Florida LAKEWATCH

Dedicated to Sharing Information About Water Management and the Florida LAKEWATCH Program Volume 51 (2010)

Marry Lettelier

LAKEWATCH Regional Coordinators from left to right, David Watson and Dan Willis.

Dan Willis

LAKEWATCH Office Assistant Mary Lettelier

Message from LAKEWATCH Crew

We hope this newsletter finds you in good health and enjoying your time on Florida's many natural resources. As we enter a new year we thought this would be a good time to update all of our volunteers on the events of the past year with the Florida LAKEWATCH program.

First, we would like to thank all of our volunteers and supporters for your hard work, support and thoughts through this past year. It has been a trying time for our country and your support has been critical to keep LAKEWATCH an important factor in the monitoring of Florida's lakes, rivers, springs

UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA IFAS

and coastal waters.

As most of you are aware Florida LAKEWATCH's overall funding has been reduced over 45% over the last two years. The good news is that LAKEWATCH is still here and looking forward to many future years of monitoring Florida's waterbodies. These cuts have caused us to make adjustments to accommodate our reduced funding.

One adjustment that we made is that we now have only two Regional Coordinators to cover the entire State of Florida. Dan Willis covers South Florida from Orange County south and David Watson now covers from Seminole County north. Mary Lettelier remains in the office answering the phones, managing the office and getting out information to you in a timely manner.

Because of staff reductions, our Regional Coordinators are now in the field a good deal more with the training of new volunteers, research projects and hosting the LAKEWATCH Regional meetings all over the state. For this reason we do ask you to be patient with us if we do not get back to you as quickly as we have in the past. We are making every effort to answer your questions as soon as we can when we get back in the office.

You also may have noticed that we are making a concerted effort to check in with our primary samplers on a regular basis. So if you receive an e-mail or letter from us several times this coming year don't be alarmed, we are just trying to make sure we are meeting your volunteering needs.

In planning for the New Year, we are busy now scheduling LAKEWATCH volunteers appreciation meetings for 2011 so look for yours in the mail later this year.

We also have several research projects that we will be working on this year and we plan to continue to work with the many agencies, municipalities, and Universities to make sure that your tax dollars are being spent efficiently.

We look forward to working with our volunteers in 2011 and hope that if you have any questions that you will not hesitate to contact us.

Dan Willis

The Florida LAKEWATCH volunteer appreciation meeting for Lake County at the Hickory Point Facility in Tavares.

Featured Bird: Limpkin

The limpkin is dark brown with a slight bronze sheen on the wings and tail. The head, neck and body are streaked and mottled with white. The bill is long with a slight downward curve and it is yellowish with a dark tip. It has long legs with large webless feet. Males and females look the same however males are normally larger. They have a very distinct voice described as a piercing repeated wail, "Kree-ow, Kra-ow".

In the United States, limpkins are found in Florida and Georgia. They are also found in the West Indies and from Southern Mexico to Argentina. They inhabit the shallows along rivers, streams and lakes and are also found in marshes, swamps and sloughs. Limpkins feed by walking in shallow water or floating on vegetation mats while probing the water primarily for apple snails (genus Pomacea) and mussels. But they also feed on lizards, frogs, insects, crustaceans and worms. Alligators prey directly on limpkins while snakes, crows, raccoons, and other aquatic mammals eat their eggs.

They may have a new predator to deal with in South Florida. The Burmese Python (*Python molurus bivittatus*) has invaded south Florida and is known to frequent wading bird colonies in its native range and south Florida. Pythons have few enemies and if their population expands predation on limpkins and other wading bird populations is a major concern. Another exotic invader of Florida, the island applesnail (Pomacea insularum), was thought to possibly impact the limpkin by outcompeting one of its favorite food sources. This exotic snail eats vegetation very aggressively while the native applesnail eats only the algae connected to the vegetation. The concern is that the exotic applesnail will denude a lake of its aquatic vegetation with detrimental effects on native applesnails, a primary food source for the limpkin. While there are anecdotal reports of the exotic snails removing some aquatic vegetation in a lake, no scientific evidence exists showing the exotic snails removing all aquatic vegetation in a lake on their own.

Pam Burtt

Limpkins inhabit the shallows along rivers, streams and lakes and are also found in marshes, swamps and sloughs entering the Saint Andrews Bay.

In addition, limpkins are able to eat the non-native applesnails providing an alternative food source. There is anecdotal evidence that limpkin population increases where exotic snails are present.

