

Once Upon a Time in the

WILDERNESS

Wild things you say you saw

Lots of you have seen something strange and wild, because we received plenty of reports on the theme, “We actually saw a wild . . .” Thanks to everyone who submitted one. You can see more at www.carolinacountry.com

The sightings amazed or scared you or both. Some were hilarious, like the “wild attorneys” spotted somewhere in the marshes near Duck. Others were almost unbelievable (a few are below). But you described all of them by first recognizing and appreciating the environment where you saw them, which was wilderness in most cases. Let’s make sure there always will be North Carolina wilderness where generations of grandchildren can see something amazing.

Next month we’ll publish your candidates for the finest North Carolina food specialty. For the remaining themes of our series, see page 16.

— Michael E.C. Gery

Wild boar in Wake County

I actually saw two wild boar in 1997 in Wake County. It was summer and I was coming home from work on a quiet Sunday morning. My routine trip became not-so-routine when I came over the crest of a hill near the Falls Lake reservoir. There in the road — and taking up the entire road — were two wild boar, tusks and all. They appeared to be fighting and apparently I was not invited. I had little reaction time going 55 mph, so all I could do was slam the brakes on my pickup and bounce off the road in the grass to avoid them. One ran off and the other one spun around to challenge me. I bounced back onto the road and kept on going and have not seen any more boar to this day.

People are amazed that such a wild animal could be so close to Raleigh, but remember that the Falls Lake area is bordered by thousands of acres of protected forest land. Who knows what other critters are living in them?

*Terry Streit
Wake Forest
Wake EMC*

Golden eagle in Ashe County

We love to hike when at my in-laws’ place near Mt. Jefferson. During excursions we have seen deer, rabbits, wild turkeys and, unfortunately, a few copperhead snakes. Our most amazing sighting occurred when we hiked a nearby mountain that did not have trails. My in-laws, who had hiked there before, described a heart-shaped lake and an old home site surrounded by orchards. We climbed up the side of this steep mountain, going straight for the top instead of at an angle. When we reached the top, we were trying to get our breath when a huge bird scampered out of nearby bush and took to the sky. The copper-brown bird had a wingspan of at least 4 feet. We had no idea what it was, but it was majestic.

Later, when I visited the Carolina Raptor Center in Charlotte, a worker told me that the bird we had seen was probably a golden eagle. The mountain we had climbed had rock outcroppings on the top where the birds sometimes nest.

Now, when we sit on the deck in the mountains watching birds soar overhead, we always wonder if that is “our” golden eagle flying above.

*Laura M. Pennell
Concord
Union Power Cooperative*

The wild rooster of Pink Hill

We actually saw a wild rooster, or should I say a “were-rooster.” It happened last fall when my brother Ben, dad and I went to the chicken house to do some work after the lights had gone out. There was a very large, bright full moon that night, and the moon had just come up over the tops of the trees. Ben had opened the large doors to the chicken house for us to get in with the tools, when all of a sudden we heard a pounding sound coming from down inside the chicken house, growing louder and getting closer.

We turned to see what was making the noise when we saw a rooster come flying past us. It landed on the table we used to put the egg trays on. This rooster looked at the moon, threw back his head and let out a noise like I have never heard in all my years on this earth. It was not a crow like normal roosters make, it was more like a scream.

That rooster then flew down off the table and ran straight into the woods, with us trying to catch it. As it ran into the woods, it turned its head around, looked at us, and stretching its left wing out behind him, waving at us as if to say, “See ya,” and he was gone.

We have not seen head nor feathers of him since. But sometimes, when the moon is full, we hear a sound coming from the swamp that sounds like that scream we heard from the “were-chicken.”

*John Lee
Pink Hill
Tri-County EMC*

A bear at lunch

About 10 years ago when I still raised beef cattle, I went to the woods after burying a dead calf. A huge, wild paw print on top of fresh-dug dirt caught my eye. I gave a delicate probe with a stick so as not to disturb the grave, and found that part of my dead calf was under the loose dirt.

Back at the house, I phoned Animal Control, who called the Wildlife Commission in Raleigh. When the game warden came, we drove to the woods. I noticed when he got out he left his pickup door wide open. His eyes darted from left to right. He examined the grave in a hurry and said, “Come on.”

We got back into his truck like two darts. “Definitely a large bear,” he said. “Do not bother that grave. You never know when a bear is



The owl in Chocowinity

We saw this great horned owl in my garden in Longpoint Landing.

