



North Carolina

Birding Trail

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East Carteret

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NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores & T. Roosevelt State Natural Area

Owner(s): NC Aquariums, NC State Parks

1 Roosevelt Boulevard, Pine Knoll Shores, NC 28512
252-247-4003 (Aquarium); 252-726-3775 (State Parks)

Carteret County

www.ncaquariums.com/pks/pksindex.htm

Site Description: The T. Roosevelt Nature Trail passes through maritime forest and paleo dunes as it winds west roughly 0.75 miles toward Bogue Sound (1.5 miles round trip). This 265-acre maritime forest, owned and maintained by the state, is one of the few remaining expanses of maritime forest on North Carolina's barrier islands. In wooded areas along the trail, look and listen for various warbler, vireo, and thrush species, along with other songbirds. Painted Buntings may be found here during the breeding season. The Alice Hoffman Nature Trail, which leaves from behind the Aquarium building, extends east in the opposite direction. This 0.5 mile long trail passes along the marsh edge, then enters a forested area. One trail spur extends out to a brackish pond. Scan the marshes for Northern Harrier, Osprey, White Ibis, and Tri-colored Heron; listen for rail species.

Species of Interest: White Ibis, Painted Bunting, rails, wading birds

Habitats: maritime forest and shrub, salt marsh

Access & Parking: The T. Roosevelt State Natural Area trail head leaves from the south side of the Aquarium parking lot. This self-guided trail can be accessed daily from 9am to 5pm. The marsh boardwalk, overlook, and Alice Hoffman Trail are only accessed through the Aquarium building, for which there is an entrance fee of \$8. The same hours apply. Amenities are available in the Aquarium.

Directions: From the Atlantic Beach Causeway, turn south on NC 58 and travel for 5 miles. At milepost 7, turn right at the signs for the Aquarium onto Pine Knoll Boulevard. Take the second left onto Roosevelt Boulevard. The parking lot is at the end of Roosevelt Boulevard.

Coordinates: N 34°41'57" W 76°49'44" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 78





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Hoop Pole Creek Natural Area

Owner: NC Coastal Federation

NC 58, Atlantic Beach, NC
252-393-8185

Carteret County

www.nccoast.org/education/pubed/naturetrail

Site Description: This 0.5 mile long trail follows Hoop Pole Creek out to Bogue Sound, passing through maritime forest for much of the walk, and ending with views of coastal salt marsh. The interpretive trail guide gives information about a number of plant species associated with this type of habitat. A variety of migrating and breeding songbirds may be seen and heard in the wooded areas. Look and listen for various warbler, vireo, and thrush species, along with other songbirds. In winter, Hermit Thrush, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet are frequent. Scan the creek and marsh areas for Northern Harrier, Osprey, Marsh Wren, wading birds, and listen for rails.

Species of Interest: White Ibis, Marsh Wren, rails, wading birds

Habitats: maritime forest and shrub, salt marsh

Access & Parking: Park at the eastern end of the Atlantic Station Shopping Center, near the Hardees. An informational kiosk along the nearby forested area marks the start of the Hoop Pole Creek Nature Trail; brochures are available for a self-guided walk. The trail is open daily during daylight hours.

Directions: From the stoplight at the intersection of the Atlantic Beach-Morehead City Causeway and NC 58, turn right on NC 58 and travel west for 0.8 miles. Turn right at the first entrance into the Atlantic Station Shopping Center and park.

Coordinates: N 34°42'04" W 76°45'07" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 78





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Fort Macon State Park

Owner: NC State Parks

Eastern terminus of NC 58, Atlantic Beach, NC
252-726-3775

Carteret County

www.ncsparks.net

Site Description: Fort Macon offers opportunities to view a variety of shorebirds, pelagic birds and waterfowl. Winter can be an especially good season to bird here. Walk the beach in a wide arc from the sound side around to the south-facing beach. As the shoreline swings east, it parallels Beaufort Inlet, with views of Shackleford Banks. In winter, watch for loons, Red-breasted Merganser, and waterfowl in the nearshore waters. The occasional Harlequin Duck, Common Eider, or alcid species may be found in the rough surf around the jetty at the southwest corner of the point; look for Purple Sandpiper on the jetty rocks. Scan the horizon for passing shearwaters, storm-petrels, gannets and scoters. Watch for rarities amongst the sandpipers and plovers that frequent the tidal wash areas. In the warmer months, scan for terns and wading birds. Walk over to the Fort and the surrounding forest and shrub areas to look for songbirds, including an occasional Painted Bunting.

