

the Shellcracker



FLORIDA CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY

<http://www.sdafs.org/flafs>

October, 2007

President's Message:

Greetings all. I hope everyone had a good summer. I did, but I certainly welcome the change in the season. For many of us studying or monitoring fishes, the fall season is our busiest time of year. But despite the increased work load, the field work and outdoor recreation become more tolerable in the fall. If you're a sports fan, football begins and baseball reaches its pinnacle. The hunting season starts and inshore fishing becomes more inshore. Economically, we save money on thirst quenchers, mosquito repellent and sunscreen. It's the best season to dig post holes, according to the Farmers Almanac. It's also the season you can put on a costume, and no one finds it odd. A friend of mine down the hall grows a beard this time of year. All independent activities, but collectively all clues that fall is around in my every day life. You probably can't relate to the bearded guy, but I'm sure you have your own associations.

The fall season also brings us closer to the highlight of our chapter activities, our spring annual meeting. Our meeting will take place on February 19-21, 2008, at the 4H Camp Ocala. Will Patterson is constructing an enlightening symposium, focusing on the Ecology and Conservation of Reef Fishes, and included the first call for abstracts in this issue. Will has already lined up several speakers, but he will definitely need your contributions to ensure the symposium's success. Oral and poster presentations on topics unrelated to the symposium are also welcome as usual.

Also included in this issue, Linda Lombardi-Carlson is requesting meeting registration forms as soon as possible to estimate our expenses related to the meeting at Camp Ocala. She also made the registration form available on-line as a .pdf format for those members that wish to send their forms electronically. Nice work Linda!

As you know, some hard work is goes into these meetings by our chapter leaders so that the outcome is informative and the meeting runs smooth. Rich McBride noted in a previous message that our chapter's success is in part due to the reorganization of our leaders. New perspectives, new topics, and differing backgrounds allow our meetings to stay dynamic and intriguing. It's your chapter, so consider nominating an interested person. Or nominate yourself. If you're interested, please contact our past president Chuck Cichra.

Finally, begin donating or soliciting whatever and wherever you can for our meeting raffle. Last year we had some outstanding trip packages and general prizes that brought in a substantial amount of money for our student travel grants. Student attendance and participation at the meetings has been remarkable over the last several years, and I believe the travel grants have had a great deal to do with it. Contact our Raffle Committee Chair, Andy Strickland, for more information on how you can help and get organized. Along the lines of student grants, don't forget about the Chapter's Roger Rottmann Memorial Scholar-



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ship. Begin working on your application early, as the scholarship can be quite competitive among our talented young professionals. The application and information related to the scholarship can be found on our website.

That's all for now. Have a good fall.

**Eric Nagid,
President FL AFS**

Upcoming Events

Oct 9-10—Symposium on Anadromous Salmonid Tagging and Identification Techniques in the Greater Pacific Region, Portland, OR

Oct 9-12—International Symposium: Wild Trout IX, West Yellowstone, MT.

Oct 15-17—Aquaculture America 2008, Lake Buena Vista, Florida. See

Oct 15-17—Third International Sustainable Marine Fish Culture Conference, Fort Pierce, FL.

Oct 18-20—Recirculating Aquaculture Systems: Principles of Design and Operation, Fort Pierce, FL..

Oct 21-24—Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Annual Meeting, Charleston, WV.

Nov 4-8—2007 Estuarine Research Federation Meeting: Science and Management Observations/Synthesis/Solution, Providence, RI.

***Check out our Parent Society's calendar at
<http://www.fisheries.org/Calendar.shtml>
for other events not listed here!***

Interested in contributing something to the Shell-Cracker? Email Jackie Debicella at jackiedebo@hotmail.com with any articles or information that you would like to be included in the next issue. The deadline for the next issue is March 30th, 2007, so start fishing...

