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Endangered Floridian

This smallest member of the whitetail deer family occupies a restricted range, a string of islands including Big Pine Key, No Name Key and Big Torch Key, located some 115 miles southwest of Miami. First noted by explorers in 1535, this diminutive deer was perilously close to extinction before action was taken to stop illegal hunting and slow habitat destruction which threatened its continued existence. Shoulder height averages 25 to 30 inches and the average weight is 63 and 80 pounds respectively for females and males of the species.

In 1953, the Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge was established and, thanks to protection and management, the herd now numbers more than 1,000. The number one danger today is the automobile. As traffic increases in the Florida Keys, the number of road kills rises, once again threatening a much loved endangered Floridian.
The Ripper came from a habit of ripping down fences. A much talked about hog was Ol’ Ripper.

There have been a lot of wild hogs that caused damage to crops and such but I doubt that there have been too many that shadowed by his leading domesticated sows back to the not only in appearance but also in his less than adjacent to Lake Seminole near the Florida–Georgia line. In this particular area there roamed a tremendous wild boar. He was known only to a few his tough hide. Some, only half kidding, said he his domain being laid waste, Ol’ Ripper got the notion to pull out from there. He headed across country until he got to Herbert Miller’s farm. Miller’s place suited him fine so he put in shelled corn for bait.

One day Jack Wingate came to a spot in a fence where Ol’ Ripper had pushed up the wire enough to go under. He had made a trail from Gill Parong’s side of the fence to Doc Greene’s side. Jack decided to set a trap there. The next day he built a pen of crossbodies and fencing. He rigged a failing door and put in shelled corn for bait.

The big rooter came under the fence that night again and headed straight to the trap. He touched off the trigger and the door fell, leaving him trapped—but not for long. He popped out those 20 penny nails, knocked the fence down and tore off into the night, squalling and grunting.

A few days later Jack and said he’d found another such crossing place. Jack went and put together another trap pen, this time using double posts and nails on every wire. But he fastened heavy logs over the top with bailing wire. The fence was shoulder high.

That night Ol’ Ripper came in and tripped the trap. He tried to knock down the fence but couldn’t so he stood on his hind legs and pressed on her front porch, rocking. She heard a noise and went inside the pen, clapping her hands and shouting in an effort to scare the hog out. Finally, after an hour or so, the boar went off, taking a few sows with him to the swamp.

The monster boar stretched out to eight feet, tip to tail, and the skin on his shoulder was so tough that you couldn’t stick an ice pick through it, said Jack. Today his mounted head glares at the fact—he just kept coming. At close range, Jack drew down on the boar’s head. The hammer fell on an empty chamber.

The story spread and the locals started hunting the Ripper’s shenanigans. Came this particular day and Paul was easing down an old overgrown logging road that threaded through a pine thicket. Suddenly there was a violent thrashing and popping like a tank coming through the underbrush. The giant hog had evidently picked up the human scent and was heading back into the depths of the nearby swamp.

Paul lifted his M-1 carbine. He caught sight of the hog crashing through the thicket and touched off a couple of shots. The hog didn’t break down, no indication of feeling the bullet strikes. Paul stood there trembling with the impact of the awesome sight and listening to the behemoth brush-busting as he retired from the field.

Of-Ripper was getting to be a much-talked-about hog. Most every hog around was hunting him. One day Jack Wingate came to a spot in a fence where Ol’ Ripper had pushed up the wire enough to go under. He had made a trail from Gill Parong’s side of the fence to Doc Greene’s side. Jack decided to set a trap there. The next day he built a pen of crossbodies and fencing. He rigged a failing door and put in shelled corn for bait.

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Word got around about the hog’s latest caper. In a few days a man from south Florida showed up with 12 prize hog dogs to hunt for the Ripper. He bragged how his dogs were the best money could buy and that he would kill the hog and show those local people how it was done. They tried to tell him otherwise but he wouldn’t listen. He turned his dogs into the swamp and within two hours, three of them were dead, four more cut up badly and the rest scared to death. That was the last time anybody tried to hunt Ol’ Ripper with dogs.

During this time Jack Wingate was setting steel traps for the monstrous hog. He had a $5 New-House, set with peanuts for bait, but it didn’t work. That hog was too smart. It seemed that nothing could kill Ripper.

One early April day, Jack was tending store when the phone rang. It was Junior Hand’s mother. She said Ol’ Ripper was in her peanut field. “I’ll be right there,” said Jack. He grabbed his 30-30 Marlin and six shells, jumped in his truck and went to the Miller place. When he got there he picked up Mrs. Hand. She drove the truck as close to the field as she dared. Jack got out, crossed a creek, and crawled up a gully. When he looked up, there, about 200 yards away was Ol’ Ripper, with three sows and eating peanuts off the ground. Jack got back down again and started crawling closer. He crawled a little more, then looked up and saw Ol’ Ripper about 25 yards away, standing near the fence by the woods. Jack figured it was now or never, so he aimed the 30-30 at Ol’ Ripper’s shoulder and fired.

He saw dust fly off the hog’s chest so knew he was hit but the hog didn’t act like he recognized the fact—he just kept coming. Jack started pumping shots into him. At close range, Jack drew down on the boar’s head. The hammer fell on an empty chamber. Jack said later that was the loudest and scariest sound he’d ever heard in his life. He was turning to run when the boar plowed up only a few feet away and that was it.

Jack went and got his truck and some help. They threw Ol’ Ripper into the bed and took him to be weighed. That hog hit the scales at 438 pounds. A close examination showed the scars of the M-1 bullets, and an assortment of other wounds including 30-30s, not counting the hits from Jack’s Marlin.

The monster boar stretched out to eight feet, tip to tail, and the skin on his shoulder was so tough you couldn’t stick an ice pick through it, said Jack.

50, after six years of rampaging, Ol’ Ripper was finally stopped. Today his mounted head glares down from the wall of Jack Wingate’s fish camp on Lake Seminole. Whenever a customer asks Jack about that pig, Jack is likely to smile, sit down, and begin the tale of the six years of havoc caused by Ol’ Ripper.

By David Avant III
Ducks Unlimited's waterfowl restoration program has proven to be

**MORE THAN JUST A GOOD IDEA**

Back in 1937, Ducks Unlimited was launched on the strength of a good idea—funds would be collected in the United States where most of the ducks are harvested and spent in Canada where the majority of the ducks are produced.

Now, in 1978, Ducks Unlimited is recognized as more than just a good idea. Its work constitutes the major effort in practical waterfowl breeding habitat management in North America.

DU is the offspring of an organization known as More Game Birds in America, formed in 1930 by a group of sportsmen hoping to bring about exactly what its name implied—a greater population of game birds. Among its discoveries were: more than 70 percent of North American waterfowl breed in Canada; by far the most important production area is the pothole country of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta; and the drought which created the "dustbowl" of the mid-30s posed a serious threat to the North American waterfowl population.

This in no way reflects upon the interest and dedication of many Canadians to the waterfowl resource. Rather it results from a number of other factors. Foremost of these is the basic fact that Canada's needs would be more nearly met by a much smaller population of ducks and geese. The demand both for hunting and for aesthetic or consumptive purposes such as bird-watching is far greater in the United States than it is in Canada.

Of extreme importance in this situation is the conflict, particularly in the grain-producing areas of Canada, between waterfowl and agriculture. This occurs principally through the demand for grain-producing lands and the resulting drainage of wetlands and in some instances through damage to grain crops by waterfowl concentrations associated with migration. Obviously, this conflict has political consequences—with reference to such things as appropriations and the thrust of government programs—in the agriculturally-oriented parts of Canada, such as the prairie province.

In my travels around Florida, I frequently encounter the belief that DU uses its funds in Canada to buy lands. This is a misconception. Ducks Unlimited acquires funds contributed by sportsmen and other conservationists in the United States and sends them to Canada for use in waterfowl habitat improvement and restoration on private and government-owned property. Ducks Unlimited does not own land in Canada. Instead, it works out long-term agreements with private and public landowners whereby wetlands are preserved and restored. Incentives for the landowners are such things as irrigation water for ranchers and farmers, replenishing of natural aquifers, ground water purification, flood control, municipal water supplies—all undertaken with the idea of benefiting both the landowner and the waterfowl resource.

By far, the major contribution to DU has been by private individuals. In recent years, however, the effort has been aided by a total of 16 states which now contribute through state duck stamps and other means—almost six percent of DU's total income.

During the past 40 years, more than $56 million has been spent to construct some 1,400 habitat restoration projects throughout Canada, constituting more than 2½ million acres of land under reservation and almost ten thousand miles of shoreline breeding habitat. An important point here is that there are no signs on any of these projects which say "Ducks only—all other wildlife keep off!" The wetlands which are preserved and restored are used by all kinds of aquatic wildlife and are generally just as beneficial to other forms of wildlife as they are to ducks and geese.

With reference to and enormously clarifying as to the earth. Deny life these essential elements and the earth is denied life. Despoil or destroy these elements and life's intricate balance of give and take is distorted or possibly destroyed. Habitat binds these elements. Habitat is life. Without habitat the question of caring for our wildlife resources becomes academic.
"Ducks Unlimited has been successful over these past four decades because it has steadfastly adhered to its singleness of purpose—habitat restoration. Without such a singular goal, DU's 2½ million acres of reserved waterfowl habitat would have been compromised by every conservation crisis that evolved, however remotely related to its cause. Habitat is the denominator we should all have in common. Because if we squabble amongst ourselves about how we should extinguish this environmental brushfire or that one, the habitat that breathes life into all our wildlife will be uncontrollably ablaze with the excessive resource demands of an inefficient modern world."

