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### BUNCOMBE COUNTY

## APD makes 'largest fentanyl seizure'

Asheville Citizen Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Asheville Police Department has made an arrest and the "largest fentanyl seizure in Buncombe County history," according to an April 28 news release from the department.

Jesse Milton Ogletree Jr., 37, of Trotwood, Ohio, was arrested on Gashes Creek Road on April 22 "in possessions of a trafficking quantity of fentanyl," according to the release.

A search warrant resulted in the police department seizing eight firearms, 33.249 pounds of narcotics and \$13,582 in cash, along with "equipment consistent with large-scale drug distribution," the release said.

The Asheville Police Department seized 8.03 kilograms of suspected fentanyl, which is the "equivalent to more than four million potentially lethal doses."

Ogletree Jr. was booked on \$60,000 secured bond into the Buncombe County

Detention Facility.

In total, the release said the department seized:

- One short-barreled rifle with suppressor and drum magazine
  - Four semi-automatic shotguns
  - Three handguns
  - 33.249 pounds of weighted narcotics
  - \$13,582 in cash
- Ogletree Jr. was charged with the following, the release said:
- Two counts of felony trafficking in

fentanyl

- Two counts of felony trafficking in methamphetamine
- Two counts of trafficking in cocaine
- Felony possession of Schedule VI controlled substance
- Felony possession with intent to sell or deliver fentanyl
- Felony possession with intent to sell or deliver cocaine
- Felony possession with intent to

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Two of the chickens in the Mountain Farm Museum flock prepare to leave the coop.

### ANALYSIS

## Royal visit is unlikely to mend differences

U.S.-U.K. ties expected to continue fluctuating

Michael Collins, Kim Hjelmgaard and Chris Kenning  
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — King Charles III jokingly apologized for the British burning the White House during the War of 1812 but slyly noted that, were it not for his countrymen, the Americans might be speaking French.

President Donald Trump marveled at the king's diplomatic skills at winning over Republicans and Democrats and paid him the ultimate Trumpian compliment: The king, the president said, is "a fantastic person."

But beneath the lighthearted banter, the personal flattery and the theatrical spectacle that surrounds a royal visit, signs remained of the deep divisions that have become the most serious test in decades of the long friendship between the United States and the United Kingdom.

"We have stood together through the best and worst of times," Charles, in white tie and tails, said during his toast at the White House state dinner in his honor in the East Room on April 28.

Political analysts praised the king's diplomatic overtures and the manner in which he deftly dealt with Trump, who is angry with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and the British government over a multitude of issues, including their reluctance to get involved in the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran. But they questioned how far the king's four-day state visit would go toward patching up the discord.

"Clearly you saw graciousness on both sides and a real warmth," said Matthew Barzun, who served as U.S. ambassador to the United Kingdom from 2013 to 2017. "There is more trust, respect and understanding, I think, at the end of this week than there was before."

Barzun compared the current difficulties between the two countries to a strained marriage. "When you come through it," he said, "you come through it stronger."

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## Chickens of Oconaluftee

### Word from the Smokies

Holly Kays  
Special to the Asheville Citizen Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Who's in charge of the chickens at the Mountain Farm Museum in Great Smoky Mountains National Park? According to the National Park Service, it's Interpretive Park Ranger Michael Smith. But the chickens themselves recognize the authority of the large, golden rooster that struts among them—the unchallenged leader of the Oconaluftee flock.

"He's kind of a little provider," said Smith.

The rooster helps keep his flock happy and healthy, making a distinctive noise to alert his ladies when he finds an especially tasty food source and also protecting them from danger. One time, Smith said, the rooster intervened when a stray dog found its way onto the farm, keeping the dog away from his hens until rangers arrived on the scene. Several years ago, he witnessed a different rooster kick at a hawk that was attacking one of his hens, forcing the predator to flee.

But Smith also plays an important role in the chickens' well-being—making sure their coop is secure from predators, that they have access to food and water, and that the flock's size and hen-rooster



Interpretive Park Ranger Michael Smith opens the coop door to let the flock of chickens that resides at the Mountain Farm Museum begin free-ranging for the day. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY HOLLY KAYS/SMOKIES LIFE

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## Chickens

Continued from Page 1A

ratio is on point. With funding from Friends of the Smokies, Smith rounds out the existing flock every spring with chickens purchased from a local live animal auction. These newly acquired birds are then locked in the coop for about a week, which gives them time to establish their pecking order and understand that the coop is their new home. The park is full of predators, but the coop offers a safe place to sleep each night.

The park keeps a maximum of 30–40 chickens in its flock. Located next to the Oconaluftee Visitor Center, the Mountain Farm Museum exists to show what farm life was like prior to the park's establishment. To ensure the chickens stay happy and healthy, visitors are asked not to chase or handle them. But as the birds spend their days free-ranging the grounds, searching out insects, seeds, grasses, and flowers to satisfy their omnivorous diet, they serve as living illustrations of what mountain homesteads once looked like.

"Chickens were important to family farms here in the Smokies prior to the park establishment because they provided items that families needed to survive," Smith said. "They provide eggs, but then also they provide meat. Chickens are also pretty hardy. They don't need a lot of input."

