



Ringer News

United Waterfowlers – FL, Inc.
The **Voice** of Florida Waterfowlers
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UW-F/FWC WATERFOWL SUMMIT EARNS ACCOLADES

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The Ocala Hilton Hotel was the scene of the two day FLORIDA WATERFOWL HABITAT SUMMIT co-sponsored by UNITED WATERFOWLERS-FL (UW-F) and the FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION (FCC) August 26 and 27.

The event featured a game cookout on Thursday evening and an all day session on Friday with an array of expert wetland managers speaking to a large gathering of representatives from government agencies, water management districts, academia and interested waterfowlers. The goal of the Summit was to bring together the various professional wetland managers from across Florida and create an at-

mosphere of cooperation, coordination and learning.

The game cookout on Thursday included a report on the conditions for the forthcoming waterfowl season by Joe Benedict, FWC Waterfowl Manager. Joe outlined the seasons, regulations and the new procedure for obtaining quota permits for the different managed marshes, including the STAs and T. M. Goodwin/Broadmoor. Prospects are high for this season with all the reports from the breeding grounds positive and the new bag limits have been adjusted to reflect the increased numbers of certain species.

The highlight of the evening was the presence of Florida See Page 3



PARTNER

From the President's Blind

With a new duck season upon us, activities abound for the hard-working volunteers among UW-F's membership. There are meetings to attend, youth hunts to be planned, and newsletters going out, including this one, our tried and true snail-mail newsletter.

The rewards are sometimes not clear to all of our members, but to the members who attend the meetings, or volunteer at the youth hunts, or to the hunt-masters who teach and train; the rewards are clear.

I can't thank the volunteers enough for their time and dedication and sweat equity shed to make UW-F a success throughout the state of Florida – throughout the year. Most of our volunteers still work for a living.

Let me say that the acknowledgement of the hard work of our volunteers is in no way intended to disrespect our members at large who haven't the time to volunteer more than they do. We operate off of the membership fees and raffles that are collected from the many members that are among the bulrushes of life. We all understand that the priorities of family and work come first. Keeping your membership current and seeing the membership grow is one of the greatest rewards for us.

When I was younger, just out of school, raising my kids was number one and a full-time job. I kept my time freed up for my kids. I'm sure many of our parents can appreciate that sentiment.

Well I had a chance to see the work of one very dedicated Cub



Master and a few other pack leaders at a campout on Halloween weekend. It was a delightful trip to the oak hammocks of North Florida with my grandson and his Cub Scout Pack. It was a pleasure to participate and share in their manifold efforts and to see all of the smiling faces of so many kids. It emphasized for me once again that the central theme in most of our lives is to pass along the traditions we cherish and leave a better place for our kids.

Each of us has a role to play in the traditions we pass down, and regardless of what those traditions are, or what the contributions are that each of us make, we can all certainly appreciate, understand and revel in each of our successes.

For all of us this coming season, we will have several new locations on public land to hunt in Florida. Some of these new places are on land that has not been publicly hunted for well over 50 years.

And our conservation efforts are leading the way in many respects. The hunter's unique perspective has always been an important part of conservation.

Then there are the smaller and less tangible benefits for each of us that come from the hard work and relationships we build over time. All of this brings me back to the kids.

Each of these efforts will benefit the new and young hunters that we take out with us to the marshes and water. The youth hunters are the future of hunting and conservation in Florida.

The very most important thing we do is to pass our hunting heritage and traditions on to our kids and the kids that attend our youth hunts. The DU and UW-F youth hunts that we plan and volunteer for are the most important projects we have, but in a way everything we do is for the kids.

Please make an effort this season to get the kids out as much as you can. It's an experience they will never forget. And be sure to be safe and have a wonderful 2010-2011 waterfowl hunting season.

John Hitchcock
UW-F President

UW-F PROJECTS

From p. 1 Agriculture Commissioner candidate, Adam Putnam. Mr. Putnam has been endorsed by

- Stan Howarter (USFWS)- Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge estuary and impoundment management for waterfowl.



John Hitchcock and Adam Putnam

UW-F for the position. Putnam mixed with the large crowd as they enjoyed platters of fried frog legs, duck bites, venison bites, fried gator and other delicacies. The candidate gave a short speech that was well received as the points supporting hunting and public access to public land were just what the group of duck hunters wanted to hear.

Friday's session began with an introduction by John Hitchcock, UW-F President, welcoming those attending and setting the tone for the meeting. Joe Benedict co-hosted the day and gave the FWC perspective for the goals to be met. Power Point presentations were utilized throughout the day to tie all the various speakers and elements together. Everyone attending was supplied a thumb drive with a set of many of the slides presented during the day.

The speakers were followed with brisk question and answer periods that sparked a number of ideas and concepts that individuals could take back to their work.

- Steve Rockwood (FWC)- T. M. Goodwin/Broadmoor WMA. Waterfowl food web and marsh management science.
- Dr. Gian Basili (SJRWMD)- Lake Apopka wetlands restoration area. History and restoration science.
- Stacia Hatrick (UF/IFAS)- Aquatic plants in Florida, natural and exotic.
- Ed Harris (FWC)- Aquatic plant management, goals and reality. Science, chemicals and methods.
- Kathleen Pietro (SFWMD)- Everglades Stormwater Treatment Areas. History and management science.

