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Caswell Beach rifle range

Distressed fawn gets helping hand



By Lee Hinnant
Staff Writer

Charlotte teenager Emma Youngs was on vacation with her family last week when she got a jump-start on her preferred career as a veterinarian and rescued a fawn trapped in deep water. The 14-year-old waded into a dark, stagnant pond and lifted a baby deer fighting for its life.

Mike Youngs and his family have vacationed at Caswell Dunes every year since 2011. This season he brought his wife, two daughters and mother to a third-level condominium that overlooks a grassy field and the Atlantic Ocean.

Periodically, they spotted a doe and several fawns at Caswell Greens, particularly near the WW I-era rifle pit that abuts Oak Island Golf Course. The concrete structure, circa 1918, was part of a larger marksmanship training

Photo contributed
Emma Youngs lifts a fawn to safety from the flooded rifle range pit last Wednesday.

See Fawn, page 9A

Fawn:

Continued from page 1A
area for Fort Caswell. Young soldiers learned long-range shooting before going to Europe during the Great War. The rifle pit is the focus of an ongoing preservation effort.

The family dressed to go shopping, and as they started to drive away from the condo paused at the rifle pit to take pictures and video of the deer, Youngs said. The deer were lingering on the tall earthen berm on the north side of the concrete pit, which spans at least 100 feet.

As the Youngs were about to move on, the family heard a cry that sounded like a deer in distress. "It was like a lamb," Mike Youngs said of the sound.

One of the fawns had apparently fallen into the water-filled rifle pit. With at least three feet of water inside, the pit offered nowhere for the baby deer to stand. It was swimming in circles and clearly in danger, he said.

They called 911 and requested help from an animal control officer, but the animal's condition worsened. "There was no way it was going to make it," Mike Youngs said. They tried to use a piece of plywood covering a former window area as a ramp, but it was too steep for the fawn to navigate.

"Emma said, 'I'm going in,'" recalled her father.

The rising high school freshman waded into the pit, grabbed the fawn and lifted it to the window area, and it walked away, Mike Youngs said.

On the final evening of their stay, the family looked over a grassy area between the condo and Caswell Beach Road. They saw a doe and three fawns. There's no way to know, but they wondered and hoped it might be the same family they helped reunite.

He said his daughter acted selflessly. "Emma wants to be a veterinarian," he said.