

Cape Hatteras

National
Seashore
Recreational
Area

NORTH CAROLINA



OPEN ALL YEAR

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National Seashore Recreational Area

Between broad, shallow sounds and foaming ocean surf lies Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area, a thin barrier of golden sand on the windswept Outer Banks of North Carolina. On these lonely barrier islands are found stimulating recreational opportunities and rewarding experiences in history and Nature.

Reaching from Whalebone Junction at the southern boundary of Nags Head, N. C., some 70 miles down through Ocracoke Island, the national seashore preserves 28,500 acres of beach land. It is divided into three sections, on three islands—Bodie, Hatteras, and Ocracoke—each separated from its neighbor by an inlet.

The Bodie (pronounced "Body") section extends from Nags Head to Oregon Inlet. Hatteras Island, largest of the barrier islands, extends from Oregon Inlet to Cape Hatteras Point, thence west to Hatteras Inlet. Across the inlet is picturesque and storm-swept Ocracoke Island, some 30 miles from the mainland. It is the southernmost unit of the national seashore.

Within the natural boundaries of the area are eight villages: Rodanthe, Waves, Salvo, Avon, Buxton, Frisco, Hatteras, and Ocracoke. These villages, with sizable expansion room around each, have been excluded from the Federal area to permit independent growth of these communities as tourist centers.

The act of Congress, dated August 17, 1937, authorizing the establishment of the national seashore recreational area states that "except for certain portions of the area, deemed to be especially adaptable for recreational uses, particularly swimming, boating, sailing, fishing, and other recreational activities of similar nature, which shall be developed for such uses as needed, the said area shall be permanently reserved as a primitive wilderness and no development of the project or plan for the convenience of visitors shall be undertaken which would be incompatible with the preservation of the unique flora and fauna or the physiographic conditions now prevailing in the area." This act later was amended to allow hunting in certain sections of the area.

SAND, SEA, AND SKY

Here, on this long strip of barrier islands, Nature has gathered and placed on display the results of her efforts

through many human lifetimes. The extensive coastline remains much the same wild, lonely beach that it was in the days of the Spanish Main and Sir Francis Drake. Perhaps nowhere are there more beautiful patterns in the surf than those found at Cape Hatteras. Ocean currents meet at the very tip of Cape Point, weaving series of herringbone designs with white-capped breakers, while scalloped sheets of surf spread obliquely along the beach at either side. There, too, one may watch porpoises roll within yards of the beach, playing and feeding upon the abundance of fish.

To appreciate the long expanse of sand beaches the visitor should walk across the barrier dune. Cars, however, should be parked only in designated areas; to pull off the highway in the sand is dangerous.

To match the beautiful colors of the sun as it rises or sets over a horizon of sheeted water, the mild and humid climate provides a long flowering season, with a variety of colors and kinds. Even in December there are fields alive with flowering gaillardia, a hardy western plant, which was brought to the Outer Banks and now grows wild on the sandy flats behind the barrier dunes.

In nearly every village, and on adjoining sand ridges, are found individual trees or growing mats of the evergreen yaupon (holly), beautiful at any time of the year but at their best in midwinter when loaded with scarlet berries. Towering over the yaupon are the stately live

oaks that have furnished shade and wood to many generations of "Bankers," as residents of the Outer Banks are sometimes called.

Westward from the elbow angle of Cape Hatteras is the widest part of the Outer Banks, almost 3 miles across, near the village of Buxton. The Buxton Woods extend westward for more than 8 miles. Fine stands of loblolly pine, American holly, and live oaks cover the higher ridges and slopes. Between the ridges are marshy valleys, in some of which are attractive fresh-water ponds. At the edge of the ponds and marshes, the forest takes on a lush subtropical quality with dense banks of ferns, shrubs, and climbing vines. The fleeting sight of a dwarfed white-tailed deer is not unusual.

Little community or family cemeteries and scattered lonely graves along the Banks hold the earthly remains of many heroes of the Coast Guard, or earlier Lifesaving Service, as well as those of other victims of the sea. Six sailors from the ill-fated *Monitor*, it is said, lie in an unmarked common grave at the foot of a large redcedar 600 yards west of Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. Similarly, their famed iron-clad ship lies in her watery grave, a few miles southeast of the Light on the dread Diamond Shoals.

