

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

We Have These Freedoms

This past Independence Day, Sunday July 4, 2021 did you think about our Declaration of Independence and our enshrinement of those freedoms and liberties via the ENUMERATIONS of our Bill of Rights (the original ten)? We Americans have almost exclusive rights not appreciated by most any other nation in mankind's history. Freedoms, liberties and equal OPPORTUNITIES. We can disagree with each other, we can disagree with government. We can make mistakes and have opportunities to correct our lives and change course for a better outcome. So, before I continue down my meager attempt to express what we have to be thankful for this Independence Day and indeed every day, I need to get to the point.

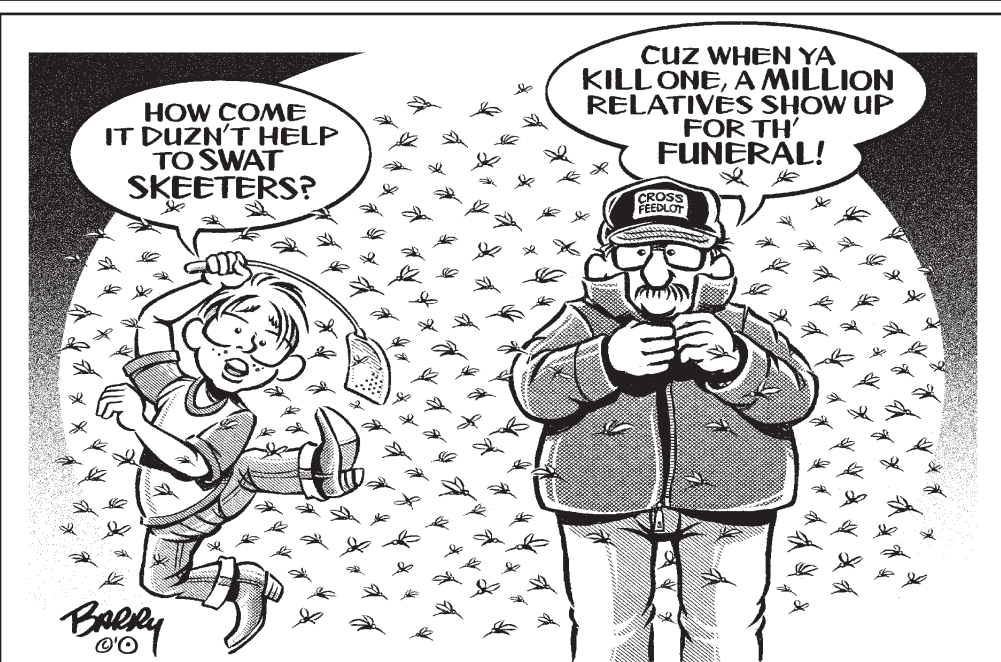
The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
 USCG Veteran



How does anyone explain why this day July 4, officially commemorating our nation's birth since 1776 has remained intact for almost 250 years? The question is simple, as is the answer and neither is rhetorical. We owe our freedoms and liberties as maintained by those who have served in the various uniforms of our military services, exclusively to those very men and women. There are untold numbers of those who suffered and made the ultimate sacrifice, laying down their lives for a dream far greater than themselves. Those wounded in combat and maimed for life certainly didn't desire to be injured, but they did not fail our Sovereign Republic. How about those clerk typists, quartermasters, drivers, sailors, Marines, grunts, store keepers, today's technicians, lower ranked personnel, officers, et al, rear line echelon folks? All, each and every one of them ever since others, just like them overthrew the choke hold of the British royalty upon a people who passionately desired freedom enough to fight for the same Blessings we often take for granted today.

Those who Honorably served in our Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and our US Coast Guard stood watch for what we should celebrate every day of the year. Add in our domestic "Thin Blue Line" our various police forces, and First responders who rush into the violence, danger, or flames while everyone else runs away. We OWE them all Thanks, Respect, Kudos for keeping our values and traditions intact. It is not politicians, elitists, others of those classes who also have their rights guaranteed and held intact by those who Honorably wear and have worn those uniforms.

As well as our many Veterans amongst us who have done their duty Honorably and stand fast beside our flag and nation, so that no matter how or what many may disagree upon, we will forever have those freedoms to do so. Unavailable to the vast majority of those in other countries.



Cicada Damage

As the summer begins to wind up and the temperatures become hotter, folks around the county are beginning to take notice of our dense green foliage this year, which is mostly due to all of the rain we've had this last winter and spring. It has made the moisture content in the soil easier for the plants to get at, and therefore they are taking full advantage of it.

Lately though, concerned citizens have been bringing in pictures, descriptions and even whole branches of trees and shrubs whose ends are dead or dying.

