



Ringer News

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 The **Voice** of Florida Waterfowlers
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

From the Presidents' Blind	2
UW-F Projects	3
Educational Corner	4
Waterfowl Books	5
Educational Corner	6
News & Events	7
News & Events—Cont'd	8
UW-F Regional Reports	9
More Regional Reports	10
More Regional Reports	11
More Regional Reports	12
Contact Info	13
Sunset	14

2010 CENTRAL FLORIDA MUD-FEAST



Yep, the title above is not a typo. I'm officially putting a motion to the Board of Directors to change the name of "Mudfest" to "Mud-FEAST". Duck bites, paella, crawfish, and fresh fried wild turkey and gator tail were served with plenty of other traditional outdoor fare. All the members who contributed deserve a round of praise for their efforts. Boats started showing up early to Lake Jessup, and by mid morning there was a sizeable crowd already relaxing and enjoying a beautiful day under the majestic oaks along the river bank. The itch to run the mud boats got to some of the attendees as they took their rigs out early and often to get messy in the fabled Jessup mud.

No official lunch bell was rung but the continuous grazing progressed to a full bore feeding frenzy the likes of a flock of hungry widgeon in a rice field. DOCKSIDE MARKET graced us with great deserts and countless members contributed food. It would be too hard to recognize all the members that helped with the vittles, but their efforts were appreciated by all.

By mid afternoon, just about the time when food coma was about to set in, the second wave of events unfolded. Pat Stone and Sid Thyhsen went above the call of duty in organizing and overseeing a great raffle and scavenger hunt. About a dozen or so boats with their crew hit

See Page12



PARTNER

From the Presidents' Blind

The UW-F 2010 Florida Waterfowl Summit is currently being planned and will be coming up soon. The event is co-sponsored by FWCC.

The 2010 Florida Waterfowl Summit will be held on Thursday, August 26th and Friday, August 27th at the Ocala Hilton. Things will start off Thursday night with a reception at 6 PM. If you get there a little late, it won't matter. We'll be grilling wild game behind the pool and doing a bit of what we do best, talk about ducks. Joe Benedict, FWC Waterfowl Management Program Coordinator, who is helping to plan this event, will give an informal presentation and will be taking questions. Any topic is fine Thursday evening. Friday will be the conference. More info will be sent in an E-alert and an E-newsletter later this month, so watch for email from UW-F. Registration will be free and you will be able to register on line, or you can contact any of the Board Members to register.

Other organizations have attempted to hold a conference similar to this. With our considerable visibility among agencies and principals that hold charge in Florida, we are about to pull it off.

There are many conferences around the state, conferences

regarding Florida's springs, conferences on the Everglades, conferences on Global Warming, conferences to ban this or that...some noble, some a waste of time. We believe our conference has merit and purpose, and that it is unique in its philosophy.

Moist soil marsh systems and other areas generally known as wetlands and watersheds have taken a beating in our lifetime. Our aim is to bring together top experts in the field of *Active* and *Adaptive* Management techniques, and experts in maintenance of wetland systems, in an effort to make wetland restoration a priority for the day, to lift the subject up for learning and discussion, to spawn creative ideas, and in the end, to bring more emphasis and money to wetlands in Florida, to help

restore and protect them.

As duck hunters, we see the changes that have taken place in our marshes. More and more, the places we return to, lack the whistle of wings in the dawn. Water is dark and lacks submerged vegetation. Other places are grown over. And in many places that held abundant food for waterfowl, the food is now gone. This conference will help bring attention to these matters. But to establish the conference as a yearly event, we felt the first year should be free to participants. So to defer our costs, we are asking for donations, so please donate if you can. E-mail any Board Member to find out how to donate or to answer any questions you may have about the conference. You can donate on line at our secure website.

The UW-F mission is to perpetuate our heritage and traditions. Having healthy marsh systems is vital to our mission, and it is generally agreed that the marsh systems, in many cases, need immediate and considerable attention. As Theodore Roosevelt would always say; "...for our children and their children's children".



John Hitchcock
UW-F President



UW-F PROJECTS

STATEWIDE:

- Partner with FWC to improve statewide aquatic plant control planning to include waterfowl health.
- Increase hunting access to all Water Management District lands.
- Advance Sovereign Land access project statewide.
- Add new state goose seasons to National Wildlife Refuges.
- Add full Migratory Bird Seasons to more WMAs.
- Support legislative efforts to reduce or remove phosphorous from Urban Turf Fertilizers.

NORTHEAST:

- Remove horsepower limitations in Guana WMA during Migratory Bird Seasons
- Improve public access to Mary A., Satori, Moccasin Island and adjacent St. Johns River marshes.
- Prevent the construction of launch sites near impoundments at the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge.
- Remove mud motor and horsepower restrictions on Ansin and T. M. Goodwin/Broadmoor.

SOUTHWEST:

- Support Tamiami Trail bridge system that will allow public access to Big Cypress Reserve and the Glades.
- Improve Tampa Bay waterfowling access.