Each of the eight villages has its own individual character but all are located on the sound side of the barrier strip, separated by it from the raging sea. Early in the Colonial period, many members of Virginia, Maryland,

and even New England families of English, Scottish and Irish derivation, settled these isolated banks. They were attracted by the opportunities for maritime pursuits, including whaling. Many of them became pilots who steered the ocean vessels across the shallow waters of Pamlico Sound to the mainland ports. Small shipyards grew up around tiny harbor settlements, using timber from the pines and oaks which then grew extensively on the Banks. Isolation, and the smallness of population, have kept alive here a quaint language reminiscent of old England, together with much of the historic color and simplicity of life. Perhaps the village richest in atmosphere is Ocracoke, which hugs the almost landlocked Silver Lake harbor, finest on the Outer Banks. Many trawlers, sport-fishing boats, and pleasure craft line the docks in their seasons; and a time of storm may find the harbor overcrowded as vessels from miles around seek the safety of the harbor.

This national seashore provides a source of enjoyment for almost everyone who has longed for adventure and for contact with primitive and isolated places. One is reminded of man's heroic struggle against the sea by the towering waves and by the lonely Coast Guard stations. Through the inlets the waters move from sea to sound and from sound to sea; with them move schools of fish. The surf breaking upon the long, clear flat beach invites equally those who would fish in the surf, bathe, or merely wander with the vast loneliness of the sea and sand and the eternally restless winds.

THE OUTER BANKS IN HISTORY

In 1585, the first English colony in America was attempted on Roanoke Island but lasted only about 10 months. During a second colonization attempt it became, on August 18, 1587, the birthplace of Virginia Dare, first child of English parentage born in America. What happened to the members of this colony remains a mystery in American history. The site of the ill-fated settlements is commemorated by Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, also a unit of the National Park System.

On the sandy plain at the base of nearby Kill Devil Hill, in 1903, two brothers, Wilbur and Orville Wright, altered the pattern of world history when they made man's first successful flight in a power-driven airplane. This site is preserved as the Wright Brothers National Memorial; it, too, is in the National Park System.

During the centuries between the settlement attempts on Roanoke Island and the first flight, legend and history have developed side by side along the Outer Banks. Partially buried in the sands or submerged in the waters are hundreds of hulks and bits of wreckage, the remains

Sand, Sea, and Sky—Scene on Hatteras Island looking toward the point





Snow geese over Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge

large concentration of gadwall nesting along the Atlantic coast is found here. Here, too, large numbers of whistling swan spend the winter.

In addition, visitors may observe loons, grebes, herons, egrets, gulls, terns, rails, vultures, bald eagles, hawks, mourning doves, pheasants, blackbirds, and grackles at various times during the year.

Construction of observation points near the fresh-water ponds is planned.

RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

By reason of its unusual combination of physical features, the national seashore provides many forms of outdoor recreation. Within the area, recreational activities include photography, sport fishing, boating, sailing, swimming, sunbathing, picnicking, camping, bird study, nature walks, waterfowl hunting in season on adjacent waters, and the hunting of upland game on Ocracoke Island and on not more than 2,000 acres elsewhere, as provided by Congress in 1940.

Although all of these activities may now be enjoyed by the visitor, added facilities are to be provided in suitable locations as the need develops and funds are provided by the Congress. Selected points of particular recreational, scenic, or historical interest will be made more easily accessible through construction of parking areas and approach roads.

Two locations have been designated where rough camping is now permitted. One is at Oregon Inlet and the other near the point at Cape Hatteras. Detailed information about camping may be obtained at the superintendent's office, Manteo, N. C., or at the ranger station near the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.

SPORT FISHING

The sounds and the ocean surrounding the national seashore provide some of the finest sport fishing to be found on the Atlantic coast. It is of wide variety and some type of fishing is to be had practically the year round. Channel-bass, known also as red drum, show up in great numbers during late March or early April at Ocracoke, Hatteras, and Oregon Inlets. During the spring, they provide excellent fishing for trollers and for surf fishermen. They slack off in the summer but return in the fall when surf fishing reaches its height. These are followed by bluefish, sea mullet, trout, spot, croaker, and the many other species that are available to the fisherman until cold weather.

Gulf Stream fishing usually starts in May and lasts until cold weather. Dolphin, amberjack, bluefish, and mackerel are taken in great numbers, with catches of blue marlin, sailfish, and white marlin on the increase.