Most reports are on the western end of Union and Towns, around places like Jones Creek, 325, and Loving Road. The most frequently asked about (and most noticeably damaged) species of plants are the White Oak trees, but there are also less frequent reports on other oak species, some apple and pear trees, and blueberry plants in particular.

UGA extension
Watching and Working
 Jacob Williams



Nature's Bulldozers

Feral or wild hogs are not something most of us usually think about until one morning we look out at our manicured yard or hay field and see that and it looks like a bulldozer had moved across it during the night.

Wild boar, feral swine and Eurasian boar are members of the same biological species – *Sus scrofa*. Pigs, or swine, were first introduced to North America by Spanish explorers in the early 16th century. Some escaped; some were released intentionally. The actions of these explorers led to the number of wild pigs now present in America. Pigs were initially favored by early North American settlers because of their lack of required care. Settlers raised pigs with free-range practices for centuries.

In the early 1900s, the introduction of the Eurasian species of boar for sport hunting resulted in this group's interbreeding with free-ranging domestic pigs ready present. Due to the cross breeding that occurred and unique features of pig biology, the pig population expanded considerably. This caused immeasurable economic and ecologic damage across the United States. Due to the extent of interbreeding between these two subspecies, the Eurasian boar and free-ranging domestic pig are now considered by most experts to be the same animal – the wild pig.

Unclaimed free-ranging populations of wild pigs quickly increased and spread throughout the United States. Major contributing factors for the success of wild pigs are short reproductive cycles and large litter sizes. Since these animals descended from domestic stock, they were selected for their high reproductive potential.

Wild pigs are the most fertile large mammal in existence. They have a gestation period of 112- 115 days, or about 16 weeks. Females can begin reproducing at 6 months of age. A typical sow will give birth to two litters per year consisting of four to six piglets per litter. Under the right conditions, a sow may produce up to 13 piglets in one litter. Doing the math, one sow can contribute over 50 pigs per year when her offspring start multiplying, because she can produce four to 13 piglets every 115 days!

While large litters were an ideal trait in a domestic hog, this characteristic has persisted in feral strains and is a major cofactor in the explosion of the wild pig population. Wild pigs travel in groups called sounders consisting of two or three related adult females and their offspring. Males, especially larger boars, are often solitary. It is common for members of a sounder to exhibit cooperative nursing, during which piglets from all the females will suckle from one sow while the others stand watch for predators. This group behavior can be considered a contributing factor to low mortality rates of the wild pig.

Another trait that has made wild pigs so successful is the ability to utilize a variety of habitats. These animals are highly adaptable and inhabit a variety of habitats, including mountainous areas, forests, salt and brackish swamps and marshes, old growth pinelands, semiarid brush habitats, as well as many other habitat types. Since their introduction to North America, wild pigs have colonized more than 40 of the 50 states.

Wild pig populations are large and growing; their populations are present at uncontrollable densities in some areas, especially in the Southeastern states. In addition to other factors, the wide-ranging diet of wild pigs has helped make this species incredibly adaptable.

Wild pigs are opportunistic omnivores. They will consume almost anything from agriculture crops and mast crops, such as acorns and fruit, to grub worms and dead animals, also known as carrion. Though not considered active predators, they will consume fawns, livestock, and the eggs of ground nesting birds in addition to vegetation, agricultural crops, and other food items. The roots of a vegetative food source will often be consumed when the leafy portion or fruits/nuts of the plant are no longer available.

During mast years, acorns, beach nuts, pecans, and soft fruit are consumed throughout the fall and winter. Earthworms make up approximately 50% to 90% of the carnivorous portion of a wild pig's diet, depending on availability and the region inhabited.

With their tough snouts and over-developed neck muscles, wild pigs can be considered "nature's bulldozers." The most common form of damage caused by pigs is ground disruption because of hunting for food. Destruction of crops, yards of homeowners, and natural habitat is of concern, and damage of a great magnitude can be created overnight.

Wild hogs live all around us on higher elevations as well as in the valleys. Several years ago on my farm, wild hogs destroyed the last acre of corn that the bears had left for later, and while they were at it, they destroyed the church cemetery all in one weekend. Wild hogs are not just wreaking havoc in farmers' fields, but also in homeowners' yards in some of the communities right here in the mountains, so nothing is safe from these ravaging gangs of nature's bulldozers.

For more information on feral hogs, contact Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D at info.ccrd@gmail.com.

RC&D
Frank Riley
 Executive Director



No instances we have seen point to a disease, lack of nutrients, or worm damage, as the symptoms can be similar and can easily be mistaken for these problems.

Instead, we can safely say that these injuries are caused by the 17-year cycle of the cicada, commonly known as Brood X.

This damage occurs when the mature female cicada "oviposits", or lays her eggs, between the bark and cambium layer of wood in the tree's branch. As the larvae grow inside the branch, they feed on some of the sap that would usually flow to and from the leaves of the plant.