For the past 11 years, DU has been growing at an average rate of 25 percent compounded annually. It has raised more funds in its last 11 years than it did in the preceding 30. For example, in 1965 income was something over $800,000; in 1976, $10 million; in 1977, $13 million; and is reaching for $16 million in 1978. Continuing this planned growth goal, DU will generate $25 million in 1980. Impressive is the fact that under the long standing policy of Ducks Unlimited, 80 percent of these funds will go for habitat restoration in Canada with a small percentage slated for use in Mexico. Even these impressive funds are but a good start if we are to keep waterfowl production competitive with other demands upon the land resources of this continent.

Who is responsible for this record? Basically, it is the private citizens who volunteer their efforts for a cause in which they believe, supported by an administrative office in Chicago and a small cadre of field workers (22 wildlife professionals who service the more than 1,100 chapters with more than a quarter of a million members in the United States). As with all other wildlife conservation organizations, the backbone of DU is the dedicated sportsman, bird-watcher, fisherman, outdoorsman—or commonly all rolled into one.

To bring the picture of progress a little closer to home in 1970 the total contribution to DU from Florida was $10,000; in 1977 it was $200,000. Florida still remains far behind such states as California, which contributed $1½ million to DU in 1977. The potential for growth in Florida is great. We average about 25,000 duck stamps sold each year in the state. Also, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service records show that Florida enjoys one of the highest harvest per hunter of any state. It always leads the Atlantic Flyway, and its harvest is exceeded only by California and Louisiana. Our position nationwide is normally from third to fifth.

As I reflect upon my comments about Ducks Unlimited’s “singleness of purpose” dedication to habitat restoration, I intend in no way to disparage the efforts and accomplishments of others. Many private conservation groups and federal, state and provincial government agencies in Canada, Mexico and the United States engage in other types of activities beneficial to waterfowl and other wetland wildlife. These include initiation of harvest regulations, acquisition of wetlands and the enactment of laws protecting wetlands, for example. These, too, are essential if we are to maintain these resources for the benefit of all.
Snare The Bear

It was his sweet tooth that finally did him in. He was ambling through the woods in Franklin County on his way to a favorite beehive (it belonged to someone else, but he never bothered to check with the owner before a nocturnal call).

There in a path were two sticks, placed just enough apart to cause him to break stride. As he stepped over the first, his foot triggered a spring snare. A loop jerked closed around his paw and there he was, tied by a front foot to a pine tree. He wasn't going anywhere soon.

A few hours later, Jimmie McDaniel, wildlife biologist for the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, checked the snare and found a rather perturbed male bear. Using a tranquilizer gun, he subdued the 150-pound, four-year old, prior to releasing his paw and loading him into a truck.

The north Florida bear was destined to leave that part of the state where his love for honey had been causing a problem for the local beekeepers. He would receive a radio transmitter collar and be released on the Merritt Island Refuge which has some good and available habitat. There biologists with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would track his movements and see if he could adapt to the area.

The conflict between beekeepers and bears is a long-standing one and, in real life, isn't nearly as amusing as the antics of Winnie the Pooh. In fact, it is a serious problem.

Available habitat for the Florida black bear is shrinking with alarming speed as the state develops. Currently there are very few areas which can support viable populations. The Northwest and Northeast regions have the highest populations and thus the highest number of complaints. Many center around the Osceola and Apalachicola national forests and large paper company land holdings.

McDaniel estimates he has trapped 20 bears within the past seven years. The majority of complaints from beekeepers:

"Once you trap a bear and move him, he usually stays put," McDaniel said. "However, that's not always the case. We have retrapped a bear a year later and within ten feet of where we had originally trapped him."

McDaniel and other biologists who work with the black bear generally attach a radio collar to any bear they capture in order to keep an eye on the movements of the animal. Currently, he has two radio-collared bears in the Apalachicola area and there are 21 thus outfitted in the Osceola forest.

Much of the conflict between bears and beekeepers can be resolved through "bear-proofing" the apiaries. Recommendations include the use of elevated platforms and electric fences.

"In the Osceola forest, they've got it just about licked," said Steve Stafford, wildlife biologist for the Northeast Region. Stafford said good electric fencing has virtually eliminated the problem there and most biologists report similar success. As he and his staff receive are inquiries as to whether or not the Commission wants to radio-trap a bear a beekeeper has spotted.

"In the last three or four years, however, we have trapped and moved four bears from Hamilton and Columbia counties and average from six to ten complaints from that area each year," Stafford added.

All complaints about black bear should be directed to the nearest regional office of the Commission. After a complaint is received, it is investigated by a biologist before any solution is attempted.

Perhaps better "bear-proofing" of hives is the answer. However, even that is not infallible, in which case the bear must vacate his home.

Our wilderness areas far removed from civilization are disappearing and if an area has good bear habitat, chances are bears already live there.

Some large landowners have gone so far as to take the position that if it comes to a choice between the bees and the bears, the bears win and the bees must go.

But McDaniel and Stafford are still concerned. No one wants to get into a situation where people are taking care of the problem themselves. "If the parties involved will just take time, the problem can generally be resolved," McDaniel said.

By Trisha Spillan
The New Year is here and my goals as chairman of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission include expanding several conservation programs which are becoming more and more important to us as Floridians.

One of our major thrusts will be aimed toward securing public lands through purchase or lease which can be made available for hunting. As the number of hunters continues to expand, we face an ever-increasing need for more publicly-owned wildlife management areas.

Recently, the Commission voted to purchase the 26,388-acre Maxcy Tract in central Florida. This new wildlife management area is located in a portion of the state where growing sportsman demand exceeds the availability of lands for public hunting and other outdoor activities.

We hope that Florida’s conservation-minded citizens will join us in this task by voicing support of acquisitions like this to their legislative delegations.

The Commission also is going to give more attention to nonconsumptive outdoor recreational pursuits because we are not just an agency to serve hunters and fishermen, but all outdoor lovers, including hikers, campers and birdwatchers.

We are a servant of the people, and my prime desire is to get more Floridians, of all walks of life, involved in our work.

One of the best ways conservation-minded citizens can take part in the Commission’s natural resources policy is by joining the Wildlife Reserve. Since its creation 10 years ago, the Reserve has offered a unique way for conservationists to work in a wide variety of wildlife and fish management tasks.

These dedicated volunteers receive no monetary reward for their services and provide their own uniforms, transportation, insurance and, in many instances, use their own equipment to carry out assignments.

Recently, we expanded the program from the Central Region into the Everglades and Northwest regions. In 1979, I’d like to work toward implementing a full statewide program should the necessary funds and personnel be made available by the Legislature.

Along with the Reserve, another growing project we’re especially interested in is the Commission’s Hunter Education Program. By the end of fiscal year 1979, we expect 10,000 people will have completed this program.

Hunter Education isn’t designed to turn out sharpshooters. Instead, it works to create the respect and responsibility that using a firearm commands.

The student, whether he is a youngster with his first rifle or an experienced sportsman, learns not only correct gun handling, but modern conservation practices and wildlife management facts.

We also will perform a wide range of wildlife and fisheries management studies this year including such areas as the ring-necked duck, Lake Okeechobee’s Fisheries Utilization and Management Program and Florida's turkey population.

This spring, citizens across Florida will have a chance to speak their minds (at the Commission’s public hearings) on the programs they would like to see carried out and regarding next year’s wildlife regulations.

I hope each of you will come and give us the benefit of your thinking so we might do a better job to serve you and our state’s wildlife.
It is unfair to make a dog hold point indefinitely. A covey of birds may get jumpy and flush prematurely or simply walk away.

Some new hunters want to flank out to the side as they approach the dogs. The same problem develops. When the birds are flushed by the other hunter, or fly on their own, the new hunter is handicapped by being 15 or so yards from the birds with the dogs.

The lagging, balky hunter is not fair to the pointing dogs. They have been trained, often under severe penalties, to hold staunchly. It is the hunter's duty to flush the birds.

A pointing breed—pointer, setter, Brittany or German shorthair—has been bred and trained to point and hold. He is not supposed to be a flushing breed, such as a springer or cocker spaniel. Pointing breeds point; hunters flush.

In general, pointing dogs are trained to hold in one or two ways. Field trial people, and dedicated owners interested in style, train their dogs to be steady to wing and shot. This means the dog remains on point, or at least in his tracks, when the bird flushes and during the shooting. He remains in position until given a command to retrieve or cast and start hunting again.

Most field hunters train their pointing dogs to remain staunchly on point until the hunters pass them on the way in to flush the birds. The dogs and hunters go in together, roughly even in line, and pass the birds. The dogs break and run, almost under the birds. When a shot bird hits the ground, the dogs are right there on him. A crippled quail has little chance of getting away.

Pointing breeds are trained to meet the requirements of the owners. An owner entering his dog in hunting trials must train him to be steady to wing and shot, plus put all the style into him he can get. The average hunter doesn't spend much time on field and fine points. He is happy if his dog indicates where quail are and holds until the hunters get there. He usually takes his dog to hunt and fetch dead or crippled birds.

Under field hunting conditions, it is not fair to the dogs to make them hold on point indefinitely. A covey may get jumpy and flush on their own or simply walk off.

Today's bobwhite quail are much wilder than they were 25 years ago. As a general rule, they do not flush as tightly as they did. Any experienced hunter will tell you the sooner you can get to dogs on point, the more likely you are to get a shot.