*Nancy Goodrich
Chocowinity
Tideland EMC*

close by guarding his food supply, and he will fight for his food.”

I let the bear have the calf.

*Marvin Beaman
Mount Olive
Tri-County EMC*

Wild women in Burke County

My husband in his youthful years enjoyed camping and hiking. He would often go camping to Short Off Mountain in western Burke County. He would tease me and say that there were “wild women” that ran through the woods. Of course, I did not believe a word of this.

He invited me to go along with him on one of those outings. After a long, tiring climb up the mountain we set up camp and hiked off to get water from a nearby stream. We had just returned to camp and began cooking our supper when I looked up to see the roughest, most rugged, wildest-looking female coming our way with a backpack slung over her shoulders. She passed by, spoke pleasantly and headed off in the direction of the stream. My husband then turned to me and said, “I told you there were wild women in these woods.”

*Melody May
Morganton
Rutherford EMC*

Bottlenose dolphins close up

During November 2002, my husband and I went fishing out of Shallotte Inlet. It was a beautiful warm day, and the water was calm. On the way out, my husband noticed something hitting the top of the water and we stopped, thinking we had found a school of kings. It was a huge pod of bottlenose dolphins, and they headed straight for our boat. We were surrounded by dolphins! They were very intent on looking us over and playing. They were dark gray on top, tapering to

continued on p. 16

spots on their sides, with white bellies. They were gorgeous and huge!

I lay flat on the front of our boat and watched five of them as they swam in the bow wake. They would rock onto their sides and look up at me. I was in heaven! We even saw a mother and baby. The water was so clear you could see them rocket right across the bow of the boat. This went on for about 15 minutes before they tired of us and left.

Never in all the years we've been fishing have we seen dolphins do this. I hope that I get to see these magnificent creatures again and have them play with us.

*Robin D. Moore
Winston-Salem
EnergyUnited*

Bald eagle in Fountaintown

It was a dreary November morning with fog and drizzle. My husband, Kenny, and I were getting ready to go to work. Suddenly my cousin pulled up in the yard. He works at night and was just getting home. I opened up the door and he said, "Lisa get your



camera, there's a bald eagle at the end of the road."

I thought he was pulling my leg, but he assured me he was serious. I grabbed my camera, and Kenny and I jumped in his truck. Sure enough, sitting in a tree behind the little church at the end of our road was a bald eagle. I couldn't believe my eyes. I have never seen a bald eagle except on TV, and here was one in Fountaintown.

I rolled the truck window down and braced my camera on the door. I was hoping I could get a picture, even in the drizzle. Kenny decided to try and get closer for a better picture, but as soon as he opened the truck door the eagle took flight. I could not believe the wingspan. It was the most magnificent bird I have ever seen.

To see our national bird in the wild gave me chill bumps. We followed in the direction he flew and saw him again much closer up. Once again, when we opened the truck door he flew off. We haven't seen him since, but I will never forget that morning.

*Lisa Maready
Chinquapin
Four County EMC*

Red fox in Rockingham County

It is not unusual to see wild animals frequently here in rural Rockingham County. White-tailed deer, wild turkey, rabbit, possum and many others make an appearance from time to time.

For the last several years, we have had a special visitor who comes around mostly in the warmer months:



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Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

JULY 2003

"Why I Went Back to School"

What was your most meaningful adult education experience?

Deadline: May 15

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True, or not so true.

Deadline: June 15

SEPTEMBER 2003

"My Favorite Photo"

Our annual photo gallery of North Carolina people and places.

Deadline: July 15

OCTOBER 2003

"Why I Like My Electric Cooperative"

Is a cooperative different than other utilities?

Deadline: August 15

NOVEMBER 2003

"The Finest Neighbor I Ever Knew"

Tell us why and send a photo.

Deadline: Sept. 15

DECEMBER 2003

"How to Live a Long and Happy Life"

Do you know an older person who sets a good example for staying healthy and happy? Send a photo, too.

Deadline: Oct. 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. Only one entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mail or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616. Or by e-mail: carolina.country@ncemcs.com. Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com

a red fox. We have a habit of throwing food scraps from the table near the edge of the garden, which of course attracts animals. Our little friend has grown quite bold in coming for an occasional twilight dinner. She will come to eat even if we are outside relaxing or doing yard work. In fact, our two boys and their friends can play basketball around the corner of the garage, 40 feet away, and she will not pass up a meal. She does keep a watchful eye, however, for anyone getting too close for comfort. When that happens, our fox will grab a slice of bread and head for home.

