



2013

OUR COAST

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North Carolina
Coastal Federation
Working Together for a Healthy Coast



We here at the N.C. Coastal Federation don't view our coast as a museum artifact under glass — something to be viewed but not touched. It's far too important for that.

We want people to enjoy the beauty of our coast, the way we do. We want you to join us—to marvel at its magnificent sunsets, to eat the bounty that its waters provide. We want you to paddle down a quiet river, boat out to offshore fishing grounds or hike through a stately longleaf pine forest, looking for birds, alligators, or even a bear. We also want people to make their livings off our coast.

But we hope that we will all do these things responsibly, in ways that don't threaten our coast's natural health and productivity. We also hope we can all work together to make sure

these places we love remain for those who come after us.

This *Our Coast* offers a few ways to do this. Yes, it's a travel guide of sorts, but it's not like the dozens of others that you can pick up this summer in stands from Corolla to Calabash. We like to call it a travel guide with a conscience.

Our Coast is about some of the most dynamic, productive and beautiful places on earth that are not far from where you are probably reading this today. The places highlighted aren't just for tourists or for local residents. They belong to all of us to be loved,

used, and most importantly, to be protected and restored.

The philosophy behind *Our Coast* is simple. We believe the more you cherish and use our coast, the more invested you become in helping us keep it healthy and spectacular. Our work provides great opportunities for you to help our coast, and if you agree, we hope you'll jump aboard and join us in our efforts.

— Executive Director



North Carolina Coastal Federation
Working Together for a Healthy Coast

The North Carolina Coastal Federation is a non-profit tax-exempt organization dedicated to involving citizens in decisions about managing coastal resources. Its aim is to share technical information and resources to better represent current and long-term economic, social and environmental interests of the North Carolina Coast.

nccf@nccoast.org • www.nccoast.org

CENTRAL OFFICE: 3609 Highway 24 (Ocean), Newport, NC 28570
phone: 252-393-8185 • fax: 252-393-7508

Our offices, nature library and shop are open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

NORTHEAST OFFICE: 128 Greenville Street, Manteo, NC 27954
phone: 252-473-1607

SOUTHEAST OFFICE: 530 Causeway Drive, Suite F1, Wrightsville Beach, NC 28480 • phone: 910-509-2838

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STAFF

Headquarters
Executive Director Todd Miller: toddm@nccoast.org
Deputy Director Lauren Kolodij: laurenk@nccoast.org
Assistant Director Christine Miller: christinem@nccoast.org
Assistant Director Frank Tursi: frankt@nccoast.org

Development & Marketing Director Sally Steele: sallys@nccoast.org
Director of Operations Rachael Carlyle: rachaelc@nccoast.org
Business Manager Jo Ann Marsh: joannm@nccoast.org
Program & Policy Analyst Ana Zivanovic-Nenadovic: anaz@nccoast.org
Administrative Assistants Rose Rundell: roser@nccoast.org
Emily Farmer: emilyf@nccoast.org

Northeast

Coastal Scientist Erin Fleckenstein: erinf@nccoast.org
Coastal Education Coordinator Sara Hallas: sarajh@nccoast.org
Coastal Advocate Ladd Bayliss: laddb@nccoast.org

Central

Coastal Scientist Dr. Lexia Weaver: lexiaw@nccoast.org
Coastal Education Coordinator Sarah Phillips: sarahp@nccoast.org
Jones Island Manager Sam Bland: samb@nccoast.org

Southeast

Senior Coastal Scientist Tracy Skrabal: tracys@nccoast.org
Coastal Education Coordinator Ted Wilgis: tedw@nccoast.org
Coastal Advocate Mike Giles: mikeg@nccoast.org
Stop Titan Coordinator Sarah Gilliam: sarah@stoptitan.org
Stop Titan Program Assistant Sam Wilson: sam@stoptitan.org

WE NEED YOUR FACE



*"We love the coast: it's a truly wondrous place to visit, to live, to work, to play. If you do, too, we have a bond even though we may not know each other yet. **This is an invitation to you, right here, right now: Please join us.** Come spend some time with us on the coast."*

—TODD MILLER, N.C. COASTAL FEDERATION FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THESE ARE THE FACES OF SOME OF OUR 10,000+ MEMBERS. They are fishermen, teachers, students, small business owners, homemakers, scientists, politicians — even a belly dancer. You see, we find that everyone who loves the coast and its treasures wants to keep our coast healthy and beautiful. The reason that the federation exists is that the more people are involved in the management of North Carolina's coast, the better it will be, for all of us. And one of the easiest ways you can be involved is by joining the N.C. Coastal Federation.

As you read this year's edition of *Our Coast*, make sure to read what people have to say about us. We hope you will then add your face to the coast. There's a handy envelope tucked inside this publication or you can go to www.nccoast.org and join today. When you join, we have a special gift for you – a coast-friendly shopping tote that helps to reduce the use of plastic bags (because plastic bags harm marine critters) – and helps promote our coast. Please join—we can't wait to meet you!

Who We Are & Where We Work

For more than 30 years, the N. C. Coastal Federation has joined people like you to safeguard the coastal rivers, creeks, sounds and beaches we love. We're the state's only nonprofit organization focused on protecting and restoring the coast of North Carolina through

education, advocacy, and habitat preservation and restoration. With three fully-staffed regional offices in Manteo, Ocean and Wrightsville Beach, we work where we live. Over these three decades we've worked to:

Protect coastal lands to expand access to the water—for swimming, kayaking, fishing and more

Restore wetlands and other coastal habitats—very important for tasty local seafood

Advocate for better coastal rules, laws, programs and enforcement

Promote low impact development as something anyone can do to help

Get students, decision-makers and the public out on the water to see what it's all about

10 REASONS Why You'll Want To Join Today

You Will...

1 Have fun – Celebrate the coast with us. You'll receive our annual calendar of events, full of special happenings up and down the coast. We also bring the coast inland from time to time.

2 Learn – Ever wonder how you build a rain garden, an oyster reef or a living shoreline? You'll have opportunities to learn through unique, hands-on experiences.

3 Be better informed – Stay up-to-date on coastal issues through daily, online news stories, monthly electronic newsletters and *Our Coast* magazine.

4 Save money – You'll get discounts and special offers from our Business Friends and free or discounted federation events.

5 Make new friends – Join us for a field trip, a workshop or an event and you'll meet like-minded people

6 Have a voice – Our advocates and lobbyists represent you and the coast's best interest.

7 Help protect and restore habitats and water quality – We've already saved more than 50,000 acres along our coast. We'll put your membership dues to work.

8 Gain access to expertise – Our staff of 22 professionals is located up and down the coast. Call or email us when you have questions.

9 Help educate others – We engage thousands of students in learning about the coast. Your dues help provide these programs.

10 Feel good – Your donation will be put to work at one of the state's most efficient nonprofit organizations. For every \$1 donated, 95 cents goes directly to our program work.

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ROAMING OUR COAST

BY BLAND SIMPSON

When I lived in New York City years ago, people learning that I was from eastern North Carolina seemed truly perplexed when they said: "What on earth do people *do* down there?" "Well," I would say, "I'll tell you," first asking how many hours they had for my answer.



Photo © Ali Erwin

On foot, with a bicycle or small craft, anyone can deeply experience – and in a very real sense own, literally get a purchase upon – vast expanses of our coast's and coastal plain's many waters, great forests and marshes that stretch from horizon to horizon and seem never to end. Much southern flora and fauna reach their northern limits in North Carolina, overlapping northern species reaching their southern limits here, creating an astonishing diversity of wildlife.

The Albemarle Lagoon – what the hydrologists call the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds and all the rivers that feed them – is one of the largest enclosed embayments in the world, and also one of our planet's most highly articulated, and fruitful, estuaries – half of eastern America's fisheries are nurtured here.

A grand chain of publicly-owned territory stretches from Mackay Island in northern Currituck Sound all the way south to Bird Island at the South Carolina state line, a collage of public (or held by non-profits) coastal lands comprising tens of thousands of acres. Nearly

half the seacoast is accessible conservation land: from Currituck Banks, Nags Head Woods, Cape Hatteras and Cape Lookout national seashores to Bear Island, Masonboro Island and the Bald Head Marshes. Just behind the barriers lie such glorious and enormous wildlife refuges as Alligator River, Pocosin Lakes, Mattamuskeet and Cedar Island, along with big forests like the Croatan. All in all it's a naturalist's dream.

Our island paradises are legendary. On Roanoke, Fort Raleigh and the Elizabethan Gardens beckon visitors afoot, and Dough Creek off Shallowbag Bay and the Roanoke Marshes along the southeastern island-side call kayakers to action. Most of Hatteras' 50 miles is undeveloped sea and sound shore, and Buxton Woods, the 1,000-acre maritime forest just behind Cape Hatteras, boasts several miles of trails, as does Ocracoke and its Springer's Point Preserve and Jim Stephenson Trail.

In the 2,300-acre Rachel Carson Reserve, a short boat ride across Taylor's Creek from Beaufort, one might walk through short cedars in the sand where the wild ponies hide. Here Rachel Carson worked (she wrote of its huge tidal flat in *The Edge of the Sea*) – from the beach at Bird Shoal, one looks out on the long barrier island of Shackleford Banks and, north, toward the lighthouse sentinel of Lookout Shoals.

Farther south, for a passenger-ferry or kayak ride, Hammocks Beach State Park offers us the rewards of Bear, Jones and Huggins islands, and, below them, coastal reserves at

Masonboro and Bald Head deliver even more.

On Lake Mattamuskeet every winter, tens of thousands of swans and geese and ducks splash down, glancing hopscotch-style as they take off, or just take it easy rafted up within sight of the pull-offs along the N.C. 94 causeway across the lake.

Each spring, not long after those swans fly north, songbirds by the millions flood our eastern swamps, returning from the Caribbean, the Yucatan and Cuba, warblers singing to beat the band and find their mates. Hidden oases like Great Lake in the Croatan Forest give the osprey nesting space atop hundreds of short cypress, and, out on island sanctuaries in the sounds from Cape Fear to Currituck, terns and pelicans nest in sand scrapes and crude cushions of straw.

Just north of South Mills, a pedestrian bridge leads one into the edge of a vast morass in the Dismal Swamp State Park. On Merchant's Mill Pond, near Gatesville, one canoes through cypress trees heavily hung in gray with Spanish moss, and campers on beechwood hillsides beneath a full moon hear barred owls crying *Who cooks for you all?* all through the night. From Buffalo City, just west of Manteo, one of the loveliest paddle trails in the Carolina east leads to the deep-green conifers and freshwater marshes of Sawyer's Lake, then to long, lake-like Milltail Creek, where alligators sun on wind-fallen pines.

