

# Cape Hatteras

National  
Seashore  
Recreational  
Area  
North Carolina



# Cape Hatteras

## National Seashore Recreational Area

OPEN ALL YEAR

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, stimulating recreational opportunities and rewarding experiences in history and nature await you.

From Whalebone Junction at the southern boundary of Nags Head, N. C., some 70 miles southward through Ocracoke Island, the National Seashore preserves 45 square miles of beach land. It is divided into three sections—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 Hatteras Inlet. Across the inlet and some 30 miles from the mainland is picturesque and storm-swept Ocracoke Island, the southernmost unit of the National Seashore.

Within the natural boundaries of the area are the villages of Rodanthe, Waves, Salvo, Avon, Buxton, Frisco, Hatteras, and Ocracoke. Congress, by the act of August 17, 1937, authorized this National Seashore Area and excluded these eight villages from the Federal area and left sizable expansion room around each to permit their independent growth as tourist centers.

Congress also provided that only those parts of the area which are especially adaptable for such recreational uses as swimming, boating, sailing, fishing, and similar activities should be so developed. It further provided that the rest of the area be permanently set aside to preserve the plant and animal life and the primitive wilderness shoreline. The act

*The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.*

was later amended to allow hunting in certain sections of the area.

### SAND, SEA, AND SKY

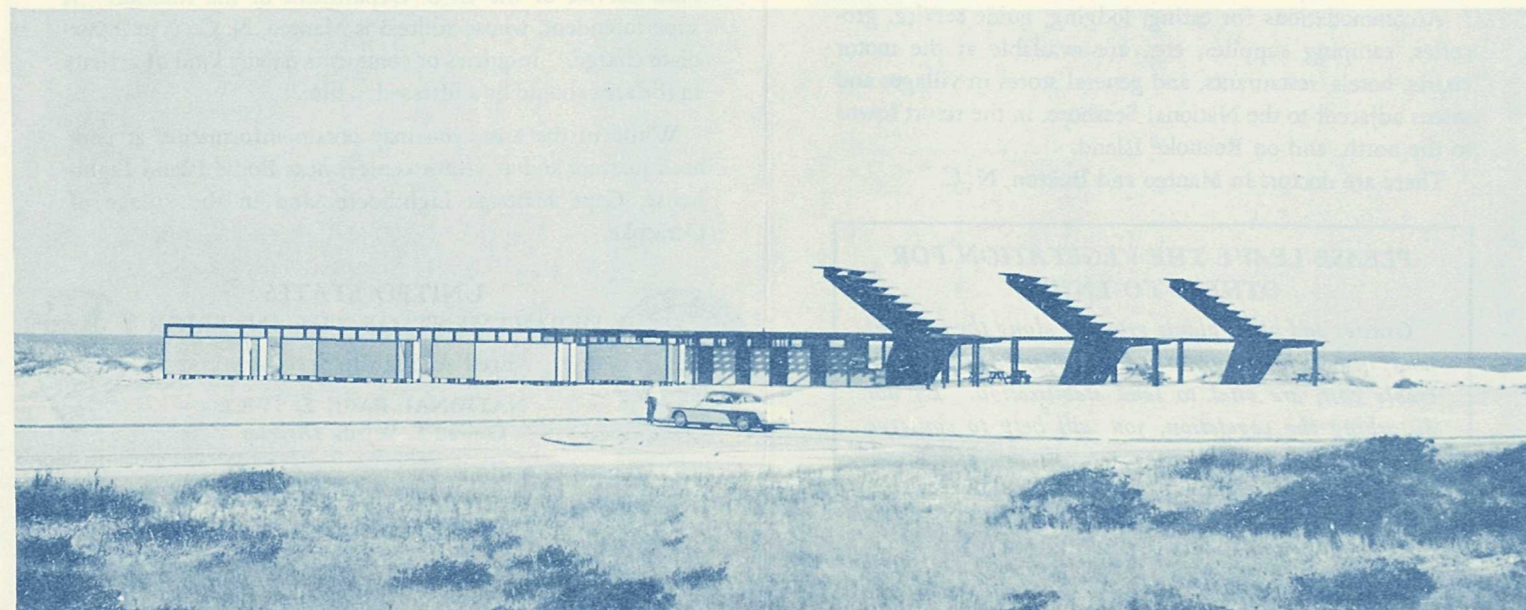
On this long strip of barrier islands, the sea and the land have battled for many human lifetimes. But the result of this dynamic conflict remains much the same. The extensive coastline is still the wild lonely beach that it was in 1586, when Sir Francis Drake anchored his ships off Roanoke Island. Perhaps nowhere are there more beautiful patterns in the surf than those at Cape Hatteras. Ocean currents meet at the very tip of the cape, weaving series of herring-bone designs with white-capped breakers, while scalloped sheets of surf spread obliquely along the beach at either side. There, too, one may watch bottle-nosed dolphin (often called porpoise) roll within yards of the beach, playing and feeding upon the abundance of fish.

