

## TIPS ON VISITING THE CAPE AREA

REMEMBER THAT THIS IS STILL AN UNDEVELOPED AND EXTRAORDINARILY PRIMITIVE AREA.

BE PREPARED TO CARRY WITH YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED.

### Specifically:

**Clothing:** There is little shade or shelter on the islands. Don't go out without a shirt and a hat.

**Food:** Take it with you.

**Water:** Take it with you. Enough water is a necessity; one can dehydrate on the islands in hot weather. If there is a dire emergency, there are fresh water ponds on Shackleford. Anywhere on the islands, one can dig down about three feet and find some fresh water. Better, still, take it with you.

**Tentage:** Make sure it is good, strong, and able to withstand wind. Unless you have a particular liking for insect bites, make sure it has a mosquito netting. From July to October, camp near the beach in the open dune fields where there is both a bit of breeze and some protection from high wind. In the non-insect season, you will find the shrub and grassland areas pleasant.

**Trash:** Please take it out with you. Should you bury it, you will cause problems. Remember that the disturbance of any part of the ecological system, including the water table, will eventually destroy the rest.

**Insects:** Yes, we have mosquitoes. So does almost every other part of the Atlantic coast. We also have sand gnats, and chiggers. Bring an ample supply of repellent. On Shackleford Banks, check yourself daily for ticks, just as you would in any other woodland area.

**Access:** All access to the banks will be by boat, as it is now. There are no roads on or bridges to the islands. Ferry service is available from Harkers Island to the Cape Lookout Bight area and ultimately will be available to the Shackleford Banks area. It is also available from Davis to Shingle Point, from Atlantic to an area north of Drum Inlet, and on a charter basis from Ocracoke to Portsmouth.

**Boating:** Make sure you have navigation charts aboard. Follow the marked channels. The sound is shallow and it is easy to run aground.

## ADMINISTRATION

Cape Lookout National Seashore is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is P.O. Box 690, Beaufort, North Carolina 28516, is immediately in charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States — now and in the future.

## PICTURE CREDITS

Picture No. 1 Aerial view of Cape Lookout Bight in 1943. Note Bardin Inlet in upper left corner. Navy Department photo no. 80-G-384655 in the National Archives.

Picture No. 2 An aerial view of Core Banks looking south toward Cape Lookout.

Picture No. 3 The Diamond City, a sailing ferry between Harkers Island and Cape Lookout. Photo by Joel Arrington, courtesy of Travel Information Division, North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development.

