Two of Florida's least common and lesser known birds are the Cape Sable and dusky seaside sparrows. Both confine themselves to specific localities, one at Cape Sable in Everglades National Park, the other at Merritt Island. Each is listed as "Endangered" by both the state and federal governments. The Cape Sable seaside sparrow is told by the greenish tinge on its back, yellow-edged wings and yellow line before the eye. The dusky seaside sparrow is similar but darker and without the greenish tinge. While the habitats of these rare birds are owned and protected by the federal government, occasional hurricanes seriously threaten their populations.
to get away from it all, try...

ROAMING THE CHOCTAWHATCHEE

Cruising northwest Florida’s scenic Choctawhatchee River, above. This 80-mile-long stretch of water is noted for its flyrod fishing for panfish—bream, shellcrackers, stumpknockers.

For outdoorsmen forced to fish and cruise within a stone’s throw of civilization, roaming the Choctawhatchee River in the Florida panhandle is a refreshing experience.

The river with the jawbreaking Indian name originates near Dothan, Ala., and eventually winds a tortuous 80-mile course southward from Geneva across the panhandle. Eventually it empties into Choctawhatchee Bay which extends westward another 30-odd miles to its Gulf exit at East Pass at the famous fishing town of Destin.

Exploring the Choctaw—as the natives call the river—can provide opportunities to sample the little fished waters, and to cruise a primitive stream.

There are no cities and towns along the river banks, although you do see weekend retreats, particularly in the delta waterways where the river joins the bay.

The angling menu is varied, and in the delta you can seek both fresh and saltwater fish. Few who cruise the river can resist the temptation of wetting a line, and if conditions are right, few fail to score.

A Choctaw cruise is startlingly different to boatmen accustomed to rubbing elbows with civilization. Dense thickets come to the water’s edge, sometimes on solid banks, at other times growing from low, swampy shores.

Spanish moss festoons the trees. Bears are known to inhabit the delta swamps, and infrequently are seen along the river banks. The bruins are too smart to show themselves carelessly. Deer, too, inhabit the swamps, but are shy. Other wildlife abounds. Birdlife is plentiful. Osprey nests are common in tall trees, testifying to the fishing potential.

Basically, boating on the Choctawhatchee is flat land cruising, although the river does pass high bluffs 20 miles above its delta, and again near Geneva, across the Florida-Alabama state line.

Normally, the river is clear, but when the rains fall on Alabama, the Choctaw becomes a muddy, yellow ribbon forming a vivid contrast to the greenery on the banks.

Low water, of course, is the prime fishing time, but for boatmen it also can mean problems, particularly the snags at Boynton Cutoff, 20 miles above Ebro, and bad stumps at the turn at Wise’s Bluff. Anytime you’re running any river, caution is advised.

There are few rivers in Florida that offer as wide a fishing menu as does the Choctaw. It not only has the customary largemouth black bass, chain (continued on next page)
ichthyology

The July-September period sees little change in lures. Worms are most effective, black, purple and blue. There are times when you can use deep running plugs.

During the last quarter of the year, there’s little change in baits, except that spinner baits now come back into general use. Depending upon the temperature, top water plugs may or may not be useful. If it’s warm, they produce. If not, it’s necessary to go deeper as the bass seek the deep holes.

Not only do you need to understand the use of lures but you also need to know where to find the fish. Beginning in late April and continuing through April, still waters are the best places to locate the bronzebacks. Try any of the numerous

Jim Canady of Freeport, a tackle salesman by vocation and a dedicated fisherman by avocation, lifts a bass from the Choctawhatchee.

The Choctawhatchee is one of the few rivers in Florida where the saltwater stripers migrate. Tangle with one of these brooders and you’ll be in for a fight. Black Creek, a tributary of the Choctawhatchee, frequently has schools of stripers chasing bait fish in the spring.

Also and pole fishing for mullet is popular. During the summer, you see boat after boat anchored near holes that have been chummed previously. The mullet will bite on dough balls or even bite-sized pieces of white plastic worm. Hook a mullet on a limber cane pole, and you have a real scrap. The west coast mullet, of course, is a tasty dish.

Undoubtedly the strangest fishing is for the giant alligator gar. Fishermen use heavy saltwater tackle and huge chunks of bait to hook these brawlers, which often weigh more than a hundred pounds. There’s a real art to hooking the gars because it takes them so long to swallow a bait. You have to gradually work it back through their long backs until they can swallow. Hooking requires expert timing.

And not to be forgotten are the pan fish. Cane poles still their streams, redbreast, white crappie or speckled perch. It’s good panfish fly rodding country, too.

Of course, whether fisherman or amateur, you can always expect to encounter chain pickerel especially around grassy areas. Encounter a splendiferous spotted on light tackle and you’ve caught a scappy fish. These are a habit of mousing in on bass fishermen, particularly when the anglers are using flashy baits.

Beginning the Choctawhatchee can be a treat for any angler or boatman. It’s a different river, and don’t be surprised if the fishing is surprising.  

Pickeral and panfish, but also saltwater species at certain times such as speckled sea trout and channel bass.

In addition, it affords such unusual angling as canoe poling for mullet and fighting the huge alligator gar, which are only found westward from the Choctawhatchee.

Even the bass fishing can be unusual. Repeated trips of Freeport, a tackle salesman by vocation, but a dedicated angler by avocation, showed me this. Particularly in the nile bass (redfish).

He was heading for some creeks where we’d caught mouth of the Choctawhatchee into the bay.

Specled sea trout only a few months before.

The bay was flooding, and our first problem was the bordering swamps, you’re in trouble fishing.

Swamps for eight-course dinners, and they’re way out of reach of your lures.

Jim had been optimistic when Kit and I met him, and Grady Clark, who was taking a busman’s holiday from his landing on Juniper Lake. But I wasn’t, not with the water conditions we faced.

This was the second day of our trip, and the day before I had been drawn by Grady.

Jim piloted our boat across a shallow bar, and halted in the mouth of a marsh creek entering Buck’s Cove. He was taking a busman’s holiday from his landing on Juniper Lake. But I wasn’t, not with the water conditions we faced.

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Hunting

Ear Protection

old shooters never die, they just can't hear a dangd thing you say!

By CHARLES DICKEY

Every time you shoot a gun without ear protection you lose a little bit of your hearing! Like DDT, it's accumulative. You don't notice the first small doses but a continuation of exposure spells trouble.

The hearing loss from gunfire is sneaky. It starts with the loss of hearing of high frequency sounds. The victim doesn't realize it until he takes a hearing test. If exposure continues, he begins to lose hearing in the normal range he depends on. The loss is usually so gradual the victim may not know about it until his friends tell him. The accumulated damage cannot be repaired. There is no remedy or cure.

While sitting around with a bunch of range shooters, you've probably seen them raising a hand to cup an ear to better hear what was being said. You can tell who shoots a gun from his right shoulder. It's the one who cups his left ear, the one closest to the muzzle blast and turned towards it. The left ear receives more hearing loss than the right ear, but both are damaged.

Skeet, trap and rifle and pistol range shooters not only receive hearing damage from their own guns but those of the other shooters. It can also happen in a duck blind or other hunting situations where two or more gunners shoot close to one another.

Without getting technical, let's take a look at our hearing mechanism. Your ear canal is the opening, the one with hair and wax which help block foreign matter such as dust and insects. It's about 1/5 inch long and leads to the eardrum which picks up sound or noise waves and transmits them further into the ear.

The eardrum is connected to the inner ear by a complicated auditory system. The chain transmits sound to the inner ear, a maze of bone, membrane, tubes and fluid and the vital cochlea. Sound must reach the cochlea.

It has 20,000 to 30,000 fine cilia cells essential to moving the sound to the brain's center of hearing where the message can be decoded. Like parts of any machinery, the cochles can be worn out. Shooting, or any kind of excessive noise, gradually wears them down and there are no replacement parts.

America is a noisy nation. There's no doubt that an entire generation of youngsters have damaged their hearing by listening to rock music played loud enough to crack a brick wall.

Urban and suburban Americans live in a din of excessive noises from trucks, planes, construction equipment, power tools, blasting television and you name it. Some health authorities say that noise is more dangerous and insidious than both air and water pollution. Besides loss of hearing, researchers have found that exposure to noise causes heart damage, increases the level of cholesterol in the blood and raises blood pressure. Other stresses due to noise include changes in the secretion of stomach acid and endocrine hormones and even changes in kidney functioning.

Muzzle blasts are only one thing causing hearing impairment. They can be controlled or curtailed. Sound is measured in decibels. Hearing begins at zero decibel or just above. Ordinary speech is about 40-50 decibels. Most scales run to about 140, a level that causes pain and permanent ear damage. Continuous exposure to anything more than 90 decibels can cause permanent hearing loss.

The crack of a centerfire rifle may register 180 decibels. A shotgun hits about 165 and a pistol around 120, depending on loads. Also, it makes a difference whether a gun is fired from an enclosure or in the open.

If excessive noise helps the hearing mechanism recover, if you've ever had your ears rung by getting the full muzzle blast of someone firing too near your head, you know a rest is needed. I've had an ear ring last two days. I've also changed friends.

Various governmental agencies got interested in excessive noise in the early Seventies. In 1972 the Noise Control Act was passed and the Environmental Protection Agency was charged with setting and enforcing noise levels for new transportation, construction, electrical and other machinery. Many industries now require that their workers wear ear protection under conditions of excessive or prolonged noise. With the hunter and shooter it's voluntary.

