

PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

KILLDEER are the only ringed plovers with two breast bands.

## Rings Around The Neck

BY BILL FAVER

Some of the scientists tell us the rings around the neck of some birds have formed in order to help protect them from predators. The rings, and other similar markings, help break up the form of the bird and confuse the predator so that it cannot see the shape clearly enough to grasp it. One such bird is the killdeer, one of the group known as ringed plovers.



FAVER

The killdeer is the largest of the ringed plovers, about 9-11 inches long, with a large head and short, thick neck. There are two black bands around the neck and breast. The back is brown with a long brownish orange tail. Underparts are white. A black band extends across the front of the crown, separating the white of the forehead. That band extends to the red eyering. Bill is thin and black and the legs are long and cream-colored. Both sexes are alike and the immature birds may have only one neck band.

Killdeer are found throughout the country along roadsides, on golf courses, in yards and fields, and at airports. They prefer short, grassy areas to feed on in-

sects and small invertebrates. Sometimes they follow a tractor, searching for the grubs in a freshly-plowed field. These birds are noisy and easily alarmed. When in flocks of a few birds, if one flies, they all fly, sounding forth their "kill-dee" or "kill-dear", from which they get their name.

Nests are shallow scrapes in small gravel or sand. Four heavily spotted eggs are laid and both sexes incubate the eggs for 24 or more days. Both sexes sit on the eggs and care for the young.

Killdeer have two defenses against predators. If the animal is a large cow, deer, horse, or similar, which could only harm them by stepping on the nest, they will stay put until the animal is right on them and then quickly cry and fly up. This usually alarms the animal enough to cause it to change course. If the animal is a dog, cat, or something that would prey on them, the killdeer will leave the nest and feign injury by dragging a wing, or fluttering to draw attention away from the nest.

Killdeer in our area now have been joined by some from the north who migrate here. They are very interesting birds to watch and are easily identified. Look for a "shorebird", with two breast bands. It will have to be a killdeer!

### GUEST COLUMN

## Congressional Retirements Unexpected, Though Frustrations Understandable

BY JOHN GIZZI

"My frustration with Congress is, I suspect, exactly the same as yours: an apparent inability or unwillingness to focus on the substance of the tough issues."

With those words, Republican Alex McMillan announced that he was packing it in after five terms as U.S. Representative from North Carolina's Charlotte-area 9th District. In cutting short his tenure a term ahead of his own self-imposed 12-year term limit, former Harris-Teeter CEO McMillan seemed to say quite a bit about the Tar Heel State's U.S. House delegation—namely, that a political outsider was not going to be forever patient with the ways of Congress and would likely move up or out, very much like a colonel who, failing to attain his cherished star after a period, opts for civilian clothes and a pension.

This "up or out" attitude is not confined to McMillan or his fellow Republicans. Only weeks before he made his startling announcement, a similar farewell was uttered by six-term Democrat Tim Valentine of the 2nd District. Valentine was admittedly much more the professional politician than McMillan was, but, as the most conservative-leaning of North Carolina's eight House Democrats, he was an outsider nevertheless.

In an *au revoir* that could easily have been spoken by a Republican, the 67-year-old Valentine—who had voted against the president's economic stimulus package earlier in the year—declared that it was time for newer leaders "who can move our country along toward a more responsible and fiscally responsible government."

Like the "preview of coming attractions" in motion pictures has come the growing hints that sophomore Republican Charles Taylor of the 11th District will seek one more term in his Western North Carolina turf and then seek the governorship in 1996. Far more than McMillan or Valentine, successful lawyer and tree farmer Taylor is the archetypal "Mr. Outside"—championing term limits and congressional pay cuts, and serving as the "namer of names" in both the House Bank scandal of 1991 and the more recent House Post Office flap.

In almost striking contrast, the "insiders" (read: those with more background in government than in the private sector) in the N.C. delegation all seem to harbor no thought of retirement. Among Democrats, 10-term Steve Neal (5th District) and 11-term Charlie Rose (7th District) are now in the proverbial catbird seat for genuine House clout—Neal one seat away from the chairmanship of the Banking Committee and Rose, two from the chair of Agriculture. The lawmakers sepa-

rating these two N.C. members from the gavel are all septuagenarians. Two other Tar Heel Democrats—Bill Hefner (8th) and David Price (4th)—occupy coveted perches of power on the House Appropriations Committee. Their standing almost certainly will improve on the so-called "College of Cardinals" with four top members over 70.

Still another Democrat, four-term Martin Lancaster (3rd), holds spots on Armed Services, Small Business, and Merchant Marine and Fisheries—all promising territory from which a lawmaker can bring home the bacon (which Lancaster unabashedly does, having secured \$10 million for a new bridge over the Neuse River and \$150,000 for a bridge study in his district).

Even minority Republicans or two freshmen Democrats could be on the periphery of power in the next session of Congress. As early supporters of House GOP leader-in-waiting Newt Gingrich, both Howard Coble (6th) and Cass Ballenger (10th) are very likely candidates for high-profile assignments with the House's "loyal opposition." Ballenger probably in the foreign policy realm and Coble as a prospective whip in the Gingrich floor operation.

For the first time since George White left the House in 1890, North Carolina has black House mem-

bers—two, in fact, both elected after reapportionment and both apparently on the congressional "fast track." Eva Clayton of the 1st District in Northeastern North Carolina won a slot on the House Agriculture Committee and was elected president of the freshman class. Charlotte's Mel Watt (12th) was one of three freshmen Democrats named to the powerful Democratic Steering and Policy Committee.