Lunch was supplied by UW-F and, just as the game fare was a hit Thursday evening, the Bar B Q ribs and chicken, fried frog legs, venison meatballs and accompanying vegetables brought a rush to the buffet. Dessert was sent from Miami by DOCKSIDE MARKET and their excellent rum cakes were soon cleared out.

There is no way to give enough credit to Stephen Simpson and the crew that prepared the food for the Summit, two very large meals, over 150 pounds of meats to be grilled and fried and vegetables to be prepared and cooked. Milan Balkanski and Stephen Williamson made sure the food moved from the grills and stoves to the buffets. The compliments from those enjoying the good food showed the appreciation of the hard work.

John Hitchcock closed the meeting with a passionate call for the preservation and restoration of Florida's wetlands. John thanked the participants for sharing their knowledge and pledged to bring the group together again to insure further cooperation in the mutual goal to conserve our heritage.

UW-F, with the help of the FWC, conducted this event FREE to all participants. There were no fees for attending and both meals were FREE. UW-F has a tradition of presenting events at no charge for those attending. Obviously, there were costs involved and the event could not have been held without the assistance of a number of generous donors. A special THANK YOU to each of those who contributed.



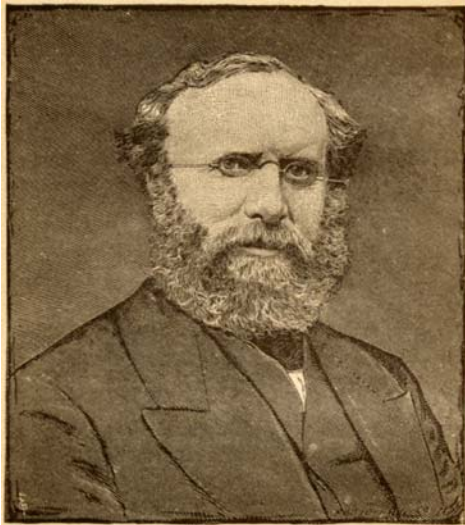
Good time was had by all!!!

Educational Corner & Waterfowl Books

By John Hitchcock, UW- F President

THE AMERICAN SPORTSMEN AND CONSERVATION— Part 4

Few know about Robert Barnwell Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt's uncle. We think it's important to understand who the earliest conservationists were in American history, RBR being one of them, and in this case it's important to understand the influence that "Uncle Rob" had over his nephew



ROBERT BARNWELL ROOSEVELT.

– Theodore Roosevelt in the earliest years of Theodore's life. So to that end, in this issue we devote fully 2 pages to Robert Barnwell Roosevelt and in particular one of his best books. So consider this a combination article of the two columns we normally run in the newsletter.

Robert Barnwell Roosevelt lived next door to his brother (Teddy's Dad) and the Roosevelt family in New York City when Theodore Roosevelt was a very young boy growing up. The two brownstones were connected by a door on the second floor. The brownstone home that Theodore lived in with his family is now the historical birthplace of Theodore Roosevelt.

Robert B. Roosevelt was an interesting character who fed his dog at the dinner table, kept a milk cow, chickens and horses in the back yard (New York City), and had a habit of keeping all sorts of animals in the house, including monkeys, parrots and ducks

and other fowl, and various reptiles, this a habit that Theodore Roosevelt adopted later in life, even when he was President. I think it's safe to say that beyond his father, Teddy was significantly influenced by his uncle Rob.

Robert Barnwell Roosevelt, or Rob as he was known, was a blueblood attorney who seemed to dabble into just about anything and everything that struck his fancy, but mostly he enjoyed fishing and bird hunting. The Roosevelts were all very wealthy, primarily due to the success of Rob's father (Teddy's grandfather); the mercantile baron Cornelius V. S. Roosevelt. So RBR had the resources early in life to pursue his passions, no doubt. I'm not sure he had to work all that much, at least as an attorney. He rarely speaks of his profession in his writings and his obituary in the New York Times states that he mostly abandoned the practice of law after only a few years. But from his accounts of such things as how to make a milk cow earn her keep, and his dutiful book-keeping of various projects, it seems he was frugal in some respects, and certainly earned his own keep with the books he authored, some of which were very successful titles including *"The Game-Fish of North America"* (Carleton – 1862) which rocketed Roosevelt to the top of the Piscatorial world, and then there is my favorite - *"Florida and Game Water Birds"* (Orange Judd – 1884). I have a first printing of this book, and although few pop up for sale, these books are being re-printed today, so it's easy to get a copy.

Anyone who claims that *"Florida and Game Water Birds"* is the first book on "Florida's Birds" is wrong, and has not read this book; for the title is somewhat deceiving. Those who do their research by skimming, or reading only the first few chapters, or reading only the last few will be tricked by this book. Only the first part in this book is dedicated to Florida and that first part

primarily documents RBR's trip he made to Florida with friends, including Seth Green, sailing all the way to and from Florida from New England in RBR's 60 foot sailboat named the *Heartsease* that he had specially built for the trip.