Ours is a breathtaking, water-loving land, and the glories one finds in these wild redoubts are many. A great hope I share with all my cohorts in the N.C. Coastal Federation is that our fellow citizens will ramble, afoot, afloat, afield in any way, to coastal spots both easily accessible and well off the trodden track, and will come to love, or deepen their existing affections for, the tidewater and riverine lowlands and the many waters that belong to us all.

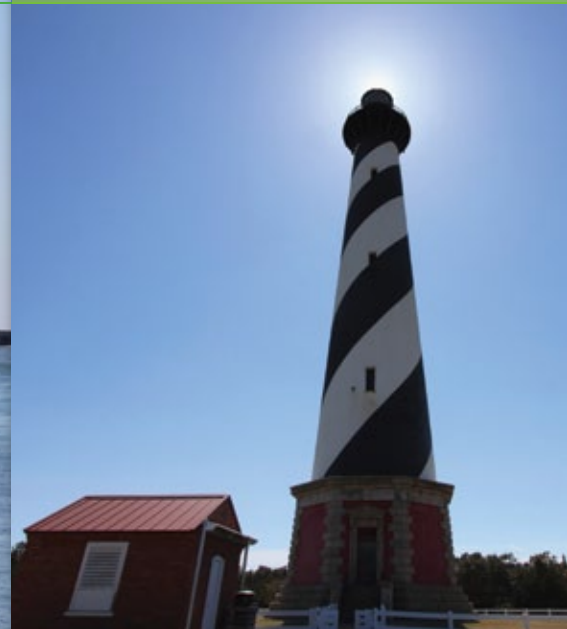
What do we do down here? We wish all comers a warm, hale and hearty welcome to the sound country and, indeed, to all the coasts of Carolina.

Bland Simpson is Kenan Distinguished Professor of English & Creative Writing at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. With Ann Cary Simpson, he is author of *Into the Sound Country* and *The Inner Islands*, and with Scott Taylor he collaborated on *The Coasts of Carolina*. He is also a board member of the N.C. Coastal Federation.

Your membership could let a child visit the coast for the first time.



Photos by Sam Bland



A Tour of the Tenuous N.C. 12 from Oregon Inlet to Rodanthe

BY LADD BAYLISS, N.C. COASTAL FEDERATION COASTAL ADVOCATE

Leave the bustle and bedlam of summer traffic on the northern Outer Banks and take a drive south on N.C. 12, probably the most written-about and ever-changing road on the East Coast. Come get a glimpse of climate change at work and peek into the future of North Carolina's fragile barrier islands.

Start at Whalebone Junction in Nags Head and head south. The beach expands, the salt marsh appears and the unbroken line of beachfront homes gradually subsides. The next 25 miles encompass the most dynamic stretch of roadway in North Carolina.

Before crossing over Oregon Inlet to Pea Island, a stop at **Oregon Inlet Fishing Center** (Map #14) is a crucial part of the trip south. Built in 1953, the marina is the center of the local sportfishing industry. During the summer months, the marina's docks are animated with the one of the greatest traditions in the region: fishing truths and tall tales. Enjoy the center's famous hot dogs and observe as one of the best recreational fishing fleets in the world heave their day's catch from boat to dock.

Turn right out of the fishing center and cross the 2.5-mile-long **Herbert C. Bonner Bridge** (Map #15) over Oregon Inlet. The inlet and the bridge are key chapters in the N.C. 12 story. To know why, you need to understand just one thing: The inlet moves and the bridge does not.

Oregon Inlet has steadily crept southward, as do other inlets along the N.C. coast.

Scientists estimate it has moved two miles since it opened in a hurricane in 1846. If you walk across the fishing catwalks on the side of the bridge, you'll notice that much of the catwalk on the northern end of the bridge now spans dry land. It didn't when the bridge opened in 1963.

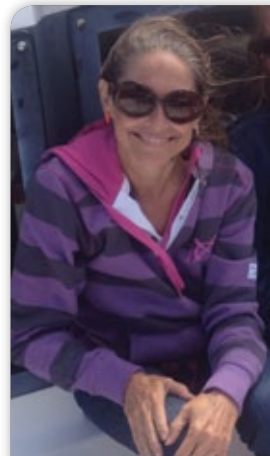
The moving inlet has been more than just an inconvenience to fishermen. To insure safe passage to the sea, the boat channel through the inlet must pass under the bridge's highest spans. That hasn't been easy since the inlet moves and the bridge doesn't. The state has had to constantly dredge the

channel to keep it in place and deep enough for the commercial fishing boats that use it. The job has become increasingly difficult and expensive in recent years.

Stop at the **Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge** (Map #16) at the south end of the bridge to stand on the other reason. The refuge is known for its crystal waters and vibrant bird populations. But walk out to the beach and you can stand on the big rock wall that the state built in the early 1990s to protect the southern approach to the Bonner Bridge. The so-called terminal groin did its job and kept the land here from migrating away from the bridge. But the island on the other side of the inlet keeps coming south, squeezing the channel and making the job of keeping it in place difficult, to say the least.

Maybe this problem will be solved when the state builds a new higher bridge, across the inlet. The debate about where to put the replacement bridge has raged for several years now. Some environmental groups and scientists urged the state to avoid the inlet

COASTAL FEDERATION FRIENDS ARE OUR NEIGHBORS



"I like knowing the Coastal Federation is quietly at work behind the scenes on our behalf. But it's also good to know that when I have a specific concern, they are just down the street and ready to help."

—ANGEL ELLIS KHOURY, MANTEO

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Photo by Sam Bland

altogether and build a long bridge out into Pamlico Sound to connect the two islands. The state opted instead to build the new bridge about where the current one sits. Construction will begin next year unless the courts say no.

Driving south through Pea Island, you can't help but notice the new "normal" of N.C. 12. Bright yellow bulldozers sling sand that the ocean dumps on the abused roadway with every storm tide, while lines of dump trucks

transport load after load to build dunes in a herculean effort to halt the encroaching ocean. Rows of sand bags, some as big as houses, hold power poles in place at Mirlo Beach ([Map #19](#)), while a piecemeal bridge supports traffic at the "new" New Inlet that Hurricane Isabel cut a couple a years ago. This is now the new standard as the state battles to keep the road open in the face of a rising sea.

While the tenuous system will continue to flounder in the face of the next coastal storm, the beaches lining N.C. 12 are worth the extra look. Stand beneath the temporary bridge of the New New Inlet, or float from sound to ocean. Count the paces from Mirlo Beach's sandbags to the ocean's edge, or count the houses pasted with condemnation notices, tottering precariously over the surf, as if a pin prick would send them reeling to the sea.

The fragility of the system is unmatched. Sure, it may not have been what you had in mind, but I'll bet you'll remember exploration of these oddities better than that nap on the beach. Crystal clear waters and sweltering beach days will most likely always be a part of Outer Banks summers. Will N.C. 12?

Ladd Bayliss is the federation's Northeast Coastal Advocate and a Dare County native.

OTHER PLACES WORTH VISITING

THE ALBATROSS FLEET ([Map #18](#))

Hatteras, a small village at the tip of Hatteras Island, is home to a colorful commercial and charter fishing fleet, including the first charter fishing boat brought to the Outer Banks in 1937. The Albatross I, II and III boats are still fished by Capt. Ernie Foster. Charter a boat to The Point, one of the best offshore fishing areas in the western Atlantic, or just go by the docks in the late afternoon to watch the boats bring in their catches and say hello. You'll be glad you did.

» www.albatrossfleet.com

ALLIGATOR RIVER GROWERS ([Map #1](#))

You've not had an onion until you've tasted a Mattamuskeet Sweet grown on this family farm near Englehard. Visitors are encouraged at the farm where other produce is sold.

» www.alligatorrivergrowers.com

ALLIGATOR RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE ([Map #9](#))

Spanning 28 miles north to south and 15 miles east to west, this refuge was established

in 1984 through a land deal brokered by The Nature Conservancy. In 1987, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released eight red wolves in the refuge. The release capped a decades-long search for a place large enough to re-establish a healthy Eastern wolf population. There is now a healthy population of wolves on the refuge. The refuge is also home to black bears, deer and an abundance of birds, especially in the winter when thousands of waterfowl congregate in Alligator River and nearby refuges.

» www.fws.gov/alligatorriver/

BUXTON WOODS ([Map #17](#))

South of Oregon Inlet in the crook of Hatteras Island, much of what is now the Buxton Woods portion of the N.C. Coastal Reserve was once slated to become a golfing community in the midst of the 3,000-acre maritime forest—the largest such woodland system in the state. Local residents worked closely with the N.C. Coastal Federation to save the tract. The state bought the property, creating the Buxton Woods tract of the N.C. Coastal Reserve. The

reserve now contains 968 acres and includes several hiking trails.

» www.nccoastalreserve.net/About-The-Reserve/Reserve-Sites/Buxton-Woods/84.aspx

DISMAL SWAMP STATE PARK ([Map #11](#))

The park in Camden County opened in 2008 and marked the first time that public access to the Great Dismal Swamp was made possible in North Carolina. Features of the park include the historic Dismal Swamp Canal, which is used regularly by boaters, and almost 17 miles of logging trails open to hiking and mountain biking through swamp forests. Be on the lookout for butterflies, which are plentiful at the park. Forty-three species have been found here.

» www.ncparks.gov/visit/parks/disw/main.php

FULL CIRCLE SEAFOOD MARKET ([Map #8](#))

Owned by long-time coastal advocate Willy Phillips, this shop on the eastern edge of Columbia offers the freshest local catch, along with the house specialty, smoked bluefish, and crab cakes made locally. In season it also sells local produce. Ask for a peek at the shedders, where crabs are held until they molt and





can be sold as soft shells. There's also a wind turbine, which Willy will gladly show off.

» [252-796-9696](tel:252-796-9696)

GOOSE CREEK STATE PARK (Map #4)

Giant old oaks draped in Spanish moss welcome you to this special world where broad, lazy Goose Creek joins the Pamlico River. A primitive camping area, picnic sites, swim beach and hiking and paddling trails offer a variety of ways to savor the tranquil surroundings at Goose Creek State Park.