There are a number of ear protectors on the market. Most are inexpensive, probably costing less than one trip to an ear doctor. Cotton does little or no good. I've seen pistol and rifle shooters on the range insert 38 or .45 hulls into their ears. They're better than no protection.

My own choice of ear protection is valves. They are small and easy to carry in a little plastic case. They allow you to hear normal conversation but filter out the dangerous high decibel noises. They are made of silicone rubber and are comfortable.

I wear Sonic II Hearing Protectors made by Norton Safety Products of North Hollywood, California. They're available in most gun shops. Norton has compiled an impressive series of test results showing their Sonic II protection is as good as any device on the market.

I wear the valves for any sort of range shooting such as skeet or sighting in a rifle. A few times, I've worn them in duck blinds, sometimes wearing one only in the ear facing the other gunner.

For awhile, I thought of wearing them when my son turned on his rock amplifying system. But it was impractical because I couldn't get the whole neighborhood to wear valves. We compromised on the problem and he takes his system to an abandoned building when he must blast rock.

Ear muffs are made by at least seven different companies and the sets have been improved for comfort. The muffs simply surround the ear and block out seconds. They allow you to hear range commands but sometimes it's muffled or distorted. Headbands have been improved so as not to tilt or interfere with wearing glasses.

Because ear canals come in different sizes, plugs or inserts are made in a choice of sizes so they fit snugly to do the job. For instance, Hear Guard Ear Inserts are sold in small, medium and large sizes.

A couple of companies sell plastic molded custom-fitted protectors. A plastic, or silicone putty, is shaped like your outer ear and ear canal. Loud noises can't get through but you can hear normal conversations. The companies will send you the molding material and you do your own casting. Their protectors are more expensive than the muffs or valves.

Looking back on some of my range shooting, courtesy of Uncle Sam during World War II and the Korean fracas, I cannot recall that the students or instructors or anyone wore ear protection. Perhaps it would have appeared unmanly. I remember vividly that no one was supposed to flinch, no matter how many rounds he put through a machine gun.

Only in recent years have I noticed many gunners on trap and skeet fields using hearing protection.

Ear muffs, left, are popular ear protection on the shooting range, but Charles Dickey prefers valves (above) which protect ears yet allow the wearer to hear conversation.

(continued on next page)
People can tell I'm a right-handed shooter. In a noisy crowd, I'm always cupping my left ear to try and hear better.

During the deer season, I wish that I was eight feet tall. I'm sure the extra two feet of altitude would give me better visibility and I'd get more shots.

It's not hard to get close to deer in Florida. The problem is to see them! Just about any place you can get close to a deer, there is likely to be a buck. If you can get five feet above the ground cover or understory, your visibility is increased several times. To get this advantage, many bowhunters are going to tree stands. So are the hunters who use rifles and shotguns.

A permanent tree stand is sometimes preferred because it can be built large and comfortable. Bob (Gerald R.) Hunter, who frequently writes for Florida Wildlife, made one six feet by four feet last season. His wife, Gerry, likes to hunt deer and the Hunter, who frequently writes for Florida Wildlife, made one six feel by four feet last season. (continued from preceding page)

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Florida's major hunting seasons ended in March, so a while has rusted away since you leaned the old smokepole in the corner. While the main drift of this publication is not aimed at the shooter, it is the time of year when every gun owner owes it to himself and herself to protect a valuable property.

I, as an expert gunsmith formally certified by all the major arms companies, make appraisals of firearms for banks and attorneys; you wouldn't believe what poor care some very wealthy people take of their guns. If someone cared for his guns properly they would never wear out, seldom have a breakdown, and be worth far more when it comes time to bequeath. The first thing to do this month is to take a close look at your shotguns.

If your armament consists of just one modern-day-wonder that falls apart by punching two knockout pins, you probably can do your gun maintenance without special helps. But if you have any fine guns, or any guns held together with screws, you'll have a lifelong need for a solid vise with both wooden and padded jaw inserts, and a set of good screwdrivers with their bits ground to exactly fit each screwhead. Without these you cannot dismantle and reassemble a fine gun without marring it, nor get adequate pressure to scrub out a rough bore. Begin with a look at the gun's exterior.

If there is rust, wipe off all metal to remove oils. If the rust is minor, wet a piece of very fine steel wool with bore solvent (never with rust remover, 'Steel Fur,' a product of Herter's, Inc. (Your dealer will have most of the products mentioned; if he doesn't, addresses of the manufacturers are listed at end of this article). Coarse steel wool may leave scratch marks. If major rust has developed, expect some pitting; you are going to end up with visible pits in the surface metal unless you polish them out entirely.

If you have the equipment, brush off all the deep rust you can with a rotary wire scratch wheel having coarse or medium bristles. Fine wire wheels only burnish the rust. If the wheel is properly broken in, by having been rotated always in the same direction, you can remove a lot of heavy rust with practically no damage to the bluing; a new wheel will leave scratch marks. If the wheel doesn't remove all the rust, next step is to use a fine-cut file, carefully. If the file doesn't get it all, you'll just have to use a power driven grit-impregnated hard cloth wheel to cut down to the bottom. You'll have to judge whether you can remove all the pits without dangerously weakening the barrel. At any rate, you'll show a lot of bare metal at this stage which will require refinishing. If the rust has developed because the gun has been used around seawater, you should proceed no further without thoroughly washing the gun in fresh water, or the salt will continue to eat up not only your gun but also everything the gun touches.

If you want to do your own cold rebluing, polish the metal as smoothly as you want the finished product to look. For at least the final polishing, insert wooden plugs in the barrel or action so you won't get your sticky hands on the bare metal. After the final polishing don't put anything on the metal except the bluing chemical. For such bluing I recommend G-66, Perma Restor-It, Ospho-Blue or Formula 44. None of these need a neutralizer after bluing, and they require only a single application.

After applying the blue, flush off with a clean water, and then oil or apply WD-40, XEP Super Lube or anything that will prevent new rust.

Instead of using a cold blue you may prefer to have the entire gun rebued commercially. However, if you want a blue-black finish that is rust-proof, I recommend Dupont Teflon-S or black chrome. Prices for good work for these processes is under $50.

Your most likely trouble spot right now will be the shotgun chamber. When paraffined paper shells were in use, the hot paraffin protected the chamber fairly well; with the newer plastic shells there is no such protection. When guns are used around salt water, or early in the season when the salt sweat from your hands is transferred to the shells you...
handle and thence to the bare chamber walls, this salt causes heavy rust even if you oiled the chamber before. I have had guns brought to my shop with the chambers so badly rusted that you could not insert a shell of the proper gauge. One such gun, a Remington in a sheath of semi-melted plastic which also causes heavy buildup even if no rust is present. These deposits contain several kinds of non-ferrous rust. If the situation has gone too far out of hand, you may remove the rust and buildup by using an Outers Laboratories stiff wire brush attachment on your cleaning rod, saturated with Outers, Hoppes’s No. 9, or surplus government bore cleaner, plus a lot of elbow grease. The government juice is excellent and you can find it in war surplus stores at ridiculously low prices. The job can be speeded by using a tightly fitting wire scratch brush on just the tip section of your cleaning rod, turned at moderate speed with an electric hand drill or drillpress. Another procedure which often works is to split a piece of rod for about an inch with a hack saw, insert a piece of coarse emery cloth about 1 x 4 inches in size, wet with cutting oil, and turn this in the chamber at high speed (kit is available from Mittendorf). Should none of these remedies suffice, you have waited too long and will have to send your barrel to a gunshop which has a barrel machine. Be sure your gunsmith knows better than to let friction overheat the chamber or it will draw the temper, and make the ribs of a double fall off. Now open the action of your shotgun and see how dirty things look. It is NOT necessary to take a shotgun apart every year for a detailed cleaning. Elapsed time is of little consequence, but the amount of firing is a semi-automatice or pump shotgun or rifle should be field stripped and cleaned about every 500 rounds, but a good double should not be completely torn down unless it malfunctions or you suspect trouble. The locks of side lock doubles (L. C. Smith, etc.) should be removed for servicing about every five years.

A complete stripdown of semiautomatics and pumps is not necessary unless the gun has been submerged or has gotten infiltrated with caustic substances (loose fertilizer in pickup trucks, or being urinated on by hounds). They may, unless so exposed, be cleaned adequately by merely removing the barrel and magazine assembly, pulling the triggerguard assembly, and detach­
ing the stock. You’ll need a pan large enough to hold the triggerguard; soak the assembly in the pan while you’re working on the rest of the gun. You can use a petroleum-soak like mineral spirits or a waterbase like 409 or any strong household detergent. An old dental probe or large needle will loosen the smallbottlebrush and smallbottlebrush will finish the job. A thorough sloshing in hot water winds up the process.

The water should be so hot it evaporates and leaves the parts dry and ready to be lubricated. If the bore doesn’t wipe clean with a solvent-wet patch, use a liberal amount on a stiff bronze wire brush that is the size of the bore or larger. Don’t use steel brushes because they’ll score the metal, nor metallic ones because they won’t do any good. And don’t reverse direction of the bronze brush inside the bore; push it all the way through, then draw it back. I’ll not unduly lengthen this article by including basic cleaning instructions which accompany every cleaning kit you buy.