The *Heartsease* was a Sharpie which with its "light draught" was well suited for the shallow inside water of Florida's coast. The boat only drafted two feet, but still had two state rooms, a cabin with 4 berths and a cuddy cabin for cooking and cleaning up. They also took along a pair of light skiffs for their excursions inland on the rivers and creeks. There were no levees to jump or weirs to get around in the Florida of the 1880s. There were a few inlets that had been cut, and some of the first attempts at ditching and draining Florida were underway in its interior, but most of Florida was still natively adorned and flooded in the 1880s.

Along for the trip was the doctor, only referred to in the book as "The Doctor", and never being named. Also on board for the trip were their apparent mistresses as well, at least two, also un-named but otherwise delicately described and suitably pampered.

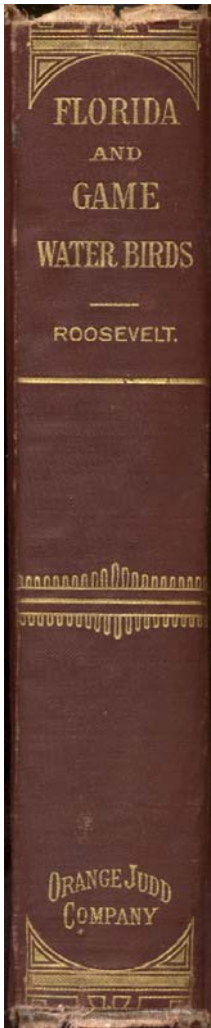
Only 115 pages of the 418 page *"Florida and Game Water Birds"* is dedicated to Florida. RBR was a very talented writer whose dry sense of humor and wit along with an affinity for detail go along way in making this book easy and enjoyable to read. Roosevelt's naturalist side is seen in his descriptions of the birds, fishes and landscape of Florida. Much can be gleaned about Florida as it used to be. Some of it is rather sad to read, what a paradise Florida once was. If only one could travel back in time, I would be the first to purchase a ticket.

The best part of this book is Part 2, the "Game Bird" portion of the book where Robert describes in detail the various game-birds of the Atlantic coast, mostly shorebirds, rails, ducks,

Educational Corner & Waterfowl Books -cont.

and geese and the means for hunting them. The stories of his duck hunting adventures, shore bird hunting and rail are some of the best bird hunting stories ever told in my opinion, and right up there with the best from George Bird Grinnell to Worth Mathewson. RBR details his hunting trips to special places, from the Jersey Shore, to Currituck Sound, from Montauk Point for its Bay-Birds to the Duck hunting in the exclusive clubs of the "west".

Part 2 of the book - "Florida and Game Water Birds" starts out with a chapter on the Sportsman and his duties regarding the Protection of Game Birds and Non-Game birds alike. It's a detailed essay on bird protection from the earliest days of the conservation efforts and awakenings in America and from one of conservation's earliest advocates. It is part of a book about hunting and may seem odd at first to the novice, but it goes to show again that the hard-core sportsman, and especially the bird hunting and duck hunting Sportsmen



were those who knew first and foremost that our birds were in trouble and thus those same men were at the forefront of the efforts for their protection and conservation in America.

From there the book's wildfowl storytelling begins and includes a very detailed comparison of hunting with muzzle-loading shotguns vs. the new breech-loaders. The breech-loaders were a fairly new fangled thing at that time, just beginning to become popular, and of course RBR had all of the finest toys his money could afford. It's interesting to read the very detailed comparisons regarding speed, reliability and safety.

RBR spent much of his free time fishing and bird hunting among other pursuits...he was a committed angler, bird hunter, sportsman and conservationist. He dedicated his life to fish science and funded many of the efforts to develop ways to hatch and stock fish. RBR headed the New York Association for the Protection of Game, becoming its President in 1877, and holding the post until his death in 1906. He also served for 20 years as the head of the New York State Fish Commission. He funded much of the early research done by Seth Green who paved the way for restocking many of the rivers, streams and lakes across America with fish of different species. And RBR ran and won a seat in congress to fund the work even more. At some point along the way RBR struggled as all conservationists do, having a hard time recruiting fishermen into his way of thinking regarding Fish Culture. In one of the best moves he ever made,

he recruited Seth Green who at the time was considered to be one of the greatest fisherman along the east coast. Green, with backing from the fish commission and Roosevelt, developed the science of artificial insemination, starting out small, but then developing his methods into world class hatcheries, selling millions of fingerlings around the country, re-stocking rivers lakes and streams with the help of Roosevelt all along the way. Roosevelt and Green became close friends and thus Green tagged along on many of Roosevelt's adventures including the sail to Florida in 1883. His methods to hatch trout and American shad helped to re-stock many streams devastated by the commercial net fishermen.

