

THE EVOLUTION OF GRAPHIC ARTS IN A CONSERVATION AGENCY MAGAZINE

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the development of graphic design concepts as incorporated into a conservation agency magazine from 1966 to the present. This evolution will be presented relative to six different categories each with an individual set of typical graphics problems. They are: Logo (title block), covers, inside front cover, editorial page, interior (both print and illustration), and special graphic effects. The refinement of a coherent and meaningful graphics design in these areas typifies the evolution of the whole.

INTRODUCTION

In 1966 Stein Printing Company of Atlanta proposed to the Georgia Game and Fish Commission a concept and format for a departmental conservation magazine to be produced monthly. This idea was adopted and *Georgia Game & Fish* became the official publication of the Commission. This publication was for the most part a technically oriented biological hunting and fishing how-to magazine.

In its beginning, the total appearance was old fashioned and at least ten years behind in the area of magazine publication. The interior was a tight format with black and white photography. The only use of color was on the cover. Changes occurred as the staff grew and began to have more input into layout which previously had been done entirely by Stein. Eventually rough layout was done by the editor and a staff writer and thereby the graphic quality began to pick up. Still, no great headway was made for no graphic specialists were involved.

Beginning in 1971, Georgia state government underwent a major reorganization. As a result of this reorganization, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources was created. It was conceived as an "umbrella" resource management agency to combine the functions of many natural resource agencies under one administrative blanket. The new Department included the Division of Earth and Water (minerals and mining), Environmental Protection (air and water quality), Planning and Research, State Parks and Historic Sites, and Game and Fish.

No longer was Game and Fish an entity functioning on its own nor was its I & E Section. This Section was re-christened Public Relations and Information and moved up to a departmental section to serve all the various divisions. So with this change, *Game & Fish* magazine was re-constituted to cover all the facets of the Department of Natural Resources. The magazine name changed to *Outdoors in Georgia*. In July of 1972 the first edition of the new magazine appeared as the official conservation publication of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

The evolution of graphic design in our conservation agency magazine has occurred for diverse reasons. The growth of our magazine staff and budget has been responsible for many of the physical changes contained in the magazine. Most noteworthy was the establishment of an art section which was started in August of 1972.

Graphic art relates to and reflects its environment and that total environment includes people, politics, the economy and even the weather at times. These catalysts of change occur and effect our product whether we want them to or not. It is the graphic response to these occurrences by which the graphic artist is judged. If the fulfillment of these challenges is good and serves its multifaceted purpose, we, the graphics people have then made our contribution to a better publication.

At times, the graphic growth of our magazine has been slow. Some new concepts have worked well and sadly sometimes we have had to regroup entirely, thus learning from our mistakes and building on positive accomplishments.

The evolution of graphics from 1966 to the present time has fallen into six distinct areas. To explain this evolution, we have prepared a series of slides, since it would be senseless to speak at length on graphic techniques without graphic display.

LOGO OR TITLE BLOCK

The original title block of *Georgia Game & Fish* was designed by Stein Printing Company in 1966. The masthead style used occupied the top one-third of the front cover. Georgia was in all caps in 32 point stacked over a very bold Game & Fish in 90 point type size under which the departmental seal

or logo was positioned on the left-hand side leaving a vast amount of white area. This feat of design (the departmental seal) on a scale of 1-10 would probably rate 2 in graphic design. A deer, turkey, bass and quail were quartered with a red cross over which the seal of Georgia was printed at center point. Wondering how this particular logo was developed, I learned that the design was executed by an employee of Game and Fish as no in-house artist existed at that time.

By July 1970, the masthead had been doctored somewhat, making some improvement. The area occupied approximately one-fourth of the cover giving more space for cover subject matter. The word "Georgia" in all caps became smaller and "Game & Fish" went to lower case and was reduced from 90 to 72 point. Georgia remained printed in black and white and game & fish being printed in a color to complement the cover photo, as had been the practice from the beginning. The same departmental logo was used, but smaller this time and placed in the left-hand corner next to game & fish.

This remained the standard head until July, 1972, when it was replaced by the new name *Outdoors in Georgia*. Since the "new" magazine was to be all encompassing of the outdoors, a casual type face for the title seemed to fit the bill. De Vinne Ornamented was chosen. The word "outdoors" was felt to be the dominant concept in the title block and was set in caps and lower case, with "Georgia" stacked under in lower case in a smaller point size.

From the beginning, we received criticism of having used the fair name of our state in lower case. I have found the use of lower case for any proper name highly objectionable to the Georgia populace. I don't know if this is a carry-over from our Victorian Bible-belt culture, or whether our teachers only teach poetic license, having never heard of, or at least being intolerant of artistic license. So, after almost three years of Georgia in lower case the Board of Natural Resources unanimously voted that beginning April, 1975 "Georgia" would be capitalized! Another battle was lost in the world of graphic design.