Routine cleaning of double barrel guns and dril­

lungs should be limited to removing (fore-end) and barrels from the frame. Remove all burned powder buildup and all bits of paper, flattened wood seeds etc. which would prevent proper breeching, lockup of the action, or function of automatic ejectors. After cleaning, squat a piece of best of WD-40 or XEP through each firing pin hole and into the ejector mechanism. The remainder of the gun should receive light lubrication of all visible moving parts (SAE 10 motor oil will do), and heavy lubrication of hardworking surfaces such as the hinge, cocking cam, locking bolts and lugs, guide rails and timing cams. The heavy lube should be Never-Seez but cup grease or even Vaseline will do. Too-heavy oils may cause misfires in cold weather.

Rifles and handguns should not be disassembled any more often nor to any greater extent than necessary; and don’t run a cleaning rod through the bore any more than you have to. As many guns are made for the quick-detachable type intended for such.

Leaking of the bore isn’t usually a problem for shotgunners but can be for rifles and handguns which use soft lead projectiles. The only satisfactory mechanical device I’ve found for restoring leaded bores is the Lewis Lead Remover. Stubborn de­

posits may require you to buy a minimum size bot­

tle of mercury; plug one end of the bore, pour in the mercury, plug the other end and smash the barrel until you are exhausted. The lead amalgamates with the mercury as a liquid and can be poured out.

Guns these days come with many different stock finishes, but they can be divided simply into plastic and natural finishes. The plastic finishes should be washed clean, just as you’d wash your face, and then tightly waxed and polished; a neutral color Kiwi boat polish as fine. Automobile waxes sometimes turn a ghastly white on gunstocks. If the natural finish is wax, wipe the surface with a damp cloth, dry it, and wax with neutral or brown Kiwi, polishing as you would a shoe. If the finish is oil, wipe clean and apply Fermy’s tung oil, or any good brand of gun oil, rubbing it in well with palm and fingers.

Dents and minor nicks can be removed or minimized by applying a wet cloth and ironing with a household clothes iron which will swell the fibers of wood to fill the cavity. Be cautious with heat on plastic finishes.

Mold and mildew on gunstocks, holsters and the woodwork can be minimized by spraying with household Lysol. Never spray aerosol like WD-40 on loaded guns. The aerosol penetrates the ammunition, usually around the primers, causing misfires, hangfires, and possible burst barrels in automatics.

Guns are stored best either horizontally or muzz­

dle down so lubricants don’t ooze down into the stock and rot it. They should rest on nothing porous, in air-conditioned rooms or where the humidity is low. Residual curing salts in deerfoot gun racks are likely to eat holes in gun barrels, as are racks with felt padding. Any rack padding should be vinyl or plastics. Guns fitted with recoil pads should never rest on the pads, or the pads eventually will collapse.

In our hot, humid summer weather, the old smooth-poke’s beauty, utility and value are seriously threatened, unless you take steps to protect it. A thorough cleaning, and periodic checks during the off season, make good sense where tattooed firearms are concerned.
No Surprise To The Fisherman

Are fish easier to catch in Lake Jackson or Lake Okeechobee or the Everglades? Can I catch more fish on plastic worms or surface lures? These are questions I'm sure every Florida bass fisherman has asked himself.

As fish easier to catch in Lake Jackson or Lake Okeechobee? Which Bass are easier to catch in Lake Jackson or Lake Okeechobee?

During the course of the study, a total of 77 different lures were used. Time did not allow each individual lure to be fished enough to rank them individually so we grouped the lures into three categories: surface lures, subsurface lures or crank baits and bottom lures. Some lures might fit more than one category depending on how they were fished. For instance, many lures float but dive on retrieve. With these, we restricted the fisherman to one method of retrieve during each fishing period and then categorized the lure accordingly.

Throughout the study we recorded the number of strikes, the number of fish hooked and lost and the number of fish actually landed. From the numbers refer to the number of strikes per hour of fishing.

Table 2. Effectiveness of different types of lures in hatchery ponds during the different seasons. The numbers refer to the number of strikes per hour of fishing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Lure</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Spring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surface</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsurface</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fishermen seemed to be much less effective during the fall on the lakes than on the ponds. This is probably due to the fact that the bass are hard to locate on the lakes in the fall and in the ponds we knew where the bass were. The other difference between the ponds and the lakes that the bottom lures were not more effective during the winter on the lakes. The other obvious fact that shows up is that surface lures are the most effective type of lure in the spring.

Another fact emerged during the study. The number of fish landed for an equal number of strikes was exactly the same for surface lures and for the bottom lures, but the percentage of fish landed on subsurface crank baits was much higher. In other words, you are much more likely to land a fish which hits a crank bait reeled in under the surface. This is probably due to the usual speed of retrieve and the number of hooks on most of these lures.

To sum up, the important facts which were revealed are as follows:

1. Bass are about as easy to catch in one lake as another.
2. Some individual fish are easier to catch than others.
3. Bottom lures are the most effective in winter and surface lures in the spring.
4. You will land a higher percentage of your strikes on subsurface crank baits than on any other types of lures.
5. Bass are harder to locate during the fall. None of the above facts will be much of a surprise to the dedicated bass fisherman, but isn't it nice to know that all those things you have been saying about bass fishing and lures are now based on scientific fact.

By Steve Smith and Joe Crumpton
All spring we've heard the whistle of bobwhite quail. It will be with us into the fall, as much a part of summer as blackberries, mockingbirds and chigger bites. Some hardly notice, while others of us have listened for it since childhood, remembering it as the first bird call we learned to recognize. Without it, we would be immeasurably poorer.

In the early spring, bobwhites leave their winter coveys and begin to pair up. Although they are normally gregarious, they seek privacy once paired. During this time, the male vigorously defends the female whenever other males venture too close.

The pair selects a nest site, often near a clearing, a firelane or a road. The nest is almost always built on the ground, typically in a tuft of dead grass left over from the previous summer.

Both the male and female construct the nest. First, a shallow depression is scratched out, then filled with twigs, grass stems and pine needles. Finally, an arched top of pine needles and grass is built which almost completely conceals the female once she is on the nest.

Within one or two days after the nest is built, the female begins laying. Almost daily, she visits the nest long enough to lay one egg, then she re-joins the male. Only after the clutch is complete, usually 12 to 16 eggs, does incubation begin.

The task of incubation belongs to the female, but if she dies, the male often takes over, incubating the clutch and raising the chicks. If the nest is broken up but the pair survive, they will repeatedly re-nest until successful.

Once incubation begins, the temperature inside the eggs rises and embryonic development of all eggs begins simultaneously. The eggs hatch after 23 days, all within a short period of time.

As soon as the last-hatched chick is dry, the hen leads the brood from the nest to begin feeding on small insects and seeds. By the time the chicks leave the nest, they are already very active. Like tiny bits of buff and brown fluff, they scurry about the adults looking for food. When danger nears, they instinctively sit tight, their coloration providing near-perfect camouflage. Meanwhile, the hen pretends injury long enough to lure predators away from the hidden young.

By autumn, the young birds will be as large as their parents and capable of the strong, explosive flight that makes them the favorite of most bird hunters. Grouping into coveys of as many as 30 birds, they'll spend the winter together, roosting in a circle to survive the cold.

Most won't make it through the winter, but the heavy losses have a purpose, too. Highly productive, short-lived animals such as quail naturally sustain heavy mortality. Otherwise, they would become too numerous for available food and shelter.

Only one out of five of this summer's bobwhites will survive the winter, but that will be enough. By March, the pinelands will echo their whistle again, announcing the coming of another summer.

—Michael Miller
For the wildlife buff . . . .

MERRITT ISLAND

Playalinda Beach, above, is part of the refuge and is representative of the adjacent 25-mile long national seashore. White ibis, right, and other wading birds can be seen feeding in the freshwater marsh.

Roseate spoonbills, left, are just one of the beautiful wading bird species found at the refuge. White pelicans, below, are winter refuge regulars. Stand of sabal palms, below left, is typical of one of the coastal plant communities that is found on the refuge.

The Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, sprawling along Florida's mid-east coast, is for the birds—the native brown pelicans, the migrant white pelicans, the bald eagle, and for myriad ducks, coots, herons, ibises and egrets. The rare dusky seaside sparrow, too.

It is also a refuge for alligators, manatees, otters, raccoons, bobcats, skunks, and snakes. White-tailed deer and wild hogs also roam the 134,000-acre preserve.

Along the 25 miles of unspoiled Canaveral National Seashore—for all practical purposes the Seashore is a part of the island refuge area—sea turtles make good use of the shore. In late spring and summer, the big sea turtles—the loggerheads, greens, and Atlantic ridleys—come crawling out of the moonlight-splashed breakers to lay their eggs near the dunes. Gulls and terns forage along the beach and shore birds skitter over the sand.

But all this vast and sun-sparked wilderness also is for the important, and perhaps most endangered, species, Homo sapiens. For those who value nature's Florida, the Merritt Island refuge can pro-

by Mike Smith

(continued on next page)
vaid an exciting experience. Fortunately, the usu-
ally heavy hand of man has left relatively few scars
on the area. The refuge is easy to reach. Simply turn
east in downtown Titusville on Road 402, cross the
Indian River and there you are. Or you can enter the re-

(continued from preceding page)

scape, fishing, boating, surfing, picnicking, bird-
watching, photography—the area provides rare op-
portunity for all this and more. There is rich fishing
in the salty lagoons and in the surf. In winter, duck
hunting is a popular activity for some. To hunt, you
need a special permit. For information write to Ref-
uge Manager, Merritt Island Wildlife Refuge, P.O.
Box 6054, Titusville, Florida 32780.

