

4th black bear killed by car on busy road

By The Associated Press
ROYAL HIGHLANDS — A motorist struck and killed a 90-pound Florida black bear, a winding spool, while a mile of where three others have been hit and killed in the past three weeks, a state wildlife officer says.

Joe Johnson, a Hernando County wildlife officer for the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, said the impact snapped the bear's spine and the animal died almost immediately when it hit Thursday evening on U.S. 90.

Johnson blames the growing frequency of bear-road deaths on increasingly heavy traffic in this fast-developing Gulf Coast corridor. The accident happened in Hernando County, about eight miles south of the Citrus county line.

"Five years ago, there weren't even a sign on the road. Now there are 2,000 an hour," Johnson said.

A black bear was killed Oct. 14. Another was killed Oct. 20, and the third on Oct. 31.

He said the concentration of bear

Wealth, status not found with older men, study says

By The Associated Press
GAINESVILLE, Fla. (AP) — Most young women who marry older men don't gain wealth or status, according to a University of Florida study released Friday.

"We found out this time that women marry up and men marry down in just an unobtrusive way," UF sociology professor Bernard Versari said.

Versari said marriages of younger women and older men are more common among the poor and are more common among blacks than whites.

Versari, along with two of his colleagues, Faye and Donna Bernardi, studied 2,287 couples under the age of 65 and grouped them according to age difference between spouses.

The study used three criteria to determine the status of each spouse before they married: their educational level, occupation and their present occupation.

Men in the "gray decoupler" couples studied had status levels as similar to their wives as men for the women to move up. When there were differences, it was more common for the woman, not the man, to have a higher status. This was because the woman often had a higher educational level than the man, Versari said.

The group of women which had the most potential for gaining status was the couples with age differences of 1 year or less, the researchers said. The group with the highest potential for "post-marriage" marital relationships, in which the men were younger than their wives.

The results are surprising, Bernardi said, because they are so different from the widespread assumption that younger women marrying older men are "gold diggers."

"Chances are that these couples marry for the same reason most everyone does — because they are in love," Bernardi said.

Defender named for man charged with burning girl

By ROBIN POLLACK
www.pressfla.com

The January murder trial of a man accused of burning to death a 12-year-old girl should start on Wednesday, thanks to the appointment of an attorney to replace the public defender who has handled the case.

When Charlotte County's chief public defender, Wayne Woodard, resigned last week, there were fears of a long delay in the trial of Brent Scott. Woodard had been handling the case since Scott was arrested in May 1986 and charged with the first-degree murder of Linda Pharris.

To avoid postponing the Jan. 4 trial date, court officials this week appointed private attorney Leonard Johnson to take over Scott's case.

Johnson is familiar with the case. He recently was assigned to assist Woodard with Scott's trial. Johnson also used to work with Woodard in the public defender's office.

Johnson said Friday he is "the logical choice" to handle Scott's case.

"It either was me, or else they would have had to bring somebody else in cold" with little or no knowledge of the case, Johnson said.

And by appointing an attorney unfamiliar with the case, there would have been a risk of a four- to six-month delay in the trial start-up, Johnson said.

"It's such a complex case — there are more than 2,000 pages worth of court documents" in Scott's court file here.

Scott, 36, is charged with murdering Pharris in October 1978 by burning her alive. The Fort Charlotte girl's charred body was found in the middle of a brush fire off Toledo Road Boulevard. She died from smoke inhalation.

Although Scott was the prime suspect in Pharris' death at the time, investigators said they did not have enough evidence to indict him. The case was reopened in late 1985 after officials thought they had compiled enough evidence to charge Scott.

Johnson said he probably will be paid \$50 per hour for working on the case — much less than he would for representing private clients. "You never get paid as much as you compared to when you're retained privately," he said.

Hunter victim of duck sting

By The Associated Press
WEST PALM BEACH — A federal judge returned to Broward County Monday of shooting too many ducks while hunting with his dog, and was ordered to be an undercover agent for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The judge fined Kevin Martha \$250 in court costs. Martha was one of several hunters who received a citation for the last from Sidney Woodson.

Because he was in the hunting party suspected Woodson was a covert agent, the hunters paid their cash for his camera. Martha gave Woodson his address so Woodson could mail copies of the photos.

Woodson ran the undercover duck sting in December 1985. The undercover sting was the offense and when the citations were sent out was to give Woodson time to finish his undercover work without giving himself away.

"I've actually got five years" to bring charges, he said.

Woodson indicted Martha for shooting three ring-necked ducks over the limit. Martha, 24, defended himself in court Thursday by maintaining that Woodson didn't have enough evidence for a conviction.

"Did you ever see me shoot the ducks?" Martha asked.

"No," Woodson said.

"Can you identify which ducks are mine in this picture?" he asked.

"No," Woodson said.

But that wasn't the issue. U.S. Magistrate Ann E. Vissac told Martha when he found him guilty. The point was that Woodson had duck and Martha got with his ducks. The court said with three more than the limit, Martha.

Outside the courtroom, Woodson laughed. "I could never be an FBI agent," he said. "I actually get to have fun. I haven't given time on these things."

Saturday school proposed as padding option

By The Associated Press
FOUR WATSON BEACH — A school board member wants to reduce spending with Saturday sessions at the school where an anti-tobacco program was pushed by the angry father of a paddled pupil.

Charlotte County School Board member Bernadette Cover said Thursday she believes corporate reimbursement eventually should be sought at all schools. She suggested a pilot program be tried first at Pryor Junior High School because of the publicity it received over the assault on the anti-tobacco program.

"When a teacher has a disciplinary problem with a student, that teacher will have the luxury of assigning the child to a Saturday school," she said. "This will definitely improve the awareness to the parent that the student has a disciplinary problem."

Cover made the suggestion at a school board workshop meeting, saying a similar program is already in effect in Palm County. Chalmers School Superintendent Fredger Killian said he would look into the idea.

The assault at Pryor touched off a public debate on corporal punishment in this Padsuade community.

Woman accused of manslaughter

Drunken play turned deadly Friday night when a Fort Myers woman fatally stabbed a man while the two were playfully wrestling with a knife in their apartment, a Fort Myers police spokesman said.

Mary Louise Pescock, 45, of Apt. A-3, 3400 Palmis Apartments, was charged with manslaughter after the accidental stabbing of Robert L. Hobbs, 24, of that address, in the chest at 9:28 p.m. the spokesman said.

Hobbs was rushed to Lee Memorial Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Pescock was being held in the Lee County Jail early today, police said. Her bond was \$50,000.

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