

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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'Moth Syndrome' A Safety Hazard

Like moths drawn to the flickering of a candle, casual sightseers can't seem to keep away from local fire scenes.

Apparently they're drawn by the hint of danger and the mystery and power of the fire itself. Or perhaps they simply have nothing better to do with their time.

The July 19 fire at Oyster Bay clubhouse is a good example of what one local fireman calls "moth syndrome." Until forced to leave the immediate area, onlookers fluttered about without purpose, standing on mounds of bleached oyster shells or darting in for a better look at the fire.

They got in the way of firemen pulling hoses. Their vehicles clogged the entrance to the facility and the parking lot. Their carelessly parked vehicles slowed fire trucks trying to get in position around the building.

Coming and going, rescue ambulances that transported exhausted, dehydrated firefighters to Brunswick Hospital had to fight their way through heavy "let's take a look" traffic.

What's the price for playing with fire?

When a moth gets too close to a flame, it gets zapped, scorched.

Maybe that is what it would take to discourage sightseeing at community fires—death or serious injury of a sightseer.

In the meantime, casual onlookers shouldn't be allowed to interfere with the job at hand.

Fire chiefs have the authority—and the responsibility to their volunteer crews—to provide as safe a working environment as possible. The chief in charge has control of not only all firefighters on the scene, but also law enforcement and emergency personnel. In short, he's the boss.

Using his police powers, the boss can have interfering sightseers—and any vehicle that impedes an emergency operation—removed and possibly cited.

Taking a tough stand on the issue might temporarily dull departmental public relations, but it would also give volunteer firefighters deserved support.

If you have no business on a fire scene, stay away until the emergency is passed—or take a chance on getting zapped.



'Bob' Wielded Final Blow

Hurricane Bob proved a blessing in disguise last week, its winds wielding the final blow to the once-grand old flag that had held sway over U.S. 17 for several years.

The flag was the subject of a recent Beacon editorial.

Owners of a gas station had allowed a giant-size U.S. flag to wave both night and day, in weather both fair and foul. Such poor treatment took its toll quickly, with a boost from Hurricane Diana last September and a series of winter storms.

Its tattered, faded condition made a more obvious impression on those casually passing through town, perhaps, than on those of us who passed under its stars and stripes daily.

Its condition certainly made a bad impression on one out-of-county newspaper editor who passed through here on the way to a recent press association conference in South Carolina. It was the only landmark he could associate with the Town of Shallotte.

The flag is gone. It was hauled down Thursday, but not before its shredded 13 stripes had caught the eye of more than one newspaper photographer.

When—or if—it is replaced, the owners should take care to give the U.S. flag the respect due it, rather than turning a national symbol into merely another business emblem.

Ringnecked Doves Mate For Life, Daniel

When Jody arrived home, Colin was under the shed busily snapping bits of wire, fasteners for an impromptu and rather large tabletop cage.

Off to one side her brother, Daniel, held a box that was taped shut at the top and had airholes in its sides. As he watched his father's every move, Daniel was on pins and needles, itching to open the box and show us what was inside. But wait he did.

From within came a fluttering noise and a soft sound, such as the murmur you hear in a henhouse near dusk. It was a familiar, comforting sound, unlike the harsher calls of a brood of pheasants in a nearby pen.

The GA's had been baking cookies at church, in preparation for a visit to the nursing home. Jody McCoy's house was the last stop on the delivery run home; it was tempting to linger. The McCoys had been family friends since childhood, their house reachable through a soft sandy road that ran through the woods from behind our house on U.S. 17 to theirs



Susan Usher

off Village Point Road. We'd grown up together riding bikes, picking berries and skating at the local roller rink.

This was an exciting day to stay. Janet filled us new arrivals in: Daniel had been to Gilbert Grissett's and didn't return empty-handed. Gilbert raises pigeons and doves in Grissettown—mostly for fun, but also for a little profit.

Daniel was the proud owner of a family of ringnecked doves: male, female and baby. The baby was all down and quills with a huge beak. It sat in an old wren's nest Colin had appropriated from the rafters of the shed. The mother was all over herself in this new situation, alternately sit-

ting on or near her baby and fluttering up the walls of the cage.

Doves mate for life, Jan reminded the children, recalling the wild mourning doves that return each year to nest in a nearby stand of pines.

Meanwhile, we were marveling at the birds. If you've never seen ringnecked doves, you can't imagine the delicate beauty of these creatures.

Averaging about eight inches in length, their dusty rose feathers fade to a pinkish-white on the underside but are a blushing gray in the upper wing area. They have red feet and red eyes. A dark band circles the neck, giving them their name. They like taking long drinks of water, swishing cracked corn and seeds about their cages and cooing, cooing and cooing some more.

