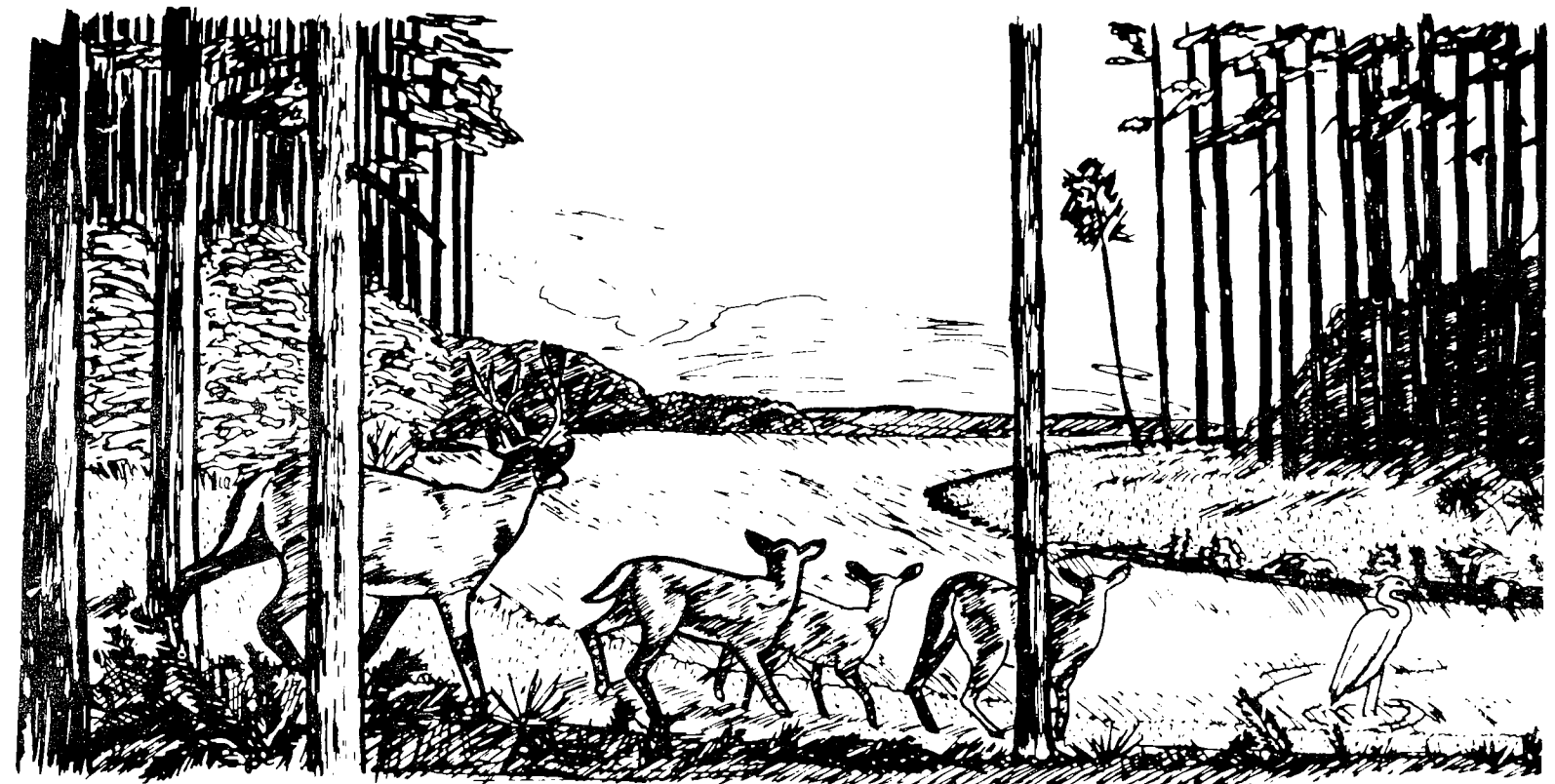


THE FLORIDA 4H

FOREST ECOLOGY PROGRAM

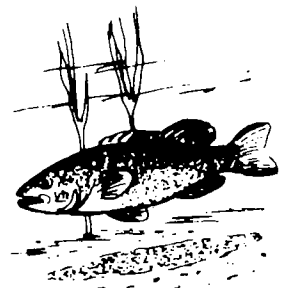
UNIT 3. INTRODUCTION TO FLORIDA ANIMALS



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THE FLORIDA 4-H
FOREST ECOLOGY PROJECT
MEMBER'S MANUAL
UNIT #3

C O M M O N F L O R I D A A N I M A L L I F E

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Everyone loves animals

In Unit #2 you studied Florida plants. How many animals did you see in the woods and fields last year? Probably not many compared to plants, unless you count ants, and bugs and bees and birds and butterflies -- and even fish, which are animals, too!

