



The News Reporter's

OUTDOORS GUIDE

Hunting, Fishing
& Outdoor Fun in
Columbus County

August 31, 2023



Easton McPherson on the Waccamaw River in Pireway



Drake McClellan fishing at Lake Waccamaw and enjoying the beautiful sunset



Tyler Mincey doing what he loves – fishing in the river!

Wyatt Hinson fishing in his granddaddy's pond



GONE FISHING



Eliza Brown caught four fish at a fishing pond near Lake Waccamaw on her first fishing trip with her daddy.

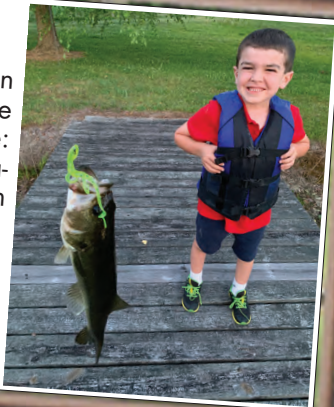


Abigail Hardee's first time fishing. She decided to return this minnow so "he can grow up."



Ansley Young fishing in Lake Waccamaw

Levi Hilbourn at his favorite fishing hole: Mema and Papa's pond in Ward Station





Kaley Smith loves turkey hunting and was able to get this nice bird this past turkey season.



Krista, Gram and Khloe Hunt squirrel hunting with their dad. They also love to deer and duck hunt, fish, and ride the four-wheeler around their property in Clarkton.



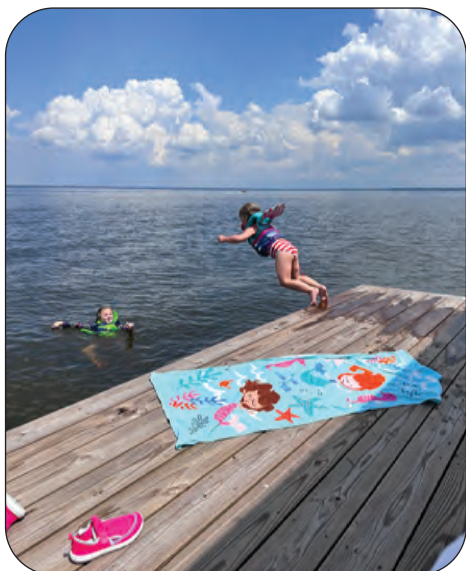
Gunner Powell doing what he loves the most—duck hunting with daddy in Whiteville.



Olivia Watts' first buck from hunting in Whiteville with her dad



Jase Graves' first mallard hunt near Tabor City



Piper and Juniper Walters beat the heat at their favorite spot, Lake Waccamaw.

OUTDOOR FUN



MacKenzie Oxendine horseback riding at the Lumber River Campground



Natasha Sing enjoying the Hobo Hunt at the Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum



Grace Horne enjoying feeding her chickens on her family farm in Whiteville. She has a variety of farm animals, including goats, chickens, ducks and a donkey.

Dove season opens Saturday

The 2023–24 hunting season for mourning and white-winged doves opens on Saturday, Sept. 2, and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission reminds seasoned and novice hunters the importance of being properly licensed, observing state and federal regulations, and following safe hunting practices.

Dove hunting season will be separated into three segments: Sept. 2–Oct. 7, Nov. 11–Nov. 25, and Dec. 9–Jan. 31, 2024. The daily bag limit is 15 mourning or white-winged doves, either as single species or combined, and shooting hours are from 30 minutes before sunrise to sunset. Hunting of migratory game birds, including doves, by any method is not allowed on Sundays. It is illegal to dove hunt with a shotgun that can hold more than three shells, unless it is plugged with a one-piece filler incapable of removal without disassembling the gun, so its total capacity does not exceed three shells.



Migratory game bird hunters, including lifetime license holders, are required to register in the federal Harvest Information Program (HIP). HIP is a survey method developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to collect more reliable estimates of migratory game bird harvests throughout the country. HIP certification is available

July 1–April 1 and expires June 30 each year.

