This Florida Wildlife Magazine Digital Preservation Project is developed with financial assistance provided by the:

William H. Flowers, Jr. Foundation and the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida, Inc. through the Conserve Wildlife Tag grant program.

FLORIDA WILDLIFE
NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 1979

1979
Vol. 33 N. 4

November
December

Scanned by:
The Research Information Center of the Fish & Wildlife Research Institute

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
FLORIDA WILDLIFE SCRAPBOOK

ALL HUNTERS CAN NOT BE EXPERT SHOTS

ALL HUNTERS CAN NOT BAG A DEER

ALL HUNTERS CAN NOT TAKE A TURKEY

THINK OF EVERY GUN AS A LOADED GUN

DON'T TAKE SOMEONE ELSE'S WORD

CHECK THE SHELL CHAMBER

OF EVERY GUN YOU HANDLE TO SEE WHETHER IT IS LOADED OR NOT

THINK OF EVERY GUN AS A LOADED GUN

LOAD YOUR GUN ONLY WHEN HUNTING!

HUNT SAFELY

But - ALL HUNTERS CAN HUNT SAFELY

KEEP YOUR GUN UNLOADED

AT CAMP • IN YOUR CAR • AT HOME

Enroll in a hunter education course. Or, if you are the type of person who likes getting involved and would like to become a certified hunter education instructor, call your nearest Hunter Education Officer. The toll-free numbers are: Lakeland — 1-800-282-8002; West Palm Beach — 1-800-432-2046; Panama City — 1-800-342-1676; Ocala — 1-800-342-9620 and Lake City — 1-800-342-8105.

IN THIS ISSUE

Peggy Perkerson, Wildlife Artist - 2 - Trisha Spillan
Anti-Hunting Backlash - 6 - Dr. David Samuel
Fishing St. Martin's Marsh - 13 - George X. Sand
Lab at Boca Raton - 17 - Paul Shafland
Ducks - Ducks - 20 - Morrie Naglar
Tools of the Trade - 28 - Kyle Hill
The Waterfowl Collection - 33 - Morrie Naglar
Florida Tiger - 36 - Steve Johnson
Antler Rattling - 44 - W.R. Sponburgh
Hunting - 46 - Conservation Scene

THE COVER

As quiet as a shadow drifting through the woodlands, the bobcat is the supreme hunter of small animals. Rodents make up a good proportion of its diet. As with other predators, however, the "cat is an opportunist, taking whatever suitable-sized game comes its way.

Artwork by Peggy Perkerson

FLORIDA WILDLIFE (ISSN 0015-4369) is published bi-monthly by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Farris Bryant Bldg., Tallahassee Fla. 32301. Single copy price $1.00. Subscription rates, 1 year, $5.00; 3 years, $14.00. The Commission assumes no responsibility for unselected manuscripts and illustrative materials. Permission is granted to reprint text materials EXCEPT for advertising and commercial purposes, provided full credit is given FLORIDA WILDLIFE and contributors. Clearance must be made with photographers and artists to reproduce illustrations. Second class postage paid at Tallahassee, Florida. Post Office Publication Number 202444. Copyright 1979 by Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Tallahassee, 32301. (904) 488-1960.

Published by Florida Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission

Typeset by Canon Graphics • Printed by Rose Printing Company
Like many young art students, Peggy Perkerson knew she wanted to do something with her art—but just what she wasn’t sure. So it was a fortuitous decision on her part to do some pen and ink drawings for her living room wall in Roanoke. For it was these drawings (which turned out so well she exhibited them) that inspired her to seek a career in wildlife art.

The pen and inks of African animals caught the fancy of a circus memorabilia collector who commissioned from her a series of 26 drawings of circus animals and scenes. These were ultimately exhibited at the Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota. Public acceptance of her work and the realization of her serious interest in wildlife firmed her decision to make this her career goal.
When a subject is selected, Perkerson gathers her camera and, if possible, heads for the nearest area to photograph the animal personally. The white-tail deer, reproduced on this page, is a particular favorite. "Not only was he the first of my work to really win big," she said, "but I photographed him from life at the Junior Museum in Durham, N.C., and got to know him pretty well."

The deer won her a first place in drawing at the prestigious North Carolina Wildlife Art Show in 1972 in Roanoke. The North Carolina Zoological Park, after viewing her art at several shows, now owns what could be considered the largest collection of Perkerson drawings.

Currently employed as a graphics illustrator in Tallahassee, the 31-year-old artist finds the north Florida area a treasure trove of subjects. The Tallahassee Junior Museum (which has commissioned her work) is a frequent haunt for the lady and her camera.

Other commissions have included Helyn Danizinger Interiors of Oklahoma, the Birmingham, Ala., Zoological Society and Heritage Advertising, N.C. Her work has graced the pages of Outdoors in Georgia, Wildlife in North Carolina, Sunshine Artists, and, of course, Florida Wildlife.

The owl and the hawk are two of her more recent works and show the influence of her graphics work. She has begun to add a new dimension to the starkness of pen and ink with washes of ink or watercolor, staying within the earth tones. "Recently I began experimenting with different pen strokes to see what effect they would have on the overall composition."

Like many popular artists, Perkerson doesn't have many examples of her work adorning the walls of her studio. Her work sells too fast and it takes a while to build up for the art shows she attends throughout the Southeast. She does have a few prints on hand, however, from which were gleaned these examples of her touch with pen and brush. —Trisha Spillan

FLORIDA WILDLIFE
At one time it was thought anti-hunters would spell the end of hunting. But there’s a trend in the wind that causes reconsideration. It’s an ANTI-HUNTING BACKLASH

I’ve been following the anti-hunting phenomenon since 1971. One reason is that I’m a wildlife biologist on the staff at West Virginia University and teach a course which relates directly to anti-hunting. My second reason is that I’m a hunter interested in the future of wildlife management. At one time I frankly felt that anti-hunters would spell the end for hunting. But there’s a trend in the wind which causes me to reconsider. It’s an anti-hunting backlash.

A backlash occurs when people with a certain attitude or idea suddenly change their point of view in response to one or numerous events. In this case, people who leaned towards anti-hunting do an abrupt turn-around. And people who had no opinion at all develop a pro-hunting attitude.

An example of backlash in another matter entirely involved the anti-strip mine sentiment in my home state of West Virginia during the late 1960s. Surface mines left the land in deplorable condition and many people were opposed to surface mining. There was also a large non-committed group. Then the industry and the laws changed and reclamation improved drastically. Yet many people still emotionally opposed surface mining as environmentally damaging, even though the realities were that reclamation had improved and the country needed the coal. People continued to hear how terrible strip mining was, yet they saw cattle grazing on the land in deplorable condition and many people left the land in deplorable condition and many people still emotionally opposed surface mining as environmentally damaging, even though the realities were that reclamation had improved and the country needed the coal. People continued to hear how terrible strip mining was, yet they saw cattle grazing on the land.

The first inkling I had that a similar thing might happen relative to hunting occurred in 1975 as I sat watching the now infamous television program, The Guns of Autumn. Many times people have aired a show that I have selfishly wished it had run another hour or so. Even one more outrageous, biased scene would have pushed a lot of neutral people over the brink in favor of hunting. It was that bad. It was that biased.

Guns showed scenes so obviously selected to defame hunting, so absurd that thinking people realized the bias on the anti-hunters’ side and cast their spell with a live wounded bear. It’s not so precise. The hunter’s side. The wildlife manager’s side. The Fund. For Animals is in the woods. This serves to anger them and frustrate the hunt.

By Dr. David Samuel

As a wildlife biologist, my big complaint against anti-hunters is that most do not present any viable alternatives. “We do it for the animals” they say. But it doesn’t look that way in the case of the Great Swamp.

Take Cleveland Amory and his group, Fund For Animals; they continue to reach for new lows in efforts to stop hunting, their ridiculous actions should trigger more backlash. For example, Fund For Animals re‐leased its “Tips For Hunt Saboteurs.” The purpose of this tips is to make hunting miserable for hunters. People who had no opinion at all develop a pro-hunting attitude. The habitat deteriorated, as did the health of the deer. People were successful. A series of legal actions plus a lot of newspaper propaganda stopped the deer hunts. Even after biologists warned that overpopulation would lead to starvation, the Humane Society of the United States, New Jersey Branch, persisted in this fight.

With each yearly legal battle, the deer herd grew. The habitat deteriorated, as did the health of the deer. In the winter of 1974, dead deer were found—starved. Suddenly many anti-hunters and non-hunters who were leaning toward anti-hunting felt betrayed. They’d been led to believe that all this biogical talk about overpopulation was just a ploy to prevent criticism of the deer hunt. But as the deer carcasses piled up, they realized that the biologists were right all along; the deer were in poor condition due to overpopulation. A backlash occurred.

As a postscript to the Great Swamp controversy, since that first 1974 hunt there has been a hunt every year. The deer are healthier, starvation is almost non-existent, there are fewer skin tumors (indicating good health), fawns now weigh more than fawns previously did, antler size has increased, and reproduction has increased. In all honesty, it makes me wonder who is really interested in the well-being of the wild animals on the refuge. Others wonder too.