Favorite locations for taking fish are Oregon Inlet, the wrecks at Rodanthe, Cape Point near Buxton, Hatteras and Ocracoke Inlets, the Gulf Stream, and Pamlico Sound. Arrangements may be made for fishing equipment and charter-boat service at almost all of the villages or at the Fishing Center at Oregon Inlet. Harbors and marine services for yachts also are available.

MIGRATORY WATERFOWL HUNTING

In contrast with the situation in other areas administered by the National Park Service, hunting is permitted in the national seashore by the congressional act authorizing its establishment. Hunting must be done under rules and regulations conforming to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and is confined to three portions of the area: (1) on waters of the sounds within the national seashore, (2) on Ocracoke Island, or (3) within not more than 2,000 acres of land on Bodie and Hatteras Islands. However, no hunting is permitted within the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge and adjacent closed waters.

For detailed information relating to hunting, please write or otherwise communicate with the superintendent of the national seashore at Manteo, N. C.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Throughout the national seashore, the camera-equipped visitor will find subjects and scenery to keep his shutter clicking. Towering sand dunes, wild ponies, skeleton shipwrecks, gnarled live oaks, rough seas, and picturesque villages make it difficult for a camera fan to decide which to shoot first. Bird life and unique plants and



Surf fishing at Cape Hatteras Point

flowers are plentiful the year round. There are lighthouses, Coast Guard stations, and waterfront and beach scenes to challenge and satisfy both the amateur and the professional.

A word of caution: In this world of sand, sea, and sky, do not underestimate the light. If you use a meter, take its advice even if it records more light than you believe to be present.

HOW TO REACH THE AREA

From the north, Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area is approached by U. S. 158. This route connects with major north-south routes U. S. 13 and 17. U. S. 64 and 264 approach the area from the west. U. S. 64 crosses the Alligator River by free ferry. Near Mann's Landing it is joined by U. S. 264 and both cross Croatan Sound also by free ferry to Roanoke Island. (Construction of a bridge is underway to replace the Croatan Sound ferry.) From the south, the visitor reaches the area by U. S. 70 to Atlantic, N. C., and then by daily passenger toll-ferry to Ocracoke Village. Special arrangements must be made to transport vehicles to Ocracoke.

There are three scheduled daily trips each way by bus between Norfolk, Va., Elizabeth City, N. C., and Manteo, N. C. Within the national seashore, there are two regularly scheduled bus trips daily between Manteo and Hatteras, with stops in intervening villages.

The hard-surfacing of the road to Hatteras Village lessens the transportation problem for the motorist. Highway traffic across Oregon Inlet is handled during daylight hours by a free ferry operated by the State of North Carolina.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Except for the concessions at Oregon Inlet, there are no commercial facilities within the federally owned area. Accommodations for eating, lodging, guide service, groceries, camping supplies, etc., are available at the motor courts, hotels, restaurants, and general merchandise stores in villages and towns adjacent to the national seashore, in the resort towns to the north, and on Roanoke Island.

