

THE MOCKINGBIRD is one of the "mimic thrushes" and gives us clues to other birds in our area. PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

Listen For The Clues

BY BILL FAVER



FAVER

One of the advantages of having several of the mimic thrushes in our area is being able to listen to them for clues of the arrival of spring bird migrants.

The Catbird, Brown Thrasher, and the Northern Mockingbird are our most common mimic thrushes, but we seem to hear and see more of the mockingbird than the other two species.

The "mock" sings all year but seems to do his best in spring and summer. In early spring he will pick up any bird calls he hears and repeat them several times from some high perch. When we are only vaguely familiar with some of those songs, we can know the birds have arrived and begin looking for them. It's scientific name, *Mimus polyglot-*

tos, means "many-tongued mimic," and that seems to describe this bird well.

Some researchers have reported that mockingbirds not only mimic other bird songs but have made such sounds as the tinkling of keys on a piano, the barking of a dog, the sound of an ax striking wood, a wolf whistle, and a car horn. Some mockingbirds have been known to sing 200 or more different songs.

We are told the males do most of the singing, and probably to keep other males out of their territories. The variety of their songs is believed to aid in attracting females. A male with a great collection of songs and a substantial territory seems to be welcomed by females. Such a male may be seen as one able to protect the female and support the raising of a brood.

Now is the time to begin listening to the mockingbird's song. You can hear what has arrived and know what other birds are singing by the clues they will give you.

MORE LETTERS

Children Learn Racial Bias, Harmony By Parents' Example

To the editor: I would like to respond to the letter in your Feb. 17 issue, headlined "White History Month?" and written by Leroy Faircloth. With all due respect to Mr. Faircloth, I know it is his right to voice his opinion. Now may I voice mine?

I am a black woman, wife and mother. My children also attend the local schools. Anytime that any of my children are given an assignment to write about anybody—be they white, black, yellow or orange—unlike some children, they cannot refuse by saying, "I'm not going to write about a white person."

However, when a white child refuses to write about a black person, it's because it's his "constitutional" right to refuse.

It seems that you are saying there is something wrong with a white child writing about a black person. If you believe in your constitutional rights, then you should also believe, as is stated in the Constitution, that all people are created equal. If this is so, then what is the problem with a white child writing about a black person?

When I was younger and in the local schools, I also did not particularly care to write about "white people," but I was taught that it wasn't a matter of writing about a black or white person, but a matter of learning about history, be it black or white history. History is an important part of education.

In response to the issue of Black

History Month, if history has been taught correctly and unbiased regarding any minority race of people, there would not be a need for Black History Month.

Here is a little bit of history: The first human heart transplant was performed by Christian Neethling Barnard in December 1967. The yo-yo, a toy enjoyed by many races of children, was invented by a black slave.

It is unfortunate that in 1994 some parents are still promoting racial separation instead of racial harmony. Since children learn by example, one can only guess the lesson this child has learned from this.

Anetta Bryant
Bolivia

'Evil's Welcome Mat'

To the editor:

I am still scratching my head over the proposal of two gambling proponents, Senators George Daniel and Sandy Sands, to use revenues from a state-operated lottery to finance anti-crime proposals.

Since the special legislative session on crime is costing the taxpayers \$50,000 a day, priority ought to be given for ways to reduce crime rather than to increase it.

Evidently, Daniel and Sands have not done much research on state-sponsored gambling. Financing anti-crime programs by legalizing gambling is like putting out a fire with gasoline.

Of course, one of the arguments that gambling proponents always give for a state-operated lottery is that it will eliminate criminal activity. That idea can not be substantiated. Evidence from a number of states shows that the presence of legalized gambling actually increases rather than decreases illegal gambling.

Connecticut started a state lottery to cut into illegal gambling and organized crime. Austin J. McGuigan, their former chief state's attorney observed: "Rather than cut into the revenue of organized crime, the state has been swept by a gambling mania, which has more than doubled the level of illegal wagering in the

last eight years."

Former Director of the FBI William Webster said: "I really don't see how one can expect to run legalized gambling anywhere without serious problems—fraudulent tickets, counterfeit lottery processes. Any time organized crime sees an opportunity to put a fix on something, to get an edge on something, it'll be there. And gambling is still the largest source of revenue for organized crime."

The U.S. News and World Report has stated that the biggest fears of states—that lotteries would bring corruption and scandals—are now surfacing. In spite of stringent security provisions by state lottery officials, incidences of corruption have occurred recently in several states.

We have enough crime in North Carolina without putting out the welcome mat for this insidious evil of gambling. Let's encourage our legislators to just keep saying NO to such proposals.

