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Florida Poisonous Snakes

Eastern Diamondback
- Size to 6 ft. or more
- Diamond-shaped markings
- Black and white facial stripes
- Black bands
- Ringed tail

Canebrake
- Size to 2 ft.
- Black tail

Rattlesnakes
- Black and white facial stripes
- Black bands
- Size to 5 ft. or more
- Small battle

Pigmy
- Spotted markings
- Size to 2 ft.

Copperhead
- Size to 1 ft. or more

Cottonmouth
- Size to 4 ft. or more
- Light facial markings
- Dark body - olive, brown or blackish

Florida's Venomous Snakes
- Beauty doesn't mask the threat.
- Six species of poisonous snakes are found in Florida. Snakebite is a rarity. But be careful.
- Wear snakeproof leggings in the woods and fields.
- Wear pants legs outside of boots.
- Be cautious around logs and dense brush.

Florida Wildlife Scrapbook

Florida Wildlife Magazine • Florida Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission

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THE COVER
Living up to its fighting reputation, a largemouth bass takes to the air in a flurry of flying spray.
Photo by George X. Sand
This Florida Panhandle lake is home for some hefty largemouth bass

JUNIPER LAKE

The first time I saw Juniper, I couldn’t believe my eyes. The lake appeared unfishable.

Why? Because the plainly visible above-water stick-ups, and the obviously greater number below, guaranteed problems, big problems.

Just getting a boat around the lake is a challenge, but an even greater one is getting a lure to the fish. The odds are definitely in their favor.

Yet this lake in the Florida Panhandle on the outskirts of DeFuniak Springs is the home of hefty largemouths, regularly producing bass in the 11- to 13-pound range. There are reports of even larger fish being landed occasionally.

Despite this, Juniper is not as widely known as many more publicized Florida lunker holes. But, if you hit Juniper when it’s hot, you can encounter some real line-stretchers.

To understand the lake’s challenge, you need to know its history. It’s not a big body of water—some 670 acres—a half pint compared to many more famous lakes.

But once you know how it was built, you understand the lake’s unusual features. In 1962, the Walton County Soil Conservation Service and the Walton County Commission built a dam across a small creek draining a tiny natural pond. Surrounding it was a titi swamp.

The dam was built in 1962. After chemical treatment to remove the existing fish population, dominated by some undesirable “rough” fish species, restocking was started that fall with bluegills and shellcrackers. Channel catfish were added during the winter of 1962-63, and bass fingerlings were stocked in 1963. The lake, opened to the public in May 1964, is managed by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.

There was a minimum clearing of vegetation prior to filling. A narrow stretch was cleared around the shoreline by hand, and in a few places by bulldozers. Otherwise, everything was left as it was, resulting in a dense underwater jungle, particularly where the dense titi thickets grew.

The titi swamp is the key. A titi swamp is different from the usual run of swamps. Mainly, it’s far more dense. The titi is a small tree that thrives in shallow water. It has a small crooked trunk that divides into numerous branches 10 to 15 feet above ground.

The trees are now dead, but their skeletons create an underwater jungle that makes boating impossible, provides a perfect bass lair, and almost guarantees a broken line if you hook a fish of any size.

But like all bass holes, you have to be there at the right time. For Juniper, that means spring. The spawning season is undoubtedly the prime time to look for trophy largemouths.

March is the top month. How good is shown by the experience of Bill Allen of DeFuniak Springs who had a
JUNIPER LAKE

one-day angling experience that featured a 13½-pounder and another just 2-ounces shy of 12-pounds. There aren't too many bass holes that will yield a pair like that in a day's fishing.

You'll be more impressed if you study the photo log in Grady Clark's store at Clark's Landing on the lake. Grady, an avid fisherman, photographs most of the big bass catches, and his picture collection is impressive. The lake's monthly pattern is fairly well established by the photos. The picture log shows the January-April period is the most consistent producer of big fish. The monthly marks during this period range from 12 lbs to nearly 13-pounds.

But oddly, even larger bass have been caught during hot weather. The biggest photographed in August went 13 lb 10 oz, while usually slow September has produced a 13 lb 12 oz lunker.

The lake record, as far as Grady knows, is a 17½-pounder. He weighed that fish for a lucky angler several years ago, and the mark has stood since. It'll be hard to beat.

Another interesting facet of Juniper is you have just as good a chance of landing big fish at high noon as early or late in the day.

On one trip, I learned of three big bass landed during the high noon period. One weighed 8 lb 5 oz, another 9 lbs; and Ralph Noble, with whom I was fishing with Grady Clark, landed a 6½-pounder. Any time of the day apparently is the time for a big bass.

Obviously, this odd-ball lake can be fished anytime despite the weird physical features, but how do you go about it?

You are restricted in your fishing, but from a rather small fishable area you can catch lunkers. You can operate a boat only on the perimeter of the lake, and the edges of the "sanctuary." Even then, watch out for floating logs, and stickups inches below the surface.

Using an extra-big bass boat requires caution. The ideal boat for Juniper is a small, 14-foot skiff with a small motor. Clark's landing has such rental boats. You don't need power nor speed, for there's only about 8 miles of shoreline.

After fishing with such experts as Clark, Noble, and Jim Caraday, of Freeport, a frequent challenger of Juniper, it's obvious that the plastic worm is the number one lure.

During the January-March period, Juniper experts use a worm without a weight, because much of the fishing is in shallow water. The preferred colors—good all the year around—are black, dark blue, dark green, deep purple, and purple-grape.

Although most anglers regard Juniper as a worm lake, there are a few who use top water lures. The prime time for top waters and crank baits, if you can find water sufficiently clear to use them, is from April through June.

During this period, topwater plugs with single or double propellers are used as well as shallow running, lipped plugs. Spinner baits, too, are effective because of their ability to run over underwater snags. However, no lure is 100 percent fool-free, so wise anglers have spares with them.

Color for the topwater and shallow runners is usually black and silver, although a few prefer the frog back combination. Infrequently, because Juniper is a winnowpaine lake, black and gold, and crenellated colors are used, but there are days when these are the ticket to success.

During the warm weather through September, plastic worms again are the prime lure. However, worms now are fished deep with a weight, but don't expect to be fishing beyond 10 or 12 feet. The lake is basically very shallow.

Early and late in the day during the warm months are the prime time for topwater lures as the bass move into the shallows to feed. But during the day, you have to seek them somewhere on the perimeter of the "sanctuary." Getting to the fish is the prime problem then.

In the fall the plastic worm again is the chief lure, fished both with and without a slip sinker. During this period, the bass are widely scattered, sometimes around the few grass beds, sometimes along the shore, and sometimes around the edges of the "sanctuary." You have to keep searching to find them, but fortunately there isn't a lot of water to cover.

Juniper has virtually a level bottom, resulting in the bass roaming everywhere. Thus you don't have to search for specific locations such as drop-offs and structures. There are a few grassy points that produce more consistently than others, but you can catch bass anywhere in the lake if the bigmouths are in a hitting mood.

Tackle for fishing the half-pint lake is standard. Most prefer 20- to 30-pound test lines with stiff rods, either with bait casting or spinning reels. You don't need a huge tackle box full of lures, but you do need a lot of luck. The odds do favor the bass.

If you're unfamiliar with the location of DeFuniaik Springs, it's not hard to find. The little town is on U.S. 90 and Interstate 10.

the hefty fish hit a plastic worm at high noon.

Ralph Noble displays a 6-pound bass from Juniper Lake.
When my young son began asking for the third year in a row if he could have a BB gun for Christmas, I went to see Bob Wakefield. Wakefield has left as many footprints on hunting trails as any woodsman. He was sure to have some pointers on how to safely go about introducing a youngster to the shooting sports.

Since September, when he isn't working his regular job at Sperry Univac, Wakefield has operated his R&P Custom Ammunition shop out of the garage of his Largo home. He taps brass rims with a precision press, checks tables of ballistic coefficients, and keeps black powder in tight-lidded cans in a tight-lidded wooden box inside a shower stall in the garage. A smoke detector in the shower stall, and a sophisticated fire alarm system over his work table, provide ample proof of the store he sets on safety.

Perfect, I thought. He'll be able to steer us away from any unwise selections.

But then I wondered if I had been right to bring along my son, whose nine-year-old eyes widened at the sight of a well-oiled Winchester Model 94, 30-caliber rifle on the table next to a Remington 30-06 with a high-powered scope and a couple of heavy hand guns, one with a shiny nickel-plated handle.

"I use a shoulder harness for my single-action revolver," Wakefield said, pulling a fancy leather strap over his arm. "That's not so I can look like Clint Eastwood, but because the swamps where I go hunting often get me into water well above my waist."

Choosing a gun, he said, depends on the type of shooting one plans to do, the terrain one plans to shoot in, and, for a hunter, the kind of game one is after. A target shooter doesn't need the same equipment as a sportsman tracking wild hogs.

For a youngster just learning to shoot, a 22-caliber rifle is often the first choice, Wakefield said, because it has no recoil worth mentioning. Air rifles and CO2 guns are also used for teaching beginners.

"Those BB guns can be just as dangerous as firearms," he said, "and you have to be just as careful with them."

Having hunted in nearly every type of situation, often with his brother Jim, Wakefield said he became fed up with the standard, stock ammunition sold for certain guns and began studying how to make his own.