CENTRAL:

- Establish “walk-in” waterfowl hunting program on the Apopka marshes.
- Encourage SJRWMD to improve habitat at Emerald Marsh, Orange Creek and Ocklawaha Prairie, including burning and tussock removal.
- Insure SFWMD and Polk County complete the Lake Kissimmee western shore boat ramp facilities and have hunter friendly regulations.
- Improve relationship with the Potash company, and work with the FWC to add hunting opportunities on the WMA.

NORTHWEST:

- Improve motor restrictions on Lake Lamonia.
- Cooperate with FWC and Beau Turner Youth Conservation Center to expand youth hunting opportunities.

SOUTH:

- Open STA 2 and 6 to duck hunting.
- Prevent backfilling of L67 canal to save public access to the Glades.
- Support efforts to keep Lake Okeechobee water level lower.
- Establish full waterfowl seasons on any CERP reservoirs constructed.
- Add a third hunter to the STA program.
- Work with Broward County to insure Everglades Holiday Park remains hunter friendly.
- Allow ATV access for waterfowlers in Holeyland and Rotenberger during waterfowl seasons.
- Include waterfowling in C44 Reservoir and STA and the Lakeside STA.

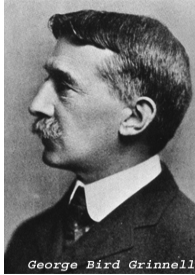
EDUCATIONAL CORNER

By John Hitchcock, UW- F President

THE AMERICAN SPORTSMEN AND CONSERVATION— Part 3

I mentioned that the next issue would move to the Boone and Crocket Club. We will save that for the next issue. After reading the third edition of Dr. Reiger's book, I felt a need to cover this subject matter first, because it adds great context to the overall subject of Conservation and the Sportsman's contributions in the earliest years. And I know I have asked the readers prior, but I will do so again; who among you knew that a Duck Hunter and Sportsman founded the original Audubon Society? The following is from the original front page article found in the *Field and Stream* Journal,

February 11, 1886, Dr. George Bird Grinnell, the publication's editor and owner, and duck hunter, announced the new Audubon Society. The following is the article, transcribed here, in its entirety, word for word.



George Bird Grinnell

"Very slowly the public are awakening to see that the fashion of wearing the feathers and skins of birds is abominable. There is, we think no doubt that when the facts about this fashion are known, it will be frowned down and will cease to exist. Legislation of itself can do little against this barbarous practice, but if public sentiment can be aroused against it, it will die a speedy death.

The *Forest and Stream* has been hammering away at this subject for some years, and the result of its blows is seen in the gradual change which has taken place in public sentiment since it began its work. The time has passed for showing that the fashion is an outrageous one, and that it results very disastrously to the largest and most important class of our population — the farmers. These are injured in two ways; by the destruction of the birds, whose food consists chiefly of insects injurious to the growing crops, and of that scarcely less important group of Rapaces, which prey upon the small rodents which devour the crop after it has matured.

The reform in America, as elsewhere, must be inaugurated by women, and if the subject is called to their notice, their tender hearts will be quick to respond. In England this matter has been taken up and a

widespread interest in it developed. If the women of America will take hold in the same earnest way, they can accomplish an incalculable amount of good.

While individual effort may accomplish much, it will work but slowly, and the spread of the movement will be but gradual. Something more than this is needed. Men, women, and children all over the land should take the matter in hand, and urge its importance upon those with whom they are brought in contact. A general effort of this kind will not fail to awaken

four months about 70,000 birds.

The birds of the fields, the birds of the woods, the birds of the marshes, and those of the sea, all suffer alike. It is needless to repeat the oft-told story of destruction. How can we best go to the work to combat this great and growing evil: what means can we best employ to awaken the once popular feeling against it?

In the first half of this century there lived a man who did more to teach Americans about birds of their own land than any



public interest, and information given to the right thinking public will set the ball of reform in motion. Our beautiful birds give to many people a great deal of pleasure and add much to the delights of the country. These birds are slaughtered in vast numbers for gain. If the demand for their skins can be caused to fall off, it will no longer repay the bird butchers [commercial hunters] to ply their trade, and the birds will be saved.

Statistics are as yet wanting to show the proportions to which this traffic has grown in North America, but we know that it reaches well into the hundreds of thousands. Some figures published in *Forest and Stream* of Aug 4, 1884, show that in a three months' trip a single taxidermist collected bird skins to the number of 11,018, which, including specimens too badly mutilated for preservation, the skins spoiled in the making, would perhaps represent a destruction of 15,000 birds. This same person states that he handles annually about 30,000 bird skins, almost all of which are used for millinery purposes. A single middleman brought to the taxidermist in

other who ever lived. His beautiful and spirited paintings and his charming and tender accounts of the habits of his favorites have made him immortal, and have inspired his countrymen with an ardent love for the birds. The land which produced the painter-naturalist, John James Audubon, will not willingly see the beautiful forms he loved so well exterminated.