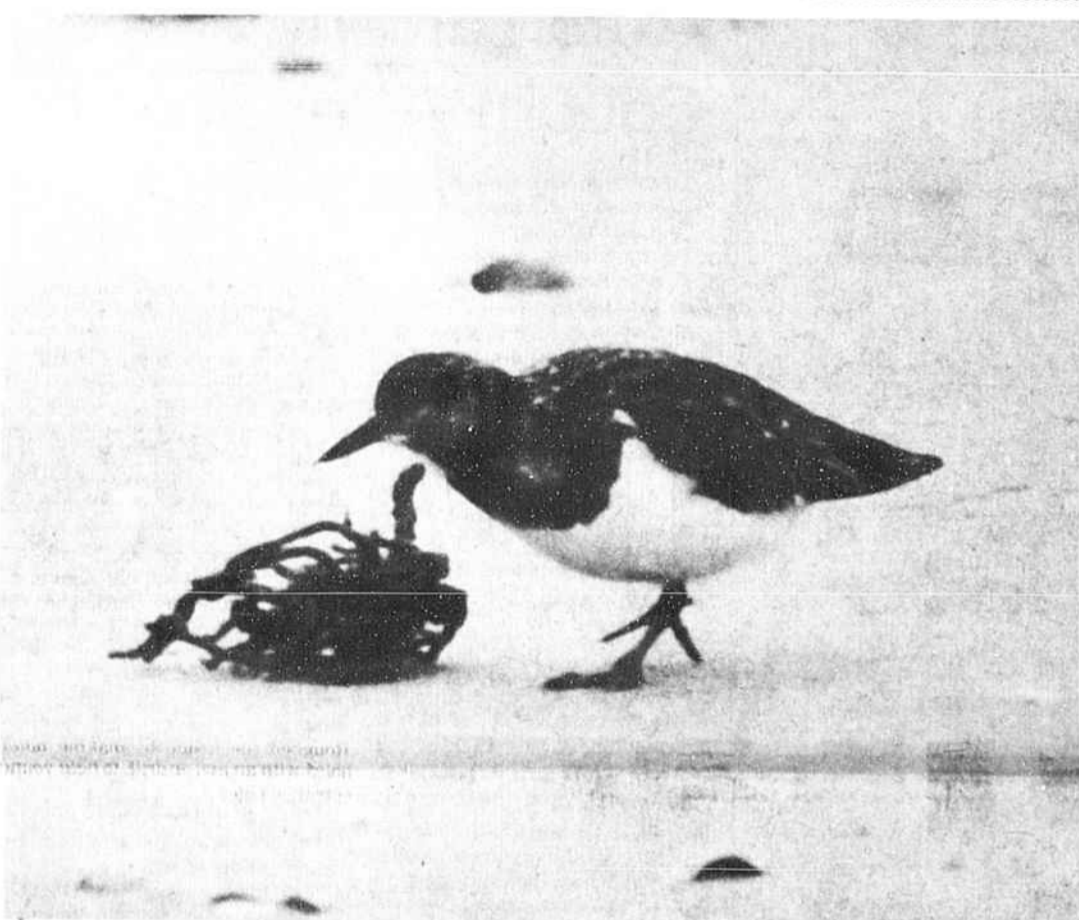
At Daniel's and Jody's house, you have to keep any new arrivals in perspective. Their yard reminds me of what it was like for us girls growing up on McMillly Swamp. It's full of animals for companionship—and to love and learn to be responsible for their care. They've got

cats—including Frisky, who couldn't take his eye off the doves; Sugar and Shorty, the children's pet dogs that stay in the yard; a brood of pheasants, plus a little aquarium.

Off to the sides of the yard, in pens of their own, are the black and tans that are Colin's and the children's pride: Duke, 11 years old but as frisky as a three-year-old; and Jan, 10, a sedate mother figure. The first mating of these senior citizens produced two beautiful female pups; Sheba and Tar Baby. Unlike many black and tans bred today for color, his haven't a trace of Doberman blood. These pups had enormous long ears, Duke's legacy, and perfectly formed bodies, with tails made for pointing.

They're not for sale, so don't ask. When they're the right age, he'll be looking to mate them with some equally true-to-breed males. Colin says he wants to re-establish the old time black and tan line. After one look at those puppies' gorgeous ears, Jody thinks that's a great idea.

Watching Jody and Daniel brings to mind some of the best moments of childhood. Unlike some of their friends, Daniel and Jody don't own lots and lots of store-bought things. The other kids should be envious, though, because these two have something much finer, something that can't be bought: the whole outdoors for a learning lab and playground—and parents who understand why that's important.



Ruddy Turnstones

The name is descriptive of this shorebird about the same size as the sanderlings. The "ruddy" comes from the rich chestnut color on the shoulders and wings and the "turnstone" comes from its habit of pushing and flipping shells, stones and debris in search of food. It is one of our regular birds along the Brunswick County coast and can be easily overlooked because of its protective coloration and feeding habits.

This chunky, plover-like bird is about 8-10 inches tall with a wing spread of 16-19 inches. Its orange colored legs are probably its best mark of identification because no other bird of its size has orange legs. In summer its upperparts are rusty red which makes a strong contrast between the whitish underparts. Face and breast have conspicuous black markings which become duller but still visible in winter. In winter the



Bill Faver

upper markings become brownish and the legs may also become duller. In flying, the black and white patterns on their wings and the three white streaks down their backs make them appear larger.

