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Described as "common" during the 19th century, the Bachman's Warbler is now the rarest songbird in America. Although not known to breed in Florida, the peninsula was once a main migration route for Bachman's Warblers from nesting territories in the Carolinas, Tennessee, northern Alabama and Arkansas to wintering grounds in Cuba and the Isle of Pines. Early ornithologists recorded the seasonal passage of relatively large numbers of Bachman's Warblers as they fed through the hardwood swaths and hammocks of Florida. Yet, since 1909, only one sighting has been reported in the state. Too little is known of these tiny birds to understand the reason for their sudden decline or even to guess at how many remain. In an effort to guard the remaining few and, hopefully, to re-establish a significant population, the Bachman's Warbler is fully protected and has been classified as "Endangered" by the U. S. Department of the Interior and the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.

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From a painting by Wallace Hughes

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By Doug Alderson

The Mysterious Cypress

In many lakes, rivers and swamps from extreme southern Florida to Delaware, the unique cypress tree, notably the bald cypress, prevails. This ancient, pyramidal tree of the coniferous redwood family, which sometimes reaches a height of 150 feet, adds a mysterious splendor to the wet wilderness. At sunrise, where cypresses are shrouded in white mist and silhouetted against the early morning light, one can imagine this primitive species of tree existing since the dawn of time.

Gray clumps of Spanish moss usually droop from the upper branches and the longer strands of the stringy moss spiral around the ash-gray or reddish brown trunks to the water below. Some of the trees' trunks are slightly arched, with twisted arms outstretched toward the sun. Some cypresses seem to be weeping, their limbs heavily laden with moss and slouched earthward.

Turtles and alligators frequently slide into the dark water from exposed cypress knees and roots, creating gentle ripples that reflect dancing flashes of light on the wood.

Each part of this majestic tree provides countless homes for wildlife. Red-bellied woodpeckers methodically move up the trunks, chiseling holes in the hard wood, then spearing insects with their barbed tongues.

Turkey vultures crouch in high cypress branches as eagles and hawks eye the squirrels that run up and down the scaly bark. Kingfishers plunge and dart between the trees from lookouts and white herons and egrets arrange themselves nobly on the feathery crowns.

Even the peregrine falcon, usually a cliff-dwelling bird, occasionally nests in hollow bald cypress in the northern states.

One of the few nesting grounds of the wood stork is protected in Corkscrew Swamp, a 10,000-acre National Audubon wildlife sanctuary south of Fort Myers. It contains the largest tract of virgin bald cypress in North America. The stork makes his nest in the high trees and feeds on minnows, crustaceans, mollusks, tadpoles, frogs, small mammals, insects, seeds, and even occasional small alligators. All of these animals thrive in the protected cypress swamps, such as Corkscrew, which is part of the Big Cypress Swamp.
Many seem like natural, miniature replicas of fully mature cypress; but others twist and meander over the ground with hardly any crown at all. The stunted forest is a freak of nature. Other trees would have normally pushed the cypress off the sandy soil long ago.

The bald cypress' natural habitat is water and, contrary to popular belief, cypress rarely blow down because of the non-supporting environment. Their heavy bases and anchor roots enable the cypress to withstand hurricane winds. The buttressed bases or "knees" which may be three to four times larger than the rest of the trunk, are perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of the bald cypress. Shallow roots spread from the bases laterally, burying themselves in the sandy soil or peat at the bottom of the swamp, river or lake. From these roots grow the "knees," curious protrusions which may be a few inches to several feet tall. The oddly-shaped knees can resemble unusual natural and man-made creations and form intriguing shapes and designs.

The mystery of the knees even has scientific minds baffled. Botanists believe they help stabilize the tree—but not all cypress have knees. It has been hypothesized that knees are aerating organs through which gas exchange occurs with submerged roots. Some experts feel they are just useless growths, like warts. None of these theories have been proven.

Knees do serve, however, as useful sunbathing and nestling spots for various animals and insects. Bees make honey in the knees and the bottom dwelling Pomacea snail lays its pink, pearl-like eggs there in clusters. The knees and swollen domes of the cypress are good cover for fish and ducks, making stands of cypress favorite places for hunters, fishermen and observant nature lovers.

If one paddles a canoe silently through a bald cypress swamp or lake edge, the natural splendor and sounds are greatly intensified in the undisturbed primitive setting. Perhaps the most intriguing cypress to observe is a dead, hollow one, usually ridged with woodpecker holes and standing upright by only a few thin segments of unwielded wood. They are homes for raccoons, spiders, hornets and, on the upper branches, ospreys. Dead cypress knees are favorite nesting spots for ospreys. Few pairs of these majestic birds settle in live trees. Their shrill, whistling calls echo through the trees as they swoop down from sprawling platforms to catch fish in the dark water below.

Indian tribes in the South hollowed out fallen cypress trunks for canoes and valued the light, durable, water resistant wood as did white settlers. By 1920, Americans nearly devastated virgin stands of cypress in Florida. By the peak year of 1913, one billion board feet were milled. In Okefenokee, loggers removed 400 million board feet alone.

The strong wood was mainly used for ship construction, pilings, boat docks, bridges, crossties and greenhouses. It was easily shaped and sanded and other instruments were made from it. Even cypress knees were taken, being prized for polished lamp bases. But the natural lamp base craze faded and the virgin trees were exhausted, thus ending an era.

New trees grow slowly—about one foot a year—so they were not replanted as crops as are fast-growing pines.

The bald cypress is monoecious; that is, the pollen-bearing (male) and the seed producing (female) flowers bloom on the same tree. The seeds are winged and are carried by air currents, but many seeds are eaten by squirrels and wild turkeys before they have a chance to sprout. The cypress is the only southern conifer that sheds its needles in the fall.

During the dry months when many rivers are low, one can walk through the dry beds and marvel at the circular patterns and textures of the exposed roots and knees. The swollen bases and knees correspond closely to the average high water mark, so they are better developed in areas where water fluctuates frequently.

Freshwater settings are truly enhanced by the picturesque cypress and these trees are important habitats for animals and air plants such as Spanish moss and orchids. While man has admired cypress trees for their strength and durability and used them as an important crop, they are still a part of the wild, wet places of our country and benefit man and wildlife alike.
Hunting

Doves At A Distance

shooting within range, a virtue of a good hunter

By CHARLES Dickey

I take five to six shells fired to bag one

Hunting dove. Some surveys say it's even more.

While we don't go to the field strictly for score,

we're happy when we shoot well. There are usually

other hunters around, but a good number of

loose afternoons, I may sneak out of the field.

What's a good score? Well, that depends on how

much dove shooting you've done. Beating your

usual average is enough to give you a feeling of

elation. I think any shooter who gets his limit of 12
doves with a box of shells (25 rounds) deserves
some attention and compliments. If it takes you two
boxes of shells to fill out, you're still better than
average.

There are a lot of little things we can do to im-
prove our shell-bird ratios. Being an outdoor writer,
I remind my readers each autumn to practice at a
local skeet field before the dove season opens. Then
I get busy and fail to do it myself.

It's still a good idea. The hunter may not have
-fired his shotgun in months. A few rounds of shot

are using a shotgun with a modified

choke. I put

my markers around my stand as soon as I sel-
ce. I pace off yardage to a tree, stump,

dove unless it comes inside my circle. The markers
help.

Doves are small, fast and approach in varying
light. It is not always easy to estimate their range.

The markers help.

If I am using an improved cylinder choke, I put
my markers at 35 yards. There are few times that I
ever use a full choke. The dove that slips in on top
of me and wraps me up in knots must be consid-
ered. A full choke is too tight but the other chokes
are using a shotgun with a modified

choke. I put

my markers around my stand as soon as I sel-
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If I am using an improved cylinder choke, I put
my markers at 35 yards. There are few times that I
ever use a full choke. The dove that slips in on top
of me and wraps me up in knots must be consid-
ered. A full choke is too tight but the other chokes
will give me a better chance, especially the im-
proved cylinder which quickly spreads.

(continued on next page)

When my marker circle is set, I know that any
dove that flies inside the perimeter is within range.
Obviously a dove 80 yards straight up is not inange but I'm talking about the average height at
which they approach.

Let's say I'm using a modified choke and my cir-
cle is at 45 yards. I start to mount my gun on an
incomer as the bird crosses the perimeter. By the
time I pull the trigger, the dove is only 30 or 35
yards from me. This lag in my reaction time takes
care of any extra range distance because of the
dove's altitude.

By using a marker as a guide in range estima-
tion, my mind is free to concentrate on the shooting
process. I am sure the dove is in range and I don't
have a doubtful mind and balk. But more impor-
tantly, the markers keep me from taking shots
beyond my capabilities and that of my shotgun

choke.

In most kinds of dove shooting, we get in one spot
and let the birds come to us. To increase our

chances of birds flying inside our perimeters, we

use cover, blinds, try not to make spooking move-
ments and wear camouflage. We try not to let the
birds see us until they are in range and it is too late
for them to do much about it. In fact, our best

chance of killing a bird cleanly is to shoot one
which is totally unaware of our presence. A dove
can do a lot of highballing and jinking in half a
second.

As for the gauge of a shotgun, the beginning or

causal shooter should use a 12-gauge. The diameter
of a shotgun pattern is the same whether it is a 12,
16 or 20-gauge, where the same choke is used. The

Most successful dove hunters use
cover or a blind to allow birds
to fly in unaware of their presence.

Chances for a good shoot are
increased even more by sitting still
and quiet because when a dove
is spooked, it takes a good hand
with a shotgun to connect.
of 54 inches. It’s now priced at $18 with sheath. Most hunters carry it in their pockets. It’s an excellent thinning knife and ideal for general outdoor use.