"The business of preparing and reloading ammuni-

By Jill Greer

Photo by Carl Kenig, Observer Staff

Bob Wakefield checks out the action of a gun for the benefit of young Bob Kalach, in the photo on opposite page. Attention to detail is vital in safe reloading. Above, he puts micrometer on cartridge.
tion is highly specialized and complicated," he said. "Each firearm and each shooting objective requires its own unique ammunition."

As he demonstrated a reloading operation for a 44 magnum handgund, we got a rough idea of what ammunition is all about.

A bullet is actually only one type of many important components.

Once the type and purpose of the ammunition is clear, Wakefield rezises brass cases to fit the gun exactly. He measures smokeless powder into a scale, using a measurement device called a unifier for accuracy. Ballistics tables are checked and calculations are made.

The case is cleaned, sized and flared for the insertion of a primer, which Wakefield says should never be touched by hand, only by a special tool. A properly-sized bullet is then pressed into the top of the case, and the ammunition is ready for testing.

"The first thing a beginner should learn is respect for what he's handling," Wakefield said. "I wish we had a law in Florida like the one in New York that requires taking a firearm handling course before a hunting license can be issued."

Although not yet a requirement in this state, firearm handling and hunting safety classes are a must, Wakefield believes, for anyone who wants to get the most out of hunting.

The Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission regularly conducts hunter education classes in all regions of the state. Consult the appropriate regional office, listed in the back of the magazine, for details.

"Most beginners start to learn about guns when they are 13 or 14 years old, or older," Wakefield said. I breathed a sigh of relief. My son was only nine.

"I took my young friend Bobby Kalach on his first hunting trip when he was 14," Wakefield said. "He had never been in the woods before, so Jim and I had him walk between us, in single file. When a big old hog came roaring out of the underbrush right by us, both Jim and I shot and missed. But the sound of those two guns exploding was enough to send Bobby under the leaves. It's sure a lot different from the clay bird shooting he was used to.

Wakefield said he and Jim taught Bobby how to sit in one position for four hours or more without getting impatient, and how to stay in one place for an entire morning alone, knowing that to wander away means getting lost.

"Never shoot at something you hear, even if you think it's a buck sneaking through the grass," he said. "That's one of the most important things to remember—to know what you're shooting."

He said he carries dextrse in plastic bags and beef jerky in green paper packets with him on hunting trips.

"The plastic bags and the green packets always go back into my pockets, because leaving an area clean of litter is just as important as right handling of a gun," he said.

More than with most other sports, patience and confidence are necessary for a beginning hunter, he said. Even to the point of rehearsing how to walk; not heel to toe, but rather flatfooted so that the echo of a heel won't reverberate through the ground to be picked up by game. In marshy areas, a flatfooted walk also prevents sinking into the mud.

"Bobby learned what type of clothes to wear, how to rely on peripheral vision when his eyes became strained, how to use a compass and take readings before each trek away from a road, and most of all, to leave all traces of being a smart aleck at home," Wakefield said.

"This year, he's been hunting with us again, and he's pretty good."

My son listened to all of this with rapt attention. Will he get a gun for Christmas? No, not this year.

Wakefield funnels powder into measure which meters out precise charge. Knowledge and attention to details are important in safe reloading.

"KUDZU - The Creeping Menace"

Kudzu is an exotic, leguminous vine with a broad, three-pointed leaf and woody stem, first introduced to the United States from Japan in 1876.

In a century, kudzu (Pueraria lobata) has virtually engulfed large parts of the South. The region's long growing seasons, mild winters and abundant precipitation has enabled Kudzu to grow and spread at phenomenal rates. The plant begins growing in the early spring with green tendrils radiating from its deep tap roots. Producing great quantities of foliage, the tendrils can grow 60 feet in one season, often climbing vertical obstacles as high as 40 feet. Allegedly, kudzu can shoot up as much as 12 inches in 24 hours.

By late summer, the ground is covered with a thick maze of vines, sometimes several feet deep. Although kudzu loses its leaves after a killing frost and dies back to its root, the perennial vine regenerates each spring and continues to spread year after year as it establishes new tap roots at nodes along the stems. To make matters worse, the plant is bettered little, thus far at least, by disease or insects.

An estimated million acres or more of southern farms, forest and pasture land are now covered by the spooky-looking growth. Little is safe from "attack." Fences, abandoned houses, unused railroad beds, junk cars, even telephone poles are quickly enchanged.

Predicatably, that has led Southern folk to tag kudzu with such descriptive nicknames as "mile-a-minute vine," "foot-a-night vine," or simply "the vine."

First used in the U.S. as an ornamental vine to shade porches of southern homes, kudzu--by the early 1950s--was found to provide inexpensive foliage for livestock. Later, spanning the Great Depression years, kudzu's deep roots, dense foliage and rapid growth, along with its nitrogen-fixing quality, provided the kind of cover ground needed to control guly erosion, stabilize road banks and rejuvenate nitrogen-deficient soils.

Cover along roadways

KUDZU COVERS ALL

Florida Wildlife

Kudzu covers all

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what's in a scientific name? Every living thing has one. For man, it's Homo sapiens; for the whitetail deer, it's Odocoileus virginianus; for the eastern cotton-tail, it's Sylvilagus floridanus.

Scientific naming of organisms is called nomenclature, and, because it comes in two parts, nomenclature is termed binomial. Binary nomenclature was developed by an 18th Century Swedish botanist, Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778). He had a passion for classifying species and hit upon the idea of giving each living thing a shorthand description—one word for the genus and one word for the species. This idea spared biologists from the drudgery of trying to describe living things with several words or sentences. Linnaeus gave a handle to species identification.

Binary nomenclature, therefore, consists of two names: the generic, for the group of similar species to which the living thing belongs; and the specific, the scientific name of the species itself within the group. With animal designations, the generic name is always capitalized while the second word is uncapitalized.

Scientific names, derived from Latin, Greek and other languages, have been added and many have been revised since Linnaeus' time. Many changes have resulted from new biological interpretations as to where certain species should be fitted into the taxonomic scheme of things.

What are in the scientific names of animals? The names may describe an animal's size, form, color; its habits or habitat; the type of food it eats; its external characteristics (skin, hair, nose, eyes, etc.); its geological niches in time (Eocene, miocene, etc.); its geographical location; or its classical derivation. Scientific names are comprised of word parts (one or two roots, prefixes and suffixes). One word may come from Greek while the other from Latin. Sometimes it is impossible to see the connection between the scientific name and the animal to which it refers, even when the word derivation is known.

Taking a number of common game animals one might hypothesize as to how the scientific name might apply.

Bobwhite quail (Colinus virginianus): Colinus comes from the Spanish colin, meaning "a partridge;" hence, a partridge of Virginia.

Mourning dove (Zenaida macroura): Zen is from the French meaning "zenith;" al from the Greek "ever, always, forever;" dura from the Latin durus, meaning "durable;" macr from the Greek makros, meaning "long or large." From this one may think of a bird that's forever flying high for long distances.

Wood duck (Aix sponsa): aix is Greek for "a water
Fishing

How Big Is Big

You may not be looking for a world record but it’s interesting to note how your “fish of a lifetime” measures up.

By CHARLES WATERMAN

Ever since the first fishing contest there must have been arguments about rules and judging. By the time Zane Grey got into the fishing competition business in the misty beginnings of our century, the real complications began to show.

Grey, who thought a fisherman who landed a big fish with a broken rod had accomplished more than one who did it with the original gear, wrote acid things about the judging rules of various record-keeping organizations. Everybody bemoans, I guess, but Grey did it dramatically and his beefs got into print.

Since then there have been countless local record keepers, and enough on a national and international basis to keep things happily confused so that almost everybody could claim some kind of a winner. In all-around freshwater fishing, the annual Field & Stream contest was kingpin. When spinning came along, the flyers of the stationary spool thought they should be ranked separately and the International Spinning Association began keeping the books. The same thing happened somewhat later when the Saltwater Fly Rodders organized and set up their own.

In the meantime the International Game Fish Association had the saltwater business pretty well under control. Admittedly the first IGFA records were aimed primarily at the offshore angler who trolled and records from Field & Stream, it’s accepted the spinfisher’s listings and the salt water fly rod stuff too.

Since many of the records kept by the less rigid organizations simply will not meet the requirements set up by IGFA, quite a few record holders are going to weep bitterly when they find their catches no longer listed. No doubt some worthy entries will be discarded but I’m completely sympathetic with the IGFA. Rigid simplicity is the only sensible method for running a contest.

It looks as if the whole record-fish business might be put on one stringer except for another organization, the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall Of Fame, a late-coming but busy organization with its home base in Hayward, Wisconsin. As I understand it, they began mainly as a local promotion group. Hayward is a leading muskellunge fishing spot.

Anyway, they have a headquarters with exhibits and one attraction is a building built in the form of an open-mouthed muskie.

The National Fresh Water Fishing Hall Of Fame (the International Fishing Hall Of Fame is a separate organization and not into record keeping) has set up a program of world freshwater fish records, recognizing many species not ordinarily considered sports fish. Of course “gamelish” is a matter of opinion. If the Hall Of Fame folks really keep worldwide records on all the fish they’ve started out with, they’ve bitten off a big business. Anyway, they’ve hinted that maybe the IGFA doesn’t really want to handle all those freshwater records.

The majority of fishermen in Florida and elsewhere could care less about fishing tournaments, but most of them have some interest in the world’s biggest specimens and where they were caught. In addition there is another interesting reading there’s some scientific value in records. There’s also some interesting tackle dope in them.

We’ve had duplication and near-duplication for all these years. Maybe it would be nice to get all the records in one creed, or at least standardize the scoring.

