



## News & Notes

### How many fish does the FWC produce?



TIM DONOVAN

A bucket holds thousands of bass fry hatched at the state-of-the-art Florida Bass Conservation Center.

The Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management had a prolific year, producing an estimated 1.24 million fish in 2006-07. That's enough to give one fish to every resident of Hillsborough County – with plenty left for both Daytona Beach and Lake City.

The Division operates two fish-production facilities: Blackwater Fish Hatchery in Santa Rosa County and the state-of-the-art Florida Bass Conservation Center in Sumter County. Freshwater species coming from their ponds, tanks and raceways include largemouth bass, striped bass, striped bass hybrids (sunshine bass and palmetto bass), white bass, channel catfish, bluegill and redear sunfish, and triploid grass carp.

But rather than dole them out in the scenario described above, staff wisely stocked the fish at 106 sites in 41 Florida counties and provided them to cooperators in Alabama and at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the University of Florida and Bass Pro Shops.

### Chronic wasting disease not detected in Florida's deer herd

After extensive testing, the FWC has not found any evidence of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in the state's white-tailed deer population.

The FWC tested 636 free-ranging deer during the past year and more than 3,000 deer during the past five years, with no CWD-positive results.

FWC's wildlife veterinarian Dr. Mark Cunningham said, "While we can never say that Florida is entirely free of the disease without testing every deer, this sample size gives us very high confidence that if CWD is present in Florida, it is at low levels. However, even low numbers of CWD-positive deer would be cause for concern, so we plan to continue testing for the foreseeable future."

CWD is a contagious neurological disease that has been found in captive and wild herds of mule deer, white-tailed deer and Rocky Mountain elk within several Midwestern and Western states. The disease causes degeneration of the brains of infected animals, resulting in emaciation, abnormal behavior, loss of bodily functions and death.

Thus far, no Southeastern states, including Florida, have been hit by the deer disease.

To reduce the chances of CWD turning up in Florida, the state prohibits importing carcasses of any species of deer, elk or moose from 14 states and two Canadian provinces where CWD has been detected.

States and provinces currently with CWD include New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Illinois, New York, West Virginia, and Alberta and Saskatchewan, Canada. Visit the United States Department of Agriculture's Web site at [www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/animal\\_diseases/cwd/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_diseases/cwd/) for the most up-to-date CWD reporting.

"Early detection is the key to limiting the spread of the dis-

ease, if such an outbreak should occur in Florida," said Dr. Robert Vanderhoof, leader of the Deer Management Section of the FWC's Division of Hunting and Game Management.



Once again, this hunting season the FWC is turning to hunters and members of the public for assistance in helping monitor the state's deer herd for CWD.

"We're asking hunters to report any sightings of sickly or scrawny-looking deer or deer dead of unknown causes," Vanderhoof said. "If you see such a deer, call toll-free 1-866-CWD-WATCH (293-9282). Please do not handle the deer. Wildlife biologists will respond, and if necessary, collect deer tissue for testing. It's important to contact us as soon as possible, because such testing must take place within 48 hours of a deer's death to yield reliable results."

CWD WATCH is part of an aggressive monitoring program to ensure CWD is not already in Florida, and the disease does not spread into this state.

There is no evidence that CWD poses a risk to humans, however, public health officials recommend avoiding direct contact with any sick-looking deer or one that has died from unknown causes.

More information about CWD is available at [MyFWC.com/cwd](http://MyFWC.com/cwd). The Web site also offers links to wildlife and health agencies with more in-depth information about the disease.

## Camp Blanding WMA now has “hunter hotline”

Hunters who are interested in the opportunities available on Camp Blanding Wildlife Management Area can call a new hunting hotline to get up-to-date information about the area.

The hotline, (904) 291-9912, is up and running, said Scott Johns, district wildlife biologist at the FWC Olustee Field Office.

“This is something we developed at the request of the military folks at Camp Blanding. They kept getting calls about the hunts but didn’t have the information to keep up with the hunt dates, closures, re-openings, license, stamp, permit requirements and such,” Johns said.

Hunting this area can be confusing, because of the variety of hunts and military training requirements. The wildlife management area consists of 56,197 acres in Clay County.

“This hotline gives us the ability to provide hunters with up-to-the-minute changes in hunting opportunities. For example, we can let hunters know when an area has been closed for training by the military and when hunts are cancelled,” Johns said.

