

SPRING/SUMMER 2026

SOUTHWEST GEORGIA OUTDOORS

The Ancient Art of Falconry

OUTDOOR EATS

*A perfect menu for
Southern palates*

O. VICTOR MILLER

*A fish tale from a southwest
Georgia legend*

QUAIL FOREVER

*An inside look at
group's fall hunt*

BIG BASS CAPITAL

*Lake Eufaula has earned
its reputation*

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Introduction

*"Let me tell you 'bout the birds and
the bees and the flowers and the
trees and the moon up above..."*
Jewel Akens



There are great life-lessons to be learned from the birds and the bees. In this edition of Southwest Georgia Outdoors Magazine, we are describing the lessons learned from the real birds and bees. Part of the success of preserving the lifestyle we enjoy in this part of Georgia depends on the survival of the birds and the bees and the ecosystem that supports us all. Pollination is of critical importance, and the support system that allows that to happen is equally important. We offer a good reminder of the cycle of life and the importance of what the Good Lord put

here for us to look after.

And speaking of the birds and the bees, we also look at the progress made to the threat of the survival of the red-cockaded woodpecker. Rachel McGuire, outreach & education coordinator of The Jones Center at Ichauway, describes one of our country's greatest wildlife conservation success stories. The red-cockaded woodpecker was one of the first species to be listed as federally endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1970 under the then Endangered Species Conservation Act the bird has officially been downlisted to threatened due to decades of intentional and successful conservation efforts across its range, led in many ways by the work of the smart, good folks in Baker County at The Jones Center at Ichauway.

This edition also features the magical place of Radium Springs. Long considered one of our greatest natural wonders, Radium Springs once catered to traveling tourists. Now, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources owns the land, and it is prepared for fishing, hiking and biking under the management of Dougherty County Public Works. Observation decks are placed around the site and are open to the public. The gushing spring discharges 70,000 gallons of water a minute. Underwater divers have risked it all to map out the caves underneath the spring and discovered a number of rare species. Georgia blind salamanders and plain cave crayfish were discovered, collected, studied and returned. Radium Springs is located by the Flint River that runs through the region.

New to Southwest Georgia Outdoors is local writer O. Victor Miller who takes us on a "shocking" fishing trip on the Flint River and the waters of Radium Springs. He has a friend who makes flies for fishing from materials ordered from the GLOW-IN-THE-DARK CONDOM CO. (the other discussion of the birds and the bees) and comes up with unique ways to draw the fish right up to the boat. This one will have you shaking your head and laughing at the same time.

Outdoor writer Tom Seegmueller takes us on a journey to nearby Lake Eufaula, or Lake Walter F. George to us Georgians. (Tom explains why.) This 45,000-acre lake, straddling a couple of state lines, has the reputation as a bass anglers paradise. It was here in 1968 that Ray Scott organized the Bass Anglers Sportsman Society, promoting bass fishing and organizing the then new sport of tournament bass fishing. With the promotion of Scott and former Alabama Game Warden Tom Mann, who invented "Mann's Jelly Worm" lure, the lake is now known as the "Bass Fishing Capital of the World."

Albany Herald Editor Carlton Fletcher features the ancient form of hunting known as falconry, perfected by one of our own in Dougherty County, Jackie Entz. Entz is the director of education at Albany's Chehaw Park & Zoo and has been involved in falconry for the past 15 years. For Entz, spending time with her birds is more than the hunt for food or even the spectacle of watching these majestic birds respond to the instincts that have been formed in them for centuries. It is more about spending time with her family, sharing this time with nature.

Also we feature a story about local businessman James Tyson, of Tyson Steel, who grew up hunting and fish-

ing in south Georgia, but developed a passion for big-game hunting all over the world. This "hobby" has developed into a collection of some of the best preserved bounty that ranges from bear, big cats, a hippo, wolves, zebras, snakes, giraffes, big-horn sheep, moose, elk and many more. Tyson welcomes folks to come share his love of hunting by opening his display in a Wildlife Museum. You will love the photographs of this collection.

We also include in this edition a recap of this year's Quail Forever late-fall event, which captures the fun of the hunt and the fellowship that is sponsored by our local chapter. Makes you want to get ready for next fall already.

And we include some wonderful wild game recipes by popular restaurateur/musician Bo Henry. This edition features Fried Oyster Deviled Eggs and Fried Quail on a Bed of Greens and Stoneground Grits. Just reading these recipes will get your taste buds tingling.

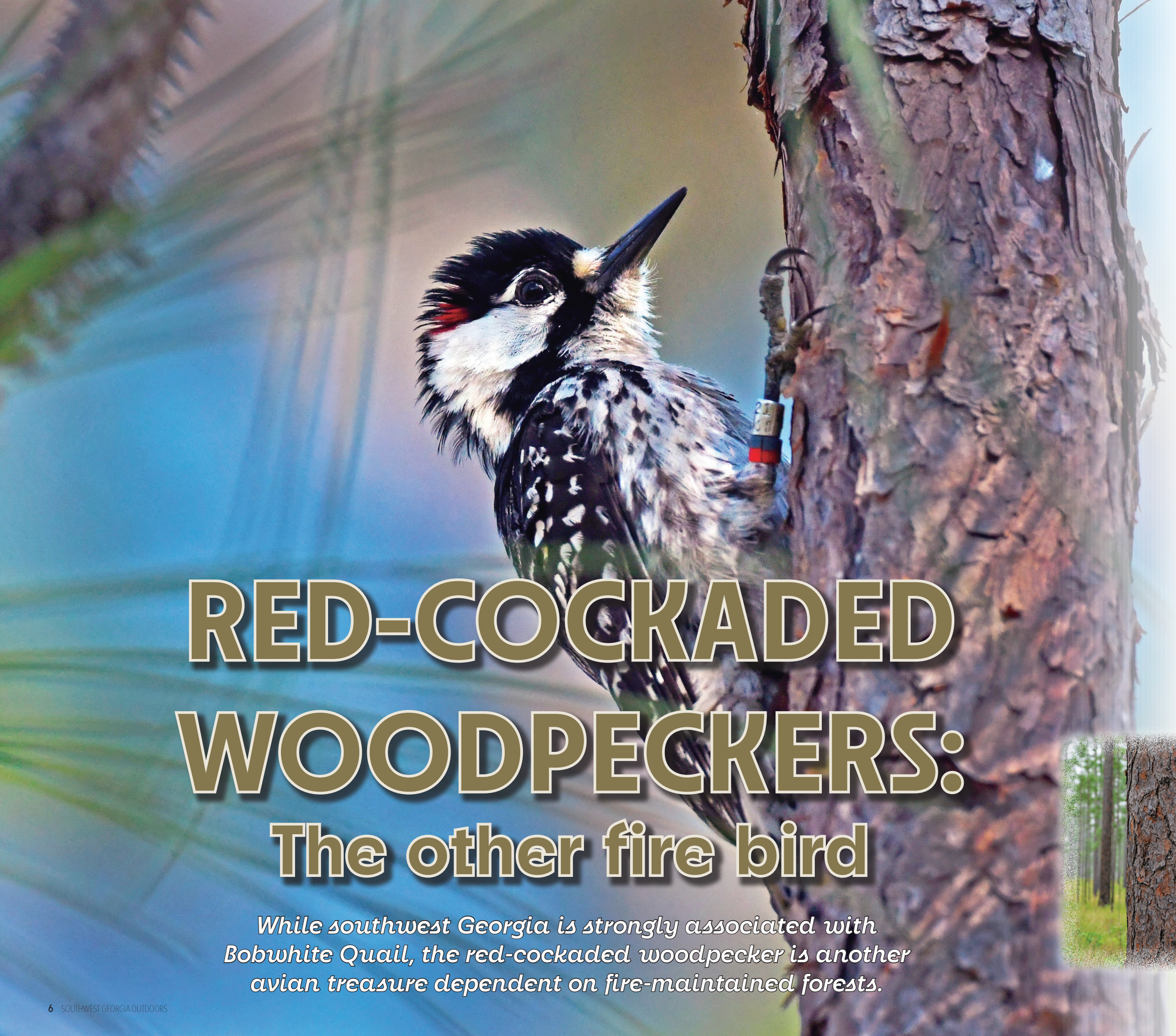
We hope you enjoy reading this Spring Edition of Southwest Georgia Outdoors magazine as we have had fun putting it together. This special section of The Albany Herald reflects the wonderful lifestyle we share in our part of the world and helps us be inspired by those nearby who are willing to share their journey with our readers.

Be safe,

A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "DuBose".

DuBose Porter,
Publisher Emeritus
The Albany Herald
Georgia Trust for Local News





RED-COCKADED WOODPECKERS: The other fire bird

While southwest Georgia is strongly associated with Bobwhite Quail, the red-cockaded woodpecker is another avian treasure dependent on fire-maintained forests.

BY: RACHEL MCGUIRE

*Outreach & Education Coordinator
of The Jones Center at Ichauway*

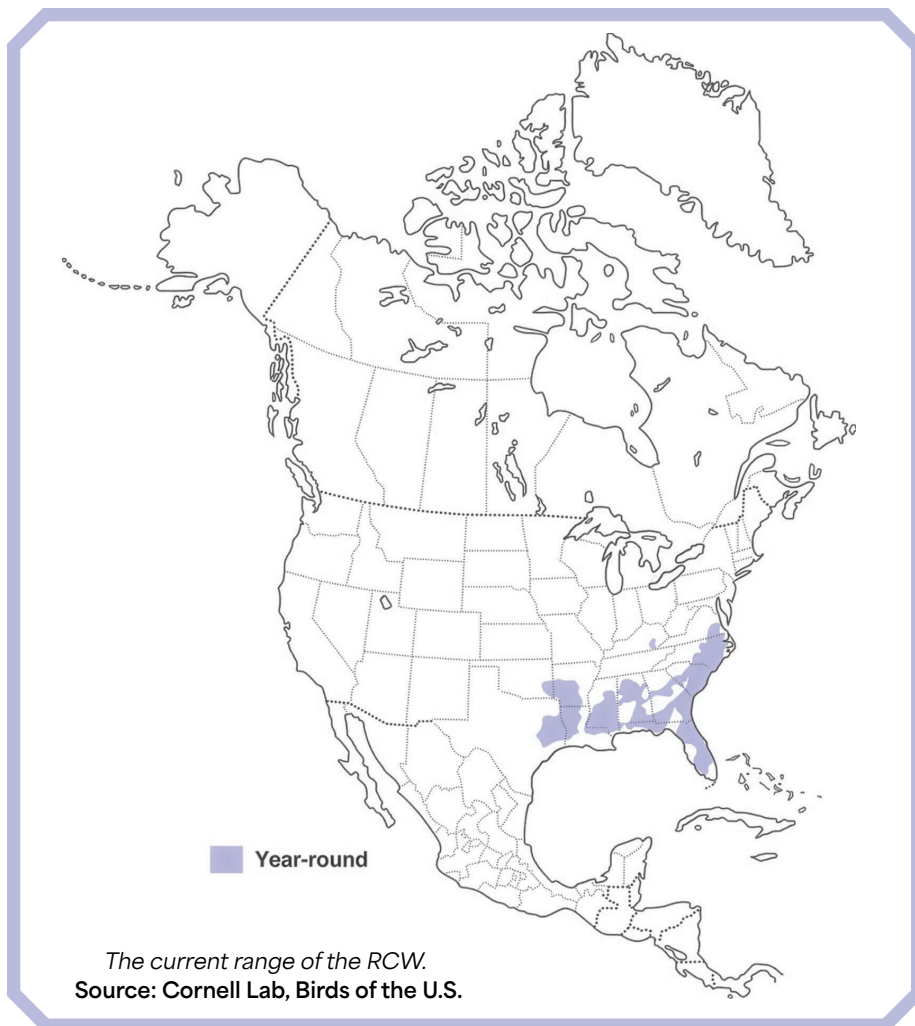
Perhaps one of the Southeast's greatest wildlife conservation success stories is that of the red-cockaded woodpecker. Although primarily associated with longleaf pine, the RCW's historic range stretched beyond from eastern New Jersey and Maryland, south to Florida, and west to east Texas and Oklahoma. In total, the bird's range included more than 15 states, but currently they're found only in 12. RCWs are a nonmigratory species, meaning they reside in the Southeastern U.S. year-round.

RCWs are relatively small birds, rarely exceeding 8 inches and weighing less than 2 ounces. Their plumage includes a barred black-and-white back, a white belly with black spots on the sides, and a distinctive white cheek patch. The "red cockade" for which the bird gets its name is a tiny, red streak found only on the head of adult males. In fact, the red cockade is rarely visible unless a bird becomes agitated or excited and puffs up its head feathers, similar to that of the hackles on the back of a dog. To the untrained eye, an RCW might be mistaken for two of the Southeast's other small, black and white woodpeckers: the downy or hairy woodpecker. Downy and hairy woodpeckers can be distinguished from the RCW because they both lack the trademark white cheek patch, have a large white stripe down the center of their backs, and ironically, have a more pronounced red patch on their heads.



