

HUNTING AND FISHING

Throughout Onslow's history hunting and fishing have provided important avenues to procure food. The earliest settlers, Native Americans, subsisted on venison and other game taken from the forest as well as fish and shell fish taken from the rivers and sounds. As European settlers colonized the region they too relied heavily on what game and forage could be taken from the forest and waterways. Settlements in the newly formed Onslow precinct developed on the water for ease of transportation and access to fresh seafood.

The firearms of the 18th century proved reliable enough that settlers could venture inland knowing they had the means to hunt large and small game, which allowed farms and plantations to be staked out further from navigable waters. Venison, bear, turkey, possum, raccoon, and squirrel were important game animals that could be roasted or put in stews. Venison could be dried and eaten as a jerky. Early settlers hunted squirrels and raccoons not just for food but also because the animals were pests that destroyed corn and pea crops.



Hunting game such as deer and bear provided many in Onslow County with their primary source of meat. Smaller game, like possum,

squirrel, rabbit, as well as game birds were also harvested.

During the late twentieth century Onslow became known as a sportsman's paradise with visitors traveling across the country to hunt. Hunting remains a popular way to provide meat in Onslow County. During the 2014/2015 hunting season hunters harvested 55 bear, 2,179 deer, and 345 turkeys.



Catching and eating fish and shell fish provided a reliable source of protein but it also provided jobs to many Onslowans.

Today's fisheries provide a source of food to many residents and non-residents alike, with shrimp and oysters being sold across the state.

Fishing in salt and fresh water provided food for many people living in Onslow. One early nineteenth century account tells of shad, herring, and rockfish swimming up the new river to spawn and feed, crowding the river so as to cause it to rise two feet up its banks. In one night over 14,000 herring were caught and shared between the local farm families.

Today hunting and fishing remain an important part of the food heritage in Onslow County. Festivals such as the Shrimp Festival in Sneads Ferry commemorate and celebrate the natural resources that the waterways provide the residents and the fishing industry in Onslow County. Upwards of twenty hunt clubs operate around the county taking advantage of private and state game and forest lands.