Hunters can purchase or renew their license and obtain their HIP certification online for immediate use in the field. Hunters can also purchase and renew their license at a Wildlife Service Agent office or call 833-950-0575, 8 a.m.–5 p.m., Monday–Friday.

It is a violation of state and federal law to take migratory game birds with the use or aid of salt, grain, fruit or any other bait. Additionally, hunters need to be aware that an area is considered baited for 10 days following the removal of all salt, grain, or other feed. Migratory game birds may be hunted in agricultural areas where grain has

been distributed as the result of normal agricultural operations. Information regarding agriculture and planting techniques may be obtained from a local N.C. State Extension Center. Visit the agency's website to view an interactive map of game land dove fields.

Hunting safety is priority when in the field. Free hunter safety courses are available through the Wildlife Commission. Wildlife Law Enforcement Officers advise dove hunters to follow these safety tips:

- Adhere to established safe zones of fire.
- Ensure you have the correct ammunition for your firearm.
- Keep the muzzle of your firearm pointed in a safe direction.
- Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.
- Do not shoot at low-flying birds.
- Do not place decoys on utility lines.

— Contributed by N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission

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N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission offers free hunting webinars

Beginner hunters encouraged to attend



The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) is offering six free hunting-related webinars from September through December. These online events are open to the public and are geared toward individuals who have never hunted, are new to hunting or lack social support for hunting. Preregistration is required.

September webinars:

Sept. 5 - Deer Hunting

Sept. 7 - Deer Processing

Sept. 19 - Squirrel Hunting

Sept. 26 - Ducks Unlimited-
Waterfowl Hunting

October webinar:

Oct. 10 - Delta Waterfowl-
Waterfowl Hunting

December webinar:

Dec. 7 - Upland Game Hunt-
ing

All classes will be held from 7-8 p.m. remotely and will conclude with a 30-minute question and answer session.

NOTE: Upon registration an email will be sent with an attachment containing information to join the webinar.

"The webinars are intended to assist both novice and experienced hunters alike for the upcoming season," said Walter "Deet" James, the hunter en-

gagement coordinator at the Wildlife Commission. "They are especially valuable for those who may not have access to an existing hunting community of family members and friends."

To register, visit GoOutdoorsNorthCarolina.com. A recording of the presentation will be available the week following each webinar on WRC's YouTube channel. Purchase or renew a hunting license using the link on the homepage.

For additional information, contact Walter "Deet" James at walter.james@ncwildlife.org (preferred), 919-707-0059 (office) or 984-202-1387 (mobile).

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New state record confirmed for channel catfish

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has certified a new channel catfish state record. On May 21, 2023, Justin Hall of Reidsville reeled in a 27 lb. 7 oz. channel catfish, from a local farm pond near his home in Rockingham County, breaking the previous record of 26 lbs. caught in the Neuse River, July 2021.

Hall has been fishing this pond for years but rarely caught channel catfish from it. Until May 2023, when his 13-year-old son caught what he estimates to have been a 25+ pounder. They returned it to the water, unaware of the record held at that time. "I told a friend about my son's catch, and he told me it might have been big enough to beat the state record," said Hall. A week later, using bread dough as bait and his Big Cat Fever Casting Rod and Zebco Big Cat XT reel, he got the record-breaker. "My wife went down to the waterline to bring it in with the net – and it bent the net." The fish measured 36 1/4 inches long and 24 7/8 inches in girth.

To qualify for a N.C. Freshwater Fish State Record, anglers must catch the fish by rod and reel or cane pole.

The fish must be weighed on a scale certified by the N.C. Department of Agriculture and witnessed by at least one observer. It must be identified by a fisheries biologist from the Commission and the angler must submit an application with a full, side-view photo of the fish for record certification.

For anglers who catch catfish that doesn't quite measure up to this latest record but still meet minimum size and length requirements, the Commission has catfish classifications for its North Carolina Angler Recognition Program (NCARP). NCARP officially recognizes anglers who catch trophy-sized freshwater fish that do not qualify for a state record with a certificate featuring color reproductions of fish artwork by the late renowned wildlife artist and former Commission fisheries biologist Duane Raver.

For a list of all freshwater fish state records in North Carolina or more information on the State Record Fish Program, visit the Commission's State Record Fish program webpage.