A Red-cockaded Woodpecker cavity tree at The Jones Center at Ichauway.

Image: Hunter Nichols



of longleaf pine savannas is due to frequent disturbance by fire. Historically, fires were largely caused by lightning strikes in the growing season (approximately April-September). There is also ample evidence of indigenous people using fire to move wild game such as bison, deer, and bear, promote the growth of medicinal plants, clear land for agriculture, and to serve as a defense strategy from neighboring tribes. Following the massive timber cuts of the 1800s and early 1900s, an extended period of fire suppression began, contributing to the decline of the longleaf pine savannas.

RCWs depend on open pine forest to serve their habitat needs for nesting, roosting, and foraging. Suitable RCW cavity trees are mature pines, typically greater than 80 years old. RCWs are the only species of woodpecker in North America that exclusively excavates and lives in cavities of living pine trees. They have a symbiotic relationship with a fungus that affects larger-diameter southern pines called red-heart, also known as heart rot. Red-heart causes internal rot of the inner heartwood; however, a longleaf pine can continue to live for many decades, perhaps well over a hundred years, in coexistence with heart rot.

The RCW was one of the first species to be listed as federally endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1970 under the then Endangered Species Conservation Act, which was the precursor to the modern Endangered Species Act. Spoiler Alert: The RCW was officially downlisted to federally threatened in October 2024 due to decades of intentional and successful conservation efforts across its range. But first, let's take a step back in time to see how this petite, fastidious bird was endangered in the first place.

Habitat Needs

The initial species listing was due to habitat loss and habitat fragmentation, particularly the loss of the longleaf pine ecosystem. As much as 97% of suitable RCW habitat has been lost since the 1700s. The longleaf pine ecosystem was decimated by a combination of European settlement, widespread

commercial timber harvesting, fire suppression, and the naval stores/turpentine industry. A healthy longleaf pine ecosystem has an open vegetative structure often described as a savanna that contains very little midstory and a predominately grassy and herbaceous groundcover. The open structure

This softer, brittle heart wood is detected by RCWs, who disproportionately choose to create cavities in trees already inoculated with red-heart. The energetic costs of cavity-making are high (try

A glimpse of the small red cockade on the head of a male RCW.
Image: USFWS



banging your head against a tree for days on end) for such a slight bird, so selecting trees with softer heartwood saves considerable time and energy. It can take up to seven years for an individual RCW to finish a cavity; however, under favorable conditions and if multiple birds help excavate the same cavity, a cavity can be finished in as little as 6-8 months. RCWs live in an aggregate of cavity trees called a cluster. There may be as few as one tree or as many as 20 trees within a cluster. One cluster accommodates one family group of RCWs, with one bird inhabiting each cavity. A cluster's footprint ranges from 1-10 acres; however, the foraging territory of a family group can vary from 60-250 acres depending on nearby RCW population density and habitat quality.

Once complete, these natural cavities become a hot commodity for other cavity nesters in the piney woods market. Biologists refer to such wildlife intruders as "kleptoparasites." Red-headed woodpeckers, for example, are extremely aggressive and can easily harass an RCW to the point of abandoning its cavity for the night, or worse, overtake its territory altogether by

"blowing out" the entrance of the RCW's cavity, deeming it unsuitable for RCW use. Southern flying squirrels are perhaps the most frequent nuisance for RCWs, stealing their cavities and leaving behind a mess that spoils the minimalist and clean nesting habits of the bird. Other seemingly innocuous secondary cavity nesters (species that inhabit cavities, but cannot create their own), such as eastern bluebirds, white-breasted nuthatches, and great-crested flycatchers can displace RCWs from their cavity trees.

To provide instantaneous housing for RCWs and address some of their delicate sensibilities when it comes to maintaining ownership of cavities, biologists developed a simple, yet invaluable tool: the artificial cavity insert. An insert is a prefabricated wooden box, typically constructed from rot-resistant western red cedar, with

the exact-sized hole preferred by an RCW that is inserted into living pine trees. The insert's frontside features a piece of expanded metal to protect the front of the cavity from being "blown out" by other woodpecker species. This task is accomplished by climbing stackable aluminum ladders, called Swedish ladders, thirty feet or more up a pine tree and using an arborist chainsaw to cut a rectangular block out of the side of a tree. The insert is then placed in this freshly-sawn hole and fitted with wooden shims and putty to secure a perfect fit.

RCWs primarily consume arthropods, particularly insects, with 75% of their diet consisting of beetles, ants, termites and roaches living on pine trees. A minor portion of their diet consists of fruits or seeds of pine, poison ivy, magnolia, blueberry, blackgum, wax myrtle and wild grape. They feed by flaking off

A technician installing an artificial cavity insert in a longleaf pine.

Image: Hunter Nichols



A freshly installed artificial cavity insert.

Image: Hunter Nichols



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Three banded RCW chicks. Note the closed eyes and relative lack of feathers.

Image: Rachel McGuire

RCW monitoring and management is a gear-heavy endeavor. Pictured are some of the equipment necessary for an RCW translocation.

Image: Ben Thesing



and probing pine bark to expose arthropods living within the layers of bark, using their forked tongues to extract prey. Typically, males spend more time foraging in the lower portion of pine trees, on the trunk and larger branches, while females spend more time foraging in smaller branches and in the pine canopy foliage. This marked distinction between male and female foraging is most noticeable in winter when arthropod activity is greatly reduced.

A Special Breeding Strategy

RCWs are known as cooperative breeders. Although this strategy is not entirely unique (other birds in the Southeast such as white-breasted and brown-headed nuthatches as well as the Florida scrub jay subscribe to this strategy), it is an effective way to raise young, especially for a relatively long-lived bird. A family group of RCWs consists of a breeding female and male along with one to four "helper" birds, most often young male offspring from previous years, that will help incubate, brood and feed nestlings.

The breeding season begins in April and lasts until June. The primary predators of RCW eggs and nestlings are climbing snakes such

as rat snakes and corn snakes. To protect their nests from snakes, RCWs will bore small holes around a cavity tree, called resin wells, to induce sap flow. The impossibly sticky sap gums up the scales of snakes, making it difficult, if not impossible, for them to climb to the nest cavity. RCWs are known as asynchronous nesters, meaning eggs may not hatch simultaneously. Eggs are laid during a multi-day period, typically one per day, until the clutch is complete (typically 2-4 eggs) and undergo a mere 10-day incubation period.

Monitoring as a Keystone of Conservation

Monitoring RCW populations is a critical component of management and recovery programs for the species. In the 1990s, federal and state agencies began more routinely banding RCWs, which involved placing a unique U.S. Geological Survey aluminum band and a combination of plastic, colored bands on the legs of RCW chicks. Banding had to occur during a "sweet spot" in nestling size from 5-11 days old. Try banding before five days old, and the nestlings' legs won't be large enough to accommodate multiple bands. Try to band after 11 days old, and

their eyes are open and feathers are emerging, making capture more difficult and likely to cause injury. This means nest checks are needed at regularly timed intervals to accurately age new hatchlings to ultimately band birds safely. Banding allows biologists to track the survival of movement of birds that have fledged the nest. It also makes it possible to track the genetic mixing of the population once fledglings become breeding adults. Lastly, it makes it possible to target the capture of specific birds to translocate individuals to promote population expansion.

The Jones Center at Ichauway's RCW Population

In 1999, it was a lonely time to be an RCW at the Jones Center at Ichauway, a private natural resource research center in Baker County. In fact, there was but a single, male RCW remaining on the 29,000-acre property. A population of one bird meant zero potential breeding groups, not a good outlook. At that time, the Jones Center, funded by the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation in Atlanta, decided to make a considerable effort toward contributing to the conservation of RCWs in the longleaf pine range.

To accelerate population recovery, the center received translocated birds annually for most years between 1999-2015. Many of the birds were received from the Apalachicola National Forest, which holds the largest remaining population of RCWs. Other donor locations included Fort Stewart Army Base, Fort Moore Army Base, Eglin Air Force Base, Francis Marion National Forest, Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge, and eight private properties in the Red Hills region of south Georgia/north Florida. Prior to the receipt of each batch of translocated birds, the center's biologist would install cavity inserts and release the birds into their freshly carpentered homes and continually monitor them for cavity fidelity and movement.

Most years between 1999-2017 experienced a population increase from 0 to 34 potential breeding groups. Then, in 2018 came the first big test for the recovering RCW population, a natural disaster that many southwest Georgians won't forget anytime soon: Hurricane Michael. Michael was still a Category II hurricane when it reached Ichauway (a feat,

considering it is 90 miles inland) overnight. Land management staff quickly responded by installing replacement artificial cavity inserts in existing clusters to minimize the vulnerable branch roosting displaced RCWs were forced to endure.

Fortunately, the population didn't sustain a large decline. In fact, in the seven-plus years following Hurricane Michael, current biologist Zach Henshaw has documented increased observations of natural starts (initial attempts to make a cavity) and completed natural cavities. In that same timeframe, management priorities on Ichauway have shifted from receiving translocated birds to relying on intra-population dispersals to "fill in" the remaining RCW habitat as the property's population continues to grow. Entering the 2025 nesting season, the Ichauway population reached a whopping 57 potential breeding groups (an estimated 180 birds). The 2025 nesting seasons shattered records at Ichauway with 98 banded chicks, 89 of which successfully fledged.

In December 2025, the Jones Center at Ichauway contributed two pairs of RCWS as part of a

translocation effort to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Chickasawhatchee Wildlife Management Area in southwest Georgia. An additional five RCW pairs were captured and transported from Fort Stewart Army Base. This collaborative effort between the DNR, the Department of War (Fort Stewart), the Jones Center at Ichauway, Tall Timbers, the USDA Forest Service, the Longleaf Alliance, Casto Environmental Services, Quail Forever, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was the first RCW release for the Chickasawhatchee WMA. Public-private partnerships in conservation such as this are a key to successfully restoring imperiled species on the landscape.

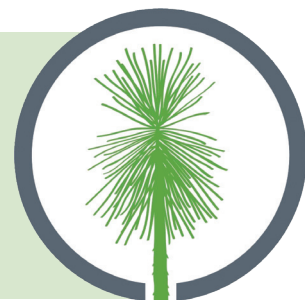
From a single male bird in 1999 to contributing to translocation efforts on public lands, this was a full-circle moment for the RCW population at Ichauway. In a world where the news can feel heavy, I hope you find a little solace that there's a whole field of individuals fighting to keep the South's wildlands and native species thriving, even if it takes fifty-plus years to feel like we're finally getting somewhere.



Partners from the December 2025 RCW translocation to Chickasawhatchee WMA in Calhoun County.

About The Jones Center at Ichauway

The Jones Center at Ichauway is a nonprofit research and conservation center located in Newton. The center's research, education, and conservation programs focus on ecology and management of Southeastern ecosystems, especially longleaf pine. The research program is home to laboratories focusing on forest, plant, wildlife, insect, and stream ecology. Learn more at www.jonesctr.org.