According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC), although the Florida limpkin population is currently stable, the main threat to that stability is the loss of habitat and a reduction in the native apple snail population. Because of these threats the FWCC has listed the limpkin as a Species of Special Concern.

Information for this article came from Sierra Club Polk Group – Florida Chapter October 2007 Newsletter Issue: 07-10, University of Florida IFAS Extension Publication # WEC242, www.oiseaux-birds.com/card-limpkin.html, and myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/BirdSpecies_Limpkin.htm.

Groupers

Chameleons of the Sea

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission **Fish and Wildlife Research Institute**

Groupers, members of one of the largest families of fishes found in Florida waters, run the gamut of sizes and shapes, from the diminutive graysby weighing several pounds to the mammoth goliath grouper that can top the scales at 600 pounds or more. Grouper is an important commercial and recreational commodity in Florida. Broiled, fried, or spicy "blackened" grouper is a staple on the menus of seafood restaurants.

Description

The word "grouper" is thought to be a corruption of the Portuguese "garoupa," a name given to a perch-like fish found in Portugal. Groupers, along with sea basses and hamlets, are in the seabass family, which is called Serranidae. Worldwide, there are more than 300 species of serranids, with 61 species in North America. More than 40 serranid species are found in Florida waters.

In general, groupers are oblong, large, and chunky fish. Their small scales usually have a saw-toothed edge, and their fins are coarse and spiny. The massive, underslung jaws of these carnivores harbor strong teeth, and many species have two canine teeth at the front of each jaw.

Groupers, like chameleons, vary in color according to species, habitat, water depth, age, or stress. Because the different species are so similar in appearance, identification can be confusing. As with most fish, the skin pigments fade when the fish is removed from the water. Nine grouper species that are found in Florida are described below.

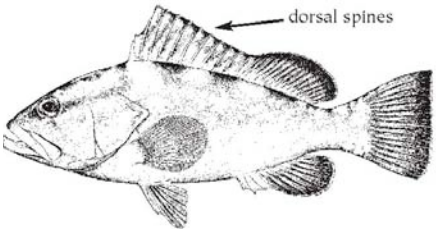
Goliath grouper (*Epinephelus itajara*)

The giant of the grouper family, the goliath (formerly called jewfish) has brown or yellow mottling with small black spots on the head and fins and has a gargantuan mouth with jawbones that extend well past its small eyes. Its tail is rounded. Its five irregular, dark body bands, or stripes, are most visible on young goliath.

They can reach whopping lengths of 8 feet or more, and the Florida record goes to a 680-pound goliath caught off Fernandina Beach in 1961. They were once a popular target of spearfishermen but are now protected from all harvest in Florida. They feed mostly on fish and crustaceans, such as crabs and spiny lobster.

Red Grouper (*Epinephelus morio*)

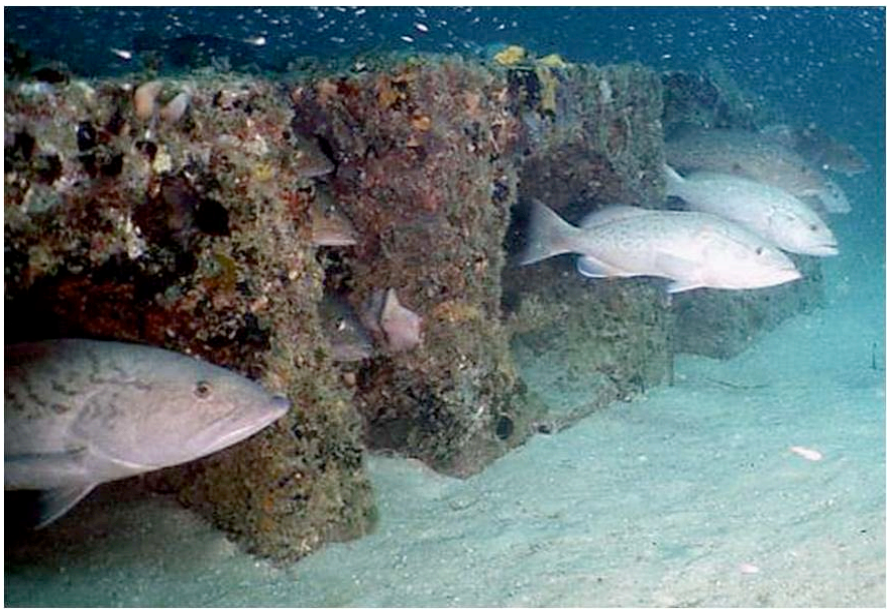
Red grouper is a brownish-red fish with scattered pale blotches, black dots around the eyes, and dark-tipped dorsal, anal, and tail fins. The membrane between the dorsal spines is not notched, and the tail fin is squared off. Red grouper is the most thoroughly studied of the Florida groupers, and much of what scientists know about groupers is based on research on red grouper. They may grow to 3 feet in length and average 10 pounds, though some reach a hefty 40 pounds.