Turnstones use their short, stout bill which is slightly upturned at the point to flick over hundreds of shells and fragments to find eggs, worms, and small mussels. When they are feeding in an area and the surf is calm, you can hear the soft clicks of the stones or shells being flipped. Their colors give them almost com-

plete camouflage on an oyster bed or along rip-rap or similar material.

These birds breed only in the Arctic areas on the coasts of Alaska to Greenland. Four buff colored, olive spotted eggs are laid in a shallow hollow lined with grass and dead leaves and concealed under low bushes. Both birds attend the nest and are territorial in defending their nest and the offspring. Turnstones winter along the coastal areas from North Carolina to South America and along the west coast. We have the birds here all summer as well, but out summer birds do not breed here.

If you are not familiar with the Ruddy Turnstone, take time to look for this little bird along our coast. Sometimes called "calico back", "calico plover", "chicken plover", and "sea quail", Ruddy Turnstones are one of our most interesting bird species.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Follow Lead Of Sunset, Says Fire Chief

To the editor:

The Sunset Beach Volunteer Fire Department would like to thank all those who gave mutual aid at the recent fire at Oyster Bay.

Our thanks to all fire departments, police and rescue squads for their assistance, and to all citizens who answered our call for drinking water—mostly brought in their personal containers.

We would like to encourage all fire departments to follow the lead of Sunset Beach and form Fire Medic Units. Their value was proven once again at last Friday's fire—giving care to firemen and all persons at the scene long before and after the arrival of rescue units.

A First Responder course is being held at the Ocean Isle Fire Department for police, firemen and all those interested in gaining knowledge of first aid and CPR. This course is being sponsored by Brunswick Tech and will begin Tuesday, Aug. 6 at 7 p.m.

David Harrelson, Chief
Sunset Beach
Volunteer Fire Department

Efforts Were Crucial At Fire

To the editor:

As an expression of appreciation, Calabash Volunteer Rescue publicly thanks Shallotte, Coastline and Waccamaw rescue units for their assistance at the Oyster Bay Golf Club fire.

Their efforts were crucial to the safety of all those involved in the fire.

Cora Phipps, Chief
Calabash Rescue Squad

Care Needed Along Ocean Boulevard

Sometimes a busy street can be too lighted for its own good, which may be the case of Ocean Boulevard West at Holden Beach.

Last week, a young woman was struck by a car near the miniature golf course next to the Holden Beach Fishing Pier. Police Chief Raymond Simpson said no charges will be filed in the incident and blamed poor visibility for the accident.

It was not raining last Tuesday night when the accident occurred around 9 p.m., nor was there any fog. The car had its headlights on and the girl probably saw the approaching car and thought the driver could see her.

The only problem was, the driver's visibility is believed to have been altered by the surrounding lights glaring onto the highway and windshield. Unfortunately, the girl walking on the edge of the highway was struck, but fortunately she was not seriously injured. Officer George Adkins said there was some dispute over whether the girl was actually



Terry Pope

walking on the highway.

She was rushed to the Brunswick Hospital for treatment and released. It was the second time this year that a pedestrian has been struck by a car on Ocean Boulevard West and rushed to the hospital.

In an unrelated incident in June, a Greensboro girl died from injuries received when a vehicle struck her while she was walking along the highway at Holden Beach. That accident was during daylight hours.

Last week's accident points out the real problem with Ocean Boulevard West, especially the stretch near the fishing pier after dark. As Police Chief Simpson noted, a driver ap-

proaching the well-lighted area can "make out shadows, but he can't really tell what is on the road."

It's like standing on a stage before an audience with lights glaring down from various directions. The performers can hear the audience and see the lights, but they cannot make out faces and members in the crowd. From on stage, one can't really tell if the audience is waving or getting ready to throw tomatoes.

On the other hand, the audience can always see the performers on stage with no problem and they always assume that those on stage can see them as well.

There are some pedestrians who assume every driver traveling down Ocean Boulevard West has a clear view of both the highway and the pedestrians' Hawaiian designs as they use the highway for a footpath on their way to the pier or pavilion.

The assumption appears to be based on the fact that while walking along the shoulder of the road, it looks like the place has enough lights

for cars to pass even without their headlights on. That's dangerously putting the "stage syndrome" to work.

The area with the most lights is not necessarily the area that is safest when using the boulevard as a footpath to the pavilion, miniature golf course or pier. Pedestrians may look like distant shadows from the wheel of a vehicle. There are now several shops in the same lighted area, increasing foot traffic along the boulevard.

Without a doubt the lighted area is a very popular spot for families and teenagers, especially this time of year. Let's hope it continues to be a popular area, but that those under the lights will think more safely when they consider walking along the boulevard.

The town of Holden Beach has applied for a state grant that would be used to construct and pave a bike-pedestrian path along Ocean Boulevard. It would help tremendously.