Boating and fishing habits in Brevard County

Edward Leonard

Marine Science Extension Agent

UF/IFAS Brevard County

An upcoming report on boating habits should provide information relevant to Brevard County's efforts to plan for recreational boating. In the summer of 2006 Brevard County, along with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), the University of Florida, and Florida Sea Grant began work on a comprehensive survey of boating activity in the county. The project was initially funded by Brevard's Board of County Commissioners and the FWC who each contributed about \$50,000. An additional \$38,000 was contributed by NOAA via FWC to extend the project to the end of one complete year, to capture seasonal trends in boating use. The project began by taking instantaneous counts of the boats observed at marinas and of trailers observed at Brevard County boat ramps. These counts were conducted by county employees and paid contractors who canvassed participating local launch facilities, marinas, and yacht clubs recording the registrations of vessels and/or tow vehicles. The survey of Brevard County boat ramps occurred at randomly selected times during the week and on weekends over the course of one year. Vessel registration numbers observed at marinas and boat trailer tag numbers collected at boat ramps were used to determine the vessel's county of origin using state vehicle registration records. In addition, a sample of home dock owners was also identified by comparing property tax records with vessel registration information. Boaters who use marinas, ramps, and private docks within Brevard County were mailed a map-based survey on which they were asked to trace the path of their last two boating excursions, to describe their regular boating habits, their preferences, their favorite destinations, areas of congestion, and what things added to and detracted from their boating experience in Brevard County. The trip information reported by more than 3,300 survey respondents was entered into a computerized mapping program (i.e., a geographic information system) that can be used to map spatial patterns of waterway use.

The final report and data sets (which will be made available to the public in November) confirms some suspicions while refuting others. Because boaters were divided by the type of access facility they used (i.e. Marina Access, Dock Access, or Ramp Access) it was possible to ask the same questions of different groups of boaters. The responses to some survey questions were sometimes very different between groups. For instance, among those who trailer boats to ramps, and those who use marinas, "Excessive Regulations" (like slow speed zones) was not the number one detractor. For these boaters "Lack of Courtesy and/or Seamanship" was the most common response. When the same question was asked of boaters identified as "Dock Access" users, the top category was Excessive Regulation, the largest component of which was manatee slow speed zones. Ramp and marina users have greater flexibility in launch site selection and can more easily avoid the slow speed zones. For boaters that use private docks far from the Intra-coastal Waterway, the speed zones have greater impact on access and convenience.

Another significant finding of the study is the number of boaters who visit from other Florida Counties who use the ramps in Brevard County. According to the sample data, 53.7% of the Florida trailers observed in ramp parking lots came from other counties, with the highest percentages coming from Orange, Seminole, Indian River, and Volusia Counties, in that order. This finding has implications regarding how FWC administered Boating Improvement Funds are allocated, and how accidents are summarized in the FWC's annual Boating Accident Statistical Report. The Boating Improvement Program awards competitive grant funding for local projects related to boating access and other boating related projects. The funding is available for projects that fall into one of two tier groups. For tier 1 grants, the program guidelines stipulate that "**priority consideration will be given to unmet needs in counties with a high level of boating activity from individuals residing in other counties.**" The study findings provide empirical evidence that Brevard County fits this priority. The future acquisition of funds from this state program could offset the County's part in sponsoring the study.

The study findings may also clarify the results published in the FWC's annual Boating Accident Statistical Report. When the members of the local advisory group for marine related issues (Brevard Marine

Advisory Council) heard the results of the Boating Accident Statistical Report they were concerned with how the media and the public might interpret the findings. In that report, there is a table which lists each Florida County's number of reportable boating accidents relative to the number of vessels registered in that County. In the case of Brevard County that ratio in 2006 was 25 reportable accidents per 40,573 registered vessels or 1:1,559. The concern among the Marine Advisory Council members pertained mainly to the potential for misinterpretation of this statistic. They felt that any publication of this statistic could be misleading, and could damage the county's reputation among the boating community. We now have evidence that a large number of boats on our waterways at any given time are probably registered in another county so the published ratio becomes less meaningful. The obvious solution to this question is to publish the *actual* county of registration for the boats that were involved in accidents. However, according to Lt. Edward Cates of the FWC's Boating and Waterways Section, "Unfortunately we don't keep that kind of statistic." Whether or not this statistic has any real impact on public opinion or policy is not known but the potential does exist.

The upcoming report may hold value for fisheries managers as well. The report includes detailed information on each boater's intended destination, primary activities on the water, and the relative importance of each activity. Not surprisingly, fishing was the leading activity. Of the 3,446 individuals who responded to this survey question, 53.2% said that they went fishing while boating. However, if we look at the response to this question by access type, the numbers are quite different. Of those who access the water at boat ramps, 73.3% participated in fishing, whereas only 24.5% of the Marina Wet Slip Group reported fishing. The responses among users of other access categories (e.g., private docks, dry storage facilities) fall somewhere in between these two numbers. Obviously, detailed information about routes, destinations, and activities could be helpful in developing accurate estimates of fishing effort.