For instance, on Still Hunt Area 2, archery and muzzleloading gun hunts have been canceled because of military training. These hunts will be conducted on Still Hunt Area 1 only.

“We also can let hunters know when the areas are opened again if the training is completed early or other changes are made. Jim Garrison, our biologist at Camp Blanding, is responsible for the hotline and will update it as necessary,” Johns said. “I hope folks will take advantage of this service. It should prevent misunderstandings and misinformation that have occurred in the past and will provide better customer service to our Camp Blanding hunters.”

For hunting information, visit [MyFWC.com/hunting](http://MyFWC.com/hunting) or call the regional office, (386) 758-0525, for a brochure.



Kolby Aton proudly holds a deer harvested during last year’s supervised youth hunt at Camp Blanding WMA.

FWC FILES

## FWC, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department sign antivenin pact



TIM DONOVAN

FWC aircraft will transport antivenin, provided by the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department, to hospitals throughout the state for snakebite victims.

The FWC and the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department have teamed up to save the lives of snakebite victims. Gov. Charlie Crist made the announcement Sept. 14.

“This partnership will save the lives of people who have been bitten by venomous creatures,” Governor Crist said. “It is an excellent example of government pooling their resources to better serve the people of Florida.”

The two agencies signed a memorandum of agreement that will make the FWC’s 12 aircraft available for emergency transportation of antivenin within Florida. Miami-Dade has the world’s largest inventory of antivenin and is the only fire department-based antivenin bank in the United States.

The project, dubbed Venom 1, provides that the FWC will provide its aircraft as one of several agencies taking part in the program, subject to aircraft availability. The agreement does not cover flights outside Florida.

“Rapid response saves lives when a venomous snake bites somebody,” said FWC Chairman Rodney Barreto. “Sometimes there is very little time to treat the victim. The FWC has the resources to help ensure victims’ survival, and this agency is pleased to make them available.”

According to “The Florida Handbook,” published by the Florida Department of State, roughly 300 venomous snakebites occur annually in Florida. Fatalities are rare in the United States and other countries where prompt medical attention is available.

Al Cruz of the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department said coral snake antivenin will no longer be in production in the United States as of December 2008.

“That means every hospital in Florida will depend on us for the antivenin,” he said.

Cruz said 75-80 percent of coral snake bites in the United States occur in Florida.



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### Roseate spoonbill named St. Augustine's official bird



JACK ROGERS

Aside from being the only species of spoonbill in the Western Hemisphere, and from receiving such accolades as “beautiful” and “graceful” by none other than John James Audubon in the early 19th century, the roseate spoonbill has received another tribute, this one from the St. Augustine City Commission when that body named the bird as the city’s official bird.

In a unanimous vote at its meeting on Mon., Aug. 27, the Commission agreed that the stunning and unique bird, which is often seen in the estuarial waters of the San Sebastian and Matanzas Rivers, was worthy of being named as the first ever official city bird for the Nation’s Oldest City.

The plume trade of the late 19th century nearly decimated the roseate spoonbill as hunters destroyed the birds by the thousands to provide its pink feathers for the manufacture of fans and women’s hats. By the 1930’s there were a mere 15 breeding pairs identified in the state of Florida, but today those numbers are estimated to exceed 1,000. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission currently lists the bird as a Species of Special Concern, with its biggest threat being diminishing habitats.

In naming the bird as the city’s official bird, the Commission stated that its action was “...in recognition of its shared characteristics with the Nation’s Oldest City: its exceptional beauty, its rich history and its uncommon ability to survive in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds.”

### K-9 Sadie to the rescue

A 57-year-old Okaloosa County man who became disoriented and lost the afternoon of Sept. 4 in a dense, swampy area of the Blackwater River State Forest was rescued by Sadie, a black lab and recent FWC K-9 graduate.

Officers said Neal Midenderg, in the Beaver Creek community, left his home on foot around 1 p.m. to search for one of his dogs. When Midenderg failed to return after an hour, his wife flagged down FWC officer Alan Kerchinger.

Kerchinger and fellow officers Danny Arnette and Ken White and a Florida Division of Forestry employee began a search and located the missing dog, but not Midenderg.