E. morio *art by Diane Peebles*

Warsaw Grouper (*Epinephelus nigritus*)

A uniform brown, the adult Warsaw grouper has no spots or stripes to make it stand out from the crowd (juvenile Warsaw groupers have white spots). It is, however, distinguished by its impressive bulk, ten dorsal spines (all other groupers have 11), and by a dorsal fin with a very long second spine. The Warsaw grouper may reach 6 feet in length and weigh 580 pounds.



Doug Marcinek

Gag grouper on an artificial reef in the Gulf of Mexico.

Snowy Grouper (*Epinephelus niveatus*)

Dark gray all over, the snowy grouper's name derives from the obscure white spots arranged in a definite geometric pattern over the body. It may reach 3 feet in length and weigh 30 pounds. This deep-water species may be found as deep as 1,000 feet.

Nassau Grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*)

This species has five irregular brown or red-brown side bands on a light background. A wide, brown stripe runs on each side of the head from the upper snout to the forward base of the dorsal fin. There is a broad, black patch that rests like a saddle on top of the narrow part of the tail. Nassau groupers may grow to a length of 3 feet and weigh 55 pounds. Their colorful, zebra-like appearance has made them a favorite photo subject for divers' magazines. Nassau grouper form large spawning aggregations, which makes this species highly vulnerable to overharvest. All harvest of this species is prohibited in Florida waters.

fast FACT

Some groupers, such as snowy, misty, and speckled hind, can be found at a depth of 1,000 feet.

Black Grouper (*Mycteroperca bonaci*)

Although similar in appearance to the gag, the black grouper has a more vivid color pattern that includes brassy, bronze spots on the side of the head and body and, sometimes, dark, rectangular blotches running the length of the back. Its fins are bordered in black. Black grouper may reach 4 feet and 180 pounds.

Gag Grouper (*Mycteroperca microlepis*)

The brownish-gray body of the gag is covered with thin, dark, wormlike markings often grouped in blotches that give the fish a marbled look. Its pelvic, anal, and tail fins are dark; the anal and tail fins have a white outer margin. Although it may reach 3 feet and 70 pounds, most are much smaller. The gag is often erroneously identified as a black grouper.

Scamp (*Mycteroperca phenax*)

The light gray or brown body of the scamp is covered with reddish-brown spots that tend to be grouped into lines. The corners of the mouth are yellow. The top and bottom edges of the tail of large adults are elongated. Scamp in the Gulf may grow to over 2 feet in length and weigh up to 14 pounds.

Yellowfin Grouper (*Mycteroperca venenosa*)

The yellowfin derives its scientific moniker, *venenosa,* from the toxicity of the flesh of some large specimens in areas where ciguatera poisoning occurs when humans eat toxic fish. Also called the rockfish, the yellowfin is variably colored, commonly olive green with rows of rounded, irregular, dark splotches on its back. Its belly is often salmon pink, and its mouth is yellow inside and along the corners. The outer $^{1}/_{3}$ of the pectoral fin is a brilliant yellow. Yellowfin taken from waters deeper than 100 feet are often bright red with even darker red body blotches. Yellowfin may grow to 30 inches and about 20 pounds.

Range and Habitat

Groupers are found in almost all temperate and tropical seas, usually over hard bottom such as coral reefs. Some species prefer shallow water, whereas others inhabit deep, dark regions far offshore. Some may lead solitary lives, hiding in reef crevices and caves. Young groupers can often be found nearshore.

Red grouper is the most abundant grouper in the Gulf of Mexico. Red groupers under about six years of age reside over shallow nearshore reefs, moving into deeper waters farther offshore as they mature.

Life History

Groupers can change sex—an amazing ability to us but a relatively common occurrence among marine creatures. Some marine animals change from male to female, others (including groupers) change from female to male, and some organisms function as both sexes at one time.

