

## Waterfronts



By Steve Waters

# A SOLITARY SPOT OFFERS BEST SHOT



SUN SENTINEL FILE

Left to right, Brian Sanders of Sunrise, Jason Maret of Sunrise and Steve Moore of Tampa show off an impressive limit of ducks they shot at Stormwater Treatment Area 5 late in the season in 2007. A key to their success was avoiding other hunters.

## Experienced duck hunters scout areas first and avoid the crowd

Duck season opens Saturday, and South Florida waterfowlers will flock to the Everglades, Lake Okeechobee and the stormwater treatment areas in the hopes of having something fly into their decoy spreads.

Hunting ducks down here isn't always easy, in part because the area has so much good duck habitat, which means the ducks have so many places to hang out. Fortunately, several experienced South Florida waterfowlers have offered some of their best tips to help you bag more ducks.

For starters, said Jason Maret of Sunrise, avoid being surrounded by other hunters by avoiding big flocks of ducks.

"I've always found, especially at the lake or Everglades Holiday Park, you're going to have to deal with crowds on opening weekend," said Maret, who also avoids the crowds at STAs. "I have always tried not to pick a spot that is overrun with lots of ducks. Where all the big groups of ducks are, everybody sees those, so everybody hunts there and there won't be enough ducks for everyone to shoot at."

"I like a few spots where there's enough ducks for a good hunt, but not everybody's going to see them and hunt there."

Even after you find a good spot,

don't expect it to produce ducks hunt after hunt. That's why Paul Schmitz of Coral Springs, who hunts primarily out of Everglades Holiday Park, is always on the lookout for new spots.

"Scout, scout, scout and scout some more," Schmitz said. "The only guy I know who slammed them every time [in the Everglades] last year, his son would go out the day before in the afternoon and find where the birds were sitting. The next day they'd go to that spot and they were getting easy limits every time."

"The birds move around. The surest way I know to get ducks is to scout today and hunt tomorrow."

Joe Kessling of Davie moves around, too.

"I never hunt the same spot two days in a row. I like to let it rest," Kessling said. "If you pound it for a week straight, you'll ruin it."

Sometimes you have to move during a hunt. Ron Demers of Royal Palm Beach, who hunts the STAs most weekends, doesn't hesitate to change spots when the ducks want to be somewhere else.

"How many times have you been duck hunting and they're 200 yards away? What do you do, tough it out or move?" Demers said. "You just don't know what

the ducks want to do until you're out there. Some of my most successful days have been just sucking it up, picking up my stuff and moving 100 yards or 50 yards."

Once you're in the right spot, you need to get the attention of the ducks flying overhead. Sam Heaton of Stuart does it by using big decoys.

"You have to use oversize decoys. The standard-size decoys do not show up," Heaton said. "You need at least the magnum size ringers and magnum size coots. You have to have something that the ducks can see, because there's so much area out there."

On calm days, Capt. George Nass of Pompano Beach adds movement to his decoys by adding a vibrating decoy or two to his spread. Those decoys make ripples in the water that move the other decoys, making them look like real ducks.

"When it's flat calm, the decoys are just sitting there," Nass said. "When the ducks see the movement, they're less wary."

Steve Waters can be reached at swaters@SunSentinel.com or 954-356-4648. Listen to him from 6-9 a.m. Saturday on the Honda Marine Weekly Fisherman radio show on WQAM (560-AM).

## Duck season

The first phase of Florida's 2008-09 duck season opens Saturday and runs through Nov. 30. The second phase is Dec. 6-Jan. 25. The Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days for children under 16 are Jan. 31 and Feb. 1.

**Shooting hours:** 30 minutes before sunrise to sunset.

**Bag limit:** Six ducks per hunter per day. The daily limit shall consist of no more than one black duck; one mottled duck (Florida mallard); one fulvous whistling duck; one pintail; two redheads; three wood ducks; one scaup (two from Jan. 6-25); four scoters; and four mallards (no more than two hens). All other species of duck (except canvasbacks and harlequin ducks) may be taken up to the six-duck daily limit. If your hunting buddy wants to give you his limit of ducks, he must tag the birds with his signature, his address, the number of birds of each species and the date the birds were killed.

**Possession limit:** Two days' bag limit.

**Licenses:** All duck hunters ages 16-64 must have a Florida hunting license, a free migratory bird permit, a Florida duck stamp and a federal duck stamp. Hunters 65 and older need only a federal duck stamp. Those under 16 don't need any stamps or licenses.

**Duck testing:** Wildlife biologists will collect samples from ducks killed by hunters to test for highly



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Hunters can take three wood ducks as part of the six-duck daily bag limit, an increase of one for the species.

pathogenic avian influenza — H5N1. Sampling will occur at various times during the duck season. Participation is voluntary and hunters will not need to surrender their ducks. Biologists will obtain the samples by swabbing the ducks' respiratory and digestive tracts. Scientists at a diagnostic lab will test the samples for avian influenza and other diseases.

**Information:** Call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission South regional office at 561-625-5122 or visit [www.myfwc.com/duck](http://www.myfwc.com/duck)

## Fishing trends

### LAKE OKEECHOBEE

The cold fronts have slowed the bass bite. The fish have been scattered and well back in the grass around Ritta Island, Long Point and Pelican Bay. The cold weather did turn on the speckled perch, which were biting in some of the canals and on the main lake. The lake level was 14.4 feet.

### FRESHWATER/EVERGLADES

Some nice-sized largemouth and peacock bass were biting in the canals connected to Lake Ida. Anglers flipping plastic crawdads were catching some good largemouths at Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge.

