

OUR COAST

NCCOAST.ORG | 2015 Edition

The Incredible, Edible Oyster

DAY TRIPPING:
Buxton vs. Beaufort

WHAT'S GOING ON?
COASTAL EVENTS CALENDAR

+ DIY Ideas for Your Backyard

NO WETLANDS, NO SEAFOOD®

At the North Carolina Coastal Federation our work goes well beyond wetland restoration. We take on projects from oysters to stormwater retrofits from Currituck to Calabash that protect and restore our coast and make it a better place to live, work and visit.

But we can't do it without you! It's your support that allows us to protect and restore our coast as we engage communities, deliver enriching events, restore valuable habitats and water quality, and develop unique, hands-on volunteer opportunities. Thanks to you, our impact is greater than ever. In the past couple of months, we have:



How Can You Support the federation?

The federation is a private and independent not-for-profit organization that works to ensure an accessible, clean, healthy coast for all! Therefore, we rely on membership and philanthropic support to protect the coast that we all enjoy.

How Can You Support the N.C. Coastal Federation?

Here are few ways:

- Learn more about coastal issues by signing up for our monthly e-news at www.nccoast.org or subscribing to our online news service *Coastal Review Online* at coastalreview.org.
- Become a member and have a direct effect on improving the coast.
- Make a tax-deductible donation to the federation and help support our projects, programs and operations.
- Become a volunteer with one of our many ongoing projects (see page 8).

Thank you for supporting our work.

— Todd Miller, *Executive Director*



North Carolina
Coastal Federation

Working Together for a Healthy Coast

nccf@nccoast.org • www.nccoast.org

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A comparison of two of our favorite coastal towns.



THE FISH HOUSE DELIGHTS

BY BLAND SIMPSON

When I was a boy, my mother often sent me on my bicycle to the small, busy fish house on Water Street in Elizabeth City, just across from the Pasquotank River wharf where boats that had been fishing down on the Albemarle Sound were tied up. I don't recall now whether I was showing up in Thomas Crank's shop for flounder or drum or trout – at the age of eight, it was all simply fish to me and it was all good. My mother would have already called in her order, so my job was just to pedal a mile and a half from home and pick it up.

Back then, I did not know any more about Mister Crank than what I saw when I walked through the door: an active older man behind cases of ice and fish, hawking and selling and wrapping them at a rapid clip, with jovial banter to match. Playing on a then-current radio jingle, every time his door swung open he said brightly: "What'll you have?" Before the customer could name his fish, Mister Crank laughed and quickly shouted out, "Pabst Blue Ribbon!"

I knew I liked his fish-house spirit, and only

much later learned how many years he had been in it, and at it: he was carrying on a family tradition of long standing: Thomas Crank and his father had been Dealers in Fish, Oysters, Terrapin, etc. since 1896. A 1915 commercial circular wrote of them: "These gentlemen are unusually careful in the purchase of their products and handle strictly pure, wholesome and fresh fish, oysters, terrapin, etc. in season. All orders promptly filled and delivered, and at most favorable prices. These gentlemen are natives of Dare County."

Though that shop is now a by-gone, as are others to be sure, many fine family establishments still remain up and down the coast, and thrive on selling fresh fish and shellfish that has come from healthy, nearby waters only hours before, and not from halfway around the globe. The food our North Carolina fish dealers take off the ice and put into our hands not only ties us to the given place and its fishermen, but also to native American people who came here long before us, many centuries to many thousands of years ago, and lived on this same diet – the best in the world.

And this heritage also gives us common cause and purpose in the here and now. The N.C. Coastal Federation, now in its fourth decade, came together initially to defeat an early-1980s proposal to strip-mine peat from Hyde County, which would have both lowered water tables and fouled prime fishing areas and fish-and-shellfish



Photo by Sam Bland



Pompano, ready for the pan.
Photo by Ann Cary Simpson

nurseries. Since then, having restored an enormous amount of oyster reefs – as well as over 5,000 acres of wetlands – up and down the N.C. coast and having built nearly two-and-a-half miles of living, non-bulkheaded shorelines, the federation has become well known for its tireless coastal restoration work and for its powerful advocacy in protecting wetlands and outstanding resource waters, all under a banner that plainly states the case:

“No Wetlands, No Seafood.”

Lord knows how much we need, and love, both.

One of my earliest memories is that of blue crabs steaming away on the stove at my grandmother Simpson’s old cottage in Nags Head. Years later, I arrived at another cottage late one evening after a long hitchhike from Chapel Hill to Kitty Hawk, my younger sisters having gone to bed, my mother brightening my arrival and banishing my road-weariness by firing up a skillet and frying several dozen oysters. Similarly, much later, my wife Ann’s mother, Pat Kindell, used to greet Ann and me and our three young children, upon our arrival in Beaufort along about supptime on Friday evenings, with a groaning board of steamed clams and oysters and shrimp, and a crabcake or

two (with a little chopped green pepper and onion and maybe a blessed hint of cayenne, too) for each of us. That was just a start: Pat also would have on the back burner a pot of perfection: Core Sound clam chowder, clam juice and a little water in its base, full of clams and onions and potatoes and more God-given pepper. We ate heartily and well, and we ate it all.

