



Around Okefenokee's campfires the black bear is usually the principal topic of conversation. Fish stories pale when compared with the swamp's endless "b'ar" tales.

a mammal reservation. Its summer-nesting wood ducks, its flocks of wintering ringnecks, mallards, pintails, and black ducks give it considerable value as a migratory waterfowl refuge. Its cranes, egrets, ibises, and herons give the swamp some status as a sanctuary for big water birds. Its incredible numbers of woodpeckers, among which there is the slim possibility of finding the all but extinct ivory-billed species, cannot be ignored. Steadily mounting alligator populations, now past the 5,000 mark, have become a noticeable feature.

But Okefenokee is more than a general wildlife refuge. It represents an attempt to preserve an area of primitive Americana; to defend against further encroachment existing stands of virgin cypress, now among the best in the South, and to reforest sections denuded by woodcutters, turpentine gatherers, and fires; to hold in trust for all the people—sightseers, students, naturalists, artists, photographers, fishermen—this amazing lost world with its beautiful mirrored effects.

In its management of the swamp the Fish and Wildlife Service plans no roads into Okefenokee beyond administrative needs, nor any other development which might mar its inherent attractions. Nature itself is the landscaper. Already stands of young cypress have hidden the stumps in the great bays, and eventually will rear a new generation of bearded giants to replace the old. Less time will be required for gum trees and pines. Preserving these woodlands calls for vigilant, unceasing fire patrols.

Maintaining water levels is another management problem. The lush aquatic vegetation of Okefenokee acts as a sponge, soaking up rainfall in the wet seasons, releasing it slowly to the torrid heat of the summer sun. But already there have been drought periods when the