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Justin Hall with record-breaking channel catfish

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Let the hunting begin....



Eastern Bear Season

Zone 5: Nov. 13, 2023 - Jan. 1, 2024

Small Game

Armadillo: No closed season

Beaver: Refer to Regulations Digest

Bobcat: Oct. 16, 2023 - Feb. 29, 2024

Coyote: No closed season

Crow: Aug. 2, 2023 - Feb. 28, 2024, and June 5 - July 31, 2024. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday of each week. Crows may also be hunted on Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Independence Day; except when these days fall on a Sunday.

Feral Swine: No closed season

Fox: refer to ncwildlife.org/fox-seasons

Groundhog: No closed season

Grouse: Oct. 16, 2023 - Feb. 29, 2024

Nutria: No closed season

Pheasant (male only): Nov. 18, 2023 - Feb. 1, 2024

Quail: Nov. 18, 2023 - Feb. 29, 2024

Rabbit: Oct. 16, 2023 - Feb. 29, 2024

Raccoon and Opossum: Oct. 16, 2023 - Feb. 29, 2024

Skunk (striped): No closed season

Squirrel — gray and red: Oct. 16, 2023 - Feb. 29, 2024

Squirrel — fox: Oct. 16, 2023 - Jan. 31, 2024

Waterfowl

General duck season:

Oct. 27-28, 2023; Nov. 4-25, 2023; and Dec. 18, 2022-Jan. 31, 2024



Deer Season

Archery: Sept. 9 - 29, 2023

Blackpowder: Sept. 30 - Oct. 13, 2023

Gun: Oct. 14, 2023 - Jan. 1, 2024

Mergansers: Same as general duck season

Coots: Same as general duck season

September Teal (includes green-winged, blue-winged and cinnamon teal): Sept. 13 - 30, 2023 (East of U.S. 17)

Canada Goose (September season): Sept. 1 - 30, 2023 (statewide)

Doves and other webless migratory game birds

Mourning doves and white winged dove: Sept. 2 - Oct. 7, 2023; Nov. 11 - 25, 2023; and Dec. 9, 2023 - Jan. 31, 2024

King and Clapper Rails: Sept. 2 - Nov. 22, 2023

Sora and Virginia Rails: Sept. 2 - Nov. 22, 2023

Gallinule and Moorhens: Sept. 2 - Nov. 22, 2023

Woodcock: Dec. 11, 2023 - Jan. 31, 2024

Common Snipe: Oct. 27, 2023 - Feb. 28, 2024



Wild Turkey Season

April 13 - May 11, 2024

(Youth only)

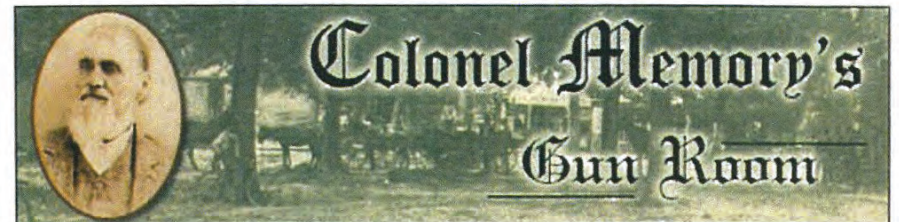
April 6 - 12, 2024

Includes a total of six ducks with no more four total sea ducks (no more than three scoters, three eiders (one hen eider), or three long-tailed ducks, four mallards (no more than two hen mallards), three wood ducks, two redheads,

two canvasbacks, two black ducks, one pintail, one mottled duck and one fulvous whistling duck.

Prior to Jan. 9 the scaup bag limit is one; on Jan. 9 and after it is two.

The season on harlequin ducks is closed.



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North Carolina's 2022 bear harvest sets record for season

Results from the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission's 2022 annual bear harvest summary show that hunters statewide recorded the highest harvest total on record at 4,056 bears — an 11% increase compared to the previous season.

Record-breaking harvest totals were recorded in the Coastal and Mountain Bear Management Units (BMU), 2,533 and 1,468 respectively. The Piedmont BMU experienced its third-highest recorded harvest of 55 bears.