Whether we have gotten river catfish or soft-shell crabs from Willy Phillips’s Full Circle Crab Co. in Columbia, or smoked mullet or bluefish from Bill Rice’s Fishtowne in Beaufort, or red snapper from Clyde Phillips Seafood in Swansboro, or more soft crabs from Eddie and Allison Willis’s Mr. Big shop on Harkers Island, or red drum from the working watermen’s Ocracoke Seafood Company out on that grand sandbar, or grouper or flounder from John Haag’s lively fish house on eastern Oak Island, or shrimp from Austin Fish Company up at Nags Head or Garland’s Seafood down in Supply, or a bushel of salty bivalves from the Rose Bay Oyster Co. in Swan Quarter, or rockfish fillets from Tom Robinson’s Seafood upstate in Carrboro, or any number of other high-grade, down-home Carolina seafood spots, it only matters that we will have gone to the right places and we will have gotten real, good seafood from real,

good folks, and we will be eating better than Louis the Fourteenth, Queen Mary and J. P. Morgan all put together. As the vaunted Cajun cook Justin Wilson would emphatically spell it out: *“I ga-ron-tee.”*

What’ll we have? I hear the ghost of old Mister Crank still asking. And how will we have it? When it comes to the fish house delights, the fruits of North Carolina’s legendary coastal and sound-country waters, no questions are as joyfully put, or answered. □

Our Coast is Sponsored by



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WEATHERING THE STORM

Better seafood, cleaner water with
stormwater management.

Nothing says the coast quite like seafood. It doesn't get any fresher than right here, where the land meets the sea. The N.C. coastline stretches more than 300 miles along the ocean, but thanks to dozens of sounds and creeks that frame the Intracoastal Waterway, as well as Pamlico and Albemarle Sounds, our coast has over 12,000 miles of estuarine shoreline that fluctuate with the wind and the tides.

These coastal waters make up an estuary that is nearly 2.2 million acres in size, the second largest fish nursery in the continental U.S. Our coastal wetlands and forests function much like kidneys to keep

coastal waters healthy and productive.

Seafood is more than a meal. It is our *joie de vivre*—not just our joy but a way of life. “The salt life,” some call it. It can provide a livelihood or relaxation. It’s influenced

our culture, history and sustained our coastal economy.

Seafood depends on a healthy environment. When it comes down to it, the quality of life on the N.C. coast has everything to do with the quality of our seafood and the waters that nurture it.

One thing about being at sea level, however, is we’re always downhill from adjacent lands where rainfall picks up bacteria and other pollutants before

flowing down into coastal waters. Any land use that doesn't allow stormwater to absorb directly into the earth or be consumed by vegetation contributes to this problem. We don't necessarily think about water pollution when it rains outside. However, polluted stormwater runoff is the number one cause of coastal water quality degradation in the country and along our N.C. coast.

When coastal waters are polluted, many fish and shellfish store those contaminants in their bodies. State environmental regulators have to close areas to shellfish harvest and even restrict swimming so we don't get sick from eating contaminated shellfish or swimming in dirty waters. Less seafood to sell and eat hurts the coastal economy.

Untouched coastal landscapes produce very little runoff because they have a

natural ability to handle stormwater: The sandy soil filters it; the plants absorb it; and the heat evaporates it. Plants not only use the water to grow, but their roots create resistance to the flow, prevent erosion and aerate the soil for draining water. *Low-Impact Development (LID)* techniques mimic this natural stormwater filtration process.

The **N.C. Coastal Federation** spearheaded a statewide campaign in 2014 to promote the widespread use of LID to protect and restore water quality. The federation also partnered with the Brunswick County Habitat for Humanity and the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service to install rain gardens, native landscaping and rain barrels at Habitat homes. Habitat is now committed to using several of these LID techniques for their landscaping at new homes, serving as a model for other homeowners. □

For more information on other success stories and Low Impact Development projects, visit www.nccoast.org/low-impact-development.

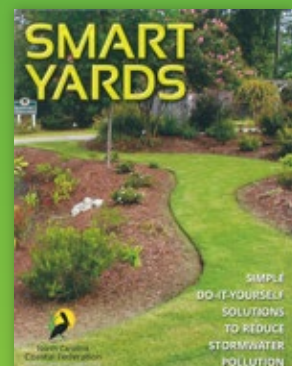


Be a part of the solution.

Try these easy DIY ideas for cleaner stormwater coming from your property.

- An \$8 piece of plastic can reroute stormwater coming from your downspout into the yard rather than the driveway.
- Capture rain in a rain barrel and save money by watering your garden with it.
- Build a rain garden using native plants. Rain gardens function as a bowl, reducing stormwater runoff by 90 percent or more.
- Native plants require less effort to grow and less money to maintain since they're already conditioned to the environment.
- Install permeable pavement that will allow water to soak through a sidewalk or driveway to the ground.

Want more tips and ideas for reducing stormwater pollution, request a copy of our *free Smart Yards brochure* by emailing nccf@nccoast.org.



Doing Good Can be Good For You

Whether you are a local wanting to get involved within your community or a visitor looking to do a good deed on your holiday – the North Carolina Coastal Federation has lots of fun outdoor volunteer opportunities.

The federation frequently needs extra hands to help in its oyster and wetlands restoration programs, rain garden projects and marsh clean ups. There are also many less physical outreach and office opportunities.

When you volunteer, not only are you making a great difference in a local nonprofit, community and its environment, but you benefit as well.

Benefits of Volunteering

- You get to do something new that enriches your life by investing in and strengthening the community, making it a better place to live for all.

- It brings you happiness by increasing self-confidence and feeling good about giving back.
- It's an opportunity to explore new personal interests, goals or places.
- Studies suggest volunteering may improve your mental health and help you live longer.
- You can gain new skills.
- It can renew your creativity and motivation by helping you escape your day-to-day routine.
- It's a fun way to meet new people.

So, if you find yourself with some spare time this summer, check out one of our amazing volunteer opportunities. □

Contact the federation at: 252-393-8185 or www.nccoast.org for more information.