To appreciate the long expanse of sand beaches, you should walk across the barrier dune—*never* drive across. It is dangerous even to pull off the highway into the sand to park, so park your car only in designated areas.

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

In nearly every village, and on adjoining sand ridges, are individual trees or growing thickets of evergreen yaupon (species of holly), beautiful at any time of the year but at

Coquina Beach day-use facilities.



their best in midwinter when loaded with scarlet berries. Mixed with yaupon are stately live oaks which, in the past, furnished shade and wood to many generations of "Bankers," as residents of the Outer Banks are sometimes called.

Westward from the elbow of Cape Hatteras near the village of Buxton is the widest part of the Outer Banks, almost 3 miles across. Buxton Woods extends westward for more than 8 miles. Fine stands of loblolly pine, American holly, and live oak 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. A fleet-sight of a 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 Life-Saving 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 ironclad ship lies in her watery grave, a few miles southeast of the lighthouse on the dread Diamond Shoals.

All eight villages are on the sound side of the barrier strip which separates them from the raging sea. In colonial times, members of Virginia and Maryland families of English, Scottish, and Irish descent settled these isolated banks. They were attracted by the opportunities for stock raising, but many of them turned to maritime pursuits. Others became pilots who steered ocean vessels across shallow

Pamlico Sound to mainland ports. Fishing also has always been important here. In the tiny harbor settlements, a local type of sailboat came to be built. Of the villages, possibly Avon and Ocracoke are the most different from mainland towns. Ocracoke hugs the almost landlocked harbor of Silver Lake. Many trawlers, sport-fishing boats, and pleasure craft line the piers in season; and, during a storm, the harbor is overcrowded as vessels from miles around seek safety.

The National Seashore provides enjoyment for almost everyone who has longed for adventure and for contact with isolated places. Towering waves and lonely Coast Guard stations remind you of man's heroic struggles against the sea. Through the inlets, the waters move from ocean to sound and from sound to ocean; with them move schools of fish. Breaking surf upon miles of sand invites you to fish or bathe, or walk the long beach with sea and sand and restless wind.

### HISTORY OF THE OUTER BANKS

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. The site of the 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 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. The stranded schooner was dynamited where she grounded on Diamond Shoals. Later, the bow drifted westerly and came ashore



Boats in harbor of Silver Lake, Ocracoke.

on Ocracoke Island, where it was covered by drifting sand. Since then it has been uncovered and reburied several times.

Legends of the Outer Banks are heavily sprinkled with piracy. Edward Teach (Blackbeard), a daring and ruthless pirate, maintained a rendezvous on Ocracoke Island, near Springers Point. Just off that point, in Pamlico Sound, is Teach's Hole. Blackbeard was killed near here in 1718 while resisting capture by a Virginia expedition.

Embedded in the sands of this perilous coastline is the heroic history of the Life-Saving Service which was merged with the Revenue-Cutter Service in 1915 to form the Coast Guard. The annals of these Services on the Outer Banks contain many 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 tradition. In World War I a dramatic rescue took place when the men of the Chicamacomico Coast Guard Station rescued most of the crew of the burning tanker *Mirlo*. 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." Coast Guard stations were once located at 7-mile intervals, but now only 4 remain active within the National Seashore boundaries.

Three Coast Guard lighthouses are located within the National Seashore: Bodie Island Lighthouse, near Oregon Inlet; Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, overlooking the Diamond Shoals; and Ocracoke Lighthouse, in the village of Ocracoke.

The lighthouse at Cape Hatteras is the second erected there. The first, which was authorized by Congress on 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 steps. It is open to visitors on a limited schedule. For information about visiting hours, inquire at park headquarters on Bodie section or at the ranger station near the base of the lighthouse.

