

The fox and the hounds



Joe Young / The Star

This rider, known as a whippers-in, supervises the hounds from straying out of the boundaries. Above, riders blow their horns to call the hounds.

Fox hunting lore rooted in British Isles

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CHERRYVILLE — "Tally ho," the huntsman says as he and his hounds spot a fox on the run.

Fox hunting has a long and storied past with its roots in the hills of the British Isles. European settlers brought the sport to America.

Locally, the Green Creek Hounds, a fox hunting club based in Rutherford County, is hosting several fox hunts. The events began Wednesday and end Saturday.

The group will journey to Rutherford County for the final day of its hunt. In addition to Thursday's hunt in Cherryville, the group also visited Cliffside this week.

The club has around 90



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The group of riders run through a field after the "talking" hounds. According to the huntsmen, the hounds don't bark, they "speak" to each other.

foxhounds that include several different breeds: American Crossbred, English and July hounds.

"We've hunted beagles and fox hounds, but it's always a great experience,"

said Mike Poage a hunt guide for the Green Creek Hounds.

One should be careful not to call the hounds "dogs" by mistake, as Vera Biggerstaff of

Rutherfordton, said, "They are always hounds, never dogs."

Mrs. Biggerstaff added that the Green Creek Hounds have one of the best huntsmen in the United States in Jefferson "Tot" Goodwin.

For more than 12 years, hunt clubs have joined the Green Creek Hounds from as far away as Ohio, Michigan, Florida and Kentucky. The group even had a rider join the hunt from Canada this year.

"It's really too cold for them to hunt up North so they come to our hunt and then a lot of them go to South Carolina for another hunt," said Poage.

The fox hunting season begins around the second week of February and ends



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The hounds run into a brush pile near an area where chickens are kept, and which leads to foxes, during Thursday's fox hunt with the Green Creek Hounds.

Battle continues between the fox and the hounds

FOX FROM 1A

the first week of March.

Riders have to make special preparations for their horses this time of year. The animals are clipped in areas where they sweat the most so they will dry off easier after the hunt.

This unique sport has a lingo and etiquette all its own. While hunting foxes one must be abreast of terms like speak, covert, tally ho, ratcatcher and hilltoppers.

In place of camouflage and fluorescent safety vests, foxhunters have

proper attire for formal and informal hunts.

This year the riders paused a moment before their hunt began to celebrate the anniversary of a couple that was married on horseback during last year's hunt with the Green Creek Hounds.

Fanfare aside, the hunt truly begins when the huntsman blows his horn to release the hounds.

The hunt may last for hours as the fox tries to outwit and outlast its numerous pursuers, but it is like-

ly that no harm will ever befall the sly animals.

"We don't ever kill the fox," said Poage.

The hunt ends when the huntsman declares that the fox cannot be captured, when the fox is cornered or when it returns to its den.

Safety is also a concern for riders as they pass through fields and woods after their prey. One rider was thrown from her horse during Thursday's hunt.

"Anytime large animals like these are involved, there is an element of dan-

ger," said Bill Anderson, who was hosting the hunt with his wife Dr. Karen Sennewald.

Anderson added that such an incident was not commonplace for their hunts.

The week's events will conclude with a ball held at the Cleveland Country Club where hunt participants will don their formalwear for a masked ball and silent auction. The proceeds benefit the Green Creek Hounds.