For the wildlife buff, or the people who want to
gain access to the area, there are numerous roads and
trails to explore, some on foot, some by car. There is
one well-marked wildlife drive, Black Point. Not all
the roads are paved, but those that are open are
passable. True, you may have to back up or sidle
along the edge of a road to let another motorist
pass, but the refuge provides an “on your own” ex-
perience unequalled in Florida.

The refuge is an enlarged and remarkably di-
verse area. Not all of it is readily explorable. It in-
cludes about 134,000 acres of salt lagoons, marsh,
and palm flatlands, salt flats, hammocks, fresh and
salt water impoundments, and even 2,500 acres
of citrus groves.

It is hemmed away from the rolling blue Atlantic
by a barrier strip of palmetto land edged by sand
dunes. A fine road runs along the beach (well-
named Playalinda) and wooden walkways make the
beach easily accessible from ample parking spaces.

The beach draws about 750,000 visitors a year.
The major part of the area is administered by
NASA, although it is protected by the U.S. Fish
and Wildlife Service and the National Park Ser-
vice. As activity at the shuttle runway, just south
of the refuge, steps up, it is expected that emphasis
on wildlife protection may shift to the northern
part of the Seashore but today the part of the Sea-
shore that is easiest to explore lies just north of
Road 402.

Even before the visitor reaches the refuge area,
he can begin to spot wildlife. Binoculars and insect
repellent are essentials for nature-lookers. As one
crosses the bridge from Titusville, he may see a
flock of white pelicans drifting on the tide. These
birds are mainly winter visitors, although a few are
here year around. Mainly they keep to protected
salty waters.

The first-time visitor should stop at the refuge
headquarters and the seashore office on 402 and
pick up booklets which contain information and
maps. It is easy to get lost on the island, but impos-
tible to stay lost for long if you keep going on any
good road.

The most clearly charted part of the refuge is the
Black Point Drive which can be entered from Road
406. This is a six mile drive.

The Black Point route leads through a variety of
terrain—uplands, marshes, salt flats, lagoons. You
will see sabal palms, oaks, cedars, pines, sweet
oak, and various hardwoods. You may spot al-

gator, and flocks of ibises and egrets, and even

mosquitoes. The white pelicans have made them-

selves at home on the salty lagoons and many mi-

gratory birds can be spotted. Members of the Indian
River Audubon Society have observed more than

250 species here.

If you are in the right place at the right time, you
may observe the Canada goose, the blue goose, the
blue-winged teal, the ring-necked duck, the bald
eagle, the peregrine falcon, the plumed wood-
pecker, the ruby-throated hummingbird—the list of
birds is almost endless. Even a small population of
the rare dusky seaside sparrows may be spotted in
the cordgrass marsh.

As you drive the Black Point trail, you will ob-
serve numerous impoundments, developed for the
purpose of mosquito control. The impounded water
is kept at a level which maintains food for water-

fowl while hindering the breeding of salt marsh
mosquitoes.

The entire Merritt Island and Canaveral Sea-
shore region is rich in history. It was inhabited by
Indians who left huge shell mounds before Ponce de
Leon discovered Florida in 1513. Canaveral is mar-
ked on the early maps of Florida. The island was
known to early Spanish explorers and British
colonists. The Dummitt Grove, included in the re-

}fuge, is one of the first orange groves planted in
Florida. It was planted by Captain Douglas Dum-
mitt about 1830. (Dummitt was a leader of the
“Mosquito Roasters” who helped protect the Indian
River during the Seminole Wars.)

Audubon visited Merritt Island, noting its wealth
of bird life. In 1950, a real estate developer began
selling island lots, but in 1953, as the space age
dawned, NASA began gathering up the pieces of
individual property and merging it into one unit.
The Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, on
NASA property, was established in 1963 to protec-
t an area for wintering migratory waterfowl.
The Canaveral National Seashore was created by
Congress in 1975 out of the northern part of NASA’s
John F. Kennedy Space Center and Florida’s Apollo
State Park. This preserved some 25 miles of clean
golden beach and about 67,000 acres of salt
lagoons, red mangrove stands, hammocks, and
palmetto land.

Plans now are under way for the building of an
interpretive wildlife center with educational pro-
grams. But the refuge remains largely a “do-it-
yourself” wilderness experience.

And that is what makes it unique and interest-

FLORIDA WILDLIFE    JULY-AUGUST 1977
A colorful marshland resident is the...

**RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD**

Over the weather-tattered remnants of last season's marsh growth, the liquid "oak-a-lee" call of the red-winged blackbird floats through the air. Stopping for a moment, the listener can spot the glossy black body of this familiar bird whose scarlet-epauletted shoulders make him easy to identify, even for the novice watcher. Nearby hides the smaller female who shares not the conspicuousness of her mate, resembling instead a dark, heavily streaked sparrow. It's nesting time in the marsh and other red-wings can be spotted near compact nests of grass, jealously guarding their clutches. Woe to those who venture too close for the sweet song can turn sour fast for those coming near the eggs.

Bluish-tinged, the red-winged blackbird's eggs are blotched with black and purple as though a child had been let loose to scribble with an ink pen. The red-wing's home will be here, near the water, until fall when hundreds will gather in flocks to pass the winter months elsewhere. But come spring, they'll be back again to enliven the cattail marshes. —Trisha Spillan

*Photos by James C. Greene*
 sometime during May, moist air blowing off the
Atlantic begins to heat and rise as it passes
over the sunbaked Florida mainland. Like corn
popping in slow motion, puffy white cumulus clouds
expand into towering bruise-colored cumulonimbus
with tops rising thousands of feet over the Ever-
glacis.

The sun darkens, then obscures as lightning
flickers on the horizon. Thunder grumbles from
afar. A gust of cool air brings the scent of rain.
As the storm nears, the wind rises, gusts rippling
and flattening the sawgrass and breaking like surf
against the tree islands dotting the savannah. As
the wind tears at the branches, the silver
undersides of sweet bay and tetrazygia reflect the
remaining afternoon light in stark contrast against the
dark hammock.

Raindrops; singular and fat, sporadic, then
quickening into a steady downpour. The wind subsides
into occasional gusts, sweeping the rain in long
grey curtains.

After months of drought, the rains have begun.

Solution holes in the pinnacle rock fill and a thin
sheet of water again covers the marl prairies.

In this table-flat land, a few inches up or down
dictate whether any given locality is seasonally in-
undated or flooded only rarely. Most elevated areas
lying west of the rocky coastal ridge in Dade
County are islands of vegetation perched on masses of
eroded "pinnacle rock."

The pinnacle rock, a soft limestone, is continually
being dissolved by organic acids set free by
decaying sawgrass and other vegetation. The rock erodes
unevenly, leaving an extremely irregular surface of
holes, scallops, ledges and pinnacles.

In the erosion process, relatively large areas of
higher elevation occasionally remain, allowing
roothold for colonizing trees and shrubs which can-
not tolerate prolonged flooding. Most of the invading
plant species are tropical in origin, brought to
Florida by hurricane tides and in the droppings of
birds.

Lying only a few miles north of the Tropic of
Cancer, the climate of the Keys and the extreme
conditions of the lower marl prairies, in low
hammocks, it would be a surprise to find them
growing naturally in a high hammock along the
coastal ridge.

Another distinction between the two hammock
types is their relationship to ground water. To sur-
vive in south Florida, tropical vegetation must be
able to protect itself not only against cold weather
but also against fire and too much or too little
water.

In the low hammock region of marl prairies and
sawgrass savannahs, hammocks are found in elev-
ated areas above normal high water. Over the

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West Indian Hammocks . . . . .

FLORIDA'S TROPICAL JUNGLES

S

By Michael Miller
(continued from preceding page)

years, the hammock builds on its foundation by dropping leaves and branches which decompose into rich peat. Slowly, the hammock floor rises and expands outward, enabling the hammock to increase in size.

During drought, the low hammock maintains a unique defense against the frequent fires which sweep the sawgrass. The marl prairie on which it lies is made up of approximately 80 percent calcium carbonate. By the same process which forms the pinnacle rock, the marl is dissolved by organic acids.

As the hammock builds its peat floor, organic acids leach from the peat onto the adjacent marl. With prolonged contact, the marl dissolves, perpetuating a moist line of defense against fire.

High hammocks are located in the pinelands along Dade County's coastal ridge and in the Pinecrest region of the Everglades National Park. These hammocks are characterized by deep solution holes in the underlying limestone. Often several yards in width, the holes create small, semipermanent ponds in the center of the hammock.

Here, the hammock is apt to be its loveliest. The sheer walls of the solution holes, tunneled and fissured by erosion, are lined with ferns and lichens requiring the bare limestone for attachment and growth. In some places, tiny waterfalls trickle down the face of the limestone, adding to the tropical mood of the surroundings.

Ground moisture only is as water vapor, through evaporation and transpiration of the lower plants, yet much of it is retained by the canopy of the overstory plants. At times, the canopy actually drips even though there has been no rainfall. Retention of the warm, moist air makes it unlikely that either fire or frost will enter the hammock.

Although frost comes infrequently to south Florida, it is nevertheless a condition to be dealt with. In the dense jungle canopy of the hammock, a natural greenhouse is formed, retaining heat and moisture long enough to weather the cold snap. The dome-like hammock actually creates its own micro-climate, ideal for the growth of orchids, bromeliads, peperomias, ferns, palms and dozens of tropical hardwood tree species.

