

Fishing & Hunting

By Richard Seale



The gifts of our senses, quiet times, the annual march of sunrise—and pelican problems

A side benefit of hunting and fishing efforts is that partaking of these activities usually involves first-light wakeup calls. Based on my grandchildren's reaction, I realize that this may not seem like a good thing to many people. All year long, I usually get up at or before sunrise. I enjoy this enough that I do not need to set an alarm.

Getting to our place of employment is our early life impetus when we start our days—but that is quite different from getting up early just for the joy of it. If we can make it a joy to greet sunrise, getting up gets to be a pleasant routine, particularly on non-work days. The trick is to be aware of how many special gifts can be ours to enjoy if we use this early time to our best advantage.

Protocols for successful hunting and fishing outings are prime drivers for one to be up and at it early. Getting to the hunting or fishing location is a busy time, but once on location, you can make the conscious decision to turn down the tempo as dawn comes and enjoy some very special quiet times. During those times, you can focus your mind on how fortunate you are to be where you are, with your many senses drinking in all that is happening around you. Your sense of sight can take in pre-sunrise dawn with its subtle changes of light and shadows. Then the brightening reds and yellow light up clouds and the horizon. At last, the sun itself rises with all its warmth and flooding light—and a new day, with all its surprises and unknowns, starts for us in earnest. During the last half hour, your eyes will have noted the passing of a surprising number of birds and animals.

Depending on the wind and rain conditions, your hearing will pick up the rustle of breezes moving through leaves and branches, birds singing and deer sensing your presence and blowing warnings. If you are on Bogue Banks, you will hear the rolling roar of the breaking ocean waves. Sight and sound are our most prominent senses, but our skin tells us when breezes are passing by us and from which direction. Breezes bring to our noses smells of blooming flowers nearby, or even a passing bear (yes, a bear has a pretty strong odor that I have smelled many times), or if out on the ocean, the oily, fishy smell of a school of menhaden swimming at the surface. Our senses are hard at work, whether we are fishing, hunting, walking on an unbusy road or sitting on a log or park bench.

Another aspect of enjoying sunrises is that this daily event marches an amazing distance around a portion of the southeastern, eastern and northeastern horizons. It takes six months in each direction but is annually repetitive, from the shortest day in mid-December to the longest day in June—and then back again. Over my life, I have marked sunrise places in different locations around the world on several porch railings. Linda just chuckles at this ongoing routine.

As August began, the single osprey fledgling was still returning to the nesting platform where it could be heard screaming for food. Incredibly, the parents

seemed to heed its call and bring it fish, even though it was capable of fending for itself. In past years with multiple fledglings in the nest, such returns only ran a couple of weeks. The fledgling's back feathers had turned almost all black, with the white spots of its youth feathers being covered over.

Pelicans feed all year long in the shallow waters that surround the osprey platform, and this season we were surprised to see the parent ospreys attacking such pelicans by diving on a pelican that had just splashed into a school of bait fish. The pelicans would snap their big bills at the passing ospreys; however, we never saw either bird hit the other. The pelicans usually flew off after a few osprey fly-bys. Our neighbor Vincent Bailey captured some of this action with his camera, and he kindly allowed me to share one of his fine photos. You can even see the pelican's open bill.



An osprey approaches a pelican with a warning to keep its distance.—Photo by Vincent Bailey

During July, the red drum fishery really turned on in many of our sounds and rivers, but relating that story will have to wait until the October *Shoreline*. I hope some of you got to fish for these seasonal inland water monsters. By the time you are reading this, bluefish and Spanish mackerel schools will start building near the inlet as well.

Dove season will start on September 3, which is the traditional North Carolina kick-off for the year's hunting seasons, and deer archery season starts on September 10. Time surely flies on by.