Federation Volunteer Opportunities

JUNE

- 23** Coastal Marsh Cleanup, Jones Island

JULY

- 7** Coastal Marsh Cleanup, Beaufort
14 Coastal Marsh Cleanup, Shackleford Banks, Cape Lookout National Seashore
21 Coastal Marsh Cleanup, Morehead City
28 Coastal Marsh Cleanup, Radio & Pivers Islands

AUGUST

- 7** Field Day at Jockey's Ridge State Park, Nags Head

SEPTEMBER

- 19** National Estuaries Day, Durant's Point (Hatteras)
26 National Estuaries Day Celebration, Morris Landing; other locations to be determined



A National Treasure at Risk

THE NORTHEAST **CAPE FEAR RIVER**

BY MIKE GILES

This June through August a special photography exhibit at the North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher in Carolina Beach reveals an unprecedented display of wildlife diversity and behavior surrounding the Northeast Cape Fear River. The photos, taken over two-years as part of an advocacy project to protect this unique ecosystem, document how truly important the area is for wildlife.

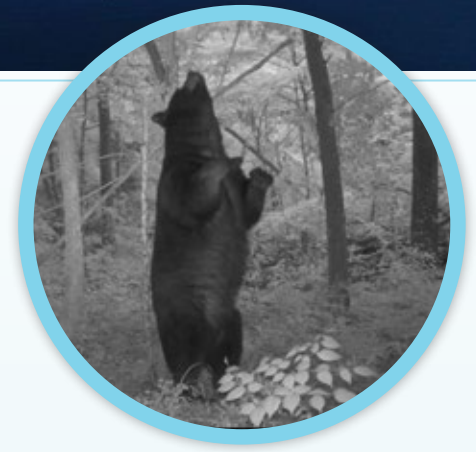
The Northeast Cape Fear River, a blackwater river system, is a major wildlife corridor, linking critical habitat between the Green Swamp in Brunswick County and the Holly Shelter Game Lands in Pender County. It may also connect a greater range of natural habitats, from coastal South Carolina to the wilds of the Croatan National Forest and the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge along the northern N.C. coast.

In addition to the terrestrial habitats along the river system, the Northeast Cape Fear River and its associated wetlands provide extensive aquatic habitat that harbor endangered and threatened species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says the Northeast Cape Fear River could be considered an Aquatic Resource of National Importance and should be protected. But, this major wildlife corridor is currently threatened by development in the Wilmington area and industrial and agricultural development moving north.

The N.C. Coastal Federation, Cape Fear River Watch and the Wildlands Network partnered to show the importance of this river corridor to the region's tourism economy by documenting the diversity of its wildlife with a photography project.

With a grant from Brad & Kelli Stanback, the partners placed infrared remote cameras at strategic locations to record the wildlife using the corridor for food, shelter, reproduction and safe passage. For over two years, thousands of images have been taken around the clock, in a variety of habitats. A total of 31 different species were documented over the course of the study and six species were selected for an in-depth analysis, including black bear, bobcats, coyote, gray fox, wild turkey and white tailed deer.

The photographs from the project provide substantial and compelling visual evidence that the Northeast Cape Fear River and its surroundings are an important resource for the wildlife of Eastern North Carolina that should be preserved for future generations. ▣



31 different species

were documented over the course of the study, including black bear, bobcats, coyote, gray fox, wild turkey and white tailed deer.

SEE THE EXHIBIT

JUNE-AUGUST, 2015 North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher

Spadefish Art Gallery • 900 Loggerhead Road, Kure Beach, NC 28449

800-832-3474 • Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily

DISCOVER YOUR COAST

Upcoming Events

For more information or to register for any of these programs or events, visit nccoast.org or call 252-393-8185

Northeast

Wine, Dine and Learn Nags Head & Southern Shores

This popular dinner series brings together working watermen, locally harvested seafood and coastal awareness. Learn about the importance of eating local seafood and how you can help us protect coastal habitats, all while enjoying a custom menu with multiple wine pairings.

DATES: May 12 (Café Lachine, Nags Head) & Oct. 20 (Coastal Provisions, Southern Shores)



Baby blue crab

Southeast

Touch Tank Tuesdays Wrightsville Beach

Ever wonder what a live shrimp, crab or whelk looks like? This fun weekly event connects children and adults alike with organisms found in nature, including blue crabs, sea urchins, starfish, oysters, sea squirts and more!

DATES: June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30; July 7, 14, 21, 28; Aug. 4, 11, 18 & 25

Miss Hatteras Fishing Trip Hatteras

The federation will team up with N.C. Sea Grant for this offshore, bottom-fishing expedition that departs from Oden's Dock in Hatteras. While you enjoy a day of fishing, you can also be part of a research team to test descending devices that improve survivability of released deep-water fish species.

DATE: May 30

Day at the Docks* Hatteras

This day-long festival at Oden's Dock is a celebration of community heritage and the living traditions of watermen as part of National Estuaries Week. There will be a variety of activities for the whole family to enjoy, including visiting the federation's education booth and participating in a tour of the living shoreline across the harbor at Durant's Point.

DATE: Sept. 19

Coastal Speaker Series Wrightsville Beach

Join the discussion as experts bring life to coastal topics such as oyster farming, sea-level rise, gardening with native plants and pressing issues such as Titan Cement and the hardening of our coastline.

DATES: May 13, June 10, July 8, Aug. 12, Sept. 9, Oct. 14, Nov. 11

Boat the Bay Manteo

Meet us on the waterfront in downtown Manteo and climb aboard the federation's education and research vessel, Spartina, to explore the estuary around Shallowbag Bay. Using catch-and-release methods, we'll investigate this important coastal habitat to discover why it's often referred to as the "nursery of the sea." Private trips may also be scheduled on request.

