

So Far, Hot Summer Of '87 Good For Tar Heel Tourist Industry

By Mary Martha Whitener
North Carolina travel officials are very positive about the 1987 travel season to date, according to an informal travel attendance survey conducted by the state Division of Travel and Tourism this month.

"We are pleased with this year's travel attendance. Last year was the best year ever; the drought last year provided many pretty days for travel. This year we've kept up with last year," said Harris Prevost, News Director for Grandfather Mountain in Linville.

Chimney Rock Park reported that attendance was considerably higher in June and that for 1987 to date, tourist attendance is up five percent from 1986.

According to Jim Ryan of the Blue Ridge Parkway, 2,346,844 tourists have visited the Blue Ridge Parkway since January, and the highest traffic count ever was reported in June of last year.

Well, I feel if the policemen would get out of their cars, stop setting in parking lots talking to one another, stay out of Fast Stops, Quick Stops, Run-ins, quit harassing the youth and start walking the street they could get the ones causing all of the disturbance instead of blaming everyone.

It seems too easy to just blame all youth because they are young. But every time I read about a young person getting killed out on the highways, out around the lake roads,

June of the year. Year to date, the Blue Ridge Parkway stands at a 5.3 percent increase in travel attendance over last year, Ryan said. Traffic at the eight N.C. Welcome Centers has increased considerably since last year. Lynne Sizemore, Director of the North Carolina Welcome Centers, reported that 671,615 tourists visited the Welcome Centers — located at the major highway interstates — in June of the year, a 10.4 percent increase from last year.

Through March, travel spending in North Carolina was up 8.4 percent compared to the first three months of last year based on sales tax receipts from hotels and motels according to Hugh Morton, Jr., State Director of Travel and Tourism.

"The index is based on the level of monthly sales by hotels, motels, and other rental accommodations."

Meanwhile, the Charlotte-based and back roads, I stop and thank God it wasn't mine.

If the Mooreville policemen and how much disturbance the youth of Mooreville are causing at night and people can't get out of parking spaces, trash on the side of the roads, and a bunch of talk on how the policeman should run all youth out of Mooreville at night.

But what really is Mooreville's future, but the youth? You want their business and money, but not them.

I really feel sorry for Mooreville's board members, it's written that you should reap what you sow. As the youth of Mooreville grow older maybe they will remember all the things Mooreville has done for them. And they may not want older people in town then.

I pray not, that is something only the Lord will know.

Some officials in the North Carolina mountains feel the abundance of snow and rainfall in the early spring could be one reason for the slight decrease in travel attendance at some mountain attractions.

The Asheville Hotel/Motel Association reported that revenues at some hotels in the area are down, based on sales tax receipts, compared to the same period last year. Lloyd Kirk said.

Attendance at the Biltmore Estate in Asheville is down 3.8 percent thus far this year, officials said. Similarly, Betty Huskins of Linville Falls, reported a slight decrease in tourist attendance to the area thus far this year.

Nevertheless, officials at attractions in the mountains remain positive about the rest of the travel season and hope that the rest of the summer will bring travel attendance back up from the slight slump it suffered due to heavier-than-normal spring snow and rainfall.

Other areas of North Carolina reported slight decreases in attendance as well, but continue to be positive about their travel season so far.

Robert L. Stern, Director of Information at Old Salem, in Winston-Salem, said that 54,429 people visited the village during the first six months of 1987, compared to 37,786 at the same time last year. However, Old Salem saw a 21.5 percent increase in the number of visitors in June when compared to June of 1986.

Captain Frank Conlon at the U.S.S. North Carolina Battleship Memorial in Wilmington reported that the number of visitors to the Battleship thus far this year stands at 34,491 compared to 37,895 in 1986, and he estimates that by the end of July attendance will be approximately one percent behind 1986 attendance figures.