I'll bet you don't believe this! Fish can't be animals, but of course they really are. What is wrong then?! It is that when we say or think animal, we really mean mammal.

The definition of animal is any living thing that can move and respond to stimulation that is not a plant. A mammal is an animal with a backbone that nourishes its young with milk.

This unit will deal with common Florida game animals that might be seen in Florida woods. Included will be mammals, game birds, and other creatures often called wildlife. You don't have to hunt game animals today if you don't want to. Just enjoy seeing them or photographing them. But the original meaning of game animals meant ones hunted for sport and food.

What to do -- step by step

1. Perhaps you have seen or studied the Florida Wildlife Conservation Record Book - 4-H 82. If you have you will know quite a bit repeated in this unit. If you know it all, go on to Unit #4 of this project, Forest Insects and Diseases.
2. Read over the project.
3. Pick one common Florida mammal to study (raccoon, opossum, fox, pocket gopher, bat, beaver, or whatever).
4. Collect material on your special creature and give a three minute talk on it.
5. Make one or more plaster casts of tracks or draw a poster showing six common animal tracks.
6. In the space provided, keep a count of wildlife seen by you for a two-day period (you pick the days).
7. Answer the questions in the record section of this project book.
8. Move on to the next unit.

More definitions

Wildlife ecology - Study of animals and where they live -- in other words, animals and their surroundings.

Wildlife conservation - Knowing what conditions wildlife needs to prosper. Favoring these practices in land management operations.

Wildlife biologist - Usually a person with an advanced college degree who studies wildlife to learn of their life history and environment.

Wildlife manager - Puts discoveries of the wildlife biologist into practice in the field.

Conservation officer - Often called Game Warden. He enforces wildlife regulations and educates the public to abide by the game laws.

Conservation aides - Assistants to wildlife biologists, wildlife managers, and conservation officers.

For information on a career in wildlife, contact your local 4-H leader, County Extension Agent, or the University of Florida Registrar.

Florida animal numbers

NOW HEAR THIS: (But you won't remember it!)

Florida has:

35 kinds of turtles (cooters, gophers, box turtles, etc.)
25 kinds of lizards (fence lizards, anoles, worm lizards, etc.)
60 snakes (rattlesnakes, cottonmouth, coral, copperhead are poisonour;
the rest are harmless)
28 kinds of frogs (bullfrogs, treefrogs, etc.)
29 salamanders (spring lizards, mudpuppies)
154 freshwater fish (wow!)
1 crocodile (in the Everglades and the Florida Keys)
1 alligator (more around each year)
350 birds (mockingbirds, cardinals, bald eagles).
55 mammals (raccoons, opossums, foxes)
15,000 kinds of insects (butterflies, bees, ants)
3,000 flowering plants (trees, shrubs, vines, flowers, ferns, etc.)

Wildlife requirements

All species of wildlife require food, cover, and water (a few exceptions here). If these items are present, wildlife will find the area and thrive. If they are not present, even stocking wildlife will be unsuccessful. Remember, suitable wildlife habitat is the key to wildlife management.

What wildlife do you see in Florida woods

Opossums - Tracks in muddy areas. Crossing woods roads at night. Climbing in your garbage can. Dead on the road. Eats anything. Can live almost anywhere.

Raccoons - Florida has several sub-species depending on area. Tracks in muddy areas, flatwoods, hardwood hammocks. Often seen dead on road. Eats anything. Sometimes has rabies!

Armadillos - Introduced animal. Eats mainly grubs, bugs, ants, worms, small lizards and snakes. Most forest types, especially pond edges at dusk.

Gray fox - Common. Most forest types. Tracks in muddy areas. Can climb trees. Eats mice, lizards, wild fruit, grasshoppers, etc.

Red fox - Originally only west Florida. Some introduced into other areas for hunting. Redder than gray fox. Can't climb trees.