DATES: June 4, 11, 18, 25; July 2, 9, 16, 23, 30; Aug. 6, 13, 20, 27

Annual Fish Fry & Shrimp Boil* Manteo

You will enjoy the bounties of our coastal waters at the largest fundraising event of the year in Manteo. Dine on local fried fish, steamed shrimp and all the delicious fixings, including dessert, while enjoying live entertainment, music and games. Come show your support for a healthy coast and peel, eat and meet!

DATE: Sept. 25





Central

The Pelican Awards

New Bern

The federation's Pelican Awards annually recognize the exceptional work of people, businesses, local and state governments and educators to protect and restore our N.C. Coast.

DATE: July 31

Kayak & Yoga Trip

Swansboro

Kayak to Jones Island in the White Oak River and relax under the shade of giant oak trees during a gentle yoga session. You will learn about the federation's conservation and habitat restoration projects and enjoy a swim from the island beach.

DATES: June 20 & Aug. 8

Coastal Adventures

Wrightsville Beach

Join us for a half-day boat cruise and island excursion to Rich Inlet, an important birding area and the gateway to the unspoiled Huttaff-Lea Island barrier island complex. Lunch is provided and space is limited.

DATES: Thursday, June 4, Aug. 6 and Oct. 1

Birding Cruises

Swansboro

Join local bird expert JoAnne Powell for a cruise through the estuaries in and around the White Oak River and Bogue Sound to search for resident and migratory birds.

DATES: April 19, May 17, Sept. 27, Oct. 25, Nov. 15

Coastal Discovery

Day Camp*

Ocean

Join us for a week-long daytime adventure to learn about the local environment and wildlife. Shoreline Explorers and Maritime Adventurers will go on several quests to explore coastal heritage and nature through hands-on activities. Camps are for students who have completed grades 3-5 and 6-8.

DATES: June 29-July 2, July 6-10, July 20-24, July 27-31

Birding Cruises

Wrightsville Beach

Climb aboard The Shamrock for a one-hour boat trip with Captain Joe Abbate, to learn about the unique coastal ecology and to see a diverse array of local shorebirds, such as Brown Pelicans, Black Skimmers and possibly even the endangered Piping Plover.

DATES: May 1, June 5, July 3, Aug. 7, Sept. 4, and Oct. 2

Coastal Cruise

Swansboro

Explore the waters in and around the White Oak River and Bogue Sound aboard the Lady Swan this summer. Cruises will highlight local history and wildlife.

DATES: May 27; June 3, 10, 17, 24; July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29; Aug. 5, 12, 19

Cycling for the Coast*

Atlantic Beach

Celebrate our coast with a bike ride along the beautiful island of Bogue Banks in eastern North Carolina while raising funds for the federation's education and restoration programs. Great, scenic ride for all ages and fitness levels. Distances: 20k, 40k and 80k

DATE: Sept. 26

S.T.E.M. Summer

Science Camps

Wrightsville Beach

These fun and engaging camps increase students' skills in science, technology, engineering and math; instill a connection to their local environment; and empower them to develop solutions to real-life problems.

DATES: June 22-26 & July 20-24

Inland

Seafood Shellebration

Natty Greene's Brewing Company, Raleigh

If you love oysters, craft beer, and our Carolina coast, this is the event for you! Back for a second year, we'll 'shellebrate' the coast with fresh steamed oysters, clam chowder and fried fish- all sourced from N.C. Enjoy beer specials, live music, and more.

DATE: Oct. 24

Oyster Roast

Natty Greene's Bunker, Greensboro

Natty Greene's Brewing is hosting this fun and casual oyster roast and low country boil to benefit the Coastal Federation, featuring steamed oysters, shrimp, and locally sourced sausage, along with craft beer, live music and yard games.

DATE: Nov. 21

FROM WASTELANDS TO WETLANDS

How living shorelines are revitalizing valuable coastal habitat.

The N.C. Coastal Federation promotes the slogan “No Wetlands, No Seafood®.” If you’re wondering why this sounds so familiar, you may have seen the popular, blue bumper sticker with white lettering. Whether it’s slapped on a pickup truck or a Prius, those who sport the sticker understand that without North Carolina’s wetlands there would be far fewer fish to catch along our coast.

Sometimes referred to as “nurseries,” saltwater wetlands are a lush, safe haven for small or juvenile fish to hide, parents to breed, birds to rest and everything in between to eat. In general, wetlands are landscapes saturated with water, although

they don’t have to be wet year-round. Here on the N.C. coast, the most common wetlands are saltwater marshes and freshwater swamps.

They’re great spots for fishing, paddling and bird-watching, and they make

wonderful outdoor classrooms for people of all ages. However, what they do for wildlife, water quality and property along the coast is nothing short of amazing.

For starters, new research is showing that wetlands play a key role in mitigating climate change. One acre of coastal salt marsh stores more carbon dioxide in its soil than all the plants and soil combined in an acre of tropical rainforest.

The plants within this transitional zone between water and land, however, do much more than store greenhouse

gasses and produce oxygen. They're the base of the food chain. Bugs and other invertebrates live on or near aquatic plants and become food for fish, birds and other wildlife.

Yet, the U.S. has lost over half of its wetlands in the lower 48 states, and the losses continue at about 60,000 acres a year, according to the EPA. In North Carolina, this is largely due to illegal ditching and draining, lax enforcement of wetlands safeguards and institutional barriers that favor erosion-control structures like bulkheads. Once salt marshes and wetlands are cleared, paved over or destroyed by bulkheads, shellfish beds frequently become polluted and closed to harvest. Thankfully, there is a natural solution to this problem—a living shoreline.