As a wildlife biologist, my big complaint against anti-hunters is that most do not present any viable alternatives. “We do it for the animals” they say. But it doesn’t look that way in the case of the Great Swamp. And so backlash will continue to grow.

The fact is that none of the above tactics are realistic and simply show how little Amory knows about wildlife, hunters and hunting. “Second, the Fund For Animals is in the woods. This serves to anger them and frustrate the hunt.

By Dr. David Samuel

As a wildlife biologist, my big complaint against anti-hunters is that most do not present any viable alternatives. “We do it for the animals” they say. But it doesn’t look that way in the case of the Great Swamp. And so backlash will continue to grow.
In April, 1979, the plaintiff challenged 182 P-R projects and called for all P-R projects to have an Environmental Assessment Report prepared at the state level. Two incidents related to this manner will lead to backlash. The first concerns a letter sent out by Friends of Animals requesting help in reviewing the assessment reports. I received such a letter, and I would have liked to have had the chance to review these reports. My colleagues in wildlife management would also have liked to have done so. Among the four of us on the wildlife staff at West Virginia University is about 50 years of experience, so we felt we could give some very constructive criticism on the way P-R monies are being spent by state game departments.

But there was a kicker. Alice Herrington and Friends of Animals apparently did not want expert opinion; for in order to review these assessments, I had to sign a card. The first sentence of that card read, "I agree that habitat manipulation to benefit game animals unqualifiably damages the environment." No way could I ever sign that.

Fact is, not one of the hundreds of ecologists or biologists I know could, in good faith, sign such a statement, because it is not true. Habitat manipulation to benefit game animals does not damage the environment. Even clear-cutting, as done by your state game agencies benefit game and non-game animals alike.

Friends of Animals wants the game departments to manage for non-game species when they are doing that now. When you manage for non-game species, you also manage for chestnut-sided warblers. When you manage for waterfowl, you also manage for sandpipers, marsh wrens and water shrews. When you manage for deer, you also manage for white-footed mice and rufous-sided towhees. The reverse will also occur. Management for woodland marshland songbirds and you'll have muskrats and ducks. Manage for woodland warblers and you'll have deer, again, up in the trees and on the ground.

There is an antihunting backlash. Some people seem to be doing almost anything to stop hunting. The ramifications of the P-R suit won't die quickly. The people who have been responsible for managing wildlife over the past 50 years will stand for only so much misinformation being propagated. I expect the near future that Friends of Animals may well be sued for harassment. Time will tell. Meanwhile, it appears that anti-hunters backlash is taking place. Some new as yet unpublished data from New Jersey shows that the anti-hunting trend is turning around. The percentage of anti's is decreasing, pro-hunters are increasing. This might be attributed to the many positive action programs of hunters, and to the many negative action programs of anti-hunters, as discussed above.

I respect anyone's right to an opinion, and I realize that many citizens were not born and raised in a hunting home, as I was. But much of the anti-hunting activity detraacts from wildlife management and does little but frustrate those who are interested in doing so. Then there are others who go one step beyond in their antihunting zeal. The Herrington essay approach will lead to one thing which will help the cause of hunting—backlash. Watch for it.
With the increase in Florida’s deer herd the past 20 years, more hunters have begun using centerfire rifles. The biggest advantages of rifles are their range and accuracy. Buckshot patterns are generally unpredictable at distances past 30 or 40 yards. This doesn’t mean you can’t hit a buck at 60 yards with buckshot. It does mean that you don’t know where you will hit him.

Rifled slugs fired from a shotgun are potent pieces of lead at ranges of 50 to 60 yards. After that, the accuracy breaks down. From a benchrest, a slug’s lead size of an automobile tire. At 30 yards with bead sights, my average group is about the placement.

It may come as a surprise to sportmen but most shotguns leave the factory without being test fired. They are lot tested, say one out of each dozen coming off the assembly line. While shotgun shooting is more pointing than sighting, the front bead might be used for a shot at a deer, or where there’s a middle bead it would be lined up with front bead. The problem is that beads are not precision guides. Also, a new barrel may not be exactly straight. The only way the gunner can know is to test fire his shotgun. Test firing may also show that one size of buckshot will pattern better than another.

When a hunter has a scope mounted on his rifle at a sporting goods store, a collimator is inserted in the muzzle and the rifle is roughly sighted in. This enables the shooter to hit a big target at 100 yards but it does not mean the rifle is precisely sighted. The collimator simply gets him on the paper so he can do some fine tuning.

Open or iron sights on a new centerfire rifle can be off. The only way the owner can tell is to test fire the rifle.

It is surprising how many people go deer hunting without first testing their guns on a range. A hunter buys a new rifle just before the season opens but gets busy and the first time he shoots his gun it’s at a buck. Maybe it’s a real trophy. But the hunter misses the whole deer! He held on but the sights were looking one way and the bore another.

It’s also fairly common for a busy hunter to ask someone else to sight in his rifle. While this is better than no sighting in, the fact remains that people’s eyes are different. For a precision instrument such as a scoped rifle, the hunter needs to test fire and sight in to fit his physical features.

Test firing a rifle or shotgun on a range gives you confidence. You know what your gun will do when you take it hunting. If there are bugs in shooting equipment, it saves frustration to work them out on the range rather than missing or crippling game.

Gun sights, especially scopes, have a way of creeping out of alignment. Maybe gremlins get into them between hunts. On some trips, especially those by commercial airlines, your rifle gets banged around, no matter how softly you have it padded in a hard case. Tightening screws work loose and rifles fall from propped positions against trees or in corners. Ideally, the sights should be checked by test firing before every hunting trip. That’s a little much for most of us, but certainly we should check the sights a few times during the hunting season.

Most deer in Florida are killed at distances under 50 yards. That’s because so much of the deer range is in dense cover. On the other hand, there are chances for shots at 200 to 300 yards in some of the open country of south Florida. In cattle country, where hunters work the edges of large pastures or range, there may be open shots at distances of 200 yards or more.

A scoped rifle should be sighted in for the average distance you expect to shoot at deer most of the time. A happy medium for most Florida hunting is 100 yards. At anything under 100 yards, you don’t have to make corrections. Also, you can hold dead on at deer estimated to be at 125 to 150 yards. For deer further away, you have to make corrections by holding a little high to allow for bullet drop.
A hunter who does most of his shooting in open country may wish to sight his rifle in at 200 yards. For certain types of western hunting, such as antelope, he might push the distance to 250 or 300 yards.

A person who has never fired any kind of gun can shoot a scoped rifle from a benchrest at 100 yards and probably group five shots the size of a volleyball. The average hunter with a little practice can bring the group down to the diameter of a tennis ball. If I'm not shooting too badly, I can group five about the size of a silver dollar. The real hot dog can shoot a group about the diameter of a quarter; he spends the rest of his life trying to reduce it to the size of a dime.

Once we get a scoped rifle sighted in, there's a tendency to keep shooting for smaller groups from a benchrest. That isn't too bad but I think the time could be more profitably spent by hunters in shooting from positions they may use while hunting. It helps to practice from prone, sitting and knee positions. A running shot at a deer is nearly always offhand. It pays to practice this one on the range, although it hurts our pride to see our group diameters spreading out.

A common hunting position is that of sitting on the ground with one's back propped against a tree. From this position, the hunter can swing his rifle in an arc of about 100 to 120 degrees. Anything greater puts a strain on him. But he should practice from these strained positions. These are often the shots he gets while hunting!

NAGBHPA Conference

Sportsmen wanting to know more about breeding game and operating hunting preserves are invited to attend the annual conference of the North American Game Breeders and Hunting Preserve Association (NAGBHPA) to be held January 7-11 in Orlando. Many of the top experts in the nation will conduct panels and present talks at the Holiday Inn on International Drive.

The speakers either operate hunting preserves or game farms or are from universities,Dave Duffy, hunting dog editor for Outdoor Life, will be one of the featured speakers.

Some of the topics to be covered include quail production, new incubation techniques, nutrition, preserve management, rearing game birds and dog training. It is not necessary to be a member of NAGBHPA to attend the conference.

A free program is available by writing J.R. Daley, conference co-chairman, R.D. 2, Alma, Kansas 66401.

Turkey Shoots

Most gun clubs never have enough money, especially when they want to add another skeet field or more points on a rifle or pistol range. Remington Arms Company may have the answer in a new 48-page booklet called "How to Raise Funds Through Shooting Games."

The secret of success is to have several luck games which inexperienced shooters can win, plus a lot of good promotion.

A turkey shoot is a good luck game, and the club members already know who the best shooters are. The inexperienced shooters stay away in droves. Remington suggests a combination of luck and skill games, with emphasis on games that anyone can win.

