



BIRDS OFTEN hunch their heads and necks down against their backs as protection from the cold. PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

How The 'Cold Birds' Survive

BY BILL FAVER

Birds have an amazing ability to withstand the kinds of weather we would not want to experience. This time of year can be a very trying time, as food supplies are low and the weather unpredictable.



FAVER

Birds who migrate have to decide when the cold has about ended in their breeding grounds, sometimes thousands of miles away. Those who stay with us all year have to judge when the last cold snap has come and it is time to start their nesting activities.

Birds usually are less active in very hot or very cold weather. So much of their energy supply is used in moving around and in getting food, they want to conserve all they can. When it is cold they can be observed sitting on a protected branch, sometimes in the warm sunshine. In rainy or icy conditions

they are often snuggled back in the thick branches of an evergreen tree or shrub.

Those we do see seem to fluff out their feathers, just as we would don a down jacket. They "zip" their feathers to close the Velcro-like fasteners and keep out the cold.

Hérons and other large birds hunch their heads and necks down against their backs to have less exposed surface. On the beach, we see gulls and terns and sandpipers up against the frontal dunes, protected from the north winds and soaking up the sunshine.

Many birds die from exposure in severe weather, but many others survive because of these natural mechanisms and practices which are built into their being. We can see this very well this time of year when we often have cold mornings and warmer afternoons.

Watch for the "cold birds" in your yards and along our roadsides and waterways, and know that they, like we, will welcome the coming springtime.

Man, Beaver At One Address?

Are we going about beaver control the smart way in Brunswick County? An item from South Carolina prompts the question.

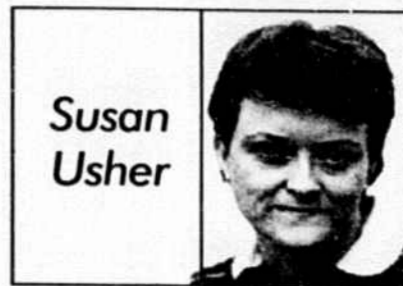
Southeastern North Carolina counties have been waging war on beavers for nearly two years now, with little to show for their efforts at trapping the persistent dam-builders. Columbus County is contemplating again offering bounties for beaver pelts, in addition to the trapping program financed jointly by area counties, the state and feds.

There might be a better way—either as a supplement to trapping efforts or, in some situations, an alternative.

Researchers at Clemson University have developed a water level flow device. One of the contraptions were installed recently by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at a private educational center in Horry County, S.C., a county which has its own beaver-trapping program in conjunction with a federal agency.

As you've guessed by now, beavers are a mixed blessing. In some parts of the United States they have been imported to generate new life in barren areas. Beaver ponds provide ideal habitat for wood ducks as well as other waterfowl and migratory birds, mammals, reptiles and fish, and can provide abundant recreational opportunities for everyone from wildlife photographers to sportsmen.

Like other wetland areas such as the Green Swamp before it was extensively drained, beaver ponds help improve water quality, temporarily storing floodwaters and recharging



Susan Usher

groundwater aquifers. They filter silt, agricultural chemicals and pollutants. With most of North Carolina's (and Brunswick County's) wetlands lost or converted to other uses, that role is increasingly important.

But in southeastern North Carolina, as in Horry County, most people don't view these semi-aquatic engineers as saviors and restorers of the environment. They are "varmints," the bad guys of the animal kingdom, targeted for population control measures that range from shooting and trapping to the futile dynamiting of beaver lodges.

These sleek swimmers with the big, flat tails live up to their reputation as "busy." They single-mindedly build dams wherever they hear running water, wreaking havoc on agricultural interests from corn and soybean farmers in Ash and Wainabow to Federal Paperboard's pine plantations. Strict vegetarians, beavers dine on field corn and soybeans as well as shrubs and trees.

Driving along U.S. 17, N.C. 130 and numerous other highways, you can see evidence of the beavers' industriousness and destructiveness: partially submerged timber and

crops, with teepee-topped tree stubs along the banks, and flooded backyards and roadways.

In North Carolina there has been some use of "three log" or "three pipe" drains to maintain drainage in culverts and impoundments targeted by beaver, and some use of metal fencing with drains inserted.

But from the people I talked with last week, the methods in use around here don't appear to work exactly like the Clemson U. device. One person I wanted to talk with didn't call back before this column was due—Perry Sumner of New Bern. He's the furbearing project leader for the N.C. Wildlife Commission and very knowledgeable about beaver control measures being used in this state.

Beavers are stimulated to build and maintain dams when they detect current water flow. Engineers have actually played tape recordings of running water and triggered a high response in beaver activity.

The Clemson U. creation is intended to reduce the likelihood that beavers will detect water flow, and therefore also reduce the beavers' urge to build dams.