Although all grouper species are probably able to undergo a transformation from female to male, the incidence of individuals that do so is highly variable. Red groupers may change after the first five or ten years of life. Gag groupers may change at about 10 or 11 years of age. Nassau groupers have the potential to change sexes, although apparently few do.

Scientists aren't sure what natural advantage the sex change affords grouper or what specific factors trigger it. Some believe that, for those species in which individuals live close to one another, a causative factor may be the death of the dominant male in the event group—an event that prompts the largest female to change sex and then become the dominant male in the group hierarchy. However, because other species of grouper lead essentially solitary lives, some scientists believe the sex change is triggered when the fish gather together as a prelude to spawning.

Grouper species generally have distinct spawning seasons. For example, red grouper off Florida's west coast spawn mainly in April and May in nearshore waters of 90 feet or less. Gag grouper spawn principally from January through March. However, in warmer waters of the southern Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean, some grouper may spawn throughout the year. "Ripe" female black grouper in the Florida Keys, for instance, have been documented in all months.

When observed in a spawning aggregation, Nassau grouper swim upward in the water column and release their gametes (eggs or sperm) before descending back to the bottom. This behavior is known as a "spawning rush."

Goliath groupers have a particular courtship style. When they gather together before spawning, the head of the dominant male turns pale white, and he makes a booming sound to threaten other males who invade his territory.

When groupers spawn, eggs and sperm are released into the water at the same time, and their union is by chance. A female red grouper may shed from 1.5 million to 5 million eggs in a spawn and can spawn several times during the spawning season.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to distinguish one species of grouper larvae from another, so much information about the egg and larval development of groupers remains a mystery. In general, the eggs hatch into larvae that drift with

the currents for the next 30 to 40 days before transforming into juveniles. Little is known about the range and behavior of most juvenile grouper, but red and gag grouper juveniles have been studied.

Red grouper juveniles remain in the plankton for about a month, until they reach 3/4 to 1 inch in length. Then, they take up life on rocky bottoms and stick close to nearshore reefs, where they eventually become a mainstay of Florida's party boat industry. Juvenile gag grouper enter bays and estuaries in the spring and hide among the seagrasses or gather near rocky outcroppings until, at about three years old, they leave these sanctuaries to reside in deeper waters. Groupers are considered to be adults when they become sexually mature, which for most species occurs between four and six years of age.

All groupers are meat-eaters. Most eat fish, although the larger goliath also dines on crustaceans and even juvenile sea turtles. It is believed that many groupers do not actively search for prey but lie in ambush waiting for a suitable meal to swim near; then they strike at it with lightning speed.

Groupers maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with small "cleaner" fish. A grouper will permit these tiny janitors to pluck dead tissue, parasites, and scales from its gills and body and even to enter its mouth to remove parasites. When a grouper wants to be "scrubbed," it opens its mouth and assumes a non-threatening position to attract its fastidious helpers.

fast FACT

One female goliath on display at The Florida Aquarium in Tampa has been observed to sit on her food when she is not hungry, presumably to keep other fish that share her tank from eating it.

Economic and Management Considerations

Once considered a by-product of the red snapper fishery, grouper, in recent years, has soared in popularity among seafood consumers. Florida currently produces about 80% of all the grouper caught in the U.S. Historically, recreational catches were much higher than commercial landings were, but that situation has reversed in recent decades.

The surge of interest in grouper has resulted in regulations that limit harvest. Any harvest of Nassau or goliath grouper is prohibited in Florida waters. Some commercial restrictions have quotas based on the water depth at which selected species are typically found. Restrictions are also placed on recreational anglers. They must abide by both bag and size limits, which vary depending on the species of grouper being targeted. Because fishing regulations are subject to change annually, anglers should consult the FWC Division of Law Enforcement for the most recent information.

In 1995, about 9.3 million pounds of grouper were harvested by commercial fishermen and had an estimated value of $16.6 million. That year, grouper ranked third in total pounds of seafood landed in Florida and fourth in market value. The bulk of Florida's grouper harvest occurs in the Gulf of Mexico, and red grouper is the species that is most frequently caught.

Recreational fishermen use hook and line gear and lay the bait on the bottom in order to snare groupers. Commercial fishermen use longlines— extensive lengths of fishing lines with baited hooks at regular intervals. The lines are retrieved with mechanical reels.

Grouper yield a high quantity of edible meat compared to their body weight. An 8-pound grouper, for instance, will produce more than 3 pounds of edible flesh. Because the meat has little oil and a fat content of only 1%, grouper are considered a lean fish.