This is a small sample of the information products that will be available in the final report, so be sure to look it over once it becomes available this November. The report will be posted on the Brevard County Extension website.



News from the ICAST show (the American Sportfishing Association's trade show)

Bob Wattendorf recently attended the ICAST show where he met Jonathan Phillips and some of the college bass anglers from the NCSU 2007 National Champion Bass Fishing Team. This is a relatively new college competitive fishing program that is covered by Fox College Sports (<http://msn.foxsports.com/cfb/story/6619602>). If your college or university might be interested in forming a team, you can visit <http://www4.ncsu.edu/~jphillip/bass/> for some links to information or contact Jonathan (jonathan_phillips@ncsu.edu) for more info.

AFS Chapter Meeting Abstracts

Limit abstracts to ≤ 300 words and follow this format (WORD is preferred):

Presenter: Schaub, M.; Tel. 888-123-4567; Email: MattSchaub@HoustonTexans.nfl;
Author(s): Schaub, M.¹, S. Moore², and D. Majikowski³. Affiliation. Address. Telephone. ¹Schaub's email;
²Moore's email; ³Majikowski's email.

Title: The Sometimes Rocky Road of a University of Virginia Quarterback

Abstract: You know how this works: 300 words, max. If you can't count that high, MS Word will do it for you.

Student Presentation: no (versus yes, to indicate work reported was completed while a student)

Presentation type: oral (versus poster)

Annual Meeting and Symposium Announcement – 1st Call for Papers

28th Annual Meeting of the Florida Chapter of the American Fisheries Society

February 19-21, 2008
Ocala 4H-Camp, Altoona, Florida

Well Florida Fishheads, it's that time of year again—time to begin thinking about what you might present at the annual Florida AFS Meeting, or at least how you can sneak away from work for a few days to enjoy the company of friends and colleagues at the chapter meeting. The 2008 meeting is still a few months away, but it is never too early to plan to attend. The meeting will consist of contributed papers and a symposium titled “Ecology and Conservation of Florida Reef Fishes”. Reef fishes are incredibly important to Florida's fishing economy. They also are ecologically significant in coastal and marine ecosystems of our state. It only makes sense that Florida has long been a hotbed of reef fish research. Currently, there are many challenges to fisheries management of reef fishes in Florida, and many of those challenges are being addressed via basic and applied research. The purpose of this year's symposium is to bring together research biologists and fisheries managers to present and discuss broad issues and themes that apply to a range of species and regions throughout the state. These include, but are not restricted to, reef fish population structure and connectivity, regional differences in population demographics, unique challenges to reef fish management, and the roll and function of marine protected areas.

The meeting format will consist of both invited and contributed oral presentations and posters. **All abstracts are due Friday, January 11, 2007 for full consideration in the symposium or contributed sessions.** Please send your abstract (<300 words) and associated information in formatted fields (follow format in box below) to wpatterson@uwf.edu; in the subject line of your email, please list the author(s) as they will appear in the program (e.g., SchaubMooreMajikowski.doc). Platform presentations will be 20 minutes (15 minutes for presentation and 5 minutes for questions or discussion). We will have PowerPoint 2003 loaded on a laptop capable of accepting your presentation on a CD, DVD or flashdrive. All posters will be formally presented on Tuesday evening, February 19, and can be left up for the entire meeting. Posters should be no larger than 150 X 100 cm (60" X 40"), but they can be set up either as portrait or landscape format on an easel. If you require other options for projection or poster formats, please contact the annual meeting's Program Chair, Will Patterson, at wpatterson@uwf.edu.

The 2008 meeting will be held at the Ocala 4-H Camp, on beautiful Sellers Lake in the Ocala National Forest. This venue is located east of Ocala, south of SR 40, just off SR19. Maps and directions will be available in the next issue of the Shellcracker and are currently on the Chapter's website at <http://www.sdafs.org/flafs/doc/ocala4h.html>. The meeting's schedule will be similar to recent past meeting. We will begin on the afternoon of February 19th. Lunch will be served and then followed by the presentation of contributed papers. The Reef Fish Symposium will kick off on Wednesday a.m. with a brief introduction by Will Patterson and then a keynote address by Dr. Jim Bohnsack of NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Fishery Science Center in Miami. Contributed papers will follow the symposium on Wednesday afternoon. The business meeting and raffle will follow dinner on Wednesday night. We will hear more contributed papers on Thursday a.m., followed by lunch and the presentation of awards.