I don't think a pair of hunters should run through cover with loaded guns. Besides being dangerous, a hunter can't shoot well if he's bouncing and puffing when the quail fly. But the two hunters should rapidly walk to the dogs. They should get up to them quickly but safely.

If one hunter arrives first, he should wait for his partner about five yards behind the front dog, the one which has the birds. The covey can flush at any second but at least one hunter will be in range to shoot. If the birds hold, when the second hunter arrives, the two hunters should check their positions and then walk in line abreast. One should be on either side of the front dog.

They should walk in aggressively, or at least in a positive manner. No matter when the birds come up, both hunters will be close to them. They will have time to get off two or three shots apiece. As hard as most of us have to work to find a covey, we need all the fire power on the line we can get when the birds flush.

If everything goes according to the textbook—the dogs and quail both holding—the hunters flush the birds. That's as close to them as you can get. It increases your chances of bagging quail.

Years ago when hunting singles, it was customary for only one hunter to walk in to flush the bird. The hunters alternated and were quite polite about it. It's a different story today, unless you have access to a lot of birds. Most single hunting is done in brush, thickets or swamps. Both hunters should walk in to take the shot for the simple reason that one may get blocked for a shot, no matter how experienced he is.

The woodcock is a mysterious bird to most Florida hunters and not many hunt it. Most of the ones bagged are flushed by quail hunters. Although the timberdoodle nests in the south, most of its breeding grounds are in the northern states and Canada.

The woodcock migrates in small flights at night. Its diet is about 90 percent earthworms, which it probes with its long bill. The woodcock may eat half its weight or more in worms each day. When the ground freezes too hard for drilling, the bird has to move.

It's found as far south as the Everglades but most of the migrating birds apparently stop in the northern half of the state. They scatter out along the edges of swamps, rivers and low moist areas. Most of their flying is near dusk and dawn. During the day, when they rest and sleep, they are often found in low-lying cover in upland woods.

The woodcock is a night-flying bird. If you shoot a woodcock at dusk or dawn, the bird is made more visible. It doesn't take much of a shot charge to bring them down. Number eight shot will do the trick. The best choke is improved cylinder, since nearly all of your shots will be in brush or timber.

The meat is dark and strong. In Europe, where they're found as far south as the Canary Islands, the birds are cooked longer than ours. It's the flush outdoor writers always write about. However, woodcocks don't read about themselves. Sometimes they tower, but other times they zigzag through the trees, and I've seen plenty of grasscutter damage.

For many years, biologists believed the woodcock was strictly a night feeder. Today, there's evidence that the bird may search for earthworms during daylight hours.

One reason woodcock are not hunted more in Florida is they are too scattered. It's difficult to find enough of a concentration to make it worth the effort. The more spread-out they are, the more likely the number of woodcock will increase in Florida coverts.

Woodcock usually hold tight for pointing dogs. In fact, a dog can crowd them and this is one reason some quail hunters don't like timberdoodles. They are afraid their dogs will later try to work too close to quail.

The classic flush of the woodcock is to tower above the surrounding trees, level out and then pour on the coal. It's the flush outdoor writers always write about. However, woodcocks don't read about themselves. Sometimes they tower, but other times they zigzag through the trees, and I've seen plenty of grasscutter damage.

A woodcock's flight is unpredictable and that adds to the sport. Some birds seem to embarrass themselves by slowly flying to the left. Others seem to have jet-assisted takeoff.

If you get a concentration of woodcocks, they're fun to hunt. It doesn't take much of a shot charge to bring them down. Number eight shot will do the trick. The best choke is improved cylinder, since nearly all of your shots will be in brush or timber. The meat is dark and strong. In Europe, where they have a larger woodcock, it's about the fanciest and most expensive dish you can order in a French restaurant.

Most deer hunters put slings on their rifles. It's usually more for convenience in carrying than for an aid in shooting accuracy.

There's a surprising amount of tremor built into all of us. I'm reminded each fall when I sight my rifle in. Even with my rifle tucked into sandbags, the crosshairs on my scopes do a lot of wagging. No matter how I get braced, the crosshairs won't settle down as much as I would like.

Whether shooting at a still or ambushing buck, I like to find a rest, or prop against a tree. However, they are not always a convenient prop and a sling comes in handy.

Michaels of Oregon recently came out with an instructional brochure on the nomenclature and use of slings and straps for various shooting positions. A free copy of "Sling It" is available by writing Uncle Mike, P.O. Box 13010, Portland, Oregon 97213.

The woodcock, a mystery bird to most Florida hunters, is often bagged by quail shooters.
Twenty acres of mangroves, mud and sand serve as a valuable outdoor classroom. This special place is called COCKROACH BAY.

On Tampa Bay in Hillsborough County there is the only remaining undisturbed mangrove stand, one of the few such on that part of the Gulf coast. Located at Cockroach Bay, the stand is included in the Hillsborough County Community College's Environmental Studies Center.

Twenty acres of mangroves, mud and sand might not look like much to the unpracticed eye. After all, when you've seen one mangrove bush you've seen them all. There must be a reason, however, why this spot on Tampa Bay has been a favorite of hunters, fishermen and bird-watchers and Dorothy Cole, botanist of the Center's staff.

A favorite of hunters, fishermen and bird-watchers

In the description.

Actually, “showing” people in the earthy aroma of sun-warmed marsh.

The first stop for any group of visitors is the trailer which serves as a combination field office, museum, storage center and classroom. Shelves display specimens of the flora and fauna visitors may expect to encounter on a tour of the place. Fred and Dorothy hand out jars and microscopes. There's plenty of life in this barren spot of mud, she picks up a piece of tiny, succulent plant creeping along the ground.

Marty shows them that the sea purslane is not alone in its taste for a little salt in its water. Growing nearby is an entire salt marsh community—needlerush, cordgrass, saltwort. Now the reason for the jars and buckets is apparent. The girls accompany the boardwalk to gather specimens to take back and peer at under the microscopes.

The mangrove breaks the chain and thus ultimately removes a whole group of important food fishes from our tables. If time and weather permit, there is still another area of Cockroach Bay to be explored. Fred and Dorothy hitch boat trailers loaded with pontoon boats to their cars and drive to the boat launching area. Offshore they collect floating specimens from the plankton food chain and use a dredge net over the sea grass to collect specimens.

The wrap-up session takes place back at the headquarters building. Peering into the microscopes, visitors examine specimens they have collected and discuss what they have seen on their tour.

Environmental groups have had a watchful eye on the Cockroach Bay area for some time. The Audubon Society has long had bird sanctuaries on islands in the area. In 1970, the Tampa Electric Company agreed not to develop the shoreline of land it owns on the bay. Shortly after that the state acted to set aside Cockroach Bay as an acoustic preserve.

Man has used the food produced by this rich environment for centuries. On Cockroach Key near the Environmental Center is the largest remaining shell midden mound in Hillsborough County. According to Dr. J. Raymond Williams of the University of South Florida's anthropology department, archaeologists discovered the site had been occupied through three prehistoric periods. At one time the Indian mound had a modern house built on it. Early settlers feared women would fall in the vicinity. Fishermen and their families lived in shacks along the bay and truck farms lined the shore in what is still one of the big vegetable growing centers of the state.

Now the wildlife is coming back. Nesting pairs of roseate spoonbills as well as other birds have been spotted and bobcat tracks are frequently seen. Located just south of Ruskin near the old town of Sun City, Cockroach Bay seems too near the shadow of Tampa’s skyline to be so wild.

The staff welcomes visits of groups of up to 30 people at a time, six days a week. While Cockroach Bay is most heavily used by schools, from junior high through college, Fred and Dorothy will also accommodate older and younger groups by special arrangement.

Guided by an instructor, students using shovels and screens explore the mud-sand bottom of Cockroach Bay for specimens of plant and animal life.

By Barbara Deane
The Red-shouldered Hawk

This valuable, beautiful bird is Florida's most common bird of prey.

The high-pitched, two-syllable call "kee-yerr" of the red-shouldered hawk is an oft-heard, distinctive sound of the Florida outdoors. Liliated to perfection by the bluejay, an observer must often look more than once to properly identify the originator of the call. Not only is the red-shoulder the most common hawk in Florida, it is also the most tame. Often it will remain quietly on its perch atop a telephone pole, fence post or dead tree branch while an observer approaches to within a few yards. It habitually remains perched for long periods and may also be seen soaring high in the sky in the typical buzzard-like fashion of the buteos or broad-winged hawks.

The handsome, adult red-shoulder is colorfully clad in a coat of black and white and reddish feathers, while the immature bird is mostly drab brown. Both have a key identification marking, the presence of whitish spots or "windows" at the end of the undersurface of the wings, easily spotted when the bird is in flight.

Foremost on its food list are snakes, lizards and insects. Seldom does it bother birds, but it does dine frequently on rats, mice and other small mammals.

A year-round resident, the red-shoulder is found from the Panhandle to the Keys. A common nesting bird, it constructs a large, bulky nest of sticks, Spanish moss and leaves in the crotch or fork of a limb of cypress, pine or oak trees, preference usually in that order. Cabbage palms, gum and mangroves are also used. The red-shoulder lives in a variety of habitats—swamps, open pine woods, oak, cypress and palmetto hammocks and the prairies.

Once blacklisted, hawks are now recognized for what they are—a valuable part of the natural scene, largely beneficial to the interests of man and a vital cog in the balance of nature. For these reasons, all hawks are protected by state and federal laws.