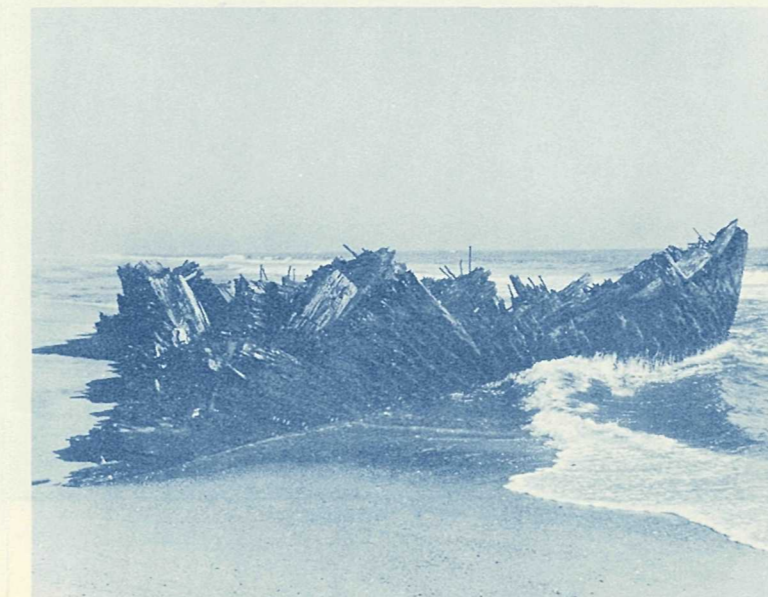
The story of the neighboring sea and the heroic Outer Bankers who followed it is told, in part, in exhibits at the visitor center, about 2 miles from the tip of the cape.

### GEOLOGICAL FEATURES

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

Some 30,000 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

Remains of the *G. A. Kobler* beached in 1933 on Hatteras Island.



sounds were sand flats. The winds shifting the sands into dunes and ridges began the formation of the Outer Banks. When the continental ice sheet melted, sea level rose to its approximate present height, creating Pamlico Sound and flooding 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. The largest dunes on the Atlantic seaboard, near Nags Head, are outside the National Seashore. Along the beach, wind also has piled up lower dunes, which serve as a sea barrier. The process of building up the lower dunes has been accelerated by fences, acting as catchments, that were built under the supervision of the National Park Service, as authorized by a Federal stabilization program inaugurated in 1935.

The sands of Cape Hatteras actually continue underwater as gigantic shoals for 12 miles out into the Atlantic. In places they almost reach the surface. You can stand at the cape on a stormy day and watch the waters come together in an awesome display of savage fury. This ocean spectacle is produced by the head-on clash of warm waters from the Gulf Stream with colder currents from the north. Few places offer 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.

Interesting features of this coastland are the inlets connecting the ocean with the broad shallow sounds. All have a history of opening and migrating southward, and some have closed. It is in time of great storm that they are born, usually having a lifetime of a few hundred years or less. Of the 3 inlets within the National Seashore, 2 are scarcely more than 100 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 that spanned this inlet are plainly visible several hundred yards west of the highway.

### BIRDLIFE

About 400 species of birds have been recorded in the National Seashore. Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, a

5,880-acre tract south of Oregon Inlet and administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior, offers the greatest year-round variety. Both migratory and nonmigratory waterfowl use the refuge as wintering grounds and for nesting. Thirty-four species of shorebirds have been recorded here.

Several heavily traveled lanes of waterfowl traffic converge on Pea Island Refuge, an important way station on the Atlantic flyway. Pea Island marks the southern end of the greater snow goose migration. Thousands of snow geese winter here, as do Canada geese and all species of ducks of the North Carolina coast. The only large concentration of gadwall nesting along the Atlantic coast is found here. Large numbers of whistling swan spend the winter in the refuge.

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

An observation point has been built near a fresh-water pond, and there are bird panels in the visitor center near Bodie Island Lighthouse.

### RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

By reason of its unusual combination of physical features, the National Seashore provides many forms of outdoor recreation: Photography, sport fishing, boating, sailing, swimming, sunbathing, picnicking, camping, bird study, and nature walks.

Although all of these activities may now be enjoyed,

A good catch from surf fishing at Cape Hatteras.