We propose the formation of an Association for the protection of wild birds and their eggs, which shall be called the Audubon Society. Its membership is to be free to every one who is willing to lend a helping hand in forwarding the objects for which it is formed. These objects shall be to prevent, so far as possible, (1) the killing of any wild birds *not used for food*; (2) the destruction of nests or eggs of any wild bird, and (3) the wearing of feathers as ornaments or trimming for dress.

To bring this matter properly before the public at large, we shall employ every means in our power to diffuse information on the subject over the whole country. Those who are will-

See Page 6

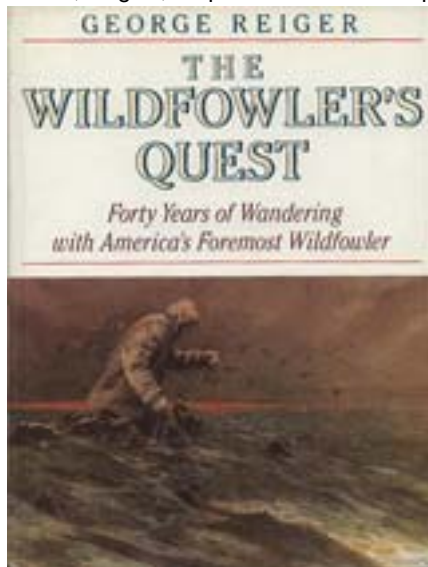


Waterfowl Books – Part Five

By John Hitchcock, UW-F President

In keeping with a promise I made a few reports back, we'll examine the work of George Reiger; duck hunter, sportsman, and conservationist. You may recall that we've already looked at one of the works of his brother – John Reiger; his quintessential volume on the history of conservation in America, *"The American Sportsman and the Origins of Conservation"*. Where John is the fact digging Ph.D. historian, George is the storyteller. George's passion for waterfowling and storytelling are eminent in his books and writings.

One of my favorite tales of past hunts comes from George's work; *"The Wildfowler's Quest"*. In the chapter on Florida, the readers are taken on several hunts for teal, ringbill, snipe and lesser scaup,



in Florida during the 80's, in the marshes and estuaries just north of where I sit. I've hunted in this stretch of the St. Johns River many times near Winder and the salt just east. I've read this short story over and over and each time I travel back to the 80's with George. A few of you will remember those days on middle river. There were abundant teal, and snipe to be found in the open marsh and in the shallow water and mud along the St. Johns channel. The "blackjacks" were thick on Winder. Now-a-days it's not quite so, but the memories are what we strive to regain, are they not? These stories are important to each of us because they not only entertain us during the long off-season, but they set the template for us with their historical account. This is where George is a true master.

You can sense his intent, or so it seems. His observations live on with each reading. They inspire and promote the ethos of the sportsman.

The best way to sample George Reiger's works regarding waterfowling is to find yourself a copy of *"The Wings of Dawn"*, re-released in 2000 under the sub-title *"The Complete Book of North American Waterfowling"*. This book is a sampling of most of what George would like every duck hunter and sportsman to share. George starts out with a few history les-

The Complete Book of NORTH AMERICAN WATERFOWLING



A HANDBOOK OF TECHNIQUES
AND STRATEGIES
GEORGE REIGER

sons of his own, detailing the earliest methods of waterfowl hunting, and then adds a condensed early history of the British and American waterfowling methods. From there the book goes on to describe the early days of conservation in America, then gives instruction on ducks, geese and swan. The book looks at duck stamps, flat art, and decoys. And it's well appointed with useful photos throughout, many explained in detail adding to what can be gleaned.

In *"The Wings of Dawn"*, as in *"The Wildfowler's Quest"*, you'll enjoy most the storytelling. In one chapter, after describing "Skunkheads" he jumps to dogs in an instant. You get the sense he intended to carry you from one thought to another, as it might have been sitting near a fire warming you toes after a hunt. He writes of one particularly good Chesapeake; *"Turning and coming in through the de-*

coys, that enormous dog looked like a Bengal tiger with a songbird in his mouth". I know a few reading this who would appreciate that comparison.

It's interesting to note that George, his brothers and father spent a great deal of time hunting Lake O, as far back as the '40s until *"the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had tampered enough with the levels of the lake to ruin forever what had been one of the finest waterfowling grounds in the south."* George tells in this book, *"the ringbill is one of my very favorite waterfowl"*. They began hunting in the area in the late 1940's, hunting out of Fisheating Creek.

Don't skip the introduction, or the bibliography. If you do, you'll miss out. You need to read this book from cover to cover. There's still plenty of time to find a copy, and read it before the time comes to touch up the paint on a few blocks, or patch the waders. Before long it will again be fall, then winter. It will be here again before you know it, and the reason for all of our toil will become clear once again. As George puts it; *"Another season has begun, and life is strangely renewed by the taking of life. You are part of nature's harvest, and in the killing, you learn to crave the perpetuation of waterfowl as only a waterfowler can. Duck hunting is essential to your well being. It is re-creation in the original sense of that word. The wings of dawn have become extensions of your very soul"*.

There are other great books written by George Reiger, most still easily found, new or used. For those wanting to find George Reiger's books, copies are available on Amazon.com, Alibris.com, and Abebooks.com, among others.