Brackish water areas of the Everglades are in big trouble, evidently a matter of cumulative things that are coming to a disastrous head in some areas. There’s been some very poor fishing for saltwater species, becoming progressively worse despite brief periods of “comeback.”

The specific sector that’s received the most publicity is Florida Bay, located between the southern tip of the mainland and the Keys. It’s long been a
good shallow water fishery for redfish (red drum), says the regulars, nothing much is left but migratory 33036. They're doing their own biological and public use and from drainage which hurries fresh to the sea, and the mangrove line has drawn steadily inland. There is no question that there is heavier sports fishing and increased pressure to something they have no use for.

Excessive efficiency has become a recognized problem of black bass fishing, simply an outgrowth of more study of the fish. When fishermen took off too many of certain age classes it was necessary in some parts of the country to establish "slot limits" to prevent the harvest of fish during a growth period in which they were especially vulnerable.

It's easy to make a list of the things which have made the bass more catchable. "Excessive efficiency" can be translated to things like the bass tournament, the modern bass boat, the more efficient use of electric motors, electronic bottom and underwater study, development of plastic worms and their relatives, progress in the use of spinnerbaits and one that really came to the forefront just recently—underwater study.

Underwater study could have been done a long time ago but bass fishermen just didn't get into things that seriously until recently. It'd be a good idea to get a name and address on fishing tackle. It wouldn't be much trouble and good fishing tackle, unlike guns, doesn't have a universal appeal. Many people who would keep other things would bring back specialized fishing tackle, preferring a little reward to something they have no use for.

Underwater observation such as that done by Gibbs and people like Florida's Glen Lau has taken much of the guesswork out of how a bass lives. There are those who say so scientific an approach takes out some of the fun, but it can be applied to bass management as well as bass catching. In the long run the underwater observers with their masks and fins can be friends of the fish instead of its enemies. Anyway, the bass is reaching a point where it prospers only by the fisherman's leave and can be hand pressed through angling without re­ strain. Other game and fish species have been in such a position for generations.

Through the years I've lost quite a bit of fishing tackle one way or another and so has almost any other absent-minded soul who moves around with his gear. A while back I took a new heavy-duty casting reel and a new rod to match and went out to a grassy field to try them out with a casting plug. Their retail value was almost exactly $100. Never got home with them. I did what I've done several other times. While stuffing other gear back in the car I laid the rod and reel on the roof, then got in and drove off with them up there—temporarily. They fell off somewhere, of course, and though I confidently scoured the route back to the field I never found them. Somebody had picked them up from the road, even as you or I would do, and there was no identification on the tackle.

Nevertheless I have never bothered to put my name and address on fishing tackle. It wouldn't be much trouble and certain fishermen, unlike guns, doesn't have a universal appeal. Many people who would keep other things would bring back specialized fishing tackle, preferring a little reward to something they have no use for.

You don't hear much about fishing tackle thefts except by shoplifters and through years of careless­ ness I have a pretty good record with it. Of course if somebody really did sit in a boat they'd take the tackle along with other things but I've had very little of that. I had a couple of valuable rods disappear in the mail once, the cardboard carton coming through with one end gone, but for all I know it may have been an accident, the rods un­ marked and impossible to return. My tackle box was lifted at a boat dock when I was a kid but I guessed who did it as an unsavory character I know had been hanging around there.

It would be a good idea to get a name and address on anything of much value. Don't do as I do.

Bobber techniques are not likely to be the subject of scientific dissertations, their being associated with very elemental fishing methods, but there's much to it. In Europe, where "matchmen" participate in fishing contests using tiny single grabs and such and often scoring with little waggles you wouldn't keep in your bait bucket, the use of a bobber is very important. An account of their methods says that no true contest angler would consider fishing for money with an assortment of less than two dozen floats of various sizes and shapes. One champion, it explained, travels with 450 floats of various dimen­ sions.

Flots are used in some pretty hoity-toity fishing, even though called something else. Many fresh­ water trout fishermen engage in delicate wet fly or nymph fishing having used pieces of fluorescent yarn on their lines or leaders to indicate strikes. One real master I know runs his leader lengthwise through a little 2-foot-long tube made from a discarded floating line and it stays several feet from the fly. If that isn't a bobber I don't know what it is but the sophisticated name is "indicator.""
What's the status of Florida's bobcat population?

Biologists are working on the answer.

 TRACKS TELL

By Morrie Naggiar

Time was, and not so long ago at that, when a Florida bobcat pelt brought only a dollar or so on the fur market. As might be expected, during those days there wasn't a great deal of energy expended trying to put 'cat hides on the boards.

Then fickle fashion — coupled with vastly improved foreign economic conditions — ordained that long-haired furs were "in." The dollar value of bobcat pelts started to climb. Skyrocketed might be a better term for what has happened to prices over the past few seasons. During the winter of 1978-79, for example, most any half-way acceptable Florida 'cat skin brought $40-$50 or even more.

With this sort of enticement, it naturally followed that there developed a more than casual interest in bobcats on the part of outdoorsmen whose activities involve fur harvesting. It also followed that concern over the future of the species in the state became an issue with many conservation-minded people, including both professional and nonprofessional conservationists.

One question foremost in their minds is, "What is happening to Florida's bobcat population?"

A pelt tagging program, initiated during the 1977-78 season helped measure the extent of the bobcat harvest in Florida. It provided that all bobcat pelts offered for sale must be tagged with a non-removable seal. In addition, a federal law making it mandatory that any bobcat pelt exported must carry one of these tags, helped assure that the Commission was able to compile a record of at least a substantial portion of the annual harvest.

While the tagging system revealed interesting and useful figures on how many cats are killed in a season, it didn't necessarily reflect the status of the general population. The need for such data is readily apparent if the species is to be properly managed. On this basis, an effort was launched to get some sort of a handle on the stock.

At the onset of the bobcat project, a search of the literature showed that very little had been done on developing techniques for determining bobcat population trends. A method currently being used for coyotes, however, appeared promising. This is the scent station transect method.

It is an adaptation of a standard trick used by fur trappers. It relies on the compulsion of a bobcat to check out an invasion of its territory by another 'cat.

The technique has been used in a number of western states over several years to determine relative abundance of coyotes and has been tried experimentally on bobcats elsewhere in the southeast.

It involves establishing permanent scent station transects along unpaved roads in bobcat habitat. Each transect consists of 10 stations located 2/10 of a mile apart. At each spot, a three-foot circle of ground is dug up and the soil sifted so animal tracks are readily seen and identified. A cottonball saturated with bobcat urine is placed in the center of the plot.

These "scent posts" are set up one day and checked the following morning. Timing is such that cooperators with the project run their transects as close as possible to the same day throughout the state. If one or more bobcat tracks are noted at a site, that is recorded as a positive station while those without tracks rate a negative mark.

Preliminary results of scent station work in Alabama and Georgia indicate considerable variance in the number of positive stations per transect. Therefore, in order to draw statistically meaningful conclusions, it was necessary to establish a large number of transects. Currently, 1,000 scent stations have been set up throughout Florida in a variety of habitat types.

Information gathered this past season was used to establish a "base line." From this starting point, transect data in ensuing years will reflect the bobcat population trend, whether up, down, or stable.

It's too early to make any sweeping conclusion regarding the state's bobcat population. As a result of the first season's work, however, it is apparent that the species is widely distributed in Florida and occupies a variety of habitat types.
The sun was already over the tree tops as the three anglers turned their pickup off the pavement and onto a one-lane woods road. The area, located in western Levy County, was typical coastal hammock with huge water oaks, cabbage palms, cedars and tidal creeks. The truck bumped along for several miles and came to a stop beside a small borrow-pit connected with a roadside ditch. The ditch, only 10 to 15 feet across, flowed with dark, tannin-stained water. The pit wasn’t typical of one you would expect to find in the area, but rather a small hole 30 feet across with huge rocks protruding from the surface.

With some degree of excitement, the three fishermen—Herb, Don, and Jim—unloaded their unsophisticated gear, namely bream buster fiberglass poles and a couple of cans of worms. Each angler picked out a likely looking spot along the roadside ditch which was screened by a stand of small willows. The men began breaking off tree limbs to create openings large enough for them to stand at the water’s edge and fish.

Herb was the fastest of the limb trimmers and was soon prepared to settle down to some serious fishing. He threaded a small piece of earthworm onto a #6 hook, fastened a cork approximately 20-inches up the line, and tossed the tiny morsel into the ditch. The cork never had a chance to float upright! A fish snatched the bait and ran into the willow brush, all in one motion, before Herb could even think of setting the hook. Recovering rapidly from his surprise, and uttering an exclamationary word or two, he worked the fish up through a maze of willow shoots and onto the bank.

"Hey, Don," Herb shouted, "Come look at this stumpknocker!" "Stump what?" came the reply. Don left his own limb-clearing operation and hurried over to see the fish.

Not much for size, the stumpknocker measured only five inches in length. Its combination of colors—dark brown, tanning to a hue of grayish-blue on the sides and a rusty orange belly, made it a thing of real beauty. Each scale was marked with a dark spot, hardly larger than a fly speck. Traces of orange and yellow edged the scales along its sides. The iris of its eyes were ringed with turquoise. Yes, it was a pretty little gem of a fish.

Herb was really getting into a lecture on the superior table qualities of the stumpknocker when Jim let out a...
yell. He'd hooked a fish. That sent Don scampering back to his fishing spot.