# CAPE HATTERAS

## NATIONAL SEASHORE RECREATIONAL AREA

NORTH CAROLINA

0 1 2 3 4 5  
SCALE IN MILES



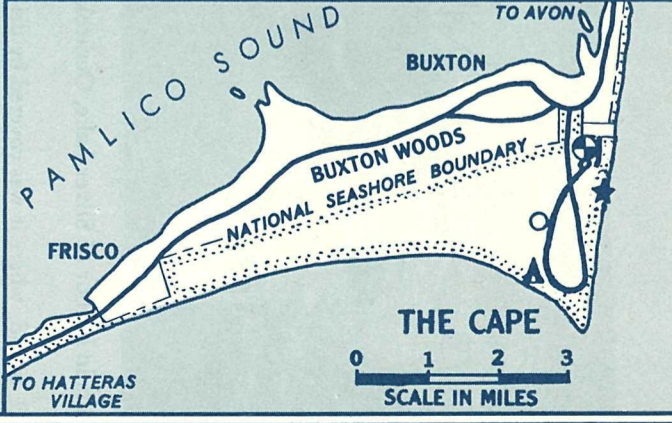
To Williamston and Raleigh, N. C.

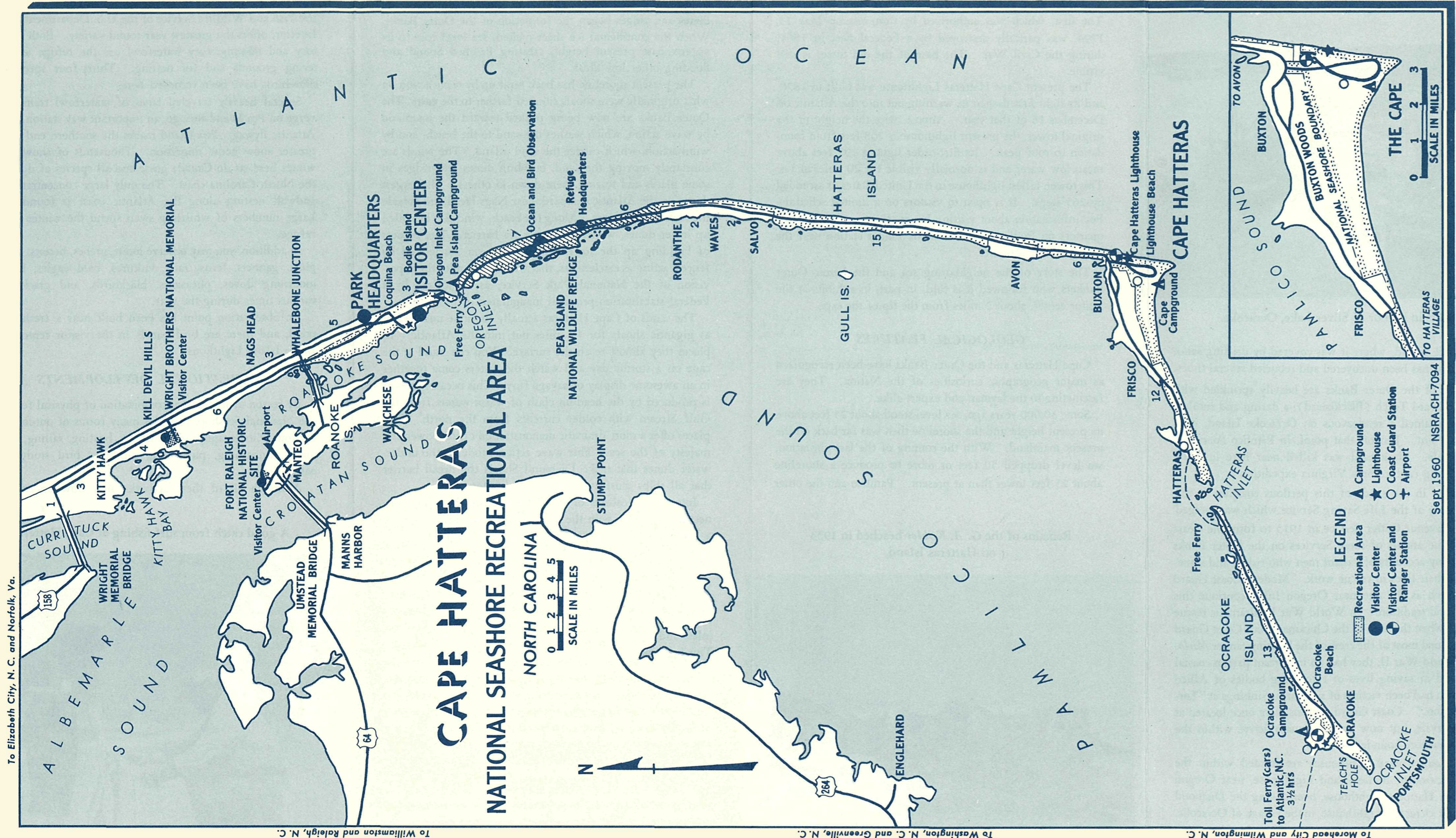
To Washington, N. C. and Greenville, N. C.

