to America in 1650 along with his family and servants. Whether he was the first American fox hunter is not known, but he was the first recognized owner and breeder. Others brought hounds to America before 1650 but they were used to chase Indians, not fox.

George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and many other historically famous statesmen were avid fox hunters who lost hours of work and sleep to ride to the hounds. War and politics also consumed some of their time; therefore, they did not become as well known for their hunting and breeding of foxhounds as did others.

The first foxhounds to reach America came from England and Ireland. They were large, bulky hounds and had trouble hanging to the elusive American fox. As interest grew in the sport, and hound owners created a strong sense of friendly competition, they bred their hounds carefully, trying to get the best hunting hounds for the type hunting they had in the U.S. Owners were so proud of their packs that many of them gave them the family name. Not only did individual hounds carry the family name, but in some cases the entire bloodline was given the family name, thus the American Foxhound came into being.

Today only four bloodlines are recognized. They are the Walker, named after the Walker Brothers, of Kentucky; the Trigg, after H. C. Trigg, of Kentucky; the Goodman, after W. C. Goodman, of Kentucky; and the July, which was bred by Miles G. Harris, of Georgia, but did not get the family name. Hunters wanted good running hounds but they also wanted a hound that looked good. What looked good to one hunter did not necessarily please another.

Clubs were formed, and in 1894 the National Foxhunting Association adopted a set of standards for foxhounds. They said the perfect foxhound should "be smaller and lighter than the English Foxhound. Dogs—shoulder height between 21 and 22.5 inches. Weight not to exceed 57 pounds. Bitches—20 to 22.5 inches shoulder height, and weight not to exceed 50 pounds.

The head should be of medium size with muzzle in harmonious proportions. The skull should be rounded with a slight peak. "Ears should reach to one inch of the muzzle and should be soft in coat, low set and closely pendant. "Eyes soft, medium sized and varying shades of brown. "The neck must be clear and of good length, slightly arched and without trace of throatiness. "The shoulders must be of sufficient length to give leverage and power, well sloped, muscular, but with clean run and not too broad. "The chest should be deep for lung space. Well spring rib, back ribs should extend well back. "Back and loin should be broad, short and strong, slightly arched. "The hindquarters and lower thighs must be well muscled and very strong. "The elbows should be set straight, neither in or out. "Legs should be straight and placed squarely under the shoulders. "Feet should be round and catlike, not too large, toes well knuckled, close and compact, strong nails, thick pads, tough and indurated (hardened) by use. "Color—Black, white and tan are preferable though the solids and various pies are permissible.

The standard has changed slightly over the years. Hounds are a little taller. Color should not matter; however, most judges still prefer the blanket-back hound. The feet are more foxlike than catlike, and the coat is close and smooth.

There are really three classes of foxhounds today. There is the running hound that does not show, the combination hound that runs well and has the make-up to show, and the strictly show hound.

A hound that runs hard cannot possibly have the fine skin and coat of a pampered show hound, which only leaves the kennel to be in a show. Good combination foxhounds are few and far between. Perhaps we have lost sight of the goals our forefathers set forth for us, but as times have changed, so have foxhunters. One thing we all do have in common, though, is the thrill of hearing a good race and seeing a fine hound stand at show.

Today we feed special diets to achieve desired results, we have highly qualified veterinarians to tend our hounds for injury and diseases, and we have stud hounds and brood bitches to produce any cross we want. Good hounds don't just happen, they come from careful breeding.

An owner or handler can help a good hound through training and grooming. A running hound usually just needs to be run frequently with older hounds to reach its potential. A show hound must be properly trained and properly groomed to catch the judge's eye.

Show hounds are like show people. A good makeup specialist can cover up blemishes and highlight good points. Show hounds are bathed, combed, clipped, trimmed, brushed, and powdered. Their nails are trimmed to make them stand better. Their teeth are brushed and their ears swabbed.

I doubt that George Washington or Robert Brooke did all this to their hounds—but they didn't win many trophies either.

Although not required by the standards book, Kent Lake Shadrack smiles for the camera, with a bit of urging from groom Pam Hester in photo on opposite page. Grooming hound, left, is important part of show preparation. Skillfully done, it can highlight strong points and cover blemishes.