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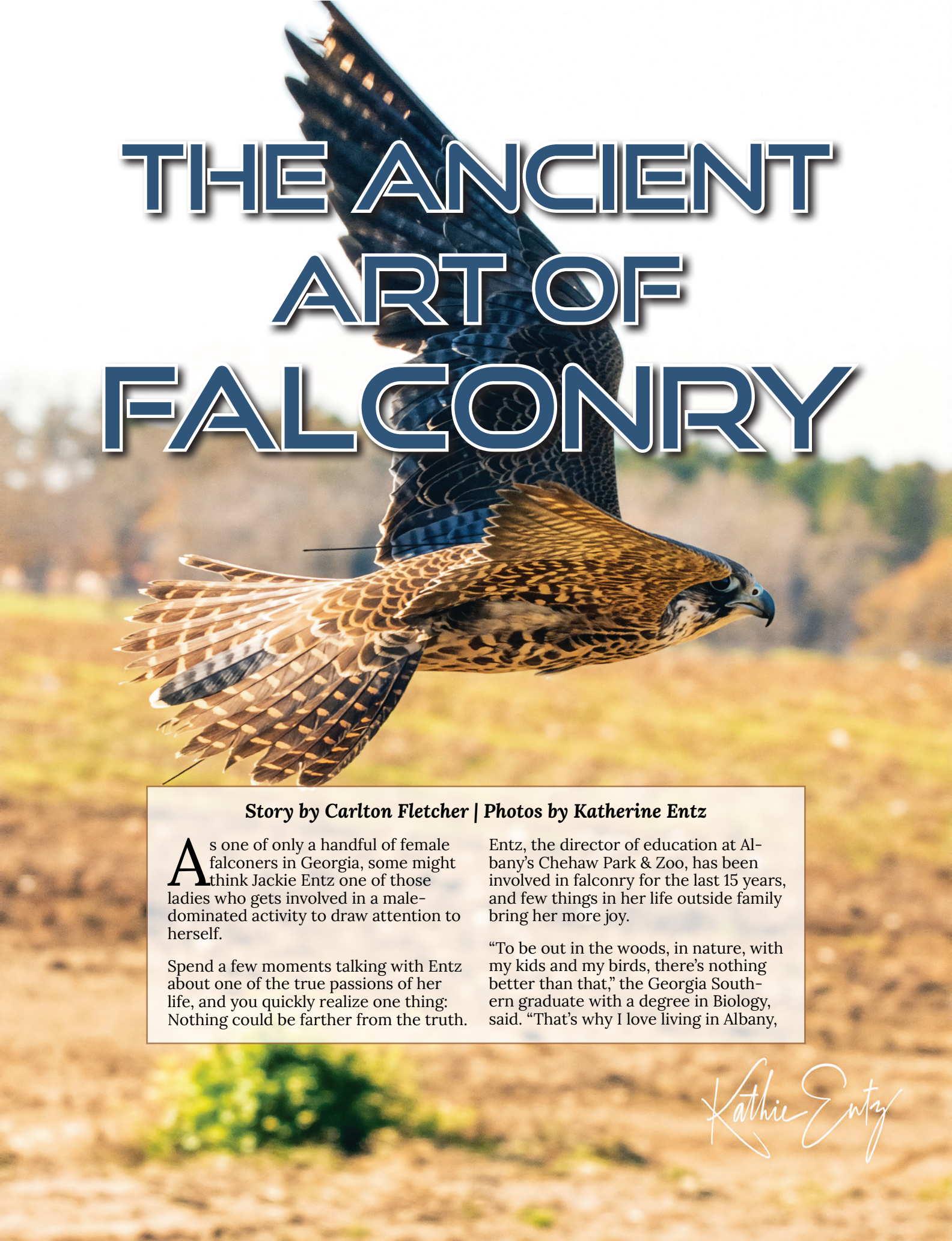


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A detailed photograph of a falcon, likely a Red-tailed Hawk, in mid-flight. The bird is shown from a side profile, flying towards the right. Its wings are spread wide, revealing the intricate patterns and colors of its feathers, including dark brown, tan, and white. The background is a soft-focus landscape of a field with dry grass and some greenery under a bright sky.

THE ANCIENT ART OF FALCONRY

Story by Carlton Fletcher | Photos by Katherine Entz

As one of only a handful of female falconers in Georgia, some might think Jackie Entz one of those ladies who gets involved in a male-dominated activity to draw attention to herself.

Spend a few moments talking with Entz about one of the true passions of her life, and you quickly realize one thing: Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Entz, the director of education at Albany's Chehaw Park & Zoo, has been involved in falconry for the last 15 years, and few things in her life outside family bring her more joy.

"To be out in the woods, in nature, with my kids and my birds, there's nothing better than that," the Georgia Southern graduate with a degree in Biology, said. "That's why I love living in Albany,

Kathie Entz

and that's why I turned down job offers to stay here. This is home.

"I got into falconry at Georgia Southern, and when I was about six months into my first job, at Chehaw, I had other opportunities, other offers. But Albany was home; my friends and family are here, and the elements of wildlife and conservation in my job were important to me. Plus, Chehaw has real wildlife habitat. It's not a place stuck in the middle of a city with lots of concrete."

Entz came to Albany when her dad landed a job with Mars Chocolate in the southwest Georgia city. She was born in Illinois, lived there until the family moved to Texas when she was 9, and came to Albany when she was 12.

Another selling point for the so-called Good life City? The abundant gopher tortoises.

"I'd studied gopher tortoises in school, and I was fascinated by them," Entz said. "When I came here and saw all these gopher tortoise holes in the landscape, I was ecstatic."

At Georgia Southern in Statesboro, Entz worked at the university's wildlife center on campus, where she encountered falconers for the first time.

"My bosses were falconers," she said. "I quickly fell in love with the sport and the art of it."

The sport/hunting element of falconry has been around since before Jesus and was practiced in multiple cultures throughout the world. Hunters trained their birds to bring home food for their families, and while hunting for meat is not as widespread as it once was, Entz says there are plenty of purists – like herself – who make meat brought in by her birds part of her family's diet.

It was while traveling back to

her alma mater for a field meet that Entz met her "sponsor." (More on that momentarily.)

"I was talking to some of the people at the field meet, and I said, 'It would be cool to do this in Albany,'" Entz said. "This guy overheard me and said, 'You're from Albany? Me too.' It was funny: I had to go all the way to Statesboro to find my Albany sponsor."

To get a falconry license in Georgia, a person must go through a number of steps to be certified in three distinct stages: apprentice, general and master. The apprentice stage requires that the would-be falconer obtain a bird(s), build a mew (shelter) to Department of Natural Resources specifications and stock it with listed equipment, go through a rigorous inspection and finally make 80% or better on a test.

"You have to be under a sponsor for at least two years, and the test is pretty tough; it includes information about specific birds, veterinary care, game laws and biology," Entz said.

Once the apprentice-level test has been successfully completed, the falconer can apply for a general certification. Once he or she has served at that level for a period of five years, the falconer can become a master, the level held by Entz.

While her birds – red-tail hawk Hansel and tundra peregrine falcon Storm – are not particularly hungry in the lead-up to the fall hunting season, and feeding the birds is the primary method for building a bond between them and their owner, they do strike a few poses on a recent late-winter day with the southwest Georgia weather leaning more toward spring. But they're not interested in showing off their flying skills.

Training birds of prey to hunt on command is one of the



Jackie working
in the field.
Photos by Katherine Entz

more fascinating elements of the bird/human bond.

"The first step is getting them to eat food you have for them," Entz said. "Their food generally consists of quail, beef, chicken, mostly meat. It's an oddity, but these birds will not eat in front of a person unless they trust that person. But I've found over the years that it's not that difficult to get them to trust you; most times, I can get one to trust me in a day or two."

"Their flying in search of food is pretty much instinctual; it's part of their nature. A lot of times when they make a kill, they will hide the animal and come back for it on a later day. Eventually, though, they realize that if they bring their kill to you, you're going to reward them with food."

Entz has owned a number of birds in her 15 years of falconry, some she's grown close to and others she's encouraged to take off on their own.

"It's like dating somebody; a lot of it has to do with personality," she said. "That's one of the cool things about falconry: These animals, if they decide at some point not to return to their owners, they're in their natural habitat. They'll do fine on their own."

Entz said birds like Storm typically hunt quail, pigeons and ducks, while Hansel is more apt to look for teals and

smaller game animals like squirrels or rabbits. Hawks and falcons are the primary birds of prey handled by falconers, although one such Georgian has a license to hunt with a Golden Eagle.

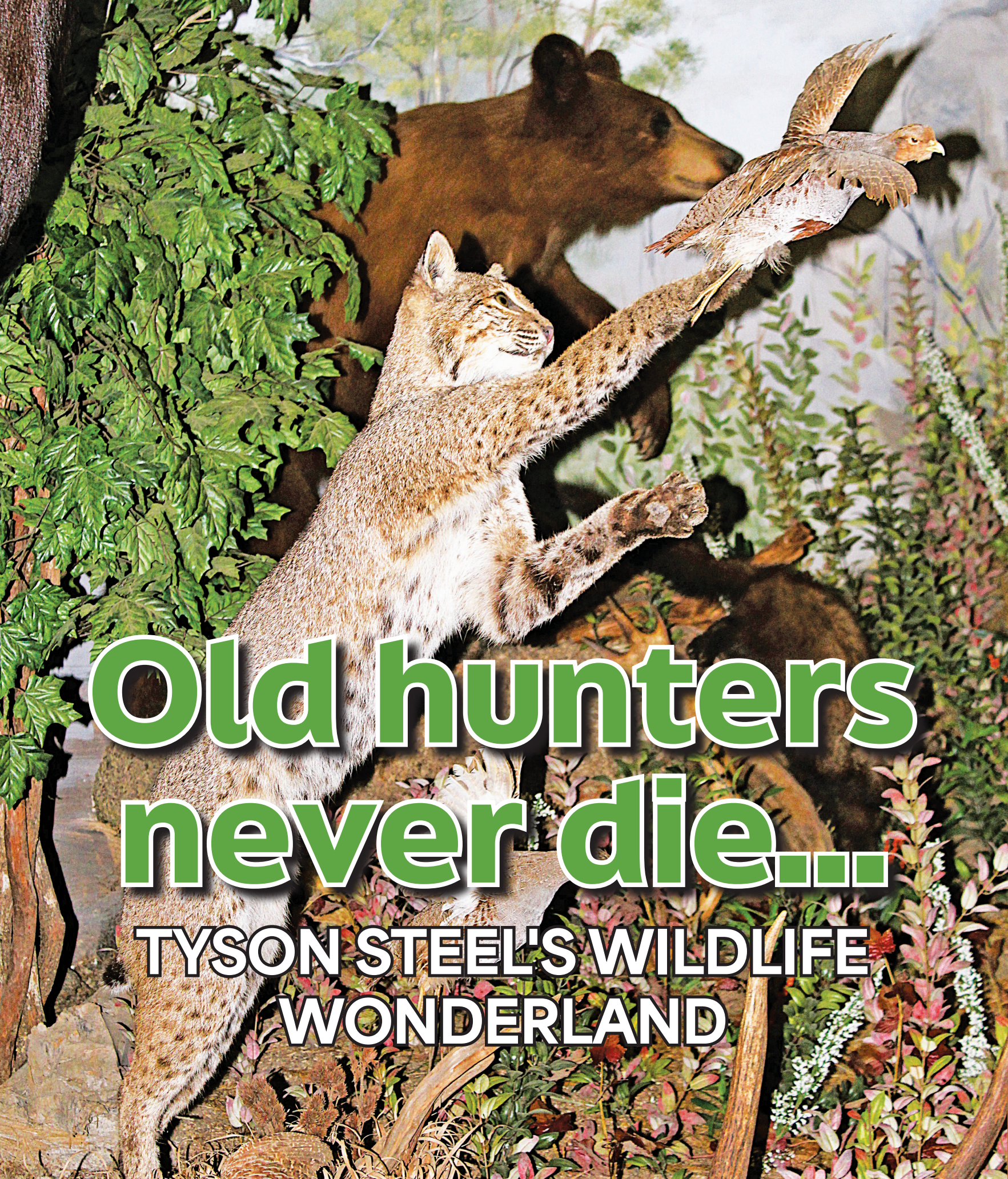
Hunting regulations for birds of prey pretty much mirror laws for other hunters in the state. Seasons are the same, and bag limits are the same.

But for Jackie Entz, spending time with her birds is about more than the hunt for food or even the spectacle of watching these majestic birds respond to the instincts that have been born in them for centuries. It's the time spent in the woods – usually with daughter Carson, 6, and son Weston, 4 ... and "bonus daughter" Ansley, 24, often in the mix – convening with nature and sharing her knowledge with her "babies that aren't babies any more" that is the primary draw.

"This isn't about being one of about 15 (out of more than 200 total) female falconers in the state, it's about going home to get my kids and my birds and spending some quality time in nature," she said. "It's neat to be there, neat to watch the birds chase some prey and even neater when they get a squirrel."

"But, in all honesty, any day I go into the woods with my birds, that's a good day."





Old hunters never die...

TYSON STEEL'S WILDLIFE
WONDERLAND

Story and photos by Tara Fletcher

This is a story about a world-traveling, big game hunter, but to get to that part of his life, we have to go back to the beginning.

Eighty-five years ago, James Tyson was born in south Georgia. Like most little boys in this area, he grew up around fishing and hunting and developed a life-long love for both.

In the early 1970s, Tyson was working as a delivery man for UPS. During one of his regular stops, he noticed that the usual receiving clerk was absent. The next week he asked the clerk where he had been. The clerk told him he had been in Eufaula, Ala., picking up some secondary metal from a manufacturer there. Tyson thought that maybe he could do the same and resell it, so he and his brother-in-law headed to Eufaula and brought back their first load. After some time with no bites on the metal, Tyson decided to run an ad in the newspaper, and he sold it. That was the beginning of Tyson Steel.

By 1990, Tyson, with a thriving business and trusted employees, decided to retire. Still a young man of 40 at the time, it wasn't long before he confessed to his wife Jackie that he was "miserable." Jackie's reply turned out to be a life-changing question: "What would make you happy?" That year, James Tyson's big game hunting legacy began.