Skunk - Most forest types. Also old house sites. Eats lizards, insects. "Dead skunk in the middle of the road." Common.

Bobcat - Most forest types. Common. Eats small animals. Tracks in muddy areas.

Black bear - Seldom seen. Needs large forest areas to survive. Probably 1,000 in Florida.

Panther - Seldom seen but still about 50 left in Florida. Protected by law!

Otter - Wet areas. Statewide.

Here are examples of wildlife you might see in Florida forests. Most are considered game animals, but some are not.

Rabbits - Both eastern cottontails and marsh rabbits are common in Florida. The largest southern rabbit called swamp rabbit is not found in our state. Range: seldom move over one mile from where born. One rabbit per acre a good population. Like field edges and farmland. Food: grasses, sedges, sprouts, leaves, wild fruits.

Raccoons - Widespread in most areas. Favorite habitat hardwood forests along rivers, small streams, and swamps. Food: many things, including acorns, crayfish, fruit, eggs, small animals. Need den trees.

Foxes - Gray fox common in Florida. Red fox is rare. The gray fox can climb trees almost like a cat. The red fox can't. Both foxes are forest dwellers. Primarily they are meat eaters, but often include insects, fruit and fish in their diets. Foxes move several miles searching for food.

Bobwhite quail - Small patch farming, fence rows, and cornfield edges are quail country. Favorite gamebird. Some five million found in Florida. About 2,000,000 killed every year by hunters. Quail need a variety of weed and grass seeds for food. A covey needs about 20 acres of home range. With excellent quail management, one quail per acre is possible. One per five acres is more common.

White-tailed deer - Common in many areas. Population increasing (about 430,000 in Florida today). Deer rarely venture far from their place of birth. All needs for reproduction, growth, and sustenance must be available within a radius of one half to one mile. Forests with many small openings are ideal for deer. Food includes a great variety of browse, acorns, mushrooms, wild fruits, and new grass.

Black bear - Few people in Florida have seen a black bear, yet hunters kill about 50 per year and we have over 1,000 living in our state. Food includes both plants and animals of many kinds such as flesh, carrion, fish, insects, roots, berries, nuts, and honey. Bears need extensive undisturbed forests.

Panther - Florida has the only remaining panthers found in the eastern United States. They are now protected by law. Most live in the Everglades, but they may range statewide. Large undisturbed areas of woodland are required panther habitat. Food includes deer, rabbits, and other small game. Most people who report seeing a "black panther" are seeing something else. Only one or two authentic reports of a panther attacking a human anywhere in the United States have been proven.

Fox squirrel - Common creature of longleaf pine forests and scruboak ridges. Comes in many color phases. Fond of pine mast (seed).

Gray squirrel - Common statewide. Hardwood forests favorite habitat. Two squirrels per acre common in good habitat. Food: acorns, mushrooms, insects, fruit.

Mourning dove - Some migrate, some live year round in Florida. Primarily a farmland gamebird. About 41 million found in Florida at beginning of hunting season. Over two million killed by hunters each year. Often found in towns.

River or pond ducks - Most migratory except Florida duck and wood duck. Other species include gadwall, baldpate, widgeon, pintail, green-winged teal, and mallard. Principle food is vegetable matter. Also eats acorns and hardwood seed and fruit. A wood duck next box makes a good 4-H project.

Eastern wild turkey - Riverbottom forests are favorite turkey habitat. Need large undisturbed forest for best populations. A flock ranges over five to ten thousand acres of forest land. Food: seeds and fruit of hardwood trees, legumes, insects and grasses. Human disturbance greatly limits turkey population. Over 1,000 killed each year by Florida hunters.

Other Florida animals

For your study of a Florida animal, use these examples or pick your own creature to read up on. There are countless ones to choose from.

Nature study tips -- how to find Florida animals

1. Go on field trips with small groups of only two or three people. Large groups seldom see many wild creatures.
2. Early morning or late evening just before dark are the times most animals move about.
3. Learn patience. Pick a suitable observation point in a likely spot and wait -- and wait some more!
4. Remember in heavy cover animals make noises, too! Learn the characteristic noises various animals make when moving through the woods.
5. Know the habitat and territory of the creature you want to find.
6. Watch along the game trails or where game animals cross roads.
7. Be aware of wind direction. Don't expect to find animals in your downwind direction; that is, if the wind is blowing from you to them, they will smell you and never be seen by you.
8. Look for signs of wildlife: nests, den trees, tracks, droppings, food remains (pine cone cores, etc.).