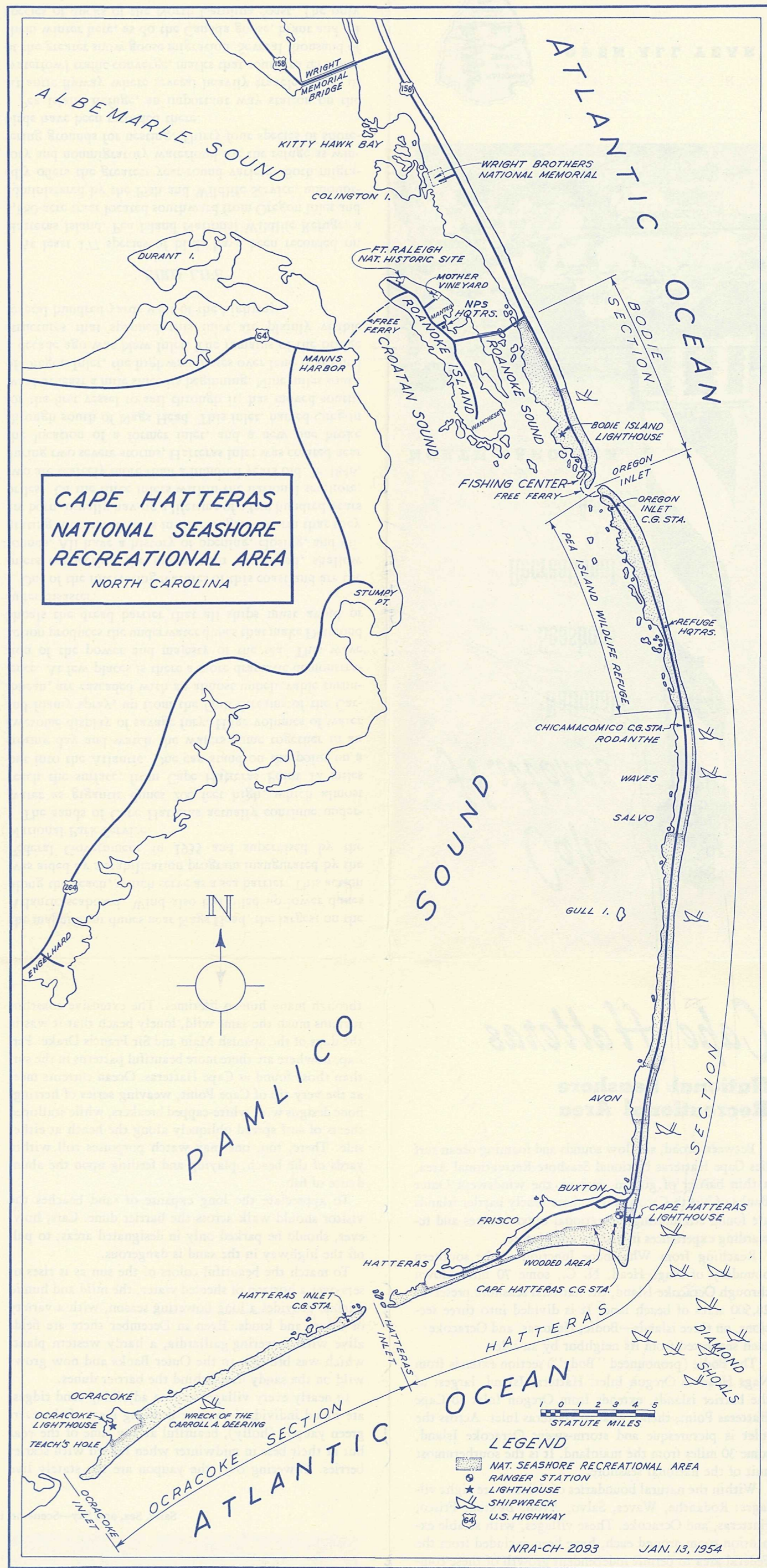
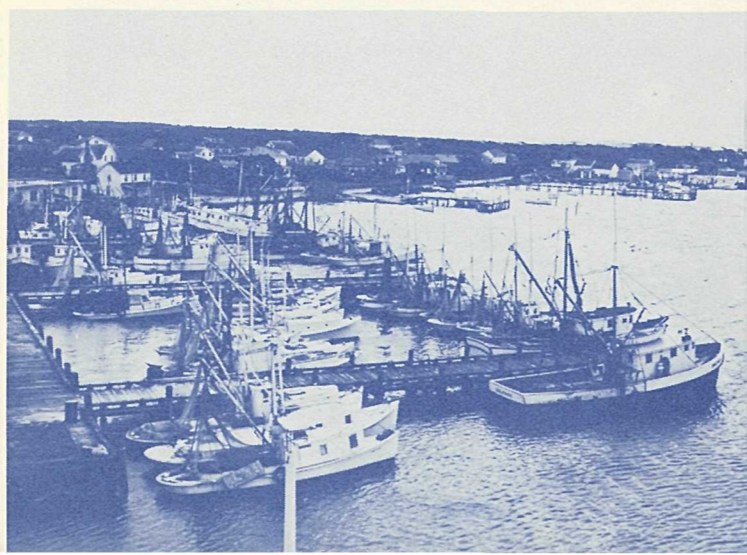
There are doctors in Manteo, N. C., and at the Cape Hatteras Health Center, Buxton, N. C.

WEATHER AND WEARING APPAREL

A mild, temperate, rather damp climate prevails as a result of the nearness to the Gulf Stream. Annual mean temperature is 62°, ranging from a mean of 46° in mid-winter to 78° in midsummer. Annual rainfall is almost 55 inches, with the wettest period from July to October. This combination of temperature and rainfall produces a comparatively high humidity, averaging 81 percent.