Wildlife, too, finds the hammocks well suited to its needs. Birds in abundance are attracted to fruit-bearing shrubs and trees and the insect life of the hammock. To the Everglades deer herd, the low hammocks are high land during wet years; a place to bear fawns and find food.

A number of the few remaining Florida panthers also range through the area, leaving scratch marks high in the trees and the bones of their kills on the hammock floor. The deep hammock is a favorite place for the panther to find deer and raccoon and a final sanctuary from man.

But one of the most spectacular forms of wildlife in the hammock is also one of the smallest. By searching high in the wild tamarind and poisonwood trees, a keen-eyed visitor will sometimes see the jewels of the hammock, Florida tree snails. Finely textured and delicately striped in yellow, green, blue and brown, the snails could pass for pieces of the best hand-painted porcelain.

The elevated terrain, the rich soil, the wildlife and even the beauty of the hammocks have long attracted Floridians, both red and white.

Hunting parties of Indians used the hammocks for temporary camps. When the Spaniards came, they made use of the tropical hardwoods; the mahogany for shipbuilding and lignum vitae for medicinal purposes. The later whites who settled the area often chose the hammocks for homesteads or cleared them for gardens.

Today, many of the hammock names read like a Who's Who of the early settling families. Matheson, Brickell, Nixon—Lewis, Castellow, Hattie Bauer; the old names remain.

But as the hammocks bear the marks of history, they are not without the scars of progress. Many survive drought, fire, high water, frost and hurricanes, only to disappear under the axe, plow and bulldozer.

Becoming increasingly a premium in south Florida, the surface water which once watered the Everglades and protected the hammocks from fire is now being diverted to the cities or out of state. As the water table drops, the dry season fires which were once only a minor difficulty in the hammocks ecological system have now become catastrophic.

Drying in the prolonged drought, the peat foundation of the hammock ignites and smolders as it is touched by sawgrass fires. Within days or weeks the organic deposit of hundreds of years is burned away. Roots exposed and support gone, the grape trees topple, leaving wreckage in place of the functioning biological mosaic that was a beautiful jungle.

In the Keys and the high hammocks outside the Everglades National Park, the threats are less subtle. Here, the hammocks are simply pushed aside to make way for land development.

Fortunately, some private interests as well as the governments of Dade and Monroe Counties and the State of Florida have taken an interest in preserving some of the hammockland.

Commercial enterprises such as Monkey Jungle and Parrot Jungle are located in coastal ridge hammocks, making use of the tropical vegetation. However, the best example of how the hammock can be utilized rather than exploited is Orchid Jungle in Dade County. Adjacent to Hattie Bauer Hammock, the Fennell family grows orchids, exhibiting them in the natural backdorp of the hammock.

Castellow Hammock, also of the coastal ridge, has been acquired by Dade County and serves as an outdoor classroom. Although nature trails have been cut through the hammock, it remains almost entirely intact.

Monroe County has gone even a step further. Under the direction of the Florida Department of Administration, the county has adopted guidelines for the protection and utilization of tropical vegetation by Keys developers. A county ordinance now requires a permit prior to the disturbance of hammock vegetation.

This interest on the part of elected officials and the business community is a hopeful sign. It's an indication that we are beginning to appreciate the value and significance of tropical ecosystems in subtropical America.  

Photo by Michael Miller

Everglades fires (facing page) increasingly threaten hammocks and other plant communities. At the water table drops in south Florida, hammocks become more vulnerable to effects of fire. Some showy hammock plants and animals (clockwise from top left): cardinal air-pipe, a bromeliad closely related to pineapple and Spanish moss, a native orchid; Florida tree snails (Liguus fasciatus); Florida tetrazygia in bloom.

Photo by William Green

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In central Florida, nothing signals the onset of autumn or the coming of spring like the seasonal migration of greater sandhill cranes.

Near the end of October, a cold front brings the first migratory cranes of the season and, as temperatures drop, more cranes arrive throughout November and into December.

All winter, their loud bugling is familiar to those who live in crane country. At first light, a great clamor advertises departure of the birds from roost to feeding grounds. In the evening, the ringing calls mark the return trip.

And on a warm morning in early March, with a southerly breeze for a tail wind, the cycle turns again. As the sap is beginning to rise in the north woods of their summer home, the cranes are overcome by the urge to return.

Calling excitedly, a flock springs into the air, climbing with strong wingbeats until an updraft is located. Circling on the thermal, gaining altitude with each upwind turn, the birds climb to an altitude of perhaps 1,500 feet before beginning their northward journey.

At this point or soon after, the cranes are faced with the decision to continue or to wait for better conditions. Something is perceived by them which, as yet, is beyond our understanding. If conditions aren't to their liking, they return after a false start. But if a voice heard only by the cranes says "go," they're off. Their feet might not touch earth again until they're in Michigan.

Not all cranes in Florida are migrants from the north. Some are Florida cranes, a non-migratory subspecies of sandhill crane found scattered throughout the peninsula south of Gainesville. They are also occasionally found in Madison County, in Georgia's Okefenokee Swamp and have been reported near Sumatra in Liberty County.

To the casual observer, Florida cranes and greater sandhill cranes are identical. Greater sandhill cranes, however, tend to gather in large flocks and their feathers are apt to be mineral-stained a reddish brown. Florida cranes are most often found in family units of two and threes and their feathers are stained a darker grey.

Standing about four feet tall, with red crown and ostrich-like tail plumes, cranes are unlikely to be wariness, intelligence and imposing size set cranes apart

(continued on next page)
confused with any Florida bird except possibly the great blue heron. Even the resemblance to herons hardly extends beyond size and, to a degree, color. Great blue herons are inherently loners while cranes are gregarious and are seldom found singly. They are usually in either large groups or family units. A crane flies with outstretched neck, and wingbeats which are slow on the downstroke with a fast, jerky upstroke, as if the joints need oiling. A heron flies with S-curved neck and slow, even wingbeats.

Cranes apparently mate for life. In the spring, a pair of Florida cranes stakes out nesting territory, usually in a freshwater marsh. The nest is constructed of piled vegetation often in shallow open water. Two eggs are laid and both birds guard the nest and take turns incubating the eggs. If both eggs hatch, one colt (as the young are called) is usually lost within a few days. The remaining youngster grows quickly and is soon hard to tell from his parents. The best clue is the crown. It is less developed in the young than in adult birds.

Cranes are devoted parents, keeping their young nearby throughout the first year. The next breeding season, however, brings a rude awakening for the colt. He suddenly finds himself persona non grata and is driven away by the adults.

The urge to be with others of his kind soon leads the young crane to join a flock of immature birds and other nonbreeders. The young birds stay with the nonbreeding flock until they take a mate of their own.

For more than 10 years, the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission has conducted research on sandhill cranes in Florida. The work has included the migratory greater sandhill crane as well as the stay-at-home Florida crane.

Although cranes are not game species in Florida, the Commission recognizes them as a valuable wildlife resource. As crane habitat is steadily lost in Florida, wildlife biologists have become concerned for the continued existence of sandhill cranes in the eastern United States.

The results of the research team's work are published in professional wildlife management journals and presented at international symposia seeking better ways to protect and enhance crane populations. The work not only benefits sandhill cranes in Florida, much of it is applicable to those in other states and even to the extremely rare whooping crane. 

Released unharmed, the captured crane makes speedy departure. Leg bands and harmless wing markers, easily seen at a distance, enable research team to learn more about crane movements.
It's hard to believe that just a few short months ago we were riding out the coldest winter in memory. Now, with the summer doldrums, Dog Days and 90-in-the-shade weather upon us, the recollection of January's frost doesn't seem quite so bad.

To many, the best way to beat the heat is to stay indoors, usually about halfway between the MAX. COOL button and the fridge. To others, though, summer heat is something to be enjoyed rather than endured, preferably outdoors and on the water.

For those who plan to spend part of their summer on the water, the Florida state park system offers limitless opportunities. Whether your thing is fishing, swimming, skiing or a wilderness canoe trip, it's all here and you won't have to go far to find it.

Florida has no less than 32 parks located on the water. The parks are situated in every corner of the state on rivers, springs, the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico.

At the Blackwater River State Park near Milton, visitors have a choice of hiking the trails in the state forest or cooling off in the cold river water. One tip: If you plan on hiking, use some good bug repellent before you go. Otherwise, you'll be scratching chigger bites for days.

Fort Clinch State Park at Fernandina Beach combines military history with the charm of a small fishing village. Wekiva Springs near Apopka is a favorite state park of central Floridians who picnic on the shady grounds, swim in the spring itself, or canoe the river formed by the spring overflow.

And those who want to get under water can try John Pennekamp State Park at Key Largo. Pennekamp has upland camping facilities but much of the park is under water on a coral reef and is excellent for snorkeling and scuba diving. Needless to say, you won't need chigger repellent.

-Manatee Springs State Park, 1,799 acres, near Chiefland. One of the major springs in this country with 49,000 gallons per minute flowing into the famous Suwannee River, 1,000 feet away. A combination boardwalk and boat dock leads to the river. Named after large aquatic mammals once common here. Camping permitted.
Among Florida bowhunters, 1952 is best remembered as the year of the first Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission-sponsored bowhunt, a special 10-day antlered deer season in the Ocala National Forest.

Participation was relatively small; only 225 permits were sold that year.