» www.ncparks.gov/visit/parks/gocr/main.php

JOCKEY'S RIDGE (Map #13)

The state's most famous dune, Jockey's Ridge, owes its existence as a natural area to an Outer Banks conservation heroine, Carolista Fletcher Baum Golden. In 1973 when the ridge was slated for development, Golden took that most radical of conservation steps: She stood in front of a bulldozer that was preparing to carve a chunk out of the dune. The state subsequently obtained 426 acres of the dune and established Jockey's Ridge State Park in 1975. When you visit the park, make sure to walk back to its sound side. That's where the N.C. Coastal Federation is working with the park to restore salt marsh. You'll see an oyster bag sill and marsh plants there.

» www.jockeysridgestatepark.com

MATTAMUSKEET NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE (Map #2)

The state's largest natural lake is at the center of the 50,000-acre refuge that is the winter home of tens of thousands of migrating waterfowl. Bald eagles and other raptors can also be found here, along with one of the largest populations of black bear in the state and all four poisonous snakes found in North Carolina. Lake Mattamuskeet offers fine fishing for largemouth bass, bream, crappie and white perch, and some of the biggest blue crabs in the state can be caught out of the canals leading from the lake.

» www.fws.gov/mattamuskeet/

NAGS HEAD WOODS ECOLOGICAL PRESERVE (Map #12)

Just off the crowded business district of Kill Devil Hills, a residential street climbs a dune and drops into a diverse deciduous forest called Nags Head Woods. It's not the kind of place you'd expect to find on a barrier island. Tall ridges with dogwoods, oaks, and beeches drop precipitously into beautiful ponds.

» www.nature.org/nhw

N.C. COASTAL FEDERATION OFFICE (Map #30)

Come by the federation's regional office in Manteo to visit our rain gardens and the stormwater park that is adjacent to the office. We'd love to see you.

» www.nccoast.org

OCRACOKE FISH HOUSE AND WATERMEN'S MUSEUM (Map #19)

In 2006 the last fish house on Ocracoke went up for sale, threatening the survival of the island's centuries-old fishing culture. The nonprofit Ocracoke Foundation was formed to obtain grants to buy the fish house, and a Working Watermen's Association now operates the for-profit Ocracoke Seafood Co. Watch the boats unload their catch and buy fresh local crabs, shrimp and fish at the Seafood Company and browse the exhibits at the Watermen's Museum.

» www.ocracokewatermen.org

PALMETTO-PEARTREE PRESERVE (Map #7)

This 10,000-acre preserver was set aside by the Conservation Fund as habitat for threatened red-cockaded woodpeckers.

» palmettopeartree.org

POCOSIN ARTS (Map #6)

This nonprofit arts cooperative in downtown Columbia has a gallery with local arts and crafts, many for sale. It offers workshops, classes and retreats and brings in visiting artists for demonstrations.

» www.pocosinarts.org

POCOSIN LAKES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE (Map #5)

The 110,000 acres that make up the refuge were slated to be strip-mined for peat in the 1980s. Led by the then-new N.C. Coastal Federation, commercial fishermen, farmers and local residents fought the proposal. The peat miners eventually gave up and the land was donated to the federal government. It is now home to endangered red wolves and a host of birds, reptiles and mammals.

» www.fws.gov/pocosinlakes/

PORTSMOUTH VILLAGE (Map #20)

Step back in time and visit this historic fishing and shipping village on the north end of Portsmouth Island. The village was founded in 1753 and largely abandoned after a series of hurricanes at the turn of the 20th century. The last resident left in 1971. The site and buildings became part of Cape Lookout National Seashore five years later and are now on the National Register of Historic Places. Private ferries from Ocracoke will take you to the village.

» www.nps.gov/caloi/index.htm

SWAN QUARTER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE (Map #3)

The 16,400-acre refuge includes a waterfront dock that's a great place to gain access to Pamlico Sound or just stop for quick walk or picnic. The tens of thousands of waterfowl that use the refuge each winter faced a serious threat in 2004, when the Navy announced plans to build a practice landing field nearby. Public opposition forced the Navy to drop its plans.

» www.fws.gov/swanquarter/



COASTAL FEDERATION FRIENDS ARE FARMERS

"The Federation's work in Hyde County is a win-win for the environment and the farmers."

—MAC GIBBS, HYDE COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION DIRECTOR, ENGELHARD



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left: The federation is restoring Beacon Island, one of the only remaining brown pelican nesting sites in North Carolina. right: Portsmouth Island's historic church. Photos by Sam Bland

A Day Run to *Portsmouth & Parts Beyond*

BY PAT GARBER

OCRACOKE – Off the coast of eastern North Carolina lies the remote, uninhabited island of Portsmouth, renowned for birds, seashells, surf fishing and history. Getting there from neighboring Ocracoke requires a boat ride through the serene beauty of Ocracoke Inlet. Along the way, you may learn about pirates' lairs, Civil War forts and an effort to save one of the last remaining brown pelican rookeries in the state.

Part of the Cape Lookout National Seashore, Portsmouth Island has beautiful ocean beaches and soundside marshes that stretch its 22-mile length. Superior fishing, beachcombing and shelling await those who visit.

History also beckons. At its northern end, not far from the island of Ocracoke, stands what is left of a once vibrant and important port. Big sailing ships once stopped there for "lightering." Their cargo would be transferred to smaller boats that could safely transverse the shallow inlet and Pamlico and Core sounds. Commerce faded and fishing replaced shipping as the primary occupation for the islanders.

The U.S. Life-Saving Service opened a station on Portsmouth in 1894, which played a vital role in the community for 50 years. Steadily the population declined. Only 17 residents lived on the island in 1956. The last two left in 1971.

The National Park Service took over the island when the seashore was created five years later. Now a ghost town, the village is maintained as a cultural resource, with a visitors'

center and public access to the old church, the lifesaving station, and several of the old homes.

There is no ferry service to the old village on the northern end of Portsmouth, but two brothers, Rudy and Donald Austin, carry passengers from Ocracoke to Portsmouth on a regular basis. They captain two 24-foot skiffs, each capable of carrying up to 15 people. The ride to Portsmouth takes about 15 to 20 minutes, but it is much more than just a boat ride. The Austins, who grew up on Ocracoke, are a wealth of information about all things related to the islands, and they are more than happy to share their knowledge. Don't expect a canned speech, though. The Austins are born storytellers, and they entertain their customers with their wit and knowledge.

Rudy, the elder brother, explains that their father, Junius Austin, began the business years ago. He had, for 20 years, been the caretaker of the Portsmouth Life-Saving Station, which became a hunting and fishing club after it closed. Junius sometimes took people to

Portsmouth in his skiff, but business increased and prospered after the seashore was established. Rudy and Donald took over the business after their father died. Rudy's son, Wade, sometimes helps out.

Now they run the boats seven days a week in the summer, weather permitting, and on demand at other times. "But I'm not going over in any thunder squalls," Rudy said emphatically.

They also take out school and church groups, sometimes using both boats. At the end of December each year they transport assorted bird watchers to the island for the annual Christmas Bird Count, a nationwide citizen-science bird monitoring project.

"They're an interesting group," says Rudy. "Some come from as far away as Michigan."

Every other year the brothers ferry people across for the Portsmouth Homecoming, sponsored by the Friends of Portsmouth Island. A lot of people go, including the descendants of the residents who once lived there. "It's a great way to encourage young people to get



Photo by Sam Bland

involved," Rudy notes.

As the boat leaves Silver Lake Harbor in Ocracoke, the captain might mention that the harbor, then known as the "Creek," was shallow and unnavigable before the Navy dredged it for its ships in World War II. He might follow up by describing what happened when the war came to the Outer Banks, with German submarines attacking merchant ships in plain sight of the islanders.

Then he'll point out Hog Shoal, alive at low tide with a variety of water birds. He may steer the boat close to Beacon Island, famous for the number of brown pelicans, terns, and other sea birds which nest there each spring. Beacon Island is itself rich with history, having been the site of the Civil War fort, Fort Ocracoke, which was burned by federal troops in 1861. Erosion from storms has eaten away at the island, and it is now the focus of a joint project by the N.C. Coastal Federation and Audubon N.C., which are using oyster shells to build a protective reef around it. James Barrie Gaskill, an Ocracoke native and a federation board member, is leading the effort.

In the distance, you can see what is left of Shell Castle, once a significant island in itself. Wharves and warehouses, used by the ships that passed through Ocracoke Inlet, lined its shores. Before the Ocracoke Lighthouse was built in 1823, there was a wooden lighthouse there. The island, which built up around a huge

oyster reef, has almost disappeared.

"Things change," says Rudy. "Everything changes."

The boat ride may include a swing by Ocracoke's South Point, with a chance to see Blackbeard's hideout, Springer's Point, and Teach's Hole, where he anchored his ship. The 122-acre Springer's Point Preserve is owned by the N.C. Coastal Land Trust and boasts over a mile of estuarine shoreline, parts of which are eroding because of waves generated across Pamlico Sound and boat wake from a nearby navigation channel. Local people, the land trust and the federation are working to restore the site.

Whatever route it takes, the ride is sure to be interesting and informative. "We try to educate the people on birds, turtles, dolphins, shells, whatever they want to know," Rudy says

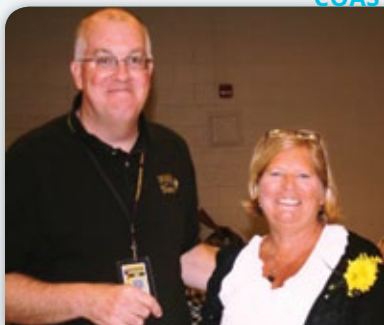
Approaching Portsmouth, the boat slows to navigate the shallow and winding channel. The steeple of the church is visible in the distance, as well as Haulover Dock, now under repair by

the Park Service. The captain hands out maps and directions to guide visitors to the beach and the village, with instructions to be back in a little more than three hours. For those who want to go to the beach, Rudy says with a laugh, "I tell them walk to the ocean and turn left. If you turn right, we may not see you again for days!"

To take the ride to Portsmouth Island, book ahead and then come to the dock behind the Ocracoke Waterman's Museum, next to the Community Store in the heart of the village. The round trip ride to Portsmouth costs \$20 a person, and the entire excursion lasts four hours. Be sure to bring bug spray and water if the weather is warm, and be prepared for a memorable, rewarding adventure.