Old Timers, made by Schrade Cutlery, have increased in price because they are hand finished with over 135 operations. Deacon Ernst, product manager for Schrade, told me he realized a lot of sportsmen still want a quality knife with no frills at a low price. That’s why they’ve come out with a whole new line called the Frontier series. The knives carry a 25-year warranty.

The Frontier knives sell at almost half the price of Old Timers because they are machine finished. The blades are made of high carbon 1095 pitchter steel. They are precision-ground, heat-treated and tempered to a uniform hardness of 57-59 on the Rockwell C scale. The cutting edge is then hand-honed.

I like the Frontier prices. When I lose one, I can withstand the financial shock.

Another knife to check is the presentation Big Swede which sells for $15.00. It’s made by Normark, the company which makes Rapala lures and knives.

The knife breaks down completely for easy cleaning by simply turning a couple of screws. The 4-inch saber-styled blade is made of Swedish stain-less steel. The grips are made of molded plastic with a good guard to prevent your hand from slipping onto the blade.

The Big Swede folds to an overall length of 4 inches and can be carried in your pocket or worn on your belt. When the blade is extended, it has an excellent locking system.

Big Swede folding knife

No way that little bitty fish can produce baby fish. It’s just a baby itself.

And, as if that settled the matter beyond a shadow of a doubt, the weather-beaten old bass master closed the book on the long-standing controversy about the spawnability of the largemouth bass. Or did he?

The question of the spawnability of bass has been a bone of contention among biologists as well as bass fishermen for many years. (However, possibly for the first time in the history of sports fishing, the biologist and the bassman agree.) They tend to believe that maturity in bass is related to age and size. The rule of thumb is that a bass has to be at least 12-inches long and two years old for its first-time mating and spawning. Well, at least in Florida waters, that “ain’t necessarily so.”

Facts to the contrary recently came to light while monitoring some hatchery pond experiments. For example, in one study a 6-inch male was observed spawning with an 18-inch, 4-pound female, and in another wholly separate study small males were seen guarding nests in six controlled ponds.

In the “big mama—little daddy” study, many of the fry produced were eaten by bream, yet the pint-sized male did protect hatched eggs and small fry until they began to swim free.

This break-through prompted another study involving seven ponds using selectively bred bass stocked as fingerlings.

At eight months, males we're observed sweep-netting” nests in six of the seven ponds. At the end of nine months, six of the seven study ponds were stocked as fingerlings. “At eight months, males were observed sweep-netting” nests in six of the seven ponds. At the end of nine months, six of the seven study ponds were stocked as fingerlings.

By Sten Smith and Joe Crompton

studied by the Commission’s bass investigation team; but actually, they’re neither technical nor difficult, but simply fact-finding. Bass definitely reach maturity and spawn at an early age and small size, particularly under favorable food and habitat conditions.

The dirt-bottomed ponds were prepared by standard hatchery methods, suitable forage was stocked and protection was afforded the stocked fingerlings.

But from that point on the fish did “their own thing.”

The facts are convincing. They serve to revise long-standing notions about spawning in bass. Although the events occurred in hatchery ponds, they are in no way limited to that type of situation. Such conditions obviously exist in innumerable natural lakes and ponds. Early sexual maturity, in the largemouth bass, can and is occurring in popular fishing waters.

Gist of the matter for the “bassman” is that the species is prolific and can survive, multiply and thrive wherever given a sportman’s concern and protection. Thus, no bass is insignificant, whatever its size.

Maybe, the old bassmaster, if he read this far, will agree “this a little bitty fish can produce baby fish” after all.
PILOT’S-EYE VIEW

By Ken Musson

Interstate expressways carry more and more visitors to the tourist centers of Florida each year, and at the end of the concrete roadways are the motels and shopping centers, condominums and restaurants providing a make-believe habitat for fun in the sun.

For those who stick to the highways and developed places, it’s easy enough to adopt the cynic’s viewpoint that the Sunshine State has become a vast concrete and plastic playground. But there’s another Florida out there, and I recentlly looked down on it from the co-pilot’s seat in a light plane piloted by my friend, Bill Morris.

We didn’t start out that day to look for the Florida most people dream about. We were on our way to Miami from Tampa, hoping to be able to take some photographs of the city that Flagler founded.

But Bill doesn’t like to fly a straight line.

“Let’s take a look at the new Florida Power and Light plant on the way out,” he suggested as the wheels left the runway at Peter O. Knight Airport. “You should see the lake they have there. It’s the biggest man-made lake in the state.”

Whether or not it’s the biggest man-made lake, or to bound toward the relative safety of nearby trees.

Next looked the Caloosahatchee River. Like an east-west highway stretched into the morning sun. Some boats skimmed its surface. Others floated at the end of a tether while fishermen sought whatever quarry they might find beneath the surface.

The Caloosahatchee has become so popular among yachtsmen traveling between the coasts it even has motels along its shores catering to them.

At Clewiston, the waterway bulges to become Lake Okeechobee, then it narrows again as the St. Lucie Canal to provide access to the Atlantic Ocean.

“Look at that,” he implored. “Look at that!”

He was drawing attention to a pair of deer, standing undecided in the middle of a small bit of pastureland, their eyes intently following the passage of our plane above them. Unlike the cattle, they were impressed, uncertain whether or not to freeze in their tracks and hope this intruder has not spotted them or to bound toward the relative safety of nearby trees.

Ten Thousand Islands in the Everglades

The Atlantic Ocean, splashing itself on the beaches of Fort Lauderdale, Hollywood, Miami, is breathtaking from the air. One might look, turn away and look again, then ask himself, “Was it really that blue the last time I looked?”

And somewhere around North Miami, or perhaps Hollywood, there is a stretch of beachfront (continued on next page)

“it’s easy enough to adopt the cynic’s viewpoint that the Sunshine State has become a vast concrete and plastic playground. But there’s another Florida out there”
The ranger station at Lostman’s River is a halfway stopover for those who make the trip by water, and it stands out sharply in its remote loneliness.

The names given the waterways which provide a lacework pattern to this part of the coast are misleading. Shark River, Broad River, Haulover River, Lostman’s River all suggest cypress tree-lined streams meandering back into the depths of a forbidding swamp, waiting to swallow up the unwary traveler.

In truth, they are part of a delta-like network of channels which forms the mouth of the “River of Grass” called the Everglades. That huge expanse of marsh is constantly drained by nature across a plain almost as wide as the state with a relentless flow to the sea. Beneath the sawgrass of the interior and the cypress and mahogany closer to the coast, the water moves along its journey, often just below the surface.

Here, where the mangroves mark the coast, the water has dug the arteries which carry it on to meet the salt water, but they are not true rivers, and the water movement is more a result of tidal action than of river currents.

But because they are channels and because here the water is deeper—maybe a foot or so compared to the inches or less covering the inland sawgrass—roots some of the islands are high enough so palm clusters have taken root and clean white sandy beaches offer their temptation.

From an airborne vantage point, many things can be observed that might escape the notice of travelers in car or boat. Cattle never seem to be aware of a plane overhead. Deer left definitely take notice and either freeze in place or bound away to nearest tree cover. Looking down at Elliott Key (far left), part of the Biscayne National Monument, Pilot’s eye view of Florida Bay, pilots can see mangroves and many bays, as well as the mangrove and palm clusters. The vastness of the Everglades gave way to the fast-growth residential areas around Fort Myers and much of the lower gulf coast. But even along the man-made canals the sunshine glows as warmly and as welcome as it does on the mangroves and the palmettos. And the sand of any beach is as soft to the feet of a sunbather who reached it by car as it is to those who travel by boat.

It’s all Florida. It’s all still right out there. The cynics who believe otherwise simply need another vantage point.
Strange Ways Animals Eat

You may think eating is the simplest and easiest thing animals do. But when you think about the strange food they eat and the strange places they eat it, you may wonder how some of them manage to eat at all.

The big, clumsy walrus of the far north stands on his head much of the time to eat. He dives into the sea until his head reaches the bottom. There with his big tusks he rakes up clams and other shell food. He sweeps the food into his mouth with his upper lip and strong bristles. Standing on his head under water, he doesn’t spend much time chewing. He cracks the shells with his back teeth, and swallows the meat along with the broken shells, sand and mud. His stomach sorts out the meat and digests it, and then throws up the waste which he spits out of his mouth.

If you watch a snake eat a big meal you may have trouble believing your eyes. Its mouth may look like it could get nothing in it larger than a small mouse. Yet, as a rule, snakes probably swallow whole prey bigger than most whales do. If you were watching a boa you might see it swallow a deer or sheep. You will never see a snake chew its food, unless you happen to watch a member of only one rare species. They have no teeth for chewing. They use their teeth only for defense and holding. So they must swallow their prey whole. This prey may be several times larger around than the snake.

To swallow such a huge mouthful the snake separates the front ends of its lower jaw. This is easy for it because the ends are held together only loosely by a ligament that stretches like a rubber band. At the back of the mouth the snake unbinds its upper and lower jaws. Without bones to hold the mouth in shape it becomes a monstrous opening. The snake pulls the prey inward with the jaws on one side while pushing the set on the other side forward for a new grip. Thus, in seesaw fashion the snake works its meal into its mouth and into its stomach, which stretches like rubber to several times its normal size.

If you have watched a snake eat you possibly wondered, before the long meal was over, how it breathed while its mouth was so full and stretched so tight. It breathes through an extension of its windpipe that runs along the floor of the mouth out beyond the lower jaw. It takes in air through this extended tube as a diver breathes through a snorkel. And to protect its delicate, slender tongue under this enormous pressure the snake draws it back into a sheath. Fortunately for the snake, such big meals may last for several months.