A living shoreline offers a dual defense against erosion and sea-level rise, which simultaneously benefit our fisheries and the environment. The first defense is a sill usually built with oyster shells or rocks. These materials attract spat, or baby oysters. As more oysters grow on the structure, it becomes a living reef, one that absorbs wave energy so that waves don't hit the shoreline as hard. The second line of defense is a marsh planting of native plant species along the shoreline to reinforce it and make it stronger. □

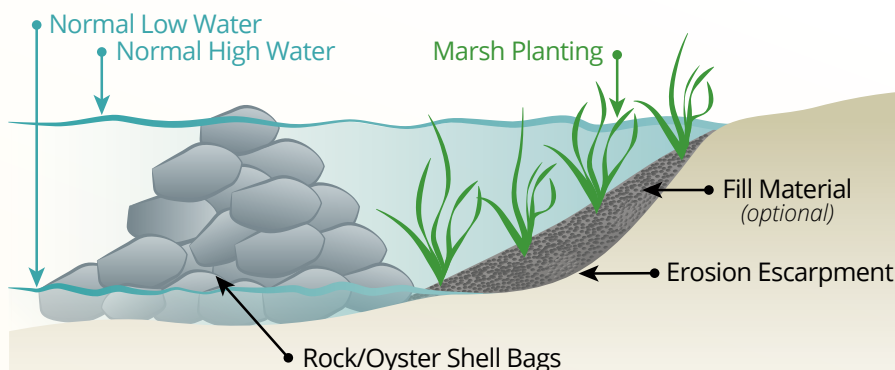


Photo by Sam Bland

Learn more about living shorelines at nccoast.org or email us with your questions at nccf@nccoast.org.

Living Shorelines

Living shorelines are a proven, natural approach to protect shorelines from erosion. They also maintain and provide valuable habitat for a variety of estuarine species and help to improve the water quality of our coast.



Our Coast is Sponsored by

Coastal
Stormwater
Services, Inc.

Contact them at
910-520-1835

Coastal Review Online

Coastal Review Online is North Carolina's only nonprofit news service dedicated to covering the coast's environmental news. Every weekday you'll find a new, in-depth story on topics as far ranging as the mysterious appearance of harbor seals to state legislation that's affecting our coast to recipes for cooking jumping mullet.

It all started in 2012 as an experiment when the N.C. Coastal Federation decided to try and fill the gap in coastal environmental reporting left by the decades-long decline of traditional media. Forced by falling revenue and circulation, newspapers made substantial cuts in staffing. Once there were nine fulltime environmental reporters in North Carolina; now there are two.

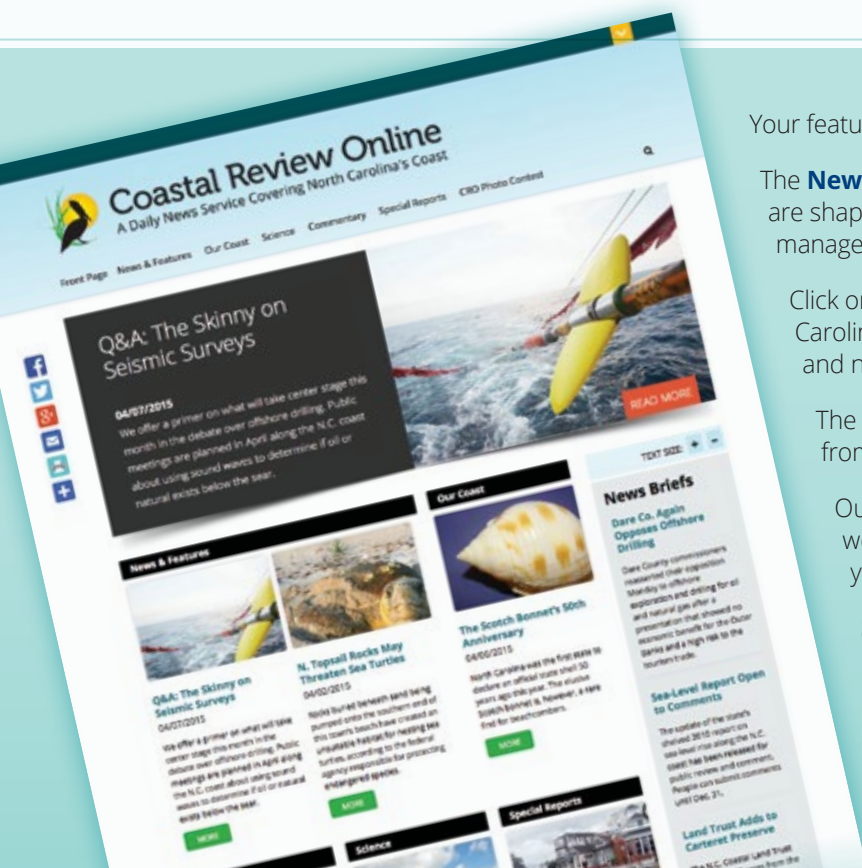
Frank Tursi, the *Coastal Review Online's* editor and the federation's assistant

director, knew this better than most. Tursi, a 30-year newspaper veteran, was the senior environmental reporter in North Carolina before he took a job with the federation in 2002. The author of three books and the winner of numerous awards for his environmental reporting, Tursi still clings to the quaint notion that if you give them the facts, most people will come to the right conclusions.

Since its launch, the news service has proven that a conservation group can

publish quality journalism that meets the highest standards of accuracy, balance and fairness. *Coastal Review Online* is a member of the N.C. Press Association, and nearly all of its stories are written by professional journalists, most of whom are former newspaper reporters and editors.

Come visit the brand new website. In addition to our daily article, you'll find the site's archive of almost 1,000 stories easy to search and second to none as a resource on the coast's news. Plus see our new multimedia features, like the Photo of the Week. Stay on top of your coast by becoming a subscriber and joining us on Facebook for news, events and conversation -- tell us your thoughts on the latest news. [□](#)



Your featured **story of the day**.