The booklet explains in detail a dozen games. One of the best money-makers as a luck game is the duck target shot with a .22 rifle. The target has 52 small playing cards. Each card is sold for $1 before the shoot by club members. The person buying a card signs his name and address on the card he selects. After the card is sold out, the day of the turkey shoot, a person from the audience fires a .22 bullet through the back of the target. It's strictly luck. The person who bought the card the bullet goes through wins a prize or cash. If the prize has been donated, the club makes more than $51 per target sold.

The booklet is written so that a church group, civic club or charity can follow it and conduct a fund-raising shoot. An ideal way to put on a shoot is for a gun club to tie in with a local charity with the profits going to the charity. The charity can usually get a lot of publicity and its workers help sell targets. The gun club makes some public relations points in the community as well as helping a worthy cause.

The booklet, which has sample targets, sells for $1.95 and can be ordered from Shooting Development, Remington Arms Co., Inc., Bridgeport, Conn. 06602.

FLORIDA WILDLIFE

Almost on her first cast in one of St. Martin's ponds, Lou Sand caught a 6¾ pound redfish. Speckled trout of that size are not unusual, either.

BY GEORGE X. SAND

Like spearing fish in a barrel is an old expression but one I hear less frequently during these recent years of burgeoning population and development in my part of the country. Well ... to provide Florida Wildlife readers the opportunity to give forth such happy words, I'm going to reveal a secret fishing spot of mine on Florida's upper Gulf coast. Hero anglers can still enjoy Utopian sport when peak tides flood hundreds of brackish water ponds that otherwise remain landlocked on the St. Martins marsh.

Such flood waters (spring tides are usually best) allow redfish, seatrout, and other game fish to swim far into this roadless marsh. As the water drops, many of the fish become trapped in the landlocked ponds.

The specimens waiting to be caught in these palm-fringed tide pools come big. My wife, Lou, caught a 6¾ pound redfish there almost on her first cast. Speckled trout of that size are not unusual, either. Sheepshead and drum may be present in the ponds, too.

You needn't be a distance caster, nor even a good fisherman, to catch these trapped battlers. Most of the ponds are small. You need only toss out your bait or artificial lure and wait for the confined fish to approach. They can't swim off, so they often circle the pond. You
catch one, then wait until another comes swimming past.

Of course, you don’t connect with every cast. Nor does every one of the ponds contain fish. There may be fish present one day and none the next. (Some of the ponds contain fish.) Thus these fish strike readily because the supply of minnows, shellfish, and other natural food in these marsh waters is understandably limited.

Here’s another plus. This marsh is public land. You needn’t ask permission, or pay an entrance fee, to fish here.

Nor do you need a boat or guide. Simply drive to the end of Fla. Hwy. 494, which ends at Ozello, and walk from there. Hwy. 494 joins U.S. Hwy. 19 about four miles north of Homosassa Springs.

And, if that is not encouragement enough, there is at least one friendly “native” living at Ozello (retired Crystal Springs realtor Ronnie Green) who will show you on a map of St. Martin’s marsh where to go for the best fishing. No charge for such information.

The St. Martin’s Preserve, created by the State of Florida in 1970 for public use, is bordered on the south by Homosassa Bay and the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge. Crystal Bay and the pretty river of the same name form the northern boundary of this preserve. This is a watery labyrinth of bays, bayous and creeks; countless islands, keys and tidal ponds, most of these being inaccessible by land approach. Still completely unspoiled by man, the terrain here is a painted-picture setting of twisting waterways that wink in the afternoon sun and scattered tube islands, many of which have tall, graceful palms. These hammocks lie like motionless ships anchored in peaceful array upon an immense sea of golden marsh grass.

And when all this natural beauty is bathed in the burn-orange light of the great Gulf of Mexico sunsets that set alight the rim of the sea, it is truly something to be seen and enjoyed.

Perhaps the single largest piece of “dry” land in this preserve lies at the back door of Ronnie Green’s waterfront trailer. It was Ronnie who introduced me and my wife to the fine duck shooting that is also available here. Ronnie lives on a sizeable tract of marsh land that penetrates some two miles into the St. Martins Preserve. Because of this convenient access location, he had once given thought to building a sportsmen’s club at this hunting and fishing jumping-off site.

I must confess that Lou and I were skeptical when Ronnie Green invited us to visit the landlocked marsh ponds and watch fish until you grew tired.

“These days,” I told my wife, “you have about as much chance of doing that as you would trying to have the last word with your echo!” Nevertheless, we agreed to check out this place. One of Ronnie’s three sons, Ronnie “Mac” Green, was reputed to have recently caught 150 redfish at St. Martins in three hours, releasing nearly all of them. This 150 head was said to have weighed from two to six pounds apiece.

When we arrived at Ozello we found Ronnie, his son Mac and a companion, Bill DeBusk, awaiting us. We learned that DeBusk, 29, now a commercial mullet and trout fisherman, had been born on a 32 acre island in the near-by St. Martins River. Bill and his three sisters and four brothers had been obliged to go to school and shopping by boat.

I looked at Mac Green. “Did you really catch all those reds on rod and reel?” I asked.

He grinned and nodded. “Those fish out there got nothin’ to do but get fat!”

“How come nobody seems to know about this place?” I asked suspiciously.

“Some people know about it. They just haven’t done much talkin’, that’s all.” Mac’s grin widened and he jabbed a thumb toward DeBusk. “Ask him what him and one of his cousins did out there!”

I swung my glance upon Bill and he shrugged.

“About this same time last year—March—we fished fifteen days without a good fish.” Mac was nearly beside himself against the strong pull of what obviously was a good fish.

Bill DeBusk takes his place into the marsh aboard his mullet netting boat (the motor well of this outboard skiff was near the bow, so nets could be played out over the stern). I would not recommend use of a boat by anyone who does not have a good knowledge of this half-land, half-water area. It is tricky enough for the average person on foot not to become lost in this confusing network of ponds, streams and ditches. The latter have the nasty habit of appearing suddenly where you least expect and usually are too wide to jump across.

“It’s easy to meet yourself comin’ back out there,” was the dry way another member of our party, Mac’s bearded brother John, put it. “However, when you’re walkin’ you can always find your way out by back-trackin’ the trail you leave in the grass.”

A recent peak tide had surged in from the Gulf, flooding this vast marsh, and some of the pond-connecting streams and ditches still contained quite a bit of water. This receding water helped us avoid these tripping hazards. DeBusk tied up his boat and we began following him single file through the waist-high marsh grass. Every now and then one of us would go down with a yell as we stepped into a hidden ditch or hole.

The first pond we came to was about two acres in size, fringed by myrtle clumps. Bill and Mac studied the surface for a time. Then both agreed that we should move on.

“When they’re feedin’ strong you can see ‘em workin’ close to the banks,” Mac explained.

We walked on and came to another tide pool, smaller than the first. “Let’s try this one,” Bill suggested.

At his suggestion I tied one of Jim Bagley’s Trout Tout jigs to the end of my wife’s spinning line. “Bring it in fast,” I cautioned as I prepared to leave her to seek a casting position farther along the grassy bank. “This water is pretty shallow and you’ll get hung up on the bottom if you don’t.”

I had moved but a short distance away along the bank when I heard a sudden yell from Lou. I wondered if she hadn’t stepped into another hole, but a quick glance over my shoulder revealed that she was fast to something big!

“E-e-e-e-yowww!” my wife yelled happily, bracing herself against the strong pull of what obviously was a good fish.

Bill had come running back to help. Mac was watching from the opposite shore, a couple hundred yards away, and called to Lou: “That’s a big red you got!”

The fish had made a slashing run toward Mac and now was bulldogging about stubbornly near the center of the tide pond, successfully resisting Lou’s efforts to bring it in.

“Give him time to tire himself,” Bill urged. He
warned Lou about the rocky bottom. The fish could quickly cut itself off on those oddly-shaped limestone formations, some of which we'd been obliged to walk across on our trek here.

I said nothing, but watched approvingly as my wife continued to play the fish. Lou has handled some real scrappers in her time.

A quarter hour later my wife was able to bring theiring fish safely to the bank. Bill DeBusk reached down quickly and grabbed the big silver fish in the gills.

"E-e-e-yowiel!" Lou yelled anew as DeBusk swung the gleaming prize onto the bank. The red was a beauty. It would go well over six pounds.

"Why doesn't a fish like that die in this shallow water when it gets cold?" I asked Bill.

He shrugged. "A redfish is hard to freeze," he replied. "They keep movin'. Maybe some of the smaller ones die."

I have neither the space here, nor the desire, to make FLORIDA WILDLIFE readers envious of what took place on this majestic marsh for the remainder of our day. I can only urge that you try this fishing.

Most any medium-weight spinning or bait casting tackle will do. Because there are few obstructions growing on the shores of these ponds I was to regret that I hadn't brought a fly rod along.

If you prefer meat on your hook use live shrimp or cut bait. For artificials, try surface and medium-running plugs; small jigs like the Trout Tout, if you can keep these off the bottom. The flyman should do well with streamers and popping bugs for both reds and seatrout.

As you walk through this marsh, look for signs of redfish popping food at the surface of the ponds. Sometimes you can see these fish rolling and flashing in the sun. Keep in mind that these spottails, while their vision is poor, are sensitive to vibrations. So walk carefully.