### FLORIDA BAY/10,000 ISLANDS

Mangrove snapper, sea trout, jacks and snook were biting in front of Flamingo. Spanish mackerel were biting in the Gulf of Mexico, along with some cobia.

### GOLD COAST OFFSHORE

The cooler weather and breezy conditions have made for good fishing for sailfish. Capt. Skip Dana said the best sailfish bite has been from Delray Beach to Lake Worth Pier, where some boats were catching 10-15 sailfish a day. Boats out of Hillsboro Inlet Marina were catching 3-5 sails on their four-hour trips. Some big dolphin also were biting. Anglers on the *Helen S* and *Fish City Pride* drift boats had a few cobia, some kingfish and some big mangrove snapper, including a 12-pounder caught by Armando Ramos of Pompano Beach, fishing in 100-180 feet from the inlet to the steeple.

Capt. Ron Mallet of *Just Add Water* caught sailfish, kingfish and dolphin on live baits on deep lines drifting in 120-160 feet from north of Port Everglades Inlet to Dania Beach.

### PIERS

Deerfield Beach Pier had a couple of kingfish and Spanish mackerel. Pompano Beach Pier had a few bluefish and ribbonfish. Anglin's Pier had lots of sharks, a couple of snook and a few pompano, bluefish and bonito. Dania Beach Pier had some bluefish and snapper at night, a few mackerel and an occasional snook.

### THE KEYS

Cero and Spanish mackerel and a variety of snapper were biting on patch reefs. Dolphin, kingfish and sailfish were biting on the outside of the reef.

## Outdoors Notebook

**Chumming clinic:** George Poveromo, host of *George Poveromo's World of Saltwater Fishing* on ESPN2, has a free seminar on chumming for mackerel and bottom fish at 7:30 tonight at Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World in Dania Beach. Poveromo will discuss where to locate mackerel and yellowtail snapper off Broward and Miami-Dade counties and how to successfully chum for them and catch them. Call 954-929-7710.

**Quota changes:** A proposed rule to modify the quota hunt permit program will be presented at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Dec. 3 meeting in Key West. Changes include making all permits non-transferable and establishing a guest permit. Visit [MyFWC.com/Contact/Contact\\_Rules\\_intro.htm](http://MyFWC.com/Contact/Contact_Rules_intro.htm).

**Kite-fishing talk:** Capt. **Chuck Hampton** talks about kite-fishing at the Boynton Beach Fishing Club meeting at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Boynton Beach Boat Ramp Park clubhouse, 2210 N. Federal Highway, Boynton Beach. Contact **Carol Moran** at 561-707-5660 or [cr5mor@aol.com](mailto:cr5mor@aol.com).

**Fly-tying demo:** Capt. **Bob LeMay** demonstrates fly-tying for all levels Dec. 6 at The Fly Shop of Fort Lauderdale, 4834 N. Federal Hwy., Fort Lauderdale. An introductory session geared toward beginners and featuring basic techniques is at 11 a.m. From noon-4 p.m., LeMay will tie popular patterns for saltwater and freshwater fishing. The event is free. Call 954-772-5822.

**PRV warning:** The FWC is warning hunters using the J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area in Palm Beach and Martin counties to be cautious about wild hogs after at least three hunting dogs died after displaying symptoms consistent with the pseudorabies virus (PRV). Tests to confirm that it was PRV are pending. The disease, which is not related to rabies, is no threat to humans but always fatal in dogs, which are at risk of infection if they are bitten by wild hogs or consume raw wild hog meat.

## OUTDOORS CALENDAR

**Saturday:** East Cape Boat Day, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., The Fly Shop of Miami, 8243 S. Dixie Hwy., Miami. Call 305-669-5851.  
**Saturday, Dec. 6:** Family bass fishing clinic on how to catch largemouth and peacock bass in local canals, ages 10 and up, 9-11 a.m., Coconut Creek Wal-Mart store at 5571 Hillsboro Boulevard. Contact Ron Gallo at 954-748-2277 or [rongallo@bellsouth.net](mailto:rongallo@bellsouth.net).  
**Sunday:** 28th Giblets & Gravy team bass tournament, Lake Okeechobee out of Roland and MaryAnn Martin's Marina in Clewiston. Entry fee \$100 per team. Pre-register at BJ's Bait and Tackle, 201 Southwest 125th Ave., Plantation. Call Mark Escobar at 954-475-0248.  
**Dec. 6:** Boca Raton Flotilla 36, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, "GPS for Mariners" class, Marine Safety Building, 3939 N. Ocean Blvd., Boca Raton (just south of Spanish River Boulevard). The class provides an introduction to the use of global positioning systems. Cost is \$50. Call 561-391-3600 and leave a message or visit [cgauxboca.com](http://cgauxboca.com).  
**Dec. 11:** Islamorada Fishing Club Captain's Cup Sailfish Tournament. Entry fee \$2,500 per boat. Winner-take-all first prize of \$25,000 with 18 boats. Field limited to 30 boats. Visit [theislamoradafishingclub.com](http://theislamoradafishingclub.com), call 305-664-4735 or e-mail [fishing@theislamoradafishingclub.com](mailto:fishing@theislamoradafishingclub.com).  
**Dec. 13-14:** Don Gurgio Sailfish Classic, Islamorada. Entry fee \$495 per angler. Call 305-852-9337.  
**Dec. 20-21:** Islamorada Junior Sailfish Tournament, out of Marker 88 Restaurant. Entry fee \$100 per angler, maximum four anglers per boat. Call tournament director Tammie Gurgio at 305-852-9337.  
**Jan. 2-4:** Key Largo Sailfish Challenge, Angler's on the Bay. Entry fee \$495 for the first angler, \$450 for each additional angler up to a maximum of four per boat. Call 305-852-9337.