

State Researchers Seeking Reasons For Decline In Rabbit Population

No one is sure why but wild rabbit populations have been on the decline in North Carolina and other parts of the Southeast for at least two decades.

Recently, a N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission research project has been yielding some leads on the problem. Rabbit hunting in North Carolina has been a tradition since the 1920s when Caswell County alone shipped more than 45,000 a year by rail to New York and other large cities.

Today, rabbit hunters are satisfied just to have enough rabbits to enjoy a chase with a good pack of beagles.

Biologists with the Wildlife Commission are investigating the role of disease and predators in controlling rabbit population levels. Standardized fall box trapping has been conducted on the Penny Bend Rabbit Research Area near Durham each November since 1982. Capture success during a seven-day period using 100 box traps has been used to monitor population changes on the area.

This year, after six years of habitat improvements and stable rabbit populations, the rabbit populations dropped to almost nothing.

"The declines we have seen are very localized and are not being seen on other areas we are studying," said Carl Betsill, commission biologist. "This decline on an intensively monitored area like Penny Bend Rabbit Research Area gives us a unique opportunity to study the reasons for the population decrease. Since food

and cover conditions have steadily improved during the study and we have noted no dramatic increase in predator levels, we theorize that the recent population drop may have been caused by disease. With assistance from the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study in Athens, Ga., we are planning to screen populations of mammals on Penny Bend and the game land area for disease organisms that have the potential to drastically lower rabbit populations."

Already many of the remaining rabbits have been collared with radio transmitters and are being monitored daily to determine survival rates as well as the probable cause of death. "Theories abound about the causes of rabbit declines," Betsill said. "These range from decreases in available habitat to genetic changes in the rabbits themselves. Recent studies have indicated that a fungus living in common fescue may even be the culprit."

"This theory advocated by some rabbit hunters for a number of years has only recently received serious attention from research scientists," Betsill said. "Other work by the commission at Penny Bend is focusing on predator-prey relationships, another theory of rabbit declines favored by many hunters. A five-acre enclosure, fenced to exclude ground predators, is also being used as a tool to study predation. Only by having research areas like Penny Bend can we hope to find answers to the many unknown factors that affect wildlife abundance."

Florists

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about five or 10 minutes. I hope to be able to see him if he comes to the one I'm at," she said.

Mrs. Van Norwick has at least one goal during her trip. "I just love Reagan. I just hope I get the chance to touch his elbow," she said. How about Bush? "I'm impressed with him."

Mrs. Van Norwick, owner of Georgia's Flowers in Williamston, has experience in floral decoration in the nation's capital. She was invited to help decorate the White House at Christmas, but was unable to make the trip. She also provided floral services at various functions when Lyndon B. Johnson was president.

"It's a volunteer-type thing. The AAF contacts florists to see if they can go. There are many good designers who can't go and it is also a good way to get some experience," she said. "It's also a good way to pick up ideas and then scale them down for use back home."

"It's all planned. Sometimes, though, they end up doing more than they thought they would do," she said.

"The security's the thing. They inspect your delivery truck everytime it's loaded and unloaded to keep anyone from hiding inside and sneaking inside one of the balls," said Mrs. Van Norwick. "They have armed guards go with you when you go to pick up or unload."

"The flowers to be used come from Holland, South America and around the world, she said. "They'll fly in flowers from everywhere in the world for the balls," said Mrs. Van Norwick. Some flower growers donate flowers, but what is bought is paid for by the Republican Party and not by taxpayers, said Mrs. Van Norwick, a Republican.

It's also sort of a reunion for the florists. "I know about 50 that are going," she said.

"I hope we will get tangled in the parade route," she said.

Winning Streak Snapped

Lady Pats Take 61-59 Overtime Win

MOREHEAD CITY — West Craven's 11-game winning streak in girls' high school basketball came to an end Saturday night as West Carteret, rebounding from a defeat to Washington, defeated the Lady Eagles 61-59 in double overtime in Morehead City.

Wendi Nelson, a 5-8 junior center, rebounded her own shot and scored with one second remaining in the second overtime for the margin of victory. She finished with 16 points for the Lady Patriots.

West Craven, which fell to 1-1 in the Coastal Conference and 11-1 overall, was led by Linetta Bryant's 28 points while Chundra Croell added 17.

West Craven evened its loop record at 1-1 and improved to 3-8 overall with a 72-50 triumph in the boys' game.

The West Carteret girls slowed the pace in order to combat West Craven's fast-break tandem of Croell and Bryant, Lady Patriot coach Phyllis Willis said.

"We knew we couldn't run with them, so we had to control the tempo," Willis said. "That's what we worked on Saturday morning during practice."

After gaining possession to start the first overtime, West Carteret held for the last shot, which failed. West Craven rebounded with seven seconds left, but the Lady Eagles' last-second shot fell short.

In the second overtime, Wendi Nelson scored four points and her sister, Kim, added a free throw for the victory.