"The increase in the harvest in the Mountain BMU likely reflects the influence of the poor acorn crop we observed in the fall 2022 in this region," said Colleen Olfenbittel, the black bear & furbearer biologist for the Commission. "Acorn production has been surveyed by the Wildlife Commission for 40 years and when acorn production is poor, bears will move more in search of fall foods, making them more vulnerable to both vehicle mortality and legal hunter harvest.



For the Coastal BMU, the record harvest reflects the continued interest, both locally and

nationally, in bear hunting in this region due to its reputation for large bears and, in some ar-

reas, high bear densities."

Most of the bear harvest occurred in the Coastal BMU

(63%), followed by the Mountain BMU (36%) and Piedmont BMU (1%). This is a trend that has stayed the course since the mid-1990s.

Other season results showed:

- Statewide, most bears were harvested on private lands with 16% of the harvest occurring on Commission game lands.

- In the Mountain MBU, 34% of the harvest occurred on Commission game lands.

- Most successful hunters used the assistance of dogs for harvesting bears; however, the number of still hunters increased, with 41% of successful bear hunters reporting they used still hunting to harvest their bear in 2022. This is the highest percentage since the Commission started requesting this information via the Big Game Harvest Report in 2009.

"Bear hunting seasons are highly regulated and play a key

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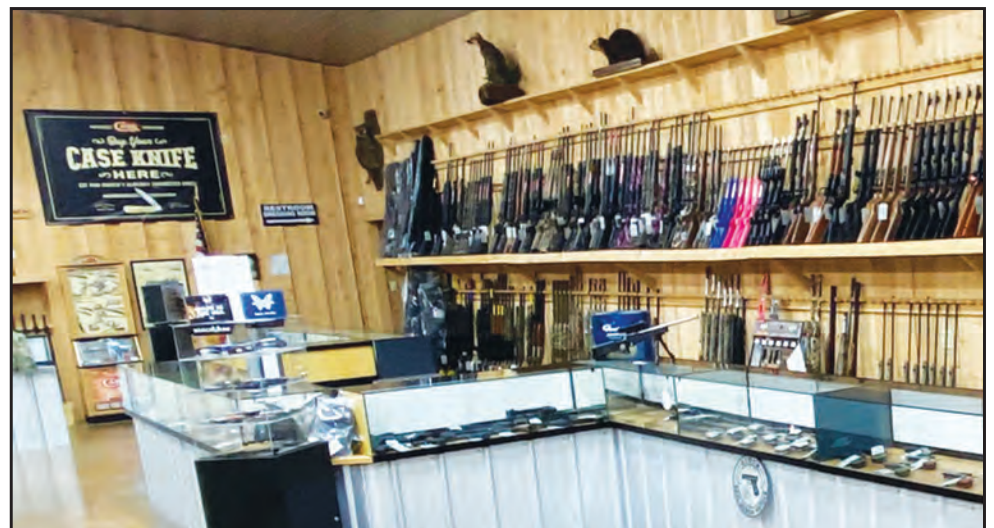
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Spot a Chipmunk? Let the Wildlife Commission know!

For the second year in a row, biologists with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission are asking for the public's assistance in helping them track chipmunks east of I-95 in North Carolina.

While biologists have long known chipmunks were found in the state north and west of Wake County, a photograph of a chipmunk from Wilmington in 2021 got them wondering just how far east and south these tiny rodents have travelled. So, last year, they submitted a public appeal asking for observations. For this year, biologists are again asking anyone who sees a chipmunk east of I-95 to:

- Take a photo
- Note the location (GPS coordinates are preferred)
- Email the photo to hwi@ncwildlife.org

Much smaller than squirrels, chipmunks are only 8 to 10 inches long (counting 3 to 4 inches of tail), with reddish-brown fur, two white stripes bordered by black on the sides and one black stripe down the center of the back. Their most distinguishing characteristic is their large cheek pouches, which they use to store and carry food.

Although chipmunks can be found in both urban and rural habitats, they prefer open woodlands or forest edges, which provide plenty of cover, and dry hillsides for digging burrows. Burrows provide protection from predators such as hawks, owls, foxes and snakes, as well as a safe place to sleep during the winter.