Action continued for a couple of hours. When things would slow down in one place, the fishermen would walk down the road to another likely looking spot in the ditch, clear some tree limbs, and start again. By lunch time, over a hundred fish had been caught. Most of them were the clumsy little stumpknockers. Several small bass, bluegills, speckled perch and a shellcracker were included in the catch.

The spotted sunfish, *Lepomis punctatus*, is best known here in Florida as stumpknocker. It occurs throughout most of the state, at least as far south as Highlands County. Its general range is from South Carolina to Florida. Primary habitat for this member of the sunfish family is lowland streams. It is quite common to find it in tidal creeks and rivers that empty into the Gulf of Mexico, even though the salinity may be high and tidal effects significant.

When fishing areas such as the lower Suwannee, or the mouth of the Aucilla, Homosassa and Chassahowitzka rivers, plan to fish on low tide. The fish seem to bite as well on either tide. However, it is difficult to get the bait close to them on high tide as they are usually back in the trees and grass. On low tide, the fish are forced to leave the vegetation and are more accessible.

This species differs from its cousin, the redbreast, in that stumpknockers like to bunch up in the eddies close to shore. The redbreast prefers the more open, swifter parts of the river.

When fishing for stumpknockers with spinner baits, it is best to cast the lure within a few inches of the shore and make a slow, steady retrieve. A rule of thumb holds that if you don't get your lure hung up on low tide, then chances are you aren't casting close enough to shore. The twist of the spinner seems to get the fish's attention causing it to move in for a closer look. And, if things are to its liking, it will grab the hook.

Pursuit of the stumpknocker is one type of fishing anyone can enjoy. You don't need an expensive bass boat with all the extras to catch a mess of these fish—a simple cane pole and worms do just fine.

If you want to experience a pleasurable family outing, add a portable cook stove, some grease, meal and other fixins to your bream fishing gear. Load up the family and head for the nearest dark water creek. Somehow the stumpknocker tastes even better when cooked out on the river bank.

**Florida’s Venomous Snakes**

*Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission*

Tallahassee, Florida 32301

The facial pits, one located between the eye and nostril on each side of the head, plus the elliptical pupil, the broad V-shaped head, and the characteristic color pattern of the body, mark the diamondback rattler.

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**Florida has an abundance of wildlife, including a wide variety of reptiles. Snakes, and their cousins the alligators, crocodiles, turtles and lizards, play an interesting and vital role in Florida’s complex ecology.**

Many people have an uncontrollable fear of snakes. Perhaps because man is an animal who stands upright, he has developed a deep-rooted aversion to all crawling creatures. And, too, snakes long have been used in folklore to symbolize falseness and evil. The ill-starred idea has no doubt colored human feelings regarding snakes.

Whatever the reason for distrust, they nonetheless occupy a valuable place in the fauna of the region. On the plus side, for example, snakes help keep in check rodents that threaten crops and, not uncommonly, carry diseases that affect man.

Of the 40 species of snakes in Florida, only six are venomous. These are readily recognized by anyone who will take the time to learn a few distinctive field marks.

There are two types of venomous snakes in Florida. The Crotalidae or pit vipers and the Elapidae.
The Crotalidae are readily identified by the facial pits, one located between the eye and nostril on each side of the head. The elliptical eye pupil and broad, roughly V-shaped head are other identifying features of this group. Included in the family are the diamondback rattlesnake, canebrake rattlesnake, pigmy rattlesnake, cottonmouth, and the copperhead. The venom of these snakes is haemotoxic, that is, it destroys the red blood cells and the walls of the blood vessels of the victim.

**Diamondback Rattlesnake**

The eastern diamondback is the largest and most dangerous of our native snakes. It also ranks high on the list of poisonous snakes of the world. Its large body size, quantity of venom, aggressive defensive tactics and tremendous striking speed make this snake one to be treated with extreme caution.

The diamondback is recognized by a distinctive pattern of yellow-bordered diamond-shaped body markings. Brittle, button-shaped segments form a rattling mechanism at the end of the tail. The arrow-shaped head is much wider than the neck.

Found throughout Florida, the diamondback occurs in every county and on many of the coastal islands. It may be encountered in almost any habitat, but most commonly frequents palmetto flatlands, pine woods, abandoned fields, and brushy and grassy areas. In most situations, this snake is difficult to spot since its color pattern blends into the background.

When disturbed the rattler assumes a defensive position with the body coiled upon itself, rattle free and elevated to sound a warning whirr, and head and neck raised in an S-position. From this stance, when the target is close, the rattler can usually deliver its stabbing strike and return to its original position so rapidly that the movements appear only as a blur to the human eye. The effective striking distance is from one-third to more than one-half the length of the snake's body. Recurved fangs or teeth, lying folded inside the roof of the rattler's mouth, are self-erecting when the mouth is opened wide during a strike. As the fangs pierce the victim, pressure exerted on the poison sacs extrudes venom into the wound. The rattler does not have to be coiled to strike—it can strike from any position and in any direction. When disturbed it generally, but not always, sounds a warning rattle.

The diamondback may shed its skin from three to five times a year, depending upon the amount of food it takes in which in turn governs its rate of growth. A new segment is added to the rattle at each shedding. Some rattle sections may be broken off as the snake travels about, and it is somewhat unusual to find a perfect set. In the light of its irregular rate of adding new rattle segments, it may be concluded that the number of segments in a rattle in no way determines the age of a diamondback.

Although it may attain a body length of over eight feet, it is rare to find a rattler over seven feet long. Rattlesnakes feed on small warm-blooded animals, mainly rabbits, squirrels, rats, mice, shrews, and occasionally birds. It gives birth to from 9 to 13 young at a
Canebrake Rattlesnake

The canebrake rattlesnake is restricted mainly to northern Florida but has been reported as far south as Alachua County. This snake is the southern subspecies of the timber rattlesnake found in other portions of the United States.

The canebrake is recognized by its grayish brown or pinkish buff color, with dark bands across its body, orange or rusty-red stripe along the midline of its back, and a brown or black tail which terminates in a rattle. As in other rattlesnakes, the head is much wider than the neck. A distinctive mark is a dark band extending from the eye to the middle of its back, and a broad head much wider than the neck.

Cottonmouth

The cottonmouth moccasin is a pit viper without rattles. It grows to large size, exceeding five feet in length. Most Florida specimens average about three feet. It occurs commonly in every county in the state and on many coastal islands.

Color pattern of the cottonmouth varies from olive-brown to black, with or without dark crossbands on the body. It is stout-bodied with an abruptly tapering tail, and a broad head much wider than the neck. A distinctive mark is a dark band extending from the eye to the rear of the jaw. A drooping mouthline and protective shields overhanging its eyes give it a sullen appearance.

Often when disturbed it draws into a loose coil, cocks its head upwards and opens its mouth wide to reveal the whitish interior lining, hence the name cottonmouth. From this loose-coiled stance, it lunges out in a fast strike to imbed its poison-carrying fangs. It usually retains a hold on its prey, chewing in order to drive its fangs deeper into its victim. It does not have to be coiled to strike, but can deliver a bite from almost any position, either in or out of the water. It is an unpredictable snake. Some individuals are calm and sluggish while others may be very aggressive.

A water snake, the cottonmouth is found along stream banks, in swamps, margins of lakes and in tree-bordered marshes. It hunts at night for its prey of fish, frogs and other snakes, lizards and small mammals.

The cottonmouth gives birth to six to 12 young that are born with poison sacs loaded and ready for action. The baby snakes are boldly marked with reddish-brown crossbands and bright yellow tails. At this stage they can be mistaken for copperheads.

During the day, the cottonmouth spends time resting near water, often in a grassy patch, on a pile of debris, in brashy places and in low trees hanging over the water.

The poisonous bite of this reptile results in great pain and severe swelling. With immediate and proper medical treatment, the bite is only occasionally fatal to humans.

Pygmy Rattlesnake

The pygmy rattlesnake, also called ground rattler, is common throughout Florida. It is found in every county and on many of the offshore islands. Its rattle is small and slender and produces a sound like the buzzing of an insect. This warning signal can be heard for no more than a few feet away.

Stout-bodied for so small a snake, it is gray in color and marked prominently with rounded, dusky spots. Starting at the base of the head, reddish spots alternate with the black along the midline of the back. Most pygmy rattlers measure less than 18 inches in length. This species feeds on small frogs, lizards, mice and other snakes. Like other members of the pit-viper family, it does not lay eggs, but gives live birth to its young.

Look for the pygmy rattlesnake in palmetto hammocks, the canebrake also occurs in abandoned fields and around farms. During hot weather, it may seek out low swampy ground.

COTTONMOUTH—reveling its “cotton” mouth and a favorite resting spot (below)
Copperhead

Florida is the southern extent of the range of the copperhead. At that, it is hardly more than of rare occurrence in a few counties in the northwest portion of the state, notably Liberty and Gadsden counties. A handsome snake, it is pinkish tan in color with reddish-brown cross bands on the body. These bands are wide along the sides and narrow along the back to form something of an hourglass shape. The copper-colored head is wider than the neck. Average length is 30 inches.

Many snakes that are reported to be copperheads turn out to be young cottonmouths which are similar in appearance. So uncommon is this species here that very few bites, and no resulting deaths, have been reported from Florida.