Photo by Cliff Bickford

Wallace Hughes
Bobcat  Slipping through the woodlands with no more sound than a shadow, the bobcat is a highly skilled stalker of rabbits, mice and other small creatures that make up the bulk of its diet. Basically a “sight” hunter, its sense of smell is reputedly less acute than some other predators’—foxes and coyotes, for example. Probably for this reason, and the fact that some of the “game” it seeks is diurnal, the bobcat is seen abroad during daylight more than most other furbearers. The usual litter consists of two or three young. Aside from its service in rodent control, as the quarry for exciting hound chases, and the commercial value of its pelt, just the sight of a bobcat drifting silently through hammock or flatwoods can highlight any trip afield.

Black Raccoon  mask and ringed tail are trademarks of this most widely recognized of our furbearers. The species ranges throughout the state, as much at home in the coastal marshes as in the cypress swamps and rivers of the interior. Even though the animal itself may not be seen, the tracks—those of the front feet somewhat resembling scaled-down human handprints and those of the back feet like flat-footed human footprints—are common in both muddy and sandy places. Mainly nocturnal in its wanderings, the coon is truly omnivorous, savoring a wide variety of animals and plants.

Otter  An active, vigorous species, the otter occurs throughout the state. Since the earliest days of settlement, otter pelts have been important items of commerce. Even in the subtropical southern parts of its range, the pelt reaches a sufficient degree of primeness to considerably interest the fur trade. Active both by day and night, it is not uncommon for a fisherman or hunter to come face-to-face with an otter, or a family group, chasing about on the shore or thrashing with vigor in the water. Despite the claim in certain quarters, fish are certainly not the only food enjoyed by this large aquatic member of the weasel tribe. If anything could qualify as a favorite, a top choice in Florida would be crayfish. A variety of other water-dwelling organisms are also taken in quantity. Because of their playful nature, otter are favorites of wild animal displays, for given sufficient space to romp, they are sure to put on a lively show.

By Morrie Naggiar
Short on brains and certainly no great shakes on looks, the opossum, nevertheless, has survived down through the ages when seemingly more richly endowed contemporaries passed into oblivion. Opossum-kind dates back to the age of dinosaurs, 70 thousand years ago (plus or minus a few millenia). With a brain capacity of only one-sixth that of a raccoon of equal size, the geared-down creature plods through life, seemingly taking what comes its way with enviable aplomb. Most any kind of organic matter seems acceptable as food to the animal. In the face of danger, it may go into a faint, or a good imitation of one, giving rise to the popular, if trite, expression, "playing possum." Even in this time of high prices for raw furs, opossums bring a relatively modest sum on the market, but collectively, their pelts contribute substantially to the fur take of southeastern trappers.

**Opossum**

**Skunk** By reputation if not by sight, the striped skunk is another well-known furbearer. Perhaps more often smelled than seen, the species occurs throughout most of the Florida mainland. The amount of white in its pelage varies from a small patch on the head of some individuals—a "star" in the parlance of the fur trade—to almost entirely white on the back. Omnivorous, the species destroys many harmful insects and rodents. It is also not unfamiliar to the chicken house. Fortunately, it is rather easily eliminated by trap or gun, but the aftereffects may be long-lasting. Although currently not highly favored on the fur market, a considerable number of pelts are sold each year.

**Weasel** This smallest of our carnivores is a bundle of nervous energy, continuously on the go. Although known to occur throughout the state, at least as far south as Collier County, actual records of sightings or collection of specimens are limited. The weasel's coat is dark brown on the upper parts and yellowish on the underside, usually with a white chin and sometimes white spots about the face and on the feet. The brown tail is black for about a quarter of its length. In recognition of its apparent rarity in the state, the weasel is protected by a year-round closed season.

**Mink** Although found from the Panhandle to the southwestern tip of the peninsula, Florida's mink population occurs only in certain localities, for the most part in coastal areas. The long, slender body is similar to its close relative, the weasel, but longer fur gives it a somewhat heavier appearance. The mink is dark brown usually with a white chin. The length of adult specimens ranges from about 19½ inches to 28 inches with the 6 to 7½ inch tail included. By inclination, the mink is aquatic, fish making up at least part of its diet. A great variety of other delicacies including crustaceans, amphibians, birds and small mammals are taken as the opportunity is presented.
Although sometimes confused with the red fox because of the considerable amount of reddish color that shows on the sides, forelegs and head, the gray is quite distinctive. Its predominantly dark gray color scheme is set off with a ridge of black fur on the back of the neck, down the back and on the upper surface of the tail. The tip of the gray's tail is black.

The gray shows a preference for woodlands and brushy pastures in contrast with the red's selection of more open country. **Gray Fox**

**Red Fox**

Apparently not a native to the state, the red fox has become a part of our fauna by introduction and natural spread from neighboring states. Its current Florida distribution is difficult to define with any degree of certainty, but it is locally common here and there at least halfway down the peninsula. The usual coloration is rusty or yellowish-red with black feet and lower legs, white tail tip, and white throat and belly.

**Beaver**

For several decades the beaver, formerly a common resident in the northern part of the state, was absent or exceedingly rare. In the July 1956 issue of FLORIDA WILDLIFE, an article detailed the reintroduction of the species to the Eglin Air Force Base in northwest Florida. Natural drift across the state line from Georgia and Alabama has undoubtedly added to the stock, and now, at least in some Panhandle counties, the eager rodent is overabundant and overactive as far as some timber owners, road builders, and farmers are concerned. An average mature beaver will tip the beam at something around 40 pounds and heavier ones are not all uncommon. The wide, flattened, all but hairless tail, the large, webbed feet and the conspicuous incisor teeth are the most prominent characteristics of the beaver.

**Coyote**

Occasionally, down through the years, the coyote has been reported in Florida but apparently no substantial resident population has yet been established. Just above the state line in Georgia, however, the species has become well entrenched. That population apparently resulted from intentional introductions. Obviously a highly adaptable animal, the coyote can and does pose problems for the raisers of small livestock and poultry. Its ability to avoid traps is legendary. It crosses readily with the domestic dog. From the number of recent reports, it seems a distinct possibility that the invader from the West has found a home in the Sunshine State.
The Fort Jefferson National Monument embraces a tiny group of islands known as the Dry Tortugas, 67 miles west and slightly north of Key West. The islands are the last link in the chain of keys that stretches out in a great curve from the mainland of Florida, the remains of an ancient coral reef. But the road ends at Key West and that makes all the difference.

By Robert W. Loftin

GARDEN AND BUSH KEYS, SITE OF THE FORT JEFFERSON NATIONAL MONUMENT PROVIDES A NURSERY FOR LARGE COLONIES OF SOOTY AND NODDY TERNS

Beyond the motels, shell shops and fast food restaurants crowding the Keys, there is only the sea—the sea, the sky and the birds. Go there for a glimpse of what the Florida Keys were like before the highway changed them forever.

The Dry Tortugas were discovered by Ponce de Leon in 1513, who named them for the lack of fresh water and the great sea turtles which crawl here to lay their eggs. (Tortuga means turtle in Spanish). John James Audubon visited in 1832 to paint and draw the tropical birds which nest in enormous numbers.

The massive brick fort which completely covers Garden Key was built between 1846 and 1876 to guard commerce entering and leaving the Gulf of Mexico through the Straits of Florida. It is the largest masonry structure in the Western hemi-

Terms fill the air over Bush Key. Sooty tern is capable of spending unbelievable lengths of time in air without touching down on land or water. Fort Jefferson covers Garden Key.

Photos by Robert W. Loftin
sphere—a half mile around with walls eight feet thick, enclosing a parade ground as large as 20 football fields.

The fort never fired an angry shot and, even before it was finished, became obsolete because of the invention of rifled cannon which could readily reduce the heaviest masonry wall. It was made into a prison just after the Civil War and it was here Dr. Samuel Mudd, the unfortunate physician who set the broken leg of Lincoln’s assassin, John Wilkes Booth, was incarcerated.

Mudd was probably innocent, but in the hysterical atmosphere of the times, was convicted of complicity in the plot and sentenced to prison. He was pardoned for heroic service after he stepped in to help when yellow fever ravaged the prison and the post physician died.

The fort was used as a coal station during part of the 1800s and then abandoned. It became a national monument in 1935, primarily in recognition of its unique wildlife values.

The islands are famous for the enormous colony of sooty terns which have nested here since time out of mind. The colony consists of roughly 80,000 and produces about 20,000 young each year on Bush Key, across a narrow channel from the fort.

The sooty tern spends most of its life far out at sea although, apparently, it is incapable of resting on water. Scientists believe it can, and does, remain airborne around the clock for years on end. It does utilize flotsam to rest but, beyond the Continental Shelf, there are many sooty terns and little flotsam.

So the sooty tern flies and either sleeps literally on the wing or, possibly, never sleeps at all. It feeds by plucking small fish and squid off the surface of the sea. Only to rest does it seek out land.

Fort Jefferson’s colony has been studied since 1959 by Dr. Bill Robertson of the Everglades National Park. With his wife, Betty, and a host of volunteers, he has been able to band more than 350,000 young sooties and gain some insight into the tern’s life.

For example, banding returns have shown the young birds, once they leave the colony, forsake the adults and life along the Gulf and Caribbean. Instead, they wing their way across the Atlantic to the west coast of Africa. There, for the first three to six years, they roam the African coast before setting back out across the Atlantic to the colony where they were hatched. Once home, they continue to roam around the colony for a couple more years before they begin to nest.

Are these birds just wasting time that could be spent in reproducing? Dr. Robertson and other scientists think not. The terns are simply following a survival pattern which has evolved through the centuries. It is difficult to obtain food by picking it off the sea’s surface and many years’ experience is needed to learn how to get enough to raise a chick.