One fortunate thing about the title block as it is now, which I refer to now as our logo is its versatility and flexibility of positioning. The masthead style allowed no freedom in placement. The current logo appears usually in the upper right-hand corner. Several times it has been positioned in the lower right-hand corner to better fit into the cover composition. Our logo can be enlarged, reduced, over-printed, dropped-out, or used alone with a framed subject underneath. This allows more freedom in the selection of cover material as well:

COVERS

The change of the magazine to *Outdoors in Georgia* offered new potential for cover subject matter. No longer were covers limited to photos or artwork pertaining only to game and fish. In fact, a wealth of new areas and concepts were virtually thrust upon us. As a result, our photo section received a wealth of requests to supply new photos and ideas. Scenic or calendar-type photos were used on the first three issues.

In October of 1972, we used our first "big name" art work on the cover. We had chosen a painting by Bob Christie entitled "My Two Favorites" depicting a pair of bird dogs at work. Unfortunately, the ratio of the painting didn't quite fit cover dimensions, so it ended up being a partial wrap-around. Everything was fine until our Deputy Commissioner picked up the magazine by the back cover and was confronted by a full view of one dog's derriere.

Several times we were caught with no suitable illustration that related seasonally or to any feature story inside and were forced into creativity. In November, 1972 a feature story on "Ducks in Trouble," was totally without color pictures and yielded only one poor quality black and white photo. This photo was blown up to wrap-around cover size, was used as a negative with the logo dropped out in red, resulting in a striking dramatic effect, and one of the best covers we have had. A year later this same process was used for a December issue. This time a reverse with red background and trees silhouetted in white gave a Christmasy-looking cover. (We had had no snow; therefore no snow photos.) A bonus to this type of cover is a cut in production costs. A wrap-around in one or two colors as compared to color separations in four color process is a saving in the initial color cost as well as in the printing run. A fish rubbing was used in the same manner, which also added interest to the "do-art-at-home" set.

The introduction of metallic inks with one other color has produced handsome and cheap covers for us as well. One was a silver background with a swamp scene overprinted in black. This cover has been used in a slide presentation by a printing house other than our printer to illustrate to the trade how to achieve a good graphic effect without the expense of full color. This one cover appears to be a wrap around but is really a mirror image. The color slide was converted to a black and white for this. Again,

we used this same method for a special on "Gold in Georgia" with a gold metallic background overprinted with a photo circa 1800 to produce the nostalgic effect.

INSIDE FRONT COVER

In *Game & Fish* the inside front cover was split in the middle with a black bar with the editorial on the right and table of contents and departmental information (a list of commissioners, staff, etc.) on the left. No graphics were employed on this page other than the reduction of the masthead which appeared at the top of the left-hand column.

In December of 1971, this page was revamped. The editorial was moved to page one. The inside front cover was designed with a column on the left-hand side, screened and, containing within this screen the State seal, Governor's name, Commissioner, Board members and Division Directors, etc. overprinted. The remainder of the page was used for table of contents, information about the magazine and listing of the magazine staff. All of this was printed in black ink on a stark white page. This style was carried over into *Outdoors in Georgia*, with the only change being the new logo.

A new editor inflicted a drastic change on this page in September, 1974. Change for the sake of change was the apparent reasoning behind the new layout — certainly not better graphics. This change was to blow the State seal full page, screening 10 percent and to overprint the same printed material as before. The result: possibly the worst graphic garbage ever to be in *Outdoors in Georgia*, a poor readability, and an overall appearance of sheer clutter.

The departure from the above mentioned bastard style was to revert to original layout and to add color. This page now has three distinct areas which hold together as a complete page. The color used on this page is pulled from the cover or from the editorial page. Always the page will complement the editorial page and ideally the cover also, thus giving a continuity from outside to inside. The only area not colored is the space for the table of contents. This is left white and is immediately seen and easily read.

EDITORIAL PAGE

The editorial page in *Outdoors in Georgia* began with two columns of type accompanied by a picture of whoever happened to write the editorial. This progressed, or rather continued, with just a large headline or picture and copy. We did break the monotony once with a pictorial editorial, macabre as it was, of a scene of a dragging operation for a drowning victim. As mentioned earlier, we have now introduced color on this page. When possible, we use a full bleed color photo with the editorial overprinted or dropped out. If only a smaller photo is available, this is used. This has been one of our best changes to evolve along with the inside front cover. Rather than ignore the inside back cover, we added one color there leaving the subscription blank in white to make this stand out, be clipped out, filled out and mailed in!