Some may wonder why I review mostly old titles. I think George sums up my feelings best in his preface to the bibliography in Wing's first edition; *"While I doubt I'll ever have a chance to amend this bibliography, I'm at the stage in life when I find greater pleasure in rereading good, old titles than risking disappointment on unproven, new books. If you know of a good waterfowling title I've overlooked, please write me. Such a surprise will be almost as welcome as a northeast wind with a taste of snow."*

See Page 6

Educational Corner & Waterfowl Books -cont.

Sportsmen & Conservation-cont. ing to aid us in our labors are urged to establish local societies for work in their own neighborhood. To such branch societies we will send without charge circulars and printed information for distribution among their neighbors. A little effort in this direction will do much good. As soon as the association shall have a membership and shall be in a position to organize, and shall have attained an existence, we will hand the books and any funds which it may have, over to its members, who will, thereafter, take charge of it.

The work to be done by the Audubon Society is auxiliary to that undertaken by the Committee of the American Ornithologists' Union; and will further the efforts of the A.O.U. Committee, doing detail duties to which they cannot attend. Those who desire to join the Audubon Society, established on the basis and for the purpose above set forth, should send their names at once to the *Forest and Stream*, 40 Park Row, New York."

A note to the reader in closing...Dr. Grinnell mentions the work of the A.O.U. in the final paragraph. It's interesting to note that most, if not all of the founders of the American Ornithologists' Union were bird hunters and sportsmen, including Frank M. Chapman, the creator of the Audubon's Christmas Bird Census.

Waterfowl books-cont.

As a footnote, a note from my good friend - author and publisher - Worth Matthewson;

"I have long felt sportsmen are indeed lucky to have two brothers, John and George Reiger, involved in writing on outdoor subjects. John's major book, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation*, should be placed at the head of must reads for anyone interested in our natural history, especially hunters. For waterfowlers who want to read an excellent book on their sport, then one can't find one much better than George's *The Wildfowler's Quest*. George has a very broad range of interest in hunting, but waterfowling is closest to his heart. That is very evident in *The Wildfowler's Quest*." Worth Mathewson.



UW-F NEWS & EVENTS

UW-F ASSISTS TRAILBLAZERS

UW-F volunteers presented a seminar on waterfowling during the U. S. SPORTSMANS ALLIANCE annual TRAILBLAZERS event on April 3 at the FWC Ocala Youth Camp. A full schedule of outdoors sports were featured, including fishing, trapping, frog gigging and hunting.

Randy Clark, Sid Thysen, Doug Dort and Jason Ballard along with his son Cody and friend Daniel Callas conducted the waterfowl program. Topics presented were the ethics of waterfowling, duck identification, scouting, decoys and calling.

The youngsters always enjoy the dogs and their retrieving skills. Hiding duck wings and watching the dogs find them and bring them back "to hand" is a special treat for all.

UW-F Members participate in numerous youth events each year across Florida. These young people will be our neighbors in the marshes and it is important they have the knowledge to be good hunters and respect the sportsmanship and heritage of waterfowling.

UW-F SUMMER SHOTGUN RAFFLE UNDERWAY



Happy trailblazers' participants

The 2010 UW-F SUMMER RAFFLE features a BENELLI VINCI COMFORTECH 12 gauge shotgun, 28 inch barrel, MAX 4 CAMO, chokes and case. MSRP \$1479.00

Tickets are \$5 each or five for \$20 and donations can be made on the UW-F Website under "Fundraising".

The drawing will be at the BASS PROSHOPS OUTDOOR WORLD during the Florida State Duck Calling Contest on August 15. You do not need to be present to win.

Thanks to the Orlando BASS PROSHOPS for sponsoring the raffle.

UW-F has only two major "fundraisers" each year, a SUMMER and WINTER raffle featuring a quality shotgun. The success of these raffles is very important

as they help fund the RINGER NEWS and the UW-F web site, as well as finance the UW-F Mission "to make duck hunting in Florida better for Florida's duckhunters."

UW-F FIRST DUCK PINS

Hunters who bag their first duck are eligible for a UW-F FIRST DUCK PIN. The excitement of that day lasts a lifetime and often is just the beginning of many wonderful days in the marsh. Some "late season" pins went out to:

- DANIEL KNOLL

Daniel shot a bluebill on Tampa Bay on January 18.

- JUSTIN CALDER
- KELLI NERAU

Justin and Kelli shot their ducks during the Youth Hunt weekend. Kelli bagged a Ringneck drake and Justin a Mottled Duck.

- THEISS SAGUES
- ANNIKA RECZEK
- ARTURO CORCES, JR.

Annika and Arturo also bagged their first

UW-F NEWS & EVENTS

ducks during the Youth Hunt weekend, February 6 and 7, and enjoyed the UW-F Jack Bylsma III Youth Hunt Celebration cook out at STA 1 W.

Congratulations to all.