Additionally, breeding space on these small islands is limited. It takes time to learn how to handle the task of raising young. When the decision is made to nest, only one egg is laid, perhaps because one chick is all it can support. Apparently these terns, which can live 35 years, have devel-
opened a pattern of putting off breeding until they have the expertise necessary to cope with the strain of the nesting cycle. Their longevity allows them to produce more young over a lifetime than species that breed early and kill themselves in the process.

In addition to the great sooty tern colony, several hundred brown noddy terns nest on Bush Key. This lovely, soft-plumaged tropical tern shares the sooty's inability to rest on water but seldom ventures far from the small keys and islands where it roosts.

Why it is called "noddy" is disputed with some believing it refers to the breeding displays which include a great deal of nodding. Others feel "noddy" means stupid, for this tern, unaccustomed to man, can be caught on the nest, often with bare hands.

Noddy terns build bulky nests in shrubs, unlike the sooty who prefers to lay directly on the ground. From their one egg can hatch a chick with either white or dark gray down. Despite the color of the chicks, the resulting adults are indistinguishable.

A third Tortugas bird which cannot rest on water is the magnificent frigate bird or man-of-war bird. These graceful gliders do not nest here but use the islands for "R&R," roosting and resting. Given favorable air currents, this relative of the pelican can travel a hundred miles almost without moving a muscle.

On some Pacific archipelagos, frigatebirds have been tamed by the natives and carry messages from island to island. Although they are tremendous aerial acrobats, frigatebirds often rob other birds of their prey. When they do fish, a favorite technique is to skim above schools of large predatory fish and snatch smaller fish from midair when they leap out of the water to escape their pursuers below.

Whether your interest is historical or ornithological, Fort Jefferson is the place to go. The monument is accessible by boat or seaplane. There is a campground but no other facilities. And the Dry Tortugas are still dry; no fresh water is available. No supplies of any kind can be purchased so bring everything with you. If you want to spend a little time in a place where nothing is for sale, head for Fort Jefferson.

There's a new look to hunting the old way. Ask any

CHARCOAL BURNER

Thrashing some 40 feet up in the thick foliage of an overcup oak said a cat squirrel was working the fall acorn crop. I eased the heavy octagonal-barreled rifle into the fork of a small tree and waited. Soon the gray paused in his bustling and stood outlined against the sky. The front bead settled into the rear sight notch and centered on the branch directly under the animal.

Kerboom! The .50 threw out a billow of bluish smoke. Through the haze I caught a glimpse of the limb dropping and the squirrel spraddle-legged and seemingly hanging in the air above it. The next instant, the nimble nutcracker was on the trunk of the tree scurrying unharmed for the refuge of the upper branches. He must have run through the air, cartoon fashion, to reach the trunk!

The limb swished to the ground. I examined the broomed end of the branch. It looked to me like there should have been plenty of shock to stun the gray. So much for the bit about barking a squirrel, one of those stories beloved of frontier days yarn spinners. Maybe some fine point of technique was lost in the handing down, and again, maybe not.

That is one of the joys of hunting with and shooting the old black powder guns, though. You can sort of check out for yourself some of the lore that has been passed on from the time when a

By Morrie Naggiar
flinter or a caplock was what there was available in hunting guns.

There's a lot more to it than that, of course. With a front stuffer, a single shot, or a double at best, for example, you tend to take your time, stalking or waiting for a good clear shot. You realize it's probably going to be one shot you'll get for better or worse. The result is that you put in more time hunting—which is why you're there, isn't it?—and possibly put more game in the bag than with a more up-to-date gun.

Aesthetics enter the picture, too. There's something especially pleasing about the lines of a well-made muzzleloader, whether one of the mass-produced plains-type Hawkins or a custom-built reproduction of a flintlock from the "golden age." What muzzleloader hunter hasn't unobtrusively, at least, leaned his rifle against a log, or laid it on the ground, and placed pouch and powder flask or horn in a still-life arrangement and sort of secretly revealed in the nostalgia of it all? Hopeless romantic? Perhaps so, but that's part of the muzzleloading game, too, for many muzzlestuffers.

There is also something pleasing about putting together the various components that go to make up a load. Measuring the powder, pouring it down the barrel, placing a ball on a patch and driving it home, capping the nipple or priming the pan, and the satisfying "kerboom" and billow of sulphurous blue-gray smoke. It's a lot more personal than pumping in a neatly-packaged cartridge a machine in some distant factory put together for you.

Muzzleloading opens a whole new field of tinkering, too. Casting rifle balls or maxies, making a powder horn or a hunting pouch, putting together a gun from a kit or from scratch, and an endless number of other projects which open up as the newcomer gets into the field.

There are a number of muzzleloader clubs in the state. And club-sponsored target shooting, not only at regulation paper targets, but some offbeat types of events as well. The pioneer events, for example. These highlight such feats as snuffing a can, pumping in a neatly-packaged cartridge a machine in some distant factory put together for you.

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Handful of gray squirrels for the pot is result of a muzzleloader hunt in the swamp by Don Naggiar, left, of Tallahassee. A cloud of sulphurous black powder smoke, below, means another bushytail in the bag.
DOUBLE TAKES

A charter member of the Bobwhite Literary and Wild Hog Society, a year ago I was named chairman of a "doubles committee" to define exactly what a double is in wing shooting.

Killing two birds with one shot is not a double. It's blind luck!

My committee's definition was, "A double is when a shotgunning knocks down one bird with one shot and with no perceptible stop in movement quickly kills another bird on the wing with a second shot." The committee's report was rejected at the membership meeting. Because a double has great prestige, the members wanted the definition relaxed.

One member proposed a special category for bobwhite quail. On a covey rise, for example, if three shots are fired with continuous movement and no balking by the hunter, it should be called a double if any two quail drop. Where a hunter killed a quail on the first shot, missed the second, but connected on the third, it should be known as a "stutter double."

A duck hunter proposed a category to be called a "mercy double." For instance, if on the first shot, he hit a duck and it wavered but did not plummet, it would be his duty to fire a second shot to dispatch the bird. If, on his third shot, he downed the duck, and there was no break in his movement, then he should be credited with a "mercy double."

Another hunter wanted a category for a "gun-jam double." If he killed a bird with the first shot but could not fire a second because the gun jammed, he should be allowed special dispensation. After repairing the gun, if he bagged a bird on the first shot, it should be considered a "gun-jam double."

A woodcock hunter wanted the definition broadened to take into consideration the low daily limit of five. When he shot his fifth bird of the day, and there was another in the air, he could not shoot. If he could have fired legally, he might have gotten a double. He proposed calling this a "virtual double."

A jack snipe hunter said that if that was accepted, he proposed a "seasonal double." If on his last shot of one season he killed a snipe and on his first shot of the next season he downed one, then he should be credited with a "seasonal double."

A deer hunter wanted to know the classification of his shooting prowess if he shot a buck and the bullet passed all the way through and killed another buck standing behind. Several southern colloquialisms of luck, including methods of obtaining same, were hooted at the deer hunter. He was then kicked out, a rifleman having no business attending a meeting of wing shooters.

One hunter proposed that a referee, wearing white knickers and a black and white striped shirt, should accompany all quail hunters shooting for record. The referee would be the final judge in all questions of doubles or triples. The society's attorney suggested that referees cannot see any better than hunters. He should be required to carry a portable television camera for instant replay before making a decision. To end the debate, I made a motion that all pump and semi-automatic shotguns with a capacity of more than two shells be outlawed. Only shotguns with a maximum capacity of two shells could be used.

The membership instantly called for a vote. I was kicked off the doubles committee—unanimously. When I got home, I discovered a definition of a double no one can argue with.

It's two ounces or twice the normal portion the pourer would dispense if he were making a single.

By CHARLES DICKEY

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1979
The early February morning dawned with frost and biting winds and the 30 anglers on the Gadsden County side of Lake Talquin shivered as they listened to last minute instructions from the officials.

Then each boat took its place in line to prepare for the takeoff. I had seen my husband off at bass tournaments many times before, but had never experienced firsthand the excitement and anticipation involved in the ritual. Entrants looked strange, with faces hidden by ski masks to protect them from the icy winds that would blast them momentarily. The smoky steam rising from warm outboards added to an already bizarre scenario.

The time arrived with a wave of the flag, motors kicked into gear, and bass boats went flying toward separate destinations. I temporarily forgot the cold and glanced around the sight that had thrilled me as a mere spectator. Nothing was visible except spray whipping up from boats around us. The roar of 15 motors was almost deafening. I knew at that moment what it was all about—why competition was so addictive.

Along with 14 other women, I was part of a new twist in bass tournaments—one of the first couples' tournaments to be held in Florida by a national fishing organization. Sponsored by the Poor Boy Bass Association, this tournament was a result of the members' wives suggesting that the program be expanded to include them.

That suggestion had culminated in the 15 couples on Lake Talquin for the tournament. On previous fishing trips, Jerry, my husband, had driven at a moderate speed for my benefit. Little did I know that it was SLOW compared to the top speed necessary to reach prime fishing spots before other competitors. I realized then that I was more concerned with staying alive than getting there first.

Sixty miles an hour is exhilarating—but it is also very frightening. My apprehension heightened as we headed full-speed into the fog. Although Jerry had been a guide on Lake Talquin for several summers and knew the channel well, I held onto the side rail and attempted to block out of my mind the horrible accounts I'd heard of boats colliding with floating logs—the fisherman's nemesis. So, I put my trust in the Lord (and my husband's knowledge of boat handling), shut my eyes and said a little prayer. We were definitely on our way.