Registration forms are available on the Chapter's website:

<http://www.sdafs.org/flafs/PDF/2008%20FL%20AFS%20registration%20form.pdf>.

Please note the savings available if you register on or before January 11, 2008. This helps in many ways: reduces everyone's registration time, gives us a head's up on the head count, saves money, gets you the correct-size meeting shirt, and you don't miss any talks. Therefore, please print the pre-registration form and send in your deposit to the Chapter's Secretary-Treasurer, Linda Lombardi-Carlson, by January 11, 2008. Last, you should plan to bring your own linens or sleeping bag if you are planning to sleep at the camp. Linens will only be available in limited supplies and for a small fee.

Students: Several student travel awards will be available. The application form is available on the Chapter's website at <http://www.sdafs.org/flafs/awards.html>. Master's and doctoral students are also eligible for the Roger Rottmann Memorial Scholarship, for which the recipient(s) will be announced at the Annual Meeting. More information and the application materials are available at <http://www.sdafs.org/flafs/doc/rottmann.html>

We're looking forward to our 2008 annual meeting, and hope to see you there!

Student Section

Fish Community Composition in Tussock-Forming Aquatic Macrophytes at two South Florida lakes

Aaron Bunch, Graduate Research Assistant
Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences
University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

Large-scale habitat rehabilitation projects have been conducted in Florida to improve degraded littoral habitats. These projects have included lake drawdowns and physical removal of macrophytes and organic matter from the shallow littoral zone of lakes in the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes and others (e.g., Lake Istokpoga). A concern for lake management is the formation of tussocks, which are dense floating mats of aquatic macrophytes. Tussocks typically form when macrophytes such as cattails or other similar species become buoyant due to aerenchyma tissue and/or gas bubbles. These buoyant formations can break off during high water periods and float to different areas within a water body. Stabilization of lake levels exacerbates the rate at which tussocks form. Lake levels are now stabilized for flood control and water supply through the use of water control structures and regulation schedules.

Tussocks can cause problems for navigation, angler access, and may affect fish communities in lakes. Tussocks affect water quality (e.g., dissolved oxygen and temperature) and substrate (i.e., accumulation of organics), and thus, may be unsuitable habitat for some recreationally important fishes and their prey. Dissolved oxygen (DO) concentrations may become hypoxic ($DO < 2$ mg/L) in tussock habitats due to reduced water circulation and the biological oxygen demand associated with organic material. Thus, there is a need to identify spatial and temporal trends in dissolved oxygen (i.e., hypoxia) with respect to tussock-forming macrophyte biomass.

I am conducting research on Lakes Kissimmee and Istokpoga in South Florida to better understand how tussocks affect fish communities and DO concentrations in littoral zones. The objectives of this project are to: 1) evaluate the spatial and temporal patterns in hypoxia with emergent aquatic macrophyte species and biomass levels, and 2) assess how fish community metrics vary with macrophyte species and biomass levels. I am quantifying fish density, bio-mass, richness, and diversity in macrophytes that are known to form tussocks (e.g., cattail, pickerelweed, water primrose, smartweed, and torpedo grass). Fish samples are taken over a gradient of macrophyte densities (50-95, percent area covered). Dissolved oxygen is measured over temporal and spatial scales within each macrophyte type and biomass level. The spatial component of DO sampling involves measuring DO and temperature both vertically and horizontally in macrophyte stands. These data along with temporal DO measurements from data loggers will be used to plot spatial and temporal trends in hypoxia within tussock-forming macrophytes.

Preliminary results suggest that hypoxia-tolerant fish taxa such as Poeciliids and Cyprinodontids dominate fish communities in tussock-forming macrophyte stands at Lakes Kissimmee and Istokpoga. Generally, DO tended to be hypoxic during night and morning hours with an increase during afternoon, and the magnitude of the increase was influenced by macrophyte species and biomass level. This fall further analyses will be conducted to evaluate associations between fish communities and macrophyte species and biomass levels.

Results from this study will be used to predict how changes in dense emergent macrophyte biomass influence littoral fish communities and DO concentrations. My study will provide lake managers with a better understanding of how fish utilize dense emergent macrophytes in Florida lakes, which has management implications for aquatic macrophyte control efforts and goals to maximize the diversity of fish communities and increase abundance of species that support fisheries.

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