Tyson's love of hunting has taken him to Africa 12 times. He's hunted in Canada, Australia, Russia, New Zealand, China, Mongolia and all over the U.S.

Tyson had each of the skins of animals



A giraffe is one of the wonders at Tyson Steel's wild game unseen.
Photo by Tara Fletcher



Tyson
STEEL
Building Products, Inc.



he bagged shipped to nationally recognized taxidermist Rob Nancarrow, where they were professionally preserved for what was becoming quite a collection of trophies in the Tyson home.

"I had collected so many pieces in the house, Jackie told me, 'You gonna get this stuff out of here,'" Tyson said.

So he moved the trophies to a building at Tyson Steel, and as the number of animals kept growing, so did the idea that he would open his display to the public in a Wildlife Museum.

"I know how blessed I have been and to see people, especially children, come through the museum, eyes wide open, seeing animals they may never get a chance to see up close, that brings me so much joy," Tyson said.

More than 175 species are represented at the museum, including a bear, big cats, hippos, wolves, zebras, snakes, giraffes, big-horn sheep, moose, elk and many more.

As we sat among the animals, posed and placed in settings built to mimic their natural surroundings, I could almost see the memories running through his mind. He pointed out a brown bear standing more than 7 feet tall.

"That was the first bear I ever killed," he said, adding, "bear are my favorite animals to hunt."

Not far from the bear is a huge moose. Tyson smirked as he

recalled shooting the beast, then approaching him to begin the skinning process.

"I thought it was dead, but it wasn't," he said. "It made a sudden move, and I slapped at it and broke two of my fingers."

Tyson said he's had a lot of positive feedback about the collection but noted "there was this one lady who called me 'disgusting.' Then I saw her at a wild game dinner and she apologized. I guess it's hard to be critical with a mouthful of fresh-shot quail."

Tyson said he is aware that many of the places where he has hunted rely on hunting for survival. He eats much of what he kills and shares with people who need it. What was the best meat he ever ate? Tyson says it's kudu steak.

These days, Tyson sticks to deer hunting and fishing close to home, but with a quick trip to the wildlife museum, he and everyone else can take a walk through the frozen tundra, African plains, dense forest, rocky mountains or an alligator-filled swamp, all in one place.

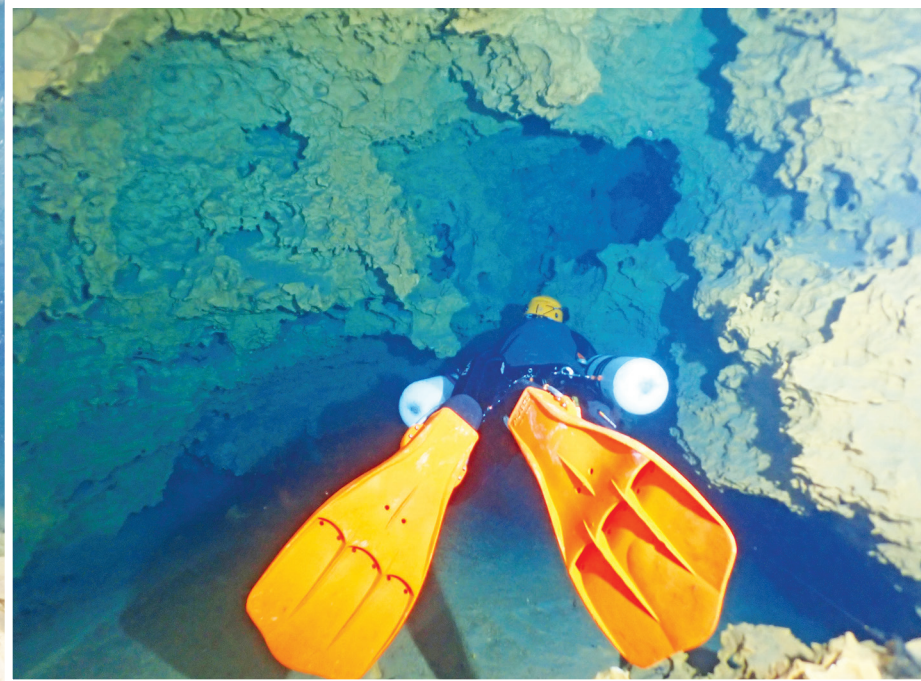
"I've had a very interesting life," Tyson said. "I'm so thankful that God gave me a good business to pass along to my children, good health and a good wife."

Tyson invites everyone to come to his museum at 361 Doerun Road for a real walk on the wild side. His museum is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Nature scenes involving wildlife kills are part of James Tyson's museum.
Photos: Tara Fletcher

A GEORGIA NATURAL WONDER – RADIUM SPRINGS

Story by Tom Seegmueller | Photos by Jason Voorhes & Angela Miller



Photos by Jason Voorhes

Georgia's only first-magnitude spring normally discharges 70,000 gallons of water a minute, a rate of flow capable of filling an Olympic pool every 8 1/2 minutes. This feature alone would easily rank Radium Springs as one of the state's natural wonders.

However, it's the color of the iridescent blue water that has drawn humans to the 66-degree water since its discovery.

During three distinct historical periods, the spring has gone by different names. There is no historical record of who "discovered" the spring. Archeological evidence found scattered around the spring on the east bank of the Flint River indicates the area was continually inhabited since the Paleolithic Period when mastodons still roamed the region.

Col. James Moore, the former governor of the Carolina Colony, and his army of 50 Carolinian militia are likely the first white men to see the spring while traveling down the east bank of the Flint in June of 1704 to attack Spanish missions in Florida during Queen Anne's War.

Two factions of Lower Creeks were known to be living in a shared town surrounding the spring. Both the Hitchiti and the Osochi had moved into the area from their original lands on the Gulf Coast. They would establish what was known as a Hotalihuyana, or "hurricane town" with a ceremonial center at the spring. They called the spring "Skywater," believing that the blue from the sky had fallen into the spring.

Benjamin Hawkins, who served as the U.S. Indian agent for the region, reported that the Osochi moved west to the Chattahoochee River before 1794. When the Treaty of Fort Jackson was signed in 1814, it opened the region to white settlement. Four years later, the Hitchiti living at Skywater had all died of smallpox.

The white settlers moving into the area would call the spring they found Blue Springs. Before the region was successfully settled, Creek holdouts attacked white settlements, attacks that evolved into battles.

In 1836 two of the final battles in

the region occurred. The first took place at Pine Island in southwest Dougherty County. The second occurred 4 miles from Sylvester. Erasmus Gray responded there with a detachment of militia and defeated the Creeks.

A short while later, in 1916, W.E. Hickey began buying up the land surrounding Blue Springs. Up to that point, the property had been left in its natural state. But Hickey saw opportunity and began developing the first resort on the site. He would initially build a home, restaurant, pavilion, country store, dance hall, and a sheltered picnic area.

Hickey dug out the pool area around the spring's boil and improved the natural beaches by connecting them with concrete walkways. The restaurant became known for its fried chicken, and the country store for its nickel and dime slot machines. He capitalized directly on the spring, fencing it in and charging a dime to enter his resort and a quarter more to go swimming. Hickey's growing enterprise flourished until a flood in 1924 inundated the property for days.

When the Flint rose again the following year, Hickey was ready to sell. His timing could not have been better. As fate would have it, Barron Collier was traveling by train to Florida, where he was the state's largest land owner and developer. Stopping in Albany, he stayed at the Gordon Hotel. He asked the hotel manager to assist him in arranging transportation by car to Florida. The manager reached out to car dealer Thad Huckabee, who had opened a car dealership next to the hotel.

When Huckabee discovered who the passenger was, he volunteered to personally drive him to Florida. When Huckabee, a real-estate developer himself, left Albany with Collier onboard, he drove only 4 miles south before pulling off the Dixie Highway to show Collier Blue Springs and ask his opinion about the possibilities for developing the property. Collier asked Huckabee why no one had already done so. When Huckabee told him it was due to the lack of local funding, Collier said, "Buy it."

Huckabee approached Hickey on Collier's behalf, offering him

Background photo by Angela Miller

\$85,000 for the property. Hickey accepted the offer, but for some reason Huckabee missed the closing deadline by 15 minutes. Seeing another opportunity, Hickey required him to pay an additional \$15,000 before finalizing the sale. Considering inflation, the \$100,000 purchase price for the 88 acres would be the equivalent of \$1,845,000 today.

Collier wanted the first floor of the facility to contain a dining area and lounge with pecky cypress walls. The entire second floor was occupied by a ballroom overlooking the spring. Collier's architects were able to incorporate many of Hickey's existing structures into the casino.

The casino formally opened to the public in April of 1927 to much fanfare, with then-Gov. Clifford Waller addressing the 500 invited guests. The following day, The Albany Herald reported on the gala in great detail, describing the casino and the resort's many attractions, including a lodge, hotel, swimming pool, golf course, tennis courts, a gun club with a trap range, and walking and equestrian trails along the Flint River.

During construction of the casino, Collier had the water flowing from the spring tested. It was discovered to contain radioactive qualities, leading to a name change: Radium Springs. The new resort's location could not have been more appealing to the northern travelers flocking to Florida by rail or by automobile on the recently completed Dixie Highway.

The Casino was conveniently located a few miles south of Neyami in Lee County, the halfway point between New York and Miami.

High rollers of the era, including gangster Al Capone, were known to frequently use the route, so Radium Springs would be operated as a club instead of a community facility. Membership was marketed as being, "specially designed for a select class of discriminating investors." Dues were advertised as being reasonable and "much less than taxes in a reasonable community."

Unfortunately, the timing of the casino's construction could not have been worse. The Great Depression, which started in 1929, resulted in a massive economic collapse, destroying the tourist activity that Collier and Huckabee were dependent upon for the club's success. Although the anticipated influx of rich Yankees was greatly reduced, Radium Springs quickly grew a strong regional following.

The resort's survival during this tough economic period is credited to strong management by manager Floyd Alford, who worked tirelessly with the local Chamber of Commerce to promote the resort as well as touting the golf course through the Georgia Golf Association. Alford even managed to attract actress Ethel Barrymore to stay at Radium when he heard she was coming to perform in Albany.

Although many of the owners' grandiose plans were never

developed, the golf course and clubhouse were completed and were very popular. Golfing great Bobby Jones played a tournament on the course. He also played the course when he was quail hunting in the area.

An infamous match was played on the course when boxing great Joe Louis came to Albany in 1941. Louis played a match against King Solomon Minor, a popular caddy at the golf course. Minor won the game and reportedly won the \$43,000 wager made by local golfers who backed him. The match was an ironic contest considering the segregated rules of the club at the time.

For 50 years, Radium Springs would provide the setting for balls, proms, weddings and civic functions, including the Cotton and Debutante balls. Swimming, golf, and tennis were popular, and the restaurant achieved wide regional acclaim. But it never achieved the status envisioned by Collier.

During World War II, the club was leased by the U.S. Air Force and used as the Officer's Club. Following the war, the property was in disrepair, and the growing influx of new residents in the region had no ties or attraction to Radium. In 1944, a group of investors led by Richard Tift, a local real estate developer responsible for assembling many of the shooting preserves in the region, purchased the property from Collier.

For two more decades, Radium had numerous owners. In 1981, G.H. Manley and Charles Finleyand



Artifacts from various eras are common in Radium Springs' waters. Photos by Jason Voorhes



purchased the property with the goal of returning the casino and other amenities on the property back to their former grandeur. However, fate had a different plan. On May 24, 1982, a catastrophic fire started by the casino's antiquated wiring devastated the landmark. Flames were already coming from the roof when firefighters arrived at 4 a.m. to fight the blaze. When the sun came up, the devastation of the building was startling.

Hundreds of Albanians drove by to see the destruction. After much soul searching, Manley bought out Findley's half-interest in the property and began a decadelong restoration project at a cost of \$1.2 million. These efforts were buoyed by the formation of the Radium Springs Preservation Group Inc., which was founded in 1989.

Sadly, as these efforts neared fruition, a second disaster struck the casino. On July 5, 1994, the Flint flooded to record levels. What would later be recognized as a "500-year flood" had devastated the ground floor of the recently restored casino. And, although many in the community rallied behind an effort led by Morgan Murphy to once again save Radium Springs, mother nature put an end to any realistic hope of recovery. A second record flood in 1998 once again devastated the property.

In 2000, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources purchased a 7-mile stretch along the east bank of the Flint, including the property at Radium Springs, excluding the casino.

A more lasting and historical story surrounding the property lies approximately 18 feet below the outline of the casino's original footprint. Here is where the waters of the upper Floridan aquifer rush through subterranean caverns before boiling to the surface.

The allure of the cavern's opening has been a focus of fascination for centuries. Visitors to the casino routinely tossed silver coins into the spring's boil in hopes that a dream might come true.

