

Don't scare the fish

By Jessica Wayne  
Staff Writer  
The Pender Post

Henry is sitting across the table as I write this column.

His hat is pulled low over his eyes leaving just his whiskers visible underneath the bill. Henry and I went on a date to the Wildlife Expo in downtown Wilmington Saturday. While I would like to say the attention we got was on my account, that simply isn't true. See, Henry is the sort of fellow who attracts attention. Besides being a 20-pound stuffed rat, he has a cute little face that children adore. Their mothers, well, not so much. It's not really fair to call Henry a rat—he normally goes by the more distinguished classification of Nutria.

Nutria are semi-aquatic rodents indigenous to South America but transported to Louisiana in the 1930s for their fur. Promoted and distributed in the 40s as a control for aquatic weeds, by the 50s reports started coming in about the damage they cause due to overgrazing of marshes. Besides being seldom seen, nutrias do reside in and around Pender County as well as throughout the eastern part of the state. Henry was part of the display for the N.C. Trappers Association at the wildlife expo. I helped decorate for this display at the request of my friend and coworker Jefferson Weaver. We attended the expo Saturday with Henry in tow and spent the day educating people on the benefits and entertainment value of trapping. No, I do not trap myself, but I love the outdoors and had a good time plundering through the duck calls, knife displays and crafts. However, what caught (and held) my attention was the fishing gear.

I am not, by nature, an extremely patient person. And while I both respect and admire hunters, I'm quite positive that pastime would not hold my attention for long.

The exception to the rule is fishing. I can sit for hours on the creek bank listening to the water running, animals scurrying and mosquitoes buzzing in my ears. I've spent a day fishing only to return home empty handed. More often than not I've come home with supper in a bucket and a grin on my face.

I have my grandpa to thank for teaching me to love fishing. He took me fishing when I was barely big enough to hold a pole. I learned to gut and scale fish standing on a five-gallon bucket. He taught me the importance of remaining still and being quiet "so we don't scare the fish." I was taught to bait my own hooks and yes, I take fish off the line myself, thank you very much.

I learned to keep a fishing pole and tackle box in the trunk in the event I run across the perfect fishing hole and happen to have (or take) a spare minute. Most of all I cherish the memories of fishing with my grandpa and the patience he taught me to exhibit at least in one area of my life, if not so much in others.

My grandpa turned 79 on Monday. He and I don't fish that much anymore, but I cherish the memories we made as some of my favorites.

Maybe I should model my behavior on that of Henry and be seldom seen and less seldom heard, just like when I'm fishing.

—Wayne is a staff writer for The Pender Post. Contact her by email at [postnews@thependerpost.com](mailto:postnews@thependerpost.com).