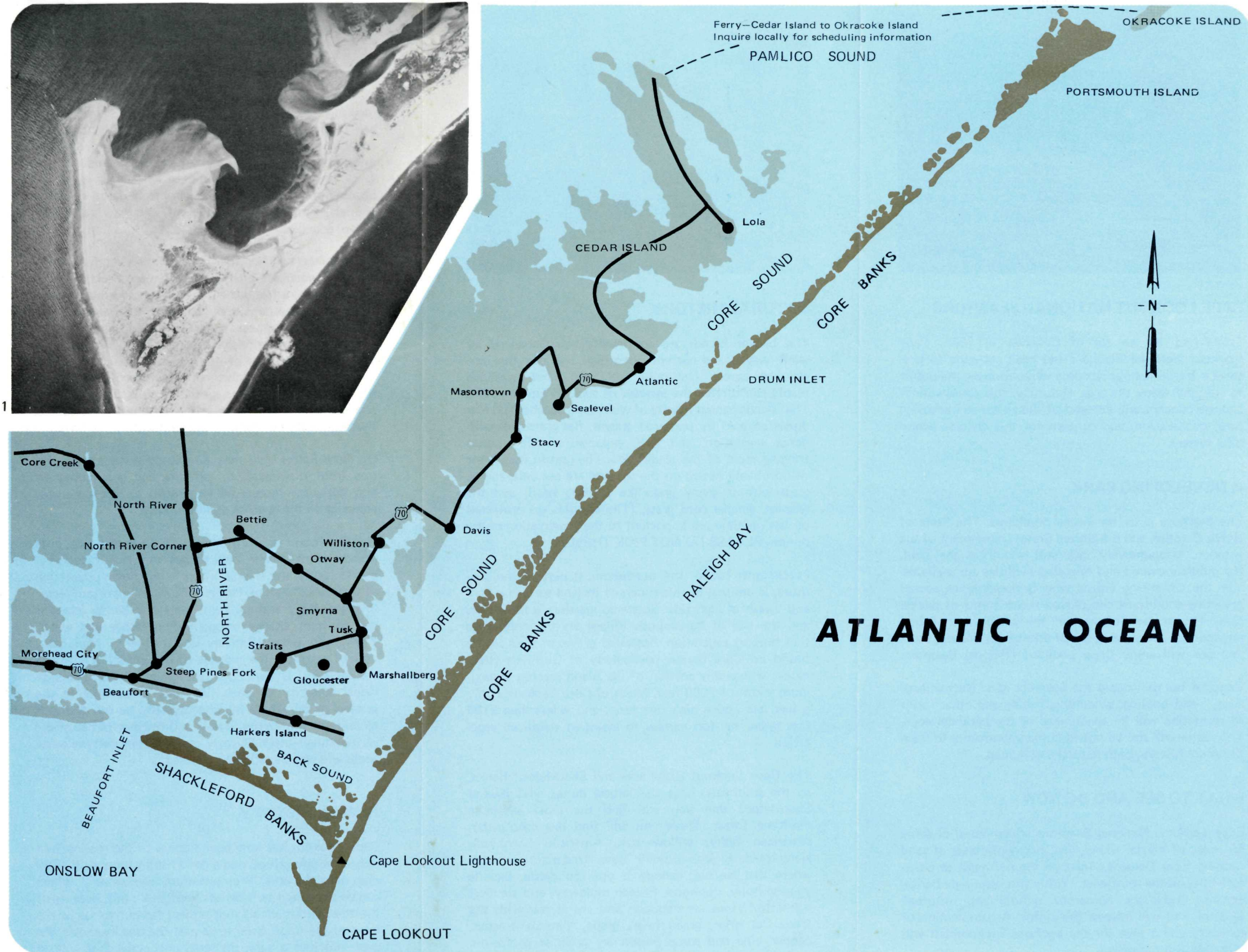
Picture No. 4 Henry Pigott's cottage on Doctors Creek, village of Portsmouth. Mr. Piggot was one of the last three residents of the village. Photo by Joel Arrington, courtesy of Travel Information Division, North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development.

Picture No. 5 Methodist Church in Portsmouth. Photo by Joel Arrington, courtesy of Travel Information Division, North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development.

Picture No. 6 Cape Lookout Light Station today. Photo by Hugh Morton, courtesy of Travel Information Division, North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development.



# cape lookout NATIONAL SEASHORE







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### CAPE LOOKOUT NATIONAL SEASHORE

Established by an act of Congress in 1966, Cape Lookout National Seashore has been set aside to preserve a fragile natural resource while allowing the public to use and enjoy the area. Naturally, this conservation-and-use concept will demand of the visitor an increasing care, cooperation, and concern for this delicate ecological system.

### A DEVELOPING PARK

The Seashore is by no means developed. The State of North Carolina and the United States Department of the Interior, cooperatively, are still acquiring the land. No publicly owned and operated facilities are available. Yet the discerning visitor who is prepared to accept primitive conditions can pursue many forms of recreation. The student of nature, the person who fishes, anyone who loves being out-of-doors with the sun, sand, and sea will enjoy Cape Lookout National Seashore.

Congress has designated the Seashore as a "Recreational Area," and boating, swimming, fishing and other forms of recreation will be encouraged as the park develops. The visitor will also be provided the opportunity to learn the area's history, both natural and human.

