



GREEN-BACKED HERONS extend their bodies as they wait for food to swim by. PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

The Energy Crisis: Searching Or Waiting

BY BILL FAVER

Most animals spend much of their time searching for food. For them a great deal of energy is required in hunting and the key to staying alive is locating food containing more energy than they consume in finding it.

The animal scientists even have an equation: Net energy gain divided by time spent hunting equals energy from food collected divided by time spent searching, pursuing, preparing, and eating. This equation applies to the birds and insects as well as the larger predatory animals.

Many birds become specialists in searching for their food. Ospreys, hawks, and owls cover wide areas, circling overhead or perching on a tall tree, as they use keen eyesight to sort out their prey.

Many of the herons and egrets seem to stake out a systematic path as they cover a marsh or shoreline looking for snails, fish, fiddlers, frogs, and snakes.

The Green-backed Heron is an exception. It prefers to position itself on a low shrub near the water and wait for minnows to swim by. The Green-backed Heron is so efficient at this it may extend its entire body

down below its feet to snatch a fish.

Unlike the "searchers," the "waiters" can get by on less food. They don't expend as much energy getting food, so their needs are less. The waiters are dependent upon food that moves—that will come to them. There are many examples of the waiters in the ocean—sea anemones, barnacles, oysters, parchment worms and others. Many are "filter-feeders," straining nutrients from the water that passes through their bodies.

Some of the waiters employ ambush strategies, snagging victims as they pass by. Some of the insects are masters at setting traps. The ant lion, or "doodle bug," digs its cone-shaped hole in the sand, waits for an unsuspecting ant to fall in, and then sucks out the body fluids.

Spiders, of course, spin webs and wait for insects to become entangled. A few animals, including insects, even use a lure or tool to help in their feeding.

Animals have an energy crisis each day as they use energy to search for food or to wait until a meal comes along. Pollution, storms, habitat destruction and disease may wipe out their food supplies and cause them to use more energy than they can replace. When this happens, they, too, become weak and vulnerable, susceptible to disease and predation. Such is life among the searchers and the waiters!

Letters

(Continued From Preceding Page) visitors without a very necessary high-rise bridge that is desperately needed for safety, convenience, and practicality.

It is time that the Sunset Beach council served the majority of its patrons—not its own provincialism and personal interests.

Paul J. Skiver
Greensboro

Officials Elected To Take Stand

To the editor:

I received this anonymously in the mail this week and would like to share it. I would like to thank all the marvelous supporters who elected members of this (Sunset Beach) council because they were willing to take a stand to maintain the small beach atmosphere and orderly growth of our beloved area.

Our supporters moved and came to this area to avoid a Myrtle Beach environment and were willing to elect officials who supported their views.

Katherine Hill Peed
Sunset Beach

(Editor's note: The writer is a member of the Sunset Beach Town Council. Following is the text of what she received anonymously in the mail:)

The Man In The Arena

"It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the door of deeds could have been better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows the triumph of high achievement; and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

Theodore Roosevelt

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Celebrate Coast At Raleigh Fair

To get landlubbers more involved in preserving the North Carolina coast, WRAL-TV in Raleigh is hosting a Carolina Coastal Celebration April 8 and 9 at the Kerr Scott Building on the N.C. State Fairgrounds in Raleigh.

The free event will showcase traditional entertainers, crafts, unusual

seafood and educational exhibits about the coastal environment.

Sea Grant and Beach Sweep '89 sponsors will staff booths at the two-day event.

The fair is the latest project in the station's ongoing commitment to addressing problems facing the state's

sounds and estuaries. It has produced a half-hour documentary, "Troubled Waters," and the booklet, "Sound Advice," a resource guide that tells inland residents how their actions affect the coastal environment. It also sponsored a forum in Raleigh that featured former CBS anchor Walter Cronkite.

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