Coral Snake

The coral snake's venom is the most potent of any of North America's snakes. This colorful species is closely related to the notorious cobra, krait, and mamba. The coral is shy and secretive, seldom aggressive unless startled, tormented or hurt. It has short fangs and a small mouth. It does not strike like the pit vipers but bites and chews to inject its poison. Especially vulnerable parts of the human anatomy to coral snake bites are fingers and toes. Most bites occur when a "pretty little snake" is picked up by someone who does not recognize it as a venomous one.

The coral snake is often confused with the harmless scarlet king snake, which it closely resembles. Both snakes are brightly colored with red, black and yellow bands. A helpful rhyme goes, "red touch yellow, kill a fellow; red touch black, good for Jack." The red rings of the coral borders the yellow. The red of the king snake borders the black. Also, the coral has a black nose, the king snake a red nose.

The coral snake is a small-sized, slender-bodied reptile with the narrow head and round eye pupils characteristic of non-poisonous species. The largest coral snake on record measured 47 inches, but most specimens are less than 24 inches in length.

Found more or less commonly throughout Florida, the coral inhabits pine woods, pond and lake borders and the jungle-like growth of Florida's hammocks. It favors such places as rotted logs, piles of decaying vegetation, heavy fallen leaf cover and old brush piles.

It noses about through decaying vegetation and hums to catch and feed on other snakes, lizards, frogs and other small animals. The coral snake lays eggs, usually six or less in number that hatch in 60 to 90 days. Young snakes measure from seven to nine inches at hatching, and are patterned and colored like their parents.

Doris Mager and the southern bald eagle, principals in the story of The LADY and the EAGLE

By Elizabeth T. Adler

It all began with an injured robin. In 1962, Doris Mager was working in the Audubon Society's gift shop in Maitland. Someone brought in a robin to which some sort of misfortune had fallen. She successfully nursed the bird back to health. This led to calls for aid to other songbirds.

The sideline grew. Currently she is hosting 16 injured birds of prey, including eagles, at her central Florida home. She cares for them with the help of volunteers and a grant from the FAS. She is currently the vice-president for research and rehabilitation of predatory birds.

A combination doctor, nurse and rescuer, Mrs. Mager is often called when one of these magnificent birds of prey is hurt. Over the years, she has cared for more than 30 eagles although, unfortunately, not all have survived.

It was one of these eagles, dubbed John Paul Jones, which aided this dedicated woman in
friend had to amputate the right wing of an eagle after it had been shattered by a gunshot. The operation occurred at the same time Paul Jones underwent many hours of patient training before venturing into his first classroom. The sight of the "Eagle Lady" and her friend was soon familiar throughout the state.

The eagle's death shortly before Christmas put an end to the appearances, temporarily. Mrs. Mager had another future star, though, waiting in the wings. Now she tours with General Patton, who also has a shattered wing and will never fly again.

"He's really good to take to school because then the children realize what the problem is. And it's working. I can show you stacks of letters from kids just crying their eyes out for the eagle with the broken wing."

She concentrates on children, believing them to be the greatest hope for future protection of the bird.

Mrs. Mager's dedication to Florida's raptors goes beyond public school appearances. She is also a member of the Bald Eagle Nesting Survey Committee. The committee, composed of representatives of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service and Florida Audubon Society, annually checks nesting sites throughout the state to determine the current number of eagles in Florida. Mrs. Mager is responsible for keeping track of some 200 nests in a 17-county area and checks the sites three times a year.

Last year, Florida's eagle population held steady at 1,000. Increased enforcement, public awareness programs, the Audubon Society's acquisition of eagle sanctuaries and the cooperation of landowners on whose property eagles' nests are found, all have helped stem the decline.

Florida is one of the major breeding grounds for the bald eagle—the other is Alaska. The bald eagle is currently considered endangered in 43 states and threatened in six. The public pressure to save this national symbol, as well as other endangered species, has resulted in tougher laws and increased penalties for killing. In January, a north Florida man was fined $500 for killing an immature southern bald eagle.

Mrs. Mager's dedication, and that of countless others, has helped awaken the people of Florida to the eagle's plight. The EXXON Corporation, for example, has come forward with a grant to help the Bald Eagle Nesting Survey Committee expand and increase its work.

It's starting to pay off. Soon Mrs. Mager will have a new facility for injured raptors. The society is building a $35,000 predatory bird center at its headquarters in Maitland and Mrs. Mager will be the director.
Isolated, unpredictable and resistant to the forces of man...

At the southwest corner of the Florida peninsula lies an intriguing coastal wilderness known as Cape Sable. Bordering the Gulf of Mexico, this crescent shaped point of land displays a 14 mile strip of primordial beaches. A subtropical community of plants and animals complements the isolated shoreline. Living things abound here where warm seas meet the land and this bounty has lured mankind for centuries. Yet the Cape has managed to overcome man's intrusion and, for the most part, remain intact.

The first known inhabitants of this region were the Calusa Indians who roamed the area for almost 2,000 years. The Calusa were large powerful people and fierce warriors, according to early Spanish explorers. With the discovery of the New World, ships...
of several nations sailed by the Cape. No doubt men came ashore on this inviting landfall to search for food, water and other objects of value. Records show that some early Europeans were tortured and killed by hostile Calusa.

These strong aborigines practiced little if any agriculture but managed to live well on the Cape by hunting and fishing. Bones of turtles, deer, sea mammals and many species of fish have been discovered at their ancient campsites.

Many pieces of broken pottery were also found, some carrying designs which have helped to reconstruct the lifestyle of the early natives. However, very little is actually known about the Calusa for this once great race suddenly became extinct two centuries ago.

Americans later made several futile attempts to settle the Cape. During the Seminole Indian wars, U.S. forces constructed two forts on the beach. The army had hopes of developing an agricultural community which would serve as a barrier against the Indians, but a substantial community never materialized and the forts were abandoned. Today not a sign remains of either structure.

During the Civil War an attempt at farming on the Cape was made by a detachment from the Union army stationed in Key West. Tropical storms, however, hindered production as seawater occasionally swept over the beach ridge to saturate the soil with salt. At the turn of the century settlers tried raising cattle and coconuts on the Cape. Both ventures failed when summer plagues of mosquitoes killed the cattle and the price of transporting coconuts climbed too high. Now only a few coconut palms remain.

All houses have been destroyed by hurricanes. One storm took the lives of two persons residing at the doomed plantation. In 1915 a group of enterprising businessmen decided that they could make a fortune by draining the Everglades and opening up land for agriculture. The plan called for a dredge to cut a drainage canal through the heart of the wilderness to the Gulf of Mexico at Cape Sable.

After nearly a year of hard digging the dredge completed its trek. When it finally broke through to the Gulf though, seawater rushed inland and the Everglades water would not drain out. As a result, the project was later abandoned. Today this canal remains and provides a rather interesting canoe trail to the isolated and uninhabited coast.

Since 1947 Cape Sable has been under the jurisdiction of Everglades National Park. Aided by this protection it has remained one of Florida's wildest and most isolated sandy shorelines. Its location at the southern end of the state also makes this area unique for it harbors plants and animals from both tropical and temperate life zones. At the Cape one soon discovers life has been and still is abundant here. The beach itself is made up almost entirely of shells.

Numerous animals roam the beach in search of food, leaving tracks, diggings and other signs of their presence. During the summer, tracks and nests of sea turtles line the sands. Amid this corridor of animal activity are fragments of the pottery once used by the early Indians. A coastal prairie of grasses and a forest of subtropical hardwoods occupy the high ground behind the beach. Oddly enough, desert plants thrive here too. Beyond this, a vast mangrove swamp stretches 10 miles to the nearest civilization. Because of this natural barrier, there aren't any roads leading to the beach. The absence of automobile traffic is the main reason Cape Sable remains wild and unchanged by modern man.

Isolated as it is, Cape Sable remains one of those increasingly rare gems of nature. Here the adventurous can get a peek at the Florida that was.
Safe Gun Handling

By Lt. Frank Disbrow

Safe gun handling is emphasized throughout the entire Hunter Education program of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. One full class period is devoted to the many aspects of safe handling of firearms, and the subject continues to be discussed in the remaining 11 classes.

The knowledgable sportsman always follows three primary rules of firearm safety.

1) TREAT EVERY GUN AS IF IT WERE LOADED. The only unloaded gun is the gun with the action open. Never accept a gun from another person unless the action is open.

2) ALWAYS POINT THE MUZZLE IN A SAFE DIRECTION. The most basic action of safe gun handling is "MUZZLE CONTROL."

3) BE SURE OF YOUR TARGET AND THE PATH TO IT AND BEYOND IT. A good sportsman carefully identifies his target. He will not shoot if there is the slightest chance of not being totally safe.

The Hunter Education program strongly recommends that guns and ammunition be stored separately and be locked up. Home gun safety requires the education of all members of a family. Firearms should be placed under lock and key to prevent children and careless adults from handling them.

Four basic rules of gun handling in the field are:

1) SAFETY "ON." Always remember that the safety is but a small piece of metal that can malfunction

2) KEEP YOUR FINGER OUTSIDE THE TRIGGER GUARD. Your trigger finger should protect the trigger from snags. Watch out for buttons on coats.

3) MUZZLE UNDER CONTROL AND POINTED IN A SAFE DIRECTION. Each Hunter Education student learns the correct carrying positions. How you carry your gun depends on the locations of your hunting companions.

4) KEEP THE FIREARM UNLOADED UNTIL READY TO USE. Most firearm accidents occur around vehicles or in camp. Your gun should not be loaded when in a vehicle or in camp, or when not in use.

