

# MONTFORD

THE NEWSLETTER OF ASHEVILLE'S MOST HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD
Vol. 26 No. 03
MARCH '21



# 2021 Historic Montford Garden Tour

Here comes this year's big springtime event: the **2021 Historic Montford Garden Tour**, the community's first garden tour in 17 years. The date is Saturday, June 5, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Rain date is Sunday, June 6).

Featuring 12 distinctive Montford gardens, the all-day tour will raise funds for community initiatives that were hit hard by the cancellation of the annual Holiday Tour of Homes during covid-19 restrictions.

Tickets for the 2021 garden tour are \$25 apiece and are required for entry to the individual

gardens. For tickets, go online to <u>montford.org/garden-tour</u> or visit the Asheville Visitors Center Gift Shop at 36 Montford Ave. Any covid-related public health directives at the time will be in effect.

This year's garden tour adds a special ingredient to the mix: live musicians will be performing at many of the gardens, including bluegrass, jazz, folk, and classical styles.

The selection of gardens for the tour highlights the variety of landscapes beautifying the neighborhood. Several of the gardens grace homes that are more than 120 years old, while others are next-to-new infill properties. Some of the gardeners are long-time landscape professionals, while others have just taken up the pastime.

All the gardens show how the life of any garden

changes over time. Original owners pass away, properties get neglected in tough economic times, and then come roaring back to life when new owners inject their energy and creativity.

An original, framed 18"x24" oil painting by Montford artist Mandy Kjellstrom will be sold through a silent auction at her garden, which is also on the tour. Posters and note-

cards featuring the painting also will be available for purchase on the webpage and at the Visitors Center.

### Looking forward to seeing you there!

The 2021 Historic Montford Garden Tour Committee.







### TEMPIE AVERY MONTFORD CENTER

## **Center Update**

At this time, we are continuing to provide Monday-Friday all-day programming in partnership with Asheville City Schools (ACS). ACS provides teaching assistants in the morning as well as breakfast and lunch for the kids. We (Parks and Recreation) provide activities focusing on physical movement and socialization in the afternoons.

## PODS: Pandemic's virtual learning students get much-needed help

https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2020/10/20/pods-pandemics-virtual-learning-students-get-much-needed-help/3711013001/

Seth Jackson Manager, Tempie Avery Montford Center 253-3714, sjackson@ashevillenc.gov.



Photo Credit: Asheville Citizens-Times



# International Women's Day Monday, March 8

International Women's Day began in the early 1900s as a response to increased female activism and unrest. As women campaigned for change in the United States and across the world, the first National Women's Day was celebrated in America in February of 1909. The first International Women's Day was celebrated by Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland in 1911 after being created and voted upon at the International Conference of Working Women in Copenhagen. These early International Women's Day celebrations worked to end discrimination and focused on women's rights to work, vote, and hold public office.

Since its early roots in labor movements and women's marches, International Women's Day has grown to become a day of celebration and acknowledgment of women's achievements throughout the world. The United Nations recognizes International Women's Day as a global day dedicated to women's rights and international peace. Today, it is a day that serves to recognize the political, economic, and social achievements of women throughout the world. International Women's Day is celebrated across the world in countries such as China, Cuba, Russia, Vietnam, and Zambia with political rallies, conferences, theatre performances, parades, and gift-giving to women.

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The house at 235 Pearson, now known as the picturesque Wright Inn & Carriage House, was originally built in 1899 as the home of prominent Asheville businessman, Osella B. Wright and his wife, Levinia "Leva", and designed by noted nineteenth-century architect and plan book publisher, George F. Barber.

Osella Brent Wright was born on September 26, 1853, to Niles B. and Louisa Gregg Wright in Coal Valley Twp., Rock Island Co., IL. On December 20, 1883, "young popular farmer of Rural", Osella B. Wright married Lavinia Donaldson in Rock Island, IL. His bride Lavinia was described as "an estimable young lady" and "sister of County Clerk Donaldson". After many years of prosperity as a farmer and businessman in Rural, IL, in 1896, Osella, at the age of 43, decided to move south. The Rock Island Argus reported on May 22, 1896, that "O. B. Wright, formerly of Rural, left this morning on the steamer Pittsburg for Louisville, where he will be joined by Mrs. Wright, and they will travel extensively in the south before determining upon their future home".