Apparently the leveler can suppress the problem of flooding of agricultural and timber lands while maintaining some of the benefits associated with beaver pond habitats. To me, that sounds like a smart alternative, a compromise that might just allow man and beaver to coexist at the same address.

Perhaps some local landowners will check it out and let me know whether the leveler really works.

Only One Cure For The Fever

It pounced on me like a cat on a dropped shrimp.

I woke with symptoms as final and dreadful as the first spasm that lets you know you've thrown your back out. I was helpless. There was nothing I could do about it.

I had car fever again. There was only one way to make it go away. Trade the Farfignewton.

We'd had a satisfying three years together. I bought her used in Hendersonville last time I had the fever, and she had given me so much. Her power windows, her sunroof, the way she hugged the road compared to the top-heavy four-wheel-drive I'd traded her for.

The papers in the glove box had included the name and phone number of the previous owner. I called to find out why anyone would trade a car with only 22,000 miles on it.

Miss X was out of town, but I talked to her daddy who said he was the one who bought it. She was a high school student, he was in the car "business." She'd only kept it for a year because she thought it was "too conservative," so he'd traded it for something redder and more dangerous. Naw, there's waddn't nothing wrong with it.

And there waddn't, Farfignewton, a fully loaded 1989 Volkswagen Jetta, took me to work and back on a dozen trips across North Carolina, from close-to-Murphy to close-



Lynn Carlson

to-Manteo, never requiring any more attention than an oil change from Eric every now and again.

But this morning, all that wasn't enough. I tried to concentrate on the fun we'd had taking the turns too fast through Hickory Nut Gap. But my thoughts kept coming back to the fact that curves and hills are about as common as snow plows in these parts, and I was itching for an upgrade.

"Don't make a big deal of it. Just do it on your lunch hour," was the car-buying advice of my friend Sandy, three of whose last nine jobs were as sales representative of some of western North Carolina's most reputable automobile dealerships.

That is, of course, advice no man could ever take. Eric bought his current ride nine years ago, after spending a full six months reading every issue of "Road and Track," "Car & Driver," and "Motortrends" and investigating the auto loan terms of every lending institution in the re-

gion.

(Okay, so I've bought five cars in the meantime and his is all paid up with 130,000 miles on it and is still running like a top...A gal's gotta do what a gal's gotta do.)

I took the advice. One Friday I left for lunch in the Farfignewton and came back driving my first American-made car in ten years—with my first V-8 engine since the '64 Chevy Impala I'd driven as a teenager. I test-drove three cars and bought the third one. It was all the shopping I could stand.

The power! The roominess! The comfort! The new-car smell! The interest rate!

Automatic transmission. An accelerator that will jerk your head back if you hit it too hard too quickly. The ability to get around school buses in short passing zones. The ability to carry two adults and a teenager away for a weekend and get all the luggage in the trunk. Enough leg room for tall people.

And, most importantly, protection against car fever. For another couple of years, anyway.

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MORE LETTERS

Former Health Employee Says She's Concerned, Not Disgruntled

To the editor:

Just to set the record straight: on Feb. 13 I approached the Board of Health, not as a "disgruntled" ex-employee, but rather as a concerned taxpaying citizen of this community.

My attempt was to better the conditions at the health department both for the public served and for my friends and co-workers who continue to remain employed there.

Aside from the TB incident—which also, in my opinion, was a matter primarily of expediting services—my complaints, suggestions and grievances had all been addressed in letter form in September 1993 to the director, who had requested an evaluation from all nursing staff employees.

I also wish to clarify the inaccuracy of the press report that I had not reported the incident; I, in fact, had requested two other staff RNs read and evaluate the man's forearm. Both did so, and one has documented it as positive and is following up on the first (negative) documentation made by a third RN. There was no accusation stated, only facts.

I further wish to state that, to my knowledge, there was no conflict or personal problem between myself and my immediate supervisor. She gave me a good and fair evaluation.

My concern over the non-promotion was rather a question of the method in which the health department conducts their hiring procedures. I had no problem with their selections, but merely in how they reached their decision. In view of the fact that I possess adequate credentials, had been employed there just short of a year and had received commendation on my performance, both from the family nurse practitioner in primary care and the lead nurse in adult health and with no known complaints from the public, it remains an enigma to me.

One might wonder if the overlooking of these positive attributes and the lack of promotion might possibly be the result of my September letter critiquing the health department operations.

It was never my intent for this to become a public issue. I felt it an in-house problem that could be rectified and that is why I requested an executive session and refused to speak to any reporters. Apparently some board members felt it should be public knowledge. I know not their intent.

The department and its services are sorely needed and I only pray that, in the final analysis, conditions and services will improve, both for the general public being served and for them employees who deliver them.

Christine L. Stewart, LPN
 Southport

A New Approach

To the editor:

I am writing this to voice an opinion addressing the need to develop an alternative system of education outside the current school setting for at-risk students. The scope of this idea is non-traditional in nature.