When hunting with companions, safe gun handlers always determine zones of fire. Each hunter knows his zone of fire and the firing zones of his companions. A safe hunter never swings his gun outside of his zone of fire.

Three dangerous, unthinking types of hunters are sometimes found in the field. "THE SHOW OFF"—Breaks safe gun handling rules to get attention. He can cause accidents. Don't hunt with him, "THE OVEREAGER HUNTER"—Is too anxious to be safe and courteous. He causes accidents. Do not hunt with him either. "THE SELFISH HUNTER"—Is only concerned with himself and not with safety. He causes accidents—don't hunt with him. Hunter Education students learn and demonstrate these rules to their certified Hunter Instructor, the safe and courteous method of hunting.

Hunting alone, however, is accompanied by drawbacks—dangerous ones—a deep nasty cut from barbwire, a bad fall into a burned-out stump hole, a wailing bed of trochevous quicksand—all of these have happened to me. There is one other grave risk for the solitary Florida hunter and his dog. Witness the following:

One day I went quail hunting with only my two pointers, Mac and Lady, for company. At that time there still remained in northeast Hillsborough county a large unfenced stretch of piney woods that could be entered by a circuitous route without crossing posted land and thus rousing the ire of various ranchers, to whom the words "bird hunter" was an anathema. As one red-faced cattleman once informed me while har­assing my departure from his pasture, "Anyone who uses a bird dog's fanny for a compass is the lowest thing there is."

I drove through the woods as far as my old '39 Ford Phaeton would go till blocked by a flooded branch too deep to ford; then taking gun and dogs, I loaded the stream and followed a dim trail through overgrown woods for a couple of miles. From there onward the woods had been burnt within the last two years; prime quail cover, loaded with low-bush acorns, and myrtle bushes.

Mac and Lady were no fancy field trial champions, but they set about in short order to prove that they were staunch "meat dogs"; my old game dog was soon gunning with fat birds. I ate lunch and then headed for the car.

By the time I had regained the thick unburnt stubble, the dogs became bored and ran off ahead of me down the lonely trail. They bobbed out of sight around a bend, which I turned a minute or so later and so beheld a strange, shooting sight. Thirty-five yards ahead in the left-hand rut stood both dogs close together, on point facing a large clump of palmettoe to the left of the trail. Their tails wagged slightly over the high wire-grass between the roots, where rising cobra-like three feet above the grass was a large rattlesnake, just at the tip of their tails.

What to do? The rattler could either strike dog at any time he chose, so figuring that a few hirishoot spreading to the banches of Mac and Lady to be the lesser of two evils, I threw up my gun and fired. The dogs whirled about until the nasy thing collapsed on the ground—six feet of him. There was probably another one in the palmetto clump pointed by the dogs, but I had no desire to play the great white hunter in that shoulder-high tangle, and continued forthwith to the car and my nerve restoring bandy flask. A companion would have been a welcome sight there. Afterwards somehow, that particular corner of the wilds lost its appeal to me, and I rarely returned.

Illustration by Peggy Perkins

LEE KNIGHT is a member of a pioneering family that has hunted and fished Florida woods and waters since 1943. "I've been fortunate enough to have done more than my share," he admits.


How to choose and use

**BINOCULARS**

By Rick Schroeder

Before I bought my first pair of binoculars, I never knew much about them. I figured I had no real need for binoculars. Now I don’t know how I ever enjoyed the outdoors without them.

I’ve since bought several pairs and no matter what outdoor activity I’m engaged in, I take a pair along. While hiking, binoculars are helpful in locating distant landmarks. For hunting, binoculars will tell the difference between a distant spike buck and a doe. Camping and outdoor activities offer many uses for binoculars, from scanning the countryside to watching wild animals.

There are ways to use and enjoy binoculars in practically every outdoor activity. The key to getting the most enjoyment from binoculars is knowing how to choose the right pair for your needs and learning how to use them properly.

Several features will help you determine which type of binoculars best fit your specific needs. These features are power, objective lens size, field of view, weight and price.

Let’s examine power first. All binoculars are marked with two numbers stamped on the body. Numbers such as 6x30 or 7x35. The first number indicates the power of the binocular. A 7x means that an object is made to appear seven times larger than it would with the unaided eye.

More power is not necessarily better. As the power increases, it becomes more difficult to hold binoculars steady enough to prevent movement of the image. Look through a pair of ten power (10x) binoculars for several minutes and you’ll notice the tremors. Seven or eight (7x or 8x) power are the strongest that can be easily hand held for any length of time.

The objective lens on a binocular is the lens closer to the “object” being viewed. The size of the objective lens is shown by the number following the power designation. An 8x30 binocular has a 30 millimeter objective lens.

The amount of light transmitted through binoculars is a function of their power and objective lens size. A 7x50 glass lets in more light than an 8x30. A simple way to compare the amount of light transmitted through different eyepieces is to divide the objective lens size by the power. This results in what is termed the exit pupil.

A 7x50 binocular has an exit pupil of 7.1 millimeters, and an 8x30 of 1.75 millimeters. The pupil of your eye opens to about seven millimeters in dark conditions, such as very early morning, late evening or at night. At these times, binoculars with large exit pupils allow you to view objects with no apparent loss of light. A binocular with an exit pupil of four used at night would result in a darkened image with less details visible.

So, binoculars with larger exit pupils are necessary for night or poor light viewing conditions. Those with exit pupils of four millimeters or less are best reserved for daytime use.

In terms of power and objective lens size, which binoculars are best for you? For all purpose uses, 7x35 binoculars are the standard choice. Seven power is easily hand held and the five millimeter exit pupil is acceptable for daytime, morning and evening use.

If you’re going to be using binoculars mostly at night or in other poor light conditions, 7x50’s are your best bet. 7x50 binoculars are the preferred glass for boat owners, astronomers, enthusiasts and those who enjoy the outdoors at night.

Higher power glasses, such as 10x and 15x, are good for long distance viewing. They are especially useful for spotting deer and other wildlife in distant open areas. You’ll need to have a sturdy support for these higher powered binoculars to prevent a “jumpy” image.

What about wide angle binoculars? Are they the ones for you? The advantages of wide angle is they allow you to see more area at one time. Most 7x binoculars have a field of view (stamped on the body) of about 370 feet at 1,000 yards. Wide angles have a field of view ranging from 300 to 600 feet at the same distance.

Wide angle binoculars are better for tracking moving objects, such as birds in flight. However, they are slightly bulkier than standard glasses and this may make focusing more difficult.

Binoculars weigh from as little as five ounces to more than three pounds. If you’ll be using them mainly for car trips and vacations, a heavy pair will do fine. For backpacking or all day hiking, you’ll want the lightest pair that still has the right power and objective lens size.

Knowing all of this will help you choose the right binoculars for your specific needs. But, in the end, there will be one overriding factor in your final choice—price.

Binoculars range in price from under $20 to more than $200. The rule is that you get what you pay for. Higher priced binoculars have better optics, always come with fully coated lenses, and produce clear, crisp images. It is better to rely on known brands than to buy a “bargain special.”

Learning to use binoculars properly and efficiently is as important as purchasing the right ones. It’s frustrating to bring home a new forty dollar pair and find you can’t use them properly.

A few simple adjustments are necessary to match binoculars to your eyes. To adjust the eye width, look at a distant object and move the barrels of the binoculars together and apart. When the two circles merge into one and your eyes feel comfortable, the width is correctly set. Read the scale located on the center post of the binoculars. This setting is your guide for eye width whenever you use the binoculars.

In center focus binoculars the left eye is adjusted with the center focus ring, and the right eye focus with the right eye piece. Look at something in the distance and cover the right objective lens with your hand. Focus your left eye with the center wheel. Then cover the left objective lens and focus your right eye with the right eyepiece. Note the setting for the right eye, so many units plus or minus on the eyepiece.

This separate adjustment corrects for the difference in eye strength. Each time you use the binoculars, preset the right eyepiece to the correct mark. From then on focusing for both eyes can be done with the center wheel alone.

The neck straps on most binoculars are so long the binoculars hang down to your waist. When you walk, the glasses swing back and forth and bang into your stomach with each step. A shortened neck strap (cut the strap or tie a knot in it) will raise the binoculars to chest level, where they will hug your body as you walk.

Learning to spot the intended object is sometimes more difficult than you would imagine. If you’re trying to locate something that is not moving, note its surroundings. For example, is the object to the right or left of a large rock or tree stump? By using prominent features as guides, you’ll be able to move easily from them to your objective.

Targets in motion are more difficult to spot. Follow the target with your unaided eye looking directly over the barrels of your binoculars. Then lift the binoculars to your eyes. With practice you’ll “hit” the target the first time.

From watching a hawk spiral up toward the clouds, to stargazing at night, binoculars have a thousand uses.

Choose the pair that meets your needs and learn to use them well. You’ll find that they can add tremendously to your enjoyment of the outdoors. Who knows, you may even think of use number one thousand and one.
It's surprising it has been able to survive at all, but there is still hope for

THE MANATEE

The endangered Florida manatee has only one known enemy—man. In view of our persistent interference, it's surprising these "sea cows" have been able to survive at all. There are only about 1,000 manatees left in the state, and their situation is critical.

The state's present rapid urbanization has destroyed most of their natural habitat, but more important, most of the remaining habitats have become unsuitable through increased boat recreation and traffic. Locks and other water management structures throughout the canal system crush and drown unknown numbers of manatees. Many more become unsuitable through increased boat recreation and traffic.