Bowhunting is now a well established Florida hunting sport. Permit sales figures for the past two years show that 11,141 bowhunting hopefuls bought the required special permits in 1975, and 10,310 in 1976.

Although 1976 participation showed a slight decline, 1977 permit sales are likely to set a new high. A new type of bow—the compound—has literally created an entirely new ball game for bowhunting!

Many bowmen now inactive because of failure to make game kills will be returning to bowhunting because of renewed hope that the compound type of bow offers.

What is a compound bow?

Whether simple, fixed power two wheel design, or a more complicated adjustable power four, six or seven wheeler, a compound bow is basically engineered on the working principle of block and tackle, long used to lift heavy weights with reduced effort.

With most compounds—say, one rated 50 pounds draw weight, for example—full draw weight must be applied until midway point of draw is reached. At this stage, eccentric wheels on each end of the bow are sufficiently levered by bending bow limbs and tensed bowstring cable to abruptly rotate 180 degrees, and thereby automatically store already applied bow-bending power. Thereafter, only about half of the formerly applied effort is required to complete full draw.

On release, stored bow energy is transmitted to the arrow in an initial smooth thrust, that reaches power peak about midway of release. A matched arrow leaves a compound bow more smoothly and faster than from conventional bows.

Women, particularly, are finding the compound bow an answer to prayer for a truly powerful hunting bow that can be held at full draw with comparative ease. Using compounds, they are making increasing kills of big game animals. In essence, the compound bow has brought women's lib to bowhunting.

But the new compounds are not without disadvantages. They are complicated in assembly, heavier to support in outstretched hand and are almost impossible to properly restring afield. When field servicing is attempted, a small tool box must be part of one's tackle, including a string changer and replacement parts.

Although widely adapting the compound because of mechanical benefits, veteran bowmen still rate the recurved end style bow superior for shots at fast moving game and for shooting wild hogs in palm-leaf country. Shooting a compound from a tree stand offers no problem, they say—unless the quarry is a fast target.

By Edmund McLaurin

Veteran bowman Irish Brady, of St. Petersburg, takes aim at a nice Florida buck, using a two-wheel, 50-pound rated compound bow.

Consensus is that the compound type of bow is here to stay, however, having proven its hunting worth despite certain disadvantages.

A prospective purchaser should make a round-robin tour of home area sporting goods stores, and examine and evaluate the different makes and models stocked. Likely, fixed power two wheel and adjustable power four wheel models will dominate the displays. The latter permit the purchaser to adjust draw weight to poundage he or she can best handle. The multiple wheelers also permit less critical balancing of their eccentrics and give better equalization of working strength of bow limbs. Many, however, can be prima donnas!

The fixed power two wheel hunting compounds, on the other hand, do not require frequent tinkering, are lighter in weight, have fewer parts and created crevices to snag on brush, and are generally less expensive.

There is wide choice of brands and models. Currently, there are more than thirty nationally advertised brands of compound bows and close to ninety different models. Only the best will survive the test of time.

When in doubt, seriously consider a compound that carries a brand name nationally respected in the archery tackle field. With archers, good product reputations are earned.

Don't overlook the pertinent fact that, like a fine violin or piano, a compound bow—especially one of adjustable power—must be periodically tuned for (continued on next page)
However, with the new compounds, most models are set up by manufacturer for inclusive arrow length brackets that very practically permit as much as two inches underdraw without sacrificing bow power, after the bow's full power, midway draw peak point has been reached. (Under no circumstances should a compound bow be drawn beyond its bracket-rated arrow length specification.)

The way an arrow is nocked on bowstring, whatever type of bow used, is a major factor in good arrow flight. Proper nocking calls for an arrow to be nocked at location on bowstring of correct fisticmle that gives close to a true right angle, preferably 1/8" to 1/2" above true 90 degree angle. If your arrow's visible hop, sway or fly other than true point on course, look to both string fisticmle and related arrow nocking point. The critically influencing factor of correct location of nocking point on bowstring is too often overlooked.

Few hunting broadheads, other than those that incorporate razor blades in assembled makeup, are ever really sharp. They should be! If you cannot moisten hair on arm and shave a spot with a broadhead's cutting edges, then the broadhead is below desirable standard of sharpness.

Keep in mind that—unlike a rifle bullet delivering hydraulic shock along with tissue destruction—a broadhead arrow point kills solely by combined penetration and resulting hemorrhage. It is the latter that brings death. The faster the created hemmerhage, the more rapid will be the arrow-shot animal's demise.

It is both inefficient and inhumane to hunt with dull arrows. You not only won't bag much game—if any—but you will be decidedly unpopular among fellow bowhunters who take pride in making quick, humane kills.

An alumina-ceramic composition household knife sharpener, called "The Crock Stick," will put sharp edges on a broadhead in jiffy time.

There is fast growing acceptance of a hunting broadhead point appropriately named "The Satan-lite," for its similar appearance to one of our space-age midflight interplanetary missiles. The broadhead features a tungsten carbide spitzer tip about 1/4 of an inch long, permanently fitted to an anodized aluminum shaft that accepts four replaceable razor blade sections. The non-business end screws into arrow shaft socket.

On contact with animal tissue, the hard carbide point depresses immediate area of contact for instinctive aim on targets field estimated to be anywhere from 17 to 35 yards from bow. Many successful utilize "pin heads," with shanks pushed into a strip of leather or wood glued to the bow, pin locations being determined by shooting over measured ranges. Both single and multiple sighting pins are used, depending on personal preference.

With the flatter shooting compound bows, a single sight pin can be used to effectively give point-blank aim on target's field estimated to be anywhere from 17 to 35 yards from bow. The many competing brands of compound type bows, array of available models, the growing volume of purchases, improved target shooting by users, big game kills being made, all add up to one thing—compound interest.
When the name Osceola is mentioned, the Florida historian conjures up in his mind the famous chief of the Seminoles. To hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts who spend their spare time in northeast Florida woodlands, however, the name is as likely to bring back memories of a rewarding outdoor experience in the Osceola Wildlife Management Area.

The management area encompasses some 157,000 acres in Baker and Columbia counties and lies within the Osceola National Forest. On the southwestern edge, the boundary comes to within a mile of Lake City. The Oxfenokre Swamp joins the area to the north. The area is popular with campers, hunters, boaters and fishermen from Jacksonville which lies 40 miles east of the Forest.

The Osceola is one of the three wildlife management areas in the state which are located solely on federal property administered by the U.S. Forest Service. Osceola was established as a wildlife management area in 1957 under a cooperative agreement between the Commission and the Forest Service.

The history of the forest presents an interesting picture of important developments in the Civil War and pioneer efforts in the practice of forestry in Florida. As a national forest established by presidential proclamation on July 10, 1931, the Osceola's habitat is mostly pine-palmetto flatwoods, interspersed with hardwood bays and cypress-blackgum swamps. The Big Gun section features, somewhat uniquely, a collection of pine islands scattered about a gum and cypress swamp. Impossible Bay, as its name implies, is an almost impenetrable bog comprised of dense undergrowth with few sizable trees, the result of a fire which destroyed timber and burned deep into the muck soil in the 1940s.

During the period from 1930 to 1950, the area was worked heavily for naval stores, but in the early 1950s an invasion of black turpentine beetles made necessary the salvage cutting of about 22 million board feet of timber. A drastic reduction in naval stores production followed. Numerous creeks thread the area, draining into either the Suwannee or the St. Marys rivers. Hardwoods such as blackgum, sweetgum, water oak, hollibay and ash occur along most of the creeks and when the fall season arrives, the leaf color is almost as spectacular as that of the Smokey Mountains.

Ocean Pond, comprising 1,800 acres, is the only large lake in the area. It is a popular spot featuring a developed campground, boat launching site and swimming areas maintained by the U.S. Forest Service.

OSCEOLA WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

primary timber species is slash pine, but native stands of mature longleaf pine exist on some of the better drained sites.

Fishing for bream, bass and speckled perch in Ocean Pond provides year around angling activity. For the fisherman who would like to try his hand at something different, the numerous creeks adjacent to the swamps are "hot spots" for redfin pickerel, warmouth and catfish when the water levels begin dropping from the overflow stage. Tips on how to catch the "little muskie," the redfin pickerel, can be found in the October 1976 issue of FLORIDA WILDLIFE. The Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission has stocked sunshine bass in Ocean Pond and anglers are currently harvesting the scrappy hybrids up to two pounds or so in weight.

Many of the barrow pits, which are areas dug out for fill dirt, have been stocked with bass and bream and provide some good fishing.

A variety of game animals and birds are available to hunters using the area. Hunting with dogs is allowed on 30 per cent of the forest with the remainder designated for still hunting only.

Hunting season begins in September with a three week archery season followed by two 3-day muzzleloader hunts the last two weekends in September. In October, three 3-day special bear hunts are conducted. Then, beginning in November

(continued on next page)
ber, the general hunting season begins and continues until the first of January. Legal game includes deer, hogs, quail, squirrel, bear and rabbit. Hunting of small game is allowed through the last weekend in February in that portion of the state south of Interstate 10. A spring gobbler season is held for three weeks from March into April.

During special hunts except the bear hunt, vehicles are restricted to graded and paved roads south of Interstate 10. This regulation is designed to allow visitors an opportunity to hunt in deep woods areas without being disturbed by vehicles.

The 1976-77 season saw the harvest, during the general season, of 84 bucks and 46 hogs. Archie took an additional 29 deer and 10 hogs while the muzzleloader hunters downs 45 deer and 31 hogs. Bear hunters bagged two of the animals.