Later RBR's exploits would branch out into issues with water pollution "No man ever caught a trout in a dirty place." was his motto. RBR's fame peaked at about the time that TR was heading off for Harvard in 1876. Everyone seemed to know of Robert B. Roosevelt, and wanted to visit with him or go fishing. Then in 1883 came his trip to Florida and the renewal of his efforts for the protection of the birds. He mixed his wonderful abilities of story telling with his lessons on conservation. He had developed his skills as an advocate for all the fishes and birds into a career of advocacy which certainly only ended with his death. He understood how progress was denuding the forests and erosion was polluting our rivers and streams, and he along with Grinnell and friends like Seth Green help light the first candles of modern day conservation in America.

From p. 12 have to work with. Two STAs, 1 W and 3/4 have A and B hunting areas allowing for two additional hunting permits per hunter this season. A sections will be hunted on Saturday, B sections on Sunday. STA 3/4 permits will allow for three hunters per permit. (STA 1 W and STA 5 remain at two hunters per permit). Condi-

tions are excellent in most of the cells open for hunting. Several Snail Kites have nested at the junction of the north/south and east/west central levees at STA 5 and some restrictions on driving by the nests were in place during Early Season. The nests may be abandoned by Regular Season, but be sure to read the regulations

posted.

OTHER AREAS

The newly located Rocky Glades Small Game Hunting Area will be open for waterfowl only. Conditions for waterfowl will depend on the amount of rain we get.

UW-F NEWS & EVENTS

UW-F 2011 WINTER HUNT AND BOARD MEETING NEWS

The UW-F WINTER HUNT AND BOARD MEETING will be held in Fellsmere at the Marsh Landing Restaurant on Saturday January 15. The meeting is currently scheduled to begin after the lunch that will be served starting at 1 pm. The lunch is FREE as is usual with all UW-F events!

This is the major UW-F Board Meeting that sets the pace for the new year and all UW-F Members, families and friends are invited to participate. Many Members come on Friday evening and hunt Saturday morning in the surrounding marshes. This year the new Fellsmere Area 1 Small Game Hunting Area will be open to add to the Mary A, Satori and T. M. Goodwin/Boardmoor hunting opportunities.

There is a KOA Campground as well as several nearby motels in the Sebastian area. The KOA is located at 8802 US Hiway 1. Phone: 772/589/5705. A Best Western is at 1655 US Hiway 1. Phone 772/388/9300.

Further information regarding special rates and reservation periods will be posted on the UW-F Forums.

The official Board Meeting agenda will include the 2011 UW-F budget, the 2011 UW-F Projects list, the elections of 2011 UW-F Board Members to replace those whose three year terms have expired and the appointment of 2011 UW-F Officers and Regional Directors. Following the official Board Meeting the meeting will be opened to all Members attending for questions and input.

Many Members, families and friends stay over Saturday night for additional cook outs and socializing and perhaps another hunt the next morning. The UW-F Winter Hunt and Board Meetings are rotated from the South to the North of Florida each year to allow more Members to participate closer to their homes. The 2012 Meeting will be in Clewiston.

UW-F VOLUNTEERS ASSIST TRAILBLAZER DAY

UW-F'S George Krimminger, Jim Schutt, and Jonathan Lipinski brought a duck boat, decoys and duck callers to the TRAILBLAZER event sponsored by the South Florida Council Boy Scouts of America and the U. S. Sportsmen's Alliance on October 16. The event was held at the Plantation Heritage Park.

The event featured training for Scouts in shooting

skills, archery skills, angling skills, trapping and other outdoor skills, including waterfowling. These skills are useful as the boys work to obtain various Merit Badges. About 300 Boy Scouts participated.



The duck boat was camouflaged with palm fronds and decoys placed in front for effect. The boys enjoyed sitting in the boat and blowing a wide variety of duck calls. The sessions were all good fun and added many new potential recruits to hunting in the Florida marshes.

Thanks to George, Jim and Jonathan for taking a day from their busy schedules for the Boy Scouts!

NEW DUCK BLINDS AT BTYCC

UW-F's Northwest Region Director Stephen Williamson, assisted by Beau Turner Youth Conservation Center's (BTYCC) Kenny Barker and the local Leon



County Boy Scout Troop 25 constructed six new

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duck blinds at the Center on October 16. UW-F donated the camo paint for the blinds.

The blinds were placed on the flooded corn ponds maintained at the Center. Several Youth Hunts will be conducted during the forthcoming waterfowl season.

Unfortunately, during the day a young black bear was found dead after being struck on Highway 27 adjacent to the Center. Steve and Kenny were asked by the FWC officer in the area to move the bear's carcass away from the traffic lanes. The boys in Troop 25 had an unexpected opportunity to observe a Florida Black Bear close up. A larger 600 pounds bear had recently been killed on the road nearby and may well have been the parent of this yearling.

Steve and other UW-F Members are very active as volunteers at the BTYCC.

UW-F FIRST DUCK PINS EARLY SEASON AWARDS

Early Season in September always brings out a lot of new hunters and this year was no different. Several of those hunters bagged their first duck and UW-F was glad to send each of them a UW-F FIRST DUCK PIN as a memento for the event.

If you are someone in your hunting group harvests their first duck, please send the complete name and address to: newtoncook@bellsouth.net

We will mail the pin to the successful hunter.