There are no closed seasons or daily bag limits for redfish, seatrout, sheephead and drum. (However, the first two of these must measure at least 12 inches from tip of nose to fork of tail.) That doesn't mean you should catch a sack full, however. Leave some for my wife's next visit. I'm already in the doghouse with Lou, I fear, for telling you about this place.

Most any medium-weight spinning or bait casting tackle will do. Because there are few obstructions growing on the shores of these ponds I was to regret that I hadn't brought a fly rod along.

If you prefer meat on your hook use live shrimp or cut bait. For artificials, try surface and medium-running plugs; small jigs like the Trout Tout, if you can keep these off the bottom. The flyman should do well with streamers and popping bugs for both reds and seatrout.

As you walk through this marsh, look for signs of redfish popping food at the surface of the ponds. Sometimes you can see these fish rolling and flashing in the sun. Keep in mind that these spottails, while their vision is poor, are sensitive to vibrations. So walk carefully.

There are no closed seasons or daily bag limits for redfish, seatrout, sheephead and drum. (However, the first two of these must measure at least 12 inches from tip of nose to fork of tail.) That doesn't mean you should catch a sack full, however. Leave some for my wife's next visit. I'm already in the doghouse with Lou, I fear, for telling you about this place.
LAB at BOCA RATON

changes has generated considerable concern. As a result, the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, in cooperation with Florida Atlantic University, has established the Non-Native Fish Research Laboratory at Boca Raton.

The primary objective of this laboratory is to collect basic information on the distribution, habits and general biology of non-native fishes living in Florida; document the effect of non-native fishes on the environment; and develop and evaluate new techniques and methods for managing these species. Understanding the complicated interactions between native and non-native species is possible only through extensive and time-consuming field and laboratory research.

The laboratory is located on 23 acres of land surrounded by a levee (16 feet above sea level) and an eight-foot chain link fence. These precautions exist to prevent the loss of fishes in the event of flooding and/or poaching. The faculty consists of research, office and storage buildings, 17 ponds, and a mobile home for the resident biologist.

All laboratory ponds drain into a wastewater pond where the water gradually filters through the sand bottom and back to the underground water table. This closed draining system prevents the release of non-native fish, eggs and/or parasites which might be flushed from the research ponds.

Several research projects are being conducted at the laboratory. These include identifying the lower lethal water temperature limit for some non-native fishes which originate from tropical and subtropical climates. Knowing the lower lethal temperature limits for these fish enables us to better predict if these fish can become established and what their potential range could be within the United States. Another study involves the spawning of non-native fishes and the rearing of their larvae. From this study we have been able to compile a developmental series which can be used to identify the larval and juvenile stages of non-native fishes collected in the field. In addition to these studies, a collection of both native and non-native fishes is maintained at the laboratory.

Pond studies in progress are aimed at interactions between native and non-native fishes. In one study, we are investigating the effects of walking catfish and blue tilapia on established populations of largemouth bass and bluegill. In another study we are evaluating blue tilapia in conjunction with largemouth bass spawning activity and success thereof.

A third pond study has been designed to identify the sizes of blue tilapia that largemouth bass can swallow.

Such studies are necessary if we are to adjust our fish management practices to incorporate these new species.

A comprehensive field study is being done in a central Florida lake where we are investigating the direct and indirect relationships between non-native and native fishes. Blue tilapia recently became established in this lake which, historically, supported a good largemouth bass and bream fishery. Information is being collected on the feeding and habitat preferences of all fishes in the lake.

The future of Florida's sport fisheries is presently being threatened by physical, chemical and biological (e.g., non-native fishes) contamination of the state's waters. Increasing success of non-native fishes in Florida is generally indicative of a deteriorating aquatic habitat. Research conducted at the Commission's Non-Native Fish Research Laboratory will continue to provide answers to some of Florida's unique fishery questions.

PAUL SHAFLAND has his MS in Fisheries from Southern Illinois University. He has been with the Game Commission for five years and is in charge of the laboratory at Boca Raton.

FLORIDA WILDLIFE

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1979
Florida's colorful waterfowl  •  By Morrie Naggiar

DUCKS-DUCKS

MALLARD and BLACK DUCK

To many duck hunters, the mallard is the epitome of North American waterfowl. It is widely distributed, a strong flier, wary enough to try the hunter's skill and a joy to behold in the air, on the water, or in hand. It's also excellent on the table. The black duck, famed for sharpness of eye and wit in eluding the gunner, starred in many a waterfowling story of earlier years. Florida hunters once enjoyed, at least locally, excellent black duck shooting, but the species has fallen on somewhat hard times. A decline which started during the 1950s appears to be continuing. This drop in population doesn't appear to be related to habitat reduction alone, but the precise reasons are yet unclear.

MALLARD  Hen, left; drakes, right

MALLARD DRAKES, left; BLACK DUCK, right

MOTTLED DUCK

Until recently the Florida duck was recognized as a separate species. Specialists in such matters, however, have decided that it and the Mexican duck are actually the same and have grouped both under the name "mottled duck." It's a matter of interest to the wildlife scientist, but it is unlikely that among our hunters the Florida duck will be known by anything other than local names like Florida mallard, summer mallard or summer duck. The plumage of this species is darker than the hen mallard and somewhat lighter than the black duck. The bill of the male is bright yellow with a black spot at the base. The female's bill is dull orange with black spots across the top.

MOTTLED DUCK

Photo by James C. Greene

Photo by Wallace Hughes
**PINTAIL**

A far-ranging species, the pintail is more widely distributed than any other of the world’s waterfowl. It is also one of the more abundant winter residents of Florida. The trim appearance presented by the slender body and long neck plus the elongated, narrow wings give the pintail its easily identifiable silhouette. At times it responds readily to a well-placed spread of decoys but becomes exceedingly wary as the hunting season progresses. One of the earlier southbound migrants in the fall, it is ready to head north with the slightest hint that spring is on the way.

**GADWALL**

One of the species that has fared well over the past couple of decades, the gadwall population has been increasing steadily over most of the country. Along the Atlantic flyway, however, there appears to have been a decline since the 1960s. Less colorful than many of the other ducks, it is probably misidentified more often than most other species. At a distance, the drab coloration and body conformation suggest a hen mallard, hence the common name, gray mallard. The colored wing patch—speculum—is the best in-hand identification feature. The inner area of the speculum shows a white patch and the outer portion either black in adults or gray in young birds.

**AMERICAN WIDGEON**

A colorful, medium-sized duck, the American widgeon is a plentiful favorite of many waterfowlers. Strong wing, widgeons move about in compact flocks and show some of the erratic flight characteristics of the teals. The three-noted piping whistle of the drake is a common sound about Florida’s winter marshlands. In flight, the bird is readily recognized by the large white patch on the forewing. Up close, the white crown of the male is a prominent mark and gives rise to its nickname, baldpate. Stems and leafy parts of aquatic plants make up a good part of the food of this species. Widgeons frequently feed in close association with canvasbacks and other divers, as well as coots, and habitually snatch bits of succulent underwater vegetation from these birds.
SHOVELER

In winter plumage, the male shoveler is a strikingly beautiful bird. His appearance, some believe, is marred by an exaggerated bill. Nonetheless, this flattened shovel, or spoon if you prefer, serves admirably for the bird's specialized feeding habits. Unlike most other ducks, the shoveler feeds heavily on plankton, straining it from the surface layer of water, aided by lamellae on the edges of the bill. The blocky, rather humpbacked appearance of the shoveler in flight, plus the blue shoulder feathering marks this duck for ready identification, as if the large bill, usually carried at an angle of 40 degrees or so was not identification enough. The spoonbill decoys quite readily, but it is not sought after by most duck hunters. Its strong flavor precludes its admittance to the list of favorite table fare.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL and WOOD DUCK

The blue-winged teal is the earliest migrating of all waterfowl, commonly appearing in the state during August on its southward movement. The species is one of the most abundant of North American waterfowl. Its small size, swift flight and prominent blue shoulder patch mark this species afloat. The male's badge is a white crescent between eye and bill. The wood duck is a breeding bird over a good portion of the country from the Eastern Plains states eastward and from southern Florida into southern Canada as well as in the Pacific states. The woodie made a comeback from what seemed certain extermination during the early part of this century. The loud squealing call of the hen is often the first indication of their presence in favored woodland ponds and sloughs. Natural nesting sites are tree hollows but they readily accept special nest boxes erected for their benefit.
REDHEAD

Red head, dark chest, gray back and dark rear-quarters mark the male redhead. The females and immature birds are tawny brown. The arc of the wing beat is rather shallow, similar to a mallard. Flight is fairly fast. Encountered in more inshore locales than most other diving ducks, it may raft up in huge concentrations sometimes intermixed with widgeons, pintails and others. In flight, the tight, wedge-shaped flocks are a stirring sight to the coastal gunner.