As planned the evening before, we headed for shallow flats at the east end of the lake. Word had it that several good-sized fish had been caught there the previous weekend. Nearing our destination we idled the boat through a maze of stumps lurking below the surface. We were shivering, partly from the cold, but mostly from nervousness.

We both chose spinner baits and began checking around each "fishy-looking" patch of grass and gnarled tree stump. Being fairly skilled at casting, I became discouraged when my first few throws were direct hits into foliage and my $500 C "bird-nested" with unprecedented frequency. Jerry, a patient partner, said I had temporary tournament jitters and he would probably start doing the same thing (a true prediction which made me feel better).

After an hour with no strikes, we moved to another area with even shallower water which is more conducive to good early spring bassing. We covered three to four acres, but still no success. Zipping up my life jacket, I prepared for the mad dash to another location.

Our luck held and during a precious five minute break for hot coffee, we wondered how many couples already had fish in their boats. We decided to start fishing back in the direction of the tournament headquarters, switching to deep-diving plugs, hoping to entice some lazy large-mouth out of his hideaway.

Bass ignored us and Jerry tried to console me. Little did he know I was mostly disappointed because I wanted to make him proud by proving I could at least bring in a bass whether it was a winner or not. But, as the weather cleared and the temperature rose to 62 degrees, my spirits lifted as I basked in the sun and realized how much I loved being out on the water, doing the thing I liked best with the person whose company I most enjoyed.

At weigh-in, only nine of 14 boats had bass, with the largest a little over two pounds. But it was the 15th and last boat in, with our houseguests aboard, which took the couples' tournament with a 5.3 pound lunker.

A cookout following the fishoff had 50 couples attending, and a tour of Tallahassee the next day, for wives of tournament anglers, kept the high spirits going.

That weekend marked a new trend in bass tournaments. Wives were no longer relegated to motel rooms or campsites until the final judging. Hinton Day, 1978 director of the Florida Division of the Poor Boy Bass Association, reasoned that women interested in bass fishing should be encouraged, and members might get less objections if wives could share in the fellowship.

So now a couples' tournament is held the Saturday preceding each men's formal contest on Sunday, with a cookout afterwards and special activities for the ladies during the men's competition.

How has all this been received? Well, after the first fishoff, 25 to 30 couples signed up for the next tournament on the Apalachicola River.
common snipe

by John B. Edscorn

Rain-soaked shoregrass naps in a brief breeze. All is still as we ease on. There, faintly rippling the grassy shallows, a snipe. It's tending to fly. Don't move a hair. Patience. At last, it's feeding within shotgun range. Learning this can be a long, costly process for some hot-shots, however. One slow-learning of my acquaintance has for years been kicking up snipe and hanging away prematurely—averaging one bird per box of shells at his best. Net too many hunters bother with such small, difficult game today.

In Florida, you may expect snipe from September until April but the peak months are well within those limits. Snipe prefer freshwater areas, especially wet prairies, shallow marshes and shorelines offering similar habitat and feeding opportunities. A "frozen" snipe's cryptic color pattern blends perfectly into the grass and the bird is often overlooked until it flushes, making its escape with appropriate "scape" cries of a harsh, grating tone. A "frozen" snipe can be ideal for photo-stalking. If you see it before it pulls its disappearing act, that is. Inch toward it, afoot or by car. Our point-blank shot described earlier was actually made from a station wagon. Cars are perfect photo blinds and very maneuverable ones as well. Betch your approach and you'll feel like the little kid left holding the bag on his first "snipe hunt." Do it carefully and you'll need that camera and at least a 400 mm telephoto lens and extensions or bellows for very close, frame-filling focus on such small subjects.

Photo trophies capture permanently your climatic moments afield. And stalking, particularly on foot, demands the savvy of an uncommonly knowledgeable hunter. You won't be filling your frames with genuinely wild turkeys at the start, so help both novice and experienced sportsmen better understand their roles and responsibilities in hunting and firearms ownership. The hunting rules and regulations for the current year are reviewed along with other general hunting laws such as Fla. Statute 372.99. This probhbits the display of a firearm over any paved road, highway, street or occupied premises.

The main points of the 1968 Gun Control Act are discussed including:

- It is illegal to sell a firearm to anyone under 21 years of age.

- It is illegal to buy, sell or possess any sawed-off shotgun (a smooth bore cartridge-type shotgun with a barrel length of less than 18 inches and an overall length of less than 26 inches), a short-barreled rifle (a rifle with a barrel length of less than 16 inches and an overall length of less than 26 inches), a fully automatic machine gun or submachine gun, or a silencing device for a firearm that is not properly registered. The federal registration fee is $200 for each weapon or device.

The wildlife officer's primary duty is to enforce the game laws. However, education rather than arrest is an important objective of the Game Commission. All hunters should know the laws governing their sport.
Seventy-nine years ago The Montgomery (Ala.) Advertiser was advocating the protection of the lowly gopher tortoise, an unattractive, slow-footed, and apparently dim-witted creature that has been around some 60 million years. It was the dietary mainstay of many impoverished families in this area during the lean Depression days of the 1930s.

Commenting on a Florida paper's efforts to obtain legislation for gopher protection in 1899, The Advertiser said: "Many a time in Pensacola have we seen barrels of gophers standing on the sidewalks just as if they were so many potatoes, living and apparently doing well without food or water, waiting to be bought up and turned into gopher gumbo or some other succulent dish for the delectation of epicures or the garnishment and adjunct of feasts."

"By all means let gophers have the strong arm of the law thrown around them, and let them browse and burrow and increase and multiply in the land of their forefathers without fear of harm from shortsighted or avaricious destroyers. We can imagine New England without office seekers, Kentucky without whiskey, and Kansas without Populists, but not Florida without gophers."

And now, in 1978, the lowly gopher seems more in need of protection than ever, since state wildlife officials are considering removing it from the threatened species list, leaving as its only protection the present five-a-day bag limit, which has not yet halted illegal commercial trade.

But ugly and simple as it might be, the gopher still has some friends, two of whom are Dr. Walter Auffenberg, curator of reptiles, and Richard Franz, herpetologist, both with the Florida State Museum in Gainesville. They are founding members of the Gopher Tortoise Council, an organization dedicated to the protection of Gopherus polyphemus as the burrowing tortoise is known in zoological circles.

The poor gopher needs all the protection he can get. Not only have land development and clear-cut forestry operations removed much of his natural habitat, but somehow an interesting (but doubtful) bit of folklore has it that gopher meat "is good for your love life" and also has medicinal value in lowering high blood pressure. Although both of these claims are classified as "old wives tales" without basis in fact, they have given impetus to the hunting and eating of gophers, which have been considered a delicacy for a hundred years or more among gourmets in Pensacola and the Minorcan population of St. Augustine and New Smyrna. In these markets, a good-sized gopher will sell for $5 to $10, and no questions asked.

As a consequence, the gopher population has dwindled to an estimated 1.2 million, about 50 per-

The GOPHER

Gophers use their powerful flippers to dig holes in sand hills to depths of 15-20 feet or more. They share their burrows with a variety of insects and animals.

Thirty-two sandhill gophers, one of Florida's threatened species, were captured on the Camp Blanding Wildlife Management Area near Kingsley Lake in an area soon to be mined by the DuPont Company. The gophers were then transplanted to another portion of the management area which had previously been mined.

Wildlife Management Specialist Jim Schatz, who headed the transplanting, reported the gophers have already settled in, digging new burrows and munching contentedly on grass and herbs in the sandhill area.

By E. L. Matthews

The Bradford County Telegraph

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1979
But during shipment from Bell to Pensacola, the tight packing causes the gophers to sweat, and on arrival at their destination the meat is delightfully flavored and needs neither salt nor spices, our information tells us.

No eclat social event in Pensacola during the gopher season is complete without soups or stews made from the Bell product.

For those not familiar with local lore and geography, "Peggy" was the nickname of the Seaboard's branch line train that make a daily trip from Starke through Brooksville and LaCrosse, and on to Bell, near the Suwannee River.

Those who have never tasted gopher stew, might naturally wonder what difference it would make if an ugly, stupid creature such as the gopher should disappear from the face of the earth. But the question isn't as simple as that. It just so happens that and crawling insects, some of whom would not survive if it weren't for the cool, humid atmosphere sand, settling down from the surface to a depth of 12 to 12 feet, and 20 or 20 feet long.

Temporary visitors commonly found in gopher holes include the diamondback rattlesnake, gopher snakes, and the rare blue indigo snake, which has the advantage of being on the state's endangered species list. Permanent tenants, which live only in gopher hole are commonly known as protective steps are taken. He says that destruction of habitat has had an even greater impact than hunting on the declining gopher population, and calculates that even if losses due to hunting stop altogether, the present population of 1.2 million would decline another 75 per cent, down to only some 300,000 gophers, by the year 2000. He doubts that the species can maintain itself if the population falls to that level.

The daily bag limit of five per person, and the strict ban on commercial sales have been ineffective in stopping the trade in gophers, Dr. Auffenberg says. He reports seeing pick-up trucks loaded with as many as 300 gophers, bound for the Florida Panhandle, where they are almost hunted out. Other major markets for the meat are Miami, Tampa, and St. Augustine.

Gophers are hard to catch for they don't stray far from their holes, and can pick up scents anywhere as they scurry back inside when disturbed while feeding. Poachers, however, have found a way to outwit them by attaching a piece of bedspring to the end of a flexible rod and thrusting it into the hole. The gopher is entangled in the spring and can then be dragged from its burrow.