Snakes swallow eggs whole. Most of them break the shells by wrapping themselves around a tree limb and tightening their bodies until the shells break. Some have spike-like projections on the backbones which push through tissue and project into the gullet. Here by compressing muscles the snake “sweat” the eggs in half.

A snake is not the only animal that does not use teeth for chewing. Actually, more animals eat without teeth than with them. Birds and turtles have no teeth. Many insects, such as grasshoppers and cockroaches, have gizzards that grind their food. True bugs, order of Hemiptera, have no jaws. Thus they cannot nibble. They suck juices from plants or animals.

Some spiders, like snakes, have teeth only for defense and holding prey. But they, as a rule, live on a liquid diet. The spider injects a digestive juice inside the body of its prey. This fluid dissolves the tissue it comes in contact with. The spider then sucks out its meal as soup.

The larva (maggots) of true flies are meat eaters. They emit a chemical that dissolves meat. The larva then absorbs the liquid food.

The lamprey also lives on a liquid diet. It has no jaws. Its mouth is a suction cup with a tongue full of cone-shaped teeth in it. When the lamprey wants a meal, it attaches itself to a fish with its suction cup mouth. Then it raps the body of the fish with the teeth on its tongue. Through the opening made, the lamprey sucks out the body juices for its meal.

A mosquito, to get a meal, pierces your skin with a complex set of lances, six in all. She keeps them neatly enclosed in a sheath. To be sure she will not miss a meal, once the lances are used, she injects a chemical which keeps your blood from clotting.

The matamata turtle makes like a vacuum cleaner to get a meal. Its jawsbones are weak and rubbery. They serve little more than to help make a big loophole for a mouth. But it makes such a strong suction when it opens its mouth that a flood of water rushes in carrying everything about it that is not anchored. Later the turtle spews out the water, keeping any food that came in with it.

You may have wondered how oysters and other mollusks that spend their entire lives stuck to a rock ever manage to eat. They have adapted very large gills that secrete a sticky mucus. Edible animal and vegetable matter flowing through sticks to them and is eaten.

People who have had to go to a dentist to have their teeth adjusted so that they would all come together properly when they eat can appreciate the problem of the sea urchin. It has five teeth that point toward the center of its mouth. They come together like spokes in a wheel at the hub.

A lugworm, to eat, pushes the front part of its alimentary system outside of its body and inside out. Sand sticks to the protruded part. Then it is drawn back with the sand on the inside of the system. The worm takes its food from the edible matter sticking to the sand.

There seems no end to the marvelous ways animals have adapted to the strange needs for eating just about everything in every sort of place.

Illustrations by Wallace Hughes
Haul Seines, Trawlers & Trotlines

harvesting Okeechobee's renewable resource

In July, 1976, the legislature authorized the use of haul seines and trawls in Lake Okeechobee. The new legislation also provided for the tagging and subsequent sale of certain species of gamefish through a commercial fishery utilization program monitored and supervised by the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. Although Okeechobee's fishing is still open, in (a 1977 tournament on the lake, produced national three-day record.)

Fishing by commercial fishing methods and sold, the bass and pickerel cannot. The gamefish which can be sold are known collectively as "scale fish."

Soon the pocket is emptied and the towboat is hauling the fish back to Clewiston. Within an hour, the fish are sliding down the chute into Jim Nesbitt's fish house.

Nesbitt is a fisherman who is more enterprising than most. He built a fish house to handle his own haul seine catch, opened his facilities to other fishermen, and soon had a full-time business on his hands. He quickly had to double his storage capacity and now runs the largest operation of its kind on the lake.

As the fish come down the chute, they're graded and sorted—scale fish, catfish, rough fish such as gar and shad, and undersized scale fish.

The scale fish are immediately placed in vats of ice water to be thoroughly cooled. They are then individually tagged with one-time use metal tags as required by law, then weighed. The catfish are skinned and weighed and the rough fish are either placed in a cooler for possible sale or are hauled to the dump.

Currently a weak market exists for the rough fish. The shad are used as crab bait by the coastal crabbers while some of the other species are used by tourists attraction "alligator farms" as gator food.

The Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission conducts a marketing program for the local industry and hopes the rough fish will eventually be used as pet food, fertilizer or some other product. But, for now, potential investors are waiting for the commercial fishing program to get beyond the trial stage before building processing plants.

On the other hand, the scale fish are eagerly ac-
cepted by Florida seafood buyers. Retailers say they have little trouble selling the fish, even in the summer when many people catch their own.

In the first nine months of the program, Nesbitt was spending approximately $20,000 weekly purchasing fish and paying wages for the tagging crew; a sizable economic wallop in a town the size of Clewiston.

While the economic benefits of large scale commercial fishing are obvious, there are other possible gains to be made by removing large amounts of fish from the lake. Biologists working on Lake Okeechobee believe the commercial seining program can help to maintain water quality and to im-

By Michael Miller

cont continued on next page
prove sport fishing as well as utilizing an economic resource which traditionally has been wasted. Many fishermen tend to agree.

Southwest of Observation Island, in the western half of the lake, a trawler cuts his engine and a Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission wildlife officer eases his patrol boat alongside. The officer is new to the area and doesn’t recognize the fisherman.

“Doing any good this morning?”

“Aw, I’m catching a few. Mostly rocks, though.” The fisherman holds up a piece of limestone from the lake bottom.

At the officer’s request, the fisherman produces his fishing license and his commercial permit. He also throws in a little Okeechobee history.

“Sam-don’t-give-a-damn-Thomas,” he says. “I’ve been guiding on this lake since I was 11. But the fishing got so bad that, last year, I told my folks to quit coming. This year, though, it’s starting to pick up again.”

Thomas thinks commercial fishing is improving Okeechobee’s sport fishing. He said, “My dad commercial fished here in nineteen-thirty-four. I started fishing commercially in thirty-four, along with my dad and a lot of other folks, and the bass fishing never was so good.”

Thomas echoes an opinion held by many on the lake these days: that commercial fishing can make sport fishing better.

Things haven’t always been that way, however. Twice in the past, commercial seining has been made legal in Lake Okeechobee only to be closed by the demands of sport fishermen.

Nothing puts a sportsman’s teeth on edge more than the idea of a commercial operation cleaning out his favorite fishing hole. Traditionally, sportsmen have felt that every fish that’s taken with a net is one less that might’ve wound up on their stringers.

But the art of fishing has entered the realm of science. Fishermen now have a direct link with biologists working to improve fishing. Fishery biologists have learned that, under certain circumstances, gamefish populations can be improved by the pressure of commercial fishing.

(Continued on next page)
When bait seining and trawls were outlawed on Lake Okeechobee in 1948 due to public sentiment, the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission began an experimental seining program and an investigation of fishing practices to determine how much phosphorus, nitrogen and other organic material in the waste water and has begun to noticeably affect gamefish populations.

As nutrients accumulate at an increasing rate, the plant life of the lake responds accordingly. When heavily fertilized, the plant community increases rapidly. If conditions worsen, algal blooms are apt to occur which can result in reduced dissolved oxygen and even fish kills in extreme situations.

Fortunately, gamefish usually require more dissolved oxygen than most rough fish such as gar and mudfish and are the most severely affected by conditions causing a fish kill.

Even when a fish kill doesn't occur, the increased plant growth favors a corresponding increase in forage fish such as gizzard shad which crowd gamefish out of the better feeding and cover areas.

The Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission research program has found early symptoms of these conditions in Lake Okeechobee. The sport fishery may be affected over the next few years if the trend continues without intensive management.

One of the only management tools for use on Lake Okeechobee with any real hope for success is the large-scale removal of fish. This can best be accomplished by commercial fishing methods such as trawls and haul seines.

A year ago, a trial commercial seining program was authorized by the Legislature. The program was set up to be continually monitored and to be closed or suspended if evidence indicated damage to Lake Okeechobee's sport fishery.

The program attempts to accomplish three major goals: (1) To utilize an economic resource which has traditionally been wasted; (2) To remove a portion of the excess nutrients trapped in the lake; and, (3) To prevent deterioration of sport fishing in Lake Okeechobee.

A decline of Okeechobee's sport fishing would be a symptom of a greater problem—the overenrichment and subsequent deterioration in the quality of the lake's water.

While commercial harvest of fish should not be considered as a solution for the water quality problem, it is a step in the right direction.

It is estimated that removal of 10 million pounds of fish would eliminate about four percent of the phosphorus and about 10 percent of the nitrogen annually trapped in Lake Okeechobee.

Each organism in the lake, from the lowestlife to the biggest bass, consumes and stores nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen. If it dies in the lake, its stored nutrients remain in the system. If it is caught and removed or eaten by something which is caught and removed, the nutrients stored in its body are also removed.

Sport fishermen harvest only about 400,000 pounds of fish from Lake Okeechobee each year, and, before haul seines and trawls were legalized, the commercial catfish take was less than two million pounds.

Yet, according to proven fish management practices, we should be annually harvesting half the total pounds of fish which the lake supports, or about 22 million pounds.

The market value of this amount of fish is in the millions of dollars. The resource is there, largely untapped, and it's a renewable resource.

As a measure of protection for the sportman, the Commission has established regulations prohibiting the taking of largemouth bass and pickerel by commercial fishing methods as well as the sale of these fish. Additionally, areas have been set aside within the lake which are closed to trawlers and haul seines.

To see that regulations are understood as well as enforced, wildlife officers patrol the lake and check the various wholesale fish houses in the area.