RING-NECKED DUCK

This is one of our most common ducks, occurring in considerable numbers on lakes and freshwater marshes throughout the state. Frequently referred to as a bullneck or ringbill, the ring-necked duck is not especially highly esteemed by many hunters. Perhaps it is a case of familiarity breeding contempt. Nevertheless, it is a strong flyer, decoys readily under most conditions, and provides a great deal of sport for the state's waterfowlers.

LESSER SCAUP

The bluebill or lesser scaup gathers in impressive concentrations in certain favored coastal waters of the state. Much more at home in bays and estuaries, it sometimes rafts in huge flocks well offshore during calm weather. Arriving from the northern breeding grounds during October, it remains until April or May before returning north. Common about many of the tourist centers on both the Atlantic and Gulf sides of the state, it is probably the best known of our waterfowl. Although it feeds on animal matter, vegetable material also is taken in good quantity. Tending to be somewhat strongly flavored, it is not the top choice as a table bird, although it's acceptable to most. It decoys readily and figures heavily in the bags of Florida duck hunters.
TOOLS of the

Patrol sedan is useful in many areas. Lower maintenance and fuel costs make it more practical in areas where four-wheel drive vehicles are not required. 14-foot Westwind boat, left, with 115 hp Mercury outboard is used statewide for a variety of patrol activities. 14-foot Kennedy craft equipped with 20 hp Mercurys are also used extensively.

Ever wonder how wildlife officers patrol Florida's nearly impenetrable wilderness areas? Well, it isn't easy! It takes a lot of stamina, guts and specialized equipment! Florida wildlife officers use a variety of sophisticated as well as practical gear in order to get them where they need to go. Although some of the vehicles used appear more like lunar landing craft than patrol devices, they are especially suited for Florida's unique habitat types. Without specialized "tools of the trade," officers would be unable to provide the necessary protection to wildlife and fish populations found in isolated areas.
Airboats, above, are used throughout the state for wilderness patrol. They are especially valuable in search and rescue activities. Used on Lake Okeechobee and the St. Johns and Apalachicola rivers, this 18-foot Old Timer boat, right, is equipped with a 175 hp Johnson outboard motor. A 24-foot Mako with a 235 outboard is also used on Lake Okeechobee. It is especially suited for use in rough waters.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Capt. KYLIE MILL, heads the Division of Law Enforcement's wildlife inspectors section from his office in Tallahassee.

Oversized, balloon tires on a swamp buggy, left, adds buoyancy and enables it to travel south Florida's boggy marshes. A half-track, below, has a Cadillac engine and can achieve a top speed of 50 mph. Along with full-tracks, it is used in extreme south Florida where both visibility and traction are required. Most of them are custom-made by the Game Commission.
A few years back the taxidermists' art, craft, or whatever, hit a kind of slump. Or maybe it just seemed that way. At least for a while, I didn't give it much notice. What game and fish came my way was duly admired and then relegated to the kitchen.

Then, all of a sudden it seemed, a whole new crop of practitioners proliferated. Maybe a new generation of hunters came to look on its take with increased appreciation. Maybe a good hunting trip is becoming a more memorable experience in these days of increasing numbers of hunters. Or, it could be an upswing on a cycle of interest in preserving hunting trophies.

At any rate, on a recent search for some glass eyes to aid in refurbishment of a set of somewhat battered duck decoys, I happened on the shop of young taxidermist Jack Livingston of Tallahassee.

Now, hunters tend to specialize. With Livingston, it's ducks. He started as a youngster hunting waterfowl in Leon and surrounding counties. Then his curiosity was piqued by thoughts of preserving his feathered trophies. That was a bit over 10 years ago and he's been honing his taxidermy skills ever since—the past 2½ years as a professional.

His shop, located at 1408 N.W. Capital Circle in Tallahassee, is named, appropriately enough, The Waterfowl Collection. On display are numerous examples of his work, but he admits that it is difficult to build up as good a collection as he'd like of display birds. Most of his efforts are devoted to mounts for customers who are so anxious to take possession of their trophies that they seldom leave them around the shop very long. Demands of his chosen
Example of Livingston handiwork is male wood duck shown in flight against a decorative piece of weathered driftwood, right. A different type of coffee table, below, shows mallard duck in mini-habitat.

34

profession are such that Livingston has relatively little time to devote to duck hunting nowadays.

While he was making a start as a professional, Livingston worked for his brother as a jewelry repairman in a local mall. He still puts in a shift at the shop there. Nimble fingers and an eye for fine details, engendered by his jewelry work, come in handy in mounting birds, Livingston claims.

A good many of the ducks hunters bag in these parts are in pretty fair physical condition, meaning they sport a good layer of fat. That greasy coating lies just under the skin and must be removed completely if the mounted bird is to retain its attractiveness for any length of time.

It's a slow, tedious process but vital to a good job. This is one reason Livingston finds himself turning out a maximum of two or three birds a day. Any more than that is too fast for a good permanent mount, he believes.

One of the chores he faces each year is attempting to salvage valued mounts that some other, less careful taxidermist rushed through in an assembly-line production.

If you've ever had problems fleshing a relatively heavy deer hide or a 'coon or possum pelt, you can appreciate the infinitely more delicate operation of removing fat from a paper-thin bird skin.

In an earlier day, the body of the mounted bird was formed by wrapping excelsior—long, fine shavings of wood—with thread or string. Livingston still uses that technique on special occasions, but today most birds are mounted over a styrofoam form which is filled in and rounded out with a fine fiber called tow.

In addition to the more conventional bird mounts, Livingston is developing such pieces as coffee tables with enclosures featuring a duck or two in a marsh-type setting. They've been popular and, again, he's been hard pressed to keep samples on hand in his shop.

"Condition of the bird delivered to the taxidermist is of primary importance for good results," Livingston emphasizes. Once blood sets in the feathers, its complete removal is difficult and sometimes impossible. A bird that is tossed in the bottom of the boat, perhaps scuffed about by muddy boots and rumpled by decoys and other gear, is not exactly a prime candidate for a first-class mounting job.

If you're going to have a bird mounted, plan to take a clean cloth or cotton, a large paper sack and some clean newspapers along with you on the hunt. As soon as you get the bird in hand, remove all traces of blood from the plumage using cloth or cotton soaked with cool, clean water. Then wrap the bird carefully in clean newspaper, the head tucked down along one side, and put it where it will stay clean, dry and as cool as possible. Deliver it to the taxidermist as soon as you can.

Livingston hopes someday he will be able to work as a taxidermist on a museum staff. He continues to study the art, visiting taxidermy shows and fellow taxidermists to learn as much as he can. Meanwhile, The Waterfowl Collection is keeping him busy in the kind of work he has dreamed of doing since he tackled that first coot mounting job a decade ago.
The bobcat is one of the most intelligent, and thus one of the hardest to hunt, of Florida's game animals. By Steve Johnson

FLORIDA TIGER

He was close. I could almost sense his presence and even in the predawn darkness I knew there was a good chance the cat had already seen me. For two hours I had remained as motionless as the mosquitoes would allow.

Now, at last, the sky to the east was growing noticeably lighter. Gradually the night sounds faded until only the gentle rustling of the wind through the woodlands broke the silence. Distant indistinct clumps of trees and bushes began to take on more definite form. The hour of reckoning was at hand.

Cupping the wooden barrel of the predator call in my hands, I sent out the screeching cry of a mortally wounded woodpecker to shatter the early morning stillness. I called steadily for several minutes. Then, after a short breather, I began again the high-pitched squeal.

Ten minutes into the second calling, I spotted the cat sitting motionless along the very trail where I'd first found his sign. He was some 60 yards out and staring right at my blind.

I urged the call into an even more strident wailing. The cat responded by slowly moving up another 20 feet before he settled back on his haunches for another five minutes.

The bobcat had the source of the sound located now. Again he moved forward, stopping some 40 yards out. Not a muscle twitched as he stood peering toward my stand. The intensity of the drama had me tight as a fiddle string. He was still too far out for a good pistol shot. I continued the call. I knew that at some point he would come no closer. I tried to judge where this would be.

Twenty-five yards in front of me was the trunk of an oak tree which had been blown over by high winds years before. He broke his stance and walked to the base of the tree. Here he would wait until he was sure of the noise.

I was offered a target about the size of a grapefruit at 25 yards. My shot would come from a sitting position. Bracing my back against a cabbage palm, I mentally calculated the number of moves I would have to make to bring the scope-sighted Ruger handgun to rest on top of my knees. There would be no way to conceal the movements. All had to be accomplished in one single swift motion.

The gun was cocked as it was in motion—sighted before it came fully to rest and fired. I saw the cat's
right ear twitch and oak bark fly around his head. I had missed.

I have been hunting Florida bobcats with a predator call about seven years. Before that I hunted them with dogs. I have found them to be one of the most intelligent, and thus one of the hardest to hunt, of Florida's game animals. A bobcat hunt with predator calls can become one of the greatest challenges Florida can offer its sportsmen. These "Florida Tigers" don't come easy. Luck, if there's any to be had, belongs to the cat. Here is where a sportsman can match his wits with the greatest of all Florida hunters—the bobcat.