The best times to spot chipmunks are early morning and late afternoon — those are the times chipmunks are most active, gathering and storing food, usually nuts, seeds and berries, although these opportunistic predators will also snack on insects, small amphibians and birds, if given a chance.

Also, look down and not necessarily up to spot one, according to Andrea Shipley, a mammalogist with the Commission. "Unlike squirrels, chipmunks spend most of their time foraging on the ground, climbing trees only occasionally," Shipley said.

"We really want to encourage people to send us photos and information of any chipmunks they see in any county east of I-95," Shipley added. "We will use this information to update our chipmunk distribution map, which we will then use to assess the animal's conservation status in the state and any need for conservation



planning or research we may do in the future."

For more information on eastern chipmunks in North Carolina, visit the Commission's eastern chipmunk species page, www.ncwildlife.org/eastern-chipmunk.

— Contributed by N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission

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Bear harvest

Continued from page 8

role managing local bear populations, helping to resolve agricultural damage, reinforcing a bear's natural fear of people, and providing wild game meat to communities and families," Olfenbittel said. "The 2022 bear harvest produced an estimated 591,700 plates of food, providing an important source of sustenance for many North Carolinians."

Commission staff closely monitor trends in the harvest, including the female bear harvest, which was up 11% in 2022, comprising 40% of the statewide reported harvest. Since the 2015 bear season, the Coastal BMU had the highest ratio of females (43%) comprising the harvest among the three BMUs.

"The Commission works continuously to assure bear hunting seasons remain sustainable so that we can continue to maintain our successfully restored bear population," Olfenbittel said. "Based on our most current data, we are meeting the population objective for the Coastal BMU, which is to stabilize population growth."

Biologists conduct research and monitoring efforts in all BMUs to have the best science to evaluate and inform current and future management decisions. This includes a bear population and density study they recently conducted in the Mountain BMU and a similar study currently being conducted in the Coastal BMU.

"These studies, in addition to other data, will assure our continued success in meeting our goal for the bear population, which is to use science-based decision making and biologically sound management principles to manage black bear populations in balance with available habitats and human expectations to assure long-term existence and hunting opportunities," Olfenbittel said.

Mandatory Bear Tooth Submission Program Helps Biologists Monitor Bear Population Trends

In 2021, with support from the N.C. Bear Hunters Association and the state's bear hunters, the agency began requiring bear hunters to submit a premolar tooth from

their harvested bear. The data gained from the tooth provides the Commission with information about the age structure of the harvest, which is used to monitor trends in the bear population and evaluate impacts of current and proposed changes to hunting season structures. After submitting their harvested bear tooth, hunters receive a hat and the age of their harvested bear.

"The mandatory tooth program has been enthusiastically embraced by our bear hunters, who for decades have played a key role in assisting with our agency's efforts to restore, and now manage, North Carolina's bear populations," said Olfenbittel.

The Commission posts its annual harvest summaries on the black bear webpage under the Surveys and Reports section. A comprehensive Bear Annual Report is published in the late fall. The report is available on the agency's website https://www.ncwildlife.org/Portals/0/Hunting/Documents/Bear/NCWRC_Annual_Bear_Report_data_through_2021.pdf.

— *Contributed by N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission*

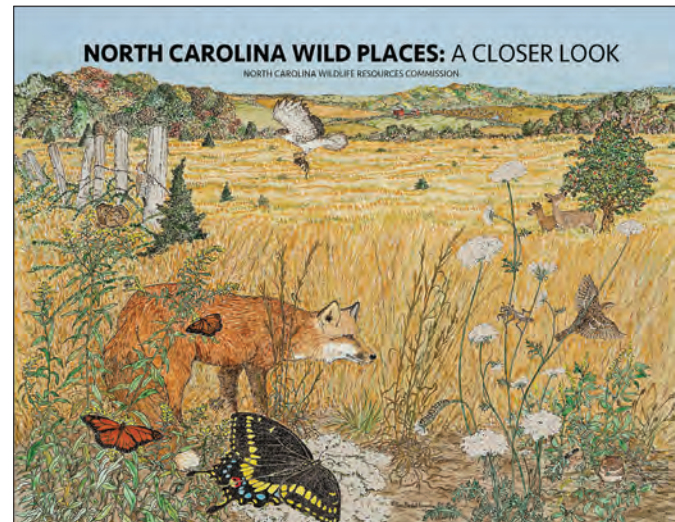
Updated educator resource focuses on native wildlife and habitats

