

IFAS Matters



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IFAS Matters - April 2015

Posted on April 6, 2015 by Jack Payne

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"A hell of a shot, weren't you?"

Source: [Charles Barsotti](#)

A Bumper Crop of Opinions

"Truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it." - Flannery O'Connor, writer (25 Mar 1925-1964)

We live in a world where drawing lines in the sand has become a blood sport and the resultant vitriol has replaced educated opinion. Climate change and vaccinations are today's frontrunners in risky topics. The long-established verboten subjects of politics and religion are now fractionalized into so many subsets and sub-subsets of impassioned opinion that finding a neutral ground for polite discourse is darn near impossible. Opinions, informed or otherwise, are running rampant.

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[UF/IFAS, others improving health of marine life and coastal economies](#)

[UF/IFAS awarded funding to fight citrus greening](#)

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A good example here in Florida is a hunting-versus-protection debate that now rages because the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's bear management program proposed a bear hunting season. It is facing protests from members of Audubon Florida, the Humane Society of the United States, and other animal groups.

So that's why a study at Cornell Lab of Ornithology by researcher Dr. Caren Cooper (now at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences) is so appealing, because it seems to support the profoundly divergent hunting and non-hunting conservation credos with both equanimity and unassailable truthfulness.

As a trained wildlife biologist and former director of conservation for Ducks Unlimited, the conclusions didn't surprise me, but they substantiated what most biologists already know.

In a nutshell, "...people who either enjoyed hunting or birdwatching were 4-5 times more likely to participate in PEBs (pro-environmental behaviors) than those who did neither. ... Those who were both birdwatchers and hunters were ... eight times more likely to involve themselves in PEBs than folks who did not engage in wildlife recreation."

I'm sure that this is not going to raise a resounding chorus of kumbaya from hunter and non-hunter conservationists, but it does level the playing ground for a rational discussion. Or not.

It's unimaginable to live in a country where one's opinion can't be voiced. Likewise, opinions are like (add body part of choice), everyone has one.

-Jack

Citations: [Conservation Magazine](#)



Congratulations, Dr. Gutter!

Michael Gutter named new Associate Dean and State Program Leader for 4-H Youth Development, Families and Communities.

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AgSave\$ Program

UF/IFAS Extension working to help farmers and ranchers keep it all in the family with AgSave\$ Program.

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Retired UF/IFAS cattle specialist is Agricultural Hall of Fame inductee.

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Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, P.O. Box 110180
Gainesville, FL 32611-0180 | Phone: (352) 392-1971