It was two weeks to the day that I had missed the big cat that a landowner in the area had been hunting called to tell me of a panther that was cleaning out his chicken coop.

Big Boy seemed to have an appetite for fowl. The "Ole Big Boy" as I now call him. He was a good-sized cat. He was a half step away from my aiming point when I shot him a pant her. He was a good-sized cat. He must now be feeding in the dark, early morning hours, when, by law, it is illegal to hunt him.

A heavy rain cancelled out the next daybreak appointment. It rained solid until noon. That afternoon I made a scout around the area. Near the place where I’d missed him before I found bobcat sign coming and going from the direction of the chickens. I decided that his feeding habits had perhaps been altered with the changing phases of the moon. He must now be feeding in the dark, early morning hours, when, by law, it is illegal to hunt him.

I have learned in previous hunts that it is the second hour in the blind that produces the action. I was well into the second hour when I caught sight of movement off to my right. Although I was well camouflaged, I dared not move. Movement is what gives everything away in the woods. For this reason, I dislike calls that require hand movement to function.

By the time I spotted the motion that had caught my eye, I realized that he had slipped up on me unnoticed. I stopped the call and froze. I had to wait for him to make the first move.

For 10 minutes I waited. A mosquito penetrated my net mask and began to drain my forehead. My legs began to fall asleep. Finally he moved into my line of sight. It was not the bobcat but a Florida grey fox, no more than 15 feet from me. He began to pace back and forth, and every now and then he’d lift his head up high to test the air. He never did locate me, and after awhile disappeared down the trail. As the sun began to set, I eased out of the blind.

As I walked back to the truck, I took a trail that was covered with fresh tracks of all kinds since the recent deluge—deer, fox, armadillo, rabbit and bobcat figuring most prominently. I did a double take on the bobcat tracks. They looked like the others I had found, and with the assumption the cat would return to the easy feast, I sat out the next morning. I decided against using the woodpecker call so soon after the foul-up before. I just sat in a blind within view of the chicken roost. But he didn’t show up.

That afternoon I made a scout around the area. Near the place where I’d missed him before I found bobcat sign coming and going from the direction of the chickens. I decided that his feeding habits had perhaps been altered with the changing phases of the moon. He must now be feeding in the dark, early morning hours, when, by law, it is illegal to hunt him.

A heavy rain cancelled out the next daybreak appointment. It rained solid until noon. That afternoon I made a blind between the chickens and the fresh sign. Instead of the woodpecker call, I took an old-fashioned turkey box call that I had worked with before on other bobcats. I began to work on the gobbler side of the box, trying to maintain a constant steady gobble, which for that time in the afternoon, is an unusual noise in nature.

I have learned in previous hunts that it is the second hour in the blind that produces the action. I was well into the second hour when I caught sight of movement off to my right. Although I was well camouflaged, I dared not move. Movement is what gives everything away in the woods. For this reason, I dislike calls that require hand movement to function.

By the time I spotted the motion that had caught my eye, I realized that he had slipped up on me unnoticed. I stopped the call and froze. I had to wait for him to make the first move.

For 10 minutes I waited. A mosquito penetrated my net mask and began to drain my forehead. My legs began to fall asleep. Finally he moved into my line of sight. It was not the bobcat but a Florida grey fox, no more than 15 feet from me. He began to pace back and forth, and every now and then he’d lift his head up high to test the air. He never did locate me, and after awhile disappeared down the trail. As the sun began to set, I eased out of the blind.

As I walked back to the truck, I took a trail that was covered with fresh tracks of all kinds since the recent deluge—deer, fox, armadillo, rabbit and bobcat figuring most prominently. I did a double take on the bobcat tracks. They looked like the others I had found, and with the assumption the cat would return to the easy feast, I sat out the next morning. I decided against using the woodpecker call so soon after the foul-up before. I just sat in a blind within view of the chicken roost. But he didn’t show up.

That afternoon I made a scout around the area. Near the place where I’d missed him before I found bobcat sign coming and going from the direction of the chickens. I decided that his feeding habits had perhaps been altered with the changing phases of the moon. He must now be feeding in the dark, early morning hours, when, by law, it is illegal to hunt him.

A heavy rain cancelled out the next daybreak appointment. It rained solid until noon. That afternoon I made a blind between the chickens and the fresh sign. Instead of the woodpecker call, I took an old-fashioned turkey box call that I had worked with before on other bobcats. I began to work on the gobbler side of the box, trying to maintain a constant steady gobble, which for that time in the afternoon, is an unusual noise in nature.

I have learned in previous hunts that it is the second hour in the blind that produces the action. I was well into the second hour when I caught sight of movement off to my right. Although I was well camouflaged, I dared not move. Movement is what gives everything away in the woods. For this reason, I dislike calls that require hand movement to function.

By the time I spotted the motion that had caught my eye, I realized that he had slipped up on me unnoticed. I stopped the call and froze. I had to wait for him to make the first move.

For 10 minutes I waited. A mosquito penetrated my net mask and began to drain my forehead. My legs began to fall asleep. Finally he moved into my line of sight. It was not the bobcat but a Florida grey fox, no more than 15 feet from me. He began to pace back and forth, and every now and then he’d lift his head up high to test the air. He never did locate me, and after awhile disappeared down the trail. As the sun began to set, I eased out of the blind.

As I walked back to the truck, I took a trail that was covered with fresh tracks of all kinds since the recent deluge—deer, fox, armadillo, rabbit and bobcat figuring most prominently. I did a double take on the bobcat tracks. They looked like the others I had found, and they were heading in the direction of my new blind. Was it possible that the cat had heard my call and had not yet gotten around to locating its source?

That night I asked the landowner to tie a dog out near the chicken roost for the night. If I could keep the bobcat away from an easy a free meal, then, with a little more luck, he might come to the turkey call at dawn the next day.

Time dragged by the next morning. With enough light to see by, I faced the trail I had walked out on the night before and started to call. Five minutes into it, Big Boy trotted right up some 30 feet in front of me. He must have laid up somewhere close to the blind the night before with his mind on turkeys at sunup.

At first glance, bobcats always seem bigger than they really are. I could see why the landowner had called him a panther. He was a good-sized cat.

I stopped the call. The bobcat stopped. The whole world stopped. He sensed something amiss and turned his back on me to retrace his footsteps down the trail. As he ambled off I raised the handgun and sighted through an opening in a palmetto fan. I picked a spot ahead of him and settled the crosshairs on that point. He was a half step away from my aiming point when I began the squeeze on the trigger. I wasn’t aware of the sound of the gun. My entire attention was focused on the animal. The slow-moving, .45 caliber slug smacked into him just behind his left front shoulder. He shot straight up in the air and crashed down dead in a palmetto thicket 25 steps from where I had fired.

His coat was prime and fluffy. He had, of course, been eating well. On unofficial scales he showed 39 pounds—huge for a Florida bobcat. In his right ear was an old wound, almost healed, possibly made by my first shot at him.

Each hunt I go on is a learning experience and unique in its own right. Success comes hard. The percentages are more in favor of the animal than the hunter. You don’t just pack up and march out to collect the crafty "Florida Tiger."
FISHING

By CHARLES WATERMAN

Coming by a matched fishing outfit is a cinch these days: buy a "set" or gather the components yourself.

S
ome grizzled know-it-alls wouldn't touch anything they hadn't assembled and "figured out" for themselves but the "complete outfit" certainly has its place more than ever. That's a rod-reel outfit sold as a unit. A main reason is the amount of tackle bought from clerks who have limited or no experience with it. The department store fishing department can hardly give the attention that goes with a specialized tackle shop. Even when I was a kid you could buy made-up line, bobber, hook and sinker combinations and if you wanted farther you could get a jointed pole together with reel, hooks, artificials and all the fixings in one package. This is simplification for a new fisherman. Today, with so wide a variety of tackle available, I get an occasional letter asking my opinion of a rod and reel combination with the pettiner carefully listing model numbers he's found in a catalog. This is the logical procedure of a logical person and it's logical to assume somebody who writes about fishing should answer such a query. I have to look up the numbers and am sometimes a little vague, even after I've done that. But it's still the best way to make an inquiry.

Matched outfits simplify this. They've been especially good in ultra-light gear. There are many, but two examples are the Daiwa Minispin Systems, employing open-faced reels, and the Minicast Systems, employing pushbutton reels. Some of these rods are only 4½ feet long. The prices are reasonable. When it comes to high-grade turning-spool plugging outfits you won't see assembled units so frequently. Turning one loose and then setting his copy over a fireplace is kind of nice.

Fly Fishing for Bass

It's hard to keep philosophy out of fishing. Freshwater trout and their close relatives have continued as the elite of light tackle gamefish, partly because of the difficulty of catching them, partly because of their picturesque surroundings and largely because of the sensitive pastimes of tying flies and fishing delicately. By comparison, bass fishing has been a redneck sport with relatively crude clothing, language and equipment, but something funny happened on the way to the classification. The dog-gone bass fishermen all of a sudden got just as technical as the trout folks and the subtleties of worm fishing required what might be an even more delicate touch.