Scientists at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission have conducted research on several species of groupers. In 1991, the FWC Fish and Wildlife Research Institute printed a publication about the distribution of serranids in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. Results from a study on the reproduction of the yellowedge grouper have also been published. Research has been completed on the age, growth, and reproduction of the black grouper and on the life history of goliath grouper, yellowmouth grouper, gag grouper, and red grouper. We hope that learning more about this diverse group will let us continue to enjoy it as a menu item and as another of nature's intriguing marine creatures.

Fishing license revenue and the federal Sport Fish Restoration Program are important sources of funding for sport fish research. The Sport Fish Restoration Program is a "user pays/user benefits" system funded by a tax on sales of recreational fishing equipment and boat fuel. The program supplies three dollars for every one dollar provided by the state for projects that improve fishing and boating opportunities.

This article is a reproduction of the Sea Stats series.

•

For current recreational saltwater fishing regulations visit MyFWC.com

•

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
100 8th Avenue SE, St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 896-8626
http://research.MyFWC.com

Volunteer Bulletin Board

From the Water Lab: Farewells and Arrivals

We bid farewell to valued laboratory technician and friend Dorota Roth. Dorota has departed the lab team and returned to Canada to be with family and seek out new adventures. Dorota's all too short time with us from May 2009 to August 2010 was truly enjoyable and her good nature, genuine laughter, and sense of humor will be sorely missed. The entire LAKEWATCH family wishes her much success and joy in her travels and future endeavors.

This September, Steve Banes joined our diverse laboratory staff. We all welcome Steve as a great addition to our dynamic lab team. Steve comes to us from the private sector with many years of analytical experience in laboratory techniques used to evaluate quality control for a major production facility. Steve brings strong skills set and technical expertise to the lab team. All team members are well on their way to completing our in-house laboratory goal of cross training by year's end to better serve our volunteers.

We would like your help in making sure your samples arrive safe and sound. Please remember to fill bottles completely. **Then** shake or pour out excess down to shoulder of bottle. This will allow for expansion of your water sample upon freezing and the bottle will not be stressed. Bottles become stressed from having too much water in them. They look swollen and often fall over when set upright. These bottles tend to rupture in transport, especially if there are a lot of bottles picked up during a collection run. The samples in these cracked bottles can get contaminated from partial thawing and refreezing in transport. Once they are in the lab we try to recover samples, but results from cracked bottles are often suspect and some are simply lost.

Your Florida LAKEWATCH water lab team extends a hardy thanks to all our volunteers for their continued sampling and support.

Tad DeGroat, Wanda Garfield, Ivelisse Ruiz-Bernard, Steve Banes, and Claude Brown

Hillsborough County Collection Center Changes!

The collection centers at Keystone and Nye Park have changed. This change is necessary to ensure that everyone has convenient access to a drop off location now that the parks are operating at reduced hours and staff.

If you currently use the **Keystone Park** location, you'll now **go to the Austin-Davis Library at 17808 Wayne Road Odessa, FL 33556-4720**.

It's right beside Keystone Park. You can walk from one building to the other in a few steps. This drop-off is located on the west side of the building by the service door. It's inside a marked plastic storage shed. The shed is locked with a special combination lock (combination 7922).

If you currently use the **Nye Park** location, you'll now **use the Lutz Library at 101 Lutz-Lake Fern Road, West Lutz, FL 33548-7220.**

This collection center is located inside the library. To access it, go to the Library information desk and ask them to take you to the LAKEWATCH freezer. They'll assist you from there.

Both libraries have the following hours:

Hours of Operation:
Sunday Closed
Monday 12pm - 8pm
Tuesday 10am - 8pm
Wednesday 10am - 6pm
Thursday 10am - 6pm
Friday 10am - 6pm
Saturday 10am - 6pm

*** All other collection centers will remain unchanged.**

Thank you for your dedicated participation in the program. The data you collect not only helps you better understand and manage your pond, lake, or stream, but also helps us protect our water resources. Keep up the good work, and let me know if you have any questions.

Florida Black Bass Management Plan Survey Results

By Bob Wattendorf of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Florida anglers want a homespun management plan for the most popular freshwater sportfishes in America – the freshwater black basses. Recent surveys indicated more than 94 percent of nearly 5,000 respondents feel such a plan is important, and nearly two-thirds felt angler input was critical.