Naturalist Pat Garber washed up on Ocracoke Island in 1984. She immersed herself in the island's natural environment and later wrote a series of award-winning columns based on her experiences for the "Island Breeze." She later published the columns as a collection of essays, called "Ocracoke Wild."

COASTAL FEDERATION FRIENDS ARE OUR TEACHERS



"The Coastal Federation provides me extra support and additional resources as I teach the 8th grade students at Manteo Middle school."

—MARY ANN HODGES, MANTEO

join us: SCAN OR VISIT NCCOAST.ORG



Coastal Cooking, Local-style



BY LIZ BIRO

Fresh from the water, dropped into a pan and seasoned with salt and pepper.

Ask a native coastal North Carolinian what's the best way to cook fresh seafood and this is the recipe you're likely to get.

With the elaborate dishes that inventive chefs create at hundreds of restaurants lining the N.C. shore these days, it's hard to remember why simple, traditional seafood recipes like roasted oysters or mullet and sweet potato stew endure – until you sample their pure, delicious seafood flavor.

Letha Henderson, in the cookbook *Coastal Carolina Cooking* (University of North Carolina Press, 1988), remembered fondly her father boiling shrimp “just like they came out of the river, with a pod of red pepper and some salt.” The Hubert woman told of fuss-free dipping sauces: melted butter or black pepper-spiked vinegar.

The dish seems primitive compared to sautéed shrimp that Chef James Rivenbark of Wrightsville Beach's South Beach Grill layers with herb-crusting eggplant, Tasso ham and fire-roasted red peppers. He drizzles the stack in roasted garlic, boursin and asiago sauce.

At the Outer Banks' colorful Port O' Call restaurant, a flounder fillet might arrive stuffed with “crab meat imperial” and finished with sherry lobster cream sauce.

The late Mabel Smith, a Salter Path native, crowned flounder with all kinds of sauces, too, when she cooked in famous Carteret County restaurant kitchens such as the former Ottis's Fish House in Morehead City. But Smith thought the best flounder recipe was her mother's combination of fish baked with potatoes and onions.

Mom added only one garnish: “She would take a real pretty tomato and lay about three thin slices on top,” Smith said.

Coastal North Carolinians' preference for modest seafood meals dates back to the Algonquin tribes that populated the Carolina shores for thousands of years before settlers arrived.

Those Native Americans in the mid-1500s offered Spaniards who landed at South Carolina fresh oysters steamed over an open fire until their shells popped. This cooking method never went out of style, as evidenced by the hundreds of “oyster roasts” staged every fall and winter in North Carolina's coastal plain.

Settlers who later lived on remote barrier islands relied on what they could catch, what they could grow and Motherland cooking styles, said Kathy Hart, co-author with Nancy Davis of *Coastal Carolina Cooking*.

Hart and Davis interviewed native cooks all along the state's coast to document traditional recipes. Baked and stewed seafood dishes incorporating potatoes and onions came up a lot, including “baked flounder” like Smith's mother made.

Fishermen were also farmers, Hart notes. Potatoes and onions thrived in the coast's sandy soils and were familiar vegetables.

“They were isolated for many years, so they didn't have access to things like fresh herbs,” Hart said of barrier island residents. “Plus, a lot of them were Scottish-Irish immigrants, so they were used to using those (potatoes and onions).”

Seafood offerings did not start to change until the 1970s and '80s, when a huge influx of tourists and new residents altered the culinary landscape. With more food-wise and affluent

Your membership helps us restore and protect wetlands: 'no wetlands, no seafood'

visitors arriving each year, chefs responded with increasingly daring dishes, author Elizabeth Wiegand wrote in *The Outer Banks Cookbook: Recipes and Traditions from North Carolina's Barrier Islands* (Globe Pequot, 2008).

“Early Bankers didn't eat deep-water fish like grouper or dolphinfish (mahi), but rather fish from the sounds, like drum and mullet, and they had ample supplies of oysters, clams and crabs. They considered shrimp a nuisance, a ‘bug,’ which they traded on the mainland as fertilizer for sacks of corn...,” Wiegand wrote.

The dividing line between humble, traditional seafood recipes and over-the-top contemporary ensembles is easy to see. Disparate palates, however, always agree on the formula for one dish: crab cakes.

No matter if they're served in a five-star restaurant or dockside seafood shack, the crab cakes that English settlers introduced to the colonies should be so meaty that the cakes hardly hold together.

That's the advice of Joyce Taylor, author of *Mariner's Menu: 30 Years of Fresh Seafood Ideas* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003). Seasonings in her Deluxe Crab Cakes – dashes of cayenne, white pepper, dry mustard, Tabasco and parsley – hardly seem deluxe. The flavor of the crab is what should shine, Taylor said.

One sweet bite and tasters ask if Taylor has added sugar to the formula.

“Nope,” she said beaming. “That's the crab meat.”

Mabel Smith's Baked Flounder

SERVES 6

- Butter or lard
- ¼ cup diced salt pork
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 3- to 4-pound whole flounder, dressed but not filleted
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 to 5 medium potatoes, sliced crosswise and cut into 1/8-inch thick slices
- 2 medium onions, sliced thinly
- Salt
- Black pepper
- Water
- 1 tomato, sliced thinly

Grease a large, shallow baking dish with butter or lard and set aside.

Fry salt pork over medium-low heat until meat releases its oil and pork is crisp.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Meanwhile, place flour in a large, shallow dish. Sprinkle flounder with salt and black pepper on both sides. Flour both sides of fish, shaking off any excess. Place fish in greased baking dish. Surround fish with potatoes and onions, seasoning with salt and pepper as the vegetables are stacked around the fish. Sprinkle salt pork and drizzle its drippings over the fish. Add water to the pan to a depth of ½ inch.

Bake, uncovered, at 400 degrees for 15 minutes. Reduce oven setting to 350 degrees and continue baking until potatoes are tender and fish is white and flakey, about 20 minutes. Remove from oven and garnish fish with tomato slices.





James Barrie Gaskill is an Ocracoke fisherman and a board member of the Coastal Federation.

Real Tastes of the Coast

NORTHEAST

Basnight's Lone Cedar Cafe, Nags Head

In spite of its size, the restaurant still feels like a family restaurant. Perhaps it's the home made cornbread and collards. (Be sure and ask if they have some that day - it's not always on the menu.) Fishermen deliver their catch daily to the restaurant's docks and it can be prepared most any way you like it. The view is spectacular, overlooking Roanoke Sound, and you might get a look at the osprey that return to their nest every year.

» www.lonecedarcafe.com

Big Trout Marina, Engelhard

An institution in Hyde County. Great down-home, country cooking, featuring local fish served either inside or on picnic tables on the dock. Cash only.

Cypress Grill, Jamesville

Typically open from January through April, this historic restaurant bases its schedule (and charm) on the historic herring runs of the Roanoke River. Herring is a depleted fishery in North Carolina, however, so they serve up sustainable seafood and delicious homemade pies.

Eduardo's Taco Stand, Ocracoke

Great tacos, locally caught fish. Ten-dollar burritos that will fill you up for a whole day. Really good guacamole. Cash only.

Full Circle Crab Company and Call of the Wild, Columbia

As far as we're concerned, this is high dining. Love Willy's seafood trailer set up by the road side next to the Crab Co. I've been several times for lunch and would drive miles out of the way to sit on

a picnic table and enjoy a freshly-cooked crab cake sandwich. They also have shrimp and oyster burgers, scallop kabobs and great onion rings. It's seasonal, so check out their web site before going if you plan to eat. The seafood market is open year round.

» www.fullcirclecrabco.com

O'Neal's Sea Harvest, Wanchese

Open year round, this fish house/restaurant hybrid guarantees the best quality. Whether looking for lunch, or a piece of seafood to cook for yourself, O'Neal's is a one-stop shop. You'll certainly come away with a better understanding of where your food comes from.

CENTRAL

The Chef & the Farmer, Kinston

While not technically on the coast, this restaurant in a remodeled 100-year-old mule stable in downtown is all about the food of the coastal plain. Working with a small network of local farmers and fish dealers, Chef Vivian Howard, who grew up on a tobacco and hog farm in Deep Run, creates a menu that changes almost every week and highlights the region's culinary traditions and its agricultural bounty. Everything on the menu comes from within 100 miles of the restaurant. Savor a two-inch-thick grilled pork chop that came from a locally-raised, organically-fed hog and remember what real meat tastes like. The restaurant has been recognized as one country's best, and Howard has been twice nominated for the James Beard Award. Be warned: It's pricey to eat here and it could take a couple of hours from

appetizer to dessert but you'll be rewarded with a true dining experience.

» chefandthefarmer.com

El's Drive-In, Morehead City

For 59 years, El's has remained largely unchanged since it was one of the first fast-food restaurants in Carteret County. It serves homemade slaw on top of shrimp and oyster burgers, and plenty of hotdogs, and other fried foods. More than 500 vehicles crowd out an equal number of seagulls each day as stalwart waitresses place trays on your car windows full of fried foods.

The Island Grill, Atlantic Beach

This beach hideaway provides casual but fine dining opportunities that locals love. It serves fresh local seafood, vegetables, fruits and berries, all of which are combined to create specials such as fresh tuna, "martini" style scallops, and tasting sauces and sides. After dinner, enjoy a walk on the beach just out the front door of the restaurant.

» igrestaurant.net

Nicky's of Swansboro

A lot of their fresh seafood comes from down the road at Clyde Phillips Seafood - right off the boat. The crab cakes and flounder are especially good. If it's offered when you are there, do not pass up their seafood lasagna. It's in a rich, decadent sauce and different from anything you've had before. The restaurant is owned by a local family, and they greet, cook, wait tables, tend bar and make you feel right at home. More information and specials are posted on their Facebook page.

Moore's Olde Tyme Barbecue, New Bern

Don't let the corny name fool you, this is the real deal when it comes to eastern-style N.C. barbecue. The Moore family has been serving 'cue in various locations around New Bern since 1945. The pork is slow-roasted every day over a wood-fired pit as are the succulent pork ribs. The barbecued and fried chicken is also very good, and the hushpuppies actually have diced onions in them. They also serve shrimp burgers and flounder and speckled trout plates for those so inclined.

» [www.mooresbarbecue.com/Moores/Welcome.html](http://www.mooresbarbecue.com/Moores>Welcome.html)

T&W's Oyster Bar, Peletier

No imported oysters here, so you can only find fresh oysters at their casual bar when oyster season is open in North Carolina. A special treat is the T & W "Rooster" - a plump, raw oyster on a saltine topped with a jalapeno, hot sauce and a dab of horseradish. It's a bit out of the way (off Hwy 58 about six miles north of the Emerald Isle Bridge) but if you love oysters - steamed or fried - it's worth the trip. Their menu includes a good assortment of local seafood. Do not dress up, the locals might laugh at you. They have a Facebook page.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14...