By JIM REED
CONSERVATION SCENE

Dove Hunting Book

CHARLEY DICKEY, a widely published and highly regarded outdoor writer, and a frequent contributor to Florida Wildlife, has put together an excellent guidebook detailing the sport of dove hunting. The title is Charley Dickey's Dove Hunting.

Drawing on his own considerable experience and, by his own admission, also leaning on the experiences of many experts he's hunted with, he's "done it up brown" in this effort. The book covers the whole bit as far as the mourning dove is concerned. Dickey starts off with some facts of life on the bird. He tells you about types of hunting, makes some good points on getting a golden opportunity to get in on hunting with, he's of the sport of

This year marks the first issue of a wild turkey stamp and the issuance of a limited number of art prints for framing (See back cover). A turkey stamp will be added to the series annually.

"Basically, the turkey stamp differs from the duck stamp in that the duck stamp is required by federal law to hunt migratory waterfowl; the wild turkey stamp is a voluntary purchase on the part of the hunter and conservationist," notes Fink, "but in both cases the money collected from the sale of the stamps is used for the benefit of the species involved."

The other difference is that in the case of the wild turkey stamp, the $3.00-per-stamp purchase price is tax deductible.

For additional information about the attractive 6" x 10"-inch art print by Florida wildlife artist Russ Smiley, the first edition of the wild turkey stamp, or the National Wild Turkey Federation, write Tom Rodgers, Executive Vice President, NWTF, P.O. Box 461, Edgefield, S.C. 29824.

Calendar Available

THE 1977 EDITION of the famous Remington Arms Company calendar, a favorite with outdoorsmen for many years, may now be ordered.

As in previous years, the 1977 Remington calendar will include individual pages for each month of the year, each headed by high-quality reproductions of specially commissioned original paintings.

The theme for twelve scenes, painted by well-known wildlife artist Tom Beecham, will be "Pioneers in Conservation." The calendar is dedicated to those conservation pioneers who fought the early and frequently lonely battles to focus attention on the need for practices that would insure the future of our wilderness and wildlife heritage. Many of them devoted their lives to developing proper management of our natural resources. Without their efforts, many of the wildlife species we still enjoy today would be extinct and many wilderness areas would be gone.

Some of those saluted include J. N. "Ding" Darling, John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, Aldo Leopold and other pioneers who foresaw that a system of well-managed checks and balances was needed to protect and conserve our wilderness and wildlife.

There are twelve sketches of the men honored with informative paragraphs about their lives and achievements.

Among the paintings are ones of the grizzly bear, puma, black tail deer, mallard ducks and eight other wildlife species. The calendar measures 14" by 22", has large spaces for making notes and is spiral bound in the middle.

Individual calendars can be ordered by sending check or money order for $2.95 each to Remington Calendar, Calendar Promotions, Inc., Washington, Iowa 52353.

FLORIDA WILDLIFE'S FISHING CITATION

is available without charge to subscribers to FLORIDA WILDLIFE Magazine and their immediate families who catch any of the listed freshwater fish of the prescribed minimum size. A citation for framing will be mailed to the applicant upon receipt of the following application form properly filled out and signed. Only those applications received within 90 days of the date of catch will be honored.

APPLICATION FOR FLORIDA WILDLIFE FISHING CITATION

The Editor, FLORIDA WILDLIFE

Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission, Tallahassee, Fla. 32304

Please send me the Florida Wildlife Fishing Citation with the inscribed data listed below:

Name (please print) ____________________________

Address _________________________________

City __________________ State ____________ Zip No. ____________

Species __________________ Weight _______ Length ______

Type of Tackle _______ Bait or Lure Used ________

Where Caught ____________________________ County __________________

Date Caught ___________ Catch Witnessed by ____________________________

Registered, Weighed By ____________________________ At __________________

Signature of Applicant ____________________________

CUT OUT AND SAVE THIS APPLICATION BLANK

Florida Wildlife's Fishing Citation with the inscribed data listed below:

Name (please print) ____________________________

Address _________________________________

City __________________ State ____________ Zip No. ____________

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Type of Tackle _______ Bait or Lure Used ________

Where Caught ____________________________ County __________________

Date Caught ___________ Catch Witnessed by ____________________________

Registered, Weighed By ____________________________ At __________________

Signature of Applicant ____________________________

CUT OUT AND SAVE THIS APPLICATION BLANK
WILD TURKEY  By Russ Smiley  See "New Turkey Stamp" – Page 40

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