The personal popularity in Washington of the two members aside, their relatively quick moves to noteworthy sinecures could be interpreted as signs that the House Democratic leadership would rather they stay in Congress instead of perhaps facing tough re-election challenges should the courts throw out North Carolina's district map.

Such reapportionment and the historic volatility of North Carolina voters (nearly half of the state's members had, by congressional standards, relatively tight races in 1992) are, then, the only two obstacles facing a delegation with seniority and the prospect of great clout in the near future. For 1994, the electoral stakes will be high, and not just in the two open seats vacated by McMillan and Valentine.

John Gizzi is associate political editor of Human Events, a national weekly newspaper.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Ordinance Can't Stop Natural Noise

To the editor:

Much ado has been given in various letters to editors about the lack of ordinances or enforcement of ordinances concerning excessive noise, particularly barking dogs.

I, for one, appreciate the lack of noise that the country has to offer compared to the constant blare of larger cities. I appreciate not having the repetitive and constant sounds of sirens, jack-hammers and traffic.

I also have enjoyed listening to the "little" sounds that I never knew existed that are so enjoyable in the country. But I also have enough common sense to realize that all the laws and ordinances in the world will never stop noise, especially those that are natural to all species of animals and mammals.

People make noise when they talk (some more than others). That is a natural occurrence. How would you like it if it was against the law for you to communicate verbally? How loud do you have to be to call your kids (or husband) in from playing outside? How loud do cough or sneeze? How do you keep a baby from crying, completely? How would your life be if you really had to live it in silence?

Excessive noise of any type is not enjoyable, but some noise is natural and cannot be completely stopped. As an animal lover for my entire life, I cannot think of any humane way to stop an animal from its only means of communication, especially dogs.

There is also not an animal that I know of that understands written laws, or the time on the clock. Cows "moo," lions "roar" and dogs "bark." A person may be able to reduce the frequency, but not its entirety. Please be fair to animals of all species.

James F. Hendricks  
Bolivia

### Children Grateful

To the editor:

Brunswick County Lodge 53 Fraternal Order of Police would like to express its sincere appreciation to the citizens of Brunswick County for their support of our "Shop with a Cop" program.

Because of this generosity, the FOP was able to take more than 45 children Christmas shopping, purchasing much-needed clothing and, in some cases, groceries.

We also want to thank Meezie Childs and her co-workers at the Brunswick County Department of Social Services who assisted with the program. These dedicated employees both suggested the recipients and spent hours helping with participants.

It is not possible for the children to thank each of you personally, but we can assure you that what was done for them was appreciated.

Tom Vernon  
Vice President  
Fraternal Order of Police

### No Blasting Now

To the editor:

Many people realize that a quarry is not needed and certainly not wanted in Brunswick County.

However there are some who are afraid that (the anti-mining) ordinance will halt the operation of small open pit sand quarries; such is not the case.

This ordinance will halt the blasting/dewatering necessary for deep mining operation. There is to my knowledge no one in Brunswick County using blasting at this time for mining.

Our commissioners have the right to protect the local residents from any harmful activities.

Sharon Sykes  
Southport

### Good Neighbor?

To the editor:

(Martin Marietta) a good neighbor?

I believe we should question anyone who calls themselves good neighbors when their first move is to post the land "no trespassing" and post a guard.

I assure you, the people of Brunswick County would like to protect this land from people who do not live here and do not appreciate its natural beauty. What are these good neighbors trying to hide from us?

Thelma Osborne  
Southport

### More Home-Grown

To the editor:

I read with interest your recent article on "home-grown teachers." I think they are some of the best teachers in our county and state.

I don't understand why the Brunswick County Board of Education don't acknowledge home-grown tea-

chers are the best and give them the top priority when hiring teachers, instead of hiring out-of-state and out-of-county teachers.

Bill Shoemaker said "home-grown teachers are probably one of the last of the vanishing breed of community schools." Home-grown teachers are a vanishing breed in Brunswick County because principals hire teachers from other counties and states. Sometimes they hire their buddies from the schools they have left.

I feel when a Brunswick County native wants to become a teacher strongly enough to obtain loans and get a degree and become a teacher, the least the board of education can do is make sure these home-grown teachers get top priority in hiring.

Other counties give their home-grown teachers top priority in hiring, so it's difficult for Brunswick County native teachers to get hired in other counties.

The Brunswick County Board of Education passes the buck to principals, saying the principals do the hiring. Who hires the principals?

Brunswick County Board of Education, who votes you into office? Certainly not out-of-county and state voters.

Voters of Brunswick County, if this practice of hiring out-of-county and state teachers instead of home-grown teachers continue, I think it's time we voted in a new board of education next election.

Voters, remember, the next home-grown teacher not hired by the Brunswick Board of Education may be one of your children, a family member or a friend.

Dianne M. Mabry  
Ash

### Write Us

We welcome your letters to the editor. Letters must include your address and telephone number. (This information is for verification purposes only; we will not publish your street/mailling address or phone number.) Letters must be typed or written legibly. Address letters to:

The Brunswick Beacon  
P.O. Box 2558  
Shalotte NC 28459

Anonymous letters will not be published.



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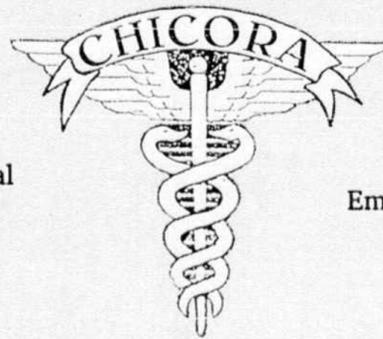
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