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission's Education Division recently released a free tool for North Carolina educators. "North Carolina WILD Places: A Closer Look" is a free, downloadable book about the state's native wild-

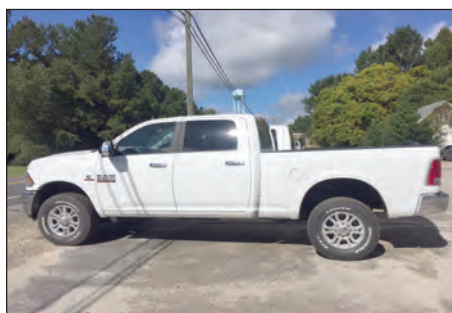
life and plant life.

"Educators often want students to know about the wildlife and habitats that live around them, but seem to have more access to resources on the tropical rain

Continued on page 12



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Wild turkey harvest sets record with 2023 season

North Carolina's five-week wild turkey season had its highest ever recorded harvest of 24,089 birds, according to recent results from the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission's annual turkey harvest summary. The 2023 season surpassed the previous record of 23,341 harvested birds set three years ago in 2020.

"This year's total harvest statewide was 9.5% higher than the average of the previous three years," said the agency's Upland Game Bird Biologist Hannah Plumpton. "Also, all three ecoregions had noticeable increases in harvest in relation to the 2022 season, particularly in the coastal region."

To put the harvest in perspective, biologists typically compare it to the average annual harvest over the previous three years. Stats for this season are:

- Harvest during the week-long youth season increased by 11%, with 2,478 birds reported.
- Harvest in the mountains increased by 5%.
- Harvest in the piedmont increased by 6%.
- Harvest in the coast increased by 14%.
- Harvest on game lands increased by 14%.
- Number of adult gobblers harvested increased by 15%.
- Number of jakes harvested decreased by 20%.
- Jakes comprised 11% of the harvest this year, a 4% decrease.



The top five counties for the number of turkeys harvested, all in southeastern North Carolina were Duplin (829), Pender (689), Bladen (652), Sampson (585) and Brunswick (571).

When considering the size of counties, the top five counties for the number of turkeys harvested per square mile were Franklin, Duplin, Northampton, Caswell and Vance.

Turkey harvest in North Carolina is somewhat different than several other southeastern states, where turkey harvest peaked several years ago and has now declined somewhat in recent years. North Carolina's record harvests are largely be-

ing driven by increases in the southeastern part of the state.

Wild Turkey Ecology research

wild turkey reproduction that was observed in 2021.

Commission biologists continue to closely monitor wild turkey harvest and reproduction across the state and have initiated several special research projects in recent years. One project investigated Gobbling Chronology across the state, providing a detailed picture of when gobbling peaks in each region. Currently, the Commission is involved in an ongoing

project, in cooperation with North Carolina State University, the National Wild Turkey Federation and Louisiana State University.

This project will be completed this year and will provide foundational information about turkey nesting, survival, predation, hunter harvest and many other critical pieces of information. The information will help the Commission make the best decisions in conserving and managing wild turkey populations and habitat.

For additional turkey harvest information, including harvest numbers by county, game land, season and weapon type, read the summaries here under the Harvest Reports tab. The agency posts annual harvest summaries on its website, for all game species. For more information, visit the wild turkey page.

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Josh Watts after working hard for his successful hunt near Chadbourn



Jackson Duncan with his first buck from the woods of Hallsboro in December



Lance Strickland killed this turkey on youth day with his dad and friends.