With the Gulf Stream lying to the east and Pamlico Sound to the west, winters are warmer and summers cooler than on the mainland. Only one year in three sees temperatures below 25°; few days have freezing temperatures. Growing seasons average 42 weeks and enable citrus fruits to flourish in and near the village of Buxton on Hatteras Island. Snow is rare; when it does occur, it is

Boats in harbor of Silver Lake, Ocracoke



light. Northerly winds prevail in winter and southwesterly in summer. Winds of hurricane force are infrequent.

In summer, light-weight clothing is appropriate, but it should be adequate to protect visitors from sunburn and mosquitoes. In winter, medium-weight apparel generally is suitable, but warm, preferably wind-resisting, garments are needed for nights, early mornings, and windy days.

ADMINISTRATION

Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area, established in January 1953, is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Manteo, N. C., is in immediate charge of the area. Inquiries or comments on any kind of activity in the area should be

addressed to him. While in the area, visitors may obtain information also at the ranger station near the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.

The National Park System, of which Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area is a unit, is dedicated to the conservation of America's scenic, scientific, and historic heritage for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Douglas McKay, Secretary

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,
Conrad L. Wirth, Director
Cover: Cape Hatteras Lighthouse

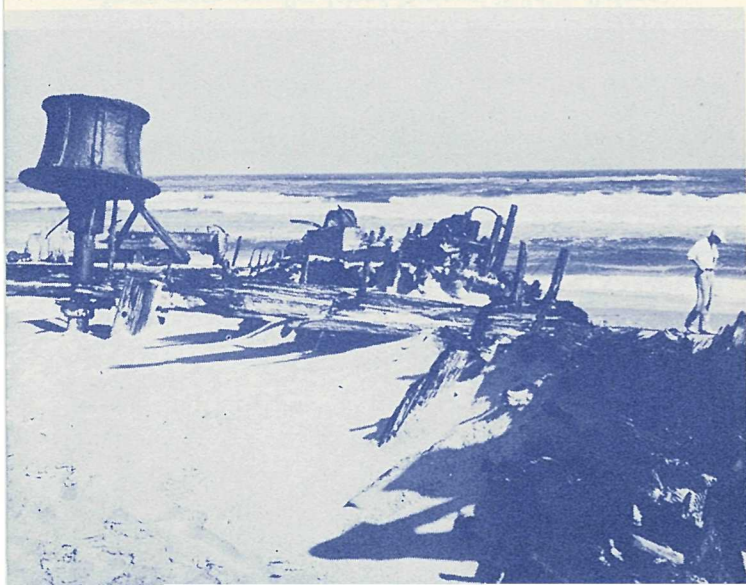
of ships that fell victims to storms, accidents, or human violence.

Probably the best-known shipwreck story is that of the ghost ship *Carroll A. Deering* on Ocracoke Island. *The Deering*, a five-masted schooner, was found stranded on Diamond Shoals in 1921, food still in the galley pots but with no crew aboard. The only living creature was the ship's cat. The fate of the crew remains unknown—one of the mysteries of the sea. The *Carroll A. Deering* was dynamited where she grounded on Diamond Shoals. Later, the bow drifted westerly and came ashore on Ocracoke Island, a few miles west of the Coast Guard Station at the east end of the island. It was buried in sand, and reexposed by the 1944 hurricane.

Legends of the Outer Banks are sprinkled heavily with piracy. Edward Teach (Blackbeard), as daring a pirate as ever sailed the seas, maintained a rendezvous on Ocracoke Island, near Springers Point. Just off that point, in Pamlico Sound, is Teach's Hole; residents like to point out that near there Blackbeard was killed in 1718 while resisting capture by a Virginia expedition.

The heroism and history of the Lifesaving Service (merged in 1915 with the Revenue-Cutter Service to form the Coast Guard) are embedded in the sands of this perilous coastline. The annals of that Service on the Outer Banks are replete with accounts of valiant men who risked and sometimes lost their lives in rescue work. Modern Coast Guard stations, such as the one near Oregon Inlet, continue this vigilance and this tradition. During World War II, they had an important part in coastal defense and in saving lives or recovering bodies of Allied seamen who had been victims of submarine sinkings at "Torpedo Junction." A number of Coast Guard stations,

Wreckage of mystery ship, *Carroll A. Deering*, on Ocracoke Island



once located at 7-mile intervals, remain for the visitor to see.