### WHAT TO SEE AND DO NOW

Cape Lookout National Seashore is composed of some 58 miles of barrier island, low, narrow ribbons of sand running from Ocracoke Inlet on the northeast to Beaufort Inlet on the southwest. Within this seemingly barren expanse there are numerous natural and historical features that will interest the visitor. A combination of curiosity and a love for the seashore environment will make his visit rewarding.



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### NATURAL HISTORY

The barrier islands are continually being changed by wind, waves, and currents; one high tide can alter the physical aspect. Naturally, only the most tenacious plants can survive the stresses of such an environment. The islands consist mostly of wide, bare beaches and low dunes covered by scattered grasses, flat grasslands with dense vegetation, and large expanses of salt marshes fringing most of the sound side. The grasses the visitor will probably notice on the sea side are sea oats, a large grass with a lovely grain-like fruiting head, and the wispiest, smaller cord grass. (The sea oats are protected by law, as they are important to the preservation of the dunes: PLEASE DO NOT PICK THEM.)

Portsmouth Island, the northernmost part of the Seashore, is unusual in that much of its land surface is bare and awash at high tide. Scattered marshes, a few dunes and the site of Portsmouth Village are the only areas that support vegetation. Scattered groves of trees can be found on Core Banks, particularly at Guthrie's Hammock, where this portion of the island reaches a maximum width of 7000 feet. Much of Core Banks lies only a few feet above high tide level, and is less than 2100 feet wide, far too narrow to maintain stabilized vegetation.

The Cape Lookout Bight area and Shackleford Banks, to the southeast, have the largest dunes, and it is at Shackleford that you will find the most extensive maritime forest. There you will find live oak, cedar, American holly, willow oak, American hornbeam, Hercules-club, and loblolly pine. Understory shrubs, where the live oak canopy is not too dense, include yaupon holly, dogwood, French mulberry, and stemless palmetto. Vines are common and are at war with the trees. Cat briar, green briar, grape, Virginia creeper, pepper vine and some poison ivy grow in profusion.

The changing geography of the islands produces the strange and beautiful "ghost forests" on the ocean side of the groves; trees killed by advancing sand and salt spray leave their skeletons to protrude, while the forests advance on the growing sound-side of the island.

Mammals are rare on the islands. Rice rats and racoons are two wild species found there. Animals that have accompanied man to the area include some rats and mice, and some rabbits, thought to be descendants of a stock once kept by a lighthouse keeper for meat. On Shackleford, there is a population of large domestic animals, formerly pastured there, and now gone wild; sheep, goats, cows, and horses.

Birdwatchers will find that the area is a wintering ground for such northern birds as loons, mergansers, cormorants, gannets, a few geese and swans, and other bay and sea ducks. Occasionally an arctic bird, such as the razor-billed auk, will appear, and a few pelagic birds, such as shearwaters and petrels, visit the area. In summer, you will find a number of tern species, pelicans, egrets, herons, and many kinds of shore birds. Permanent residents include various species of gulls, hawks and ospreys. These birds are just some of the species that will be found in the Core Banks area.

On Core Banks, you may also find Fowler's toads and tree frogs; diamond-back terrapins and box turtles are also fairly common. And loggerhead turtles sometimes come up on the beaches at nesting time.

Reptiles found on Core Banks include chameleons, glass lizards, skinks, and such snakes as black racers, rat snakes, and water snakes. There is no known population of venomous reptiles. Perhaps the most important factor in the ecology and natural history of a barrier island is the constant change wrought by weather and water. Yet nature, when relatively undisturbed by man, has a way of restoring the balance of life in such a changing environment. If the visitor will remember that the individual integrity of each life zone is essential to the survival of the whole island ecosystem, he can do much to preserve the barrier islands and the marine life of the surrounding waters. Destroy one life zone and the other zones will also be seriously affected.