As an additional safeguard, gamefish taken by commercial fishing methods are individually tagged with one-time use metal tags which are distributed by the Commission. While the cost of these tags is low enough to be negligible to the fish dealer, it provides necessary revenue for the funding of the commercial seining program and helps to pay for continued research on Lake Okeechobee.

Vernon Ogilvie (facing page), a Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission fishery biologist assigned to the Lake Okeechobee research project, "works up" part of the day's sample. At left, a Lake Okeechobee fly fisherman who's pleased with afternoon's catch of bass.

Photo by William Green

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1977
next to his mate, man's most prized possession down through the ages has probably been a knife of some sort. It is estimated that 90 percent of American males own or carry a knife of some kind. In this state hundreds of sportsmen proudly wear a belt knife that was born in Florida nearly 40 years ago—probably the first quality handmade knife to appear in modern times. It has since become world famous.

Inside an unpretentious backyard workshop, hidden inside a sprawling citrus grove within the city limits of Orlando, gentle mannered W. D. ("Bo") Randall, Jr., and a small staff of dedicated assistants fashion, by hand the famed Randall sporting and fighting knives.

Into the Randall shop and knife museum walk astronauts, Alaskan big game guides, soldiers of fortune and many other men to make "knife talk" with Randall and his son, Gary, the shop manager.

"We have never heard of a dissatisfied buyer"

The RANDALL KNIFE

They place orders—knowing it may take nearly two years to fill such orders.

Grateful letters sent Bo Randall by some 25,000 satisfied customers scattered from Iwo to Italy, from Arctic tundras to African jungles, speak glowingly of the superb knives. Rugged outdoorsmen tell reverently how the gleaming blades never fail...how they retain a wonderfully sharp edge even when used inadvertently to lop off the heads of big nails, or perhaps to skin out three huge brown bears in one day. (This writer has hunted with the veteran Alaska big game guide who reported this feat. The man added: "I know of no other knife that could have done such a job.")

Randall knives have been used for such things as cutting quickly through a 6-inch manila mooring rope—to free a ship in an emergency. Or to pry open the canopy of a downed fighter plane—after which the blade was still so sharp the rescuing medical corpsman could operate immediately to save the injured pilot's life.

Bo Randall once made a knife to order for a college student who yearned to kill a bear single-handed, like Davy Crockett. And he made another for a Texan who wished to brag that he owned the world's largest Bowie. (It weighed 8 pounds!). U-2 pilot Francis G. Powers was carrying one of the sought after blades when he was shot down over Russia in 1960.

During World War II, Major Bong, the famed American ace, paid the equivalent of $500 for a used Randall fighting knife. And about that time, Maj. Ralph K. Halterman, 8th U.S. Infantry, sent Bo this unsolicited testimonial: "I spent three years in the South Pacific as a jungle fighter. On New Georgia, I bought a Randall knife from a Marine pilot who was being sent home as a casualty. The blade was a work of art and accounted for a large percentage of the 364 enemy I received credit for killing with individual arms."

Bo Randall made his first knife in 1938, after a friend fell in love with the beautiful blade. He decided if he could make another...and another...and another...and another... (continued on next page)
Randall has yet to have a knife returned by a dissatisfied customer, this in spite of a refund pledge which the American Gunsmiths Guild once called, "A guarantee that no one else dares give." (I guarantee that you will see no rust, no marks on the knife you order, that it is the finest you have ever seen at any price. And I make no hesitation in saying I will give you glasses and the purchase price of the knife you order, if that is the finest you have even seen at any price. And I make no hesitation in saying I will give you glasses and the purchase price of the knife you order, if that is the finest you have ever seen at any price and I make no hesitation in saying I will give you glasses and the purchase price of the knife you order, if that is the finest you have ever seen at any price.)

Unlike many of his competitors, Randall makes no secret of how he builds a knife. Here are his step-by-step suggestions, should you wish to make a belt blade of your own:

1. Obtain a piece of carbon tool steel knife stock.
2. Heat it cherry red and hammer out the rough blade in the general shape desired.
3. Grind the rough forged blade to the size and shape of the blade desired.
4. Harden the blade by heating it cherry red and then immersing it in tempering oil. Draw out the brittleness and internal stresses by tempering the blade at low heat until it becomes a straw blue color and can be cut with a new file.
5. Grind in lines, bevels and contours and remove roughness.
6. Use a coarse hone and true the cutting edge, removing any remaining waves and unevenness.
7. Re-grind the blade on a fine grit wheel to remove scratches made by the coarse hone.
8. Smooth the blade, first with coarse and then with fine grit emery cloth.
9. Polish the blade on a glued-up, coarse emery wheel.
10. Cut and shape the hilt from one-quarter inch brass. Drill a hole and file it to rectangular shape to fit the handle tang. Fit hilt to the blade and solder in place.
11. Fit the handle to the tang, cutting rectangular lugs in pieces of fiber, plastic or leather. Slip in place and glue each separately. Drill a piece of one-half inch Duralumin for the butt and recess it to fit the tang. Drive it on tightly and peen it into place, or thread end of tang and use a nut. When the glue is thoroughly dry, roughly shape the handle with a coarse file. Finish shaping with a finer file. Then smooth it, first with coarse and then fine emery paper. The hilt and butt are file and sanded as the handle is shaped.
12. Polish the blade with a medium grit glued-up emery wheel. Polish the hilt and butt on a muslin wheel charged with polishing compound.
13. Sharpen the blade on a medium grit hone. Always use special honing oil for all honing.
14. Polish the blade on a fine grit glued-up emery wheel and again polish the hilt and butt.
15. Give a final sharpening to the blade, using a fine grit hone.
16. For final polishing of the blade, use a hard polishing wheel to remove the last fine hone scratches. Give a final polish to the hilt and butt and the final polish to the handle with a soft muslin wheel.
17. Make or have made a sheath patterned to fit the blade with a stop for the drill so the point cannot pierce the sheath and with slits along the sides to prevent cutting of the stitches. Use a keeper strap and fasteners to hold the knife in the sheath.

Caution: Grinding Nos. 3 and 5 requires great skill in getting the lines and bevels of the blade true by eye. These are dangerous operations, also requiring good gooseneck, for you can't see where you are putting in your steel from getting into the eyes. The grinding dust can be used as a roughing and tempering tool on the blade. Hot.

Muslin wheel polishing of the hilt, blade, and sheath. The final polishing of the sharp blade are also dangerous but the buff wheel can easily snatch the blade from one's grasp and cause it to fly through the air.

The secret of mailing (25 cents) Bo will send your catalog which contains these knife-making, and other, instructions. (proper way to sharpen a blade, and how to order) Address is P.O. Box 1585, Orlando, Florida 32805.

"The knife making began as a hobby—and still is," he says. "I wouldn't depend on it for a living I would have had to give it up long ago since each blade requires many hours of hand labor. Meanwhile, it does provide a living for ten full-time employees, about half of whom are war veterans."

Leaping through the thousands of letters in Bo's correspondence file can be quite an experience. (Incidentally, he answers nearly all in longhand.) Judge Roy S. Tinney, secretary of the American Academy of Arts and a world-recognized knife authority, told Randall: 'You are making knives destined to become family heirlooms. I implore you: never let mounting orders tempt you to lower the quality.'

Mrs. Harold L. Ikes presented her husband with a fine Randall blade. The first knife in space was a Randall. Bo had made a special, multi-purpose, blade for each of the seven original astronauts—each to his own design—blades for which he refused payment. Astronaut Gordon Cooper returned his knife to Bo after carrying it with him through the historic 23 orbits. This knife is now on display in the Randell museum, for which there is no charge admission. A worried Detroit barkeeper placed an order that included the terse explanation: 'I'm not a hoodlum. I want this knife because a woman comes in here who has already tried to stab me.'

An Air Force lieutenant writes from Alaska: 'Of all the brands of knives used by 60 men in an Air Force Arctic Circle survival school, yours was the only one they learned to use.'

A mother reports that the knife she purchased for her husband years ago is still so highly prized that he has actually designated in his will which of their sons shall inherit it. And an employee of the U.S. Embassy in Italy asked that his Randall be mailed in a plain wrapper, saying he was afraid to show it to many of his friends who think of knives in terms of midnight stabbings.

The most pointed letter of all, perhaps, came from an old Northwoods trapper who said simply: 'I'll be a flesh-eating locust if this isn't the best damn knife ever made!'
A Place To Hunt Doves

The average family moves once every five years. There's a problem in finding new schools and locating a family doctor. Even worse, you have to find new places to hunt! It's not easy for urban and suburban hunters to meet and get to know farmers. Yet most of the dove shooting is on private land—either farms or ranches.

Traditionally in the Southeast, most dove hunting is a social way of shooting, involving from 10 to 50 gunners. The number of hunters invited to participate usually depends on the size of the field and how large the concentration of mourning doves.

If you're not a good friend of a farmer, or friend of the farmer, you don't get invited to the big shoots. And you sure can't get up your own crowd of 10 or 20 hunters and descend on some rancher and expect to get permission to hunt.

These days it takes a quarter of a million dollars to be a one-horse farmer and a farmer can get himself obligated for a million dollars with a medium-sized operation. He may be willing to lease shooting rights to a group of hunters. If he does, chances are he knows some of them well. He's probably not interested in charging a daily fee for shooting. The dollars he might take in don't mean much when compared with his investment.

Farmers know that shooting privileges are a premium item. Many put on dove shoots to pay off their social obligations in the community. They invite bankers to keep them from calling in the mortgage. They invite doctors to improve their chances of getting medical attention. They invite preachers to soothe their feelings of guilt for not showing often enough at services and with the hope they'll make a few points towards a heavenly journey.

