

KNOTS are common along our beaches during the Spring migration.

PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

Shorebird Mysteries

Those who live or visit along the coast are able to observe shorebirds twice yearly as they migrate along age-old lines from north to south. Usually in late spring and early fall several migratory species can be spotted and some stay with us during the entire year.

Knots, Sanderlings, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Ruddy Turnstones and some others are busy during these times searching for food at the water's edge. We become accustomed to them and seldom wonder what they do the rest of the year.

No sooner than the snow begins to melt in the Arctic tundra regions and slight vegetation breaks through, swarms of insects—mosquitos, midges, flies—begin hatching in the pools left by the melting snow.

Soon after, the shorebirds begin arriving for their short nesting season. They push northward as the weather changes, and often a late snowfall in the Arctic catches over-eager birds,



Bill Faver

young chicks are able to fly, the adult shorebirds leave the tundra and begin their migration to southern wintering grounds. The young are left to follow their parents a month to six weeks later. One author wrote of this causing a double peak of migrating shorebirds along the New Jersey coast—one in mid-July and the second in early September.

causing them to retreat or abandon their nesting plans.

When the time is right, they pair off and begin their nesting rituals. Birds have their protective coloration to resemble the grasses and rocks of the tundra and to protect them while nesting.

We see some of them with this spring plumage as they head north and then we see the winter plumage during the fall and winter months. The winter coloration is more "beach-like" with sand colors, greys and whites.

Almost all of the shorebirds nesting in the arctic are insect predators and their young birds hatch at the peak of the insect season. As soon as the

Scientists and amateurs alike have studied the mysteries of how these young birds can follow the migration routes of their parents. They follow their parents to wintering grounds they have never seen. They leave without any experience of winter on the tundra, or without anyone telling them when to go or where to go. Yet they start on time, follow the established pathways, and join their parents at the other end of the Earth.

Is it tradition, or navigation by the stars, or magnetic force, or what? Next time you watch one of the shorebirds probing along the edge of the waves, you can realize he is involved in one of the real mysteries of the animals world.

Enjoy The Slow Pace While It Lasts

Sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic while road crews resurface U.S. 17 in Brunswick County is sort of like having a tooth pulled: It's painful, but it has to be done.

And as most local folks would probably agree, driving through Shallotte on Friday afternoons and holiday weekends is about as appealing as visiting your friendly, neighborhood proctologist. Both experiences hurt in the same general vicinity.

That was true even before the asphalt trucks and steamrollers converged on Shallotte a couple of weeks ago to begin repaving more than 22 miles of Brunswick County's main drag. As fate and the Department of Transportation would have it, the work will be finished by Aug. 15, near the end of the tourist season.

Everyone seems to have a favorite tall tale—or horror story—about the traffic on this busy stretch of two-lane blacktop that links Shallotte with its neighbors to the north and south.

I could probably even win Jess Parker's annual "bull-shooting" contest with some of the yarns I've heard about how far traffic was backed up toward Supply last Fourth of July or how long it took to drive from one end of town to the other. Trouble is, Jess and the other judges would know I wasn't exaggerating.

After moving to this area, everyone said I'd learn to like the slower pace here. I didn't know, though, that they were referring to

Rahn Adams



Now look here, son, I could let you walk home... What d'ya mean, it would be faster?"

Early Sunday afternoon, at the most popular restaurant in town: "Believe me, Pastor. The wife and I wouldn't have missed your sermon this morning for the world, but the traffic had us running behind, and we didn't want to interrupt the worship service by barging in late... You say we should have ridden with our neighbors because they made it to church on time? That's a good idea, sir. I've been meaning to talk to them about car-pooling to church during the tourist season."

This summer we may moan about the tourist traffic through Brunswick County, and we may groan when the flagman on the road crew flips his sign around and stops us for what seems like hours in the sweltering heat. But sooner or later, that's all going to change, and we won't be able to make excuses because of our crowded, two-lane highway.

After all, a good thing can't last forever—we hope.

the long waits I'd encounter on U.S. 17.

The only good thing I have to say about the traffic here is that it can serve as a legitimate excuse in just about any situation.

Friday around noon, at work: "Honest, boss. I would have been here on time, but I got caught in traffic... Do I know the day's half over? My goodness! I'd better leave now so I can get home before supper. By the way, is my paycheck ready?"

Several hours later, at home: "Sorry, honey. I didn't pick up a jug of milk in town because I figured it would spoil before I got home... Where's my paycheck? Gee, I must have gotten in the wrong line at the bank drive-thru. I wondered why that teller wearing the blaze-orange vest didn't give me a receipt."

Late Saturday afternoon, at the deserted ballfield: "Don't be mad, Johnny. I would have picked you up a lot sooner, but I've been fighting the traffic for hours to get here... How'd I get so sunburned when our car doesn't have a sunroof?"

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Letter

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the locals on our frequent short trips to the coast.

We know of many area needs and how folks are getting together to alleviate them; through your articles on volunteerism we have a general idea of where our abilities may be useful. We search the columns for possible part-time work (not being quite ready for complete retirement). We anticipate our turn to take local field trips or listen to local history as we read their announcement in "calendar of events."

But again we are drawn to the pictures of the beach; my husband savors the "catch of the day," while I dream of long walks and good salt air.

We thank you for the easy way in which you included us into the family and we're sorry that we became so accustomed to your visits that we almost forgot to invite you for another year.

Shirley Campbell
Raleigh

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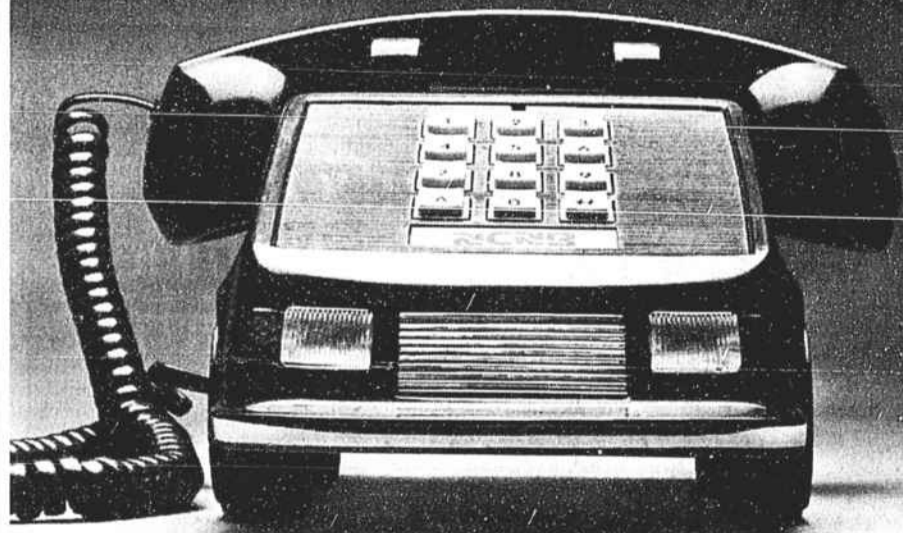
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