### HUMAN HISTORY

Cape Lookout has long been known to the mariner as a danger, a safe refuge, and a good fishing ground. A 1590 map calls the area "Promontorium tremendum," which can be translated as "horrible headland"; this, because of the treacherous shoals that project far out to sea at the head of the Cape. Still, once past the deadly shoals, the cape provides a safe, sheltered anchorage that will do

much to shield a vessel from a Northeaster, or, as in World War II, from an enemy submarine. The pirate Blackbeard is reported to have anchored here on occasion. Ships of the British Royal Navy sought refuge here during the American Revolution and during the War of 1812. During the War of Jenkin's Ear in the 1740's, Spanish privateers rendezvoused here and attempted to make a lodgement at Beaufort. In the Civil War, the area was contested by Union and Confederate forces, with the Union forces succeeding in occupying the area and making it available to the Union blockading fleet. In World War II, Allied vessels found it a safe harbor, particularly after the anti-submarine net had been stretched across Beaufort Inlet.

Military actions contribute much to the human history of the area. Some of the story needs further research before it can be told in its entirety, but still there are fascinating little tidbits, such as the story of the French seamen and soldiers who built a fort at Cape Lookout for the benefit of the American Revolutionary forces.

While military history played its part in the barrier islands, the local inhabitants were far more interested in trade and fishing. The town of Portsmouth was established by the North Carolina assembly in 1753, as a point from which cargoes could be lightered ashore to be shipped inland, or ships could be sufficiently lightened to cross the bar and proceed to Beaufort, Bath, and other ports. Buildings of Portsmouth still survive, but are now being used only as vacation homes.

Whaling was at least an occasional industry as early as the 17th century. For a length of time it was largely a catch-as-catch-can endeavor, with islanders making use of stranded, beached whales. Toward the end of the 18th century, the whaling industry became somewhat more organized, perhaps as a result of the influence of New England whalers. Local whalers, both native-born

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and immigrants, began to actively pursue the whales. The whaling industry died toward the end of the 19th century.

Fishing in one form or another has for centuries been an important industry on the Banks. In the 19th century Diamond City on Shackleford Banks, became famous for the excellent quality of the salted mullet it exported. The secret lay not in the quality of fish — the same fish was available to all the local communities — but in the care the Diamond City processors took in cleaning, salting, and packing the fish in barrels.

Most nations with a coastline have established navigational and water rescue services. In the United States, these took the form of the Lighthouse Service and the Life Saving Service, and were combined in 1914 with the Revenue Cutter Service to form the United States Coast Guard. Part of the Cape Lookout story revolves around the Lighthouse service, the Life Saving Service, and later the Coast Guard. At the Cape Lookout Bight area are two tangible landmarks dating back to the pre-Coast Guard days — the lighthouse and part of the Coast Guard life saving station. The lighthouse, completed in 1859 as a replacement for the then existing 1812 lighthouse, has survived hurricanes and war. Perhaps the greatest threat to it came from Confederate troops who systematically destroyed lighthouses in order to deny aid and comfort to the blockading fleets. Unlike others along the coast, the Cape Lookout Lighthouse escaped being blown up. The Confederates simply destroyed the Fresnel lens, which left the lighthouse inoperative for some eight months. It was not until 1867 that the lighthouse again had a full-strength illumination system.

Of the three life saving stations established on Core Banks between 1888 and 1897 — at Portsmouth Island, Drum Inlet and Cape Lookout Bight — only the one at Cape Lookout Bight remains, in recognition of the

dangers of the off-shore shoals and because of increasing recreational boating in Core Sound.

### WHAT WILL COME

As the park is developed, visitor services will increase. A visitor center at Harkers Island, accessible by automobile, will provide exhibits and other information concerning recreational activities and the human and natural history of the area. On the banks there will be the historic restoration of the Portsmouth and Cape Lookout Lighthouse areas, exhibits, camping areas, visitor services, protected swimming areas, and concessions selling limited supplies. A wilderness study and a new master plan for the full development of the Seashore will be submitted to Congress prior to January 1, 1978.



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