

# Fishing & Hunting



By Richard Seale

## To wet a line or not

A year ago, while on our around-the-world trip, by this time we had passed the halfway mark, and had crossed the vast Pacific Ocean. During that passage I was very surprised at the paucity of other ships, fish, mammals and birds. I was also surprised that I was seldom out of sight of evidence of humankind. All sorts of plastics slid by the ship, normally on top of the water. This phenomenon got me to start keeping statistics on the number of seconds, yes seconds, between sightings. My rough data indicated that a reasonable average would be just 45 seconds.

Our course went from San Diego to Hawaii, then to the Marshall Islands, and on to Japan, Korea and China. In short, we were usually far from land masses. As we got closer to land masses, whether islands or continents, freighters and fishing boat numbers escalated dramatically and we did start seeing wildlife—and more trash. The trip into China was via the Yellow Sea. The amount of fishing gear in the water from the armadas of 20-to-30-foot fishing boats was remarkable.

Early in March this year, I read an AP article by Seth Borenstein entitled “Satellites See Big Fishing’s Footprint on the High Seas.” The article related how surprised scientists have been at the sheer number of long-range industrial fishing vessels plying the oceans. Such ships now are supposed to operate a locator beacon which continuously sends a ship’s name and GPS location up to satellites, which in turn send the information back to earthbound data stations. Such tracking was supposed to be used in case of a ship emergency.

Scientists also found they could dip into this data bank to track activities of the world’s industrial fishing fleets. In 2016, data was captured from an astounding 22 billion beacon signals. This information indicated that these industrial fishing fleets were about three times larger than previously estimated. With these fleets, industrial fishing is happening in about 55% of the world’s ocean waters. In this effort, they travelled a total of 285 million miles, which is more than three times the distance from the earth to the sun. Five countries—China, Spain, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea—seem to account for 85% of the industrialized fishing effort. In 2016, of the 40 million hours that these big ships were out fishing, 17 million hours were logged by boats flying the Chinese flag.

Most of my conversations with active local fishermen contain the opinion that salt-water fishing was a lot better 20 to 40 years ago. Unfortunately, my personal fishing experiences in and around Bogue Sound, the Atlantic Ocean from Cape Lookout to Bogue Inlet and out 20 miles, and in the Pamlico Sound seem to back up such comments. Thirty years ago I never imagined that the possession of speckled trout would be closed half of the year or that the daily limit of grey trout (weakfish) would be one fish. The regulations are really overwhelming and take a lot of fun out of casually “wetting a line” like the good old days. Perhaps the data above could help explain why recreational fishing seems less productive.

Are there any fish to be caught? Well, yes, there are some. In the ocean, black sea bass are on several wrecks, as are some blue fish. But the weather of 2018 has certainly not been conducive to venturing into the ocean. The estuaries are fairly quiet except for the annual run of hickory and American shad and white perch. I have not latched on to any striped bass (rock) since the New Year.

There are a couple of good news items. One is that spring gobbler hunting season opens on April 14 (and closes May 12). A second is that, on February 26, an optimistic local fisherman returned to Bogue Sound. An osprey landed on the B-S nesting platform off McNeill Park. It brought lunch and stayed for over an hour. Dodging the March wind storms, Wayne Bailey and I managed to get the Cornell Ornithology-recommended wire mesh and starter nesting sticks secured onto the platform. We learned that the regulations that forced us to pay over \$1,000 to CAMA for a major permit to install this nest caused changes in the regulations. Now installation of an osprey platform can be done with a simple general permit. And, in the meantime, efforts continue to make the osprey the North Carolina state raptor.

## Mayor Ken Haller

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We need a bridge.  
We all agree,  
But that’s the end  
Of harmony.

We need a bridge.  
Where’s it to be?  
Ah! That is where  
We disagree.  
Frustrated, he ends:  
How reconcile  
These differing views:  
The bridge? Forget it!  
Use canoes!

Mayor Haller was intensely involved in the big debate over building a commercial town center, also designed in A.C. Hall’s original plan and strongly supported by the Roosevelt interests. It was the town center issue that would be the most contentious of Haller’s administration, and by the time it passed in 1985, commercial investors were no longer interested.

Debates over development went beyond the controversial commercial center to the size of multi-family dwellings, including not only new condominium proposals but also motels. In 1980, there was a “new provision” in the zoning ordinance, which, “while maintaining the allowable density of ten living units per acre, permits density to be varied on specific lots in a subdivision up to a maximum of 15 living units per acre in order to achieve best use of land and terrain, provided the average density of the entire subdivision does not exceed 10 living units per acre.” This provision would ease the way for developers who were about to build condominiums, while still controlling the size of those complexes. But it would not end the units-per-acre debate, and in 1980, about three years after Haller left office the first time, the density would be limited to eight units per acre.

This restrictive zoning decision did not end debate. Its application to motels caused a lawsuit against the town by owners of the John Yancey Hotel. In 1984, Mayor Haller, once again in office, helped resolve the case; commissioners agreed to increase the number of bedroom units allowed per acre to 22.

Another troublesome issue that would come up during Mayor Haller’s tenure was the problem of flooding in eastern sections of Pine Knoll Shores. This one would remain unresolved, but there were big accomplishments during Haller’s years in office. For example, the proposed Marine Resource Center became a reality, opening in 1977. Haller had an even more direct hand in establishing rescue squads and a fire department as well as in building a new town hall, dedicated in May 1979.

Over the years, both Ken and Newell Haller were big supporters of the *Shore Line* newspaper. Newell wrote for the paper and also was part of a team who collated pages for its delivery. Ken presented a resolution in March 1976 officially thanking founding editors Mary Doll and Betty Hammon. So, it was an especially sad occasion in June 1978 when he had the sad task of announcing that *Shoreline* editors could no longer continue. Publication of the paper was discontinued, but Haller predicted, correctly, that it would “rise Phoenix-like to carry on the traditions established.” When it started up again in 1979, it did so with financial support from the town.

In 1982, when George Eastland was sick and could no longer serve as *Shoreline* editor, Ken Haller agreed to become a co-editor with Noel Yancey. Both Eastland and Haller saw one of the paper’s functions as keeping a record of the town’s history as well as keeping residents aware of current town issues and events.

Ken Haller believed so firmly in the importance of keeping a record of the town’s history that he wrote a book on the subject in 1985. It covered the years 1973 to 1985. As mayor in 1974, he declared May 9-15 Historical Preservation Week in Pine Knoll Shores.

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