The following hunters are now addicted to our sport of beautiful sunrises, incredible birds and the adrenalin rush of watching a flight of ducks dropping into the decoys:

- **TYLER MURPHY**
- **ANDREW MCMANUS**
- **JASON DIAMOND**
- **RICK MILLER**
- **ROBERT BURR**
- **LEALAND DUTCHER**
- **DAN PIERCE**
- **BRITTANY RODLUN**

Congratulations to all!!!

GREG MASCHEK WINS BENELLI VINCI DRAWING

The Florida Duck Calling Contest ended at BASS PRO SHOPS in Orlando on August 15th with the drawing for the UW-F SUMMER RAFFLE shotgun. The BENELLI VINCI COMFORTECH 12 Gauge in MAX 4 CAMO went to Greg Maschek. Greg is a UW-F Member from the Fort Lauderdale area.



Thanks to all who participated in the SUMMER RAFFLE. Your donations help fund the cost of this Newsletter, RINGER NEWS, and the UW-F Web Site. UW-F has two major fundraisers each year, the WINTER and SUMMER raffles. These raffles are very important, as UW-F does not have "dinners" or "auctions" or other events designed to raise funds. UW-F depends on annual dues and the generosity of donors for special event costs, such as the WATER FOWL SUMMIT, to largely finance the operations of the organization.

The WINTER RAFFLE is now being conducted. Members, please return your packets promptly. Do-

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nations for tickets can also be made on the UW-F Web Site under "Fundraising".

2010 FLORIDA STATE DUCK CALLING CONTEST

The 2010 Florida State Duck Calling Contest was conducted at Orlando BASS PRO SHOPS August 15th during the HUNTING CLASSIC.

Nine contestants competed in three rounds of calling. Kevin Gilreath, Titusville, was the winner with Tim Bulleman, Deltona, and Dan McDonald, Perry, not far behind. Kevin is eligible to travel to Stuttgart, AR and participate in the World Championship Duck Calling Contest there on November 27.

Thanks to all the callers who took part in the annual Florida contest. Special thanks go to BASS PRO SHOPS, DUCKS UNLIMITED (Brett Bainter), and Marc Stepbach for arranging the event. Marc did a great MC job and made the competition entertaining.

We cannot forget the Judges. They will remain unnamed, but a few experienced callers take their

places behind the curtain instead of calling in the contest every year and make the tough grading decisions.

Congratulations to Kevin...and good luck in Stuttgart.



Kevin Gilreath is the happy winner

WANT TO HUNT AND SHOOT IN STYLE?

YOU COULD BE THE LUCKY WINNER OF THE BEAUTY BELOW



UW-F IS PROUDLY PRESENTING THE 2011 WINTER RAFFLE

BERETTA BLACKWING 20 GA. O/U SHOTGUN

28 INCH BARREL-SPECIAL WOOD STOCK - EXTRA CHOKES-HARD CASE

Drawing will be held at the UW-F Winter Hunt and Board Meeting at the Marsh Landing Restaurant in Fellsmere on January 15, 2011. You need not be present to win.

The drawings sponsor is Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World, 5156 International Drive, Orlando, FL 32819. Please stop in and thank Promotions Manager Greg Finenco.

VISIT <http://www.unitedwaterfowlersfl.org/fundraising.htm> and get your tickets!



UW-F REGIONAL REPORTS

NORTHWEST REGION

L. KIRK EDWARDS WEA

A meeting concerning the proposed ten year management plan for the WEA was held September 8. There was a large turnout of diverse stakeholders, including equestrians, hunters and even one from an Astronomy Club. The WEA is near the metropolitan area and attracts a large number of users. The plan put forward seems to be favorable to our constituencies.

There is a good hog population on the east side of the property. Hogs are currently not hunted but will probably be included. Currently only squirrels, turkey and migratory birds (on the west side of the property) are hunted. Deer hunting, limited to primitive weapons, also is a future possibility. The area is a long time waterfowl venue and that should continue.

The bad news is the condition of the boat ramp. The dirt ramp needs some gravel and debris removal. All users are cautioned to be very careful and a back up vehicle for towing if needed is suggested.

WORK ON NW AREA LAKES

The FWC has obtained some additional funding by grant and it is being directed to Tallahassee area lakes and habitats. Lake Miccosukee is being partially sprayed around the old Cypress Landing and the south side of the lake near the spillway. Major work is being done to Sneads Smokehouse in Jefferson County. Spraying of the old "lake" area will be accomplished. Once the vegetation has died the "cookie cutter"

machine will be used to cut out the dead areas twice in an effort to restore more open areas. The area is too dry and a wet late summer and fall is needed for the habitat.

HABITAT AND EARLY SEASON

The Early Season numbers were fair for the Northwest Region. Small groups of blue winged teal were scattered about and a good sampling of wood ducks in their usual haunts. Lakes Iamonia, Miccosukee, Munson and Lafayette held resident wood ducks.

The "front page news" of the massive oil spill in the Gulf had the potential to severely damage the Florida coastal estuaries. Fortunately, the oil has not appeared in the habitat and there are no expected effects on the normal waterfowl migration patterns in Florida.