BEAU TURNER YOUTH CAMPS UW-F GIVES WATERFOWL SESSIONS

The BEAU TURNER YOUTH CONSERVATION CENTER (BTYCC) youth camps began the week of June 7. This Conservation Center is being used as the model for Youth Centers to be developed across Florida that are now in the planning stages. Stephen Williamson, UW-F Board Member, has been leading a number of UW-F volunteers at numerous events at BTYCC.

This summer the camps run for seven weeks and have about a dozen participants each week. UW-F volunteers "teach" the Waterfowl 101 Class each Wednesday morning at 9am. UW-F Regional Director, Jeremy Smith, has been teaching waterfowl essentials, and dog training techniques during this (and last) year's Youth Camp. His wonderful dog Huntley, is always a big hit among the campers.

The young hunters are instructed in gun safety, safety on the water, duck identification, calling, decoys and retrievers. During the week they are exposed to a wide variety of outdoor skills and enjoy fishing and shooting.

Jeremy and his best friend Huntley



Stephen teaching waterfowl identification



Kenny Barker, BTYCC Dir, explaining shotgun basics to UW-F member, Christopher.

NORTHERN HABITAT REPORTS

Looking at several agency and waterfowl sites reports yields the following for the Central and Atlantic Flyways that supply our ducks:

SASKATCHEWAN/MANITOBA

Waterfowl production will be good to excellent with the boreal forest marshes ranging from fair to good and the marshes and potholes from good to excellent.

ONTARIO/QUEBEC

Early thaws left good conditions but more rain is needed. Northern areas are in better shape than the

UW-F NEWS & EVENTS

southern areas. Production will be fair in the north and good in the south of these Provinces.

ATLANTIC PROVINCES

Good conditions across the area with expected good waterfowl production.

CENTRAL USA

Minnesota is too dry and Montana did not get the rain needed. These areas will have fair production. All other states are in excellent condition and very good waterfowl production is expected.

UW-F BOOTHS AT BASS PRO SHOP HUNTING CLASSIC

UW-F will have booths at the BASS PRO SHOPS OUTDOOR WORLD Hunting Classic Events in Dania Beach and Orlando during the weekends August 6/7 and August 14/15. This is a great time to visit with other Members and/or work in the booths.

The UW-F Summer Raffle will be drawn at the Orlando event on August 15 during the Florida State Duck Calling Contest. BASS PRO SHOP ORLANDO is the sponsor of the Summer Raffle featuring a BENELLI VINCI COMFORTECH 12 Gauge Semi-auto shotgun. The UW-F booth is usually one of the most active in the show. A great chance to "talk ducks" in the summertime!



UW-F/FWC SPONSOR WATERFOWL SUMMIT

A symposium on Florida's shrinking and degraded waterfowl habitat will be held Friday, August 27 at the Ocala Hilton Hotel. There will be a reception and wild game tasting the prior evening at 6 pm. Participation is free and you can register on line or by contacting a UW-F Board Member.

The list of speakers is impressive. Experts in fields as varied as Aquatic Plant Control to the construction and management of the Storm Water Treatment Areas in south Florida will be presenting detailed information. Every duck hunter will want to attend this meeting!

Summit speakers include:

- Steve Rockwood (FWCC) T.M. Goodwin WMA - waterfowl food web, Goodwin management science
- Dr. Gian Basili (SJRWMD) Lake Apopka wetlands restoration area - history & restoration science
- Mark Sees (OWP mgr) Orlando Easterly Wetlands - filter marsh construction, management, science
- Stacia Hetrick (UF/IFAS) Aquatic Plants
- Ed Harris (FWCC) Aquatic Plant Management
- Mike Legare (USFWS) Merritt Island NWR - estuary and impoundment management and science
- Kathleen Pietro (SFWMD) Everglades Stormwater Treatment Areas - history & management science

During the reception on August 26, Joe Benedict, FWC Waterfowl Program Coordinator, will be available for questions and will give an informal presentation.

More information will be sent to Members and other interested parties by the UW-F E-Newsletter. Also, although the conference is free, donations to help offset the costs can be made on the UW-F web site and at the meeting. Healthy marsh habitat is required for waterfowl. This Summit is targeted at that need.



UW-F REGIONAL REPORTS

NORTHWEST REGION

The entire region is wired to the gulf oil spill. The disaster is so gigantic all other topics are simply drowned out. What will the contamination mean to the coming fall flights of ducks? The open sea, the estuaries....all diver habitats coated with a sheen of oil just waiting to trap the unsuspecting visitors from the north. That is our nightmare. The tale will be told by the conditions in late August. How will the cleanup progress; do we have a hurricane; can the oil be stopped at the mouths of the bays?

The good news! Jeremy Smith and Steve Williamson have been teaching "Waterfowl 101" at the BEAU TURNER YOUTH CONSERVATION CENTER camps this summer. There are six weeks of camps with youngsters from across Florida participating. Our own Milen Balkanski and his son Christopher attended the camp during the first week of July. Milen worked with the Hunt Camp while his son attended the full range of activities. This center is being used as a model for a chain of FWC Conservation Centers across the state.