"However," said Conlon, "last year was the best year since 1978. This year is a good year. We have a new Visitor Center this year and better things to offer. Visitors to the Battleship this season seem to be having a good time."

Attendance at the North Carolina Zoo in Asheboro is also down slightly from last year. According to Elsie Gellman Light of the zoo's marketing office, losses in attendance this year are directly tied to the bad weather in the early winter and spring. 72,564 people visited the park in June, setting an all-time record for attendance and revenue, according to Light.

"We're looking for a good travel season," said Light. "We're down, but we're coming back!"

Carolina Motor Club has received more requests for information about North Carolina travel and has had more people referred to AAA from out of state this year than in 1986. Ralph Peters, President said.

On the cost, Tryon Palace in New Bern had the "best April on record" this year, according to Dabney Coddington. The two-day event is up 2.6 percent in 1987 compared to 1986. Coddington said.

Bill Williamson, General Manager at Tweetsie Railroad in Blowing Rock, said that travel attendance at Tweetsie is about even with attendance in 1986. "1986 was a great year. We've had an excellent year so far," Williamson said. "We hope it will continue."

The 50th anniversary events of America's oldest outdoor drama, "The Lost Colony," have boosted attendance at the drama three percent, said Scott Parker, Executive Director.

In Charlotte, the Charlotte Motor Speedway reports increases in crowd attendance at the five events held so far. Unofficially, according to Mel Poole, Publicity Supervisor, attendance at the Speedway is up about 10 percent from last year's figures.

Officials at Carowinds amusement park in Charlotte said they are "right on budget" for travel attendance at the park for 1987. "We are pleased with the season so far and are expecting a must better August this year," said Gary Bickett.

Jerry Lottich at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville reported that the number of guests visiting the inn so far in 1987 is about the same as in 1986, despite a five percent increase in hotel room charges. "The travel season so far has been very good and we are pleased with the number of visitors at the Grove Park Inn this year."

Some areas of North Carolina have reported decreases in attendance despite the overall increase in travel attendance throughout the state for 1987.

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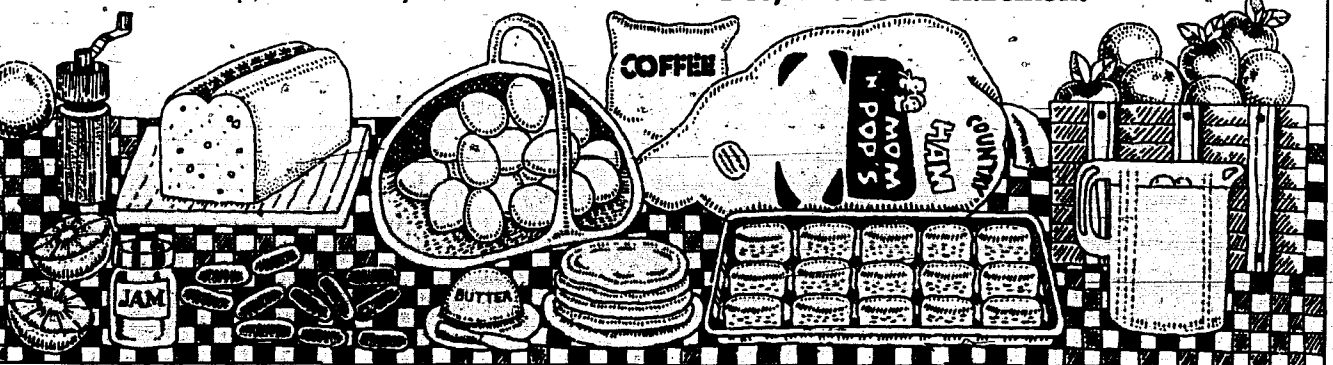
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Great-Grandchildren Of Mrs. Parker
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Rare Birds

Hatched At

N.C. Zoo

The North Carolina Zoological Park in Asheboro recently hatched three rare species of birds — all firsts for the state zoo. The new hatchlings include a grey-headed kingfisher, two scarlet ibis and three black korbans.