Photo by Charles Dickey

Photo by Waldo Hughes

When you come right down to it, there's not a lot the average urban hunter can do in return for permission to hunt. Gaining access to farms is more than a negative factor of agreeing to close gates and not to shoot cows. In the long run, the best bet of the suburban hunters is to somehow develop a sincere friendship with farmers.

This is not an article on human relationships. Most farmers are friendly people. In some manner, the dove hunter wanting a place to hunt must develop their friendship. In my experience, two hunters are more likely to get permission than a dozen or so.

Southern hunters have been spoiled by having too many doves in the past. To many, it's not a dove shoot unless the field is saturated with gunners and flooded with doves. If they are not covered up with doves, the shoot is not a success.

(continued on next page)

By Charles Dickey
I think this attitude is a mistake and one which will have to be changed, at least as far as the average hunter is concerned. Please allow me to say that I am not opposed to the large social shoots. I have never turned down an invitation to one and never will as long as my sanity is working.

Most of the dove hunting I enjoy in a season is by myself or with one or two other gunners. I actually enjoy this type of hunting more than the shooting at a large social bag-out. Where a field is inundated with doves, even if I shoot horribly I still get my limit of 12 birds in an hour. On lucky days, I may be through in 20 or 30 minutes. What's the hurry? I don't know. That's the way social shoots are conducted.

The social shoots are exactly that! Shoots. There is no hunting, except for a place to put your shooting stool and another box of shells.

With hunting alone I get a quality experience whether you pull the trigger or not. This is not true of social shoots. At these, if the birds don't come, the shoot is a failure. The gunner who first gets a limit is a hero. The gunner who bags only 10 doves, rather than a limit of 12, is a failure and has lost his manhood.

I've been on a lot of social dove shoots. No one has ever asked me if I had a pleasant afternoon. They always say, "Did you get your limit?" or "How long did it take you to get your limit?"

I like the dove hunts by myself or with another hunter because it is easier to get permission from a farmer. More importantly, I actually hunt for the birds, putter about for three or four hours and delight in being outdoors. I enjoy a quality experience for me. I am pleased if I bag 10 doves or a limit in an afternoon. I hope I see a lot of doves and get many chances to fire my shotgun. But the number of doves I take home or the times I pull the trigger has little to do with the pleasure of the afternoon. I've had some memorable enjoyable afternoons when I shot two or three doves, or none.

Depending on how warm it is, I like to start running for doves about 2:00 or 3:00 p.m. The hunts are more enjoyable if there's a retriever along, such as a Labrador, or a pointing breed which will fetch doves such as a setter, Brittany or pointer.

At this time of afternoon, I know the doves are not moving much. Mostly they are sitting in trees pruning and leafing and resting. But perhaps the dog will flush one from the edge of a cornfield and I will get a quick jump shot. Perhaps a dove changing from one wood to another will offer a fast passing shot. An abandoned sandy road, perhaps two or three doves will dart in trying to dust or pick up grit.

As there are more signs of dove movement about 4:00 p.m., with the first forays and scouts for feeding fields, I try to pick up a flight line or pattern. It's not always easy. At times, the doves themselves don't seem to know what they're doing. More likely, they know what they're doing but I can't figure it out.

If I can pick up a direction, I try to move under a flight line and hide in a fencerow or some handy cover. Perhaps there is a solitary walnut or pecan tree that passing doves land in to look over the scenery. If so, I may wait near it for awhile. If the doves come in, I get some shooting. If they don't, after a bit I move on.

I usually carry a string of four to eight dove decoys. I have never had much luck in doves peeling off and landing amongst them as scap, ringnecks or redheads do with a set of blocks (sometimes). Actually, I'm not concerned with the doves trying to light in the same low tree with the decoys. I just hope that the dovesswerve for a look and thus come within range of my shotgun.

I've had better luck with decoys around watering ponds late in the afternoon than any other locations. As the doves circle looking for a bare landing spot, they get a good look at the decoys. They may take a swing by them. At times, I am sure the doves swing because they want to go in that direction and the decoys have nothing to do with it. Even so, I feel the decoys are worthwhile. If the birds are looking at them, they're not as likely to see me.

By 5:00 on a strolling afternoon, if I am lucky, I may find a field that doves are feeding in. If there's a convenient low, bare tree, I may quickly put up the decoys. Sometimes I do not put up the decoys. With only one or two hunters, you have to stay portable. When the shooting starts, the doves may change their flight lines and it's necessary for the hunters to keep adjusting their positions.

There's usually a pattern in the way doves enter and leave a field. With only a couple of hunters, the pattern may not be interrupted much. It's important to note the direction most of the birds take when departing a field. In fact, all afternoon you watch for main directions and look for possible watering spots and roosting areas.

Late in the afternoon, I like to move to a small pond and wait. After the doves feed, they usually stop some place for a dry water landing. It's important that I watch the direction of doves leaving the pond. It may not be far to their roosting area.

Sometimes I find a water hole which a lot of doves are using and the shooting is fast and furious, perhaps the only shooting I have had all afternoon. One advantage of only a couple of hunters working a feeding field, pond or roost is that they are not as likely to "burn it out" as a large group of 15 or 20 gunners.

Doves may put up with light shooting pressure without changing their feeding, water and roosting patterns and locations. But under sudden heavy pressure from a lot of shooters, they may leave the entire area.

If I can pick up a flight line 50 or 100 yards away from a watering pond, I try to get under it and stay away from the water. I take passing shots as the doves zip by. They are free to go ahead and water without my disruptive shotgun. I'm hoping that when I come around two or three days later, the doves will still be using the same watering pond.

Four years ago, I worked the same small pond all season and always got some shooting. I never found a large concentration there but I don't need a lot of birds at one time. A few drizzling in is sufficient. Of course, it was not the same flock of doves all season. Local doves moving down in the area, may move out in September or October and be replaced by other migrants. These are population shifts through the hunting season. But however the doves migrate about, if you don't burn out a spot, the chances are that you can go back later the same day. Twenty or 30 minutes before the close of shooting hours, I try to move quickly to a potential roosting area. If I have been perspectve, perhaps I have made a good guess. The number of times roosting together varies greatly. Sometimes it's only a dozen or so and at other times they pour into a clump of live oaks by the hundreds. They also use water oaks and quite often coniferous trees, such as pines and cedars.

Regardless of the size of a roosting area, I try never to get under the roosting trees and shoot. The birds may not come back again. I like to find a shooting spot on an approach 100 yards or so from the roost. It is possible to see some wild shooting in the dwindling light. The doves which get by my gun, and sometimes that is all of them, are not bothered at the roost.

A dog which will find and fetch doves really pays off in the few legal minutes of shooting you get on a flight line to a roost. There may be a flurry of shooting for only three or four minutes in the last minutes of the afternoon. If you have a dog to take care of dead or crippled birds, you can concentrate on the shooting.

On my afternoons of patterting, I do not get shooting at all the stops and locations. But somewhere along the line, I usually find a few birds. Perhaps I walk a mile or two, not much exercise but more like a pleasant stroll with dog, companion and gun. There's no way I can lose on this sort of leisurely hunting. Regardless of the number of birds in my bag, I have a successful hunt.

Incidentally, some of the wildlife management areas provide dove hunting opportunities. By the latter part of the dove season, parts of Cecil Webb WMA are usually burned and this attracts birds. The Commission's food plots on several other management areas pull in fair numbers of doves at times, and there are also considerable dove fields managed by the Commission in various locales. Check with regional headquarters and they can give you some up-to-date tips on what the doves are doing.
The old buck snaps awake; some sound, some faint warning of danger breaking into his late afternoon nap. Lying concealed in a dense clump of gallberries, only his ears move, searching, trying to identify the alarm. Cautiously he lifts his head, nostrils flaring, sampling the breeze for danger. Only the faint scent of woodsmoke taints the familiar smells of the piney woods. He hears nothing unusual: a grey squirrel barking in the river swamp below, the October wind in the pines. A crow calls in the distance. Appetite getting the best of his caution, the buck gets to his feet, rump first, on joints stiffened with age. Again he waits, senses searching for danger signs. Reassured, he scratches his ear with a hind foot then moves down the ridge toward the swamp.

Feeling the excitement of the rut, he picks a fight with a sparkleberry bush. Brow lowered and legs straining, he rushes at the bush, gouging and shaking with his antlers. After a moment, the scrap subsides into a methodical antler polishing. Though not as large as in younger years, the antlers are still good. The heavy ears and long, heavy ears in the late sunlight. Peaceful now, he licks the sap oozing from the newly inflicted wounds in the bush. Then, with one last thrust against the resisting sparkleberry and a quick sideways bound, the battle is over. Stifflegged, he trots the final distance to the swamp, sinking to the dewclaws in the bottomland mud.

The still surface of a pool, mirroring the frost-reddened tupelo and cypress, is broken as he wades in to drink. The rippling of his passage cast undulating waves of light on the tree trunks, startling him with their movement. Head up, alert; water drips from his muzzle making tiny bell-like sounds in the evening quiet. Another sip and he moves on to feed.

The swamp floor is broken by mounds and gullies, deposited and eroded by the river at flood stage. Irregular terrain, seasonal floods and rich soil support the growth of dozens of kinds of trees and shrubs—many good for a meal. Climbing a low hammock, he nabs among newly fallen leaves for acorns. Although the buck shaves the acorns of the floodplain with other hips. In good shape, he'll have little trouble in the lean months ahead. Unless a hunter's bullet finds him, he'll most likely survive the winter and maybe several more to come.