*Robert Downs
Stoneville
EnergyUnited*

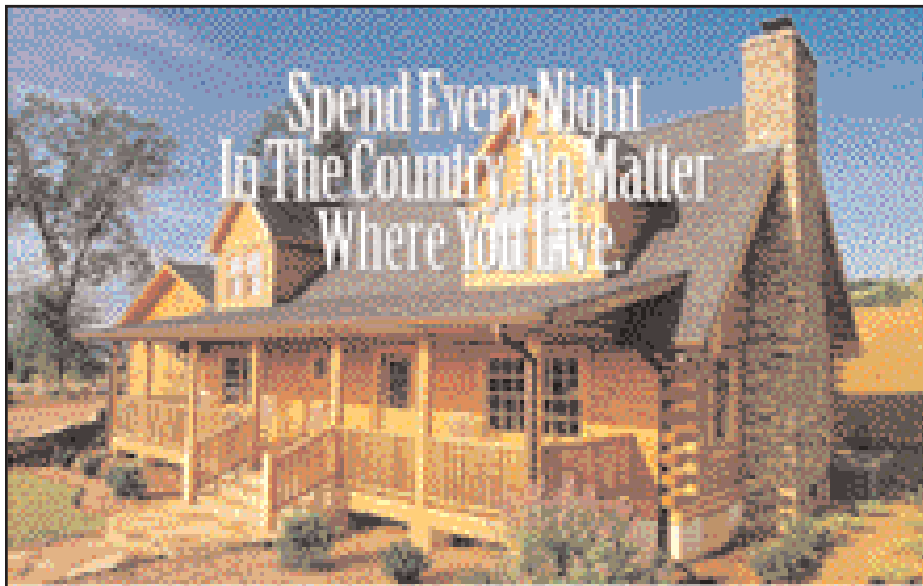
Big bear near East Lake

My husband and I have always enjoyed nature. No matter how many times we see Mother Nature's wildlife it still amazes us.

One day we decided to take a relaxing ride on our four-wheeler. We were riding slowly down a dirt road, enjoying the scenery, when we heard rustling in the bushes next to us. Hearing the noise, we both looked back. I yelled to my husband, "It's a bear!"

He shifted the four-wheeler to gain more speed. To my surprise the bear began to run about six feet beside us. Frightened of what the bear would do, I pulled my leg tight to the four-wheeler. We started laughing because in the desperate attempt to keep my leg in, I caught a cramp. Though we were laughing, we were scared. Our adrenaline was pumping from being so close to such a large animal. It followed us for about 15 yards and then it ducked back into the woods. My husband kept up the same speed as we road toward home in silence.

*Linda Cahoon
East Lake
Tideland EMC*



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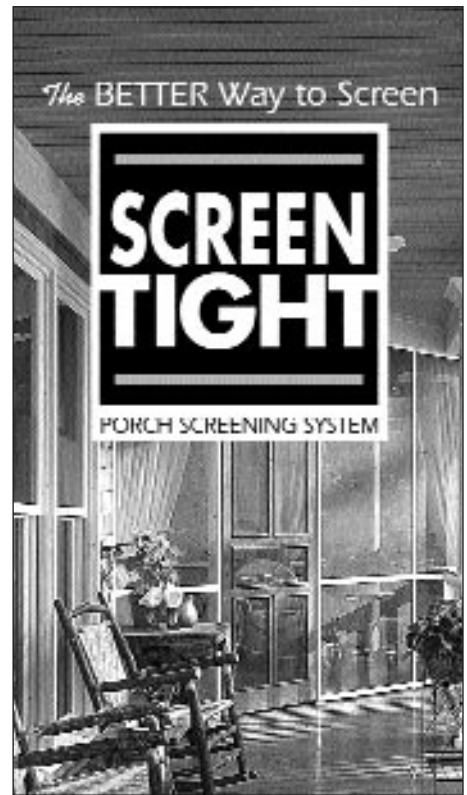
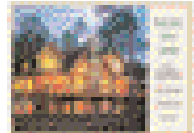


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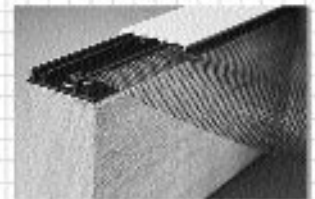


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