Places worth visiting . . .

NORTHEAST COAST

- 1 Alligator River Growers
- 2 Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge
- 3 Swan Quarter National Wildlife Refuge
- 4 Goose Creek State Park
- 5 Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge
- 6 Pocosin Arts
- 7 Palmetto-Peartree Preserve
- 8 Full Circle Seafood
- 9 Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge
- 10 N.C. Coastal Federation Office
- 11 Dismal Swamp State Park
- 12 Nags Head Woods Ecological Preserve
- 13 Jockey's Ridge State Park
- 14 Oregon Inlet Fishing Center
- 15 Herbert C. Bonner Bridge
- 16 Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge
- 17 Buxton Woods
- 18 Albatross Fleet
- 19 Ocracoke Fish House & Watermen's Museum
- 20 Portsmouth Village

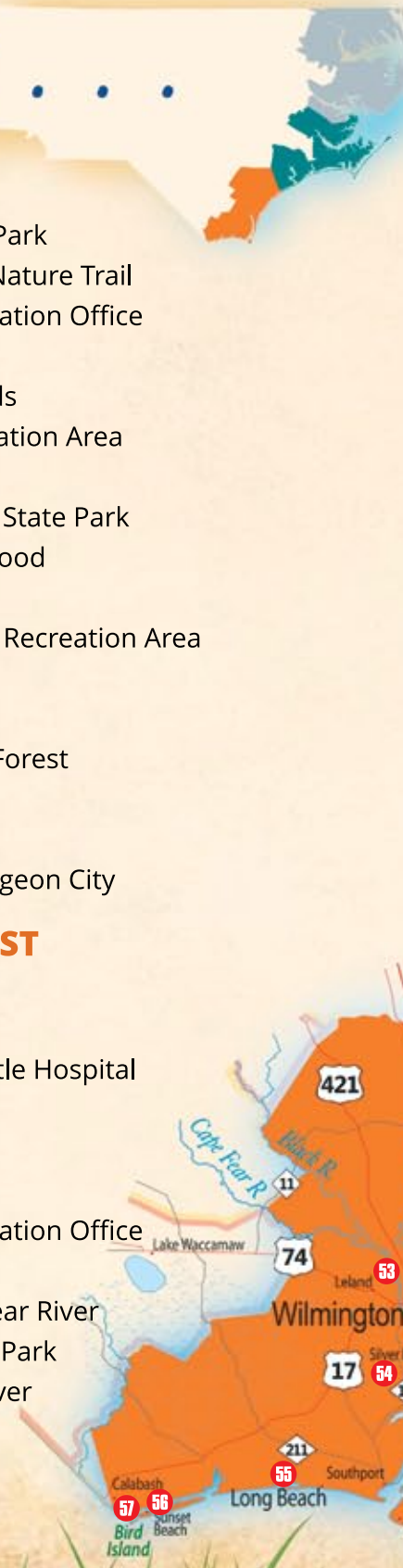
CENTRAL COAST

- 21 Cedar Island Boat Ramp
- 22 Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge
- 23 Thorofare Creek Boat Ramp
- 24 Core Sound Waterfowl Museum & History Center
- 25 Cape Lookout National Seashore Visitors Center
- 26 Cape Lookout National Seashore
- 27 Rachel Carson Reserve

- 28 Fort Macon State Park
- 29 Hoop Pole Creek Nature Trail
- 30 N.C. Coastal Federation Office
- 31 Patsy Pond Trail
- 32 Emerald Isle Woods
- 33 Cedar Point Recreation Area
- 34 Huggins Island
- 35 Hammocks Beach State Park
- 36 Clyde Phillips Seafood
- 37 Jones Island
- 38 Haywood Landing Recreation Area
- 39 Catfish Lake
- 40 Great Lake
- 41 Croatan National Forest
- 42 Brices Creek
- 43 Neusiok Trail
- 44 Riverworks at Sturgeon City

SOUTHEAST COAST

- 45 Permuda Island
- 46 Morris Landing
- 47 Karen Beasley Turtle Hospital
- 48 New Topsail Inlet
- 49 Rich Inlet
- 50 Mason Inlet
- 51 N.C. Coastal Federation Office
- 52 Airlie Gardens
- 53 Northeast Cape Fear River
- 54 Brunswick Nature Park
- 55 Lockwood Folly River
- 56 Tubbs Inlet
- 57 Bird Island



SPECTACULAR COAST



Atlantic Ocean



North Carolina Coastal Federation

Working Together for a Healthy Coast





Nothing beats fresh shrimp. Photos by Sam Bland

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

SOUTHEAST

Holland's Shelter Creek Restaurant, Burgaw

Waterfront dining usually means an ocean view. But this restaurant, east of Burgaw on N.C. 53, sits above Shelter Creek, a branch of the Northeast Cape Fear River. Open for 24 years, the building's been there for 30. It started off as a bait and tackle shop with a gas pump, but the Holland family eventually decided that serving food was the way to go.

"The view from the dining room is tranquil," said head waitress Dana Greenway. "You don't feel

trapped, even if you're stuck at work. I look out the windows and see fish jumping and squirrels playing in the trees."

The kitchen staff cooks up down-home Southern food. "People come from all around for our catfish – fried or grilled," Greenway said. "After 10 years, I still love it. And, we sell a lot of frog legs."

In addition to the great view and the food, just below the restaurant they also rent kayaks, canoes, flat bottom boats, RV spaces and cabins for those who want to further enjoy the scenic setting.

Phun Seafood Bar, Wilmington

The restaurant partners with local fishermen and farmers. Some favorite dishes are the pork belly buns and the lemongrass noodle bowl with

whatever the fish of the day is. It's always delicious. The chef goes above and beyond to source locally.

» www.phunrestaurant.com

Riverview Café, Snead's Ferry

A great place to eat seafood in a relaxed place with great views of the water and a nearby fish house. Open since 1946, fresh seafood includes what's running in the river including spot, bluefish, croaker, shrimp, and flounder.

Rx Restaurant, Wilmington

This new restaurant is in the restored historic Halls Drug Store building in the Castle Street District of downtown. The menu changes daily to take advantage of seasonal, local produce and seafood. The restaurant also offers N.C. beers on tap.

» www.rxwilmington.com

Greenlands, Bolivia,

Heather and Henry Burkert of Greenlands Farm believe that food should be from the farm to the fork, fresh and free from harmful additives. They practice sustainable organic agriculture. Their breads are made with organic flours that have no preservatives or trans fats. Their salad dressings are pure and simply free of gobbledygook that you find in most prepared dressings. Most importantly, they believe in supporting their neighbors, community and local businesses. Enjoy! Eat well, live well! ón bhfeirm (on the farm).

Causeway Café, Wrightsville Beach

Local Wrightsville Beach eatery that is an icon: Owner David Monaghan is famous for yelling out patrons names so loud it will scare the wits out of you. Fresh local seafood, great hamburgers, and most of all, the best place in Wrightsville Beach for breakfast.

Catch Seafood, Wilmington

Federation supporter and nationally recognized chef Keith Rhodes has hosted events for the Federation and has been on the TV show Top Chef. Restaurant is housed in a nondescript strip mall on Market Street but serves up some of the best seafood in the region.

Jebby's, Hampstead

This local grill and sports bar serves up local seafood, burgers and daily specials like seafood chowder and down to earth meals your mother would love. Clams and oysters from Topsail Sound. Local hangout for folks in Hampstead.

Britt's Doughnuts, Carolina Beach

Doughnuts have been made the same way on this boardwalk doughnut shop since 1938. Four products: Glazed doughnuts, milk, coffee and soft drinks.

Seafood Markets:

Nature's Way Seafood on Sloop Point Road between Surf City and Wilmington. Owner farms oysters and clams while his wife sells goat cheese and goat soap products from the goats they raise on their farm.

ATLANTIC BEACH'S HIDDEN TREASURE

BY TODD MILLER, N.C. COASTAL FEDERATION EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ATLANTIC BEACH – Step back in time when you visit the N.C. Coastal Federation nature trail ([Map #29](#)) next to the Atlantic Station Shopping Center. Known as the “central park” of this resort town, this preserved 30-acre maritime forest is about one percent of the town and pretty much all that’s left of its natural environment.

The federation bought the property in 1997 with a \$2.5 million grant from the N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund. It was the first land acquired using the newly established fund, and the purchase brought to an end a long and controversial debate over the fate of this property.

For many generations, this beautiful maritime forest had been called Hoop Hole Creek because of the historical marker posted along N.C. 58 or Fort Macon Boulevard. Union forces led by Gen. John G. Parke landed here March 29, 1862, during the Fort Macon campaign.

Many local high school students also knew it as the place to go park on dates. Back in the 1960s, a paved road was built in a failed attempt to develop the land, and it became a convenient lovers’ lane.

Investors from near Charlotte bought the property in 1984, and made plans to build 100 condos and a 100-boat marina. Their plans would have destroyed the thick canopy of live oak trees and polluted the creek that’s rich in clean oysters and fish.

The federation successfully contested the Coastal Area Management Act permit. This battle involved an amazing cast of characters, including two young lawyers who represented the federation *pro bono*. They then worked for Terry Sanford, a former governor who later to become a U.S. senator. These lawyers were Charles Meeker, who went on to become a long-time mayor of Raleigh, and Steve Levitas, who became deputy secretary of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources under Gov. Jim Hunt.

Also involved was Paul Wilms. He was director of the N.C. Division Water Quality before

he later took the job as the head of the N.C. Homebuilders Association. Wilms wrote a key memo that resulted in the permit being revoked for the project. He said it would degrade water quality because of polluted stormwater and illicit waste discharges from boats.

The battle over this project paved the way for adoption of much tighter state rules to control polluted stormwater runoff and for the proper siting of new marinas to protect shellfish water that are still in effect today.

Ten years went by, and then in 1996, the same investors applied for a new state permit to build 50 condos and a 50-boat marina. This was the same year that lawmakers created the trust fund. The federation offered to buy the property if it could acquire the grant funds. The developers agreed to the potential purchase, and a year later the property was saved as a water quality buffer.