The Wrights landed finally in Asheville by the end of 1896, and later, in January of 1897, they rented a new house on Montford Avenue from owner C. H. Campbell. Osella's first concern was the establishment of an



Editor's Note: This home was featured in the **2019 Montford Holiday Tour of Homes.** 

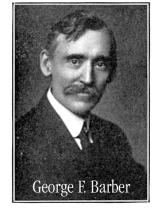
# FEATURED HOME

The history of 235 Pearson Drive

income-producing business. In January of 1898, it was announced that the Asheville Aldermen had given O. B. Wright permission "to erect a building on Patton Avenue opposite the government building". A week later it was announced that construction of the new building for "Carolina Carriage, Wagon and Harness Company", being erected at 86 Patton Avenue, was being rushed to completion as the firm "has already on hand a carload of Studebaker wagons. The new building was completed and the carriage business operating just three months later. The firm started as a co-partnership between O. B. Wright and S. A. McCandless, but in August of 1898, they dissolved the partnership with Wright becoming the sole proprietor. He correspondingly changed the name of the business to the "Carolina Carriage House".

Now with his business up and running and thriving, Wright turned his attention to building a new house, one which would be fitting for a prominent businessman of the community. In May of 1899, Osella and Leva purchased a new lot in Asheville's new "suburb" community, Montford. He chose a large lot on the southeast corner of Pearson Drive and Watauga Street. The Wrights chose the architectural firm of George F. Barber & Co. of Knoxville, TN to design their new residence.

George F. (Franklin) Barber (1854-1915), a Midwestern carpenter, architect, and publisher, practiced architecture in Knoxville, Tennessee, from 1888 to his death in 1915 and became one of the most successful architects in the



United States, largely through a mail-order blueprint business driven by published architectural catalogs and a monthly magazine. George F. Barber was the son of Lyman and Cornelia Barrett; after his father's early death, his mother moved with her children to the Fort Scott, Kansas, area, where she was living in 1860. So, George went to live with his sister, Olive Barber Barrett, where he earned his keep and perhaps some money as a farm worker to help his mother make ends meet for the younger children. By 1880 George F. Barber was married and working as a house carpenter in Fort Scott. But Barber accomplished his real goal, to become an architect, by studying construction and design books. By 1884 he had returned to DeKalb, Illinois, and was designing houses for his brother's construction company. Emulating George Palliser of Connecticut, who published one of the earliest American mail order architectural catalogues in 1876, Barber published an illustrated sampler of eighteen house designs entitled The Cottage Souvenir about 1887.

In 1888 George F. Barber moved his wife and child to Knoxville, Tennessee, because its climate better suited his health, he set up the firm of George F. Barber & Co., Architects. In 1890, with his publication of The Cottage Souvenir No. 2, A Repository of Artistic Cottage Architecture and Miscellaneous Designs, he achieved nationwide attention. The book contained fifty-nine designs estimated to cost \$500 to \$8,000 to build, along

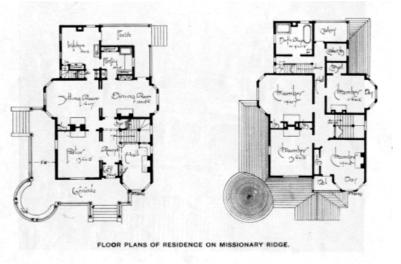
with photographs of completed houses. As with his earlier catalog, he included price-lists for the drawings and order forms to purchase sets of plans. Barber counseled his clients to negotiate slight changes to his drawings with their builders.



If major alterations were needed, the firm would provide them at additional cost. The firm also offered custom design carried out through extensive correspondence. In 1899, the year that the Wrights built their Asheville home, George F. Baber announced that during that year they had "prepared and had accepted plans for 450 residences which cost an average of \$4,000 each, or a total \$1,800,000".

Osella & Leva Wright chose a Barber design titled "Residence on Missionary Ridge, Tenn." from Barber's 1897 plan book, Homes Illustrated: A Book of Fine Engravings of Home Designs, Plans, Etc. of Modern Designs. Of course, many of Barber's published designs first started as commissions from individual clients, as was the case for this design. Chattanooga, TN contractor, David Young Greib commissioned Barber to design a new residence for his family, to be built on a corner lot in Missionary Ridge, TN, now a suburb of Chattanooga. The Greib home, which still stands at 90 N. Crest Road at the intersection of Shallowford Road in east Chattanooga,





looks just like the O. B. Wright home. Whether the Wrights chose this specific design, or whether Barber recommended it, we don't know, but obviously, it was selected as an appropriate design for a large prominent corner lot, such as the corner of Pearson and Watauga.

