Managing a Pond for Wildlife

Gary J. Burtle
Animal & Dairy Science, Tifton
The University of Georgia, Ft. Valley State University and USDA Cooperating
Wildlife as a Goal

• Share your pond with animals
• Provide plants as habitat
• Provide plants as food
• Encourage the process of plant succession (eutrophication)
Why attract wildlife?

• Make an oasis or refuge for wildlife
• Simple enjoyment of watching wildlife
• Willingness to share the pond with wildlife
Possible Disadvantages of Attracting Wildlife

• Dangerous animals
  – Snakes, bears, alligators

• Nuisance animals
  – Raccoons, deer, otters

• Poacher trespass
  – Attracted to game that use the pond
A dangerous visitor

Predators are attracted to fish.
Types of Wildlife Ponds

- Combination fishing/wildlife pond
- Wildlife viewing pond
- Wildlife refuge pond
Wildlife and Fish

- Need open water that is >4 ft deep
- Access to pond edge
- Fishing pier or boat access
- Pond productivity may be low
Wildlife and Fish

• Plan to keep part of the pond open for access
• Deep water will allow some fertilization for fish population management
• Stock red ear sunfish to help reduce vectors of fish parasites
• Small ponds do not need fish, dragonflies and frogs will control mosquitoes
Wildlife Viewing Pond

- Secluded areas
- View of wildlife access points
- Wildlife resting areas
- Blinds or view from windows of home
Wildlife Refuge Pond

- Encourage pond to reach advanced plant succession
- Shallow water encourages plant growth
- Few human access points
Backyard Wildlife Pond

- Small
- Secluded
- Perennial Vegetation
- Access to adjacent habitat
Encouraging Plant Succession

• Leave shallow areas in pond
• Lower pond in summer
• Plant the types of vegetation you want
• Watch for invasives and remove as soon as you see them
Some Plant Possibilities
Alternative plants

- **Submerged plants**

  *Ceratophyllum demersum* Hornwort (Coontail)
  *Eleocharis acicularis* Hair Grass (spikerush)
  *Mayaca fluviatilis* Bog moss

  *Potamogeton diversifolius* Threadleaf pondweed
  *Potamogeton pectinatus* Sago pondweed

- **Floating aquatic plants and Emergent plants**

  *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides* Water penneywort
  *Nymphaea odorata* White Water Lily
  *Nuphar advena* Cow Lily (spatter dock)
  *Potamogeton illinoiensis* Illinois pondweed
Shrubs - Elderberry
Trees - Pawpaw
Marginal – Primrose willow
Marginal – Swamp Loosstrife
Decorative – Marsh Hibiscus
Marginal – Duck Potato
Grasses – Bullrush
Grasses – Fall Panic Grass
Rushes and Sedges – Shore Rush
Rushes to Stabilize Pond Edge
Marginal - Cattail
Floating

• Water lily
• Spreads over shallow areas
• Shade 50% of pond to limit algae growth
• Remove by pruning to limit spread of lilies
• Will populate areas of shallow water (less than 6 ft deep)
Pickerel Weed Out of Control

This plant can displace other plants on the pond margin.
Submerged – Common Pondweeds (Potamogeton)
Illinois Pondweed
Submerged – Sago Pondweed
Coontail
Summary

- Choose your goal
- Encourage plant succession
- Choose plants carefully
- Enjoy wildlife
Do you want wildlife at your doorstep?