Spring gobbler season is held for three weeks from March into April.

During all seasons except the bear hunt, vehicles are restricted to graded and paved roads south of Interstate 10. This regulation is designed to allow visitors an opportunity to hunt in deep woods areas without being disturbed by vehicles.

The 1976-77 season saw the harvest, during the general season, of 84 bucks and 46 hogs. Archie took an additional 29 deer and 10 hogs while the muzzleloader hunters downs 45 deer and 31 hogs. Bear hunters bagged two of the animals during the special hunts.

Camping is allowed at seven designated campsites in the area. Ocean Pond is the only campsite with other than primitive camping facilities and a fee of $2 per night is assessed.

For the hiker, a portion of the Florida Trail passes through the area from White Springs to points south. This trail is well marked and is maintained by the Florida Trail Association.

The deer population is high, about 1 deer per 40 acres. Hogs are plentiful and are on the increase. The turkey population is low and as a result, no fall turkey season is scheduled. It is hoped that restoration efforts will eventually restore a good population of this popular game species.

Quail and squirrel populations are rated as only fairly due to the scarcity of suitable habitat. Okeefenokee is unique in the fact that it has one of the few fairly good bear populations in the state. The presence of large swamps, and the fact that the vast Okefenokee Swamp joins the area, are factors favoring a bear population here.

Several rare and endangered species, including the wood stove and the red-cockaded woodpecker occur here. Comprehensive cooperative management plans for these species have been developed by the U.S. Forest Service and the Commission.

The Okeefenokee National Forest is managed under the multiple land use concept. This effort involves the management of timber, wildlife, range and recreation on an equal emphasis basis.

The timber harvest is conducted in such a way as to allow a good interperssion of mature timber, immature timber and freshly cut areas. Controlled burning is conducted on a large scale to reduce wildfire hazard, improve pine seedbed and improve wildlife habitat.

Other management practices include planting of oak trees adjacent to cutover, maintenance of grass openings for turkeys, preservation of support pine stands surrounding red-cockaded woodpecker colonies and erection of wood duck nesting boxes on creaks and ponds. Barrow pits are fertilized periodically to improve fish populations.

Several important wildlife studies are presently in full swing. A 7,200 acre area has been set aside to study the effects of various land management practices on cattle and timber production and wildlife populations. Another study focuses on the improvement of "dwarf oak" and blueberry fruit production through the use of fire.

Probably the most controversial issue before the public is one involving the possibility of phosphate mining on a portion of the forest. The Fish and Wildlife Commission and the public are engaged in a study to determine the effects that mining would have on threatened and rare wildlife species. Findings will be presented to the proper authorities involved in the phosphate mining controversy.

All in all, the Okeefenokee is an area with a lot of attractions for the Florida outdoorsman.

PHOTO KATHLEEN LAMANCHE

VENISON STEW

By Kathleen Lamarche

Every hunter's wife has experienced it—the venison stew. It happens every year when the last of the tender venison t-bones and sirloins have disappeared, there's no more meat left to stew and get tired of stew meat and tough round steak to be cooked. At first, chicken-streaks and the traditional stewed last good, but oh! it's so boring! If only there were some new way to cook it!

Surprisingly enough, that meat you have been in such a stew about is the very best version of all. Not only does it have the best flavor, it is also the most versatile. So put aside all your time-worn notions that it can only be fried or stewed and get ready for some meals that are as delicious as they are fun to prepare.

For example, what could taste better to a tired outdoorsman returning home from a day afield than an inviting dish of venison goulash—tender, succulent chunks of meat floating in a spicy red sea of tomatoes-served piping hot with some old-fashioned corn bread and a crisp garden salad? It's fast-fixing and can be left simmering as long as you like, making it the perfect meal for the hunter who may not be hungry until far later than expected.

For those spur-of-the-minute crises when the boss suddenly decides to come home with your husband for dinner, try serving venison goulash, a meal guaranteed to delight the eye and please the palate of even the most discerning guest, or go oriental with the venison chow mein.

Whatever your mood, there's a venison dish to suit both your taste and your budget. So put on your chef's hat...it's time to quit stewing.

VENISON CHOW MEIN

1 pound venison round steak or stew meat, cut in 1-in. cubes, de-boned, cut in 1-in. pieces, tenderized with instant meat tenderizer if desired
3 cups thinly sliced celery, cut cross-wise
2 cups sliced fresh mushrooms
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 can condensed beef broth or 1 cup beef bouillon
1/4 cup soy sauce
1 oz. can water chestnuts, sliced and drained
1 lb. can bamboo shoots, drained

In large skillet, cook meat in small amount of hot oil until brown. Add onion and peppers, cook until tender but not brown. Stir in tomatoes and paprika, salt and pepper (to taste) and cook until thickened. Reduce heat and simmer until meat is tender, about 30 minutes. Add bean sprouts, simmer another 15 minutes or until heated through. Serve over white rice or chow mein noodles.

Serves 4.

VENISON GOUFLASH

2 pounds venison round steak or stew meat, de-boned and cut into 1/4-in. wide strips or chunks, tenderized with instant meat tenderizer.
1 tablespoon flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons butter or margarine
1 cup sliced mushrooms
1/2 cup chopped onion
1 clove garlic, minced
3 tablespoons flour
2 tablespoons butter (or margarine)
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1/4 cups beef stock or 1 can condensed beef broth
2 tablespoons red wine
1 cup dairy sour cream
1 tablespoon flour
1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons red wine
1 1/2 cups beef stock or 1 can condensed beef broth
2 tablespoons red wine
1 cup dairy sour cream
Combine 1 tablespoon flour and the salt and add to stock mixture. Add to pan and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and gradually stir in sour cream. Add 1 cup of red wine, stirring constantly until mixture thickens. Return meat and mushrooms to pan. Reduce heat; stir until meat and mushrooms are tender but not brown.

Serve over white rice or chow mein noodles.

Serves 4.
Fishing

Topwater Plugs

lops for those who like the excitement of surface strikes

By CHARLES WATERMAN

A large percentage of striking bass are hooked when the bait is dead still. Under those circum­stances they can see considerable color and assess the size. Florida fly fishermen are addicted to the "bumblebee" color of yellow and black stripes and many swear that bugs of that color will beat anything else. No doubt that you can see the yellow reflected on the surface when you're down below it. The fact that very few real bees are hopping around on the water seems to have little to do with it.

"Stick" baits, plugs that hang down from the surface with their noses up, show their colors to all and sundry. Maybe color is more important with them than with any other top water lures as long as they aren't operated briskly.

Action is the prime quality of most surface baits. Sometimes they like it fast and loud, sometimes slow and soft, and if they'll take it at all you can prospect pretty simply. You just start out each retrieve with slight motion and increase it as you go along. If they show a preference for a certain gait you can adopt that for the rest of the day. Of course you start the retrieve gently rather than the other way around because too violent an action sometimes scares fish away. If they're refused the gentle approach, a bloop and a blap can't hurt anything.

A while back I wrote a smart-alecky article about freshwater trout fishermen for another publication. I guess I wasn't very nice and maybe it was sour grapes, but the fact is that I have never been as accurate with topwater things he reads about trout fishing. I hope they don't go to the other extreme the way the bass fishermen have.

I know a fellow who likes Jackpuss. He has a bunch of them so fancy they probably cost more than a couple of outfits of church clothes. After he saw the advertising on those worn by the tournament bass fishermen, he hung his up. From his viewpoint it's a bit similar to the dislike for leather jackets brought on by motocycle gangs of 20 years ago, even if bass fishermen don't tear up any towns.

It seems that about once a year I announce the kind of baitcasting line everybody should use. Since no one asks me and I seem to be the only fisherman with a casting line problem, I consider this quite a contribution on my part.

I never learned to cast well with monofilament line. I know all the rules about thumbing hard and throwing hard but I've never been as accurate with monofilament as mono, but we figured that's the price you pay.

Braided line simply isn't very popular with Florida baitcasters, especially the ones who go into salt water, and some tackle stores don't carry it at all. It's also possible to buy some that's been on the shelf for too many years.

I have not been happy with dacron for casting, even though its lack of stretchiness can be an advantage sometimes, and some lines that carry other names are about the same thing in performance.

Right now I'm pretty happy with braided monofilament, which seems to have most of the good points of both single-strand mono and braided nylon. It seems resistant to abrasion, casts smoothly and doesn't pick up much water on the retrieve. It works on spinning reels too. The kind we've been using is Web, sold by Braid King Line Co., Inverness, Florida 32650. Ours is 15-pound test.

Origins of different types of fishing lures are pretty well shrouded in the mists of the past but it doesn't prevent imaginative fishermen from making up stories about their inception.

Now Jim Heddon is supposed to have whittled the first wooden plug, making it like a cigar (and incidentally a little like a minnow). Of course Mr. Heddon isn't around any more to prove or disprove fables but they say he tossed his filly-whittled cigar into the water and a bass blasted it.

Then the bucktail is said to have gotten its start as a fish attractor when a hunter killed a deer on the edge of a river and started to drag it away. Little puff of hair blow off into the water and a "bass went into the air with the bit of hair in his mouth."

Fellow was supposed to be eating his lunch on (continued on next page)

These popping bug bass showed no preference for size or color, but wanted the action just so.
the bank of a river and dropped his spoon into the water. As it went wobbling toward the bottom a bass smacked it. Hence the castling and trolling spoon.