MAGAZINE INTERIOR

Copy area in *Outdoors in Georgia* continued with a tight margin, carried over from *Game & Fish* which was originally set up by Stein Printing Company. Page size was, and still is, $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ inches. Copy margin area measured $\frac{7}{16}$ by $9\frac{3}{4}$ inches. This gave a crowded feeling particularly if two or more pictures were used per page within this framework. Copy length was changed to $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches leaving more margin at top and bottom and enough room at the bottom for a date line. This gave the overall appearance a freer and less crowded look.

Type faces have fluctuated. In the beginning, Times Roman 9 or 10 set in three columns was the norm for *Game & Fish*. Occasionally, on an introduction page or for a short story, two column width was used to eat up space. In August 1971, new type faces began to appear and many stories were purposefully set in two column widths. After this more leading or height was used in type faces. Two and three columns were intermingled frequently. A former editor who was graphically oriented feels this period may have shown too much diversity of type faces but during this time of experimentation we gained in our knowledge of what worked and looked best. We began the use of two columns set ragged-right. This was first used for our first Heritage Trust Edition which won a first place award in the Special Publications category by the American Association Conservation Information in 1972. Ragged-right has remained with us for special feature stories.

Eventually, another editor decided to run the entire copy in two columns. This caused drastic limitation to graphic design as to what could not be done with photo placement. Example: photos

which were a perfect fit in a small column space vertically positioned would often leave too much white area. This was disadvantageous if we were hurting for space elsewhere. We have now gone back to the intermingling of two and three columns.

Page count began at 16 pages in *Game & Fish*. This number of pages is really too small for $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$. Format would have been better in a $9" \times 6"$. Eventually the page count grew to 24, then progressed to 28 and now is standard at 32.

The interior of the magazine originally was done totally in black and white. Color was used only on the cover. Occasionally, color screen blocks were used — not duo-tones. July of 1971 marked the first introduction of color inside.

Color usage was limited to four pages within the total 16 page count. When the page count jumped to 24, eight were devoted to color. Once we reached the 32 page count, the norm was to have only one 8-page signature in black and white. We now had enough color pages to really make the magazine look good!

The input from a new Director of PR&I caused another drastic change in our color work. Upon his directive, we went to total color. Graphically, this is a difficult feat to execute without becoming monotonous. I think it is essential to have some black and white. Even *National Geographic* does! Color all the way through was not to last long.

After receiving the billing for the second full-color magazine and with a vicious budget crunch upon us, the idea that one signature in black and white was graphically helpful and added to the overall appearance, was accepted quite warmly. This is perhaps the only time a shortage of money contributed to graphic design and artistic freedom.

SPECIAL GRAPHIC EFFECTS

Special graphic effects have been used for many various reasons. The usage of color pages have helped to make a very dull story or subject come alive. Also color pages or backgrounds can enrich an already good story by giving all the pages the same background, thus setting it apart from the rest of the magazine. Color backgrounds help frame pictures in photo essay stories, and copy dropped out of color is very effective at times. Most important, graphically, color pages break the monotony of the white page.

Charts are kept from dying a slow but certain death by the brilliance of color, and it certainly tempts the reader to further investigate the subject matter.

Black and white sketches can be enhanced with the addition of one color, and, if done correctly, they give as good an effect as a full color shot. This method also is an economical one.

We have many times relied on cartoons in the magazine. As the art staff developed, another artist was employed. He has a good talent for cartooning and has saved us many times. One particular fishing story was literally rained-out — no photos. To salvage this story, we used cartoons illustrating the wet, miserable trip it really was. Many times we have been caught without necessary photos or refined art work and have used cartoons to bail out.

Cartoons, quick sketches (called in-house quick and dirties) have been important to eat up space in otherwise poorly illustrated areas such as book reviews, letters to the editor, sportsman's calendar, etc. We have given this our own terminology of "spactals."

Before the graphic section was started in DNR all type faces for the magazine were selected from the printer type book. This was limiting to achieve headlines with special effects. We began to set our own headlines when necessary using lettraset. This worked well until one particular editor felt every head should be very "artsy-kraftsy" and he almost artsy-krafted us to death. This precipitated many screaming matches and fits of temper in the graphics section. But then — aren't artists supposed to be temperamental? I certainly hope so — we have our craft to defend and respect. So much for in-house fighting, but I've been told it cleanses the soul. It also cleans out a room if the going gets rough enough.

Well, for the prettier side of the picture. Perhaps the strongest graphic growth to evolve so far is the photo-essay section which has become a regular feature every month. This has come slowly when pictures were available; now it is a planned segment of our operation. We feature different sections of our State or certain points of interest graphically — and I believe truly one picture is worth \$160 for a color separation.

The purpose of good graphic design is not to be an artistic entity, nor to be solely beautiful but to provide a favorable and supportive backdrop for the transmission of ideas, i.e., communication.