Northwest hotspots normally depend on the rain events. Currently the habitat around the local lakes and the estuaries is very good. Barring a large storm the ducks should frequent the coastal marshes and freshwater lakes throughout the region. Hopefully, the large numbers of canvasback ducks and other diving ducks on hand last season will return to the salt water.

STEPHEN WILLIAMSON/JEREMY SMITH

NORTH EAST REGION

Early goose season was typical of the past two years. Those who could scout and acquire private land access had solid opportunities to harvest Canada geese. Observing and timing the feeding and roosting routines was the key to success. Goose populations are growing in northeast Florida,

especially in the residential and commercial districts. There is relatively safety for the flocks that are growing larger. The geese have become nuisances in some areas.

Early teal and wood duck season produced decent reports of scattered populations of teal and the wood ducks remained plentiful in the backwater creeks and small marshes that dot the area. Teal were obviously moving on south.

The habitat is as good as it gets in northeast Florida. Still a bit dry, but some Fall rains should create great feeding and resting places for the migration south. Guana WMA always has good habitat, but the ducks can be fickle and either not show up or only stay a short while.

Unfortunately, the savoir of the northeastern Florida duck hunter, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, is in poor shape as this is written. Simply put...NO WATER in the impoundments...especially, no fresh water. Unless a major rain event occurs before the season opener MINWR will have the worse conditions in memory.

ZACK RAULIE

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

Conditions in the Region are good, but drying could become a problem. A reasonable rain event would be helpful.

Ryan Hamm of the FWC reported some vegetation treatment on Lake Rowell near Starke during the late summer. A strip around the perimeter, 26 acres or so, to open a navigation area. No work has been done on Sampson Lake. Habitat on Newman's Lake is poor due to pollution issues and



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not expected to be attractive to waterfowl. Lake Lochloosa has good looking habitat, but seems never to hold the ducks expected. Some spraying was done on the east side of the lake.

Orange Lake looks good. Plenty of hydrilla and other SAVs should be to the liking of the ducks. There was some treatment during the summer on Orange Lake but there are no additional plans for spraying hydrilla during season. The crews will be concentration on "frogs bit" (libnobiium spongia) that is expanding. Good work for us as more open areas are needed in the habitat. Hopefully more beneficial SAV such as coon tail will come back.

The SJRWMD staff has concentrated on Emerald Marsh this summer. Most areas will be the same as last year with the exception of the portion of EMCA Area 3. Water levels in Area 3 are low where not connected to the lake due to a pump down to facilitate planting of emergent vegetation. The low water today means seed producing plants that may make for attractive food for the waterfowl when the area floods again. The current plans are to slowly increase the water levels so that in November the marsh will be flooded. Conditions should continually improve.

Work on the levees at Emerald and marking of the location of the boat slips on the ground to correlate with the EMCA Brochure will be accomplished before season. The new conditions at Areas 2, 4 and 5 with plenty of open water and good habitat should take some of the hunting pressure off Area 3. A better quality hunt will result for all.

Ocklawaha Prairie water levels are down but the waterfowl habitat remains good. SJRWMD has treated some of the tussocks and water lettuce in the old river channel. The east side levee has been improved with a limerock cap and sloping from the bridge going north which will make the drive to the ramp easier. The District is trying to keep the east boat ramp and the channel clear, but there is no guarantee this will be possible all season. Please use the EAST RAMP, the one you come to first, if at all possible. The District has asked us not to use the west ramp unless the east ramp is blocked.

Water levels at Orange Creek are low. Only the main body of water is currently accessible by boat. The habitat is questionable and scouting just prior to season is recommended. Rainfall will determine whether waterfowl will find the marsh to be attractive or not.

Overall, the conditions are favorable for a good season. Water levels may remain lower than last year, but plenty of the habitat is hydrated.

STEVE PASTEUR (ESTEBAN)

CENTRAL REGION

It has been a busy off-season for the KCOL area. The Snail Kite continues to dominate the discussions regarding habitat and aquatic plant control. Lake Toho is especially impacted. Spraying schedules currently show Toho and Hatchineha being sprayed early, but other KCOL lakes will be sprayed after waterfowl season. This is a large improvement over past years and it seems our hard work and goodwill with the FWC and USFWS is paying off.

Toho has a number of "interested parties" and UW-F has been working within the system of meetings during the summer. The plans for treating SAV are about one third previous years. The treatment will be to open up navigation lanes and flood control. There will be no spraying on the south end of the lake. One 500 acre area in the far north will be sprayed to open up the Kissimmee boat ramp and nearby shore. A 400 foot channel will be maintained down the east side to the center of the lake and a 250 foot channel near Goblets Cove to the C 31 canal. Also, a 250 foot channel from the north to around Makinson and to the main channel. The timing of the spraying may be in early November, but a delay is possible as other stakeholders will have input during a November 5 public meeting.

Lake Kissimmee will be sprayed after season as now planned and only in areas near the structure in the very south and in the North Cove. Lake Hatchineha will be treated in November in the south cove near the connection with Cypress. Lake Jackson will only have a 400 foot wide access channel maintained. Lake Cypress will be sprayed after season with a large treatment in the center of the lake, but none in the littoral zones.

