

THE SEA HARE has two prominent tentacles suggestive of ears and a rabbit-like body shape which gives it the name.

Rabbits Under The Water

BY BILL FAVER

One of the strangest animals we find along the shore is the rabbit-like gastropod known as the sea hare.

My first encounter with a sea hare was in a marine science lab at UNC-Wilmington. I was there for a meeting and browsed among the aquaria looking at the marine critters. This very strange snail-like animal resembled a rabbit crouching down to feed. Its "ears" turned out to be antennae-like projections, and the back of the animal was formed from extensions of its "foot", folded like wings.

No shell is visible in this gastropod, but there is an internal shell which can be felt as a firmness within the fleshy body. This shell offers no protection for the sea hare as shells do for other gastropods.

Sea hares are vegetarian and prefer to feed on sea lettuce and other marine vegetation. This seven-inch-long animal used large fleshy lips, paired jaws, and rows of backward pointing teeth, called radula, to consume enormous amounts of food.

A purplish dye is released by sea hares when they are disturbed and this is used against predators to conceal the animal and provide a means of escape. Sea hares also avoid enemies and search for food by using

the large flap-like extensions of the foot for swimming.

These wings fold over the back and are joined at the rear. Usually when sea hares are seen in the wild, they are browsing among seaweed or swimming with their "wings".

Sea hares are hermaphroditic, and fertilization is internal. Sometimes during mating, the animals form chains with each animal serving as female for the one behind it and male for the one in front. Gelatinous egg strings are laid in the intertidal zone and may be as much as 65 feet long with as many as 100,000 eggs.

The eggs and young meet the same fate as most marine creatures, with most of the eggs and larvae being eaten before they have much time to develop.

In some parts of the world, the large wing flaps are eaten, either stewed or broiled. In other places, no doubt, the first century notion of these animals being poisonous still prevails.

At least one scientist at that time was accused of witchcraft and poisoning when he sought to study them.

Not many of us have encounters with sea hares, but those who do can have an experience of learning which can last a lifetime. This interesting "underwater rabbit" is another good example of the variety of animals contributing to the abundance of life in this dynamic zone where land and sea come together.

PHOTO BY BILL FAVER



FAVER

Personal Letters Bring Past To Life

What is there to say about the letters?

For a history buff like myself, reading these slice-of-life tidbits from the early- to mid-1800s would have been exciting enough. But they were written by my flesh and blood.

Several cousins and I had just visited the old Usher family cemetery outside Rose Hill and were back at the Rose Hill Restaurant when Tappy Herring Murray stepped out. She's a distant cousin also. Turns out she inherited a trunk of letters and other documents that had belonged to her grandmother, Cordelia Usher, 13th child born to William and Eliza Love Usher. My great-grandfather, Edwin Thomas Usher, was the ninth of their 15 children, seven of whom died as infants or children.

I had already read letters in the Southern Historical Collection at UNC-CH written by William's younger brother Patrick, who became a Texas Ranger, fought for Texan independence and died a prisoner of war in Mexico City.

But these letters were different, reflecting not the adventures of a family maverick, but rather the hardships of life in southeastern North Carolina, especially during the Civil War.

At Tappy's house the letters were no longer in the trunk, but were loose in a box. We began fingering through the fragile pages as carefully as we could in our eagerness to read their contents.

Some are quite personal, one to Eliza from her father, William J. Love Sr., a Wilmington physician, mourns the death of his grandsons, both named William Love, both of whom died in early 1853.

Susan Usher



But the wartime news is of broader interest.

For instance, on Oct. 19, 1861, Eliza's father writes about her brothers and sons and nephews who are caught up in the war:

"Your brother Thomas saw Lew Patterson of Capt. Devane's Company at Smithville and he told Thomas that your son Edwin (my great-grandfather) was in their company and was quite well and very well satisfied and that he had received the two bundles you sent him."

Meanwhile, her elder brother Thaddeus had returned from Manassas, Va., "where the great battle was fought" and where he visited his sons, Delavo and James, and found them sick for "they had eaten rather too freely of chestnuts." While bacon, beef and flour were plentiful, "the cooking was indifferent."

"Delavo said he never wanted a piece of pound cake so bad in his life," the letter reported.

Thaddeus had returned with a bayonet and canteen "taken from the enemy" as well as a tin kettle of

mountain butter and a "good sized cheese made after the old stile." Both were quite welcome in wartime Wilmington, where eggs were 20 to 25 cents a dozen and fresh mullets 12 1/2 cents each. "...you can see the market is pretty well up; that is high enough," Love wrote.

He writes on, "It's no great sight to see soldiers, they are pacing about here daily in any direction almost. There goes one now with a red shirt on, and reading a letter. There is about 1,000 camped on the hill in sight of John's house. I have seen more soldiers here in one day than I saw during all the war of 1812..."

Some 15 letters were written by Charley Carroll, William's eldest son, who was killed at the battle of Hanover Court House, Va., in 1864. A year earlier he wrote his sister Mary Tharessa "Mollie" Newkirk, who lived at Black River, sharing his feelings about the war.