### Journey around the world

By the time the first chicken squawked in the Smokies, humans had already been raising them for thousands of years. Today's domestic chicken originates from the wild red junglefowl bird (*Gallus gallus*) that is native to Southeast Asia. Multiple populations of humans are believed to have domesticated this species, with the oldest known bones from a domesticated chicken dating to 5,400 BC in the Hebei province if China.

Despite their nearly nonexistent flying abilities, chickens have since spread across the world through multiple routes of trade and travel, according to a 2012 paper by Alice A. Story, et. al, that used DNA and bone-dating to help trace the chicken's dispersal from Asian centers of domestication to its current glob-

al distribution. The Polynesians, approaching via the Pacific Ocean, were the first to bring them to the Americas, but chickens didn't arrive on the East Coast of North America until after 1500. Here, European breeds that settlers brought with them met breeds transported from Africa on Dutch and Portuguese slave ships. Today, countless breeds optimize everything from egg and meat production to cold-hardiness and heat tolerance.

For a farm family struggling to scratch out a living, few creatures were more miraculous than this bob-headed, scaly-footed, nearly flightless bird. A healthy hen can lay up to one egg per day, a food rich in proteins and nutrients that arrives in a naturally sealed container. Likewise, chicken meat is a source of vital nutrition that is quick and inexpensive to raise on a small farm compared to other livestock like cows and pigs.

Chickens are also easier to care for. Given enough space to range, chickens can just about feed themselves, and farm families would supplement their flocks' diets with kitchen scraps and remnants of crop harvests. Behaviors like dust bathing and preening help chickens keep mites and other parasites at bay, and hens can hatch and raise chicks without assistance from their owners. Once composted, chicken waste creates a rich manure, making chickens a natural complement to food crops.

### A source of cash or barter

With its rocky ground, steep slopes, and cold winters, the Great Smokies is a challenging place to grow food. Prior to the park's establishment, most of the families that lived here were subsistence farmers, raising enough to feed themselves with little left over to sell.

"Families would trade and borrow a lot," Smith said. "And so if you had excess eggs, you might be able to get butter from a family that had cows and produced more butter than they needed. Families also worked together."

If a hen took a notion to sit on a clutch of eggs, hoping to hatch them, a farm family might loan that broody hen out to a neighbor who wanted to grow their flock. A specific hen basket existed for transporting such hens.

Chickens could also be a source of cash. In 1915, *The Maryville Times* re-



A March 1922 photograph brought to Sherrill's Studio in Waynesville, shows a man and his son holding a pair of chickens. PROVIDED BY THE WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY HUNTER LIBRARY

ported that Blount County, Tennessee, exported 50 cars of chickens and 50 cars of eggs annually, after the 25,000 people living there at the time had purchased the "thousands of chickens, and thousands of dozens of eggs" needed for their own consumption. In 1919, the paper reported on a Knox County man who had purchased 20 fertile chicken eggs for \$20, hatching 15 chickens, which he bred and sold for a net profit of "nearly \$2,000" after two seasons in business, equivalent to about \$40,000 today. A January 13, 1920, issue of *The Carolina Mountaineer and Waynesville Courier* reported that chickens were then selling at 20–25 cents per pound—\$3.42–\$4.28 in today's dollars, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics inflation calculator.

### Living history

After a rainy morning melds into a blue-skied spring afternoon, the Oconaluftee chickens burst from their coop as Smith opens the door, releasing them to the day's important business: pecking and dust bathing. The birds quickly move into the nearby apple orchard to gobble up insects and fresh blades of grass, and visitors congregate around the fence to watch them.

"This is, for me, the reason why we have chickens," said Smith. "You can

have pictures and you can have the coop, but to have the real live animal here walking around is another level of experience."

Only about 13 percent of households in the US keep chickens, according to a 2024 study citing the APPA National Pet Owners Survey. Like the majority of Americans, Smith didn't experience these birds growing up. But he always loved animals, recalling when he was five or six how he begged his mother to get him a hamster. Later, he added dogs, parakeets, and even a turtle to his menagerie, electing to study animal science and agriculture at Tuskegee University. While in college, he took a summer job working for the National Park Service at Sugarlands Visitor Center, which inspired him to make it a career. As soon as he found out about the Mountain Farm Museum, he knew that's where he wanted to be, and it's where he's been stationed since 2015.

Most park visitors find the free-range flock a remarkable sight. A visitor might walk briskly past the barn, the smokehouse, or the blacksmithing shop, but when they see the chickens, they slow down.

"I like to share agriculture and animal science with other people," Smith said. "I've had numerous people come and say this was the first time they had actually seen a chicken in person. I've had people who are afraid of chickens and had a couple opportunities to actually pick up a chicken and take it to them and let them see that chicken in a different light."

For a flock that can number as many as 40 chickens, the Mountain Farm Museum in Great Smoky Mountains National Park is home sweet home. Interpretive Park Ranger Michael Smith considers caring for these birds—and helping visitors understand why they were so important to farm families in the Smokies—one of the best parts of his job. Follow Smith around the farm and meet some of the chickens that live there. Video by Robin Pyle, courtesy of Smokies Life.

Holly Kays is the lead writer for the 29,000-member *Smokies Life*, a non-profit dedicated to supporting the scientific, historical, and interpretive activities of Great Smoky Mountains National Park by providing educational products and services such as this column. Learn more at [SmokiesLife.org](http://SmokiesLife.org) or reach the author at [hollyk@smokieslife.org](mailto:hollyk@smokieslife.org).

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