The only natural adversity affecting manatee survival is the so-called "chilling" caused by sudden temperature drops. The Florida manatee is unable to withstand temperatures below 70 degrees Fahrenheit, and for this reason, sudden cold snaps in recent winters have killed large groups of them.

But of all the many pressures facing Florida manatees, man's power boats and their cruel cutting propellers are by far the worst. Death by propeller is now the primary cause of manatee mortality in the state. Manatees breathe, swim, and eat at the water's surface, and, since most of their habitat is now beset with motorboats, accidental collisions occur frequently. As the state has urbanized, the problem has become catastrophic. Most of the collisions are unintentional, but it is impossible to be unaware of such accidents once they do occur. Since manatees are so large and solid, many times the boats are damaged and their occupants thrown into the water. As for the unsuspecting manatees—they often survive the initial collision, only to die slowly from infection, disease, and other complications.

Most Florida manatees bear scars on their heads and backs from the deep slashing of motorboat propellers and their scars are so large they can be clearly seen in aerial photographs. Manatees are sluggish, tame creatures, and will not avoid approaching powerboats. Even those which have been injured previously by boats become desensitized to the constant sound of passing motorboats and grow passive to the danger. That is why only boats can stop this senseless slaughter by slowing down, keeping alert and obeying traffic laws. It's difficult to spot surfacing manatees even when traveling at slower boat speeds, but keeping in the traffic lanes is the best alternative available. If boaters must navigate along shore—where manatees often pause to munch on plants growing along the bank—even slower speeds and more caution are required.

Manatees have lived in Florida's rivers, estuaries and coastal waters for centuries. Ranging from northeastern South America through the Caribbean to the extreme southeastern United States, the huge mammals grow up to 14 feet long and weigh 1,500 pounds. For all their size, they are completely harmless. Gray or brown, they are related to the elephant but look more like walruses without tusks. Manatees are from the small order of "Sireniens," so named by the early sailors who thought the animals were mermaids or "sirens." Severe population declines began in the 1700s when they were overharvested for meat, oil and leather.

Until recently only one or two scientists were actively involved in manatee research. Over the last few years there has been increased interest and progress in research but pertinent information is still unavailable on normal life expectancy of the manatee (at least 25 years in captivity), interaction with other species, migrating patterns and habits, and intelligence.

The U.S. Interior Department operates an ongoing study of manatees, under the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973, at the National Fish and Wildlife Laboratory in Gainesville. It is headed by Dr. A. Blair Irvine, foremost expert on manatees. One facet of the program concerns a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Team of biologists and experts on the species. Under the Endangered Species Act, their job is a big one—to develop a plan to prevent the extinction of manatees. To do this, of course, they must know everything possible about the animals. They have done extensive studies on manatee physiology and ecology. The Federal Endangered Species Act has also provided tangible help by requiring the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to identify and protect "critical habitats" from man's encroachment. Cooperative programs between the University of Florida School of Veterinary Medicine and the National Fish and Wildlife Laboratory have resulted in, among other things, studies on manatee fungal skin infections, parasites and hematology. Another prominent authority, Dr. Daniel K. Odell of the University of Miami, has been focusing on manatee mortality in the wild. Meanwhile much of our past knowledge has come from captive manatees living in Florida's ocean showplaces. Miami Seaquarium, under Warren Zeiller, rehabilitation and research programs as part of its comprehensive research program. SeaWorld of Orlando and Marineland of St. Augustine are studying, among other data, the physiological aspects of captive Florida manatees.

Manatees are migratory mammals and the United States population winters mostly in southern Florida, crowding into "aggregations" wherever unseasonably warm water can be found. Nature historically provided manatees with warm water refuges like springs, inland streams and lakes. But since man has destroyed most of these natural

By James Mackey
sanctuaries from winter's cold, the manatees have been forced to adopt new, man-made sanctuaries.

The most popular man-made warm water source is Florida's power plant discharge canals. For the last 10 years manatees have congregated in these steam discharge canals which are heated 10-15 degrees warmer than surrounding waters. When the weather drops water temperatures to 70s degrees (about the coldest manatees can survive) the steam discharge canals are a comfortable 80-85 degrees.

Power plant discharge canals and powerboat mortality are the two major subjects addressed by the 1978 Manatee Sanctuary Act. Before its passage, the Florida statutes gave only minimal manatee protection on a state level. The Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 and the Endangered Species Act of 1973 gave them general protection on a federal level, but much more was needed. The new Sanctuary Act, although barely adequate in the opinion of wildlife officers, does provide for more protection against negligence; establishes certain power plants and natural areas as enforced sanctuaries; identifies natural refuges; regulates boat traffic; and provides for the establishment of future sanctuaries as canals and power plants are built later on.

The Department of Natural Resources is the lead agency under the new law, setting up procedures to regulate the operation and speed of powerboat traffic between November 15 and March 31. Eleven sanctuaries are legally established by the law which also names the manatee as Florida's state mammal and makes the entire state a sanctuary.

The Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission participates with DNR in enforcement of the law as does the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The state penalties for harming manatees are increased from second to first degree misdemeanor and allows authorities to confiscate any 'offending instruments' including motorboats. Manatee warning signs have been placed in and around the new sanctuaries, and these critical areas will be heavily patrolled during winter. Officers will arrest trespassers entering the restricted sanctuaries and enforce speed limits in adjacent canals.

Enforcement of the new state law during summer months will be almost impossible, according to the Miami division of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and this is one of its weaknesses—it offers no real enforced protection in waterways other than established sanctuaries between April and October. During those months manatees even travel through the highly used Intracoastal Waterway. Therefore it is the boater's responsibility to slow down and be on the lookout—especially between April and October.

Only through more research and sanctuaries, increased enforcement, boating support and cooperation will there be a happy ending for manatees. A guarded optimism grows for the misunderstood and mistreated manatees of Florida as motorboat enthusiasts—once the manatees' worst enemies—begin to realize they are capable of helping save the species from extinction.

Want to learn to shoot an arrow, swim a lake or catch a fish? Then the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission has a special summer camp for you.

Each year hundreds of young people from all parts of Florida visit the Commission's youth camps near Ocala or West Palm Beach.

Here teenagers—who often know nature and its ways only through urban parks—enjoy outdoor experiences designed to awaken interests in their natural heritage. The week-long camping programs stress conservation and recreation with special emphasis on the responsible use of Florida's vanishing woodlands and wildlife.

Youngsters are introduced to the outdoor world not through classroom lectures but through participation in actual learning experiences.

These outdoor skills are taught by specially-trained Commission instructors. Safety and personal responsibility keynote a program which includes canoeing, fire-arm safety, archery, swimming, fishing and wildlife biology.

Boys and girls, eight to 14 years old, may attend the youth camp of their choice. This year's camping season will begin June 17 and run through August 11.

Both facilities maintain one-week sessions; however, campers wishing to remain more than one week may do so with advance registration. The young people attending more than one session take part in advanced environmental explorations beyond the normal first week's programs.

The Ocala Youth Camp is located on Lake Eaton in the vast Ocala National Forest while the Everglades facility is at Hungryland Slough in the subtropical J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area about 15 miles from West Palm Beach.

The fee for each camp is $60 per week. Payment in full must accompany the completed registration form. This fee includes housing, meals, insurance, emergency and minor medical aid and incidental camp programs. It doesn't cover the camp canteen or arts and crafts costs which vary from child to child. Reservations are made on a first-come, first-served basis but campers without reservations may attend as space is available.

The sessions run from Sunday to following Saturday morning. Youngsters who would like to take part in additional weeks of camping need not be picked up over the weekend.

To ensure your youngster a chance to discover nature and to examine its unique role in our world, write for an application now.

For additional information and registration forms contact:

Camp Director
Ocala Youth Camp
1219 SW 10th Street
Ocala, Florida 32670
(904) 629-8162
1-800-342-9620

Camp Director
Everglades Youth Camp
551 North Military Trail
West Palm Beach, Florida 33406
(305) 683-0748
1-800-452-2046
A unique course in environmental education, taught by the Florida Division of Forestry in the woods of two pristine state forests, awaits 1,150 students of the state this summer.

Both boys and girls can enroll in the Division's program if they are in school grades six through eleven. The cost is $60 a week. And if they are outstanding students, they may get an extra eleven credits in the Division's program if they are specifically trained to start with a basic vehicle and modify it to meet their particular needs and hunting conditions.

The basic method of hunting is leg power. But since most hunters need a vehicle to get them to the hunting area, they generally like to modify it for special needs. The average outdoorsman today requires, or thinks he does, a great deal of gear. He doesn't like to get more than an hour from an ice chest filled with cold drinks and sandwiches. Although there are plenty of exceptions, most hunters want to be as comfortable afield as sitting in their living rooms watching a football game on television.

Wheels for Hunters

Although there is an endless variety of boats designed for the comfort of bass anglers, there are no complete vehicles mass produced for quail and other hunters. In most cases, the hunter has to buy a basic outdoor vehicle and convert it to meet his own requirements.

No doubt surveys have shown that there is not enough of a market for a manufacturer to produce a specialized version. Or perhaps most hunters prefer to start with a basic vehicle and modify it to meet their particular needs and hunting conditions.

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Not many quail hunters today use horses. With the exception of a few areas and the quail plantations of north Florida, there is not enough land in one tract to justify the time and expense of moving horses around. The quail plantations also use rubber-tired buggies pulled by a pair of matched mules. Few hunters can afford this luxury and style, nor do they have access to large continuous tracts suitable for buggies.