The Shady Oaks boat ramp and park is slated to be completed in February on the west side of Lake Kissimmee. This will be a great facility for access to the lake, especially the central and northern areas. Unfortunately, the opening is too late for this year's season. The restored Kissimmee River marshes remain in excellent



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shape, however, a rain event could change that in a day as we are all too aware. Some closures are always possible due to construction activities in the area and need to be considered when planning hunting in the area.

Overall, the entire Region has very good habitat and the outlook is very positive for the coming season.

NEWTON JONES

Toho Hydrilla Treatment Plan

The meeting was started by: Bill Caton FWC's Invasive Plant Management Section Leader. He introduced the plan and some of the reason to evaluate the past method of controlling hydrilla by attempting to kill the entire crop of hydrilla all at once to moving towards an attempt to best manage hydrilla for the benefit of the lake and the wildlife. FWC's Zack Welch the snail kite coordinator gave the back ground on the imperiled snail kite and its desperate attempts to adapt to a changing landscape to survive until the Everglades water returns to a favorable level for the snail kites to once again expand back into their to their historic areas. FWC's Ed Harris gave the back ground of the past attempts to kill off the hydrilla and explained how the new management of the lake would be adaptive and active as opposed to the old method of nuke the entire lake and come back next year and see what it looks like. Many spoke against the active and adaptive methods, including Kissimmee's Mayor and Representative Posey from Kissimmee who chastised the system for not attempting to inform more of the public to what would

be happening. FWC made a note of this and pledged to try being more inclusive of stakeholders in future meetings. Rep. Posey and the Mayor also warned of the negative economic impacts if the lakes fishery is not maintained for the thousands of fishermen and bass tournaments that utilize the lake. Strangely though B.A.S.S. was not present even though they are headquartered in nearby Celebration, guess they don't have a problem with the plan. It was inquired if they knew about the meeting, someone from the staff answered they had been directly contacted and informed of the meeting. A number of bass guides, boat dealers and waterfront residents were there and expressed the desire to have better access to the lake without regard to the needs of wildlife or quality of the lakes water. It was asked several times why FWC is encouraging the cultivation of hydrilla and the propagation of the exotic Asian apple snail as forage for the Snail Kite. The answer was clarified by Paul Gray of Audubon; the snail kites need to successfully fledge more young Snail Kites if the species is to survive in this hemisphere, to deprive the Snail Kite of a food source they have adapted to, native or not would jeopardize and compromise the species. It was generally accepted at this meeting that hydrilla is here to stay and if you can't beat it you have to manage it for its benefits that are useful.

FWC's new approach to hydrilla is very similar to how forestry uses prescribed burns to remove excess fuel and prevent a much more serious fire from starting. Wildfires are not desirable any

more than nuking a lake, but the similarities are there they sterilize and change the landscape for decades and destroy wildlife habitat that sometimes doesn't recover. This plan is designed to prevent the lake from requiring the amount of massive control we have seen in the past.

DENNIS DUTCHER

EAST CENTRAL REGION

The northern St. Johns River marshes remain too dry at the writing of this report. A "rain event" is badly needed. The MERRITT ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE has the same problem and there is little fresh water in the impoundments.

Moving further south, conditions are much better in the large marshes consisting of Satori, Mary A and Moccasin Island. The same can be said for the T. M Goodwin/Broadmoor management area. Manipulation of depths is somewhat possible and these areas are hydrated. The Early Season was an outstanding success as the teal were plentiful. This could be partially attributed to the lack of water in the pastures and fields concentrating the ducks in the marshes.

The most important news in the area is the opening of FELLSMERE AREA 1 PUBLIC SMALL GAME HUNTING AREA. Several thousand acres of duck marsh will be open for hunting beginning this season on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. The area is "walk in, paddle in" only. The marsh is adjacent to the Stick Marsh on the east side. Parking is at the Stick Marsh lot. Brochures



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and rules are available at: www.myfwc.com. The ramp at Three Forks parking area at the end of Malabar Road is officially open. The ramp and parking lot will be open 24/7. This will benefit airboaters who live in Palm Bay and to the north. You can launch at the ramp and run south/west in the ditch, jump a small berm and there is a new permanent jump into the C-40 at the new structure. You can then run south around the plug to get to Satori or Mary A.

Thanks to "Team Cracker" and Walt Lorraine and friends at the Brevard County Airboat Association for working with the SJRWMD staff on this project....and thanks to the SJRWMD staff!

More good news! The new section of East Marsh has been signed and it will be open for regular waterfowl season. The area is often called the "stump field".

Conditions are a little dry and we need some rain before season. The two new areas are particularly sensitive to having enough rainfall to remain hydrated.

DENNIS DUTCHER

SOUTHWEST REGION

UW-F and other stakeholders are now in important discussions with the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) regarding access to more public land for hunting in the region. Some of the habitats are waterfowling venues, but the large portions are upland game areas. The SWFWMD staff has been very receptive to our proposals. A meeting program for Recreational Interests has been established within the Basin Board schedule. Thanks to all the leadership and

staff for their attention. We certainly appreciate the good attendance at a recent discussion with Bruce Worth, Will Miller, Colleen Kruk, Eric Sutton and Chuck Lane all participating.