Coy C. Privette
Executive Director
Christian Action League of N.C.

Tax Help Appreciated

To the editor:

We wish to tell you how helpful your story on AARP counselors to help with income tax preparation was to us.

We were thrilled to have this service available and took advantage of it. We recently retired here from western New York. Having sold a home, bought a home here, with New York, federal and North Carolina tax forms to complete, we had more forms, instructions, etc., than we knew what to do with.

Thanks to Mr. Nielson and Mr. Dunn our taxes are completed. They helped us with North Carolina and federal, and we were able to complete the New York forms. They are very knowledgeable and their service most gratefully appreciated by us.

We do hope others here realize what a special service this is and take advantage of it.

Keith and JoAnn Burdick
Bolivia

When In Doubt: Paddle Out

Have you ever almost not done something that you knew deep down inside that you really wanted to do but had some lame excuse that nearly kept you from doing it and thereby regretting it for weeks?

No? Well I have. Most recently on Sunday, when I came perilously close to wimping out and acting my age. Whew!

As I walk to the newspaper box, I try to ignore that low-pitched vibration rumbling across the dune a half block away, to explain away the sharp cracks that only come from one thing: thick tubes of pitching seawater smacking onto a shallow shore.

Waves. There is no mistaking, no denying, no point in even trying. Nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide. No way to avoid. Just time to decide.

Perhaps Patrick won't notice, I think, indulging my morning grogginess.

Sure. Right. He got a new surfboard a month ago. He got off restriction this weekend.

The bacon has just begun to sizzle when the door to his bedroom opens. Like a zombie summoned by a witch doctor's spell, he lumbers outside and straight for the beach.

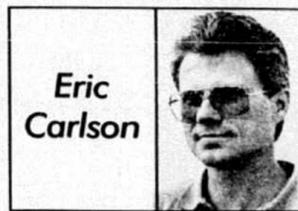
"Imgonnagocheckthewaves," he mumbles.

The one rule we have about Patrick surfing is that he doesn't go out alone. This rarely poses problem in the summer, because whenever there are waves, there's usually somebody out surfing at the pier.

And, being a pretty dedicated waverider myself, I'm often the one who roasts Patrick out of bed when the surf is good and the water is warm.

However, this is February and the water is not warm. In fact, it has been particularly cold this winter—hovering in the mid 40s. I haven't paddled since December. My extra inch of winter fat is in place. My arms are totally Gumby. And I have no plans to get salty for another month.

"Blam!" The door bursts open. Patrick is huffing and puffing and saying something about the best surf



Eric Carlson

he's ever seen at Holden Beach: Head-high sets. No wind. Hot sun. Total glass. And there's nobody in the water.

(Which translates, "I can't go surfing unless you do. And you REALLY want to go out. Don't you, dear, sweet stepfather of mine?")

As I load the breakfast dishes into the dishwasher, I feel a pair of teenage laser-beam eyes tracking me like a security camera at Wal-Mart. But I REALLY don't like jumping into water when the temperature is within a few degrees of my age.

I think of a hundred extremely important things I need to do, like washing the car. Cleaning out the storage room. Sitting on the couch and reading the paper. But the evil eye won't let up.

Finally, I agree to drive him down to the pier to check. If it's good, I'll watch him from the beach.

It was good all right. Really good. Not the usual Holden Beach wind waves breaking slowly and erratically in fat, mushy mounds of chop and whitewater.

This was a real, genuine swell from someplace far out to sea; a steady procession of long green lines stacked up to the horizon, marching in from the southeast, breaking just inside the pier and peeling off all the way to the beach.

Three guys have just come in—Cain Faircloth and two familiar faces I haven't seen since last fall. They say it's great.

Brett Fulford wanders up to the walkover, squinting hard behind his sunglasses, guzzling ice water and complaining of a headache caused by the previous evening's activities.

"You goin' out?" I ask.
"Got to. Maybe it'll clear my head."

My sentiments exactly. No matter how gnarly or cold or blown-out or just marginal the conditions, I can't think of a single time I have ever regretted stroking out for a few waves. I always come back feeling better.

However, I can recall several occasions when I thought up some easy excuse to not go surfing and later wished I had. This was not going to be one of those.

I make it to the lineup with surprising ease. Still, my bare hands have turned red and numb from the cold. My legs are stiffening up like the Tin Man in a Northeaster. I have no power in my strokes. I wonder if I can even catch a wave.

It doesn't seem to matter. I'm back out in the Atlantic, straddling my trusty nine-footer, soaking up rays, watching the birds, swapping stories with all those guys I rarely see anywhere else, but who always appear when the waves do.