The **News & Features** section covers the current events that are shaping our coast, from climate change to beach and inlet management and much more.

Click on the **Our Coast** section to find articles about North Carolina's coastal culture -- it's food, history, people, places, wildlife and nature.

The **Science** section breaks down new research and findings from coastal scientists in easy, intriguing reads.

Our **Commentary** section stimulates discussion and debate by welcoming differing viewpoints on topical coastal issues. Here you'll find opinion columns by guests and federation staffers.

Special Reports is where our investigative stories live. See the issues we've covered extensively.

News Briefs are short articles that get to the guts of news. Below this column you'll see **News Waves**, a list of links connecting you to the latest coastal environmental news from other sources.

WWW.COASTALREVIEW.ORG



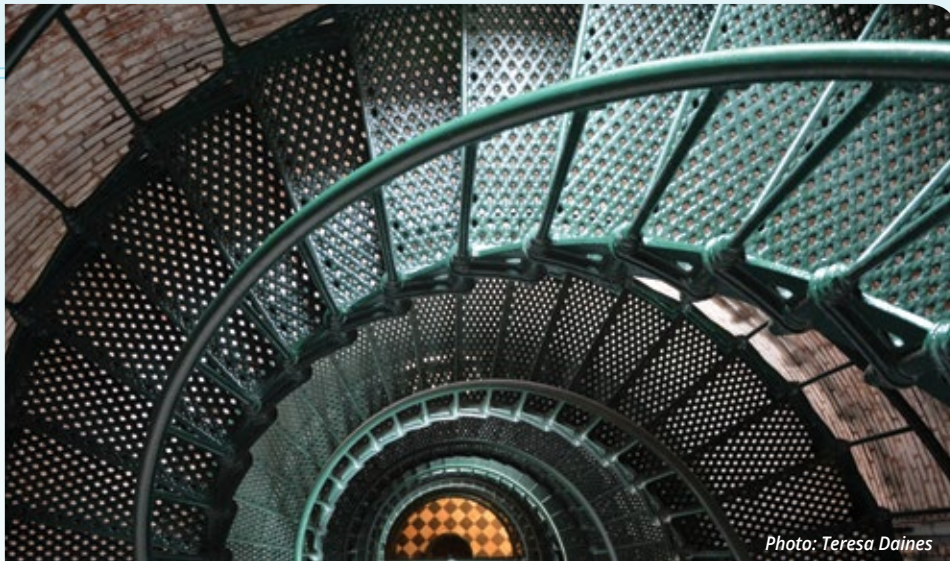


Photo: Teresa Daines



Photo: Christina Burnham



Photo: Jody Merritt

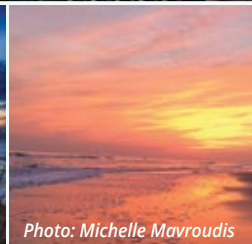


Photo: Michelle Mavroudis



Photo: Cathy Martin



Photo: Fay Sadler

Give us your best shot and help us tell the story of the N.C. coast

Coastal Review Online has a brand new photography contest with cash prizes, thanks to sponsors Emerald Isle Realty.

Show us the beauty or personality of the N.C. coast with shots of its landscapes, wildlife, people or culture. We're also looking for images that depict the coastal environmental issues that *Coastal Review Online* covers.

See submission guidelines for details at
www.coastalreview.org/submission-guidelines

Offshore Oil Drilling is a Hot Topic Right Now

This summer *Coastal Review Online* brings you four weeks of investigative reporting on this controversial issue.

WEEK ONE: Learn the history, science, politics and process of producing oil and natural gas off our shores.

WEEK TWO: Read about the pros, the cons and the reality of what offshore drilling means.

WEEK THREE: Hear what North Carolina's coastal residents know and think about offshore drilling as two reporters travel the coast, from Currituck to Calabash.

WEEK FOUR: We take you to the Gulf Coast for a true sense of what it's like to live in a place that produces oil and natural gas.

You won't find more comprehensive coverage on the issue anywhere else.

Join us for an in-depth presentation and discussion of these issues at an Oil forum, hosted by the federation in New Bern, N.C. on July 31.

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THE NAPA VALLEY OF OYSTERS



Interns with the federation monitor a new oyster reef.

Photo by Tess Malijenovsky

Oysters. They feed us. They protect our land. They boost our economy. They filter our coastal waters crystal clean. What would the North Carolina coast mean without its iconic bivalve?

There's nothing we love more than slurping down this slightly steamed, salty animal among friends. Except, maybe, for one other thing: healthy enough estuaries where the oysters live. This way, not only do we have oysters to harvest, but we have plenty of fish to catch, sell or eat, in addition to a beautiful place to live and visit.

After all, more than 90 percent of North Carolina's commercial fisheries and more

than 60 percent of its recreational harvest is comprised of species that depend on estuaries – where freshwater and saltwater mix – for some portion of their life cycle.

Oysters in estuaries are like the canary in the coal mine; they indicate the health of the ecosystem. You can bet fishing near an oyster reef is better than on an empty bottom. That's because oyster reefs support an array of life, both underwater

and above. They're foraging grounds for the southern flounder, black sea bass and red drum; nurseries for baby blue crabs and stone crabs; and respite from predators for the smaller species, like grass shrimp and toadfish. In fact, a healthy oyster reef can be home to more than 300 species.

Oysters also purify water. Just one oyster can filter 25 to 30 gallons of water a day, pulling out bacteria and toxins as they pass over the oyster's gills. In this way they also help clear the estuaries of excess nutrients like the nitrogen and phosphorous, which can trigger algal blooms that deplete



Photo by Sam Bland

"To date, the federation has created, enhanced and restored over 112 acres of oyster reefs within five coastal counties."

oxygen from the water and suffocate fish.