In July 1899, a building permit was issued to builders Chunn & Cowan, "to build a ten-room residence for O. B. Wright at the corner of Watauga Street and Pearson Drive." In August, Wright's request to the Asheville Aldermen was approved to have his new residence connected to the city sewer system, but reported that he did not need a connection to city water as he had "an independent water system on the place".

The Wright's new colorful and picturesque home was completed by early 1900. They named their new home, "Brentwood". One of the first visitors to the new home was J. C.



**NC Collection, Pack Library** 

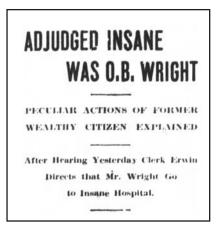
Donaldson, Leva's brother from Beatrice, Nebraska, who visited the Wrights in August 1900. The Wrights settled into their new home, but unfortunately, it wouldn't be long before major changes would affect their residency in the home.

Just a year after moving into their new home, O. B. Wright's business, Carolina Carriage House at 86 Patton Avenue closed for business, and the building was turned into a recreation hall called the "Pleasure Palace". So, then Osella decided to build two speculation houses on land which he had purchased on Watauga Street adjacent to his home. In the Summer of 1902, he was issued a building permit to build "one nine-room house on Watauga", which I believe to be the house now at 44 Watauga Street. In 1903 he purchased more property east of his first purchase, which he subdivided into two lots and built the house that are now at 36 & 40 Watauga Street.

In 1906, for some reason, Osella and Leva decided to separate, so Osella purchased and moved to a 72-acre

farm in Hominy Valley. All their property however remained in both their names. Four years after moving to the farm O. B. Wright was indicted on a "charge of immoral conduct". As bad as that was, what really got him into big trouble was when, just before the trial, he accosted his neighbor with a pistol and threatened to shoot him unless the neighbor agreed not to testify against O. B. in the ensuing trial. The neighbor's wife was able to defuse the situation, but Wright was arrested and charged with additional charges. Finally, in August 1910, after pleading guilty to two of three charges, due to "insanity", O. B. Wright was committed to the State

Hospital in Morganton, NC. By 1912, O. B. had been discharged and was living in one of his spec houses at 36 Watauga Street. In 1913, Osella and Leva had all their joint property divided and platted, and Osella proceeded to sell his portions, including the



houses at 36 & 40 Watauga Street. In 1920, Osella had moved to Apopka, Fl where he engaged in more property development. He died in Asheville on a visit in 1931.

Of course, Osella's desertion, trial, and incarceration were widely known. In 1911, the city alderman, probably in sympathy for Leva Wright's plight, relieved her "from further sewer assessments". Leva had retained their original house and surrounding lot at the corner of Pearson and Watauga, then addressed as 199 Pearson Drive. Leva took in boarders and sometimes leased out the house for periods of time to produce income. She got a nice reprieve in 1928, when her brother James C. Donaldson of Lincoln, Nebraska died, leaving his estate in trust for Leva during her lifetime. The Will stipulated that "any part of the principle [sp] may be used for Mrs. Wright...that may be necessary to keep her in comfort".

In 1946, Leva Wright died at the age of 91, and subsequently, her executor sold the house, now addressed



as 235 Pearson Drive, to James A. & Loretta Banks the same year. Apparently, Mr. Banks was a semi-invalid, and so Mrs. Banks took in boarders for income. The Banks turned the carriage house into an apartment as well.

The Banks family sold the house in 1970 to Mary Williams, who lived there until her death in 1986. In 1987, Ed & Barbara Siler purchased the house, and after an award-winning rehabilitation, they opened the house in 1989 as the Wright Inn Victorian Bed & Breakfast.

Although the Osella & Leva Wright house has been used as a Bed & Breakfast Inn since 1989, the title to the property changed hands several times until being purchased this year by the current owners. Chris and Sheri Riffle purchased the Wright Inn on June 12, 2019. Chris worked in the construction industry for 20 years before returning to school to become an electrical engineer. Chris has a strong passion for home improvement; he can repair, build, remodel and improve just about anything. Chris' craftsman skills, coupled with a sincere love of people and customer service abilities, supports this family venture in Asheville.

