

## Buffaloes <sup>[1]</sup>

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## Buffaloes

by John C. Inscoe, 2006

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Buffaloes were local [Unionists](#) <sup>[2]</sup> engaged in guerrilla warfare and terrorist tactics during the [Civil War](#) <sup>[3]</sup>, especially in eastern North Carolina. Similar to "bushwhackers" in the western part of the state, in portions of Appalachia, and on the war's western frontier, buffaloes consisted of [Confederate](#) <sup>[4]</sup> deserters, draft resisters, escaped prisoners, and lawless white men and boys. They formed bands (which were compared with "herds of buffaloes") that hid out in swamps and forests and, often in league with fugitive slaves, gathered arms and raided local communities and plantations, harassing civilians and stealing or destroying their property and foodstuffs.

Wingfield plantation, on the Chowan River north of [Edenton](#) <sup>[5]</sup>, became a fortified encampment that served as the base of buffalo operations and provided a refuge for deserters, fugitive slaves, and Union sympathizers throughout the northeastern corner of the state. Local Confederates assaulted it in a series of attacks in the winter of 1862-63. By the third strike, although the fort itself was destroyed, most buffaloes had escaped by Federal gunboat.

Farther down the coast, burning and pillaging by black and white guerrillas was sufficiently aggravating that Confederate commander [George E. Pickett](#) <sup>[6]</sup> (reassigned to the New Bern area after the [Battle of Gettysburg](#) <sup>[7]</sup>) resorted to extreme measures. In February 1864 Pickett captured 22 deserters engaged in guerrilla activity, all of them dressed as Union soldiers. After a court-martial for desertion from the Confederate army, Pickett marched the prisoners west to Kinston, where most of them had lived. There he ordered them hanged in front of their wives, children, and other family members, an action that put Pickett in the midst of yet another major military controversy.

### References:

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### Subjects:

[Civil War \(1861-1865\)](#) <sup>[8]</sup>

[UNC Press](#) <sup>[9]</sup>

[War](#) <sup>[10]</sup>

### Authors:

[Inscoe, John C.](#) <sup>[11]</sup>

### From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) <sup>[12]</sup>

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