Lamont Cox scored 17 points to lead the West Craven boys while Tony Jenkins added 16 and Johnny Galin chipped in 14.

John McLean scored 14 points to pace West Carteret while Chris Bryant added 10.

The Lady Patriots then followed their victory over West Craven with a 61-42 triumph over visiting Pender County Monday night.

West Carteret (2-1, 8-2) was led by a season-high 20 points from Wendi Nelson while Kim Nelson and Staci Kyle scored 12 each. Pender won the boys' game. No other details were provided.

The Patriot boys fell to 0-3, 3-9 after the two defeats. West Carteret hosts Havelock Friday.

VARSITY BOYS	
West Craven	12 10 14 30 — 72
West Carteret	14 12 7 17 — 50
WEST CRAVEN (17)	
Lamont Cox 17, Tony Jenkins 16, Johnny Galin 14, Jeremiah Chapman 10, Edward 7, Decker 5, Gashles 2, Williams 1.	
WEST CARTERET (50)	
John McLean 14, Chris Bryant 10, Wills 8, Noman 5, Bennett 4, Rouse 4, Davis 3, Alford 2.	

GIRLS' GAME	
West Craven	10 11 15 10 0 3 — 59(2OT)
West Carteret	11 10 8 10 0 5 — 61
WEST CRAVEN (59)	
Chundra Croell 17, Linetta Bryant 20, Brimmer 5, P. Bryant 4, Volacic 2, Poole 3, Wolfe.	
WEST CARTERET (61)	
Wendi Nelson 16, Kim Nelson 21, Staci Kyle 10, McCoolley 8, Manors.	

GIRLS' GAME	
Pender County	0 7 13 14 — 42
West Carteret	17 10 23 11 — 61
PENDER (42)	
Shanetta Parker 10, Armstrong 3, Linnwood 4, K. Moore 3, L. Fields 0, S. Thompson 0, S. Johnson 2.	
WEST CARTERET (61)	
Wendi Nelson 20, Kim Nelson 12, Staci Kyle 12, McCoolley 1, Manors 5, Warronder 2, Gill 1, Howell 2, Taylor 4.	

Eagles

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triumph. Billy Ellison scored 21 points and Joe Montford and Jimmy Walker added 15 each for the winners while Tony Jenkins, a 6-3 junior, turned in a 23-point outing for the Eagles.

East Carteret hit 21 of 42 free-throw attempts for th game and was 13-for-21 in the fourth quarter in earning the win and rallying from a 47-46 deficit at the end of three quarters.

VARSITY GIRLS	
East Carteret	10 17 10 27 — 73
West Craven	12 10 14 30 — 72
WEST CRAVEN (74)	
Leo Boston 12, Edward 4, Tony Jenkins 23, Johnny Galin 11, Chapman 2, Harris 1, Cox 0, W. Jenkins 1, Williams, White.	
EAST CARTERET (73)	
Billy Ellison 21, Joe Montford 15, Jones 0, Way 2, Walker 15, Murray 0, Copeland 4, Johnson, Nelson, Thomas.	

VARSITY GIRLS	
West Craven	21 23 10 10 — 70
East Carteret	0 12 0 17 — 37
WEST CRAVEN (70)	
Chundra Croell 17, Evelyn Brimmer 17, Volacic 0, L. Bryant 7, P. Bryant 0, Poole 0, Ryzner 0, Barrow 3, White, Wolfe, Buzzell.	
EAST CARTERET (37)	
Lynada Murray 12, Dunn 7, Parker 0, Jones 5, Johnson 4, Feltz 2, Adair, Gilliam, H. Johnson, Ellison, C. Murray, Piner, Henry.	

VARSITY BOYS	
West Craven	22 15 10 17 — 64

Legislative Lines

By REP. BEVERLY PERDUE

I don't need to tell anyone who sees the news that the first week of the 1989 session of the General Assembly was anything but dull. Normally, the opening of the North Carolina House and Senate are a ceremony, but that was certainly not the case this year. As expected, the majority in the state Senate, who are elected Democrats, voted to retain organizational control and the power to appoint committee chairmen. This transition was made fairly smoothly and the Senate will be operating differently but hopefully just as effectively next week.

The contest in the House of Representatives between former speaker Liston Ramsey and new Speaker Joe Mavretic was a much more recent development. In early December, newly elected and re-elected House Democrats met for their usual caucus to elect the Democratic slate for House officers. Ramsey was overwhelmingly the choice of his party's members at that time.

A number of House Democrats who were unhappy with Ramsey's renomination chose to form a coalition with House Republican members to block Ramsey's re-election as Speaker of the House on opening day. This opposition group, consisting of 45 Republican members and 20 Democratic members elected Mavretic who is from Edgecombe County.

Most of the Democratic members of Mavretic's group are, like me, newer members of the House. Like many of them, I had spoken out about the need for change and reform in the House. I agreed that we needed to make it a more open process so that all members had greater opportunity in the decisions making. I had fought against the closed door meetings of the past. When I was approached about joining this group, I tried to listen with an open mind and I prayed long and hard to know the right thing to do.