At the same time, young divers leapt from the rocks or walls surrounding the boil, attempting to retrieve the coins. Obviously, many

were enthralled by the cavern's entrance. It would not be until the advent of SCUBA gear that anyone could actually enter the cavern and discover the secrets held inside. Unfortunately, for the most part early diving gear that was developed was far from adequate for the challenges of cave diving.

The inadequacy of the gear was tragically proven on May 15, 1955, when The Albany Herald reported that Navy Lt. Murray Anderson from Fort Valley, Georgia, "met his death in the grotesque underwater cavern." Anderson was diving with friend Donald Gerue, two of four divers who'd formed a new dive club. The pair of divers had 25 minutes of air in their tanks with a 5-minute emergency supply.

When Gerue realized that Anderson had not returned to the surface after their dive, he unsuccessfully attempted to re-enter the cavern. He estimated that they had penetrated to a point about 200 feet into the cavern. The following day, a team of Navy divers were flown in from Charleston, S.C., was to retrieve the body. They were able to recover Anderson's body, reporting that it was a difficult process due to the strong currents in the cavern.

After this tragedy, the cavern was closed to divers. Unfortunately, five years later, two divers ignored the restriction. After being told they could not dive, they entered the opening of the cavern surreptitiously. When lifeguard Ronnie Fountain realized the deception, he attempted to go after them. His efforts proved unsuccessful.

When the pair did not return, Fountain and Jerry Lindsey recovered the body of one diver. Seventeen-year-old Vic Miller used the lost diver's SCUBA gear to recover the second body. It would not be until the 1980s when world-renowned cave divers Paul DeLoach and Sheck Exley led a series of dives to map the extent of the caves below the casino. In 1982, they published a map documenting 1,532 feet of their exploration. The farthest point they reached was 1,208 feet from the entrance at the boil.

As they ran their safety lines measuring distances and mapping

their route, they gave descriptive names to the features they discovered, including Hall of Giants, Mermaid's Tunnel, Fat Man's Misery and Neptune's Trident.

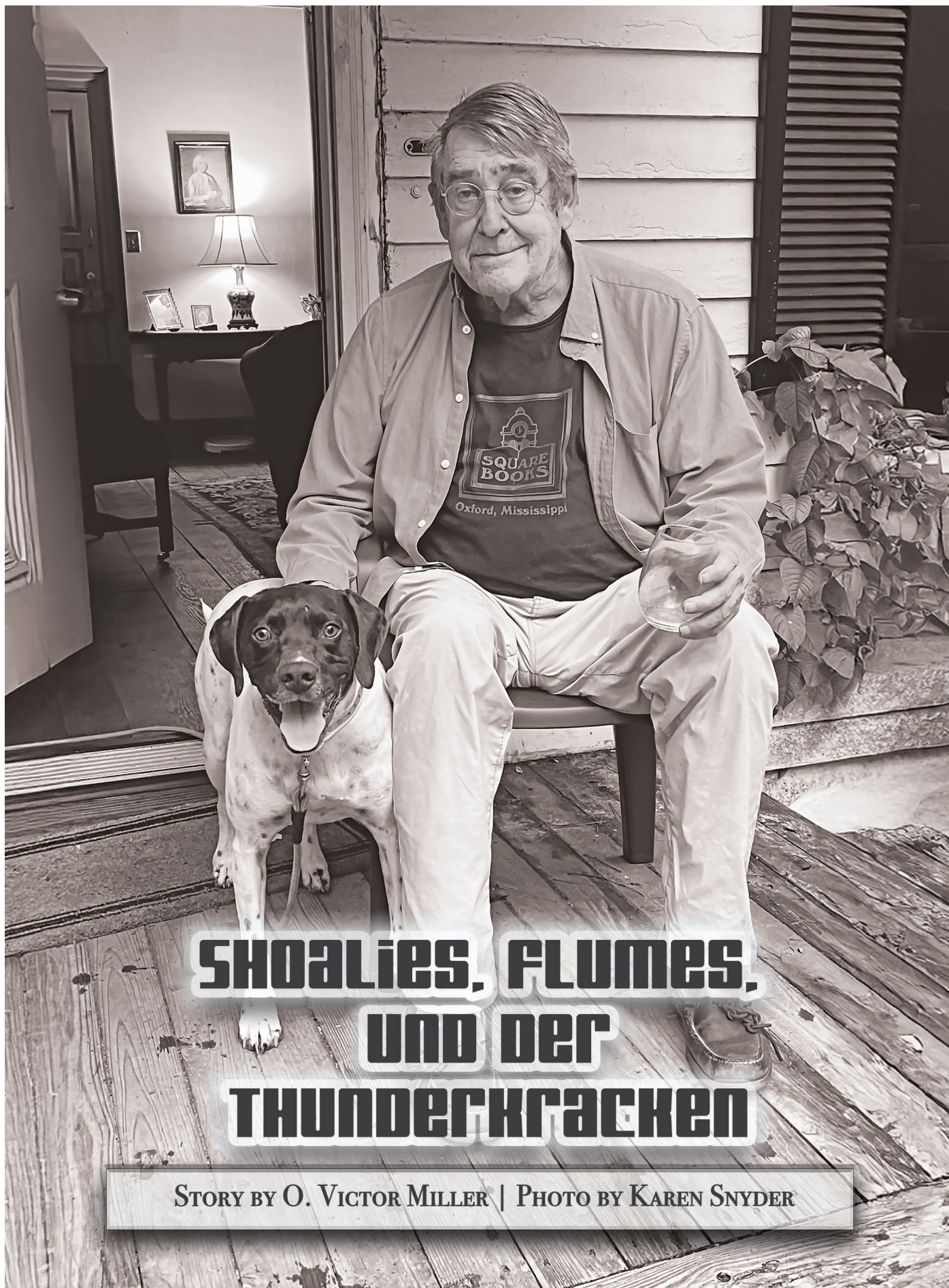
In 2017, divers extended their guidelines another 400 feet into the northern source at 1,932 feet for a total mapping of 2,608 feet. It would not be until March 18, 2025, that a team of divers from Karst Underwater Research would extend these lines farther. The four divers from Karst recently explored the cavern utilizing fully redundant life support systems as well as staged SCUBA cylinders that were placed throughout the cave for added safety.

All members of the Karst team are certified cave divers with numerous hours of experience as well as many being experienced cartographers, explorers and photographers. They inspected the lines placed by DeLoach and Exley and ran additional lines marking their extended penetration. They proceeded upstream, documenting the fauna they found with observations and photography.

The cavern is inhabited by a number of rare species, including Georgia blind salamanders, Dougherty plain cave crayfish, channel catfish, American eel, Caecidotea cave isopod, and redeye chub. The team spent a total of 16 hours in the 66-degree water. During the dives, they collected five Dougherty plain cave crayfish and five Georgia blind salamanders, which were taken to the surface for further study, then returned.

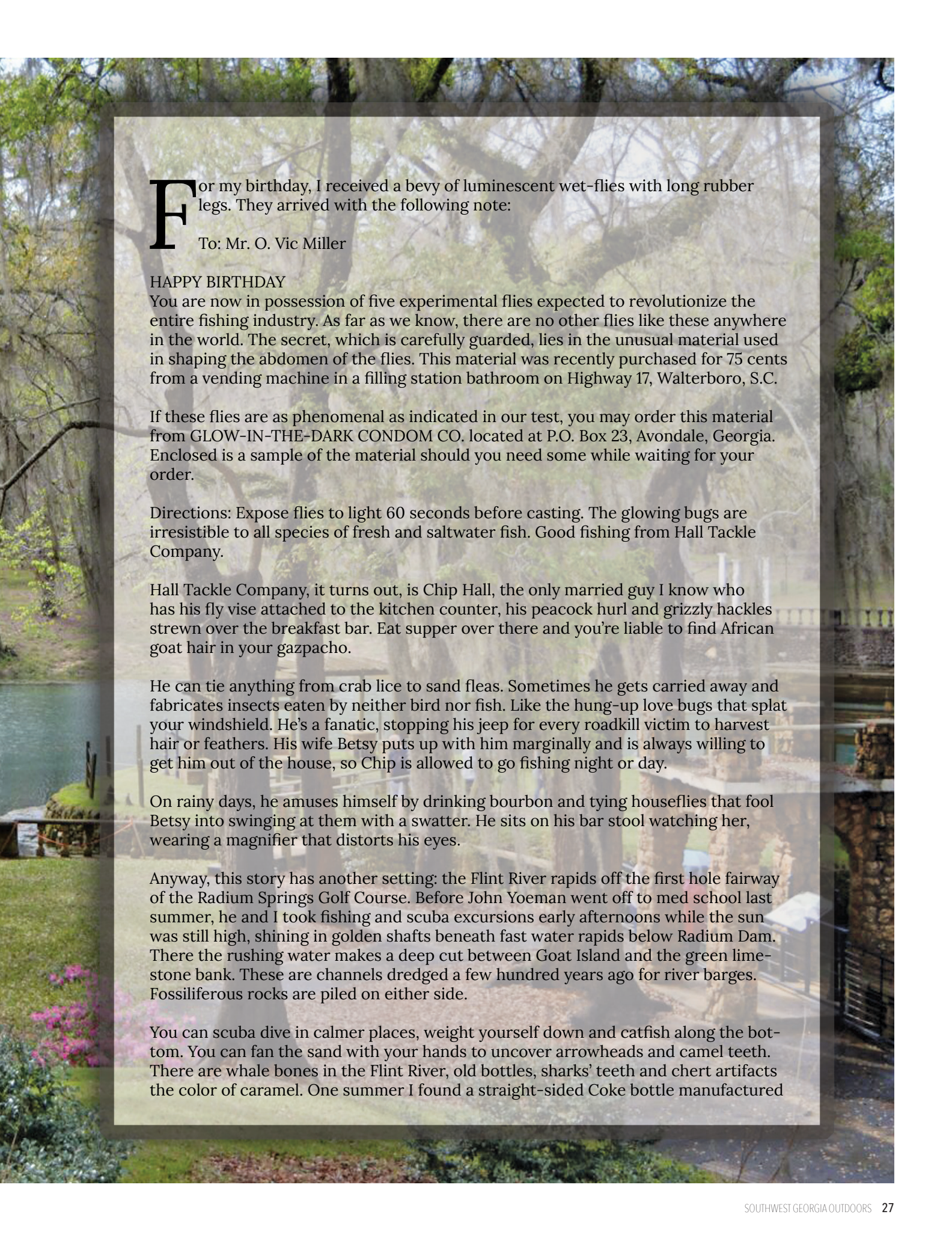
The divers completed a species count of the fauna they observed, and although the general public is currently banned from swimming and diving in the spring, Radium Springs Garden is open to the public under the management of Dougherty County Public Works. A fishing pond, hiking and biking trails, and observation decks are open to the public.

For information on using these amenities or booking a special event there, go to www.dougherty.ga.us/VisitorsCommunity/Things-To-Do/Parks-Recreation.



SHOALIES, FLUMES, UND DER THUNDERKRACKEN

STORY BY O. VICTOR MILLER | PHOTO BY KAREN SNYDER



For my birthday, I received a bevy of luminescent wet-flies with long rubber legs. They arrived with the following note:

To: Mr. O. Vic Miller

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

You are now in possession of five experimental flies expected to revolutionize the entire fishing industry. As far as we know, there are no other flies like these anywhere in the world. The secret, which is carefully guarded, lies in the unusual material used in shaping the abdomen of the flies. This material was recently purchased for 75 cents from a vending machine in a filling station bathroom on Highway 17, Walterboro, S.C.

If these flies are as phenomenal as indicated in our test, you may order this material from GLOW-IN-THE-DARK CONDOM CO. located at P.O. Box 23, Avondale, Georgia. Enclosed is a sample of the material should you need some while waiting for your order.

Directions: Expose flies to light 60 seconds before casting. The glowing bugs are irresistible to all species of fresh and saltwater fish. Good fishing from Hall Tackle Company.