Located within the national seashore are three lighthouses: one on Bodie Island near Oregon Inlet, another at Cape Hatteras overlooking the "Graveyard of the Atlantic," and a third in the village of Ocracoke. The lighthouse at Cape Hatteras is the second erected there. The first, which was authorized by the United States Congress, May 13, 1794, was partially destroyed by a Federal fleet in 1861, during the Civil War. The base of the old tower is still visible.

The present Cape Hatteras Lighthouse was built in 1870 and its light first flashed its warning out into the Atlantic on December 16 of that year. Almost twice the height of the original tower, the present lighthouse is 208 feet from foundation to roof-peak. Its first-order light is 192 feet above mean low water and is normally visible for 20 miles at sea. This tower, tallest lighthouse in the United States, is ascended by 265 stair-steps. It is open to visitors on a limited schedule. For information about visiting hours inquire at the superintendent's office in Manteo, N. C., or at the ranger station near the base of the lighthouse.

Recognizing the importance of the story of the sea and of the heroic Outer Bankers who followed it, the National Park Service is developing a maritime museum at Cape Hatteras.

GEOLOGICAL FEATURES

Cape Hatteras and the Outer Banks have been recognized as one of the Nation's major geographic curiosities. They are fascinating to the layman and expert alike.

Some 20,000 years ago, sea level stood about 25 feet above its present height, and the shoreline then was far back on the present mainland. With the coming of the last glaciation, sea level dropped 50 feet or more to produce a shoreline about 25 feet lower than at present. Pamlico and the other sounds were sand flats, with the winds shifting the sands into dunes and ridges to begin the formation of the Outer Banks. When the continental ice sheet melted, sea level rose to its approximate present height, flooding the Pamlico and other low areas.

The present shoreline has been built up by wave action on what originally were shoals situated farther to the east. The Outer Banks are now being pushed toward the mainland by wave action, which washes the sand to the beach, and by wind action, which carries the sand inland. The winds are constantly moving the sand, building dunes and ridges in some places and tearing them down in others. This movement will continue as long as the sea remains at its present level. Windblown sand makes up

the magnificent dunes near Nags Head, the largest on the Atlantic seaboard. Wind also has piled up lower dunes along the beach, which serve as a sea barrier. This action was aided by a stabilization program inaugurated by the Federal Government in 1935 and supervised by the National Park Service.

The sands of Cape Hatteras actually continue underwater as gigantic dunes 200 feet high, which almost reach the surface, from Cape Hatteras Point 12 miles out into the Atlantic. One can stand on the point on a stormy day and watch the waters come together in an awesome display of savage fury. Huge volumes of water and foamy spray, up from the Gulf Streams of the Caribbean, are cascaded with an almost unbelievable turbulence. At few places is there a more dramatic demonstration of the power and majesty of the sea. This wave action produces the underwater dunes that make Diamond Shoals the dread barrier that all ships must avoid or suffer disaster.

One of the interesting features of this coastland are the inlets connecting the ocean with the broad, shallow sounds. All have a history of opening, closing, and migrating southward. It is in time of great storm that they are born, usually having a lifetime of a few hundred years or less. Of the three inlets within the national seashore, two are scarcely more than a hundred years old. In 1846, during two severe storms, Hatteras Inlet was created near the location of a former inlet, and a new one broke through south of Nags Head. This inlet, named Oregon for the first vessel to sail through it, has moved southward at least a mile since its beginning. Nine miles south of Oregon Inlet, the highway passes over land that until a decade ago was New Inlet. The remains of the bridge structures that spanned this inlet are plainly visible several hundred yards west of the highway.

BIRD LIFE

At least 177 species of birds have been recorded on Hatteras Island. Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, a 5,880-acre tract located southward from Oregon Inlet and administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service, undoubtedly offers the greatest year-round variety. Both migratory and nonmigratory waterfowl use the refuge as wintering grounds for nesting. Thirty-four species of shorebirds have been recorded there.

Pea Island Refuge, an important way station on the Atlantic flyway where several heavily traveled lanes of waterfowl traffic converge, marks that southern terminus of the greater snow goose migration. Several thousand of them winter here, as do the Canada goose, brant and all species of ducks of the North Carolina coast. The only

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