Stephen is working with the local DELTA WATERFOWL chapter on the Lake Lammonia and Lake Carr internal combustion motor access project. These motors have been banned for some time during duck season and a more reasonable rule needs to be developed. There has always been some resistance to the change by local landowners.

There is a possibility that the sink hole dam at Sneads Smoke House in Jefferson County on the

Aucilla River will be removed. The area was a traditional duck hunting spot for many generations. Following the dam removal, extensive habitat improvement will be needed with the cooperation of the local landowners.

The inland habitat is in good shape with water in the ponds and small marshes the wood ducks love. The lakes are moderately low, but the several years of drought seem to be gone. As noted above....the oil spill is the determining factor for next season.

STEPHEN WILLIAMSON

NORTH EAST REGION

The St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) South Recreation Meeting was held in Vero Beach on June 17. A number of issues were covered including the following.

The "open/close" time at the Lawton recreation pad has been changed to 5 am to 8 pm during hunting season and is 7 am to 8:30 pm during the rest of the year.

Mary A and Sartori marshes will be almost completely open during duck season except for the new tie back canal and a small section in the northeast corner.

There is a new camp in East Marsh (Banjo) with a pad but no shelter at this time.

The short diverter plug now in place in the north end of Ansin should help keep water from south of Rt. 60 back flooding into the Ansin marsh, keeping bulrushes from spreading east and slow the water cycle, improving

habitat. The Fellsmere Project is on schedule for 2015 completion. There is "talk" of a cost shared joint venture ramp towards the southern end of the project.

Burning was good at Moccasin Island, almost all the 3500 acres, and this should improve habitat. Indian Fields also had a good burn.

The C 1 re-diversion pumps should be on line soon; which will help keep the upper basin hydrated. Unfortunately, the Three Forks project remains at a standstill due to the Native American remains found on a portion of the site.

JOE RICHTER , SR.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

News from the North Central Region is fairly uneventful, pretty standard summertime stuff for the most part. The biologist with FWC who was responsible for the invasive aquatic plant management (including the spraying program) for this area has retired, but I have met with his replacement, Ryan Hamm, and we discussed the hydrilla management for the local lakes up here around Gainesville and Ocala. The FWC has some basic goals for these lakes and I've been told they will certainly take into consideration the duck hunters position when it comes to their spraying program.

For all the area lakes, water levels and access are pretty good, but levels are dropping due to it being dry as of late. With regular summer rains they should come back up and maintain levels similar to last year. Habitat on Newnan's Lake is still poor due to the



UW-F REGIONAL REPORTS

ongoing pollution issues and unique dynamics on that lake and as such will probably not hold any viable number of ducks again this year. Hopefully with time these issues can be resolved and it can return to being a good duck hunting lake. The habitat on Lake Lochloosa looks good, fairly high levels of hydrilla, but it has never seemed to consistently hold any large numbers of ducks for whatever reason. Scouting on both of these lakes will certainly be in order this fall to see if it is worth a trip to either of them. The summer plan for spraying on both of these lakes is to maintain the hyacinth, water lettuce, and hydrilla clumps with regular spot treatments as necessary, but no major areas of treatment are likely.

For Orange Lake, this is the worst we have seen hydrilla in the lake since 1982. Unless we have extremely high water levels for some reason this year (i.e. tropical events), there is going to be more hydrilla than anyone wants on the lake by the end of the summer. I took a ride around the southern half of the lake in mid June and there were already some areas that are topped out with hydrilla, a good indicator of how thick it is out there already. These areas are mainly in the McIntosh Bay area, the extreme southern end, and a large swath of open water out in the middle of the lake. Look for more extensive treatment out there than there has been in years past because of this, but the bulk of their efforts in the next few months will be in the area between Bird Island and Redbird Island in McIntosh Bay to open it up for the fishermen. The only other treatments planned for this summer will be to keep the ramps

clear and the boat trails open over the remainder of the lake but no major spray areas are scheduled to be hit during the hot weather due to low oxygen levels. However, as noted earlier as per my discussions with FWC, consideration for the duck hunters should be taken into account when they develop their chemical treatment program for the upcoming fall/winter/spring. Additionally, there are also plans for 50 acres of hydrilla harvesting in the west arm near Sportsman Cove Fish Camp if they can work out permit needs from SJRWMD.

One of the things we'll certainly be keeping any eye on is two 100 acre test plots on Orange Lake that they have treated with a product called Clearcast which is being tested as a product which inhibits hydrilla from growing but does not completely kill it. The purpose of testing this product is to determine if it will hold hydrilla to a level which does not interfere with usage of the lake, meaning keeping it a foot to 18 inches below the water surface. This could be very significant because if successful it will mean less outright killing of the hydrilla as is currently done, and a higher percentage being left throughout the entire year. Good for the lakes, good for the ducks (and duck hunters). It should be obvious by end of the summer if this product will accomplish that goal.

The end result of all this is that they will be controlling approximately 1000 acres of the 5200 acres present in Orange Lake this year.