But eventually he will die here among the bottomland hardwoods and the hillside pines. It doesn't matter how. It's of no great importance whether his bones whiten among the gallberries or if his rack adorns a paneled wall. Fighting the same bushes, eating the same acorns, he will be here as long as the swamp and the hillside remain. —Michael Miller

The Florida panther, this state's most endangered animal, may be teetering on the brink of extinction.
and animals that were found destroying livestock could be taken by special permit at any time. In 1955, the panther was removed from the native-game animal list and given complete legal protection by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.

Since then, even with panthers legally protected from deliberate killing, human commercial developments and long term economic projects have continually encroached upon the diminishing critical panther habitat. At the present time, it is not known whether or where a viable or reproducing population of panthers still occurs in Florida. A few indisputable records of the species exist, but they are mostly of dead animals and altogether do not reveal a particular population that might be in any way feasible to manage.

If the Florida panther is to be saved from extinction, the first step is to find a viable popula-

(continued from preceding page)

tion. The next step, if a viable population is found, is to determine the critical habitat necessary for the continued survival of that population. The Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission has recently begun an investigation in an attempt to locate any extant panther population that can be protected and managed. This is being done by the Florida Panther Record Clearinghouse at the Commission’s Wildlife Research Laboratory in Gainesville and by systematic field searches for panther sign in areas most likely to contain panthers based on presently available information.

If you see a panther or its sign, you should do your best to collect some tangible evidence of the animal’s presence. This can best be done by photographing the animal itself or its sign (tracks, scapes, kills, etc.), by making plaster-of-Paris casts (continued on next page)
Adult panthers are usually silent, but they are capable of making loud roars and grunts. They are known to communicate with each other using a variety of vocalizations, including roars, grunts, and growls. These vocalizations are mainly used for warning other panthers of potential dangers, expressing territorial dominance, and attracting mates.

When a panther is hunting, it is not uncommon for it to make a unique sound known as a "clatter". This sound is made by the panther as it leaps through the underbrush, and is believed to be used as a form of communication between panthers.

The Florida panther is a solitary animal, and it is usually found alone. They are known to travel great distances in search of food, and they are able to cover large areas of land in a relatively short amount of time. This is because they are excellent climbers and can easily scale trees and other obstacles.

To help protect the Florida panther, several conservation efforts have been put in place. One of the most important of these is the Florida Panther Recovery Plan, which was developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. This plan outlines the steps that are needed to ensure the survival of the Florida panther in the wild.

Some of the key components of the Florida Panther Recovery Plan include:

- Monitoring the population of Florida panthers
- Protecting the habitats of Florida panthers
- Providing education and outreach to the public about the importance of protecting the Florida panther
- Conducting research on the biology and behavior of the Florida panther

In addition to these efforts, there are also several state and federal laws that are in place to protect the Florida panther. These laws prohibit the hunting and trapping of Florida panthers and require that any part of a Florida panther be obtained with the proper permit.

As of now, the Florida panther population is estimated to be around 120 individuals. Although this number is small, it is a significant improvement over the 20 individuals that were recorded in the early 1970s. With continued efforts to protect and conserve the Florida panther, there is hope that this species will be able to recover and thrive in the wild.
Although there is a great deal of variation in color, the Florida panther is usually a uniform rusty or tawny cinnamon-buff color (deer-colored) on the back and whitish underneath. Panther kittens are yellowish-brown with dark brown or blackish bands around the tail until they are approximately six months of age and have blue eyes. Although many people in Florida recognize that panthers are black, there has never been any conclusive evidence to prove that there has ever been a black panther in Florida.

Black or blackish. Panther kittens are yellowish-brown with dark brown or blackish bands around the tail until they are approximately six months of age and have blue eyes. Although many people in Florida recognize that panthers are black, there has never been any conclusive evidence to prove that there has ever been a black panther in Florida.

The track of a panther consists of four toe marks in a semi-circle ahead of the imprint of a ball pad. The claws are encased in a sheath and do not show in a normal track. The heel pad usually shows three toes in the back. When walking, the hind foot is often placed in the imprint made by the front foot. The smallest track of a four-ranging panther is 2½ inches which is larger than even the toe marks of a bobcat. Five or six-inch long tracks are rarely seen in Florida unless the panther is a very big one.

The principle foods of the Florida panther are white-tailed deer, wild hogs and raccoons. They will, however, take almost any prey of suitable size. If the prey is a deer, the killing bite will be on the back of the neck or on the base of the skull—the tiny foreface holes will be two inches apart. A bobcat, lacking the jaw power and weight for the neck bite and head attack, attacks by leaping on the animal and rolling it while biting into the throat to suffocate it or sever the jugular vein.

A bobcat’s canine teeth are only one inch apart at most. Dogs attack the flanks and rear and do not attack the throat until the deer is down. Great care is necessary in diagnosing kills to distinguish between the marks left on the carcass by the primary predator and those left by scavengers. To be positive that any clues left on the prey were made by the primary predator, it is almost necessary to beat the scavengers to it, which is pretty hard to do in Florida.

If you are one of those people lucky enough to see a Florida panther or its sign, you’ll always have a good story to tell your grandchildren. But if you can provide the information we’ve requested, you might have an even better story to tell.

When walking, the panther’s hind foot is often placed in the imprint made by the forepaw.
A new date is scheduled to go down in the annals of bass fishing history. The first of these historic events might be viewed as June 2, 1932, the day George Perry established the world record by landing a 22-pound, 4-ounce bigmouth bass in south Georgia. The second, June 6-8, 1967, marks the launching of the first bass fishing tournament by the Bass Anglers Sportsman Society at Beaver Lake in Arkansas. The third, being billed as the “granddaddy” of all bass fishing seminars and reportedly the world’s largest gathering of bass anglers, will be the Big Bass Seminar, scheduled for December 2-4, 1977 at the Sheraton Twin Towers Hotel and Convention Center in Orlando.

For almost half a century bass fishermen have tried to top the bass record set by George Perry. For the past decade much of the complexion of bass fishing has undergone rapid and dramatic change from contemplative to competitive. The skyrocket growth of bass clubs and bass tournaments. The Big Bass Seminar, on the first weekend of December, will herald a new era of conservation concern and communication between those who use the resource (the bass angler) and those who manage the resource (the bass biologist) and hopefully create a cooperative concept for the future of bass fishing in Florida and in the nation.

The Big Bass Seminar is coordinated by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission with the active support, collaboration and sponsorship of the Florida Federation of B.A.S.S. Chapters, the American Bass Fisherman, the National Bass Association, the United Bass Fisherman and the Poor Boy Bass Association. A non-profit educational program any revenue generated by the Big Bass Seminar will be awarded as a grant for continuing bass research studies and bass fishing information.

Attendance at the Big Bass Seminar will be limited to 2,500 anglers with admission tickets issued on a first-come, first-served basis and available by advance registration through the Big Bass Seminar, P. O. Box 15602, Orlando, Florida 32807. Holders of seminar tickets will be admitted to all discussion, demonstrations, and presentations as well as the Big Bass Theater featuring bass fishing films from Florida and around the world, plus unlimited visits and tours of the Big Bass Exhibit and Display Center.

The Big Bass Banquet scheduled for Saturday, December 3, will be limited to 1,500 anglers with tickets issued on a first-come, first-served basis. General admission will be available at the seminar site and will admit anglers to the exhibit and display center and the special attractions including fishing and casting demonstrations.

The Big Bass Seminar is an opportunity for fishermen to meet and greet some of America’s best bass anglers, to improve angling skills, to learn about bass and to have input and a voice in Florida’s fishing future. The Seminar program includes some of the biggies of the bass world including seven of the nation’s top professional bass tournament anglers, eight bass biologists with the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, one of America’s top bass fishing guides, and one speaker representing the attractive angles of angling, the female fisherman. In addition to the seminar speakers, special attention will be focused on special attractions scheduled for the exhibit center.

A visit to the Big Bass Seminar will give anglers the opportunity to preview new tackle and bass fishing equipment. One hundred tackle and equipment displays will be erected around an indoor pond which will feature a tackle testing arena. FLORIDA WILDLIFE will have a display in the exhibit center, so stop by and meet the editor and staff of Florida’s top outdoor and conservation publication.

The Big Bass Seminar is an unprecedented first with a state wildlife and fish agency and organized fishing clubs joining forces for the advancement of fishing and progressive conservation communications. When bass anglers and bass biologists get together and exchange ideas something good is bound to happen. With “Communication” being the key word for the seminar, each session and presentation will be followed by a discussion period for questions and answers and anglers registering in advance have the opportunity to submit their questions prior to the December assembly.

In summary, it might be stated that the Big Bass Seminar is designed to aid and assist bass fishermen. To establish an understanding and appreciation of the Florida black bass as America’s number one game fish and to perpetuate both Florida’s largemouth legacy and the art and pleasure of bass fishing. –Jim Floyd

**SEMINAR SPEAKERS and SUBJECTS**

**FORREST WOOD**

“The High Performance Bass Boat”

A discussion of the evolution of the bass boat

**STEPHEN SMITH**

“Black Bass Research in Florida”

A review of past, present and future bass studies

**TOM MANN**

“Successful Fishing with Crank Bait”

Tips, techniques and selecting a crank bait

**JOE CRUMPTON**

“On the Trail of the Bigmouth Bass”

Movement & behavior of bass as revealed by radio

**JIM ROGERS**

“The Silent Approach to Bass Fishing”

Achieving maximum results with the electric motor

**EDWIN MOYER**

“Will Bass Stocking Help Bass Fishing?”