I had face-to-face meetings with both Ramsey and Mavretic and I discussed this situation carefully with my colleagues in our own delegation. After developments prior to the election of the Speaker, when Ramsey agreed to make

some changes I had asked for, I felt that my demands for change were met.

The commitment I had made to Speaker Ramsey in the Democratic Caucus was one I had to stick with, even knowing that I would be on the losing side. When the time came for the vote, I was proud to vote for a man who has given so many years of distinguished service to the state and who has fought so hard to keep our rural areas in a position to get their fair share.

The dust is not settled yet. I can't tell, and neither can my more senior colleagues in the House, how this will end. What I can do is to promise the voters of Craven, Lenoir and Pamlico counties that I am in Raleigh to fight for the best possible legislation and programs for our area and our state. The people of North Carolina send us to the General Assembly to fight for their interests and not fight each other.

I want all the people of this district to know that I am going to Raleigh with a long list of programs and proposals that they have requested and helped to develop with me during the last two years. These are proposals for improving our area's roads, schools and the human service programs. I am dedicated to finding a way to get past the current organizational problems we have in the House so that I can spend my time and efforts on the work that needs to be done. I know that many of my fellow representatives feel this way too. We must get beyond the business of the House now and move on with the business of North Carolina.

It is always an opportunity to serve with our excellent delegation, Rep. Gerald Anderson, Rep. Dan Lilley and Sen. Bill Barker. We are a good team and are committed to good government for North Carolina. As usual, I want your advice and comments. My New Bern office will be open Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The phone number is 633-2667. In Raleigh, you can call my anytime day or night. My General Assembly office number is 733-5058 and my Raleigh apartment number is 829-1887.

Keep me in your thoughts and prayers. Have a good week.

Growth Of Economy Expected To Continue

The economy is expected to continue to grow, but at a much slower pace, through 1989, an economist at N.C. State University says.

Dr. Michael L. Walden, an agricultural extension economist, says there is a broad consensus among economists that there will not be a recession in 1989.

There are signs that inflation is heating up, Walden says, and that

interest rates may climb in the early part of 1989 and then trend downward during the second half of the year.

Inflation rates should be in the 4 to 5 percent range in 1989, with higher rates in the first half and lower in the second half.

Walden says the current economic expansion, now in its seventh year, should continue through 1989 with a growth of about 2 to 2.5 percent.

Poverty

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answered," Torbert said. "But they guided and stimulated the group."

Entitled "Poverty in the East: Shared Ownership in the Problems and Solutions," the report was presented at forums in Fayetteville Jan. 5 and in Greenville Jan. 6. State, local and county officials and state legislators were invited to attend.

"Poverty is a reality. Many of us talk about poverty and the need to do something to end the cycle. We are very anxious to share our findings with persons who are also concerned about this problem," said co-chairman Dr. Maria O'Neil McMahan, Dean of the School of Social Work at East Carolina University.

Co-chairing the committee with Dr. McMahan is E. C. Modlin, director of the Cumberland County Department of Social Services.

The 18-member Eastern North Carolina Poverty Committee began its work in 1986. Meeting monthly, it focused on human service needs in the areas of education, health, social services, housing, transportation and employment.

"The committee felt that these broad areas contain the key elements relating to the causes of poverty," Dr. McMahan said. "As a result of these findings, the report is keyed to identifying the unmet needs of the poor."

There are so many facets of poverty that are inter-related," she said. "We are striving to create a greater consciousness of the need for a concerted effort to combat the problem."

She stressed "the need for multiple, inter-relatedness of many diverse systems" to attack the causes of poverty.

Foy

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been found floating in a creek. Referring to the person or persons who murdered her sister-in-law, Mrs. Foy added, "They didn't have to throw her away like a piece of garbage."

"We don't know how (the body) got into the creek," McFadyen said last week. If investigators had been able to determine that, he added, they would be much closer to solving the case.

Denise Harris, one of the investigators with the New Bern Police Department who originally had worked on the case, said last week that she had turned over to the Craven County Sheriff's Department several leads she had developed. Since the body was found in the county, she pointed out, the sheriff's department had taken over the case.

Detective Mike Rice of the Craven Sheriff's Department said in a telephone interview, "We're talking to people who were supposed to have been around Sandra" the night she disappeared. "We don't like to leave cases unresolved."

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Union

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sensation between the workers and management.

Hatcher said under NLRB guidelines, a pre-voting meeting is held about 30 minutes before voting booths are set up. Eligible voters then cast ballots one at a time. The election may be observed by anyone, Hatcher said, including union, company and NLRB officials. After the vote, the NLRB determines the outcome.

If voters approve the union, it and the company begin negotiations and the union would probably be in place "in a couple of three weeks," Hatcher said.

Hatcher said the union will have an observer at the election. There are slightly more than 1 million members in the United States and Canada, he said.

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