Violating the state game laws can result in a penalty of up to $500 and six months in jail, but relatively few commercial hunters are ever caught. The Gopher Tortoise Council would like to have the gopher removed entirely from the game list, which is inconsistent with having it on the threatened species list, they say.

Auffenberg and Franz found that gophers nest in colonies averaging 11 individuals, with a ratio of one mature male to five or six females. Due to predatory animals and weather conditions, they found there was a successful hatch only every five or so years. Raccoons take a big toll in eggs, and newly hatched gophers are eaten by birds and snakes.

Gophers have been around since the Eocene, an era dating back some 40 to 50 million years, and were mentioned in the famous naturalist, William Bartram, on his travels through Florida in the 1780s. He observed gophers in this north central area and reported, "They form great and deep dens in the sand hills, and cast out incredible quantities of earth. They are esteemed excellent food."

Left to themselves, gophers grow old gracefully, and may achieve a century or more in age. One unusually large specimen, reported at Gold Head Branch State Park several years ago weighed 20 pounds, and measured 15 inches wide, eight inches thick, and 20 inches long.

In my expeditions in that territory I had developed pleasing friendships with a number of tenants who would inform me where they had seen quail. That was naturally very helpful. One of those was an elderly man by the name of Joe Thompson. Joe and my dog Bill quickly made friends as he met me one day at the ferry landing.

Joe said his boss had told him to saddle a small black horse which was tied near the ferry and I was to use the little horse any time I came over to hunt.

Although I had not been in the saddle for years, I quickly accepted the offer, mounted, and Bill and I took off for the quail area.

Joe told me that I could safely shoot from this little horse since he was totally deaf and very gentle. Bill had never seen me astride a horse and he would go out and explore an area and then he would come back to me and follow along looking up at me as if to ask, "What do the devil are you doing up on that horse? Get down here on the ground and let's go hunting."

But I kept encouraging him to get out and hunt and in a very short time he came to point in a small patch of broom sage on the bank of a thick brushy slough.

I rode up and flushed the covey and crippled one

MY DOG

Bill first saw the light of day in January of 1924, a shy, little pointer who easily stole the hearts of T. H. "Buck" Pryor and his wife. He quickly grew into a fine young giant with big feet and a well-formed chest. Retrieving first bails and sticks, then graduating to the real thing, Bill gave Buck many memorable expeditions into the sage-fields and thickets.

Pryor, a seasoned outdoorsman of some 77 years, has completed two non-commercial volumes of recollections of early days of hunting in his native southland with many of the tales centering around that special dog, Bill.

He shares with readers of FLORIDA WILDLIFE one of those—horseback hunting in some "fine quail territory."

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I rode up and flushed the covey and crippled one

bird that fell over in the brushbox in the water. Without hesitation Bill invaded the thicket and caught the cripple in the water, brought it to me and laid it down. I congratulate to an extent, climbed up on the horse and soon Bill was down on point again. This time I registered two clean kills.

As Bill was bringing the first one, I had a fantastic thought that I would try to teach him to deliver the birds to me while I was still on the horse. I stayed in the saddle while he brought in the first bird. As usual, he went back to the field and brought the second bird. As he approached the horse and before he dropped the bird, I started malfunctioning in my retractor and my dog Bill quickly made friends as he met me one day at the ferry landing.

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By T. H. "Buck" Pryor

photo by Wallace Hughes
Fishing

Distant Pastures Not Always Greener

For good reason many out-of-staters consider Florida a fishing mecca. Look around—you could be passing up some topnotch sport.

I'd sure like to get down to your country and try some of that tarpon fishing," said the man from Michigan, and my buddy with whom I'd traveled a long haul to fish for smallmouth bass, grinned and told him he should come on down to Florida. When the Michigander was gone my friend admitted that he'd lived all his life in Florida and had never seen a live tarpon.

"Since I've traveled all over the world for other kinds of fish," he said, "I'm kind of ashamed to admit I never fished for them."

Now if you live in Florida there are certain things you ought to try, even if you have to miss going to Kamchatka or Terra Del Fuego after strange and wondrous species. But most Florida fishermen have sampled only a small percentage of the fishing. There seems to be an invisible barrier about 200-300 miles. Once you cross that you seem to head for distant lands.

I'm going to list some Florida fishing you should get under your belt before you even think of wandering. If you haven't tried all of these things (easily available to anyone) you're shrinking your homework.

First is bonefishing. Not only is it one of the most exciting games in the world but it is different from anything else. It takes skill to be an expert bonefisherman but anyone who can cast a little with a spinning rod should be able to score, especially with bait.

Maybe the original excuse was that bonefish aren't much to eat but golf balls aren't very palatable either. I believe this fish is the most neglected of all. I know dozens of expert bass, saltwater trout and grouper fishermen who haven't even tried bonefish and live within five miles of them. Since many people travel thousands of miles to fish bonefish I'd say there's something goofy about this situation.

If I thought this would really attract a crowd I wouldn't write it.

Then, there are tarpon. They come in all sizes and along most of the coastline. Admittedly, tarpon should be eaten only after you've consumed your leather watch strap and tennis shoes but the runs and leaps of any tarpon are something special.

This is seasonal in most locations but the tarpon will fit any tackle you take for him, whether you use a fly outfit in a roadside ditch or a boat rod and 80-pound line with bait a little offshore. Many an expert bass fisherman seems unaware that the same tackle he uses in the lily pads will be fine for tarpon weighing more than 100 pounds.

Most fisherman seem to pass tarpon with blindness. The St. Johns River shad are better than their reputations. While that fishing goes begging to a great extent, fishermen in the Northeast and on the California coast go to great effort in getting to where the shad are running.

Florida shad, which appear in other southern rivers besides the St. Johns, although in smaller numbers, are generally caught by trolling. I've always thought casting was more fun and all you need is a light spinning outfit and some lures. You can even catch shad in a number of places on the upper St. Johns without using a boat. Wade or stand on a sod bank.

In years of fly fishing for shad I've never seen another fly fisherman on the job unless he was a member of my immediate party. If this fishing were located in some parts of the country it would be big news. The time of year is late winter and early spring.

Saltwater trout fishing comes in here although it may be less neglected than the others I mention. It is too handled with black bass tackle all the way around the big sand spit and local inquiry will put you in business with a minimum of equipment.

Most fishermen seem to pass tarpon as well. The trout (really a weakfish) gets to large size, especially along the middle east coast. That's where the big spotted ones come from. There's a "common" weakfish or trout also, not quite so popular here.

Ultra-light tackle for bluegills may not be big time sport and may not rate many TV sportmen's shows but it is some of the best in the world. Until recent years Floridians were almost exclusively bait fishermen for bluegills. Fishing got much more sporty when ultra-light spinning tackle and the miniaturespinnerbait became popular.

There always have been a few fly fishermen but they've never made much of a splash. I am not discrediting bait fishing for panfish but if you're looking for sport you'll find light spinning or fly tackle more fun and if "challenge" is a suitable word for broom fishing there's more of it with artificial bait. Although bluegill angling isn't especially technical, no matter what method you use, there's some extra satisfaction in fooling a fish with something he can't really eat.

Snook fishing in the mangrove Everglades of the lower west coast is attracting more and more bass fishermen, together with their tackle and bass boats, all of which are well adapted to the sport without much change. They're showing up more and more in recent years and if you like something much more supercharged bass fishing you shouldn't miss this.

Tarpon, left, are taken on a variety of tackle and are well known for their fighting ability featuring some spectacular aerial gymnastics. Debie Waterman puts a Florida shad in photo above. In season, good shad fishing is readily accessible to all and the equipment needed is simple.

There are many other kinds of Florida fishing, of course, including offshore hillfishing, but those get more publicity. The kinds I have mentioned are sleepers, at least to some extent.

Many baits, especially spoons, can be especially effective while sinking and if the current moves them laterally, they have just that much more appeal. The dozens of spoons of the ancient Dardevle shape are especially lively when sinking, even in calm water. They not only do the wobbling bit but they slant off this way and that on the trip downward. Spinning baits sink pretty, too.

I once fished for bass in a deep, clear lake where I could see them cruising around way down there. I could throw a spoon well ahead of a bass and when he saw it fluttering down his curiosity would bring him to it and he'd go down with it for a piece. Then when I'd start reeling he'd strike.

Such maneuvers must happen many times when you don't see them. Attractive sinking is one of the qualities of many of the best baits.

Along that line, effects of current upon lure action rates more attention than it gets. Take the deep-jigging business.

I was offshore with some experts who were showing me how to catch an amberjack over a wreck sunk in 80 feet of water. The tide was running fast
and it was hard for a farm boy to believe he couldn’t just drop a 2-ounce jig on top of a sunken ship without knowing it as he could heave up-tide.

My first efforts even never came close to the wreck and I couldn’t believe a hunk of lead was swept so far astern that no wreck resident could even see it go by. To get down deep when the water runs fast you need a streamlined lure and a small-diameter line. That’s obvious but often ignored. If you can’t see down there you need some extra imagination.

Most Florida fishing benefits from heavy rainfall and 1978 found rivers and lakes pretty high most of the time. The everglades school bass in places I haven’t found them for a long time and there’s been a general cleaning out.

Over-fertility caused by pollution is thus combated and the old belief that a constant water level was best for most fish habitat is no longer tenable. For some years fish management people met loud opposition when drawdowns were suggested.