Kerchinger found a single set of footprints in a dim road one-half mile or so from the home and knew exactly what to do: call out Officer Sarah Hahner and K-9 Sadie. Sadie and Hahner graduated in April after 12 weeks of intensive training in human tracking and wildlife and evidence detection.

Hahner, who lives in Pensacola, was off duty Tuesday but knew Sadie could help. She and Sadie arrived around 3:30 p.m. Sadie led the searchers over a one-half mile route to a thick creek bottom and Midenderg.

“Boy was I glad to see those guys,” said Midenderg, who moved to the area in 2002 from New York. “I knew I was lost, so I sat down by this tree and a brook. The thing I kept thinking about was I didn’t want to spend the night in the woods.

“My mistake was not leaving a trail so I could get back out. I was so annoyed with myself, but those guys were terrific; they were so professional.”



TIM DONOVAN

Although scratched, hot and bug-bitten, Midenderg was OK and returned home.

For Officer Hahner, the successful search shows the value of K-9s like Sadie.

*Officer Sarah Hahner and K-9 Sadie are one of six canine teams that completed training this spring. All six dogs were handpicked by the FWC from donors.*

## New Florida hunting and fishing license fees in effect

As of Oct. 1, a new fee schedule is in effect for all recreational licenses issued by the FWC.

During its 2007 session, the Florida Legislature passed a bill to increase the fees for all recreational saltwater and freshwater fishing and hunting licenses. Hunting license fees were last increased in 1979 and fishing license fees in 1989.

Bob Wattendorf, who heads up marketing in the FWC's Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management, said, "When fees for fishing licenses were last increased, in 1989, gasoline cost 89 cents a gallon. But even with the new fee increases, the cost of hunting and fishing in Florida falls below the median costs for the other 49 states. Also the percentage of increase is well below the rise in the cost of living seen since 1989."

All the fees from these licenses go back into conserving fish and wildlife resources and benefit anglers and hunters.

The increased revenue, expected to total \$10 million annually within four years, will not create new programs, but will offset a predicted \$12.5-million deficit by 2010, said Sandra Wilson, director of finance and budget at FWC. In addition to issuing the licenses, FWC is charged with directly conserving fish and wildlife resources, and it creates and enforces rules and regulations regarding hunting and fishing in the state as well as promoting boating safety and access.

Florida remains the No. 1 fishing destination in the United States, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2006 national survey. In addition, Florida ranks No. 1 in the nation for its \$11 billion generated annually through hunting, fishing and wildlife-viewing activities throughout the state.



### Recreational hunting and fishing license fees Old and new costs (effective October 1, 2007)

Florida residents type of license	Old fee	New fee
Annual freshwater fishing . . . . .	\$13.50 . . . . .	\$17.00
Annual saltwater fishing . . . . .	\$13.50 . . . . .	\$17.00
Annual hunting . . . . .	\$12.50 . . . . .	\$17.00
Annual combos:		
Hunting, freshwater fishing . . . . .	\$23.50 . . . . .	\$32.50
Fresh/saltwater fishing . . . . .	\$25.50 . . . . .	\$32.50
Hunting, fresh/saltwater fishing . . . . .	\$35.50 . . . . .	\$48.00
Annual sportsman's . . . . .	\$72.50 . . . . .	\$80.50
Annual gold sportsman's . . . . .	\$88.50 . . . . .	\$100.00
5-year freshwater fishing . . . . .	\$61.50 . . . . .	\$79.00
5-year saltwater fishing . . . . .	\$61.50 . . . . .	\$79.00
5-year hunting . . . . .	\$56.50 . . . . .	\$79.00
Nonresidents type of license		
3-day freshwater fishing . . . . .	N/A . . . . .	\$17.00
7-day freshwater fishing . . . . .	\$16.50 . . . . .	\$30.00
3-day saltwater fishing . . . . .	\$6.50 . . . . .	\$17.00
7-day saltwater fishing . . . . .	\$16.50 . . . . .	\$30.00
Annual freshwater fishing . . . . .	\$31.50 . . . . .	\$47.00
Annual saltwater fishing . . . . .	\$31.50 . . . . .	\$47.00

The FWC presented its findings to the Legislature earlier this year. The projected deficit would leave revenue streams for marine fisheries, freshwater fisheries and hunting in jeopardy. In addition, programs already in place, such as those for panthers, manatees and other imperiled species, would need funding to keep pace with increased costs.