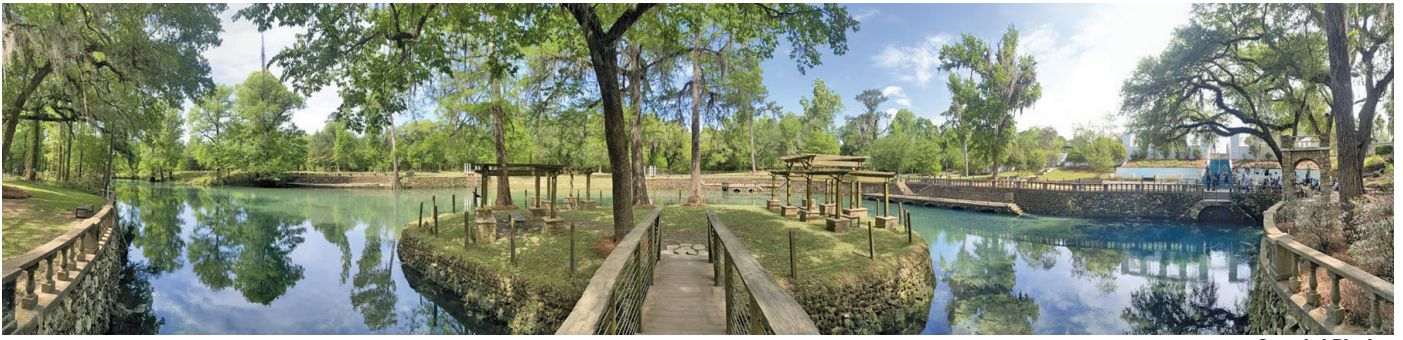
Hall Tackle Company, it turns out, is Chip Hall, the only married guy I know who has his fly vise attached to the kitchen counter, his peacock hurl and grizzly hackles strewn over the breakfast bar. Eat supper over there and you're liable to find African goat hair in your gazpacho.

He can tie anything from crab lice to sand fleas. Sometimes he gets carried away and fabricates insects eaten by neither bird nor fish. Like the hung-up love bugs that splat your windshield. He's a fanatic, stopping his jeep for every roadkill victim to harvest hair or feathers. His wife Betsy puts up with him marginally and is always willing to get him out of the house, so Chip is allowed to go fishing night or day.

On rainy days, he amuses himself by drinking bourbon and tying houseflies that fool Betsy into swinging at them with a swatter. He sits on his bar stool watching her, wearing a magnifier that distorts his eyes.

Anyway, this story has another setting: the Flint River rapids off the first hole fairway of the Radium Springs Golf Course. Before John Yoeman went off to med school last summer, he and I took fishing and scuba excursions early afternoons while the sun was still high, shining in golden shafts beneath fast water rapids below Radium Dam. There the rushing water makes a deep cut between Goat Island and the green limestone bank. These are channels dredged a few hundred years ago for river barges. Fossiliferous rocks are piled on either side.

You can scuba dive in calmer places, weight yourself down and catfish along the bottom. You can fan the sand with your hands to uncover arrowheads and camel teeth. There are whale bones in the Flint River, old bottles, sharks' teeth and chert artifacts the color of caramel. One summer I found a straight-sided Coke bottle manufactured



Special Photos

There are all kinds of treasures to be found in the waters of the Flint River.

in Albany before 1912, according to John Temp Phillips, a collector.

There's lots of wonderful junk in the Flint River

Late summer, when the water table drops and artesian springs make up a higher ratio of river water, the Flint turns jade. If you dive the deep holes with a flashlight, you can come face to face with monstrous flathead catfish, and in the springs, where layers of cold water blanket the limestone bottom, big rock-fish — stripers, some 50 pounds -- circle like gray ghosts, their eyes the size of baseballs.

Shoal bass haunt the rapids, wonderful fish that fight like rainbows on amphetamine, strong from life in the fast water. I buckled on a scuba tank and two weight belts and cat-fished near the upstream mouth of the deep channel beneath the first hole, exploring the crevasses, crawling hand over fist over the limestone boulders along the bottom of the trough while John went downstream, where he hooked and landed a mullet on a top-water plug.

John caught the mullet while I was hanging on for dear life to the corner of a limestone boulder, flapping like a flag some 20 feet beneath the surface, trying not to get sucked into the pipeline trench cut for antebellum barges. I was careful not to turn my profile to the rushing water, which had the power to smear my lips and rip off my mask. Getting tired I wished I'd entered quieter water to look for treasure.

Suddenly the corner of the boulder broke off, and I washed loose, tumbling down the

flume, my scuba tank clanging against limestone and flint. I couldn't fight the current, and I was too weighted down with lead to swim, so I tucked and rolled, protecting my head with my forearms as I shot the flume, whizzing along the amber lunar landscape. I knew I'd wash the length of the first hole fairway. Then I'd crawl to quieter water, surface and yell for John to come downstream to get me. I had plenty of air to just go with the flow, so I relaxed and concentrated on dodging rocks until I was swarmed by shoal bass, some really big ones, which kept up with me as I tumbled and boinked, banking off rocks. I decided to come back here some day to fish.

"It was the craziest thing I ever saw," I told everybody who'd listen. "Those bass followed me the length of the first hole fairway, some 300 yards."

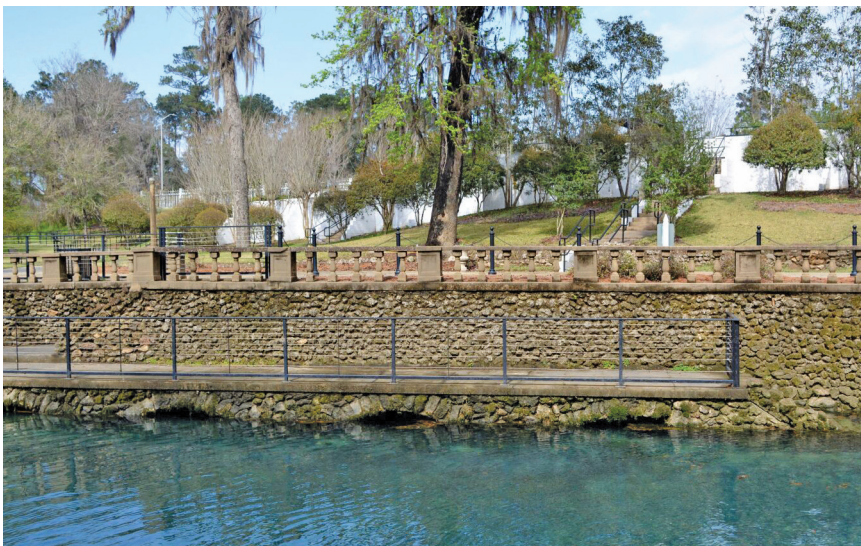
"You damn fool," Chip said, "you were knocking gator fleas loose from the bottom and the shoal bass were feeding on them. You were chumming them up."

"Gator fleas?"

"Yeah, the larval stage of the Dobson fly, hellgrammites. Shoal bass love them."

"All we got to do," I told Chip during my next trip to his kitchen, "is drag a logging chain behind the john boat to chum up the shoalies."

The chain, I figured, would serve the double purpose of slowing us down in the fast water and breaking loose hellgrammites. They ought to hit a fly, I figured, tied like a hellgrammite.



Special Photos

The "tamer" part of Radium Springs' cool waters are home to magnificent creatures.

"They ought to hit a fly tied like anything," Chip said, "especially if it glows in the dark." "Can you tie hellgrammites?" I asked. His eyes focused out about 200 yards beyond the refrigerator and he nodded once, fiddling through some black goose quills on the counter.

"He can tie anything," Betsy affirmed. As soon as the water level got right, we fastened a chain to the carrying handle of the john boat and hooked up the trailer, making a single pitstop to shave some white belly hairs off a flattened possum. We put in at the marine ditch and motored south, passing Radium Dam where I'd squandered the principal and interest of my childhood.

My childhood pals and I started diving in the Flint during the late 1950s, and I never quite got it out of my system. We figure there's something addictive in the chemicals that wash in there from industry and agriculture. Before that, Joe Lord, who was married to Marvin's and Shirley's mamma, fished every afternoon beneath the Romanesque stone arches of Radium Dam, where the cold blue water from the springs splashed like lace over the floodgates and marbled into the brown river.

I can see Joe now in his khaki shirt and trousers, a permanent fixture in the shade among the cypress knees, catching shellcrackers and eels from the mottled water, eels that were

born in the Sargasso Sea, they say. Joe always tolerated our splashing, shouting and rock skipping with a stoic acceptance nonexistent among modern adults. He never got a bite when we were around, but on Wednesday afternoons he'd even allow me and Bobby Franck to hang around. At dusk he'd roll up his bamboo poles, mount them on the brackets above the windows of his green 1947 Dodge and chug by us on the dirt road as we walked home to supper.

The only problem with the chain, besides the mind-shattering clatter, was we were chumming up the shoal bass behind us, creating a feeding frenzy beyond our casting range.

"We need two boats," I observed as happy bass frolicked in our wake, "one for the chumming and one to fish."

Our hindered movement down the roaring rapids made us feel like we were going backwards. We cast flies into braided water, where I'd once found a flint knife. Suddenly the sky darkened and we were shrouded in thick shadow. Above us loomed a puffy cloud shaped and colored like the bruised buttocks of a Sumo wrestler, cleft darkly through the center. "That's a pretty bad looking cloud," said Chip.

"Smell that rain!"

"That's ozone. Fish bite better in a barometric low just before a storm."

"We're liable to get wet."

"Since when did you start worrying about getting wet?"

Veins of heat lightning illuminated the cloven cloud, pink as a peach. Flatulent thunder followed. It was as though we were threatened by the fiery bowels of some sky deity. Then we became enveloped in strange phenomena. When Chip cast his fly line, it remained horizontally suspended in the charged air over the water, the tip-pet actually rising above the leader, his Caddis fly hovering as though it had come to life.

Our eyes met in disbelief. Had Chip finally tied a Caddis fly accurately enough to bridge the Platonic chasm between real and ideal? Had he created the soul of Caddis, fabricated from dun hackles and fine gold wire? Had Chip's creation animated itself? We both felt a tingle, which we misinterpreted as spiritual ecstasy derived from a witnessed miracle.

As we marveled with unhinged jaws, the airborne Caddis snapped like a firecracker in a curl of white smoke, and I realized that we were feeling the charged air of celestial electricity polarizing between the tip of Chip's graphite Orvis, through my metal boat, to the last link of the chain that grounded us to the rocky bottom of the Flint River. Positive streamers waved, strokes and return strokes of Elmo's fire.

Chip said the subsequent surge of current rolled my lips into a hideous rictus baring my teeth, which glowed luminescent green like the wet flies he'd tied from condoms. He also said he saw and heard the spark of galvanic electricity that synapsed the gap between fillings in my upper and lower molars, melting the amalgamate and leaving smoking cavities the diameter of my dentist's drill.

"Yaaaaah!" I cried, blowing smoke. My feet began to boogie on their own as my gluteus maxima twitched like frog legs in lemon juice. The sudden charge, he testified, did wonderful things to my neck hackles, which bristled, fizzed, and kinked like steel wool touched off with a match. My thick eyebrows, he said, backlashed.

Albany native and retired English professor O. Vic Miller lives and writes in his childhood home on the banks of the Flint River, where he is both haunted and entertained by ghosts and reminisces about his many decades of outdoor (mis)adventure. This short story is from his award-winning collection "Buzzard Luck," available at the Albany Welcome Center and on Amazon.

The only thing that kept us from frying like grasshoppers was our providential drift over a hole deeper than the length of the chain, which fell plumb without reaching the bottom, although two flathead catfish were shocked belly up to the surface.

"That was close," Chip said. "Take me to shore; I don't want to be late for church."



"It's Saturday."

"Maybe we can find a synagogue."

I cranked my Johnson and hauled in the logging chain, which still tingled my hands. We sped upstream, careening through river rocks, hell bent on reaching

the neutrally charged landing as the slanting rain chased us up the channel. The river birch and cypress knees flickered like pickets, and Chip's jowls flapped in the wind. I mumbled Bible verses as the tip of my tongue explored warm molars.

We passed the first hole rapids at Radium Country Club and Radium Dam, where the deluge caught up with us. Through the gray rain I could almost make out Joe Lord in his khakis, as though the close encounter had zapped me back to my childhood. The same lacy water poured over the mossy floodgates, and the same scab-bark sycamores and tortured cypress trunks leaned over the stippled chop. I blamed our close call on Chip's hubris of tying flies that were too damn real. It's not nice to play God or screw with Mother Nature. Just look what happened to chain-shackled Prometheus and prideful Victor Frankenstein, who set out to vitalize inanimate objects.

It's said that a 50,000-degree lightning bolt nuked some organic soup 4 billion years ago and provided the nutrients that evolved into human meat, so it seems appropriate that a higher power took Her best shot at Chip and missed, sending a high-voltage hint for me to continue tying flies that look like dust balls under the sofa and to watch out who I fish with during afternoon thundershowers.

BIG BASS

CAPITAL OF THE WORLD



Article by Tom Seegmueller | Submitted photos



Special Photos

Whether fishing on its banks or in its impressive expanse, Lake Eufala is an angler's Eden.

Disputes over a shared fishing location are nothing new. However, when that location is a 45,000-acre lake straddling a couple of state lines, things can quickly go to another level.