More than 10 million anglers target black bass nationally (the group to which the Florida largemouth, Suwannee, shoal and spotted basses all belong). Florida produces many of the world's premier bass fisheries, with bass anglers enjoying more than 14 million days fishing here annually. Although the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) zealously manages these fishes, a variety of considerations caused us to decide it was time to seek public input to help write and publicize a comprehensive, long-term Black Bass Management Plan.

Gary Morse (FWC)

Matt Hinman (left) and Darrel Davis show off their catch at Big Toho Marina (June 2010).

By June, we received 773 responses requested via presentations at Florida BassPro Shops, the Tampa Tribune Expo, Florida Sportsman's fishing/boating shows and fishing clubs, as well as from news releases and posters encouraging completion of an online survey. We also received 4,085 responses from a direct e-mail solicitation of licensed freshwater anglers.

The surveys were not intended to provide scientifically valid results with specific confidence intervals, but were an important effort to communicate with members of the public who wish to provide us with thoughts about bass fishing and how to manage the resource. On June 15, we shared these results, at the Florida Bass Conservation Center, with a Technical Advisory Group (TAG). The TAG is composed of knowledgeable Floridians representing diverse stakeholder groups affected by the FWC's black bass management decisions.

Members of the group are Todd Kersey (Florida Freshwater Fisheries Coalition President and manager of BassOnline.com), Chris Horton (Conservation Director, BASS/ESPN), Dr. Mike Allen (professor of fisheries science at UF), Gary Simpson (outdoor writer and tackle shop owner), Shaw Grigsby (tournament fisherman and TV personality), Jim Hoovan (President of Lakeland Bassmasters), Mark Jackson (Central Florida Tourism Development Council), Mark Detweiler (Big Toho Marina owner), Tommy Thompson (Executive Director, Florida Outdoor Writers Association), Terry Segraves (Kissimmee Visitors Bureau and fishing spokesperson), Peter Thliveros (professional angler), and Herb Stephen (bass guide). These individuals were asked to represent various segments of the fishing community and to communicate with their peers to ensure the FWC receives as much candid public opinion as possible during plan development. They also were asked to consider opinions of anglers who

Bob Wattendorf

The TAG listens to opening comments from FWC biologist Dale Jones about the proposed black bass plan.

responded to surveys prior to rendering their own input on what the plan should include. TAG meetings are publicized on the MyFWC.com calendar and open to visitors.

Members of the public, who responded to the survey, as well as everyone with a Florida freshwater fishing license, will receive an invitation to participate in the next survey. Others can follow the plan's development and comment at MyFWC.com/BassPlan_Survey.

Combined results from the first two surveys indicated the public considers the most important factors for a successful fishing trip to be: having a good time (97%), enjoying the scenery and time on the water (95%), relaxing (94%), being safe (92%), being with family and friends (87%), excitement (86%), catching big fish (72%) or catching many fish (71%). A take-home message is the overall fishing experience is as important as the actual catch.

Florida freshwater fisheries rated OK in terms of overall satisfaction, with 84 percent satisfied or extremely satisfied with their most recent trip (as individually defined by the previous considerations) compared to a virtually identical 83 percent for saltwater. Among anglers, who fished in freshwater elsewhere on their last trip, 89 percent reported being satisfied.

Overall 12 percent of respondents used a fishing guide in the past year, 32 percent fished in tournaments, and 25 percent were members of bass clubs. Similarly, 65 percent occasionally fished from shore, 30 percent from kayaks/canoes and 88 percent from power boats.

The following are top issues (2,245 individuals thought the top-ranked issue was critical and only 299 felt the bottom-ranked one was) related to recreational bass fishing in Florida: 1) public impacts from pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers and water use; 2) point source pollution; 3) poor angler ethics, including failure to comply with laws; 4) water quality—nutrient loading etc.; 5) development and population growth; 6) lack of conservation funding; 7) water quantity issues; 8) nonnative fish; 9) lack of access; 10) muck control of aquatic plants, 12) too many aquatic plants. Other issues were boating conflicts, bed fishing, loss of interest in fishing, too many tournaments, climate change and too many anglers.

Somewhat corresponding to the issues, anglers suggested the following solutions are critical for FWC to pursue: 1) work with DEP on water quality; 2) control non-native fish; 3) stock more bass; 4) work with WMDs on water quantity; 5) conduct more habitat restoration projects, 6) improve aquatic plant management; 7) increase communications with anglers on laws, ethics, stewardship; 8) provide more boat access; 9) simplify fishing regulations; and 10) provide more shoreline, pier and boardwalk fishing. Other considerations are to increase fishing education programs, provide more law enforcement, create more customized bass regulations, regulate tournaments more, protect Suwannee/shoal bass, provide more fishing clinics/outreach events, engage bass clubs and organized groups, implement more fishing rules and create more sponsor opportunities.