#### Compiled by: Dale Wayne Slusser, October 2019

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- 2. The Rock Island Argus, Rock Island, IL, May 22, 1896, page 8.
- 3. Asheville Citizen-Times, January 12, 1897, page 4.
- 4. Asheville Citizen-Times, January 15, 1898, page 3.
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- "George F. Barber-Biography", by M. Ruth Little & Michael A. Tomlan- https://ncarchitects.lib. ncsu.edu/people/P000234
- 8. Ibid.
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- 12. Asheville Citizen-Times, December 24, 1900, page 5.
- 13. Asheville Citizen-Times, August 29, 1900, page 8.
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- 5. E. W. & Ida Whiteside to Osella B. Wright LOT 3 BLK 10 BK 104 P 232 Db. 131/299.
- W. G. & Leatha Candler to Osella B. Wright 72 ACRES BEAVERDAM CREEK Db. 141/405.
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- 18. The Sentinel, Orlando, FL, February 16, 1910, page 3.
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- 'Faded Glory' Rich In Detail, by Carole Currie, Asbeville Citizen-Times, April 30, 1989, page 39.
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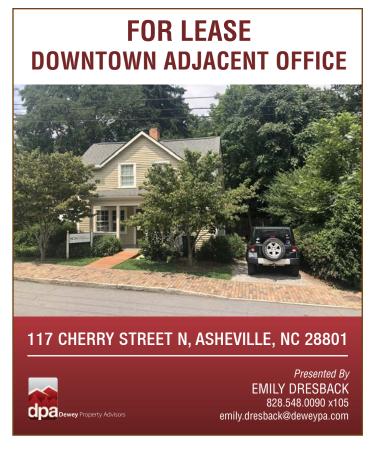


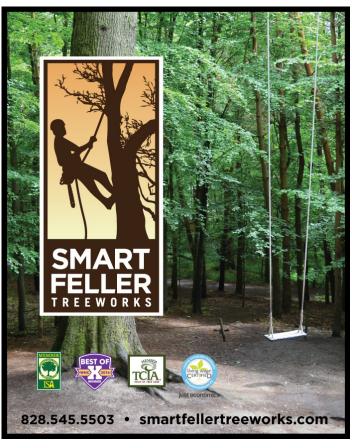
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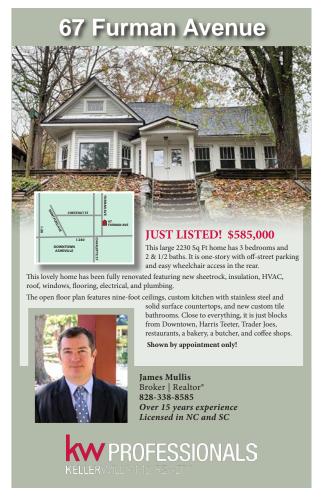




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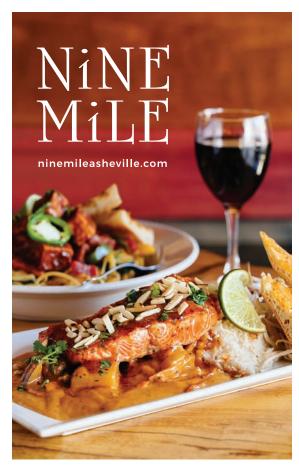


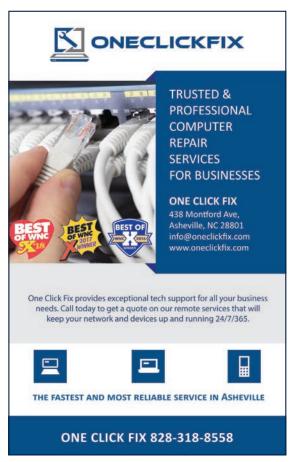
## Saint Patrick's Day

Saint Patrick's Day, feast day (March 17) of St. Patrick, patron saint of Ireland. Born in Roman Britain in the late 4th century, he was kidnapped at the age of 16 and taken to Ireland as a slave. He escaped but returned about 432 to convert the Irish to Christianity. By the time of his death on March 17, 461, he had established monasteries, churches, and schools. Many legends grew up around him—for example, that he drove the snakes out of Ireland and used the shamrock to explain the Trinity. Ireland came to celebrate his day with religious services and feasts. Saint Patrick's Day is celebrated on Wednesday, March 17, 2021.