To Morehead City and Wilmington, N. C.

### LEGEND

- Recreational Area
- Visitor Center
- Visitor Center and Ranger Station
- Campground
- Lighthouse
- Coast Guard Station
- Airport





added facilities are to be provided in suitable locations as the need develops and funds are provided by Congress. Selected points of particular recreational, scenic, or historical interest are being made more accessible by parking areas and approach roads now under construction.

Campgrounds are at Oregon Inlet, at Ocracoke, and on the cape. Detailed information about camping may be obtained at park headquarters, at the ranger station near the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, and at the visitor center at Ocracoke.

**SPORT FISHING**

The waters surrounding the National Seashore provide sport fishing that is as fine as any on the Atlantic coast. It is of wide variety, and you can do some type of fishing practically the year around. Channel bass (also known as red drum) show up in great numbers during late March or early April at Ocracoke, Hatteras, and Oregon Inlets. During the spring, the bass provide excellent fishing for trollers and for surf fishermen. They slack off in summer but return in autumn, when surf fishing reaches its height. Bass are followed by bluefish, sea mullet, trout, spot, croaker, and many other kinds of fish that can be caught 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; while blue marlin, sailfish, and white marlin are also caught.

Favorite fishing spots are Oregon Inlet, the pier at Rodanthe, Ocracoke and Hatteras Inlets, the Gulf Stream, Pamlico Sound, and on the cape. Arrangements may be made for fishing equipment and charter-boat service at most of the villages or at the Oregon Inlet Fishing Center. Harbors and marine services for yachts also are available.

**MIGRATORY WATERFOWL HUNTING**

In contrast with the rule 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 parts 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 as defined on Bodie and Hatteras sections. However, no hunting is permitted within the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge and adjacent closed waters.

For detailed information on hunting, ask the superintendent of the National Seashore.

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

Throughout the National Seashore, the photographer will find subjects and scenery to keep his shutter clicking. Towering sand dunes, skeleton shipwrecks, gnarled live oaks, rough seas, and picturesque villages make it difficult for a camera fan to decide which to shoot first. Birdlife and unique plants and 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 Harbor, it joins U. S. 264 and both cross Croatan Sound by free bridge to Roanoke Island. From the south, you may reach the area by U. S. 70 to Atlantic, N. C., and then by daily toll ferry to the village of Ocracoke.

Buses operating from Norfolk, Va., and Elizabeth City, N. C., make three round trips to Manteo daily.

Travelers on Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands should be aware of the schedules of the free ferries across Oregon and Hatteras Inlets. You can now drive your car on Ocracoke Island. Storms, however, can change conditions, and travelers should be prepared for the unexpected.

**ACCOMMODATIONS**

Accommodations for eating, lodging, guide service, groceries, camping supplies, etc., are available at the motor courts, hotels, restaurants, and general 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 and Buxton, N. C.

**PLEASE LEAVE THE VEGETATION FOR OTHERS TO ENJOY**

*Grasses and other plants growing along the miles of sand, in part the results of careful planting at considerable cost, are vital to land stabilization. By not disturbing the vegetation, you will help to conserve this scenic area.*

**WEATHER AND WEARING APPAREL**

A 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 midwinter 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. Temperatures below 25° are uncommon; few days have freezing temperatures. Snow is uncommon and usually light. Northerly winds prevail in winter and southwesterly in summer. Winds of hurricane force are infrequent.

In summer, lightweight clothing is appropriate, but it should be adequate to protect you from sunburn, mosquitoes, and cool evening breezes. In winter, warm garments, preferably wind-resisting, are needed for nights, early mornings, and windy days.

**MISSION 66**

Mission 66 is a program designed to be completed by 1966 which will assure the maximum protection of the scenic, scientific, wilderness, and historic resources of the National Park System in such ways and by such means as will make them available for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

**ADMINISTRATION**

Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area, established on January 12, 1953, is administered by the National Park Service of the U. S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Manteo, N. C., is in immediate charge. Inquiries or comments on any kind of activity in the area should be addressed to him.

While in the area, you may obtain information at park headquarters and at visitor centers near Bodie Island Lighthouse, Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, and in the village of Ocracoke.



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
Fred A. Seaton, Secretary  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Conrad L. Wirth, Director