All of this time some bass-fishing fogies like me were still slammimg around with things like popping bugs, trying to train bass and telling ourselves that the new schools of endeavor just weren't for us. I guess we are the cruelest of all, but the point of this observation comes now:

Dave Whitlock, a professional fly fisherman who has become a noted authority on dainty trout fishing, is also a bass catcher and he recently stated that consistently successful bass fishing with a fly outfit is tougher and more challenging than trout angling.

Stuffing Fish

Taxidermy is one of the world's oddball businesses, not because taxidermists are strange people but because their clients have such varied objectives when they bring in a fish to be mounted. Of late it is no secret that many "mounted" fish are simply beautifully colored duplicates of the trophy and contain no part of the original. This, some fishermen say, is a deception. They want the original with its own scales and fins.

Fact is, if you want an image of your fish, all you have to do is measure it and turn it loose. A taxidermist can build a "statue" of him. While I am sure the fish would prefer this sort of memorial I am delighted by the thought of two or more fishermen having the "same" mounted fish over their mantles! there are those who say that, like an antique, no matter how inferior, there is nothing that can replace the original scale and skin.

Many of the older models of mounted fish (in this case, "stuffed" is an appropriate term) have turned into ghostly and tattered eyesores with passing of the years and have ended up in the trash or have been long overdue for it. Still, as with the ashes of a relative, many fishermen desire the "real thing." I suspect it is getting to be a thing of the past.

Some years back I was entertained by a fisherman who meticulously scored his saltfish mount to make sure the gaffhook mark was in exactly the right place and therefore authentic. Evidently he never considered that the taxidermist might have a file of assorted gaffing scars on hand for every contingency.

Turning one loose and then setting his copy over a fireplace is kind of nice.

Fishing Inside Florida

It's a book covering the state's freshwater fishing and how to get to it, complete with records, camps, ramps and fishing prospects. There are 286 pages and 91 topo maps of the waters. Big help. The editor, Brian Angell, plans an annual edition and undoubtedly hopes the first was the hardest. Where! That's Fishing Inside Florida, P.O. Box 118, Island Grove, FL 32654. Costs $8.95.

Zeeco's 30th

The Zeeco reel folks celebrated a 30th anniversary recently. They've made a wide variety of fishing tools, some of them at a very low price and scorned by serious anglers, and others of top quality. One of the giants in outdoor equipment.

But the thing about Zeeco is that they represent an
era in fishing. They put the closed-face spinning reel on the road, especially the pushbutton above-the-handle model. Casting had never been so easy for so many. Not only did the pushbutton make casters out of canoe-poleners, it made fishermen out of nonfishermen. Whether this is good for fish supplies in the long run may be a question but without the millions of participat- pants fishing wouldn't have the support it has. Outdoor writers would starve.

The pushbutton made of casting what aviation would be if somebody built an airplane that could be flown by anyone with a driver's license.

Fishing Trends

A fishing trend builds a little at a time and then booms forth in a series of articles and books and trea-
sures reports from new experts. The striped bass boom is one of those, both in the form of purebred striper or "rockfish" and in that of the hybrids crosses between striper and white bass. Florida's hybrid is known as the sunshine bass, but maybe that won't work the nation over because it has too strong a Sunrise State conno-

striction. Hard to say what the eventual national name may be.

Anyway, America's fishermen are going striper crazy, the fish and its offspring are firmly entrenched in fresh-
water as well as salt from coast to coast.

"Anything wrong with stripers?"

Not much from the fishing angle although, even more than black bass the striped tend to stick with special habits for special places. Although I've happily caught them on surface lures farther up the Atlantic coast, most of the Florida fish are deeper down.

While eelskins and whole eels have been deadly, I'm surprised to learn that plastic worms aren't exactly tearing up the strippers. Deep going plugs, jigs and spoons seem to be the big winners. A time or two I've been frustrated when live bait took them and no artificial I could find drew attention.

Whether good or bad the current practice of catch-
ing stripers from upholstered freshwater bass boats is a far cry from casting into the surf of New Jersey or launching stripers from upholstered freshwater bass boats is a part of the old development. Hatchery experience shows the sunshine bass has a much better record of survival in this respect. Hatchery experience shows the sunshine bass has a much better record of survival than its wild counterparts. In the form of purebred striper or "rockfish," the hybrids are known as "hybrid striped bass" and are the result of crosses between striped and white bass. Florida's hybrid is known as the sunshine bass, but maybe that won't work the nation over because it has the strength of a Sunrise State conno-

striction. Hard to say what the eventual national name may be.

Whether good or bad the current practice of catch-
ing stripers from upholstered freshwater bass boats is a far cry from casting into the surf of New Jersey or launching stripers from upholstered freshwater bass boats is a part of the old development. Hatchery experience shows the sunshine bass has a much better record of survival than its wild counterparts. In the form of purebred striper or "rockfish," the hybrids are known as "hybrid striped bass" and are the result of crosses between striped and white bass. Florida's hybrid is known as the sunshine bass, but maybe that won't work the nation over because it has the strength of a Sunrise State conno-

striction. Hard to say what the eventual national name may be.

Whether good or bad the current practice of catch-
ing stripers from upholstered freshwater bass boats is a far cry from casting into the surf of New Jersey or launching stripers from upholstered freshwater bass boats is a part of the old development. Hatchery experience shows the sunshine bass has a much better record of survival than its wild counterparts. In the form of purebred striper or "rockfish," the hybrids are known as "hybrid striped bass" and are the result of crosses between striped and white bass. Florida's hybrid is known as the sunshine bass, but maybe that won't work the nation over because it has the strength of a Sunrise State conno-

striction. Hard to say what the eventual national name may be.

Rule Number One—NEVER OVERLOAD YOUR FIREARM. Each black powder firearm has a very specific range of charges that is safe. Rule of thumb is one grain of black powder for every hundredth inch of the gun's bore. An example: a .45 caliber rifle would take approximately 45 grains of black powder for a moderate load. The maximum charge should never be greater than 2 grains for each 1/1000th of bore diameter, or 90 grains in a .45 caliber gun.

Always, if you are using an original black powder gun, be sure to have it checked by a competent muzzleloader gunsmith before you shoot it with any charge, no matter how light.

Rule Number Two—USE ONLY BLACK POWDER OR PYRODEX IN ANY MUZZLELOADING FIREARM. At this time only two types of powder can be safely used in a muzzleloading firearm—regular black powder and the relatively new "replica" black powder, Pyrodyne. Each of these black powders is different from the old black powder, and the old black powder is different from the new black powder.

On the other hand, the white bass is a pretty durable little character. The hybrid has enough of his character-
tistics to give a big advantage over the pure striper in this respect. Hatchery experience shows the hybrid bass has a much better record of survival "between fry and fingering."

Comes now a whole series of stripped bass fishing contests over the U.S.

Lures and Salt Water

Freshwater lures in salt water are a large part of Florida's fishing and have led to a rather troublesome construction problem of long tenure.

The fact is that some freshwater baits simply won't take the beating given out by saltwater fish, not being made for the crushing onslaught and violent twists of heavyweights. Faster such a bait to something like 20-

pound line, not unusual in much inshore fishing, and the hooks may come off. And hooks durable for fresh-
water use may rust away with salt water and salt air.

The obvious solution is to employ lures specially made for salt water, even if they cost more. They are likely to have rugged hook fastening and heavy hooks, but in the case of plugs they're also likely to weigh considerably more than the freshwater models and can be too heavy for the tackle used. Some of the best freshwater plugs aren't available in salt models.
Many times I have heard stories of rattling up bucks. Even though I read much and listened to the stories, I never could muster enough faith in what sounded like an old wives tale to try it.

October 1978 issue Outdoor Life, page 76, had an article and pictures which fascinated me and whether it was the photography or the detailed article, I was to become part of the act.

I wrote a friend in Richfield Springs, New York, where I had come from in 1965 and till that time had taken many buck in New York. He obliged by sending a nice heavy eight point set from 1965 and a note with a good luck chuckle.

My wife, two sons, grandson and myself opened Florida 1978 season with quota permits for the Panhandle area. The deer were later coming in rut this year than in 1977 so even though I did not find any real good signs, I tried rattling, which was a joke to my hunting partners, since they had never heard of it before. I had read the article numerous times and, while reading, practiced at my kitchen table. It was just too early.

After five days, my wife and I left for Texas for a three-day hunt with Amos DeWitt at Live Oak Ranch, Deer Lease Management Services, Inc. advertised in Petersen's Hunting. No strangers were going to laugh at me, so I left my antlers like the book says fastened together with rawhide, at my son's house. We arrived on November 17, 1978 at Live Oak, northwest of San Antonio, and as the hunters and guides arrived to open the season the following morning, I could see I was in for an education. They all had deer antlers either over their shoulders or on the floor of their vehicles so they would never be without them. The rut was also later than expected and was just coming in good as we left November 21, 1978 with a six-point.