Species of Interest: Piping Plover, Purple Sandpiper, Painted Bunting, pelagic birds, wintering waterfowl

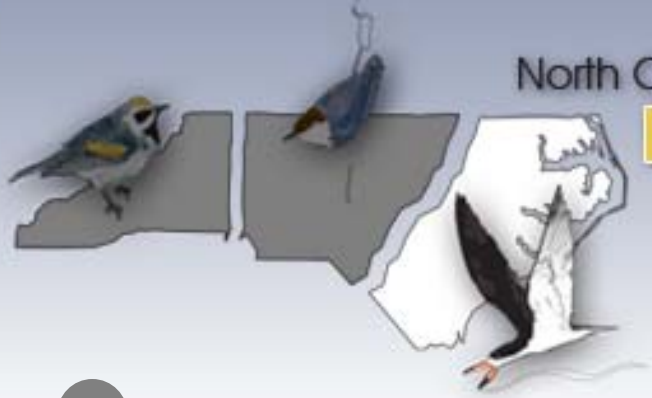
Habitats: maritime shrub, beach and dune

Access & Parking: Park in the second parking lot, close to the Fort and the eastern-most beach access and jetty. During the summer months, this park can be very crowded; early arrival is recommended. Park hours are 8am to 6pm, November - February; 8am to 7pm, March and October; 8am to 8pm, April, May, September; 6am to 9pm, June - August. Seasonal concessions are available Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Directions: From the Atlantic Beach stoplight at the intersection of NC 58 and the Atlantic Beach-Morehead City Causeway, follow NC 58 east for 2 miles. The road dead ends in the park.

Coordinates: N 34°41'49" W 76°40'40" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 78, 79





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Calico Creek Boardwalk

Owner: Town of Morehead City

North 20th Street, Morehead City, NC
252-726-5083

Carteret County

Site Description: Calico Creek is a pretty nice spot for birding, considering its relatively urban location. The best birding opportunities are at low tide; plan for a two hour lag behind the ocean tide. Walking along the boardwalk, look for migrating shorebirds, wintering waterfowl, and the occasional glimpse of a Clapper Rail amongst the marsh grass. Other opportunities to view the creek are at the ends of 17th, 13th, 11th, and 7th Streets in Morehead City.

Species of Interest: Green-winged Teal, Hooded Merganser, Bufflehead, White Ibis, migrating shorebirds

Habitats: salt marsh, creek

Access & Parking: Limited parking is available along either side of North 20th Street at the boardwalk crossing.

Directions: From US 70 in downtown Morehead City (also called Arendell Street), turn north on 20th Street and go 2.5 blocks to the Calico Creek bridge. The boardwalk runs in both directions along the south side of Calico Creek.

Coordinates: N 34°43'36" W 76°43'45" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 78





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Rachel Carson National Estuarine Research Reserve

Owner: NC Coastal Reserve

Across Taylor's Creek from the Beaufort waterfront
Reserve office: 101 Pivers Island Road, Beaufort, NC 28516
252-838-0883

Cartet County

www.nccoastalreserve.net

Site Description: The Rachel Carson site is a complex of islands across Taylor's Creek from the Beaufort waterfront. The islands at the western end of the site – Carrot Island, Town Marsh, Bird Shoal, and Horse Island- are more than three miles long and less than a mile wide, covering 2,025 acres. The site is an important feeding area for both Wilson's and Piping Plovers. A 0.5 mile trail loop, marked with numbered posts, begins at a small beach directly across from the Beaufort waterfront and heads in a clockwise fashion around the western end of Town Marsh. Low tide is the best time to follow the trail. Follow the trail along Taylor's Creek, then head through a salt marsh and a break in the shrub thicket to the top of a sand berm, with views of Beaufort Inlet and Shackleford Banks. Continue on toward mud flats. A wide variety of shorebirds often can be seen probing the mud, including Ruddy Turnstone, Willet, Short-billed Dowitcher and Sanderling. In the fall it is possible to see hundreds of Black Skimmer on the shoal. Head back across the mudflat to pick up the trail again, which continues through shrub thicket, along a tidal creek and eventually returns to the starting point.