Regarding the Ocklawaha Prairie and Orange Creek impoundments, here's the report I got from

R.H. Davis of SJRWMD. The weather was not real cooperative as far as marsh burning went. They got a lot of rain early this year which in turn caused the water levels to rise and flood most of the pyric vegetation. They were able to get one 240 acre burn completed in the marsh at Orange creek early spring but the fuel consistency was not there so it was real mosaic. The water levels were really high most of the winter at both spots, but with green up and a slack in the rain they are both on a steady decline right now. They have not done any additional boat ramp improvements at Ocklawaha outside of the accommodations they made for us last season on the west side, and nothing is planned over the summer. I suspect we will once again deal with the floating tussocks blocking the east ramp similar to the past few years, so let's hope for easterly winds this season to keep that open. Orange Creek is still much the same as far as access goes, but the areas they treated cattail in are showing some promise. The cattails appear to have been reduced by about 1/4 to 1/3 in density and there is some increased vegetation diversity out there, some of which they think may offer a slight increase in forage plants. As of right now there have been no large scale treatments of invasive plants on either marsh but there will be regular ongoing maintenance treatments occurring throughout the summer. Sounds like some things were done but not as much as planned due to weather factors.

The results of all this is that it appears things are going along



UW-F REGIONAL REPORTS

pretty much as normal. With our regular summer rainfall we should be looking at access and habitat similar to last year which, for most areas, wasn't too bad as far as duck hunting goes. If we get any tropical storms or hurricanes it could raise the water levels significantly and change the whole dynamic on all these places. The upside of that would be more access to areas that are currently dry or inaccessible; the downside would be too much water spreading out the ducks to areas hunters can't get to. I guess we'll all just keep an eye on the weather and see what happens. Be safe.

Steve Pasteur (Esteban)

CENTRAL REGION

The region has received ample rainfall and the lakes and marshes are in good shape. Lake Toho is still maintaining a good level of hydrilla despite some spraying during the winter. The Snail Kite nests will continue to restrict hunting in some areas, but the need for submerged aquatic plants for the snails they eat helps keep the spraying down. Also, the lack of state money reduces the spray program and benefits the ducks!

Our Member Roger Hoffland represented UW-F at the clean ups for Lake Bonny and Lake Parker.

I will be attending the Southwest Florida Watermanagement District's Basin Recreation Meeting with several other Members. We expect to improve hunting access to District marshes as these meetings progress. UW-F will also be represented at the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Aquatic Plant meeting where spraying is planned on July 22 at the Osceola County Extension Office.

DENNIS DUTCHER

SOUTHWEST/WEST CENTRAL REGION

Here in Southwest/West Central Florida all has been relatively quiet for the better part of late spring and early summer. The oil spill has not made any land fall on our beaches but the economic impact of the scare has surely been felt. Business, especially tourist related business, is struggling thanks to the media hype and false reporting on the widespread disaster that has befallen our coast. Suffice to say that the fishing is as good as ever and with the exception of snook, both inshore and offshore species are abundant and biting.

As for duck habitat, water levels are as good as they have ever been and marsh areas and wood duck holes look promising for the early season, provided the birds cooperate. Spraying and hydrilla treatment are still an issue on KCOL, but RD Newton Jones seems equal to the task and remains on top of the issue for UW-F.

On the front lines of access, myself, Dennis Dutcher and Paul Daniel (Field Trial Association) will be meeting with SWFWMD on July 14 at the tri annual stakeholders meeting and presenting to them a proposal to open more District lands to hunting. The proposal which encompasses some 28 properties and more than 177,000 acres of land will surely be met with extreme opposition, but we have to begin somewhere. The request will include not only the opening of small game and waterfowling areas, but big game and upland bird species as well. In a nutshell, any-

thing close to 1000 acres with a sustainable harvest area is being considered. These lands stretch from Marion County in the north to Charlotte County in the south and all points in between.

FWC has agreed to put in a request of their own for the inclusion of District lands specifically for small game and waterfowl and that is being prepared by Jamie Federson and Jason Burton to include Bowlegs Creek/Crooked Lake, Chassahowitzka River, Cypress Creek, Edward Medard Reservoir, Lake Hancock, Lower Hillsborough, Wilderness Park, Myakka Prairie, Starkey Wilderness Preserve, Tampa Bay Estuarine Ecosystem, Upper Myakka River Watershed, and Weekiwachee Preserve. Only time will tell how much horse trading will take place before any of these lands sees the first shot fired. UW-F and its leadership will be working tirelessly to effect a change for the better in order to open up more opportunity on these District lands. Stay tuned for news from the meetings as this saga unfolds.

Chuck Echenique

SOUTH REGION

Good news was announced by the South Florida Water Management District's Jerry Krenz, SFWMD CERP Recreation Manager, at the June WRAC Recreation Meeting. The Rocky Glades Small Game Public Hunting Area will be moved to a larger location west of Miami. The new location will have 1900 acres, including some waterfowl habitat. Also, the Frog Pond dove hunting will re-

UW-F REGIONAL REPORTS

turn next season to a new location as well. The dove field will be located north of Ingram Highway. UW-F and other groups have long been lobbying for more hunting opportunities near the Miami metropolitan area and these are important successes. UW-F Board Member Jorge Gutierrez has worked with the FWC and SFWMD staffs to bring about this progress.