Fisherman lassoed over the side of his boat and his tie clip came loose, they say, and went twinkling down toward the bottom and a bass grabbed it. From that came the "clothespin". From that came the stress of being played and handled will cause a fish to say. I believe it was a bluefish that napped the reaction of the individual anyone had guessed.

Experiments have shown that bass towed slowly through their lower lips near always recover from damage than was once believed possible. Some kinds of saltwater fish have made it when released in observation tanks, even after being pierced from side to side by spear guns. Even heavy Gill damage is sometimes survived and many fish have lived for considerable periods with the gill cover completely gone on one side. The layman's rule that if a fish's gills are damaged he's through is not always correct.

There's no doubt that the injured or deformed fish is a marked individual where other fish are concerned. It's never proven in the wild but some fishermen have objected to identification tags that showed plainly, believing the marked fish would be singled out by any hungry aquatic predators.

One-eyed fish certainly have a disadvantage in their kind of world but some of them make it indefatigably, even somehow avoiding predators from the blind side. Many years ago I was fishing for brown trout and raised the same fish repeatedly, seeing him come for the fly, even after others in the same pool seemed to be spooked. He didn't take the first two or three times out from his bank hideout but I eventually caught him and found he was blind in the eye on the side I was casting from. It was a blow to my ego for I'd thought I was so sneaky he simply hadn't sighted me. His fellow trout evidently hadn't communicated with him. Maybe he was an outcast because of his missing eye.

Tests showed that bass would generally survive upon release, even after being towed for hours with something through lower jaw.

(continued from preceding page)

One of the most frequent objections to returning fish once they are landed is the argument that the stress of being played and handled will cause a fish to die anyway. Bass tournament statistics prove this is seldom correct, the percentage of recovery by fish released after scaring being much higher than anyone had guessed.

As is the case with other living creatures, the reaction of the individual fish is hard to forecast. Experiments have shown that bass towed slowly behind for considerable periods with strings through their lower lips nearly always recover from the ordeal if released. This doesn't constitute a recommendation for "culling" a limit of bass from a stringer just to end up with bigger ones, but facts are facts.

Biologists agree that the stress of being landed can be fatal to some individuals of some species while having little effect on others. Ultra-light tackle is tough on many saltwater fishes, the length of the fight going against recovery.

Some fish recover from more extensive physical damage than was once believed possible. Some kinds of saltwater fish have made it when released in observation tanks, even after being pierced from side to side by spear guns. Even heavy Gill damage is sometimes survived and many fish have lived for considerable periods with the gill cover completely gone on one side. The layman's rule that if a fish's gills are damaged he's through is not always correct.

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FLORIDA WILDLIFE FISHING CITATION

TO BE ELIGIBLE...

Applicant must be a FLORIDA WILDLIFE subscriber or a member of a subscriber's immediate family. All fish must have been taken from Florida's waters, on conventional hook and line gear, with live or artificial bait, in the presence of at least one witness. The catch must have been weighed and recorded at a fishing camp, tackle shop, or similar establishment, by the owner, manager, or an authorized employee. No citation will be issued for a record-sized catch unless the fish is preserved for examination by Commission personnel.

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 inserted data listed below:

Name (please print) ___________________________

Address __________________________

City ___________ State _______ Zip No. ______

Species __________________________

Minimum Weight

Length

Species Minimum Weight

Largemouth Bass 8 lbs.

Striped Bass 10 lbs.

Chain pickerel 4 lbs.

Blugill (Bream) 1 1/2 lbs.

Shellcracker 2 lbs.

Black Crappie (Speckled Perch) 2 lbs.

Redbreast 1 lbs.

Type of Tackle...

Bait or Lure Used...

Where Caught in County

Date Caught

Catch Witnessed By...

Registered, Weighed By...

Signature of Applicant

CUT OUT AND SAVE THIS APPLICATION BLANK

FLORIDA WILDLIFE

COMMISSION HONORS FRYE

At the June meeting in Tallahassee, the Commission presented the following resolution commemorating the 35-year service of retiring director, Dr. O. Earle Frye.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, in January 1946, O. Earle Frye, Jr. was duly employed by the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission as Florida's first wildlife biologist; and

WHEREAS, since the date of his employment, O. Earle Frye, Jr. has rendered outstanding service to the causes of conservation, restoration, management, and wise use of wildlife and fresh water aquatic life; and

WHEREAS, the said O. Earle Frye, Jr. has served in the highest exaltation of leadership in the field of natural resources conservation, both in the great State of Florida and at national and international levels; and

WHEREAS, the said O. Earle Frye, Jr. has worn the laurel wreaths of many natural resources and conservation campaigns; however, they should never overshadow his deep appreciation, compassion and consideration for his fellow man, including the personnel of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission with whom he worked, and the sportmen and citizens for whom he served; and

WHEREAS, the said O. Earle Frye, Jr. has compiled thirty-one years of faithful and dedicated services as a wildlife biologist, chief biologist, assistant director and director of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, and now retires from the said Commission to take up the continuing conservation challenge through recruitment of sportsmen and citizen support.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, in a duly constituted and assembled meeting at Tallahassee, Florida, on this 17th day of June A.D. 1977, does resolve as follows:

1. That we do hereby attest and record for all who come after us the certain fact of the extremely valuable services to the State of Florida and to the nation by the said O. Earle Frye, Jr.

2. That we do hereby register now and for all time the solemn, love, respect of the members and personnel of this Commission for the said O. Earle Frye, Jr.

3. That we do hereby extend to him those eternal words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

4. That we hereby assure to him that we will miss greatly his contagious optimism, and his sincere dedication and devotion to the progress of wildlife conservation and the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.

5. That we hereby grant to him the privilege of a lifetime of dedication and devotion of a few men of whom O. Earle Frye, Jr. was a leader.

6. That we do hereby urge those who partake of the healthy exercise, peaceful solitude, appreciation and harvest of the great outdoors that they share a heritage built on a lifetime of dedication and devotion of a few men of whom O. Earle Frye, Jr. was a leader.

7. That we do hereby urge those who are not so inclined to answer the call of wildlife on wing or harken to the melody of hounds on a frosty morning or share the thrill of an exploiting bass or the call of the beebowtie to remember this wildlife is yours because a champion of conservation and a leader of men, O. Earle Frye, Jr., passed your way.

8. That we hereby record the sentiments of this resolution upon the permanent minutes and records of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.

DONE AND RESOLVED at Tallahassee, Florida, this 17th day of June A.D. 1977.

PERSONNEL CHANGES

Felix G., "Jerry" Banks has been named the new director of fisheries and a Kansas man tagged to head up the Information and Education Bureau.

At the May meeting of the Commission, the five-member board approved the promotion of Banks to the number one spot in fisheries, to replace Bill Woods, who retired after 25 years to become a private consultant.

The Commission also hired Vic McLeran of the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission as the new chief of the information bureau.

McLeran took over the duties of James Floyd who is being moved to the slot of administrative assistant to the executive director. Floyd held the position of I&E Chief for 15 years, starting with the Commission in 1952 as a wildlife officer and moving to I&E in 1956.

Banks began working for the Commission in 1948 following graduation from North Carolina State University with a degree in wildlife conservation management. He was one of the first
A dramatic painting of a pair of eastern wild turkeys by Chuck Ripper is featured on the second annual stamp issued by the Wild Turkey Federation. In addition to the limited stamp issue, a signed and numbered edition of 1,500 prints is being offered through art dealers.

The unique stamp-art print program, initiated by the organization to launch an extensive education and conservation program to benefit the wild turkey, has already proven successful.

The 1977 stamp and a limited number of 1976 stamps are available for $3 each ($30 for all) from National Wild Turkey Federation, Edgefield, S.C. 29824.

Some 600 alligator hides were sold at auction in Gainesville on June 15, the first such sale conducted by the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. The trappers to receive the top grade hides. The same company submitted a bid of $10 for the lower grade hides.

McLeran comes to the GFC from Kansas where he was chief of the agency’s Information and Education Division and also served as editor of the Kansas Fish and Game Magazine.

A six-county area of northeast Florida yielded 106 of the hides to contract trappers who are authorized to remove specified nuisance alligators in that area. The agreement with the Commission calls for the trappers to receive 70 per cent of the sale price of the hides. An additional 96 hides were obtained by Commission personnel who removed the alligators upon complaint.

The remaining 379 hides sold were confiscated by Commission personnel over the past several years. Revenue from the sale goes into the State Game Trust Fund for further wildlife management and law enforcement projects.

Bidding on the hides were representatives of three companies licensed by the federal government to deal in alligator hides. They were Fouke Dressing and Dye of Greenville, S.C.; Ocean Leather of Newark, N.J.; and King International of Wilmington, Del.

A top bid of $18,50 per linear foot was submitted by Fouke for the top grade hides. The same company submitted a bid of $10 per foot for the lower grade hides.
You might see him in the woods, rambling through your yard or trying desperately to make it across a highway, but one thing’s for sure, you’re not likely to find the box turtle in water. Although more closely related to aquatic turtles, box turtles spend their lives on dry land much like true tortoises. The Florida box turtle is found throughout the peninsula and can be told from other box turtle subspecies by the distinct yellow stripes on his head. Pick him up. Instead of biting, he’ll probably just close his shell and hope you go away. His plastron, or lower shell, is formed such that it can be closed in front like a box, providing not only a good defense but also a name.