Overall the Southwest Florida habitat is too dry to date. Early Season was definitely hit or miss...with mostly miss! Panasofkee, Crooked Lake and Walk in Water are marginable at best. Everyone knows the habitat is very good at Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge, but no one expects the ducks to show up in the numbers of years past.

The divers that come to the salt water are not so sensitive to "habitat" as the bays and estuaries are almost always the same every season. Only a large storm can have any major effect. Good hunting is hard to find and scouting is necessary but sometimes Alafia, Cockroach Bay, Bishops Harbor and Manatee have rafts of ducks. Unfortunately, very little can be said about the Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge...except be sure to take your fishing equipment.

Every year the majority of the Southwest area duck hunters "travel east" to Lake Okeechobee and the STAs for better hunting. The good news is that the habitat and hunting prospects for the Lake and the STAs are excellent.

CHUCK ECHENIQUE/DENNIS DUTCHER

SOUTH REGION

LAKE OKEECHOBEE

Six inches of water over vast parts of the lake bottom in the northwest quadrant of the Lake with attractive vegetation for feed brought large flights of blue

winged teal during the Early Season. Large numbers of Florida Mottled ducks continue to traverse the excellent habitat. Baring a major rain event that would raise the level of the Lake more than a few inches, Lake O will have plenty of ducks this year.

Dr. Don Fox, the FWC biologist for Lake Okeechobee reported at the SFWMD WRAC Lake Okeechobee Committee meeting that in the dozens of years he has worked on the Lake he has never seen the habitat in better shape.

The locks on the east side of the Lake are closed for construction at the time of this writing. No estimated opening date is available.

CAPT. CHRIS CHESLEY

WCA'S/LOXAHATCHEE NWR

Unlike past years, the water levels are near "schedule" and not too high going into Regular Season. Not a lot of birds yet, the teal were scattered and hard to find during Early Season, but the habitat is good for the Fall flights.

The annual hunting meeting at the Arthur Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge was well attended. The major adjustment this season will be the closing of the eastern section (north to south) portion of the rim canal because of the construction on Impoundment 1. The closure will last the entire season. Regulations on the Refuge remain the same for this year. Be sure to fly your orange flag while in the marsh.

STA'S

The STA program has changed significantly. The permit application process is now a "draw" system that has fans and foes, but it is the one we

See p. 5

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



Sunset

The Decoy

The decoy rattled....Picked from a pile of decoys still tangled from the last hunt of the previous season. Shaking it, the rattling was obviously from multiple pellets.... a close look revealed almost a dozen holes in the body. A sinker for sure if put out in the pre-sunrise darkness of the forthcoming opener. Too beat up with age and too many holes to fix.

The old hunter tossed it at the garbage can in the garage....missed.

Getting the decoys ready for the first hunt of the season was a ritual. These decoys had seen many a season and showed it. Despite a yearly touch up, the paint was chipped or worn on almost every one. Some rattled a bit.....with a hole or two sealed with glue to keep them afloat. Not many of them matched. Some had started out as mallards and were now painted as teal or ringers. Some were standard size and others magnum.....and there were a few authentic small sized teal, but not many. Lots of coots, some store bought coot decoys, but mostly repainted something else. There were at least a dozen extra decoys in very bad

shape that had not been used in years in a sack in the corner of the garage.

Not a set to brag about and no "famous named" carvers to be found. A couple of cork bodies that may have cost their original owner a bit, but most were just the cheaper grades gathered over the decades and remnants of several "a dozen decoys for \$36" sales at long closed local sporting goods or hardware stores. Stores replaced by the modern "big boxes" filled with more women's clothing than duck hunting equipment.

The old man grimaced.....he was thinking about decoys he did not have. A new duck was filling the sky in the marsh he had hunted since a boy.....an exotic duck that he had ignored for years as it looked more like those water turkeys the Yankees called cormorants. Where only a few would be seen before, they now numbered in the thousands. Blackbelly Fulvous he had heard them called and he had shot a couple that almost landed in his dekes set next to a muddy island. Funny looking bird, with pink feet and a pink bill!

His opinion of the "odd duck" changed quickly once he baked them in his old cast iron skillet. It was hard to admit, but the blackbellies were awfully good to eat....maybe as good as his favorite teal. He vowed to put a few more in the bag the next time he had a chance.

He knew the fulvous liked to gather on mud flats to feed...not swim in the water. That mud flat next to his old time hunting spot would be a perfect place. The revelation came slowly.....he looked at the shot up decoy laying on the floor next to the trash. He looked at the sack of old beat up decoys in the corner. "Old dog.....new tricks?"

Smiling now, he was thinking about where he could buy some pink paint.

Thanks to all our Members for supporting UW-F this year. Stay safe this season. We look forward to seeing many of you at the UW-F Winter Hunt and Board Meeting in Sebastian. January 15.

Newton Cook - Executive Director/Editor



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