THE HOLIDAY ISSUE

GO LOCAL BUYING GUIDE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

WILD & MERRY CELEBRATE WITH LOCAL WILD THINGS

RETHINKING THE WHOLE NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION DEAL

NC COASTAL FEDERATION: FARMLAND RETURNS TO WETLANDS

CAROLUS: LOCAL SURF-INSPIRED CLOTHING
HISTORY in Plain Sight

BY NATALIE P. TAYLOR

Next to the railroad tracks that run along Arendell Street in Morehead City is another reminder of the rich and exciting history of the Crystal Coast. At 26th Avenue, just before the entrance to the Atlantic Beach Causeway, is a sign that is part of the North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program, and it is marker C-91 Fort Macon. According to the marker, Fort Macon was built in 1826-1834 to protect the Beaufort Inlet. Preserved as a state park, the fort boasts year round activities, beach access and amenities, nature trails, no parking fees and a visitors center.

On a visit to the fort, you can wander the seemingly hidden passageways in the pentagonal fort. Large rooms branch off from the courtyard parade ground—at first glance, they seem innocuous. Simple brick-lined rooms. But venture inside and you will find that interior passageways connect the rooms in a surprising circular path. While exploring the dank cement passageways, it is easy to imagine the many snarling rats as parts of a prison or as barracks as they were used during times of war.

If you have ever wondered what soldiers ate or what they wore, all of this information and more is available in carefully constructed displays in the now preserved fort. The unique interior design of Fort Macon allows you to visit the interior and then walk along the grassy roof of the structure.

The courtyard of Fort Macon is an interesting place. It is the scene for many events, including the Summer Concert Series. At the courtyard’s edge is a Hot Shot furnace, a small and seemingly innocuous structure that, when used, could heat cannonballs to temperatures of 1,077 degrees. These super-heated cannonballs could set ships ablaze with impact.

Scrolling along the grassy ramparts of the fort, one can imagine the blast of a cannon, the tuft of smoke. Imagine looking out at the ocean on encroaching ships and try to envision that a cannonball ten inches in diameter could be fired up to three miles! The cannons themselves were large and extremely heavy. The largest of the cannons at Fort Macon was a Columbiad. It was ten feet long, two-and-a-half feet around and weighed in at an arduous 15,998 pounds.

Cannons were used extensively in the Spanish-American War and also as protection against pirates such as the infamous Blackbeard. In the War Between the States...

TERRAPINS WERE ONCE HIGHLY PRIZED FOR THEIR MEAT, AND OVERHARVESTING CAUSED A SEVERE DECLINE IN THEIR NUMBERS.

In order to learn as much as possible about these turtles to help protect them, NCSU-Center for Marine Sciences and Technology (CMAST) veterinarians and staff teamed up with Lori Lester, doctoral candidate (Duke University) and Wendy Dow-Pinck, doctoral candidate (Duke University), to investigate the hearing ability of diamondback terrapins. Lori’s focus of study is the effects of boats on terrapins. She works with her advisor, Dr. Harold Avery, mainly in Barnegat Bay, New Jersey, where he has a mark-recapture study looking at the population ecology of the terrapins in that area. Many of the terrapins that are captured exhibit evidence of boat strike injuries. Lori’s research addresses whether terrapins can hear boats and whether they behaviorally respond to the sound of boat engines. Wendy studies the hearing sensitivity of sea turtles in an underwater environment. Her experience testing the hearing capabilities of various sea turtle species underwater was key in helping to organize and implement this collaborative project.

In marsh habitats, turbidity, or low visibility, can cause turtles to rely more on their hearing to sense their surroundings, find food, locate mates, and avoid predators. Studies have been done to learn the hearing sensitivity of diamondback terrapins in air; however, it has never been studied underwater. The hearing sensitivity of the terrapins was tested using auditory evoked potential (AEP) measurement techniques, creating a series of sounds at various frequencies and measuring the brain’s response resulting in an audiogram. This is similar to how the hearing sensitivity of a human baby is tested.

The results of this particular study will be the first measure of underwater hearing sensitivity of terrapins and allow these to be compared to in-air hearing abilities. The results will also show evidence of whether or not terrapins are able to hear the frequencies that are produced by boat motors. This information can be used to further investigate ways to deter terrapins from fisheries and boat interactions.

Terrapins face many challenges interfacing with humans; therefore, other studies can also help us learn about the biology of these animals and protect them in their natural environment. Commercial and recreational crab pots are also serious problems for terrapins. Attracted by the blue crabs, one of their favorite foods, terrapins crawl into the pots and become trapped. Because they are air breathers, they drown when they are unable to get out. Researchers are studying the effects of Terrapin Excluder Devices (TEDs) that can be added to crab pots to decrease terrapin mortalities.

Terrapins were once highly prized for their meat, and overharvesting caused a severe decline in their numbers.

CONTINUED ON P20
ties and embedded itself in the brick walls of the fort. That shell casing is still visible. There is plenty to learn at Fort Macon, and plenty more stories. If you are curious about the shot in the wall, or if you just want to know more about life during the War Between the States, visit www.ncparks.gov and search for Fort Macon to find activities, events and other park information. Friends of Fort Macon are working to acquire replicas of the cannons that were used in the 1800s to enhance the authentic feel of the ramparts of the fort. For more information, visit www.clis.com/friends. And as always, join me next time as I continue to explore the North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program.

DID YOU KNOW THAT FORT MACON AND OTHER FAR AT ONE TIME PROTECTED A PLACE CALLED CAROLINA CITY?

TERRAPINS CONTINUED FROM P17

decline in their numbers. These appealing animals also are injured each year by automobiles while attempting to cross roads to lay eggs. Habitat destruction and pollution are even greater threats.

If you find a terrapin crossing a road or highway, relocate it to a marsh area if possible. And remember, keeping waterways and shorelines free of litter and pollution helps all coastal marine life.

For more information about projects and research at CMAST, visit www.cmast.ncsu.edu.

TERRAPIN WITH BOAT STRIKE INJURY.
PHOTO BY LORI LESTER

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_These are just suggestions. Let us know if there is something Special we can do for you. We will be open for pickups until noon on Christmas Eve._