

SPECIAL REPORT

Like he just stepped off the set of 'Yellowstone', here's Monty Murphy, organizer of our first community-wide Nutria hunt, and organizer of the 'Oglebay Posse'. And an actual former working *Cowboy*. Monty and a core group of other volunteers established a beachhead on ponds on holes 5, 7 & 8, and took the invaders on hand-to-hand. At least 16 were *coaxed, caught*, and had their residencies here *culminated*. After the late fall success, Monty was able to reprise his role when a new phenomenon was witness on the first pond behind the homes on Oglebay south.



Photo: Monty Murphy

THE GOOD



Photo: Ron Powers

This is just one look at the damage Nutria can cause, on the shore of the first pond along Oglebay. Nutria poke, dig and burrow through pond shorelines, feasting on roots and undermining and collapsing the banks. Consider the amount of material removed to create the damage in this picture; and not a trace of it has been found nearby, or anywhere in the vicinity, according to Ron Powers.

THE BAD

Melanie Dean: "They are not cute, they have 4 inch bright orange buck teeth that they use to bore into the land at the waterline. They eat it, roots & all...which leaves large underground burrows for them to have litters of up to 13 offspring. You're walking along & the ground below you collapses. Had it happen behind my house."



Photo: John Wright

AND THE UGLY

Special Report continues, next page





Photo: Monty Murphy

You can't *unhear* the sound of a Nutria in a trap. OK, if you insist: [Nutria-in-a-Trap](#). Unfortunately, the hotbed for Florida's Nutria population is the Jacksonville area. Lest you insist on hands-off for the furry folks, if you enjoy swimming and kayaking, 'Nutria-Itch' may have your hanging up your swim-trunks. They're known to carry nematodes, tapeworms, and liver flukes, all transmissible to humans.

OK, THE UGLY SPECIAL REPORT

If Magnolia Point's recent Nutria guests had been on social media last fall, they would have been blown away by the impression they'd made. Turns out they were, in a literal sense.

FWC, our state's last word and final arbiter of all wild things warm and cold-blooded, wants them gone. They allow unlimited trapping, and the rare gun-and-light night shooting. For many, it flies in the face of compassion, this edict to eradicate another mammal: furry, warm blooded, lively little eyes.

We prize the occasional glimpse of deer on Colonial or a fox darting across the fairway on #3. Not so much when we surprise an armadillo in our flower bed; humans have a unique bond with fur-bearing

animals. At first glance, a Nutria has a beaver-esque cuteness. One might imagine petting its not-disagreeably-looking coat like one might the family dog or cat.

Yet while we endure the mining adventures of armadillo, opossum and gopher turtles and those adorable deer mow down our precious flowers, Nutria's villainy is of another *magnitude*.

A member of the largest order of mammals, *Rodentia*, are they. Truly, you'd be hard-pressed to come up with any living successful living arrangement between humans and rats. And given the Nutria's persistence, scary-high reproductive rate, and our inviting pondscapes, this rat-race may be far from over.



Photo: Ron Powers

Someone didn't get the memo. In February, Ron Powers noticed this alongside the first pond on Oglebay South. The newly formed 'Oglebay Posse' was, well, *stumped*: what caused this? Were the Nutria back, and adding trees to their menu, or do we *Leave This to Beaver*? The nearby tracks (below), do not show webbed feet; and Nutria are known to change their diets to tree bark in the colder months. Stay tuned!



Special Report continues, next page



NUTRIA SYSTEM:

And good luck trying to induce *Myocastor coypus* into your trap with a few lettuce leaves, or the clichéd ‘*schmear of peanut butter*’. These guys have highly refined palates. Melanie Dean’s winning recipe for bait:

- 1 part corn
- 1 part red & green peppers, chopped
- 1 small bunch fresh mint
- 1 part chopped McIntosh apple
- 1 part chopped carrots
- 6 Wintergreen Lifesavers (they love mint)
- A few sprinkles of Jim Beam Apple

Then it’s **your** turn; consider ‘*Nutria à la Provençale*’



Photo: Pixabay

Okay, I’ll admit I had some skin in this game, if not the Nutria skin I was hoping for; here’s what they did in our backyard:



This is what they did to a stunning stand of Pampas Grass on our property, a once-majestic SUV-sized clump split open like a melon from the burrowing beggars. They’re gone, and the grass is slowly recovering. For now.



GATOR WATCH



Who’s Watching Who?
Page 12

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