Probably the most popular vehicle in Florida is a basic pickup truck with some modifications. A pickup bed has room for several dog boxes, ice chests, gun racks, lockup boxes and dead deer. For most of the year, it is used as the family and work vehicle. It can be easily converted into a camper. The owner can get a lot of varied use from his pickup and it's probably the most efficient vehicle around from a dollars and cents standpoint.

Commercial hunting preserves in the South have a special problem and have created a variety of modified vehicles. Their hunters pay and must like...
to hunt in comfort and style with a minimum of walking. Many operators start with a basic jeep, liking the four-wheel drive for wet times. Quite often a second seat, or the rear seat, is elevated so hunters can more easily see a brace of quailing pointers.

On a warm day, a brace of dogs may not last more than an hour or so, and four to six dogs may be used. So, a dog box capable of hauling six or more dogs is built on the back. A rim around the top holds extra shells, the inevitable refreshment chest, and for water, there are still plenty of Cans around. Some hunters install water tanks in their vehicles and when the dogs need watering they simply turn on a faucet and run water into a pan.

After all, the dogs should have as much comfort as the hunters. The dogs work a whole lot harder!

One of the advantages of hunting different people is that you always learn something new. During the past quail season, I had the pleasure of hunting with Donald E. (Duck) Smith, a rancher near Wauschula. He is reasonably tolerant of people who hunt deer, ducks and other game but he believes that people who have seen the true light hunt more.
CONSERVATION SCENE

Youths Receive Reward

Two 16-year-olds, Alton Deese and John Shuler of Blountstown, were presented a $1,000 reward for providing information leading to the conviction of an eagle killer. The presentation was made at the April meeting of the Commission in Tallahassee, on behalf of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Florida Wildlife Sanctuary.

As a result of the quick thinking of the two boys, Donald Edward Hand, 19, of Blountstown, was arrested and fined $500 for killing a bald eagle. The bird was shot in the Apalachicola River near Neal's Landing during the past hunting season.

Speaking of Deese and Shuler, Commission Executive Director, Colonel Robert M. Brantly, said, "These young people represent the best in our tradition of hunting ethics. We appreciate their concern for preserving Florida's endangered species."

Brantly said Hand's arrest is a part of an intensive campaign against violators who shoot protected species. "We want this small, highly visible group of people prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," Brantly said. "We are not going to tolerate individuals who demonstrate a complete lack of respect or understanding for wildlife or hunter ethics."

New Fish Records

Two recent state fish records have been recognized by the Commission.

A shellcracker caught by Richard F. Lundgren weighed in at 3 lbs. 7½ oz. The big redbreast measured 16½ inches total length and 16½ inches in girth. Merritt's Mill Pond, Jackson County, was the scene of the action which took place on April 10 this year.

The sunshine bass record was topped again, when Jimmy Keyes of Marianna beached a 9 lb. 15½ oz. hybrid. He took the fish on May 1 from the Apalachicola River just below Jim Woodruff Dam. A live shad was the winning ticket.

LUNDGREN and record shellcracker

HIREs APPOINTED TO GFWF COMMISSION

Thomas L. Hires Sr. of Tampa has been appointed to the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission by Governor Bob Graham. The appointment, effective April 26, 1979, fills the vacancy left by Nelson Italiano.

A native of Tampa, Commissioner Hires is senior vice president of the Jim Walter Corporation and president of the company's homes division. He has been with the organization nearly 25 years, since the early days of expansion that moved the organization into prominence in its field.

The new Commissioner readily admits to a lifelong interest in hunting and fishing. "...perhaps just a bit heavier on the fishing since I've had more opportunity in that direction," he says. Although living in one of the big saltwater fishing centers of the state, Mr. Hires says that most of his rod and reel activities involve freshwater species. He'll cut it even finer than that by naming bass and speckled perch as his top favorites. "I've caught 11 bass over 10 pounds, including one 13-pounder, and hope to catch a good many more in that class," he says.

Although he fishes many places, his second home in the Camp Mack area of the Kissimmee River may give a hint of at least a slight bias towards that beautiful mid-Florida stream.

The one notable departure from his concentration on inland fishing is an annual dolphin trip to Key West with a small group of like-minded cronies. In the gunning department, he says the bobwhite ranks high with him. He also confesses his deer and turkey hunting efforts have been somewhat less productive than desired, but admits that an optimistic streak convinces him that the next hunt will be the big one.

Commissioner and Mrs. Hires have a son, Thomas Jr., 22, who is scheduled to graduate in June from the University of South Florida, and a daughter, Kimberly Ann, 19, who is in school in Tallahassee studying to become a court reporter. A step-daughter, Mrs. Dianne Ginn, lives in Covington, Ga.

The new Commissioner says that his first love is "all the outdoors of Florida." A major part of his tenure with the Commission is "to serve, to the best of my abilities, the interests of the rich fish and wildlife resources of this great state."

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Habitat improvement efforts by the Commission this spring included planting 7,500 live oak, 10,000 bald cypress trees on the Avon Park area in Polk and Highlands counties. Approximately 3,000 cypress and 1,500 oaks were planted in hammocks around lakes in the recreation area on the Weebo WMA in Charlotte County, and about 500 oaks were planted on the Green Swamp area in Polk County.

Post-hunting season live trapping efforts have resulted in the relocation of 227 deer. From the Joe Budd WMA in Gadsden County, 125 animals were captured and 102 were removed from the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Brevard County. The animals were moved to various places around the state. Some went as "penalty deer" which were released in areas where apprehended poachers paid a restitution fee to cover the cost of trapping and transporting a deer to replace the one illegally taken.

Commission biologists this spring captured and ear-tagged a number of newly-born fawns in the Everglades Region. Through subsequent harvest of these known-age deer, it is hoped that the tooth wear and replacement method of aging deer can be tested for the South Region.

Biologist Tom Goodwin has again captured and outfitted a number of alligators--22 at last count--with radio transmitters. Orange Lake near Gainesville is the site of his continuing project which is monitoring the animals' comings and goings. An initial report on the project was carried in the May-June '78 issue of FLORIDA WILDLIFE.

The over-population of wild hogs in Myakka River State Park has been reduced by some 52 animals. Live-trapped, weighted and ear-tagged, they've been released in two wildlife management areas. Thirty went to Browns Farm WMA, the balance to the Holeyleand Land WMA, both in Palm Beach County.

At Lake Wales southeast of Lakeland, 19 grass carp, ranging from 25 to 45 pounds, were captured, tagged and released in early spring as part of a continuing study of growth rates and population estimating techniques. No tagged grass carp, of a total of 45 fish, have been recaptured to date.

In study ponds at Richloam Hatchery, it has been determined that insertion of radio transmitters does not prevent largemouth bass from spawning. It's been a point of discussion with fisheries workers concerned that fish carrying radio gear may not react to various stimuli in a normal fashion, compared with bass not so encumbered.

Efforts are continuing to establish redear sunfish, a highly popular panfish in some other sections of the state, in the Blackwater River of west Florida. Recently 165,000 fingerlings from the Commission's Blackwater Hatchery near Holt in Santa Rosa County were released at several sites along the stream.

A recent check on Mabo Lake near Boca Raton failed to turn up any further piranha. Last month a fisherman brought in a specimen supposedly caught in the lake. He stated he caught another earlier, but it had escaped from his stringer. After poisoning the pond, regional fisheries biologist D.C. Goforth said the two incidents appeared to have involved the same fish and feels confident there are no other piranha in the lake.

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Perhaps it's time for anti-hunting groups to be held financially accountable for the wildlife revenue lost every time they assault the courts to impose their environmental ignorance on the public. Pitman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson funds (derived from a self-imposed tax on sportsmen and disseminated to the states for wildlife conservation) are currently the target of various groups of animal befrienders who want Environmental Impact Statements filed detailing the effect of the allocation of this money has on the environment. As a consequence and because of a Federal court and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agreement, these vital dollars are now in limbo pending "acceptability" of the government's alternative proposals by these "protector" groups. Such an arrangement could be likened to letting an egg-tucking dog guard the henhouse.

It seems a paradox of the times that before any good can be done for wildlife by career conservationists, these professionals must first be subjected to the legal bad-mouthing of certain lay groups who have done nothing for the resource in their late and sensationalized appearance on the scene. Groups who know even less about constructively criticizing the plans of the professional wildlife.

An even more insidious erosion of environmental sanity is the unqualified compliance given these uncredentialed groups by branches of the Federal government which were created to administer scientific wildlife management. Unless counterpressure can be exerted to keep these agencies from rolling over every time an "anti" group rolls its eyes, wildlife will continue to feel a squeeze on the dollars needed to ensure its survival. The Federal judicial system also has a civic and ecological responsibility to determine the legitimacy of such groups and their claims before acquiescing and forcing a proven system of wildlife management into inaction by emasculating the Golden Cockerel.

The name of the game in conservation, as in any other endeavor, is money, that long green stuff. For generations sportmen have seen to it that their dollars have spoken louder than words on behalf of America's wildlife. The habitat saved and animal husbandry fostered by such funds have made it possible for these "anti" groups to have wildlife to "defend"-let alone "save." One would hope that such a positive environmental statement might have the impact to declare once and for all to the public and government that "you don't get something for nothing."
A brood of limpkin chicks rests on a convenient streamside log along the upper Wakulla River. Known by voice as much as by sight, the penetrating, wailing call of Florida’s "crying bird" accents the aura of mystery that shrouds its river swamp habitat.