She writes back, "My dear brother, you say you are sick of this cruel war; I can sympathize with you. I know you are tired of it and we all are, and oh, I do hope it will soon come to an end."

"You say that you never have a good thought. Do, my dear brother, let me beg of you not to despair. Try and be a Christian, pray and never faint, try and avoid all bad company and you will be so much happier..."

There's more, much more, and I hope to find a way to share them all with readers.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lottery 'A Wonderful Thing,' With Long American History

To the editor:

The column in last week's *Beacon*, "Lottery: The People Already Voted," was so full of self-serving innuendo, half-truths and out-of-context statements that it would take an entire newspaper page to rebut.

The writer, Coy C. Privette, executive director of the Raleigh-based Christian Action League of North Carolina, said that in electing the members of the General Assembly Nov. 3, the people already voted on the lottery, because "the role of the legislative branch is to establish policy."

So far, so good, but then he goes on to say, "It is my contention a lottery is bad policy and the legislators should refuse to pass such legislation." Does he think legislators should pass only legislation Mr. Privette thinks is "good?" What about the rest of us?

I have been fighting for a referendum on a North Carolina lottery since 1984 by writing letters and gathering information from lottery directors in other states. In early 1987, I succeeded in convincing the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners to pass a resolution asking for a public resolution. A copy of that resolution was sent to Rep. David Redwine who, at that time, had not publicly announced his support for a lottery.

It is most gratifying to see that Rep. Redwine now favors a state lottery and that each session of the General Assembly finds us a little closer to putting the decision in the laps of the people.

State lotteries have been around off and on for a couple of centuries. The birth of our great nation was assisted by a lottery. In 1776, the colonies faced the overwhelming problem of financing the revolution. On Nov. 1, 1776, the Board of Treasury raised \$10 million through the sale of 100,000 lottery tickets.

Over the next 50 years, lotteries financed projects that enabled the new states to build roads and bridges opening the way to the West. Lack of state supervision created problems and marked the outlawing of lottery activity beginning in 1833.

Then, in 1964, the first legal U.S. lottery drawing was held in Salem, New Hampshire. Today, there are 32 states and the District of Columbia deriving millions annually from state lotteries.

If Mr. Privette had taken the time

to investigate individual state lotteries, he would have learned that organized crime, as a rule, does not mess with the state operations. It is true that, in some states, organized crime runs its own lucrative gambling games based on the lottery number picks of the day, but before lotteries existed, they used horse race results from around the nation for their "hit" numbers.

Privette's excuse that the "lottery picks the pockets of the poor" is weak. Pockets of the poor are being picked every day by vendors of alcohol, cigarettes and junk foods, and the pockets of the hard-working middle class are being picked by the bureaucrats to pay for the addictions and health problems generated by these habits.

States reaping revenue from lotteries put that money to use in a variety of ways. In Florida, lottery winners who owed child support were forced to pay more than a million dollars in past due payments through a program set up by the Florida legislature. It established a Lottery Act which specifically listed court-ordered child support payments and other debts owed to the state to be deducted from prizes paid to such debtors.

The State of Kansas allocates 30 percent of its lottery proceeds for economic development and prison construction. West Virginia Lottery Director E.E. "Butch" Bryan said that in three years, approximately \$34 million in lottery money has funded basic skills computers for remedial education and \$30 million for tourism in his state. He also noted that lottery profits have allowed programs benefiting senior citizens to receive more than \$50 million in federal matching funds.

In Pennsylvania, senior citizens do not have to worry about the high cost of medicine. My 85-year-old mother pays \$6 for each of her medications, a savings of almost \$200 each month. She can travel free on public transportation during the afternoon hours or, for a small fee, an Access bus picks her up at her door. Property tax/rent rebates also are part of the benefits aged citizens receive from the lottery in Pennsylvania.

Does North Carolina have to be last in everything? Lotteries hold an important place in American history. They are not going to go away.

Thomas Jefferson called the lottery in his day, "a wonderful thing."

It lays taxation only on the willing." Our legislators should give their constituents a chance to voice their opinions regarding a lottery for North Carolina. A referendum will do just that.

Peggy M. Jaynes
Supply

No Smoking, Please, At County Complex

To the editor:

Have you been to the county complex and been subjected to second-hand smoke? Any office, especially the courthouse area, is terrible.

It is the board of commissioners' responsibility to correct this great injustice to the public. I ask them to please put the entire county complex off limits to smoking. Many government agencies have done so, as well as many private offices.

I ask the board of commissioners to have compassion on their fellow man and put the county complex off limits to smoking.

Clawson Ward
Longwood

Write Us

The *Beacon* welcomes letters to the editor. All letters must be signed and include the writer's address and telephone number. Under no circumstances will unsigned letters be printed. Letters should be legible. We reserve the right to edit libelous comments. Address letters to *The Brunswick Beacon*, P. O. Box 2558, Shallotte, N. C. 28459.

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