The other major announcement was the addition of several thousands of acres to the Hungryland Wildlife Environmental Area west of Jupiter. This area has a wide variety of hunting opportunities.

The STA hunting program will see important changes this season. There will be a "random draw" procedure for the permits with

multiple "draws" during the season. The process is basically the one used for deer and turkey permits with some adjustments. Also, STA 1W and STA 3/4 will have cells divided into two separate hunts for each. This will allow a hunter a chance to obtain two additional permits each year. STA 1 W will have the front cells in one hunt and those cells located at the south end in another one the next day. Similarly, STA 3/4 will have a second group of cells on the northwest side open as a separate hunt, one section on Saturday and the other on Sunday. STA 5 will remain as last season.

A major change at STA 3/4 will be the addition of a third hunter on each permit. This is a trial and the other STAs will remain at two

hunters per permit.

Lake Okeechobee is in excellent shape. A rainy "dry season" left the lake a bit too high and water has been released into the estuaries to be sure the lake was below the danger point for the hurricane season. The marshes are well vegetated and without a major disaster hunting next season should be excellent.

The WCAs have been in good shape, sometimes a little high but the vegetation is thick. The Arthur Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge is loaded with hydrilla and other duck food. Too much rain during a storm can cause a problem for Early Teal Season, but hopefully that will not happen this summer.

From Page 1

the water in search of prize winning decoys. It was hard telling who had more fun; the kids, or the members that took out the kids as their crew. After a concerted and effective decoy recovery effort, the captains and their crew met back at the oak head and were unbelievably surprised at the generosity of the sponsors at the raffle. Decoys, clothing, boat accessories, even hunting trips were raffled away.

Chuck Echinique with Final Approach and G & H donated decoys and equipment. Sid (Fast Duck) not only MC'd the raffle but donated an amazing amount of equipment to the cause. A "Hunt the Pit" Arkansas duck hunt was even given away. Lazy Oaks



Sid presenting some feast material

Plantation, Arks Outdoors, Mud Buddy Motors, Excel Boats, Gatortrax, and BASS PRO SHOPS all contributed. We are lucky to have multiple member connections with great companies to support these functions.

The weather was beautiful and a great time was had by all. Driving to the boat ramp might have been the only downside in an otherwise great day. Let's just say that the love bugs were in full bloom. However

once we arrived at the destination it was well worth it. Thanks to John Hitchcock for displaying some of his beautiful decoys. Thanks to all the generous sponsors and members that made the 2010 UW-F Mudfest & Family Picnic such a treat. We'll be heading south next year and I'm looking forward to it. If 2011 can even come close to 2010 we'll be in for a thrill.

Dan Daniels, R.D.

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<http://www.unitedwaterfowlersfl.org/membership.htm>



Sunset

SWAN SONG

I am into everything “Greek” this month. Jane and I are in Greece for almost two weeks. I try to find some relationship with waterfowl and duck hunting wherever we may travel. Easy to do in Egypt. Plenty of paintings of Pharaohs netting, arrowing, and wacking ducks with throwing sticks in the Nile River marshes. Harder to do in China where any wild duck landing in a rice paddy is soon in someone’s wok. The origins of the famed Peking Duck dish was the best topic I could uncover. Again, Costa Rica was easy with hundreds of Black Bellies landing every morning where the river next to the hotel ran into the Pacific.

There are some marshes in Greece, but they are small as the country is mostly hills crashing down into the sea. Some plains exist but they are heavily devoted to agriculture and have been for millennia. Easy to see

why the Greeks have been mariners for thousands of years as there are few resources in the rocky landscapes. Grapes, wine and olives...goats and cheeses all flourish today just as they have for twenty five hundred years of Greek history. Every pass in the hills, every plain, every seaside trail have been the scenes of multiple battles over the centuries as the eastern empires of Persians and Turks have swept across this poor and splintered “country”. Greece was, and to some degree even today is, made up of “cities” who fought each other as much as the foreign invaders. Sparta, Corinth, Athens....all “Greek” but everyone a rival. The ancient tribes or “races” as they are called by the historians, the Ionians, Spartans, Macedonians, Serbians, Iranians, Turks and dozens more still linger in the politics today.

Poking around in the piles of rocks,


restacked a hundred times over the centuries after a hundred battles that destroyed the cities and temples... looking at the marvelous remains of the art and culture in the museums, and, of course walking through the Parthenon, you get a sense of the ebb and flow of history through the ages. So, I look to the famous Greek philosophers for something I can “bring home” for our duck hunting tribe.

Socrates was revered for his wisdom...but the intolerant politics of the dysfunctional Athenian tribe condemned him to drink the fatal hemlock. His last words: “You know that when the swans feel the approach of death they sing, and they sing sweeter and louder on the last days of their lives...”

It’s all “Greek” to me!

Newton Cook - Exec. Director/Editor

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