Making plaster casts of animal tracks

An interesting collection of animal tracks can be made fairly easily. Follow the steps given below.

1. Find a good location such as a pond margin, dirt road after a rain, dried up puddle, or sand bar in a stream.
2. Clear off an area six to eight feet in diameter. Rake off leaves and duff down to the soil. Soften soil and rake smooth. Water the area. Place bait in the center (fishheads, catfood, meat, nuts, peanut butter, etc.). Place bait in the evening. Check for tracks the next morning.
3. If you can't find a track wet and firm enough to use (this often happens in our sandy soil), try to spray some clear plastic on the track to hold the sand in place while you make a plaster cast.
4. Mix some plaster of paris in a can with water until it is thin enough to pour.
5. Place a cardboard "dike" or fence two or three inches high around the track.
6. Gently pour the plaster over the track (about one or two inches deep).

7. The plaster will harden in 15-20 minutes. Placing a few short sticks across the plaster as it hardens will help strengthen the cast. Pour a little more plaster over the sticks to cover them and add more strength.

8. Remove the plaster cast and brush off sand with an old toothbrush.

9. You now have a negative cast. To make a positive cast (like the track on the ground), first cover the negative track with a thin film of vaseline. Make a wood frame and fill it with plaster. Press the negative into the soft plaster and leave it until the plaster hardens. Remove the negative and paint the specimen gray or brown (earth colors).

10. Label the cast (name, location found, date, and county).

Resource people to contact for information

1. Local foresters, state and private industry
2. Local game wardens and game biologists
3. Members of sportsmens groups
4. Hardware stores selling sporting goods
5. Biology and science teachers
6. Local zoos

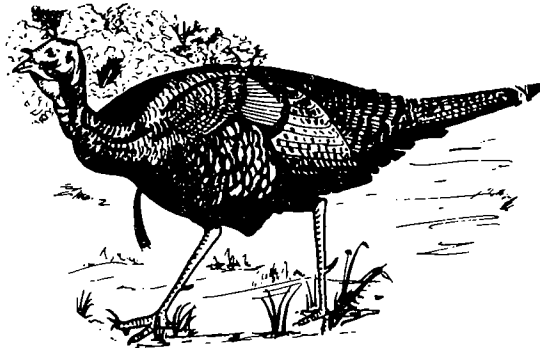
Publications on Florida wildlife

Game Commission: Florida Wildlife Magazine

Leaflets on Florida wildlife

Golden Nature Guide: Mammals, birds, wildlife ecology, etc.

Local libraries: Many good books available



I N F O R M A T I O N

MEMBER'S NAME _____ AGE _____

PARENTS OR GUARDIAN'S NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS: STREET OR BOX NUMBER _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

NAME OF YOUR CLUB _____ COUNTY _____

NAME OF YOUR SCHOOL _____ GRADE IN SCHOOL _____

YEARS YOU HAVE BEEN IN CLUB WORK _____ IN THIS PROJECT _____

NAME OF COUNTY OR HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENT _____

NAME OF YOUR LOCAL CLUB LEADER _____

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RECORD SECTION

1. Define Wildlife Ecology.

2. Explain the difference between an animal and a mammal.

3. Ask a hunter or explain why you like to hunt below.

4. List five common Florida mammals and where to look for them.

a. name _____ habitat _____

b. name _____ habitat _____

c. name _____ habitat _____

d. name _____ habitat _____

e. name _____ habitat _____

5. How many kinds of snakes are found in Florida?

6. Interview a non-hunter or tell why you dislike hunting.

7. What three requirements must be met for wildlife to thrive?

a.

b.

c.

8. What is Wildlife Habitat?

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Single copies are free to residents of Florida and may be obtained from the County Extension Office. Bulk rates are available upon request. Please submit details of the request to C.M. Hinton, Publication Distribution Center, IFAS Building 664, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611.

This five unit series with Leader's Guide was published at a cost of \$187.11, or 4.2 cents per copy, to be used in the educational programs in Florida's 4-H Clubs.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
(Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914)
Cooperative Extension Service, IFAS, University of Florida
and United States Department of Agriculture, Cooperating
K. R. Tefertiller, Director