Species of Interest: White Ibis, Wilson's Plover, Piping Plover, Black Skimmer

Habitats: maritime forest and shrub, salt marsh, mudflat, beach and dune

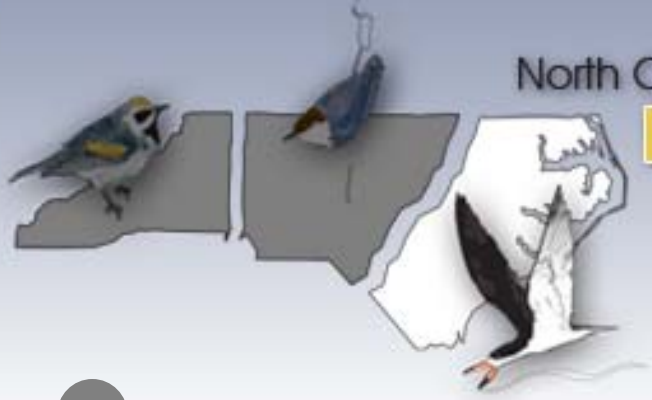
Special Concerns: Hunting is allowed within certain areas of the coastal reserve during parts of the year. Birders should be aware of current hunting regulations and seasons and take adequate safety precautions during those times. For more on hunting season safety precautions, see the hunting season information at the beginning of this guide. Footwear should completely cover the foot as shells, especially oyster shells, are very sharp and can cut easily. Marsh communities, like those of Horse Island, are quite vulnerable to the effects of use, and should be avoided. Feral horses also inhabit the islands. Special habitat areas, such as the horses' watering holes and the shorebird nesting sites, are off limits to visitors.

Access & Parking: The Rachel Carson site can only be visited by boat. Visitors may use their own boat or contact local boating concessions on the Beaufort waterfront. Visitors usually land on the sandy beach at the west end of Town Marsh and cross over to Bird Shoals on foot. An interpretive trail guide for the Rachel Carson site is available free of charge over the Internet or by contacting the Reserve education office.

Directions: Enter Beaufort from US 70 and turn right on Turner Street toward the Beaufort waterfront, which is 3 blocks south, along Front Street. Contact one of the local boating concessions to gain passage over to the Rachel Carson site. Or access the site via personal boat from one of many boat ramps in the Beaufort area.

Coordinates: N 34°42'53" W 76°40'04" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 79





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Harkers Island Nature Trail

Owner: National Park Service

131 Charles Street, Harkers Island, NC 28531
252-728-2250

Carteret County

www.nps.gov/caloc/

Site Description: This 0.5 mile nature trail begins directly behind the Cape Lookout Visitor Center. The trail heads north through pine stands and maritime forest, with regular views of salt marsh habitat and nearby Core Sound. Look and listen for Great Crested Flycatcher, Prothonotary Warbler, Painted Bunting, and other songbirds. At dusk, listen for Chuck-will's-widow. Continue on the trail until it becomes a boardwalk, and bear right at a split to reach a spur that extends out into the marsh. Watch for Osprey, White Ibis, other wading birds, and terns. Follow the boardwalk back to the split and head inland to the west. A left-hand turn on the trail will loop back to the original pathway to the south. Straight ahead, the western arm ends just a bit farther along behind the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum (next to the Visitor Center). Retrace your steps back to the Visitor Center. Shell Point, the southernmost point of land near the start of the trail, is a good place to view wintering waterfowl. Watch for Red-breasted Merganser, Horned Grebe, and loons.

Species of Interest: White Ibis, Chuck-will's-widow, Great Crested Flycatcher, terns, wintering waterfowl

Habitats: pine/hardwood forest, maritime forest and shrub, salt marsh

Access & Parking: Park at the Cape Lookout Visitor Center. The visitor center is open daily from 9am to 5pm; the nature trail is open for visitation from 7am to 5pm. The trail begins directly behind the visitor center and ends next to the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum.

Directions: Take US 70 east from Beaufort for 10 miles. Shortly after passing over the North River, turn south on Harkers Island Road and follow this road for about 5 miles south onto the island (Harkers Island road becomes Straits Road). Follow Straits Road, which becomes Island Road (SR 1335) once on Harkers Island, to the east end of the island, where the Cape Lookout Visitor Center is clearly marked.

Coordinates: N 34°41'07" W 76°31'38" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 79





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Cape Lookout Point, Cape Lookout National Seashore

Owner: National Park Service

Offshore on South Core Banks

Carteret County

www.nps.gov/cal/

Mainland visitor center: 131 Charles Street, Harkers Island, NC 28531

252-728-2250

Site Description: Cape Lookout, located at the south end of Core Banks, is the southern tip of a stretch of undeveloped, natural barrier islands off the central North Carolina coast. A 19th century lighthouse clearly marks the cape. The low-lying point includes extensive dune systems that stretch for 3 miles south of the lighthouse to the south point and then northwest to a dramatic hook. This area is a premier breeding site for the state's beach nesting birds, including Piping Plover, Least Tern, and Black Skimmer. Primary access to Cape Lookout is by passenger ferry. Watch for migrating shorebirds and wading birds while on the ferry, including White Ibis, American Oystercatcher, and the occasional Marbled Godwit or Long-billed Curlew in fall. Upon arrival at the ferry dock, look for migrating songbirds resting in the trees and shrubs. Walk south, either on the sound side or along the beach, to observe a variety of shorebirds, wading birds, and pelagic species. Explore the marsh near the old coast guard dock for rails and other marsh species. The "hook" and the southern tip of the cape host the bulk of the beach breeding birds. Stay out of roped off areas, but be on the lookout for Wilson's and Piping Plovers, Least, Common, and Gull-billed Terns, and the occasional Sooty or Roseate Terns. In early summer, scan the ocean for Northern Gannet and the occasional scoter, storm-petrel, or shearwater.