One of the most surreal days of my life was when I visited the land the first time after we bought it. In a heavy downpour, I had a ball pulling up survey stakes that laid out the planned development. It was great fun to do that legally.

Since then, the property has been zoned

“conservation” by Atlantic Beach. The federation built a nature trail that includes a boardwalk that doubles as a dam to hold back polluted runoff so that it will infiltrate into the ground and not pour directly into the adjacent creek. Thousands of school children visit the property each year to learn about the water quality and the adjacent estuary.

One of the most vexing management problems we faced was what to call the property. Local historian Jim Willis altered the historical marker next to the property with black electrical tape from Hole to Pole. He says its real name refers to a piece of fishing equipment called a “hoop pole” that is used to bail fish out of a purse seine. None of the historical maps ever showed a creek named Hoop Hole, and that name came most likely from a printing error when the historical marker was made.

The nature trail is open for public use during daylight hours. It’s a wonderful place to escape the urban sprawl, and to see the island as it existed long ago. There is a guided nature trail brochure at the trailhead. Be prepared for some bugs in the summer.

COASTAL FEDERATION FRIENDS ARE LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS



“My affiliation with the Coastal Federation has enriched my life and community by expanding my network of friends and business acquaintances through social, educational and fundraising events. It also provides volunteer opportunities for both me and my daughter, reinforcing the value of community service to her.”

—APRIL CLARK, SECOND WIND ECO-TOURS
BUSINESS OWNER, SWANSBORO

join us: SCAN OR VISIT NCCOAST.ORG



Explore the Wonders of the White Oak with the Coastal Federation

BY ANNITA BEST

SWANSBORO – No matter what, it's sometimes hard to find an activity that everyone will enjoy, even in a beautiful coastal community such as this one. That's just one of the many reasons to cruise the marshes of the White Oak River this summer with the N.C. Coastal Federation and Hammocks Beach State Park.

Each cruise is different because you never know what you'll see on any given day, and they're perfect for vacationers and locals.

Cruises are planned for June 4, June 18, July 2, July 16, July 30 and Aug. 13. Each cruise begins at 11 a.m. (please arrive by 10:45 a.m.) at **Hammocks Beach State Park (Map #35)** in Swansboro and will be led by federation and park staff. Space is limited on the covered ferry, and reservations are required. There is no charge for the two-hour program, but the ferry ride costs \$5. All ages are welcome, though the program is geared towards adults and older children.

Sam Bland, a federation naturalist, narrates the cruises. He's a retired state park ranger and park superintendent, who spent most of his 30 years with the park division at Hammocks Beach. His specialties were resource management and environmental education. Needless to say, he knows these marshes like the back of his hand. He provides a history of the Swansboro area and barrier islands, he discusses the landscape and ways to preserve it and can identify almost any species of local wildlife and vegetation.

Karen and Tom Naftzger moved to Emerald Isle three years ago from Ohio where they lived on Lake Erie. They're retired and now spend

most of their time volunteering for various organizations such as the N.C. Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores and the N.C. Maritime Museum in Beaufort. They attended one of the cruises last year and said they'd definitely be back.

"I really enjoyed it," said Karen. "It's nice to get the background (of the area). I'd do it again."

Tom also found the cruise informative and appreciated the perspective from the ferry, where you are able to get a different view of the islands.

The covered ferry winds its way through the estuaries in and around the White Oak River and Bogue Sound, where Bland begins by discussing issues that affect the local water quality, such as stormwater runoff, fertilizer use, roads, parking lots and manmade bulkheads.

He also uses the opportunity to discuss what can be done to help. "There is good news," he said. "There are things you can do."

One of the stops along the cruise is the site of a joint venture between the park and the federation, in which 40 percent of the impervious surfaces were removed and replaced with "rain gardens," resulting in a large decrease in stormwater runoff from one of the park's parking areas.

Your membership buys oyster shells and marsh grasses to restore beautiful places like these.

The cruise continues with a history lesson about the Native Americans who first lived along the river and left remnants of their pottery along its shores.

"The first person to actually own the land here was Tobias Knight, who was friends with Blackbeard the Pirate," Bland adds. "Tobias worked for the government and was also the harbor master in Bath."

The discussion goes on to include subsequent owners and uses of the islands such as a whale processing area and a Confederate fort during the Civil War and submarine lookouts during both World Wars.

"Bear Island and all the islands are constantly changing and moving. There are sand dunes as tall as 60 feet that show dynamic movement due to storm affects," Bland said. "Every plant and animal here has adapted to the salt and salt spray, wind and temperatures."

He also talked about many of the various animals, birds and insects you may see along the islands, such as the rare butterfly the Crystal Skipper, which can only be found in two locations in the world—Bear Island, which is part of the state park, and Bogue Banks. Also, the beautiful painted bunting makes its home in the area and can be seen during a particularly fortuitous trip.

A final stop is **Huggins Island (Map #34)**, which is now part of Hammocks Beach. The island was farmed in the 1930s, Bland explains, because of its frost-free winters. It's now a maritime preserve that attracts ospreys and bald eagles among many other creatures. There is also the site of an earthen Civil War fort—Fort Huggins—that Confederates built on the island to defend Bogue Inlet and Swansboro.

Some trips will take you to **Jones Island (Map #37)** in the middle of the lower river. The federation bought most of the uninhabited island after it was threatened by development and gave it to the state to be added to Hammocks Beach. The park and the federation now have an environmental education center on the island, which has become a very active outdoor classroom where students and adults help restore marshes and oyster beds. See the federation's web site, www.nccoast.org, for a list of activities on the island this summer to register for a cruise this summer.

COASTAL FEDERATION FRIENDS ARE STUDENTS

"I have enjoyed learning how the marsh grass grows and how it helps the environment. The Coastal Federation has been a fun place to meet people who are interested in preserving the local environment."

—MADISON DESMONE, CROATAN HIGH SCHOOL, CLASS OF 2016





OTHER PLACES WORTH VISITING

BRICE CREEK (Map #24)

Brices Creek in the northeastern tip of the Croatan National Forest is a good paddling destination. The blackwater creek winds through a freshwater swamp on its way to the Trent River. The Craven County Recreation and Parks Department has a map on its web site.

» www.cravencounty.com/parks/paddle/trip13.cfm

CAPE LOOKOUT NATIONAL SEASHORE (Map #25, 26)

The seashore consists of 56 miles of undeveloped beach stretched over four barrier islands from Ocracoke Inlet on the northeast to Beaufort Inlet on the southeast. It's a great place to pitch a tent and get away from it all. Even cell phone service is sporadic. Climb the lighthouse (Map #26) and tour the museum in the adjacent lightkeeper's house. The Visitors Center (Map #25) on Harkers Island offers exhibits and map.

» www.nps.gov/cal/index.htm

CATFISH AND GREAT LAKES (Map #39, 40)

A number of freshwater lakes dot the interior of the Croatan National Forest. The best known are Catfish and Great Lakes. Canoes or kayaks are best for these shallow lakes, which support a decent population of alligators.

CEDAR ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE (Map #2)

U.S. 70 leaves the pinewoods and rises atop a causeway through a vast plain of black needlerush. Almost all of the refuge's 15,000 acres are salt marsh, making it the largest tract of unaltered, irregularly flooded salt marsh in the state. Launch your shallow-draft boat,

canoe or kayak at public boat ramps where N.C. 12 crosses Thoroughfare Creek (Map #23) and at the end of Lola Road on Cedar Island (Map #21). Glide along and look for marsh wrens, Virginia rails and other birds. Bring along a light spinning rod because the red drum fishing can be spectacular in the late spring and summer.

» library.fws.gov/Refuges/cedar_island98_lowres.pdf

CEDAR POINT RECREATION AREA (Map #33)

From here you can explore the broad, saltwater estuaries of the lower White Oak River. The elevated trail offers expansive views of the river's saltwater marshes. Launch your canoe or kayak at the boat ramp for a serene paddle up sheltered Boathouse Creek or head for the river to catch red drum, flounder and speckled trout. You can even pitch your tent or park your RV at the full-service campground.

CLYDE PHILLIPS SEAFOOD (Map #36)

The pink and white building between the bridges heading into Swansboro is among the last of its kind. Waterfront seafood markets like this are fast disappearing all along the N.C.

coast. Rising costs, declining seafood prices and the high value of waterfront property are combining to threaten the very existence of the traditional seafood market. Clyde Phillips, at this location for 50 years, is the last one in Swansboro. Here you'll find shrimp, live blue crabs and local fish species, such as Virginia mullet, striped mullet and red drum. All come from Clyde's boats, which are tied up at the dock behind the store, or bought from local commercial fishermen.

» 910-326-4468

CORE SOUND WATERFOWL MUSEUM AND HERITAGE CENTER

(Map #24)

Any exploration of Down East Carteret County begins here. The museum at the end of the road on Harkers Island has striking displays of the traditional craft of decoy carving. Each of the 13 small communities that make up Down East also has its own exhibit. It's there that you can look through family scrapbooks, letters and photographs and get a real feel for the culture of the region.

» www.coresound.com



CROATAN NATIONAL FOREST (Map #41)

The 160,000-acre forest may not be for everyone. It's buggy in the summer, and its woods can seem impenetrable year round, but it's an island of green in a sea of asphalt and concrete between New Bern and Morehead City. You'll find miles of hiking and equestrian trails, great stands of mature longleaf pines, acres of wildflowers, endangered red-cockaded

COASTAL FEDERATION FRIENDS ARE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS



"The Coastal Federation is a great resource and partner for local governments. The federation has helped us with stormwater planning, grant funding and dune plantings. They've even helped us bring tourists to town for a cycling event."

—TRACE COOPER, MAYOR OF ATLANTIC BEACH

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Camp Lejeune marines and other volunteers work hard, have fun and make a difference.

woodpeckers and other birds, lakes and rivers for canoeing and kayaking, hunting for deer and wild turkey and places to fish. Forest headquarters, 252-638-5628

» www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc

EMERALD ISLE WOODS (Map #32)

Emerald Isle received a state grant to buy 43 acres along Bogue Sound to build a public park that could also be used to control stormwater. The result is Emerald Isle Woods off Coast Guard Road. The park has several hiking trails, a bathhouse, picnic shelter, and floating dock on Bogue Sound.

FORT MACON STATE PARK (Map #28)

The park in Atlantic Beach offers the usual amenities of a state park as well as wonderful views of ships coming through Beaufort Inlet on the way to the state port in Morehead City.