The brick-and-mortar approach of alternative schooling has failed miserably in the past. Traditional alternative schools have not in the past met the needs of at-risk students or been effective. An alternative school should focus on interaction, interventions and prevention—involving the family and entire community towards turning the at-risk child back into a productive citizen as quickly as possible at whatever point major problems occur.

This concept directly involves the Community-In-Schools approach discussed at the February Educational Summit at Brunswick Community College. The Community-In-Schools concept encourages the networking of all community and resource services, businesses, volunteer agencies, and churches in taking responsibility for at-risk children in Brunswick County.

This non-traditional school setting would offer a condensed academic schedule along with mentoring from county agencies and churches (e.g. juvenile courts, social services, mental health, parks and recreation, etc.). A system of alternative education for the at-risk child should include mandatory parental involvement with the student and the staff.

A positive interaction between parent-student-staff is necessary for this setting to be successful. Consequently, the parents would be mandated to attend "skill shops" at night with their child in order to address and eliminate the problem areas and provide future guidance.

It is important to underscore the importance of this networking—a proactive rather than a reactive measure—to overcome problems associated with at-risk students, the families, the schools and the communities. By implementing this system of alternative schooling, we can focus on providing a safe and orderly, ef-

fective learning environment which will then raise test scores and eventually create a high-quality curriculum.

It is a realization that schools by themselves can go only so far to heighten the skills of students. Success requires strong, collective support from churches, communities, employers and, most particularly, families.

Cynthia Tart
 Leland

Sparing Opinions

To the editor:

In a letter written to the editor of this paper dated Feb. 17, the writer made reference to Tonya Harding and her being allowed to represent the United States at Lillehammer, Norway, or anywhere. I realize this was only her opinion, and I agree we all seem to have one.

I would like to make some observations to consider: If a member of one's family breaks a law, does this make another member guilty? If I frequent a bar, does this make me an alcoholic? If one attends church on a regular basis, does this make me a saint?

The point is that you and I should not be restricted of our due liberties and activities of our freedoms by opinions and should not be labeled with guilt by such.

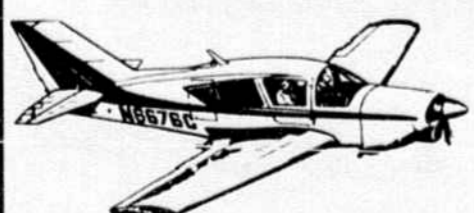
Before I start throwing stones and my opinions at Ms Harding, I would hope to believe I would not be held accountable for any action until due process was taken and clear evidence given to indicate I had some involvement in any questionable act. It would be most disastrous to damage or even ruin one's life or career based on opinions.

If Ms Harding wasn't allowed to represent the United States at Lillehammer, it would be a grave injustice to good old American Democracy. I'm glad Ms Harding is representing the United States and I wish her, Miss Kerrigan and the others the best of everything.

My prayer for me is, "Lord, help me be sparing with my opinions, and if I must do it, help me do it with love."

C.M. Parker
 Laurinburg

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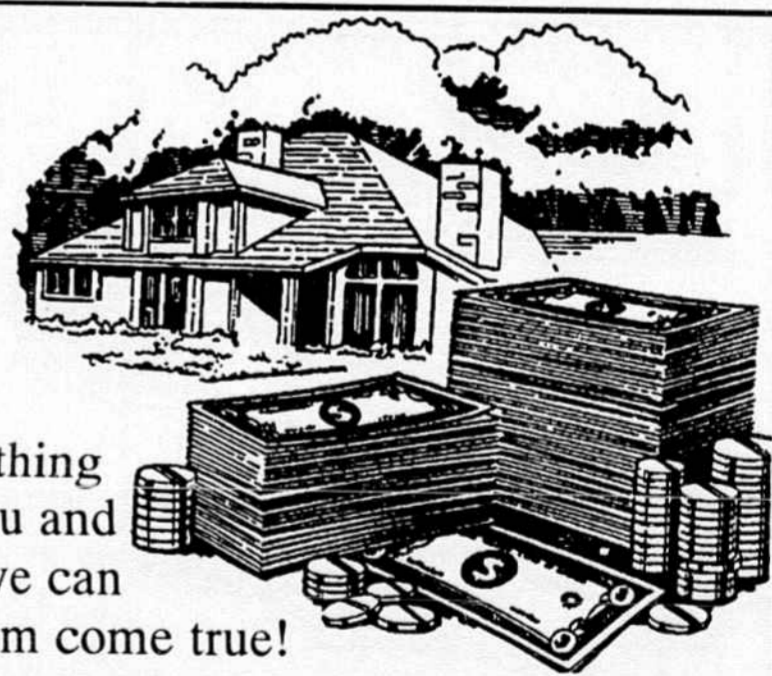


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