Species of Interest: Wilson's Plover, Piping Plover, Black Skimmer, Least Tern, Gull-billed Tern, pelagic species

Habitats: maritime forest and shrub, salt marsh, beach and dune

Special Concerns: This area is subject to rapid change due to the effects of wind and waves. Small populations of the threatened sea beach amaranth grow within the National Seashore. Nesting sea turtles and shorebirds are present in the summer. Please respect the posted areas for nesting birds and turtles. Hunting is allowed within the National Seashore during certain times of the year. Birders should be aware of current hunting regulations and seasons and take adequate safety precautions during those times. For more on hunting season safety precautions, see the hunting season information at the beginning of this guide.

Access & Parking: Access to Cape Lookout is by ferry or personal boat only. Toll ferries carry pedestrians over from several mainland access points, including Beaufort, Harkers Island, and Davis. Travelers should inquire about up-to-date ferry information at the mainland Cape Lookout Visitor Center on Harkers Island. The Visitor Center is open daily from 9am to 5pm. Note that this site requires extensive walking. Access to and on the island is limited. Soft sand may hinder walking or wheelchairs. There is a wooden walkway from the ferry dock to an observation platform at the beach and to the Keeper's Quarters by the lighthouse. Ease of access to this walkway is dependent on the tide phase. It is a distance of 3 miles to reach the southern most point of the cape and there are no shelters on the island. Restroom facilities are at the lighthouse. Hunting is allowed during certain times of the year. Birders should be aware of current hunting regulations and seasons and take adequate safety precautions during those times. For more on hunting season safety precautions, see the hunting season information at the beginning of this guide.

Directions: Take US 70 east from Beaufort for 10 miles. Shortly after passing over the North River, turn south on Harkers Island Road. Follow this road, which shortly becomes Straits Road, for about 5 miles onto the island. Straits Road becomes Island Road (SR 1335) once on Harkers Island. Follow it to the east end of the island, where the road ends at the Cape Lookout Visitor Center. Ferry operator signs are clearly marked along the road.

Coordinates: N 34°37'22" W 76°31'28" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 79





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Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge

Owner: US Fish and Wildlife Service

NC 12, Cedar Island, NC
252-926-4021

Carteret County

www.fws.gov/cedariland/

Site Description: Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge consists of approximately 11,000 acres of brackish marsh and 3,480 acres of woodland habitat. Sixteen miles of dirt roads and firebreaks provide visual access to the marsh and woodlands, as well as the bays and sound. The firebreaks serve as walking trails. The marsh and estuary provide wintering habitat for thousands of ducks and nesting habitat for colonial waterbirds. Raptors can be seen hunting over the marsh, and songbirds are viewed along the fringe habitats and uplands. On rare occasion, elusive rails may be spotted in the marsh grasses. Travel along NC 12 to bird the extensive marsh system. Listen for Black, Virginia, Yellow, and Clapper Rails, along with Marsh Wren, Sedge Wren and Seaside Sparrow. Turn down Lola Road to bird in pine woodlands and scrub-shrub thickets. In spring and early summer, this is a good area to encounter migrating songbirds.

Species of Interest: Least Bittern, Black Rail, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Sedge Wren, Seaside Sparrow, wintering waterfowl

Habitats: pine/hardwood forest, moist shrubland, salt marsh, maritime forest and shrub

Special Concerns: Waterfowl hunting is permitted on a 400-acre portion of marsh west of NC 12. Birders should be aware of current hunting regulations and seasons and take adequate safety precautions during those times. Contact the refuge headquarters for additional information and regulations. For more on hunting season safety precautions, see the hunting season information at the beginning of this guide. Prescribed burning is done periodically in the woodlands and marshes. Fire enhances wildlife habitat by promoting new growth and plant diversity, creating open areas, and reducing hazardous fuel accumulations that may result in destructive wildfires.

Access & Parking: The refuge is open daily during daylight hours. However, there are very few formal access areas. Birding is permitted along NC 12; the shoulders are wide enough to safely pull off the road. The refuge office is located on Lola Road; look for signs on NC 12. The gated refuge roads are closed to vehicles, but pedestrian access is permitted.

Directions: From Beaufort, take US 70 east for approximately 30 miles, at which point it becomes NC 12. NC 12 bisects the refuge's extensive salt marshes. Stay on NC 12 for approximately 10 more miles and watch for signs to the refuge office, on Lola Road (SR 1388), on the right.

Coordinates: N 34°57'18" W 76°16'39" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 79