However, the new fees were kept to the minimum necessary to offset the projected deficit, rather than at a level that would maximize revenue. Compared to the cost of movies, golf, bowling and other forms of recreation, fishing and hunting fees remain very affordable, especially when viewed as an unlimited, year-round privilege, Wattendorf said.

"It will allow our habitat restoration, fish stocking, law enforcement and outreach programs to continue without cuts," Wattendorf said. "We can't guarantee that some things won't be trimmed in the future, but the expectation is the license fee increases will prevent us from going backwards."

Recreational licenses may be purchased online at MyFWC.com, or by calling 1-888-FISH FLORIDA (347-4356) or 1-888-HUNT FLORIDA (486-8356), or from numerous sporting goods retailers and at tax collectors' offices. If licenses are not purchased at tax collectors' offices, additional processing fees will be applied.

*Compared to the cost of movies, golf, bowling and other forms of recreation, fishing and hunting fees remain very affordable.*



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### Boat theft is a fast-growing trend

The FWC's Division of Law Enforcement urges boat owners to protect their boats from theft and to avoid boat title fraud schemes.

More than 1,200 boats have been reported stolen in Florida this year. That reflects a 30-percent increase compared to the same period last year. Also, the FWC said there is a growing trend in theft of "go-fast" type boats.

"Go-fast boats, 26-39 feet long, are being targeted with greater frequency than in previous years," said Lt. John Humphreys of FWC's Investigations Section. "These boats are targeted by criminals because of their high-dollar value and for use in maritime-based smuggling activities."

Dade, Monroe and Broward counties have the highest number of boat thefts; however, thefts have been reported from every county in the state.

"Boat theft is big business and a growing trend in Florida," said Capt. David Bullard of FWC's Investigations Section. "Frequently, boat thefts are linked to larger issues, such as organized crime, illegal immigration and domestic security threats. Because of this, it's essential to work with federal and local law enforcement agencies to combat the problem."

"Protecting Florida's boaters and waterways is vital to FWC's mission," said FWC Commission Chairman Rodney Barreto. "It's critically important that Florida's vast boating community take precautions to avoid becoming victims of these crimes."

Contact your local sheriff's office or police department to report a stolen boat or suspected boat title fraud.

Additional information and tips for avoiding boat theft and boat title fraud can be found at [MyFWC.com/Law](http://MyFWC.com/Law) and at the Florida Marine Intelligence Unit's Web site, [www.FMIU.org](http://www.FMIU.org).

### Repaired and new signs will mark manatee protection zones in Collier County

The FWC began work in September to remove, repair, clean and install waterway signs posting state-adopted manatee protection zones in Collier County. Workers expect to finish the job by the end of the year.

The FWC is replacing signs damaged by hurricanes, deteriorated from age or in disrepair due to vandalism. In addition, the agency is relocating or posting new signs to mark the existing protection zones. Repairs will take place only on state-adopted manatee protection zone signs in Little Hickory Bay, Wiggins Bay, Water Turkey Bay, Naples Bay, Dollar Bay, Gordon Pass, Haldeman Creek, Henderson Creek, Hall Bay, Johnson Bay, Isle of Capri, Marco River, Addison Bay, McIlvane Bay, Goodland Bay, Blue Bay, Caxambas Pass, Port of the Islands, Faka Union Canal and Chokoloskee Bay.

"There are several areas around the county where officers were issuing warnings because the manatee signs were missing or damaged," said Lt. Mitts Mravic of FWC's Collier County office. "After this project is completed, officers will be issuing citations again for speeding in manatee zones."



TIM DONOVAN

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that collisions with watercraft are responsible for about 25 percent of all manatee deaths and about 80 percent of all human-caused mortality in manatees.

Boaters in Collier County will be responsible for knowing the zones and operating their vessels accordingly. Once zones are properly marked, law enforcement officers will strictly enforce speed zones as posted.

"We want to protect the manatees," Mravic said. "It's all about slowing down vessel traffic in areas where these animals frequent to avoid additional manatee fatalities."

For more information, visit [MyFWC.com](http://MyFWC.com) and click "Manatees" to access state manatee speed zone maps.

### Not all muzzleloaders are legal for muzzleloading gun season

The FWC wants to make it clear to all muzzleloader hunters – not all muzzleloaders are created equal. Some of the new models do not meet the legal definition of guns authorized for use during muzzleloading gun season.