Relative to how we develop this plan (in priority order), the following are key points: focus on preservation of natural fish and wildlife communities; obtain input from anglers; publicize a long-term plan; obtain fishing-related business' input, and science should be the principal consideration. Clear losers were; economics should be the principal consideration and continuing without a formal plan is adequate.

It was also interesting to observe that the preferred statement was: "I'd prefer to be able to catch and release three 3-pound bass," indicating a quality emphasis (53%). "I'd prefer to catch-and-release one bass over

10 pounds," representing a trophy emphasis, was selected by 32 percent. Finally, "I'd prefer to be able to catch and harvest five 1-pound bass," which is a consumption emphasis, was chosen by 13 percent of respondents. Consequently, the plan should address each type of opportunity, since neither trophies nor harvest is a dominant issue.

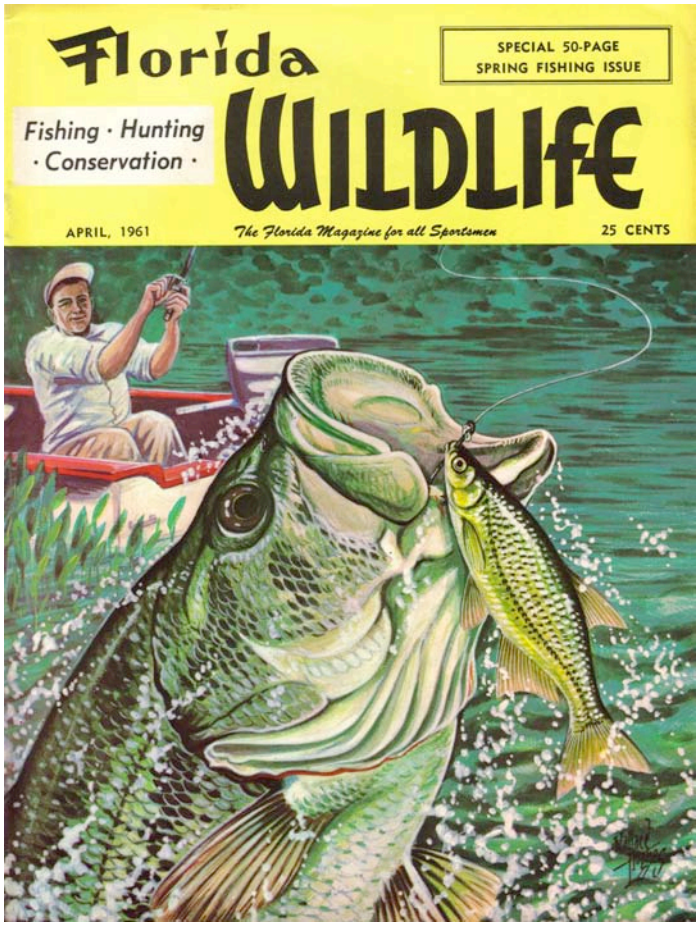
After hearing this input, TAG members worked on developing a simple goal and descriptive vision. Tommy Thompson and Herb Stephen both pointed to the need to have a concise and pithy goal statement that could be easily communicated. The team subsequently came up with this preliminary goal: "Establish Florida as the undisputed Bass Fishing Capital of the World."

Mike Allen stated "Most plans for other states are not specific enough and actionable—they tend to feel good and be very generic. We want ours to be more focused and definitive." With that in mind, a tentative vision statement was crafted.

<u>Vision:</u> Improve Florida black bass populations and fisheries by establishing quality habitats that provide anglers with more trophy bass, more locations and opportunities with a higher probability of catching quality bass, increase numbers of anglers and angler effort, and achieve a higher degree of angler satisfaction. With active support from the general and angling publics, achieve worldwide public recognition and support for sustaining Florida as the "Bass Fishing Capital of the World," based on great resources and responsible management.

Tom Champeau, director of the Division of Freshwater Fisheries, thanked participants for their insights, including a lengthy list of actions and ideas focused in areas of habitat, fish and people management. The next step is for fisheries biologists to work with the TAG team to create a complete draft plan and to share it with the public for a second round of input and discussion in August. Stay tuned to MyFWC.com/BassPlan_Survey and the Fish Busters' Bulletins for more.