In turn, as they grow, they get large enough to break out of the stem and subsequently fall to the ground, burrow near the tree, feed in small amounts on the root system "until next time", and the cycle repeats.

The damage often looks unsightly to homeowners and passers-by, but in terms of a 30 plus year old white oak, the damage is minimal, especially considering the great start to the year they had. Symptoms will not spread to other trees or even other parts of the same tree, as it is a one-time injury caused by the cicada.

Adversely affected foliage and branches generally fall off after a good thunderstorm once the cicada larvae hatch and fall out. A sure-fire way to tell if it is in fact cicada damage is found when the underside of the branch looks like it was hit with a cheese grater. It will have periodic tears about 1/2 of an inch long with open ends where the larvae escaped; usually around 12 to 36 inches back from the tip of the branch. Within 6 inches or so back from the tear closest to the trunk, branches will usually have very little or no damage.

Thank you all who reported this damage, and care for the place you live and work enough to do so. If you have any questions or concerns about this or any other agriculture or natural resource issue, please feel welcome to contact your County Extension Office.

Letters to The Editor

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Dear Editor,
 These 3 words have long been a standard in saving the environment. Here's a chance for you plant-loving people to help. Nurseries in Hayesville, NC, has thousands of pots that will be free to a good home! They have 5 gal, 3 gal and 1 gal pots that they would love to see recycled. If you are interested, or know anyone who is interested please call at 828-389-8282 or go to the nursery to find out where the pots are stored. Thanks.
Joan Crothers

Negative Impact

Dear Editor,
 One of the important issues that President Trump ran on during the 2020 presidential campaign was law and order. He kept warning us that the Democratic mayors and governors would be weak on crime and there would be extreme consequences and he was exactly right. And during the campaign Biden did not stand up to these liberal politicians of his own party. As a result we now have massive human carnage going on. We have a murder spree going on in our country mostly in Democratic run cities where there were enormous votes for Joe Biden. And now the media is supporting a propaganda campaign and joining forces with Democratic leaders to blame Republicans for the rise in crime. Not the defund the cops movement, not the reimagining police movement and not the frivolous law suits against the cops movement.

No, according to the Democrats, the Republicans are responsible for the increase in crime because they did not support the American Rescue Plan of multi-trillions of dollars. It's all the Republicans fault don't you know. So the Dems would have you believe that they now want to give this money to cities that slashed funding for the police. Before the pandemic these cities were swimming in surplus.

So do we really think that these same cities would use these new found funds to strengthen their police forces. I think not. What a bunch of sleaze balls! People are being maimed, abused and killed and this is the answer we get from the Democratic party. Under the Dems we now have increases in crime rates in the major cities, higher inflation, higher taxes, oil pipelines being shut down, higher gas prices, wide open borders, and critical race theory promoted in schools and the military. Everything the Dems touch these days has a negative impact on the American people.
Tim Groza

Refresher Course

"What do you say". Parents have been asking this question for eons to teach youngins* manners and politeness after a tyke has been granted a deed, service, or wanted/needed tangible. If you are over 18 months of age, you know the answer is thank you. Please is introduced shortly and those three words are committed to rote memory. All bets are off when The Terrible Twos strike. Kids reconnect to memory lane after returning from being wild aliens, not of this earth, to humans. Unfortunately or fortunately rote can be used out of only expectation or true gratitude. Either way it's civility.


It is not true that old dogs can't be taught new tricks. I know this from experience and that they can also exchange poor manners to acceptable ones. It just takes a heck of a lot of time to exorcise the old actions so the new can catch hold. Oh, and consistency.

"Your word is your bond" and "Say what you mean and mean what you say" are other of those phrases for phases that young people get from their elders. These are reliability and conviction lessons. They too had been committed to my memory but it seems I had almost come to the end of my rote and was left dangling recently.

There is this woman, right here in Hiawassee, to whom I have made a commitment and to whom I almost failed to deliver. She did nothing to make me feel guilty about it but she gave me the gift of feeling guilt on my own. If this makes no sense to some, I hope it does to you Shawn. My disappointment at causing you inconvenience has humbled me. Thank you. If I can't fulfill my obligation, I'll at the very least give ample notice. I guess this isn't a good time to ask about a raise. We'll give it a couple of weeks to discuss it.

*Southern US informal for youth, child, young person.
 See You Around Towns!

Around Towns
 Dale Harmon



GUEST COLUMNS

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor
 P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546
 Our email address: tcherald@windstream.net

Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should address issues of general interest, such as politics, the community, environment, school issues, etc.

Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.*

Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.

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 Deadline for the Towns County Herald is Friday by 5 PM



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Towns County Herald

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