The two issues which seem to be generating the most questions are whether muzzleloaders with an electronic ignition are legal and whether the use of nitro-cellulose powder is legal. Neither is legal for use in Florida during muzzleloading gun season.

"In particular, the CVA Electra is a new muzzleloader on the market that doesn't qualify as a state-defined muzzleloader," said Capt. John Miller of

FWC's Division of Law Enforcement. "It is not a legal weapon for muzzleloader season because it uses an electronic ignition, fired by a battery."

The legal types of guns for use during the muzzleloading gun season use black powder or a non-nitro-cellulose substitute and are fired by wheel lock, flintlock or percussion cap ignition (including shotgun or 209 type primers). They are not adaptable to use of any self-contained cartridge ammunition.

The CVA Electra muzzleloader is legal to use during general gun season, however.

For more information on muzzleloader hunting, visit [MyFWC.com/hunting](http://MyFWC.com/hunting).

## Twice as many citations issued during this year's sport lobster season



*Spiny lobsters get their name from the forward-pointing spines that cover their bodies to help protect them from predators.*

During the two-day sport lobster season, officers logged 797 water patrol hours, conducted 2,205 vessel inspections, which resulted in 8,159 users checked, and received 154

calls for service. Enforcement activity resulted in 71 boating citations with 172 related warnings; 118 misdemeanor resource citations with 255 related warnings; and 14 other citation types as well as one boating-under-the-influence arrest. Three separate search-and-rescue (SAR) missions resulted in the rescue of eight people. One non-boating related fatality occurred after a diver suffered a heart attack. The number of incidents were dramatically different than the previous year's: Officers issued twice as many resource citations; 77 percent more boating safety warnings and received 64 percent more calls for service. There were 11 boating accidents and 17 SAR missions last year compared to only one boating accident and six SAR missions this year.

## Waterfowl and coot season opens Nov. 17

The FWC has officially set dates for the 2007-08 waterfowl and coot season, Canada goose season and youth waterfowl hunting days.

The first phase of waterfowl season is Nov. 17-25, with the second phase Dec. 8-Jan. 27. Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

The daily bag limit for waterfowl is six. The six-duck limit may consist of no more than one black duck, one mottled duck (Florida duck), one fulvous whistling-duck, one pintail, two canvasbacks, two redheads, two wood ducks, two scaup, four scoters and four mallards (no more than two may be females).

The daily bag limit for coots is 15. For mergansers, the daily bag limit is five (only two of which may be hooded mergansers).

The daily bag limit for light geese (i.e., snow [including blue] geese and Ross's geese) is 15.

In Leon County and Lake Miccosukee in Leon and Jefferson counties, waterfowl hunting is allowed only on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays during the open season and on Nov. 22-23, Dec. 24, 25 and Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 and Jan. 21. Lake Talquin in Gadsden and Leon counties and the Ochlockonee River may be hunted every day during the open season.

On Lake Iamonia and Carr Lake in Leon County, the use of internal combustion engines is prohibited during the waterfowl and coot season. Additionally, on Lake Miccosukee in Leon and Jefferson counties, the use of internal combustion engines of more than five horsepower is prohibited.

The Canada goose season is Nov. 17-25, with the second phase Dec. 1 - Jan. 30. Canada geese may be taken only in Florida waters of Lake Seminole in Jackson County that are south of SR 2, north of the Jim Woodruff Dam and east of CR 271. The daily bag limit is five, and shooting hours are one-



*The northern shoveler's distinct, spoon-shaped bill has about 110 projections (lamellae) along its edges, which filter food from the water.*

half hour before sunrise to sunset.

The FWC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have designated Feb. 2-3 as Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days. During this period, only children under 16 years old, supervised by an adult (18 years old or older) may hunt waterfowl, coots and common moorhens. Shooting hours, daily bag limits and species' restrictions are the same as for the regular waterfowl seasons.

Hunters taking migratory game birds in Florida are required to have a Migratory Game Bird Permit either checked or attached to their hunting license.

The FWC recommends hunters read the 2007-08 Florida Hunting Regulations Handbook and the Migratory Game Bird Regulations for Waterfowl and Coot Seasons brochure at [MyFWC.com/hunting](http://MyFWC.com/hunting). These publications are available from county tax collectors' offices and licensed vendors.