

A Perfect Florida
Citrus Garden

Our Biggest
Gift Guide Ever

Cheese Straws
With a New Twist

GARDEN & GUN

SOUL of the SOUTH

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AT
HOME
with
BUNNY
WILLIAMS
by
JULIA
REED

IN THE FIELD
An English setter
at George Hi Plantation
in North Carolina

BEST of THE

SPORTING SOUTH

25 TRIPS of a LIFETIME for
the TRAVELING SPORTSMAN

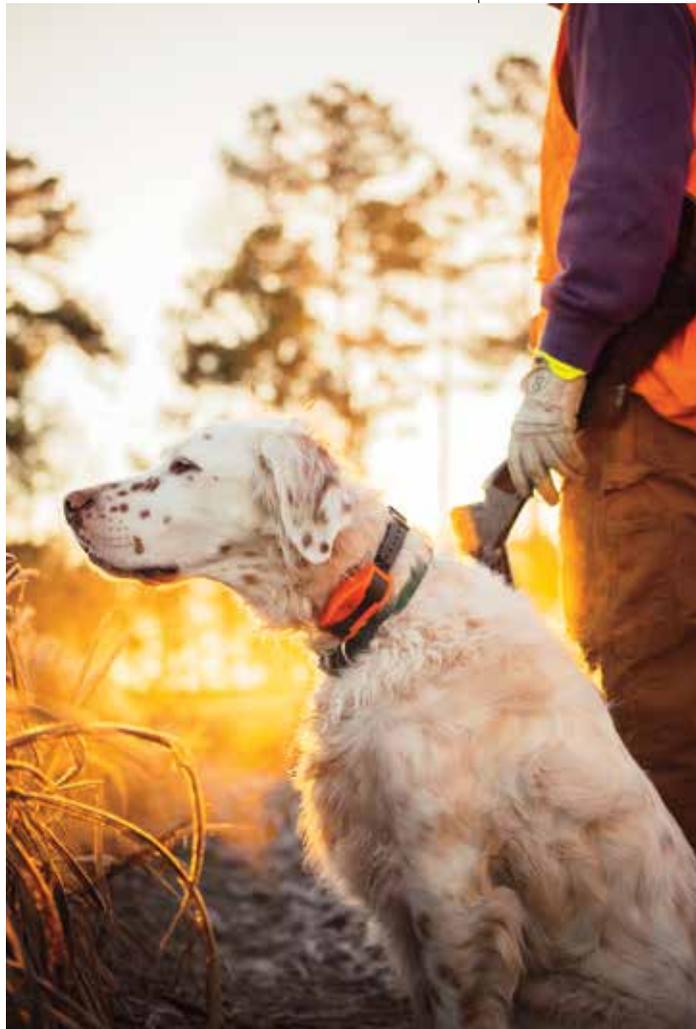
GARDENANDGUN.COM



III.
George Hi Plantation/Wildrose
Kennels Gundog Training
Garland, NC

This 1,000-acre estate in North Carolina's rolling pinelands has garnered acclaim for its restoration of classic quail habitat, but waterfowlers and retriever fans also flock here each spring to take advantage of the plantation's collaboration with Wildrose Kennels. Considered among the world's finest kennels and training protocols for sporting retrievers, Wildrose schedules a pair of two-day training sessions for beginner and seasoned dogs at George Hi. Bring your own retriever for intensive instruction and training in an immersive learning environment that will jump-start your canine's sporting career. georgehi.com

Contributors: Kirk Deeter, Irwin Greenstein,
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DAWN PATROL

Nose to the air at George Hi Plantation. Opposite: Felipe Rodríguez Alonso heads out for a day of bonefishing at Las Salinas.



PART III:
The NEXT FRONTIER

Cuba Calling

Exploring a newfound
flats-fishing treasure

by **ABE STREEP**

About twenty minutes after the troops search our van at a standard military checkpoint, light hits the swamp. Birds are everywhere—gray egrets, herons, flamingos—and the road rolls wildly up and down. Every spring, we're told, it must be repaved. Traffic isn't the issue, but rather the unruly waters, which flood over it regularly during hurricane season.

Our leader is Felipe Rodríguez Alonso, a fifty-eight-year-old Cuban fishing guide with a stocky build and a wry grin. As the high saw grass waves in the hot sun and an egret rises from a skeleton-like tree, Rodríguez says, "*Estoy buscando americanos!*" (I'm looking for Americans!).

He and a fellow guide, a salty bird-watcher with a long face nicknamed Manolo, crack up at the old joke. We're entering the Ciénega de Zapata Biosphere Reserve, right near the place where, half a century ago, a team of U.S.-sponsored paramilitaries failed to overthrow the Castro regime during the Bay of Pigs invasion. But now different kinds of Americans are coming—tourists with fly rods.

The Bay of Pigs sits alongside the reserve, a watery wilderness larger than the Everglades. It's a haven for nearly two hundred bird species, some of which exist nowhere else, not to mention crocs, manatees, and vast schools of bonefish, as well as tarpon and permit. What it doesn't have are crowds. We pull into a makeshift parking lot near a two-story wooden structure that's seen better days. This is our entrance to Las Salinas, eighty square miles of sheltered mangrove flats west of the Bay of Pigs. Only eight anglers per day are allowed to fish the area. We string up our fly rods and step out into the water in old flat-bottom wooden boats, my girlfriend, Stephanie, heading out with Rodríguez while I join Manolo. For a minute I'm mesmerized by the green and yellow grass just inches beneath the boat. Then Manolo hisses—*tssssss*—and points forward. Just thirty or so yards ahead, near a mangrove stand, is a great quavering V: bonefish. There must be a hundred of them swimming in formation, chasing shrimp larvae near the surface. The water looks alive. I cast, splash the water, and watch the fish scatter. Manolo scowls—my cast was too overhand, creating a large shadow—but I can't help smiling. This is what the tropics look like without us.