We have another reason to love oyster reefs. They protect property from storm surges and sea-level rise. Not only do oyster reefs prevent erosion by breaking the waves' momentum and slowing it down, but N.C. scientists have discovered that vertical growth of oyster reefs can outpace rising sea levels. Living, growing, natural structures that protect us and boost our fisheries, what's not to love?

That's why the N.C. Coastal Federation has made oyster habitat restoration one of its top priorities. This year the

federation held a statewide Oyster Summit in Raleigh to explore the economic and environmental returns on investing in North Carolina's oysters with over 150 experts, regulators and legislators.

Rowan Jacobsen, author of *A Geography of Oysters*, said at the summit that North Carolina is well poised to become the "Napa Valley of Oysters." Referring to our state as a "sleeping giant" that once awoken could rival Washington State, the largest producer of cultivated oysters in the country, and Virginia, the fastest growing oyster producing state. □

Speaking of Oysters

The lingo of a diehard oyster connoisseur can rival any wine snob's vocabulary when slurping back a dozen of their favorite bivalves. Since oysters are water filterers, the current, water and nutrients they absorb all influence their flavor profile, giving oysters a wide variety of tastes.



Here's a quick reference of terms for the next time you belly up to your favorite oyster bar.

Merrior: (pronounced mare-wáh): The term used to describe the unique flavors of an oyster based on the waters where it grew.

Flavor: Generally oysters are described as briny (salty) or creamy (buttery), with a slight melon sweetness, smoky, metallic or copper finish. East Coast oysters tend to be brinier, whereas West Coast varieties are sweeter. Oysters develop a more buttery or creamy taste as they approach the summer spawning season.

Texture: Cold waters slow an oyster's metabolism, leading to crisper oysters. In warmer waters, oysters tend to be meatier.

Liquor: The natural seawater and juices inside the shell or what an oyster aficionado slurps up when eating an oyster.

Mignonette: A condiment made with minced shallots, cracked pepper and vinegar, often served with raw oysters. Depending on where you are, folks may pep up their oysters with cocktail sauce, lemon or hot sauce.

Naked: Raw oysters

The Pelican Brief

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SAM BLAND

The brown pelican has long been the proud logo of the North Carolina Coastal Federation. We chose this stately bird because it is a symbol of hope, a living reminder that our coastal natural resources can withstand serious challenges. The struggles of the brown pelican, which weathered threats that brought it to the brink of extinction, mirror the challenges that continue to threaten the resources of our coast.

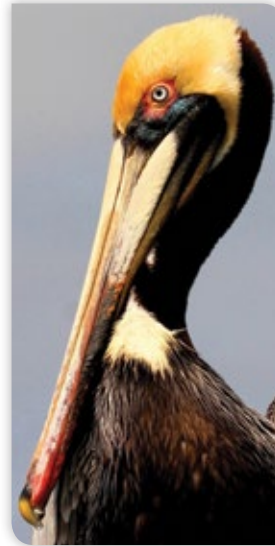
Brown pelicans are resilient and have prevailed despite steep odds. Market hunters shot them by the thousands just for their feathers; commercial fishermen unnecessarily slaughtered them under the mistaken belief that the birds were competitors; and pesticides such as DDT seriously impaired the pelican's ability to reproduce. Chemical residues collected in stormwater runoff and contaminated the fish that pelicans ate. The chemicals disrupted calcium formation, resulting in pelican eggs that were thin, brittle and unable to develop. The poisoned fish also killed pelicans directly.

Pelican populations declined dramatically, and the bird was added to the federal endangered species list in 1970. Once DDT and some other pesticides were banned,

the brown pelican began a long and slow recovery. In November 2009, it was removed from the endangered species list along the Atlantic coast and the Florida Gulf coast.

Seeing a large flock of pelicans gliding silently overhead along the barrier islands almost makes you forget all they endured. These large birds with a six-foot wingspans look like something out of the dinosaur ages. Their size is deceiving, since they weigh only eight pounds because of their hollow bones.

Pelicans have a long bill with a throat pouch that is used for fishing. Excellent eyesight allows pelicans gliding over the ocean to find mullet or menhaden near the surface. Once the fish are spotted, the pelican will rotate its upper body downward, stretch out its long