It was emigrants, particularly to the United States, who transformed St. Patrick's Day into a largely secular holiday of revelry and celebration of things Irish. Cities with large numbers of Irish immigrants, who often wielded political power, staged the most extensive celebrations, which included elaborate parades. Boston held its first St. Patrick's Day parade in 1737, followed by New York City in 1762. Since 1962 Chicago has coloured its river green to mark the holiday. (Although blue was the colour traditionally associated with St. Patrick, green is now commonly connected with the day.) Irish and non-Irish alike commonly participate in the "wearing of the green"—sporting an item of green clothing or a shamrock, the Irish national plant, in the lapel. Corned beef and cabbage are associated with the holiday, and even beer is sometimes dyed green to celebrate the day. Although some of these practices eventually were adopted by the Irish themselves, they did so largely for the benefit of tourists.

Credit: britannica.com









# Historic Resources Commission of Asheville and Buncombe County

#### Montford Action Agenda 02/10/21

Present: Chair Emily Kite, Will Hornaday, James Vaughn, Maggie Brousaides, Gail Lazaras, Emily Spreng

Absent: William Eakins, Sara Gardner, Benjamin Mitchell, Jim Coman, Stephanie West

Staff present: Alex Cole, Shannon Tuch, Jannice Ashley

#### Item, Summary and Action

#### 122 West Chestnut Street (PIN

9649124598)—Construct a new 968 square foot, one-and-a-half story accessory structure and parking area in rear yard.

**Action**—Continued

**81 Courtland Ave** (PIN 9649015935)—Construction of a 2-story, 2,765 square foot primary structure.

**Action**—Approved with conditions

**17 Panola Street** (PIN 9639947999)—Enclose non-original porch on rear elevation.

**Action**—Approved with conditions

**303 Cumberland Avenue** (PIN 9649044664)—Install new garage doors within existing openings on accessory structure and install a new pedestrian door on north elevation; extend existing stone retaining wall and gravel driveway.

**Action**—Approved

**261 Cumberland Avenue** (PIN 9649046312)—Construction of 140 square foot addition on rear elevation.

**Action**—Approved with conditions

**Kingsland Alley**—Construction of a 12' wide paved road within existing unopened right of way. **Action**—Approved with conditions

Please refer to the website (<u>www.ashevillenc.gov</u>) for the full approved minutes after the following month's meeting.

## **HRC Application Portal**

The city is now accepting HRC applications digitally via the Development Portal at this address: <a href="https://develop.ashevillenc.gov/">https://develop.ashevillenc.gov/</a>



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# The I-26 Connector Project and the Memorandum of Agreement for Riverside Cemetery Mitigations

As planned, the I-26 Connector Project <a href="https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/asheville-i-26-connector/Pages/default.aspx">https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/asheville-i-26-connector/Pages/default.aspx</a> was determined to have an adverse effect on Riverside Cemetery, a contributing property in the Montford Area Historic District. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the funding and approving agency for the I-26 Connector Project, which is then administered by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). Ultimately, the deciding parties on a <a href="Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)">Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)</a> for mitigations for the Cemetery pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act are the "signatories": FHWA, NCDOT and the NC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

Over the past year, Zoe Schumaker, Michael McDonough and Lynn Raker represented the MNA as a consulting party in NCDOT's effort to develop the mitigation procedures for Riverside Cemetery. The other consulting parties for the Cemetery were the City of Asheville and the Preservation Society of Asheville & Buncombe County (PSABC).

As a consulting party, we participated in discussions, proposed language for the MOA specifying mitigations, and reviewed and commented on the MOA drafts. With Zoe spearheading the MNA effort, we put many hours into research, recommendations, meetings, and letters leading up to the final MOA release. While we were not satisfied with the outcome, we can claim some minor victories in NCDOT's mitigation proposals.

Unfortunately, the sanctity of tranquility was not identified in Riverside Cemetery's National Register listing, and we feel the proposed auditory mitigations, which apparently meet the "standard", may fall short of what is desirable.