HAMMOCKS BEACH STATE PARK (Map #15)

Hop on the ferry to visit Bear Island, an uninhabited barrier island that is part of the state park system. The birding here is exceptional and the surf fishing can be magnificent, especially when the big red drum hit the beach in the fall. The park and the N.C. Coastal Federation offer marsh cruises throughout the summer.

» www.ncparks.gov/visit/parks/habe/main.php

HAYWOOD LANDING RECREATION AREA (Map #18)

The recreation area in the Croatan National Forest on N.C. 58 south of Maysville offers a

glimpse of the White Oak River that few people see. Here you can launch your canoe, kayak or shallow-draft boat to explore the freshwater river. You'll quickly see why the river's northern reaches qualify as among America's most scenic and wild rivers. A boat or kayak trip here is like traveling back in time. No houses mar the river's banks. No honking cars or roar of outboard engines. Just the river's symphony – birds, wind, splashing fish.



Coastal Federation Summer Camp fun on Jones Island

HUGGINS ISLAND (Map #34)

The rugged island in the mouth of the White Oak River is part of Hammocks Beach State Park. The federation helped the park buy the island after fending off plans to develop it into an exclusive residential subdivision.

N.C. COASTAL FEDERATION (Map #30)

The federation main office in Ocean has maps and displays of the organization's habitat restoration work, a nature library for members and a world-class seashell collection. People can also buy native plants year-round from the federation's garden center.

» www.nccoast.org

NEUSIOK TRAIL (Map #43)

You can hike the entire trail or jump on and off at various places along it. The northern terminus at the Pine Cliff Recreation Area may be the most popular. The 2.5-mile section meanders through the woods and along the sandy beaches of the Neuse River. There are some low hills here but nothing that should prove too taxing.

» www.neusioktrail.org/index.html
» www.clis.com/canoe2/neusioktrail.html

PATSY POND TRAIL (Map #31)

The Patsy Pond Trail in the Croatan National Forest courses through a magnificent longleaf pine forest and around natural ponds and sinkholes. The N.C. Coastal Federation maintains the trail and you can download a trail guide from our Web site.

» www.nccoast.org

RACHEL CARSON RESERVE (Map #27)

It takes a little bit of effort to get to this string of small islands and marshes that parallel the Beaufort waterfront in Carteret County, but you'll be rewarded for the effort by experiencing an undisturbed estuarine habitat that is a center of marine research and education. Accessible only by boat, the reserve is a great place to hike, kayak and look for birds. A half-mile interpretive trail on the west side of the reserve meanders through mudflats, uplands and salt marshes. A small herd of wild horses roams the islands and over 200 bird species have been recorded here.

» www.nccoastalreserve.net/About-The-Reserve/Reserve-Sites/Rachel-Carson/58.aspx

RIVERWORKS AT STURGEON CITY (Map #44)

This city park in Jacksonville is on the site of an old sewer plant that was responsible for polluting adjacent Wilson Bay. City leaders closed down the old plant and began restoring the bay. They made the plant into an environmental education center where over 5,000 students and citizens learn annually. They have also created a big public park with boardwalks along the river.

» www.sturgeoncity.org

A Walk on the Threatened Side: THE NORTHEAST CAPE FEAR RIVER

BY CAITIE FORDE-SMITH, N.C. COASTAL FEDERATION INTERN

Andy Wood leads our two-person pilgrimage to see a 1,000-year-old cypress along the Northeast Cape Fear River ([Map #53](#)). The mighty tree has lost her neighbors. One went down with Hurricane Fran in 1996. Hundreds more have dropped away from pollution and saltwater intrusion.

"It used to be a more robust-looking canopy. Ten years ago, it looked better than that," Wood admits. "She's one of the last of the big ones here."

Wood, director of the Coastal Plain Conservation Group, is armed with a dipping net and glass jars as he walks along the trail near Hampstead. The path is just a thin strip of land separating the swamp and the Northeast Cape Fear. The roadbed dates back to the 1800s when we might have travelled, not on our feet, but instead by horse and carriage.

The Northeast Cape Fear runs for about 130 miles through the southeast coastal plain of North Carolina, twisting and meandering along a path of least resistance. Not quite as big as its neighbor, the Cape Fear River, the Northeast Cape Fear is a true tributary. The river is amber-colored—dark due to the organic debris that settles at its bottom.

Wood walks along the trail, pointing out several species that make this river special. We pass a manmade impoundment, which Wood

notes the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission staff manages with the aid of *Castor canadensis* – beavers.

We nearly miss a brown water snake sunbathing. Wood observes rake marks in the mud nearby and guesses a black bear was looking for its next meal. American Holly, a

treat for many of the area's songbirds, abounds.

According to Wood, a conservationist, several species found in or around the Northeast Cape Fear are threatened or endangered. These include the bald eagle, the American alligator and the red-cockaded woodpecker.

Wood moved to Wilmington in the mid-1980s and worked as the education curator for the N.C. Aquarium at Fort Fisher. Now, he teaches others in hopes of illustrating the connection between land and water. For example, the wetlands we hike along today

COASTAL FEDERATION FRIENDS ARE ELECTED OFFICIALS



"The NC Coastal Federation is a membership driven organization which collaborates and partners with our community to ensure the public's voice is heard from Wilmington to Raleigh and beyond. If you live, work and enjoy our coast there is no better group to be affiliated with."

In my years representing Pender and New Hanover County I worked very closely with the Federation in ensuring your voice was heard in Raleigh. From stormwater to growing oysters the Federation is at the forefront in coastal protection."

—CAROLYN JUSTICE, FORMER N.C. LEGISLATOR

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are soaking up harmful pollutants and filtering water before releasing it back into the river.

"Like the liver and kidneys," Wood said. "Or a giant sponge."

His return to his first love – freshwater – was motivated by the time spent as a kid in swamps. "I was fortunate to grow up outdoors," he said. "My friends wanted to play war, and I wanted to look for salamanders."

Chances are, had they grown up together, Andy Wood and Charles "C.R." Robbins would have been the best of friends. Robbins, the owner of Cape Fear River Adventures, remembers getting lost in surrounding swamps at just nine years old.

After working in the northwestern part of the United States as a wilderness area guide, he returned to this region. Today, on his guided river tours, Robbins also teaches about the Cape Fear River basin. He discusses stricter fisheries management and pollution policies adopted on the Northwest river system.

He encourages boaters to exercise "take-in, take-out" practices. It is simple, really: Everything you bring onto the river should leave with you.

Yet by Wood and Robbins' accounts, the Northeast Cape Fear resembles a war-torn soldier. In recent decades, the river has combated heavy pollution from hog farms and an oil spill from a metal recycling plant. The results are obvious, Robbins said.

"You can drive up I-40 where several



drainages used to be. There were cypress trees growing, along with swamp gums and the pines. They were living areas," Robbins said.

"I've watched them over the last ten or twelve years die away," he said. "They deteriorated quicker than any areas of trees I've ever seen."

This deterioration has been due, in large part, to the region's heavy concentration of large poultry and swine farms. Pollution regulations are present, but policing is not.

"The waste ends up in the water table and in the runoff and in the creeks," Robbins said, nodding toward the Northeast Cape Fear. "Everything drains into another creek and another creek and finally here."

Now, the Northeast Cape Fear faces perhaps its biggest challenge: Titan America. The cement manufacturer has plans to build one of the largest cement plants in the country along the river's banks in Castle Hayne, near Wilmington.

By Wood's estimate, the destruction of more than a thousand acres of surrounding bottomland swamp would be only an initial consequence of the plant's construction. Cement production would also emit harmful air pollutants, a risk to public health, and stress surface and ground water resources.

Together with the N.C. Coastal Federation, average citizens like Wood and Robbins have worked tirelessly to stop Titan for five long years. Their successes have been hard-won.

In 2010, the federation joined other organizations to successfully sue the state to force the cement company to conduct a required federal comprehensive review before it received any state permits. Because Titan had received public funding for their project, a review was required. Following the court's ruling, Titan decided not to accept public funding, thereby evading any review. The court was forced to reverse its decision.

In November 2011, New Hanover County commissioners voted to require heavy industry

like Titan America to apply for an additional special-use permit. The permit requires Titan to publicly address potential adverse effects to public health and safety, as well as surrounding land values.

More than 240 local doctors and health care providers have voiced their opinions on public health issues related to Titan's proposed plant move-in. More than 15,000 citizen signatures opposing the Titan Cement project have been collected.

At any opportunity, Robbins says he will continue to plant more seeds, by educating others and getting the word out.

"I have signs up at my house. I talk to my neighbors," Robbins said. "I show up in my 'Stop Titan' shirt."

Wood's advice for people is simple, too. "We have to lead by example," he said. "We must recognize that what we do depends on the ecosystem services provided by the Northeast Cape Fear."

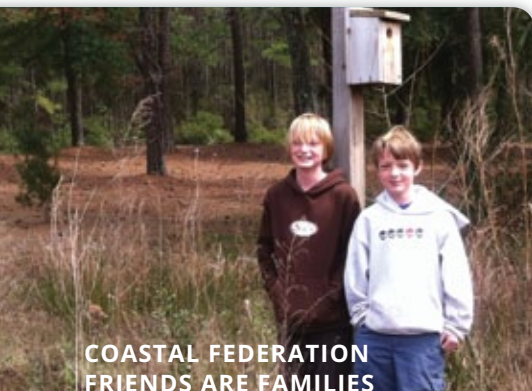
The battered and bruised struggle that belongs to the Northeast Cape Fear is also a story of its own survival, despite everything. Robbins relays stories from older residents, who frequently witnessed the now-threatened sturgeon running into nets stretched across the river. Just last year, Robbins saw a six-foot sturgeon.

"I would like to see them come back here. It's their natural way," he said. "They want to get back."

In a sense, people like Wood and Robbins all want to get back. To their childhoods. To the sturgeon. To the living cypress. It is the reason they support the work of the federation. It is the reason they continue to fight against Titan America.

"If it does happen, it's going to change this area dramatically. Permanently," Robbins said. "It's not going to be something you can fix."

"This is such a special place out here," he said. "You can't replace it."



COASTAL FEDERATION FRIENDS ARE FAMILIES

"Thank You to the North Carolina Coastal Federation for their dedication in teaching our children the importance of keeping our water ways clean and healthy, and how we can all make a difference every day. The kids loved getting to participate in our school's rain garden project, and our new school habitats are great!"