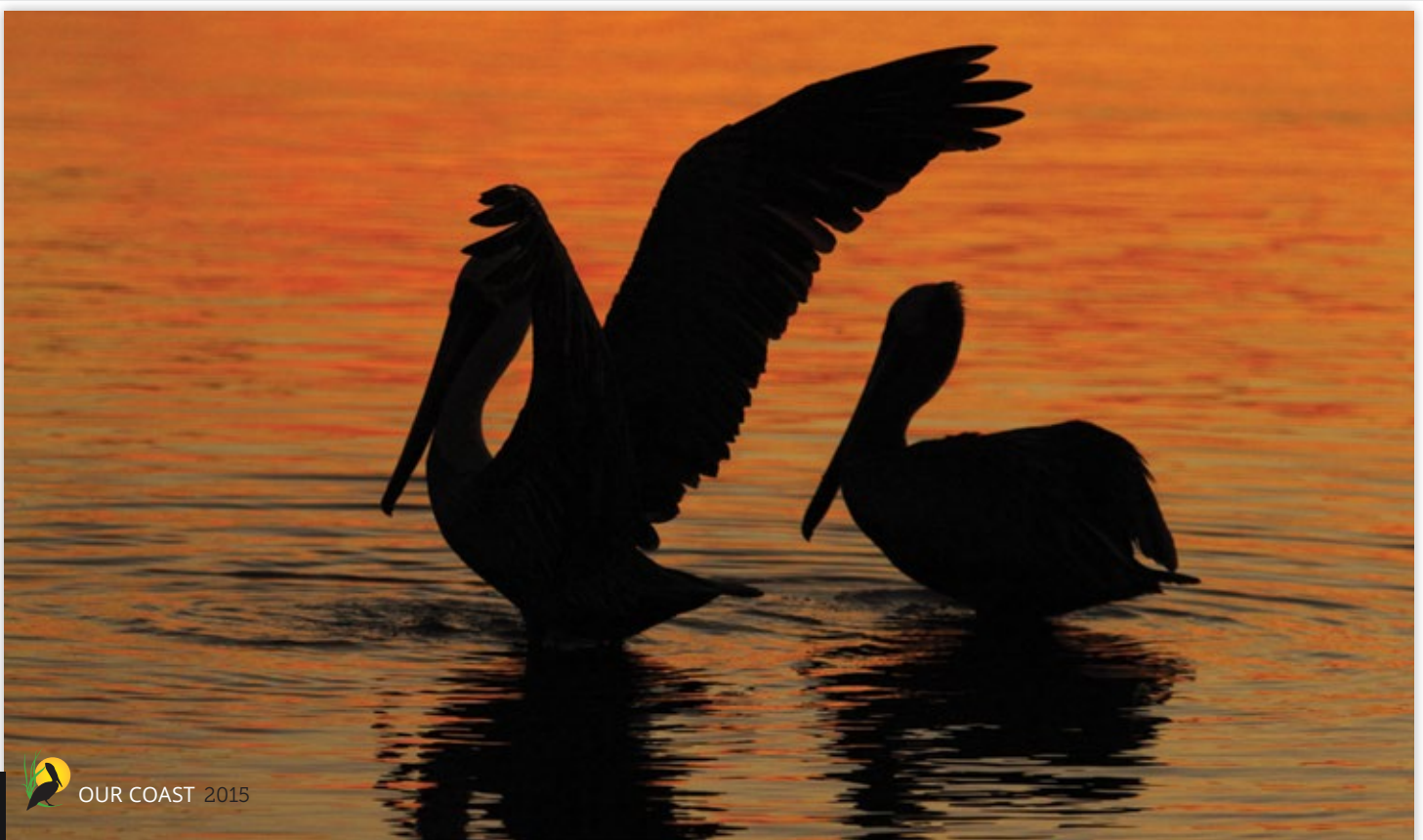
neck, tuck back its wings and begin a freefall that ends with an explosive splash on the surface of the water. Air sacs underneath the skin protect the pelican when it smacks the water after dives from as high as 60 feet. As the long bill pierces the water, the pouch will expand scooping up the fish along with about two gallons of water.

After this controlled crash, the pelican will float on the surface and drain the water out of its pouch. Any fish trapped inside the pouch will then be tossed head first

down the throat.

An excellent swimmer, since all four toes are connected by a web of skin, brown pelicans will also swim on the surface of the water lunging after fish.

On the ground, brown pelicans appear to be awkward and clumsy walkers. In flight, however, they are grace defined. They fly in groups forming a classic V pattern or a simple long line. One of the most beautiful coastal sights is a long line of pelican silhouettes skimming just above the ocean surface as they slowly rise and fall like a ribbon undulating in a soft breeze. □



BUXTON *vs.* BEAUFORT

There are hundreds of quaint towns and cities along the North Carolina coast, each with its own atmosphere and culture. We've set two of our favorite spots head-to-head to highlight the distinct feel of each and provide a few of our favorite places for you to check out!

Share your favorite spots or let us know which one of these you would like to visit on the N.C. Coastal Federation Facebook page.

Buxton



SUNRISE

Get in line early for The Orange Blossom Bakery & Café's famous Apple Ugly! A fried, twisted treat that is unlike anything you've tasted.

Grab a coffee near Beaufort's waterfront boardwalk downtown then take a stroll through the historic neighborhood to admire the colonial architecture. Don't miss the hauntingly beautiful Old Burying Ground, a 300-year-old cemetery shrouded by live oak trees in the heart of the district.

Beaufort



SIGHT-SEEING

Climb the 257 steps of the Hatteras lighthouse for a panoramic view of the island and Atlantic Ocean as far as the eye can see. Then stop by the visitor's center and museum to complete your memorable afternoon in Buxton.

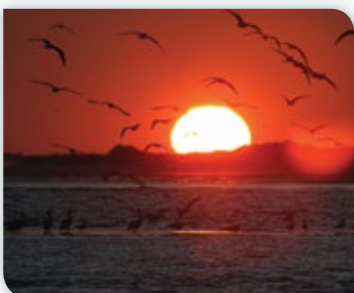
This quirky coastal town is a hub for 18th century pirate legends. Visit Beaufort's Maritime Museum to see artifacts from Blackbeard's ship, the Queen Anne's Revenge, which ran aground in Beaufort Inlet in 1718.



ON THE GO

One of the windiest locales on the coast makes Buxton a top windsurfing destination. Most surf shops in the area offer lessons and rentals, so grab a board and catch a wave.

Kayak or take the ferry over to Shackleford Island and search for wild horses, seashells or just explore this pristine, natural beach.



UNWIND

Take a romantic walk on the beach and watch the sunset at the end of day at South Beach, just south of Cape Point. The panorama is most stunning in the late fall to the early spring.

If you want to go where the locals go, head to the Backstreet Pub, deemed one of the friendliest and funkiest spots on the coast. Enjoy the live music or a cold beer after a day of adventure.





North Carolina
Coastal Federation

Working Together for a Healthy Coast

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