A research report on the results of bass stocking

**BILL DANCE**

“Winning Ways with Plastic Worms”

Tips and techniques on fishing the plastic worm

**WILLIAM WEGNER & VICE WILLIAMS**

“Lake Drawdown”

Effect of extreme drawdown on bass populations

**JOHNNY MORRIS**

“What’s New for 1978”

A review of new tackle and equipment

**JACK HAINS**

“Between the Fish and the Fisherman”

Selection and maintenance of a bass fishing line

**SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS**

R. V. “GADABOUT” GADDIS

“The Fly Rod and The Bass”

“The Flying Fisherman” the third, homeless fisherman

ROY MARTIN

“The Science and Success of Surface Lure Fishing”

A discussion and surface lure fishing demonstration

D ALE CRIDER

“Pioneer Ethics and Florida’s Bass Fishing”

The environmental minstrel sings of fish & fowl

ANN STROEBEL

“Wonder Woman & her Monofilament Lure”

A discussion and demonstration of casting skills

**FOR R E T R O C DECEMBER 2-4, 1977**

**ORLANDO, FLORIDA**

**BIG BASS SEMINAR REGISTRATION FORM**

(Please Print or Type)

NAME __________________________

MAILING ADDRESS ______________________________

TELEPHONE ______________________________

CITY __________________________ STATE __________ ZIP CODE __________

**BIG BASS SEMINAR AT $5 PER PERSON**

( ) BIG BASS SEMINAR AT $5 PER PERSON ( ) SEND ADDITIONAL REGISTRATION FORMS

**BIG BASS BANQUET AT $15 PER PERSON**

( ) BIG BASS BANQUET AT $15 PER PERSON ( ) PLEASE SEND HOTEL RESERVATION FORMS

**Attach check or money order payable to Big Bass Seminar and mail to P. O. Box 15602, Orlando, Fla. 32807. Upon receipt of your registration fee, acknowledgment will be forwarded to you.**

SEPTEMBER/ OCTOBER 1977
Wilt which is the most important—people or fish or, people or animals? This question has been asked of mankind for centuries. Sometimes the question was asked seriously in an effort to understand the agency—the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. The chief argument against the Commission is that it is different.

Why should this one agency have constitutional status which differs from all the others? The following seeks to give you the reasons.

1. In 1946 the Commission undertook litigation to correct a pollution problem created by a citrus processing plant in Polk County. The plant management agreed out of court to correct the situation. This may have been the first anti-pollution action brought by a state agency in Florida—certainly it was the first that concerned fish and wildlife.

2. In 1948 the Commission—in order to fulfill its constitutional responsibility to protect the freshwater fish of Lake Okeechobee and the St. Johns River—successfully litigated against a special legislative act declaring Lake Okeechobee and a major portion of the St. Johns River to be salt water.

3. Early in its history the Commission recognized the concept of "endangered species"—long before the phrase was coined—and the importance of wildlife in general, not just wildlife of importance to hunters and fishermen. This is reflected in the following actions: fully protected all hawks except the so-called bird hawks (Coopers and sharp-shinned hawks in 1943); fully protected the Florida panther in 1958; first fully protected the alligator and crocodile in 1950; fully protected the indigo snake and the round-tailed muskrat in 1971; established a list of rare birds and mammals as early as 1949 and gave them total protection against taking for any purpose; restricted as early as 1968 the taking of certain such unlovable creatures as turtles—where certain species in certain habitats were in trouble.

4. The Commission recognized the need for acquisition and management of lands for hunting and other public recreation as early as 1943, and between 1943 and the time that land prices became prohibitive, except in very special situations, moved to acquire 115,000 acres of land in Charlotte and Palm Beach counties.

5. The Commission recognized early that it would be impossible to acquire by purchase enough land to supply the demand for public hunting and that augmentation of public-owned lands by private lands was essential—preferably under an arrangement whereby the landowner would continue to utilize his land for timber, grazing, or comparable commercial purposes but would allow managed public hunting. This effort paid off with the establishment of the first Wildlife Management Area on private land in 1949 and continued to the present with more than three million acres now in the program. The Commission continues to lead the nation in this area.

6. As early as 1955 the Commission officially recognized the importance of destruction of wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas by establishing a field office at Vero Beach for the purpose of identifying environmentally sensitive areas and making recommendations as to how they could best be handled.

7. In 1967 the Commission, after too many "accidental" spills of phosphate slimes in the Peace River, undertook litigation. Thanks to the civic-mindedness and responsibility of the corporation that caused the spill, the Commission settled out of court for $200,000—more than three times the largest pollution settlement that had been made at that time anywhere in North America—or probably the world.

8. In 1970 when the justification for the Cross Florida Barge Canal was being seriously questioned—the only state agency that did anything but say "hurrah" for the barge canal was the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. Even though we addressed only the aspect of the matter for which we were responsible—the fish and wildlife resource source—these concerns plus serious questions about the economics and hydrology of the plan—ended in the current almost unanimous support of the abdication of the canal. Of particular significance in this instance and indicative of the usual caliber and dedication of the membership of the Commission is the fact that the majority of the Commissioners—particularly the two from Jacksonville at the time—personally believed in the canal but fulfilled their responsibility to the fish and wildlife and gave their unanimous endorsement of the scientific report outlining the unfavorable effects of the canal upon fish and wildlife.

9. The Commission has consistently supported the right of the private citizens to possess and use firearms as witnessed by its formal resolution in 1975 opposing unreasonable gun registration and control laws.

(continued on next page)

By Dr. O. Earle Frye
10. The Commission has consistently opposed anti-hunting efforts that are based on sentiment and misinformation, rather than upon accurate facts concerning the welfare of the wildlife in question.

11. The Commission assumed the leadership at the state level in the fight against indiscriminate use of hard pesticides as witnessed by its formal resolution in 1968.

12. The Commission lobbied in 1974 and 1975 against indiscriminate stocking of bass carp in Florida's waters—and were instrumental in having adopted a cautious and realistic policy for the possible use of this fish for aquatic weed control.

13. The Commission successfully challenged in the Supreme Court a 1975 act of the legislature which would have negated the responsibility and authority placed in the Commission by the Florida Constitution.

The above record is one of a constructive, often controversial effort to protect and manage the resource for which the Commission is responsible and to defend the authority mandate by the people of Florida. It is often a record of studied dissent—not entirely a position without merit in a nation conceived in dissent and proud of its heritage of new ideas of new Commissioners by the experience of those with more service.

One is inclined to ask—why has this agency existed for so many years? Perhaps the answer lies in the way it operates. The people expect instant control of the political process (or they wouldn't be appointed). The citizen board is that the average board member or Commissioner has only the particular board or agency to which they are responsible.

A final extremely important point—from the standpoint of service and accessibility to the people—is that once each month at the official Commission meeting, a person with a problem about wildlife can officially address in person the Commission—not simply a representative of the agency. A layman or Commission working closely with a professional staff constitutes the ideal balance between the public to be served and the scientific expertise of the professionals. This position is supported by a study conducted by the Wildlife Management Institute—a privately financed conservation organization of international stature and influence—which makes the following statement:

"An ideal commission consists of a group of laymen members serving staggered terms and appointed by the Governor on a statewide basis, as opposed to a district basis. Adequate discretionary legal authority is absolutely essential to manage fish and wildlife populations effectively. Each agency should have: (1) clearly stated organizational objectives in an up-to-date manual of basic policies, (2) dedicated funds supplemented with general funds, (3) sufficient professionally trained personnel, (4) an in-service training program, (5) planning for species, habitats, areas, and future human demands to define and set forth both short- and long-range achievement goals, (6) problem-oriented research within the agency and freedom to contract to outside organizations for basic research, (7) knowledge of the status and distribution of sporting, endangered, and other species and their habitats, (8) management units for handling fish and game populations, (9) programs to maintain and restore fish and wildlife environments, (10) cooperative programs with private landowners, as well as land and water-use agencies, (11) public information and education programs, and (12) staunch support of citizen organizations."

The Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission as now constituted follows exactly the "ideal" as delineated in the above statement.

The constitutional Commission is a creation of the people. It was established through the legislature and the people—through their representatives in the state legislature. (continued on next page)
The confrontations with the political power structure have been beneficial to the fish and wildlife resource. The final question—Why should the Commission be retained as a constitutional body? If it were reMOVED from the Constitution the Legislature could establish an almost identical system by statute and would probably do so. The "almost" is the key. A careful review of the record—particularly the six complete reorganizations that took place in less than 30 years—indicates that too much change would prevail in a field where stability is paramount. Why is there such a tendency to redo wildlife agencies? The three principal reasons appear to be: (1) the emotional and frequently highly controversial nature of wildlife issues—the hunter, fisherman, bird watcher, the visitor or migrant from the north who sees his first alligator on his lawn; the small child—and his mother—who rescue a baby bird from the cat all can become very concerned about the life which forms the basis of his interest; (2) the built-in conflict between rural areas—where more wildlife lives, and urban areas—where more people live, especially those who wish to hunt, fish or otherwise enjoy the rural wildlife. This situation needs the calming influence of an arbiter with statewide interest and authority—not impassioned oratory designed for local consumption; (3) Perhaps most important is the simple fact that wildlife is small potatoes when compared with other governmental functions. The three principal reasons appear to be: (1) the emotional and frequently highly controversial nature of wildlife issues—the hunter, fisherman, bird watcher, the visitor or migrant from the north who sees his first alligator on his lawn; the small child—and his mother—who rescue a baby bird from the cat all can become very concerned about the life which forms the basis of his interest; (2) the built-in conflict between rural areas—where more wildlife lives, and urban areas—where more people live, especially those who wish to hunt, fish or otherwise enjoy the rural wildlife. This situation needs the calming influence of an arbiter with statewide interest and authority—not impassioned oratory designed for local consumption; (3) Perhaps most important is the simple fact that wildlife is small potatoes when compared with other governmental functions.