Arrived back at my son's and back to north Florida hunting. This time there were signs of rut and this was going to be my chance.

My oldest son, Tom, and I have hunted many years together so quite often still hunting we will end up near each other as we like the same type areas.

I had moved about three times and, satisfied that no one was in the area, I waited real quietly for any deer to move on their own. Decided nothing was in immediate area, so tried rattling as per article and instructions given me by Amos DeWitt and two other Texans. All stories were pretty close and demonstrations pretty much alike. I had just finished second stage mentioned in article when there was a deafening shot in front and left of me. My son Tom had moved into the area and when he heard the first rattling, he just knelt down on one knee to rest and let me have my fun. When he heard the second stage, he saw a beautiful eight-point coming straight to me. There was just enough brush and cane so I hadn't seen him yet even though he was getting closer to me than he was to my son. He was coming crosswind to my son, head and neck out-stretched and not running but definitely, according to Tom, coming to the rattling and nothing was going to cause him to detour from his line.

Antler Rattling

Florida 1978 season was a real surprise. The deer were later coming in rut this year than in 1977.
In 1976 when the Lake Okeechobee Fisheries Utilization and Management program first began, biologists for the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission said the program would be flexible and changed as the need arose.

At a meeting September 21 in Miami Beach, changes in the program were approved by the Commission as the staff presented evidence of a potential overharvest of black crappie.

Dennis Hammond, the section leader for commercial fisheries for the Commission, said the program has made a transition from a predominantly net fishery to one dominated by wire traps.

Additionally, after the closed season, scalefish traps may be fished only lakeward of the commercial gear. He said, more drastic steps could be taken to protect the resource.

Wildlife Officer Edward Goggin of Osceola County has been selected as the outstanding officer of the year by the Commission's Division of Law Enforcement.

Goggin was born in Wolfs, Austria, October 31, 1947 while his father was serving with the military. He received his formal education at Campbell College in Baines Creek, N.C., majoring in business administration.

He served seven years in the U.S. Army which included a tour of duty in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot and he attained the rank of captain.

He was employed by the Commission as a wildlife officer in October of 1975 and assigned to Osceola County. He and his wife, Temple, live in St. Cloud with their two-year-old son, Andy.

"Goggin was selected for this honor because of his outstanding performance of duty," said Lt. Col. Brantley Goodson, director of the division. "He is a dedicated and conscientious officer who is well thought of by his fellow officers and the public."

Goggin represented the Commission at the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies meeting in October.

William "Bucky" Wegener, regarded by his peers as the "father of drawdowns" has been named water conservationist of the year by the Florida Wildlife Federation.

At "39 and holding", Wegener, a resident of Kissimmee, has been a fisheries biologist with the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission for 16 years.

The award marked the culmination of years of research the pleasant-mannered biologist has spent pioneering work on lake restoration.

The Florida State Racing Pigeon Association has asked that dove hunters, especially, make certain of their targets before they shoot.

Each season some valued homing pigeons fail to return home. Hawks undoubtedly account for some of the lost birds, and other factors account for others. Careless hunters actually down relatively few of the birds, it is believed, but the loss of even one valued racer is keenly felt by the pigeon fancier.

Pigeon racing is one of man's oldest sports, having been recognized as early as 3,000 BC when it was practiced by Arab tribesmen.

Eligible racing homer pigeons carry a leg band which may be traced to their owners anywhere in the nation through the annual band list issued by the Ralston Purina Company.

WIRE TRAPS
rising value of game fish and the fact the Commission had not established an upper limit to the number of persons who could legally trap. Without some modifications, there was a real possibility for overexploitation of black crappie by wire traps, he said, and immediate action was needed for more restrictive management.

The Commission voted to close the lake to the harvest and sale of game fish and the use of gill nets, trawls and scalefish traps from January 1, 1980 to February 29, 1980, the crappie bedding period when the commercial gear is most effective.

Additionally, after the closed season, scalefish traps may be fished only lakeward of the commercial fishing boundary buoys which are approximately one mile from vegetation. The scalefish traps will not be permitted at all in the lake during the two-month closed season.

To assist in the problem of unlimited entry to the fishery, persons wishing to use wire traps will be required to obtain free permits from the Commission in an attempt to provide more strict regulation.

The new restrictions, Hammond said, should help minimize the problem of a black crappie overharvest and help protect the resource.

In addition to the changes in the rules, Commission officials have pledged increased law enforcement patrol on the lake in order to closely monitor the program. If necessary, Hammond said, more drastic steps could be taken to protect the resource.

The Florida State Racing Pigeon Association is the annual subscription publication that holds a variety of articles on the subject and even a fairly casual bird-looker on the subject will find it good reading. $7.50 is the annual subscription price.

If you are especially interested in hunting guns this is a new bimonthly publication that holds considerable appeal. Bird Watcher's Digest, Box 110, Marietta, Ohio 45750, carries a variety of articles on the subject and even a fairly casual bird-looker on the subject will find it good reading. $7.50 is the annual subscription price.
FLORIDA WILDLIFE

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

COMMISSION

BRADLEY J. HARTMAN, Chairman
FRANK R. STIVERS, Director

ADMINISTRATION

M. BRANTLEY, Executive Director

FLORIDA WILDLIFE STAFF

Morrie Naggiar, Editor
Wallace Hughes, Art Director - Caroline Claiborne, Production Assistant
Mike Godwin, Editorial Assistant
Carrie Lou Satterfield, Circulation Manager - LaVerne Roberts, Circulation Assistant
Shelia Spillman, Editorial and Production Assistant
William A. Green, James C. Greene, Contributing Photographers

WILDLIFE ALERT

The Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission has begun a campaign to stamp out law violators who threaten Florida's wildlife resources.

"The new Wildlife Alert Program is designed to assist Commission law enforcement officers by giving citizens cash awards for information leading to the arrest of wildlife violators," said Col. Robert M. Brantly, Commission executive director. These citizens will not be required to testify at court proceedings and their identities will be protected by a coding system.

"The Commission will be working closely with sportsmen and other citizens across the state, asking them to join us in promoting this program," Brantly said. The new program was approved at the September 21 Commission meeting in Miami which was held in conjunction with the Florida Wildlife Federation's annual meeting.

Toll-free telephone numbers are available for public use to report wildlife violations. Cash rewards will come from two sources: the Florida Legislature which has set aside $10,000 as a reward fund for citizens who report endangered species violations, and in donations collected from dedicated conservationists to pay other rewards.

"One of the most important aspects of the program is that many wildlife violations might never come to our attention without the Wildlife Alert program. It provides people, even those who do not want the reward, a place to call and be guaranteed anonymity," Brantly said.

Law enforcement research shows that increasing assurance of apprehension and severity of punishment lead to drops in crime rates. Wildlife Alert, one part of an increased law enforcement effort by the Commission, could combine stiff fines and civil damages to have the desired effect.

"The main thrust of the new program features toll-free numbers which the sportsmen and citizens can use to report wildlife violations," Brantly said. Information received will then be given to appropriate enforcement personnel.

The Commission will also provide a limited number of bumper stickers, posters and other materials to solicit the help of the public in reporting violations. The bumper sticker will feature a Wildlife Alert message and a plea to report violators. In addition, television and radio spots outlining the program will be produced by the Commission and distributed statewide.

The toll-free numbers are:

Lakeland — 1-800-282-8002
Ocala — 1-800-342-9620
Lake City — 1-800-342-8162
Panama City — 1-800-342-1676

FLORIDA WILDLIFE STAFF

Morrie Naggiar, Editor
Wallace Hughes, Art Director - Caroline Claiborne, Production Assistant
Mike Godwin, Editorial Assistant
Carrie Lou Satterfield, Circulation Manager - LaVerne Roberts, Circulation Assistant
Shelia Spillman, Editorial and Production Assistant
William A. Green, James C. Greene, Contributing Photographers

CUR DOGS

Define a cur dog as a mongrel—a haphazard "Heinz" mixture of indeterminate ancestry—and you're risking the ire of the hog-hunting specialist. Florida hog-dog men, and some bear hunters as well, have some definite ideas about breeding the tough, hard-fighting animal they call "cur." Its family tree is based on the pit bull and hound.

In building a hog dog, breeders look to the bulldog for its aggressiveness and natural inclination to throw down and hold the quarry. Some lines also have a generous infusion of Aladale, again, the aggressive quality of the breed being what is sought. Hounds—black and tans, walkers, and blueticks, especially—are used to provide the trailing urge and ability.

Curs are specialists; they're hunters of the hard-fighting, no-holds-barred feral hogs. Because of their disposition it's no surprise that curs are far from being suitable as house pets. There are exceptions, perhaps, and some of them are used as combination stock dogs and hog hunters. At any rate, don't call a cur a mongrel, or, if you do, take some good advice and smile when you say that! —Rick Abbott
Alertness is a key to survival in the world of the whitetail. A pair starts to put distance between themselves and an intruder in this Wakulla County scene.