In 1957, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers began building a dam on banks of the Chattahoochee River. The neighborly dispute began when the reservoir was named for Walter F. George, a United States Senator from Georgia. To say Alabamians were not pleased with the name would be an understatement.

The rising waters behind the dam flooded numerous small rural communities, historic sites and standing timber, creating almost 700 miles of shoreline with channel depths exceeding 100 feet in some spots. It wasn't long before the lake began to develop a reputation as a bass anglers paradise.

The animosity over the lake's name came to

a head in 1963 when the Alabama legislature passed a resolution recognizing the reservoir as Lake Eufaula after the Alabama town of Eufaula, 20 miles north of the dam on the Alabama side. The name is derived from the Creek word "yufala," meaning "high bluff" or "red bluff," an obvious choice when the town is first viewed from the east. Another interpretation is "they separated here and went to other places," a possible reference to the site's association with the Trail of Tears.

With the stroke of a pen, the channel of the flooded Chattahoochee River basin became the dividing line of this regional dispute. Although the dispute may seem trivial today, it has deep roots.

Stuntman and professional fisherman Jerry Nolan learned just how deep when, during an early episode of his outdoor show "Strollin' With Nolan," he inadvertently mentioned going over to Eufaula.



Special Photos

The 45,000 acres of Lake Eufaula straddles the Georgia and Florida state lines.

"I got a phone call from a major sponsor informing me, 'Lake Eufaula don't exist. It's Walter F. George and it don't belong to Alabama. They asked me if I liked my check and informed me that if I called it Eufaula one more time it was over.'"

Jake Maddux, a young professional tournament angler and guide, is well-aware of Eufaula's storied history.

"Back in the day, it wasn't catch and release," Maddux said. "Everyone kept the fish. They had a 15-fish limit at the tournaments then. I think the record stringer was 140 pounds. That's like a 9-pound average. Which is insane."

"I think that tournament is what actually got Ray Scott to begin thinking about needing to do something about conservation."

Although the average-size bass now caught on the lake has decreased, Maddux went on to explain that rules changes introduced by Bassmaster influenced changes that are improving fisheries today.

Ray Scott organized the Bass Anglers Sportsman Society in 1968, promoting bass fishing and organizing the new sport of tournament bass

fishing through Bassmaster magazine. Although the organization didn't originate at Lake Eufaula, the tournaments he organized there put a national spotlight on the lake. Scott once stated that his initial goal was to raise the image of bass fishing "to be on par with golf." He succeeded, creating a sport fishing industry with a \$125 billion impact that today employs 800,000 people.

At the same time Scott's tournaments were drawing national attention to the lake, an Alabama Game Warden, Tom Mann, moved his lure manufacturing side gig to the city of Eufaula. Here Mann not only promoted his lures but the lake as the "Bass Fishing Capital of the World."

Mann is credited with numerous innovations related to bass fishing. However, one of his most significant was "Mann's Jelly Worm," which he first manufactured in his home kitchen. Each worm had a distinct color combination and was dipped in a fruit flavor oil to further enhance its fish attracting ability.

Nolan, a close friend and recreational and professional fishing partner of Mann's, recalls him walking onto the stage during one of his many fishing seminars asking, "What's your favorite color worm? You know why we make so many colors? Because you ask for them."

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Mann knew he was catching fishermen with each new creation. He was as much a showman as a fisherman, a characteristic shared by both Nolan and Mann. The two met when Nolan visited Mann's sports shop and the attached "Fish World Museum." The museum was a mixture of fishing collectibles and Indian artifacts surrounding a 38,000-gallon freshwater aquarium that was the home of Leroy Brown.

Mann caught Leroy while fishing Lake Eufaula. Feeling the fish was special, and his attitude reminded Mann of Jim Croce's song "Bad, Bad, Leroy Brown," Mann decided to take the scrappy 1-pound juvenile bass to his museum. Mann's assumptions about Leroy Brown were correct, and he would live at the museum for seven years before dying. More than 1,200 people attended the funeral for Mann's beloved bass, and condolences were received from celebrities including Hank Williams and Porter Wagoner.

While Mann would fish with whatever tackle he desired, he is noted for fishing aggressively with minimal tackle.

"He used an aggravating presentation," Nolan said. "He was always honest, reminding me it wasn't about the bait it was about the presentation. (He felt) you can throw anything, and they will hit it if you make them mad."

The night before a major celebrity tournament, the pair would often fish together. Mann once told Nolan, "Go to



sleep; those fish don't know who's throwing the bait."

When Mann died in 2005, the family asked Nolan to give his friend's eulogy.

A quarter-century after his death, many fishermen are unaware of Mann's involvement with what may be his most significant contribution to the world of sport fishing. In 1971 Mann founded Humminbird, credited with the development of the first "fish finder." Over the decades, the company has pioneered major innovations in the sport fishing sonar industry.

Today's fish finders used by Maddux and recreational anglers are a long way from the early depth finders. These live scope or forward-facing sonar contraptions allow anglers to virtually see structure and individual fish. The technology provides today's tournament and recreational anglers detailed insight into not only fish location and activity but the ability to target individual fish and observe their reaction to the baits being presented to them.

"It makes everything more precise," Maddux said. "I can really break down a body of water so much faster. There are so many seasonal techniques we thought we knew. We thought fish went into shallow waters to bed and they sat around the bank for guarding.

"Now I can see fish spawning in 8 to 12 feet of water on live scope and forward facing sonar, adding, I can say 'OK it's March and these fish should be spawning.' I can see where the bait fish are and what they are. I can see that there are a lot of shad there or bluegills. I get a better understanding of what's going on."

The equipment also obviously allows anglers to know where bass are holding up. Maddux said he believes that accuracy in bait presentation is becoming more important.

"Five years ago, if you got a bait within 20 feet of a fish, he was gonna run over and eat it," he said. "Nowadays if you miss by a foot, they're not gonna bite."

Live scope fishing provides details to the degree that allows an angler to actually observe their lure and the fish's reaction to it.



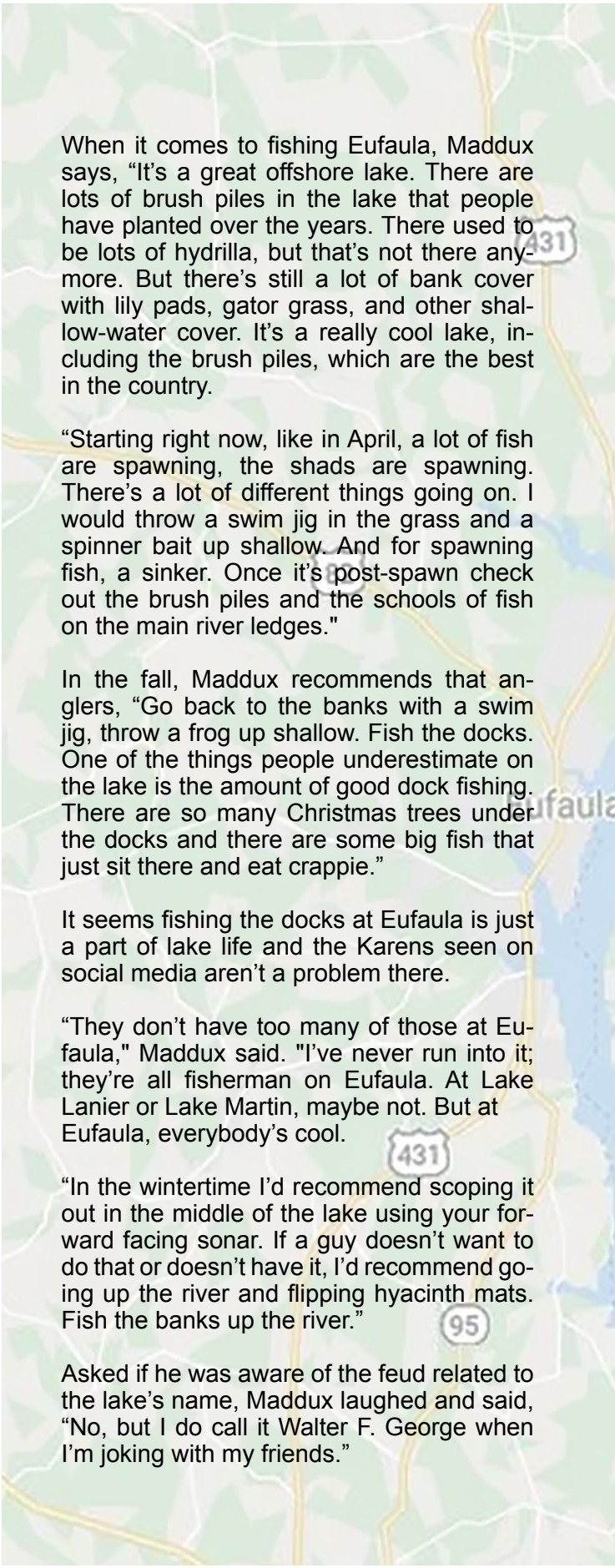
Special Photos

A monument near Lake Eufala honors bass-fishing innovator Tom Mann.



Special Photos

Lake Eufala has been designated the big bass capital of the world.



When it comes to fishing Eufaula, Maddux says, "It's a great offshore lake. There are lots of brush piles in the lake that people have planted over the years. There used to be lots of hydrilla, but that's not there anymore. But there's still a lot of bank cover with lily pads, gator grass, and other shallow-water cover. It's a really cool lake, including the brush piles, which are the best in the country."

"Starting right now, like in April, a lot of fish are spawning, the shads are spawning. There's a lot of different things going on. I would throw a swim jig in the grass and a spinner bait up shallow. And for spawning fish, a sinker. Once it's post-spawn check out the brush piles and the schools of fish on the main river ledges."

In the fall, Maddux recommends that anglers, "Go back to the banks with a swim jig, throw a frog up shallow. Fish the docks. One of the things people underestimate on the lake is the amount of good dock fishing. There are so many Christmas trees under the docks and there are some big fish that just sit there and eat crappie."

It seems fishing the docks at Eufaula is just a part of lake life and the Karens seen on social media aren't a problem there.

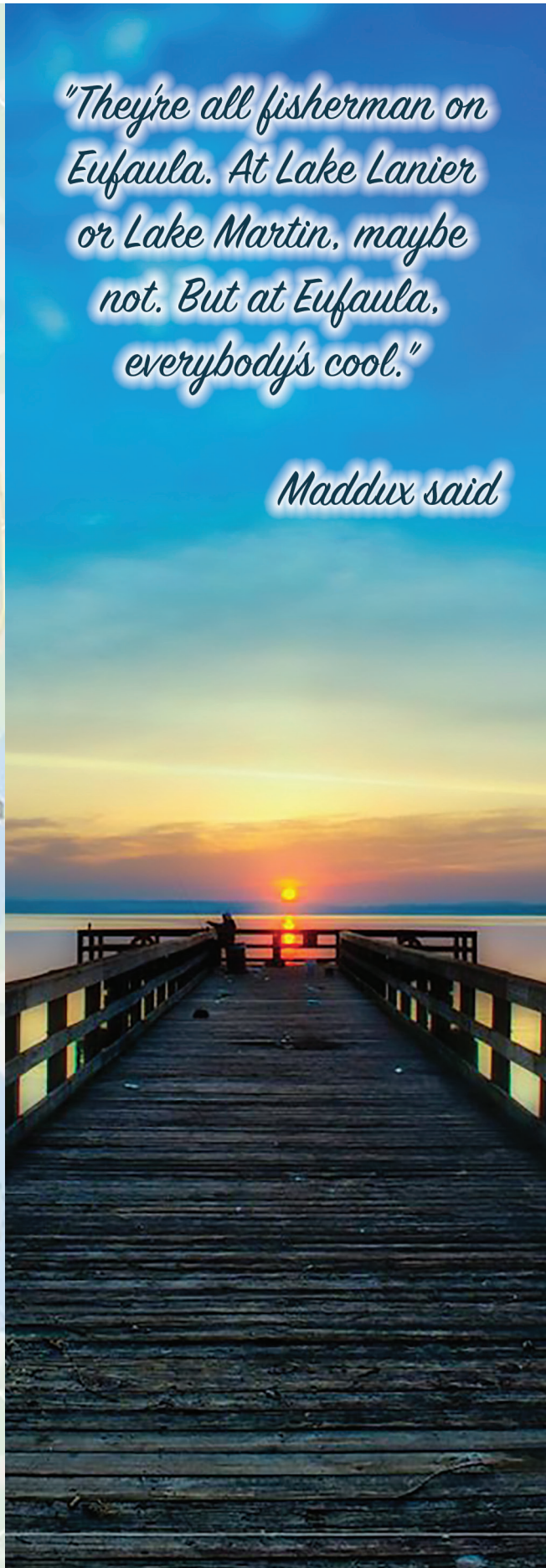
"They don't have too many of those at Eufaula," Maddux said. "I've never run into it; they're all fisherman on Eufaula. At Lake Lanier or Lake Martin, maybe not. But at Eufaula, everybody's cool."