The resulting proposal will be shared with the public and, after another round of public comment and refinement, presented to the Commissioners at a public meeting to finalize the plan. It is anticipated the plan will be accepted in early 2011, allowing the FWC to pursue implementation with the ultimate goal of making Florida the undisputed Black Bass Fishing Capital of the World.



Black bass have long been the main attraction in Florida's fresh waters. This 1961 cover illustrated by Wally Hughes (1918-2010), a renowned wildlife artist. He was best known for his work as an illustrator, photographer, and art director for Florida Wildlife Magazine.

*Instant licenses are available at MyFWC.com/License or by calling 888-FISH-FLORIDA (347-4356). Report violators by calling *FWC or #FWC on your cell phone, or 888-404-3922. Visit http://www.myfwc.com/Fishing/ for more Fish Busters' columns.*

Outstanding LAKEWATCH Volunteer

By Peggy Sias Lantz

Lake Lucy in Orange County was monitored by LAKEWATCH volunteers Ralph Sias and Peggy Sias Lantz from 1989 until now.

Ralph Sias was eight years old when his father, D.P. Sias, moved his family from Iowa to the shores of Lake Lucy in 1914. They built the first house on the lake, and the lake was named for D.P.'s mother, my great grandmother.

My father loved growing up on Lake Lucy. He swam every morning and competed in swim meets at Orlando High School and the University of Florida, winning many medals. His career took him far from Florida for 40 years, but when he retired in 1970 he returned to the family homestead on Lake Lucy.

When I was growing up, many family vacations were spent at Lake Lucy with my grandparents, and I learned to love this place, too, and I learned to swim in the lake.

Ten years after my father retired, my husband and I were able to move to Lake Lucy, but soon, in the early 1980s, the lake began drying up in a long period of drought. When there was no surface water at all, my father dug a hole in the lake bottom with a posthole digger and measured the water in the hole until he could no longer dig deep enough.

As the lake went down, my dad installed concrete blocks at ground level, carefully surveyed, from which he was able to use a modified yardstick device he made to accurately measure the water level as the rains returned. My father also recorded the air temperatures three times a day, morning, noon, and night.

As soon as we learned about the LAKEWATCH program, in 1989, my father and I began monitoring the lake. Through the years, we sent in our samples when the lake levels permitted canoeing to the sites. As the lake rose during rainy periods, the nitrogen and phosphorus counts dropped. As the lake levels dropped, the counts rose. Many times the Secchi disk touched the bottom before it went out of sight.

Peggy Sias Lantz taking her LAKEWATCH water samples on Lake Lucy in Orange County. Photo used with permission of the Orlando Sentinel, copyright 1997.

After my father died in 1991, I continued the LAKEWATCH program as much as I could, but cattails began spreading around the edge and water lilies gradually covered almost the entire surface of the lake, making canoeing to my monitoring sites nearly impossible.

Florida LAKEWATCH
Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences
School of Forestry Resource Conservation
7922 NW 71st Street
Gainesville, FL 32653

Florida
LAKEWATCH

This newsletter is generated by the Florida LAKEWATCH program, within UF/IFAS. Support for the LAKEWATCH program is provided by the Florida Legislature, grants and donations. For more information about LAKEWATCH, to inquire about volunteer training sessions, or to submit materials for inclusion in this publication, write to:

Florida LAKEWATCH
Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences
School of Forest Resources and Conservation
7922 NW 71st Street
Gainesville, FL 32653
or call
1-800-LAKEWATCH (800-525-3928)
(352) 392-4817
E-mail: fl-lakewatch@ufl.edu
http://lakewatch.ifas.ufl.edu/

All unsolicited articles, photographs, artwork or other written material must include contributor's name, address and phone number. Opinions expressed are solely those of the individual contributor and do not necessarily reflect the opinion or policy of the Florida LAKEWATCH program.

The wintering ducks can no longer raft on the lake, the herons and egrets can find no place to fish. Though the water level has remained high enough to swim in where I keep cattails and lilies cleaned out (though 15 feet shallower than in the days of my childhood, and with alligators to watch out for), it is no longer the beautiful lake we once knew. I have decided to return my LAKEWATCH equipment for someone else to use.

Ralf Sias steers his canoe to shore as the rest of the Sias family enjoy the Boundary Waters Canoe Area in Minnesota.

LAKEWATCH is a wonderful program. I wish all of you the best in your care of your lake.