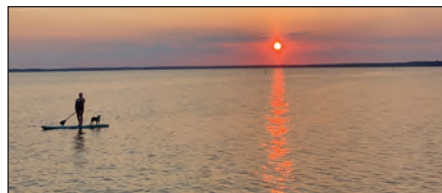
Cayden Stocks fishing in Columbus County



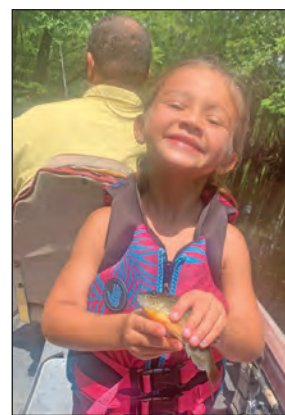
Brooks McLean harvested this turkey at Lake Waccamaw. Brooks is the grandson of the late Milton McLean, a retired Wildlife officer.



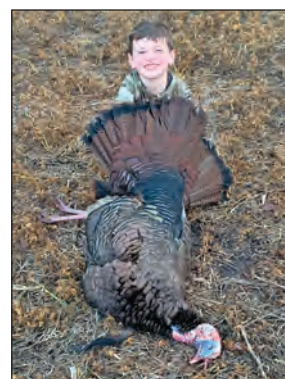
Tylee Griffin with her horse, Abe, at home



Paisley Brewer riding her paddle board with her dog Saylor on Lake Waccamaw



Scottlyn Moore during Brown's Outdoor Kids fishing tournament



Davis Strickland and his daddy went on an early morning hunt and got Davis' first turkey.



Everleigh Lee having an amazing time at the new Columbus County Parks and Rec playground at the Fitness Park in Whiteville



Major Lee enjoying relaxing time on a hot summer day out on the Waccamaw River



Parker and Hadley Owens wait out the rain at Lake Waccamaw State Park.

Wild places

Continued from page 10

forest and African savannah than North Carolina," said Tanya Poole, special initiatives coordinator with the Wildlife Commission. "Place-based education is critical to supporting students who will one day make decisions that impact local wildlife and natural resources."

The book focuses on the three geographic regions of North Carolina and highlights the three to four ecosystems within each region. It also includes maritime ecosystems.

For elementary education, "North Carolina WILD Places: A Closer Look" can be used to address science content such as

communities, life cycles, adaptations and habitats. For middle and high school education, the book also addresses concepts like energy transfer, human impacts on the environment and the interdependence of living organisms.

Multiple generations of wildlife professionals collaborated to write the book, and it's illustrated by Anne Marshall Runyon.

Educators can download a PDF copy of the book at ncwildlife.org/educator. Many other educational resources are available on the agency website, including short videos, lesson plans, wildlife profiles and additional resources on North Carolina wildlife and habitats.

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Seven hiking trails to explore in eastern North Carolina

A trip to the North Carolina coast isn't just about swimming and sunbathing. You can also experience rare ecosystems by heading down one of several hiking trails.

Kent Mitchell Nature Trail Bald Head Island

According to conservationists, Bald Head Island's 800 acres of mature maritime forest are the finest remaining example of this threatened coastal ecosystem in the state. Some of the massive trees here took root 300 years ago. The half-mile Kent Mitchell Nature Trail provides a glimpse of local wildlife including woodpeckers, otters and alligators. Bald Head

is nationally recognized for the relatively high amount of active nesting by endangered loggerhead turtles. You can only get to the island by ferry, which leaves from Southport. Once on Bald Head, the only modes of transportation are golf carts, bicycles and your own two feet.

Currituck Banks National Estuarine Reserve Corolla

The first third of a mile of your hike at Currituck Banks National Estuarine Reserve begins on a boardwalk but the hike finishes on 1.5 miles of primitive trails that wind

Continued on page 14



Croatan National Forest

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Seven trails

Continued from page 13

through a maritime forest of loblolly pine, longleaf pine, American beech and live oak and ends at Currituck Sound. If you head to the beach side of the reserve, you'll have a chance at seeing a wild horse.

Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge

Rodanthe

Many consider the half-mile, handicap-accessible North Pond Trail to be the best for viewing wildlife in the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. State wildlife agencies plant large areas here with food for migrating and native waterfowl, and more than 365 species of birds have been identified at the refuge. The trail ends at a two-story observation tower. Climb it and you can look out over ocean beach, sand dunes, ponds and salt flats and marshes. The northernmost 13 miles of Hatteras Island make up the refuge.