"In the wintertime I'd recommend scoping it out in the middle of the lake using your forward facing sonar. If a guy doesn't want to do that or doesn't have it, I'd recommend going up the river and flipping hyacinth mats. Fish the banks up the river."

Asked if he was aware of the feud related to the lake's name, Maddux laughed and said, "No, but I do call it Walter F. George when I'm joking with my friends."

"They're all fisherman on Eufaula. At Lake Lanier or Lake Martin, maybe not. But at Eufaula, everybody's cool."

Maddux said





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Birds-and-Bees **HEART-TO-HEART**

Story & Photos by Tara Fletcher



Most of us had that right of passage, birds-and-bees conversation when we were pretty young. As awkward as it was, the information was necessary and, depending on who gave it to you, helpful.

And although we're older now and we've pretty much got a handle on all of that stuff, I think it may be time for another birds-and-bees heart-to-heart.

I noticed several years ago that I didn't see fireflies very often and definitely not in the numbers I'd watched as a child. "Doodle-bugs," as we used to call them, were now nowhere to be found, I hadn't seen love bugs "love buggin'" in years, and the flocks of Robins I once saw in spring were just a few birds here and there.

If you've noticed similar things, I want to assure you, it is not your imagination.

According to science.org, in the U.S. in the past 15 years, bee colonies have declined 62.5%, national butterfly populations have decreased by 57.6% and in the past decade eight bird species have been confirmed extinct or near extinction. These aren't the only casualties of nature. The list is long and, frankly, scary.

Some people may see these flying, buzzing creatures as nuisances, but they are vital to our health and survival.

"Birds tell us that we have a full-on emergency across all habitats," Marshall Johnson of the National Audubon Society said. "When the bird community is healthy, it is an indicator that the environment is well. And when that community shows stress and decline, we're in trouble."

For those who don't think birds are helpful, think about this: A study of 9,000 turkey vultures (conducted by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife) found that in one year, the wake of buzzards disposed of approximately 1,000 tons of organic waste. They, along with other birds like crows and ravens, not only clean up other dead animals, they effectively reduce the spread of diseases.



One Caption for all photos: Butterflies and bees are among nature's most prominent pollinators.



Various flying creatures are vital to the continued existence of humans.

That's not all birds do for the environment. A recent study at Sao Paulo's Institute of Biosciences determined that more than 70% of plant species that produce flowers depend on birds to disperse their seeds. Through droppings and transporting of seeds that stick to their bodies, birds are major contributors to reforestation.

Insects are also decreasing in number. It is estimated that the insect population has declined by 75% in less than three decades and is dying off at a rate of 2.5% per year, eight times faster than mammals, reptiles and birds.

Like birds, insects are part of nature's first-string cleanup crew. By feeding on animal carcasses, they help recycle organic matter, and that matter becomes healthy soil. Insects are crucial to the food chain, providing a food source to many other species, and are critical in the pollination process. An economic impact study by the University of Georgia determined that the value of insect pollination in the state is \$360 million annually.

Bees are the insect poster child for pollination. Bees alone pollinate one-third of the food we eat and 80% of the world's flowering plants. Honeybees produce honey, beeswax, royal jelly and pol-

len bread. If that wasn't enough, the venom of these buzzing beauties is being used in various medical treatments.

These extraordinary insects also are being used by military agencies around the world to detect bombs and drugs, and they can detect Tuberculosis in human females.

"The decline of bees is caused by mankind; beekeepers accidentally killing bees is a major problem and so are pesticides," Dale Richter, owner/operator of The Buzz Fuzz, said, noting that planting pollinator-friendly plants is something we all can do to support our local bee population.

What insects and birds do for us is life-sustaining, and in return we are killing them with poison, by destroying their habitats, and through climate change.

Those who claim they don't care about the bugs or the animals that eat the bugs should consider this: According to entomologist.net, "Without insects, human beings would begin dying of starvation and lung disease. Once insects disappear from the Earth, all life will be gone in less than a century."



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Fried Quail

WITH GRITS AND GREENS

Photography by Tucker Greenfield

Wild Game Recipe: So Good



In addition to the winter, spring, summer and fall seasons, south Georgia has a few others including, tornado, football, planting and oyster. A good way to remember oyster season is any month that has the letter R in it - September - April.

Our close proximity to the Gulf Coast makes fresh oysters a big part of our food culture.

Fresh eggs are easy to get here, too. If you don't have a couple of chickens in your backyard, there's a good chance one of your neighbors does or there's a fresh egg stand nearby.

The combination of these two regional favorites is a match made in Southern heaven with this recipe contribution from local restaurateur Bo Henry:

Recipes influenced and created by Stewbos team members Lynn Ranew Mertins, Todd White, Catherine Jackson, Willie Jackson, Ed Tedder, Tucker Greenfield, Stewart Campbell, and Bo Henry.

Appetizers

Deviled Egg

Topped with a Fried Oyster

1. Deviled Egg
 - Boil 12 eggs for 10-12 minutes
 - Once your eggs are cooked, remove the shells. Use a knife to slice them in half, length-wise.
 - Scoop out the yolks and place into a small bowl.
 - Add 1/2 cup of mayonnaise, 1 tablespoon of Dijon mustard, 1 tablespoon of pickle juice, 2 tablespoons of sweet pickle relish and salt/pepper to taste.
 - Once your egg mixture is complete, add a spoonful back into each of your egg white halves, sprinkle with smoked paprika and refrigerate.
2. Seafood Breading
 - In a mid-sized container, combine the fol-

lowing ingredients and mix thoroughly for your breading:

- 1 1/2 cups yellow cornmeal
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. Old Bay seasoning
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. smoked paprika
- 1 tsp. salt

3. Fried Oyster

- Once your deviled eggs are ready, get your fry oil going to 350 degrees.
- In a small bowl, pour 2 cups of buttermilk for a milk bath for the oysters
- Dip your shucked oyster into the milk bath, then lightly toss in your seafood breading
- Gently lay your oysters into the oil and let cook for 2-3 minutes or until crispy golden brown
- Once your oysters are cooked, add one to the top of each one of your deviled eggs and enjoy.



Entrée:

4. Entrée:

Fried Quail

with Grits and Greens

(Serves 4 Portions)

A. Grits

- In a pot, add 2 cups of water and 2 cups of heavy whipping cream, then bring to a boil
- Add in 1 cup of stone-ground grits and whisk thoroughly to prevent lumps
- While you whisk, add in 8 tbsp. of butter, 1 tsp. white pepper, 1 tsp. of kosher salt, and 1 cup of sharp cheddar cheese
- Once grits are cooked, set aside

B. Greens

- You will need approximately 1 large bunch of fresh collard greens.
- Prep the greens: Wash them thoroughly; remove the tough center stems, then slice the leaves into thick ribbons.
- In a large pot, heat 1 tbsp. of olive oil over medium heat. Add 3-4 slices of diced thick-cut bacon or smoked meat and cook until bacon is crispy or meat is rendered (about 5-7 mins). Add in 1 small diced yellow onion and cook until softened, about 3 minutes.

-- Once onion is softened, add in seasoning, 1 tsp. garlic salt and 1 tsp. red pepper flakes

-- Add in 4 cups of chicken broth to the pot and bring to a boil. Stir in the collard greens. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for 45-60 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the greens are tender.

- Once reduced and softened, salt/pepper to taste.

C. Fried Quail

Brading for Quail, add together in a mid-size container and mix thoroughly

- 2 cups flour
- ½ cup corn starch
- 1 tsp. onion powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. smoked paprika.

Frying your Quail

- Get your fry oil going to 350 degrees
- Get your 8 whole quail (2 per person) and dip each one in buttermilk, then toss in your brading
- Fry for 7-8 mins or until internal temp reaches 165 degrees
- Once cooked set aside to cool until plating

D. Sauce

- In a small blender, add 4oz. (with juice) of roasted red peppers, 1 tbsp. honey, and a pinch of salt/pepper; blend thoroughly until smooth and add to a squirt bottle.

Plating

- In the center of your plate, add a scoop of grits, then use the back of your scoop to press the grits into a “birds nest” shape.
- In the center of your “nest,” add desired amount of greens
- Then place 2 of the whole fried quail on top of the greens
- Drizzle your sauce around the edge of your grits and atop of the quail and enjoy (biscuits or cornbread both pair perfectly)

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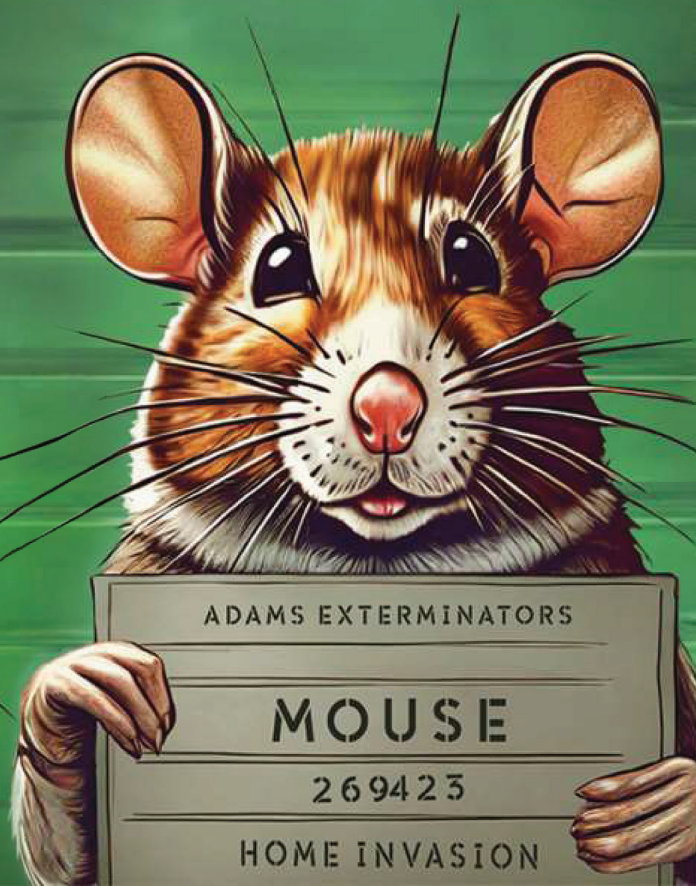
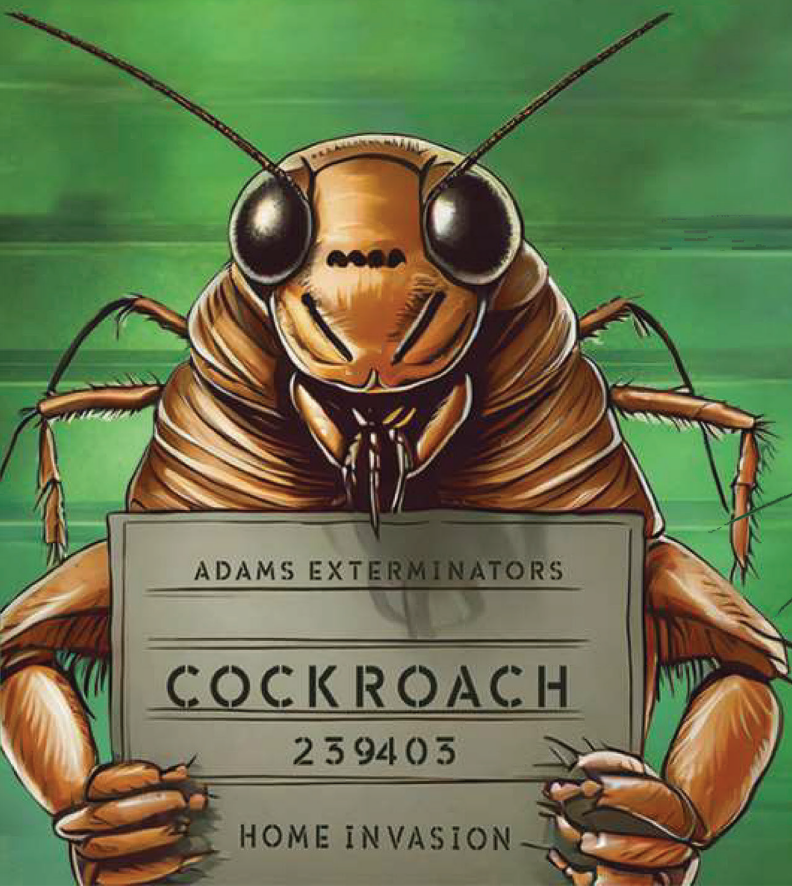


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