—KIM SHOWLIN, MOTHER OF COLIN AND RYAN SHOWLIN. RYAN AND COLIN ARE BOTH STUDENTS AT BRADLEY CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

OTHER PLACES WORTH VISITING

AIRLIE GARDENS (Map #52)

Aside from impressing visitors with a drop-dead gorgeous display of azaleas and camellias, Airlie also is committed to educating them about our coastal environment.

Thousands of students and adults have learned about the value of our marshes and oyster reefs through programs offered at Airlie, which has partnered with the N.C. Coastal Federation on numerous restoration projects. Birding hikes and eco-tours of Bradley Creek are offered regularly in the summer.

» www.airliegardens.org

BRUNSWICK NATURE PARK (Map #54)

Opened in late 2009, the park is the newest jewel in Brunswick County. Unlike most other parks in the county, which include ball fields, playgrounds and other "active" amenities, the 911-acre nature park is a quiet, relaxing place – a place for leisurely walks in the woods or serene paddles down Town Creek. You can explore the quiet woods to look for birds or for Venus flytraps that grow in remote edges of the park. Kayakers and canoeists can use the launch to glide up Town Creek toward U.S. 17 or downstream through an old rice plantation to the Cape Fear River. You may see an alligator, if you're lucky.

» www.brunswickcountync.gov/Departments/ParksandRecreation/tabid/64/Default.aspx

KAREN BEASLEY SEA TURTLE RESCUE AND REHABILITATION CENTER (Map #47)

If you love sea turtles, this is the place. As the name implies, the center rescues sick and injured sea turtles, nurses them to health, then releases them back into the wild. The facility is small and staffed by volunteers, and the turtles' needs are large, so the hospital doors are open to the public from only 2 to 4 p.m. on weekdays, early June through Labor Day. And because the hours are limited, the lines outside the hospital can look like the cordoned lines of people in Disney World waiting to get on a fast ride. But

it's worth the wait if you want to see these magnificent animals up close.

» www.seaturtlehospital.org

BIRD ISLAND (Map #57)

With the help of the N.C. Coastal Federation, residents fought for 10 years to stop development on the uninhabited island near Sunset Beach. The fight ended in 2002 with one of the great conservation victories in N.C. history. The island's 1,500 acres of beaches, marshes and uplands are now permanently preserved as part of the N.C. Coastal Reserve.

» www.nccoastalreserve.net/About-The-Reserve/Reserve-Sites/Bird-Island/87.aspx

LOCKWOOD FOLLY RIVER (Map #55)

Travel to Varnamtown, down at the river's mouth. It is still a traditional fishing village that is home to the largest remaining shrimp-trawling fleet in Brunswick County. Since 2007, the N.C. Coastal Federation has been working with county officials and local residents on projects to control stormwater pollution in the watershed, keeping the waters clean for fishermen of all stripes.

MORRIS LANDING (Map #46)

At Morris Landing, you can experience the beauty of Stump Sound without getting in a boat. Here, you can fish, go crabbing or clamming, look for birds, launch a kayak and even roll up your sleeves to help restore the island's marshes.

The N.C. Coastal Federation in 2004 bought 52 acres at Morris Landing and now works with local people to restore the shoreline. Our volunteers plant marsh grass and build oyster reefs, and we have planned activities throughout the year. Come join us!

» www.nccoast.org

PERMUDA ISLAND (Map #45)

If you haven't tried a Stump Sound oyster, you're missing one of life's treasures. It was the

COASTAL FEDERATION FRIENDS ARE CONSERVATION PROFESSIONALS

"We are so fortunate to have the N.C. Coastal Federation working in the field to protect and restore natural environments represented in the Aquarium. The federation's work to restore oyster habitat strikes a particular chord with Aquarium staff and volunteers; success of this initiative means conserving species, creating habitat, and improving water quality."

—PEGGY SLOAN, DIRECTOR NC AQUARIUM AT FORT FISHER



oysters that led to a historic fight to save an island in the sound from development. Developers in 1983 wanted to build a bridge from Topsail Island and build condominiums on Permuda. Lena Ritter, a native of nearby Holly Springs in Onslow County, had fished these waters all her life, as her father and grandfather did before her. Feisty and combative, Ritter enlisted the aid of the N.C. Coastal Federation, and led a three-year fight to save the island. The work paid off. The state finally denied the permits in 1986, and the island is now publicly owned as a natural and historic estuary preserve.

Accessible only by water, the island is worth a visit in the fall. Shorebirds feed in the marshes and mudflats. Willets, American oystercatchers, egrets, herons, black skimmers and sandpipers are common. You may even see river otters playing in the marsh.

COASTAL FEDERATION FRIENDS ARE 'ROYALTY'

"Through a partnership with the N.C. Coastal Federation and UNC Wilmington, St. James has built new oyster reefs each year through our dedicated "Citizen Scientist" volunteers. With Ted's (Coastal Federation) and Troy's (UNCW) support, direction, and hard work, our oyster shell recycling program has meant improved erosion control, wildlife habitat, cleaner water and a growing oyster population along our ICW. We have even formed The Royal Order of the Honorary St James Oyster to celebrate our efforts. Thank you, N.C. Coastal Federation!"

—TAYLOR RYAN, MEMBER AND FOUNDER OF THE ROYAL ORDER OF THE HONORARY ST JAMES OYSTER (PICTURED FAR LEFT)



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Clamming for dinner on Rich Inlet's flats. Photo by Mike Giles

Our Southern Inlets: A Boater's Paradise under Threat

BY MIKE GILES, N.C. COASTAL FEDERATION COASTAL ADVOCATE

Nine inlets cut through the N.C. coast south of Jacksonville, starting with the New River north of Topsail Island and ending with Tubbs Inlet at Sunset Beach. Most are shallow and all are special places for humans and wildlife alike.

These small inlets – we're not including the three larger inlets or the Cape Fear river entrance at Bald Head Island – are important to the survival of numerous species of fish and other wildlife. Humans depend on them for access to the ocean and, in times past, for trade inland with river settlements.

An inlet is a narrow body of water between islands or leading inland from a larger body of water, often leading to an enclosed body of water, such as a sound, bay, marsh or river. Along our coast an inlet usually refers to the actual connection between the waters behind

our narrow barrier islands and the ocean and could just as easily be called an outlet, as water from the sea rushes in on an incoming tide and reverses its direction and flushes out the inlet on the outgoing tide. This lunar phenomenon, along with the wind and storms, creates our unique coast and inlet systems.

Shallow water inlets, in addition to their historical and economic importance, are vital components for the maintenance of our barrier islands and estuaries, which play a critical role in the evolving shape, hydrology and function of the islands and inlets themselves. This “edge

of the sea” is the link between our mainland and the deep ocean that our inlets provide. In the marshes behind the barrier islands the vast estuaries are home for hundreds of important saltwater fish. The inlets are the dynamic areas of mixing of those fish, larvae, invertebrates and organic debris that feed our vast oceans. Without this exchange we would no longer enjoy local flounder, grouper, shrimp and crabs at our favorite restaurant or at home for backyard shrimp boils or fish fries.

The sand flats, shoals and myriad small islands provide an abundance of marine organisms and small worms - irresistible tasty morsels for the thousands of birds that stop over at our inlets each year. Endangered and threatened species like the piping plover, black skimmer, American oystercatcher, least tern and the Wilson's plover nest and raise their young on the sand flats and beaches of our inlets and need protection from human interference. More importantly, the inlet systems themselves need protection in order to sustain



Foraging success!



Boating fun on Rich Inlet.



Rich Inlet in its natural state



Lea Hutaff shoreline Photo by Walker Golder

the natural processes.

To appreciate how important these shallow inlets have become in our coastal economy, you have to visit one from April through November: Witness the transformation of these quiet and deserted areas to favorite social gatherings, fishing hotspots, family outings and just a plain get-away-from-it-all experience. Some of the more favorite spots include **Rich Inlet (Map #49)** between Figure Eight Island and Hutaff Island, **New Topsail Inlet (Map #48)** at Lea Island, Mason's Inlet at the north end of **Wrightsville Beach (Map # 50)** and **Tubb's Inlet (Map #56)** down at the north end of Sunset Beach. With a generous donation from staunch environmental advocates Fred and Alice Stanback of Salisbury, Audubon North Carolina in 2010 bought almost 36 acres of the Lea portion of the island, nearly doubling the amount of protected land.

Some of these inlets can be accessed on one side or the other by land but the flexibility of finding that sweet spot of sand flat in the middle of Rich Inlet or that remote point at Topsail Inlet at Lea Island make these spots popular destinations – for both weekend boaters on vacation and for local residents – for that after-work getaway sunset cruise or cookout. Both Lea Island north of Rich Inlet and Masonboro Island south of Wrightsville Beach, have the added benefit of no road access, so finding that private camping spot

or fishing hole at the inlet and on the sound and beach side of these protected islands is a popular destination spot.

While these inlets provide that invaluable landscape for locals and tourists alike, there now is a significant human threat to these resources. In 2011 the state lifted its 20-year-old ban on jetties and groins along our coast. The bill allows for four so-called terminal groins to combat poorly planned development and the natural movement in our inlet hazard areas. The N.C. Coastal Federation lobbied extensively against this change in coastal laws and was instrumental in limiting the number of permitted groins to just four. Unfortunately the four proposed terminal groins are along our southern inlets and include proposed projects at Rich Inlet, Bald Head Island, and Lockwood

Folly and Shallotte Inlets. We continue to be involved in the permitting process.

The effects of terminal groins could be catastrophic to the inlets, the barrier islands and surrounding marshlands and habitats that make these areas special. The potential changes to the inlets from these groins will drastically affect public boater access and public use of our recreational beaches not to mention the adverse effects upon wildlife.

So if you are looking for that special place to launch your boat, kayak or canoe and take a trip to one of our special inlets here in the southern coast, you will not be disappointed. Inlets welcome new friends and memories. So grab your beach chair, a good book or favorite fishing pole; the bounty of our coast awaits you. We'll see you there.

COASTAL FEDERATION FRIENDS ARE LOCAL OFFICIALS.



"Kudos to the NC Coastal Federation not only for being such a powerful advocate for protecting our coastal environment but also for providing educational outreach in the form of hands-on activities that enable our citizens to make a difference in their local community. The Federation's current effort to locate their southeast region office and education center to the town's historic square demonstrates their long-term commitment to the citizens of Wrightsville Beach and the region."

—MAYOR DAVID CIGNOTTI
MAYOR, TOWN OF WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH, NC



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