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To summarize the pros and cons:

REASONS FOR DELETING CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY OF THE COMMISSION:
1. It is different.
2. Why should the Commission be in the Constitution?
3. The Commission has more confrontations with the political power structure than other agencies.

REASONS FOR RETAINING THE CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS OF THE COMMISSION:
1. Stability, continuity of programs.
2. Proven leadership and accomplishments.
3. Record of correct decisions—often when such decisions were not popular or at the time politically expedient.
4. Has endowment and support of the people of Florida, especially those with an interest and concern with wildlife and environmental quality.

By Petronius
dated 210 BC

We trained hard, but it seemed that everytime we were beginning to form up into teams we would be reorganized. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganizing—and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency, and demoralization.

By Petronius
dated 210 BC

Florida Wildlife

September-October 1977
Many fishermen who know better will crank a spinning reel while a fish struggles partly because of stubbornness but sometimes because they keep thinking the line is going to start taking up if they fail to move the fish they twist things. Even when pumping it's possible to get too cranky. 

One Australian surf spinning reel we've talked of previously twists the line because the spool is turned to "conventional" position as you reel in although the line is paid out over the end of the spool as you cast. However, the reel is so large that the twist doesn't cause much trouble. An early American spinning reel which operated that way with a small spool really fouled things up fast and went off the market.

British fly reels retain their prestige among trout anglers although the Americans make most of the bar-stock big game fly reels.

The British reels are a bit on the expensive side and some fishermen wouldn't be caught with anything else because of the tradition and the fine tolerances. Are they worth the difference?

The workmanship is there all right and there's some special pleasure in ownership. For most fishing, an American made or Japanese single action fly reel is quite adequate. It's like a British shotgun which costs more than a new Chevrolet. It's a joy to own but probably won't shoot better than a mass-produced pumpgun...
The Polk County Cattlemen’s Association has expressed appreciation to Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission Law Enforcement Investigators Don Arnold, Don Hudson and Sergeant John Ward for their efforts in breaking up a troublesome cattle rustling ring that had been plaguing Polk and Highlands counties.

The arrests, made in three other Florida counties, came as a result of undercover investigation of a three-week old conspiracy to illegally possess and sell deer. The ring included three men who had in their possession a 900-pound Hereford bull.

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Two of the men are presently serving jail terms of two and three years and the third is out on five years probation.

**SPILL PAID FOR**

The State of Florida has received more than a quarter of a million dollars for damages resulting from phosphate wastes spilled into the Peace River in 1971. At the time, an estimated two billion gallons of clay and slime from a phosphate mine in Polk County burst a dam and poured into the Peace River.

**DEER BOOK**

FWF’s hunting columnist, Charley Dickey, has come up with another book—this one concerned with putting venison in the pot.

Step by step Dickey leads the reader through the deer’s life cycle, placing the emphasis on behavior during the hunting season.

He also discusses such subjects as finding a place to hunt and what to do when you get there—guns, hunting clothes and accessories, techniques of scouting and various methods of deer hunting are given a going over.

The section on field dressing and care of meat and trophy will be especially welcomed by the not-too-experienced hunter. It’s an excellent guide to the basic techniques of bagging a white-tail deer.

If you can’t find it locally, DEER HUNTING by Charley Dickey is available in softcover from Oxmoor House, P.O. Box 2262, Birmingham, Alabama 35202. Price is $3.95.

**PROFIT HUNTING BUST**

Officers of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission have broken up a profit hunting ring operating in St. Johns and Duval counties.

Lt. Col. Brantley Goodson, director of the Commission’s law enforcement division, said a 10-month investigation has resulted in the arrest of five persons involved in the illegal killing and possession of both deer and black bear.

One of those involved, a black bear, was charged in connection with illegally possessing a black bear skull which he had allegedly mounting as trophies. Charges against the others include taking deer during the closed season, selling deer, criminal conspiracy and unlawful possession of black bear.

Arrested were Kenneth and Joy Scott of Palm Valley, Bradley Reed of Jacksonville, Milford Stratton of Ponte Vedra and Cris Canclon of Bayard.

**WHITE-TAILED DEER**

Whidden Creek and the Peace River, destroying a substantial number of fish and other aquatic life.

Since then, three agencies and the Governor’s Office have been in and out of court seeking damages from Cities Service Company, owner of the slime pond and processing plant at the time of the break.

In July, the company settled the claim out of court and paid $298,929, of which $200,000 will go to the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission for the cost of stocking the river and creek. The remainder will be placed in the Department of Environmental Regulation’s Pollution Recovery Trust Fund for use in restoring polluted bodies of water.

**NEW COMMISSION CHAIRMAN ELECTED**

Dr. Donald G. Rhodes was elected chairman of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission at the July meeting in Homosassa. R. Bernard Parrish Jr. of Tallahassee was elected vice chairman.

Dr. Rhodes received the post from Randolph R. Thomas of Jacksonville who held the post for the past two years. Parrish took office as vice-chairman from E. F. “Sonny” Burnett of Tampa.

Rhodes, 43, is a dentist from West Cape May. He was first appointed to the Commission on December 12, 1974 to fill out an unexpired term. He was appointed to a full five-year term on January 18, 1976.

A native of Windsor, N.C., he received his bachelor’s degree from East Carolina University and his D.D.S. from the University of North Carolina Dental School. He practiced dentistry in the Air Force from 1969 to 1971.

He holds membership in the American Dental Association, Florida Dental Association, Central District Dental Society and the Brevard County Dental Society of which he is a past president. He is also active in the Lions Club, Kiwanis, Rotary, National Rifle Association and Ducks Unlimited.

Parish was appointed to the Commission in January of this year. He is a member of the National Rifle Association and a past special assistant to the Governor from 1970 until July 1976. He is currently a business consultant in Tallahassee and owns a John Deere dealership.

**PROFIT HUNTING BUST**

The arrests, made during August, were the result of a well-planned operation by our investigations Section,” Goodson said.

During the course of the investigation, Commission undercover officers seized portions of more than 18 deer which were killed illegally and reportedly sold for $50 each.

In addition, wildlife officers seized portions of one black bear, allegedly killed by the group. The black bear, Goodson emphasized, is classified as a threatened species in Florida. One of those involved, a black bear, was charged in connection with illegally possessing a black bear skull which he had allegedly mounting as trophies. Charges against the others include taking deer during the closed season, selling deer, criminal conspiracy and unlawful possession of black bear.

Arrested were Kenneth and Joy Scott of Palm Valley, Bradley Reed of Jacksonville, Milford Stratton of Ponte Vedra and Cris Canclon of Bayard.

**TOOSCHATCHEE PROPOSAL**

A “wilderness experiment” hunting proposal for the recently acquired Tosohatchee Game Preserve was unveiled on July 21 to aides of the Florida Cabinet by the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission Office of Environmental Services and the Division of Water Policy.

The Tosohatchee Area, until recently a private hunting preserve, was bought by the state with Environmental Endangered Species Trust Fund money. The purchase was supported by the Commission because of its site (28,000 acres), stands of old cypress and pine, expanse of St. Johns River marsh, populations of endangered or threatened species and its potential for a low density, high quality hunting area compatible with other uses.

The hunting proposal consisted of three, three-weekend days of archery hunting and one weekend of muzzle loaders with only limited vehicle access.

In addition to providing the opportunity for a high quality hunting experience, this proposal was designed to create a minimum impact on the areas wildlife populations.

The morning after the presentation, the cabinet aides and representatives of conservation organizations were shown the Tosohatchee-by Commission biologist’s own. C. S. Evans, personally toured the area to small groups which independently toured the area and the chances of observing the wildlife that made the Tosohatchee such a desirable purchase. The idea worked well and most groups observed a variety of wildlife and learned more about the management options of the property.

The final management plans, including whether the area will be set aside as yet undecided. The Game and Fresh Water [continued on next page]

**ORANGE COUNTY**

White-tailed Deer
Water Fish Commission, in presenting and explaining a professionally conceived proposal for one aspect of management, should make future decisions a little easier.

OUTSTANDING OFFICER

Wildlife Officer Paul Hoover stationed in Dixie County has been named "Outstanding Wildlife Officer of the Year."

The announcement of Hoover's selection was made at the July meeting of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission in Homosassa.

Hoover has been employed by the Commission since 1973, beginning as a game manager with the Division of Wildlife. He transferred to Law Enforcement in 1974 where he has proven himself to be an excellent representative of the Commission.

Professionalism, confidence, productivity and judgement were some of the qualities upon which the annual recognition award is based. Hoover was selected from a group of outstanding officers representing each of the state's regions.

Hoover will represent Florida at the October meeting of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Other wildlife officers in the final selection for the award included C.W. "Jerry" Daniels, South Florida Region; Billy Ray Smith, Northwest Region; L. David Wilson, Everglades Region and John M. Campbell, Central Region.

REDBREAST RECORD

Ft. White angler Tom Cason, Jr. has recently claimed the state record for redbreast with a 1 lb., 8 1/2 oz. specimen.

The prize bream hit an Abu Reflex spinner. Cason was fishing in the Gilchrist County section of the Suwannee River.

The Commission only recently began compiling records on freshwater fish and many of the categories are still open with no official record yet listed.

Details of the records program are available from FLORIDA WILDLIFE or from the regional offices of the Commission listed elsewhere in the magazine.

A special certificate is awarded to anglers taking state record specimens.