I am glad to note that the “drawdown,” a lake management device that has proved highly practical, is now being accepted by most fishermen. It’s simply a practice of lowering the water temporarily so that large sections of the shoreline are exposed to sunlight and a general purification takes place.

Most of the fish caught in brackish water can, at times, live in totally “fresh” or totally “salt” water, whatever those terms mean. Brackish water is the most efficient nursery of seafood.

I think we had too much fresh water for too long a time and fishing wasn’t good in the tidal rivers, especially on around him. There was about one hundred birds when there’s about one hundred birds coming at you right out of the sun!” Jed protested.

“Yeah. I see what you mean,” I said.

“Well, that’s what happened on that first flight of mallards. They were wider than usual, but Tommy and I got some good drakes. Old Nick made two nice retrieves.” Jed hesitated a moment and then said, “Two new mallards.”

“Yeah, I thought so. But a more fish being caught today than ever before.

Electronically-equipped fishermen can catch a limit of bass where fishermen of 50 years ago would’ve starved to death.

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Jed Blythe is probably one of the hardest working and intensely competitive men I’ve ever known. Whatever Jed does, he does it to win. One of his favorite quotes is “Show me a good loser, and I’ll show you a loser.” But in spite of his often tough, aggressive manner, he has a lot of friends in this town, and I’m one of them. And there’s no question of his ability. When he can handle him constantly busy, he somehow finds time to be the best duck hunter—bar none—in this country.

During the season, there’s always a duck-skill on the top of his wagon, and on weekends, Tommy, his grandson, with a hunting cap he hasn’t quite grown into, is proudly sitting there beside him. They are hunting partners. Tommy is a serious, big-eyed kid with an occasional shy smile that makes it impossible not to smile back. Nick, their big black Lab is there, too. Ears up and quill, watching all that goes around on him.

I knew that Tommy had just taken the Hunter Safety Course that Jim Nelson gave at the high school, and he now had his first regular hunting license. There probably wasn’t much that they could teach Tommy about safety and hunting ethics after his spending all those days with a real pro like his granddad.

And that’s what I usually mentioned to Jed when I saw him the other day at the diner. He was standing at the counter and talked with his coffee in hand. Not much time for idle chatter. But when I spoke to him this time, he came over to my booth and sat down. “What did you say about Tommy and that Hunter Safety Course?” he asked.

“I said that there’s probably not much that Jim Nelson could teach him. About being a safe and ethical hunter, that is. Especially after all the time he spent with you.”

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“Yeah. I thought so. But a good limit of bass where fishermen of 50 years ago would’ve starved to death. Now tad you’re going to pick out a good head on a drake up there when there’s about one hundred birds coming at you right out of the sun?” Jed protested.

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FLORIDA WILDLIFE

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1979

Observations on the shooting sports

Provided as a public service by The National Shooting Sports Foundation

NOBODY WOULD

by

Jack Douglas Mitchell

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States, rewards are available in cases where animals are killed. The informant, he said, "wasn't even aware of the reward. We're trying to get it for him for being a good citizen." The report of the carcass being kept in an ice house in Homestead. The informant, he said, "wasn't even aware of the reward. We're trying to get it for him for being a good citizen." The report of the carcass kicked off a Commission investigation that led to the arrest in March of Larry Doyston of Homestead, Jordan said, with Watson subsequently convicted and fined $500. The animal was killed in the Everglades.

Big Cypress Swamp, Jordan said, "right in the middle of the Florida Everglades." Jordan said Watson contended he shot the 97-pound male in self-defense but an autopsy showed "that was hogwash." "The panther was shot from behind, running away," he said. "They're very shy animals."--Cocoa TODAY.

**SNOOK RECOVERED**

The first snook stocked in fresh water by the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission have been successfully recovered. Phil Chapman, fisheries biologist, reported nine snook were recovered from a one-acre pond near Yee Hw Junction where 18 fingerlings were stocked a year ago. This is the first recovery of any snook stocked in fresh water by the Game and Fish Commission.

1979-80 Duck Stamp Winner

A 42-year-old artist from California has won the 1979-80 Duck Stamp contest the first year he entered. A colorful closeup of a pair of green-winged teals on the water by Kenneth L. Michaelsen was selected as this year's winner. Michaelsen's design will be reproduced on next year's Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp. A professional wildlife artist, the California man had won the 1978-79 California Duck Stamp contest with a painting of hooded mergansers.

Michaelsen's tempera painting of the teals won over 373 other entries, a record number for the Duck Stamp contest. Entries are judged on the basis of immediate visual impact, composition and design, style, lasting first impression and distinctiveness.

Although the federal government offers no prize to the winning artist, commercial wildlife art dealers have traditionally been eager to market limited edition reprints of the winning design. Revenues from the sale of duck stamps is used for the acquisition of prime waterfowl habitat. Since 1934 when the first stamp went on sale, more than $200 million in revenue has been collected and used to acquire 2.2 million acres.

**FLORIDA WILDLIFE**

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1979

**BACKTRACK With Charley Dickey**

There are many "outdoor" books worth reading. There are fewer worth buying. There then are the keepers--the collections of simple, declarative sentences constructed of old, short words that deliver the richness in good stories. Those are worth reading, buying, rereading, and keeping to read again. BACKTRACK is a keeper, a treasury of graceful humor and nostalgia. It is a measure of the best in outdoor writing. The edition is very limited, however. The National Sporting Fraternity Limited has printed only 1,000 copies--each is signed and numbered by the author, Charley Dickey, custom bound, with ribbon, and slipcased. It is truly a collector's item.

BACKTRACK is a collection of the best of Charley Dickey's stories, stretching back some 30 years, but still timeless in their humor and sometimes poignant appeal. It has been said truthfully that "when Dickey writes of a boy's first gun or an old man returning to the scenes of his youthful sport, we are there--right beside the author and his created character." One must wonder about a writer who entitles outdoor columns with the likes of "Pantyhose Problems," "The Spat and Argue Buck Club," and "Bird Dogs Love TV Football Better Than Anybody." But we've come to expect that from the Sage of Craggy Hope. Likewise we can count on the stories under the titles to be first rate.

BACKTRACK is illustrated with artwork. Commissioned and exclusively distributed by the National Sporting Fraternity Limited, 65 Old Route 22, Clinton, N.J. 08809. $25 plus $1 shipping.
from Bean. National winners will receive a $2,000 U.S. Savings Bond and their instructors will receive a personalized Marlin lever action 22 rifle and plaque designating them a Marlin Hunter Safety instructor of the year. Last year Florida had so few entrants that only a junior Safety instructor of the year. "Is It Enough to Be a Safe Hunter?"

Forms and further information may be obtained from any regional Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission office.

Mitchell Retires

A career spanning more than three decades in conservation law enforcement came to close recently when Sgt. Kenneth Mitchell of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission retired. Mitchell, who began his long tenure with the Commission on October 1, 1946, retired 32 years to the day after he began. During his entire tour of service with the Commission, he served as a law enforcement officer in Hamilton County, becoming a sergeant when that position came into being.

Mitchell recalls that one of the prerequisites for his selection as a wildlife officer with the Commission was his promise that he would stay in the position for at least one year. That promise was required, according to Mitchell, because no one the Commission had previously hired in Hamilton County had stayed on for the job for any length of time at all.

In commenting on the 32 years he spent with the Commission, Mitchell said the job had been interesting and amusing and he enjoyed every bit of it. For his retirement, Mitchell plans to stay busy working on his farm. The truth be known, Mitchell hasn’t really retired; he’s just changed jobs.

Everything You Want To Know About Deer

—but didn’t know where to ask is contained in a new book by Leonard Lee Rue III. One of America’s leading wildlife photo-journalists, Rue presents a thorough text and nearly 300 instructive photos covering all facets of deer life, from birth to maturity. Hunters, naturalists, photographers or anyone interested in deer will find this new book compelling reading. An Outdoor Life Book, find it at your local bookstore or write Leonard Lee Rue III, R.D. 3, Box 31, Blairstown, N.J. 07825.

FLORIDA WILDLIFE

Dedicated to the appreciation and enjoyment of our wildlife heritage, and to a fuller understanding of efforts directed toward the protection, restoration, enhancement, and wise use of our natural resources.

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About Deer

A block of tabby

Close-up showing shell makeup

Early Spanish ruins on Florida's east coast, built with tabby and coquina.

FLORIDA WILDLIFE

Guided tours of the Everglades Region are available. Contact the nearest regional office to arrange a tour.

Coquina and Tabby

The early European invaders, attempting to secure a foothold in Florida, located their settlements along the coastal strip. Frequently, traditional construction materials were at a premium in the vicinity of a proposed building site. But the means were at hand. In some places, such as on Anastasia Island near St. Augustine, coquina "rock" deposits were present. By a quirk of nature, vast quantities of coquina—a vari-colored bivalve, also known as the butterfly shell—were concentrated in favored spots. Over the years, chemical action cemented the shells together in a rock-like deposit. Ready quarried, the material makes durable building blocks.

Near other prospective buildings, coquina quarries were absent but accumulations of seashells of various kinds were abundant on the beaches. By mixing lime from burned shells, shell fragments and sand, cement-like "tabby" was formed. This is also durable and makes excellent construction material.

Ancient forts and blockhouses, as well as more humble structures of coquina and tabby, still stand as mementos of turbulent times in Florida's history. They also serve well as tributes to some early wilderness dwellers who learned to make do with what the new country had to offer.
Curiosity is a characteristic of the white-tailed deer. The trait is demonstrated by this pair of does, interested but not alarmed by the antics of the photographer who found them in a broomsedge field one early morning.