In mid-June, the N.C. Zoo became only the second zoo in America to successfully hatch a grey-headed kingfisher, said Ron Morris, the N.C. Zoo's curator of birds. A native of Africa, the grey-headed kingfisher was first successfully bred in this country several years ago by the Brookfield Zoo in Brookfield, Ill.

The N.C. Zoo obtained two pairs of the kingfishers on loan from Brookfield in December 1985. In Africa, grey-headed kingfishers inhabit the high country, usually close to water. Their nests are made in chambers at the ends of tunnels in the banks of streams or rivers.

In order to get the birds to breed in the J. Reynolds Forest Aviary at the N.C. Zoo, keepers had to construct an artificial tunnel and chamber from three-inch and eight-inch plastic pipe and insert them in the concrete wall of the wading pool on the aviary's lower level.

The tunnel and chamber pipes had to be filled with a mixture of native clay and potting soil so the birds could excavate the nesting area themselves, Morris explained. Grey-headed kingfishers are among the most beautiful of the African kingfishers, with striking red beaks, brilliant cobalt and turquoise backs and chestnut underparts. Although many members of the kingfisher family catch fish by diving beneath the water, the grey-headed species eats insects.

The R.J. Reynolds Forest Aviary saw its first hatchlings of scarlet ibis in June. A native of the coastal areas of tropical South America, the scarlet ibis is a favorite of visitors and photographers because of its brilliant scarlet plumage.

In the wild, the scarlet ibis roosts and nests in large colonies in mangrove swamps. They feed on the beaches and mudflats, picking up small marine creatures.

Morris noted that although scarlet ibis are exhibited in more than 80 U.S. zoos, only 15 were hatched in six of those zoos last year. The two recent hatchlings increase the number of scarlet ibis at the N.C. Zoo to nine.

The black korbans, also known as the white-quilled black bustard, is found throughout the coastal areas of southern and western regions of Southern Africa. About the size of American domestic fowl, the korbans inhabit a variety of terrain in the wild from coastal sand dunes to high grasslands.

The long legs and long neck of the korbans make them the only relatives of the crane. They are primarily running birds, but are capable and strong fliers.

Korbans are the Afrikaans word for "grunting cock." This phrase refers to the loud, raucous call of the bird, especially during the breeding season. The male black korbans are extremely noisy, calling in flight or when standing on elevated points. Males have conspicuous black markings on their heads and necks.

Black korbans are exhibited in about 100 zoos nationwide, according to Morris. They have been on display in the African Pavilion at the N.C. Zoo since 1984.

The first korbans to be born at the state zoo were hatched on Sept. 8. Two more were born in early July. Unlike the grey-head kingfisher and scarlet ibis, the korbans eggs were hatched in an incubator. The sexes of the zoo's new hatchlings have not yet been determined.

The N.C. Zoo is located six miles southeast of Asheboro off U.S. 220, U.S. 84 and N.C. 158. The zoo is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekends and holidays. Admission is \$3 for adults and \$1 for children 2-15 and senior citizens. The zoo is a program of the N.C. Department of Natural Resources and Community Development. For information, call (919) 879-5606.

TRIVIALITIES

1. What was the name of the orchestra on "The Sonny and Cher Comedy Hour?"
2. In what year did the show come to a halt due to the marital problems of the Bonos?
3. What was the name of Sonny Bonos' own show after the split?
4. After the divorce, Sonny and Cher reunited for "The Sonny and Cher Show." How long did this last?

5. Who was the original host of "The Hollywood Squares?"
6. In 1985, "The Match Game - Hollywood Squares Hour" was formed. Who hosted this version of "The Hollywood Squares?"
7. Who were the original regulars on "The Hollywood Squares?"
8. What was the name of the show that Sonny and Cher hosted after "The Sonny and Cher Show?"
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