Also, while we pushed hard for a dense vegetative buffer between the Cemetery and the elevated highway wall, NCDOT was non-committal on the extent of the buffer possible within the right-of-way itself, due to the stormwater design. While they are willing to enhance the buffer within the Cemetery property adjacent to the boundary with their right-of-way, in many cases the proximity of grave sites will preclude planting.



By far, the largest "victory" is the proposed lowering of the elevated highway and wall from the original high of 80 feet to a proposed high somewhere closer to 25 feet - if the current design revision proves successful. We do not claim this victory solely; it is the culmination of relentless efforts by several key groups — the City's working group, the City's Aesthetics Committee, as well as the MNA Consulting Party. In addition, we were instrumental in getting the solid wall for the length of the cemetery, which should help reduce noise in the most impacted areas.

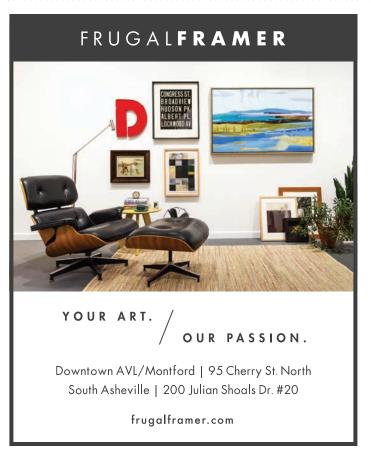
The final Memorandum of Agreement was released and signed by the primary signatories. Our dilemma became whether to sign, given the perceived shortcomings. Signing would allow the MNA to be included in the ongoing process, at least to the extent consulting parties will be engaged. If we did not concur, we would not be included in the ongoing process, but would be brought back to the table if any major design changes were to trigger a reexamination of the Section 106 mitigations.

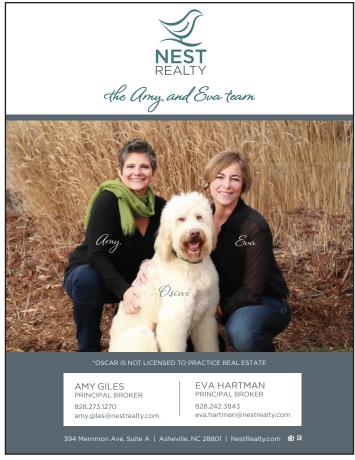
After much internal discussion, we decided it was in the best interest of the community for the MNA to remain part of the ongoing process and therefore sign the MOA. The City has also concurred, but PSABC has elected to not sign.

Admittedly, this summary omits many of the details of the past year's Section 106 activities, so please feel free to contact Zoe, Michael, or myself if you have questions.

Construction on sections of the I-26 Connector Project near us is on schedule to begin in 2024, despite other major transportation project delays across the state. For more up-to-date information, go to: https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/asheville-i-26-connector/Pages/default.aspx

Lynn Raker





## **Resource Directory**

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### Green Corner **Mitch Russell**

I was reading an article on WLOS. com about the Trump administration making changes to The Migratory Bird

Act Treaty, which was established in 1918 to protect migratory birds throughout North America after decades of over hunting and poaching. The changes could lead to deaths of millions of birds according to some experts. It was due to take effect last month.

Also within the article was the fact that cats kill over 2 billion birds annually out of an estimated 7.2 billion migratory birds per some researchers. These numbers are somewhat in question and all cats are lumped into one category. By all cats I mean feral, stray, barn and our neighborhood's full time outdoor or indoor/outdoor cats.





Regardless of the numbers of birds killed and type of cat there are ways we can reduce predation of migratory birds

- Making full time outdoor or indoor/outdoor cats fully indoor cats.
- Spaying/neutering.
- Adopted stray/feral cats-be sure to check with neighbors and check postings to be sure it's a true stray/feral.
- Take stray/feral cats to a shelter, again, check with neighbors and check postings to be sure it's a true stray/feral.
- Not placing bird feeders/seed in areas where cats hang out watching them.
- Yelling at/"shooing" cats when they appear to be stalking or about to pounce on birds.
- Attaching bells to cat's collars.
- Walking them around the yard on a leash.
- Building a specific area for them to roam with temporary fencing that they can't/won't climb
- Install an electric fence.

Following the above suggestions will aid in keeping our feathered friends safe and off the endangered or extinct species list. Thank you for doing your part.

To be fair, next month's column will get down and dirty with the effects of dog poop on the environment.