We talk about what a great day it is. How the water's been so cold. How out of shape we are. All the time scanning the horizon. Jockeying for position. Whooping when somebody snags a hot wave.

I paddle out a bit beyond the others. Not in search of a larger wave. Rather to rest and catch my breath.

Call it luck. Call it a blessing. But don't call me ungrateful when a big set wave appears and I have bumbled into just the right spot to catch it. Or for it to catch me.

"Who-Who!" I hear as my legs are lifted above my head and the board picks up speed.

I jump to my feet and stare down the glittering emerald slope. Racing to the bottom, I lean hard into a long arcing turn that carries me back to the top of the wave, where the lip is a thin sheet of liquid glass fluttering in the sunlight.

The board pauses and teeters for a moment as the wave rises beneath it. We slice across the face, faster and faster as the wall grows steeper and steeper, curling over to form a roof, a room, a womb. I am suspended in a moment that knows no bounds.

I emerge from the liquid cavern. With no fear. No thought. No ego. No plan.
Just a great big grin.

GUEST COLUMN

Get Back To Basics With Kids

BY JOHN A. GORE

In response to Susan Usher's recent column on the responsibility of the outcome of our youth in today's society, I will begin with this: Get back to the basics!

First of all, I too can remember those days when the neighbors also were like our parents and they looked out for us when mom and dad weren't around. And if we got into mischief, we would be guaranteed a good wallop when we got home.

In today's society that good bit of human nature has all but disappeared, along with some good parenting as well. There was a time when parents ruled with a strong hand. They could put the fear of God in us, or just plain fear. One thing was for certain, we showed plenty of respect to them. That has all but vanished.

Why? Let's begin with our state agencies and our governments, who in their most infinite wisdom have taken all the control away from the parents and the teachers in our schools. Corporal punishment has been outlawed in our school system and homes.

Back when I was in school, there wasn't a need for armed police in or on campus. Our teachers and principals were allowed to heat your backside if you were causing problems. Not anymore.

Teachers today afraid of calling a student down for any reason for fear of some kind of repercussion or even calling parents at home about the child. The alternative programs such as detention, or "Choices," have no effect whatsoever. The kids laugh at it.

Corporal punishment worked. Our rights as parents, to govern our own homes and issue our forms of punishment, have been all but taken away. These beautiful creatures that we have produced—who will sometimes take leave or mis-

place themselves and get into all kinds of mischief—need to be reminded of the rules of life and what is to be expected of them.

It used to be that a good "switching" was all it took to get them back on the straight and narrow. Not anymore. Social service agencies now have hotlines set up. Hit your child now and they can go and pick up the phone and turn you in for abuse. It makes them feel as if they are getting back at you for punishing them.

The next step then is for these agencies to send someone to your home to "investigate" and question your ability and authority in your home. Right then and there you have lost a major battle in the war on saving our children. And you have just lost control of your home and the ability to make proper decisions.

The next time that the kids get into some type of trouble at school or in the streets, you stand by questioning your next move, so as not to "offend the child." Now you tell me, is that the way you run your home?

In my day if you talked back—which was probably the worst mistake you could make then—you might find a shoe, broom or anything that wasn't nailed down coming at you. A little extreme? Maybe, but it got your attention.

Better not do that either, because parent groups and community groups say that's not the way to handle the situation. You need to sit down, talk and rationalize the problem. I can't put in this article what some of these kids today would tell you to do with your advice.

That's also why the know-it-all parents and community leaders, who have attended every forum and workshop on child-rearing, need to come down off that soapbox and join us in the real world, down in the trenches.

Delinquents and hooligans are running rampant and laughing at our courts because the judicial system as I see it today does not work. Three good meals a day, plenty of basketball and weightlifting and all the TV you can watch is not what I perceive to be the proper punishment for distributing drugs, gang-type violence, shooting, beating or maiming other human beings.

Whenever you have a good kid gone bad, everyone, including the courts, makes it look as though it was you, the parents, who are at fault. I say stop persecuting parents who have done all they know how, and lock the criminals up in prison and jails where they will do some hard time and possibly come out and not want to go back in. Right now our jails are like well-supervised country clubs.

I am but one caring parent that still believes in the old ways of child-rearing. And it works. Parents, get control! Government, stay out! Courts, toughen the penalties!

These children are the most valuable asset of the future. Sitting around and talking about solutions is fine, but it doesn't stop there. If we don't get back to basics, then what's left of this society and that to come is going to hell in a handbasket.
John Gore lives at Ocean Isle Beach.

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