Croatan National Forest

Havelock

Located south of New Bern, Croatan National Forest looks more like it should be in the mountains rather than the coast. Oaks, hickories and beech trees line the half-mile Island Creek Trail. Farther down the trail you'll see tupelos and cypress trees, complete with Spanish moss, in an area that was once heavily logged. Follow the signs and associated interpretive information to unlock the significance of this area.

Nags Head Ecological Preserve

Kill Devil Hills

According to The Nature Conservancy, the combination of maritime swamp and maritime deciduous forests that you'll find at Nags Head Ecological Preserve exists in just a few places in the world. The Sweet Gum Swamp Trail will take you across a number of sand ridges. You'll hike through a mixed forest of beeches, hickories, hollies, southern red oaks and

loblolly pines — some of which are more than 300 years old. Deer, otters and egrets are often encountered along the trail.

Lake Waccamaw State Park

Lake Waccamaw

Set off on the Lake Trail at Lake Waccamaw State Park, which begins at the visitor center and follows the lakeshore to the Waccamaw River; and you'll experience something scientists can't explain. The lake is known as a Carolina bay, a small elliptical lake that receives water only from runoff, and no one is sure

how it formed. The trail passes through a variety of ecosystems during its 5-mile course. Marked by blue blazes, Lake Trail cuts through a pine forest, past one of the oldest stands of cypress trees in the state, under towering hickory trees and alongside aquatic grass beds that are home to fish. The Sand Ridge Nature Trail is a 0.75-mile loop that begins and ends near the picnic area. Or try the Pine Woods Trail: It winds from the picnic area to the visitor center, giving you a view of the park's unique plants including Venus flytraps.

Cliffs of the Neuse State Park

Seven Springs

You'll get some great views and a few history lessons when you set off on the trails at Cliffs of the Neuse State Park. Each of the four trails is less than a mile long, allowing you to walk them all in one visit. One trail will take you to creeks that were used in the production of moonshine and to power mills that ground cornmeal. You'll have perfect views of the Neuse River on the trails that wind through oaks, dogwoods and other trees dripping with Spanish moss.



Cliffs of the Neuse State Park



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See an Armadillo in North Carolina?

The Wildlife Commission wants to know

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission is asking the public to report any sightings of nine-banded armadillos to help Commission biologists determine their range expansion in the Tar Heel state.

If you observe an armadillo in the wild, please participate in the NC Armadillo project by uploading and sharing your photos or download the iNaturalist app, available for iPhone and Android.

Another option for reporting an observation is by emailing armadillo@ncwildlife.org and including:

- A photo of the armadillo (if available)
- When it was observed (date and time)
- The location where it was observed (GPS coordinates are best, but a detailed location description is acceptable)

Armadillos lack thick insulation and must dig for most foods. Freezing conditions can cause them to starve or freeze to death, so mild winter temperature conditions are ideal for them. Given that North Carolina is experiencing fewer long stretches of below-freezing weather, armadillos are expanding northward.

“Whether armadillos continue spreading beyond their current range will be largely determined by climate,” according to Colleen Olfenbuttel, the Commission’s black bear and furbearer biologist. “The number of counties with confirmed observations



is 28, stretching from Cherokee to Dare counties. This makes it likely the armadillo is expand-

ing its range naturally throughout North Carolina, rather than being helped by human

page.

— Contributed by N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission

intervention.”

Native to Central and South America, armadillos have gradually expanded their range into the southeastern United States. In 2007, the agency received the first confirmed sighting of a nine-banded armadillo in Macon County, and in the last 16 years it has received more than 898 reports in 70 counties.

Learn more by reading the Commission’s armadillo species profile, the 2022 armadillo observation report, and the armadillo web-



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A man with a beard, wearing a camouflage jacket and pants, is sitting in the driver's seat of a Landmaster UTV. The UTV is parked in a field of tall grass with trees in the background. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The UTV has a roll-over protection structure, a front rack, and a rear cargo bed. The brand name 'LANDMASTER' is visible on the side of the vehicle.

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