



# CAPE HATTERAS

NATIONAL SEASHORE

NORTH CAROLINA

## INTRODUCING CAPE HATTERAS

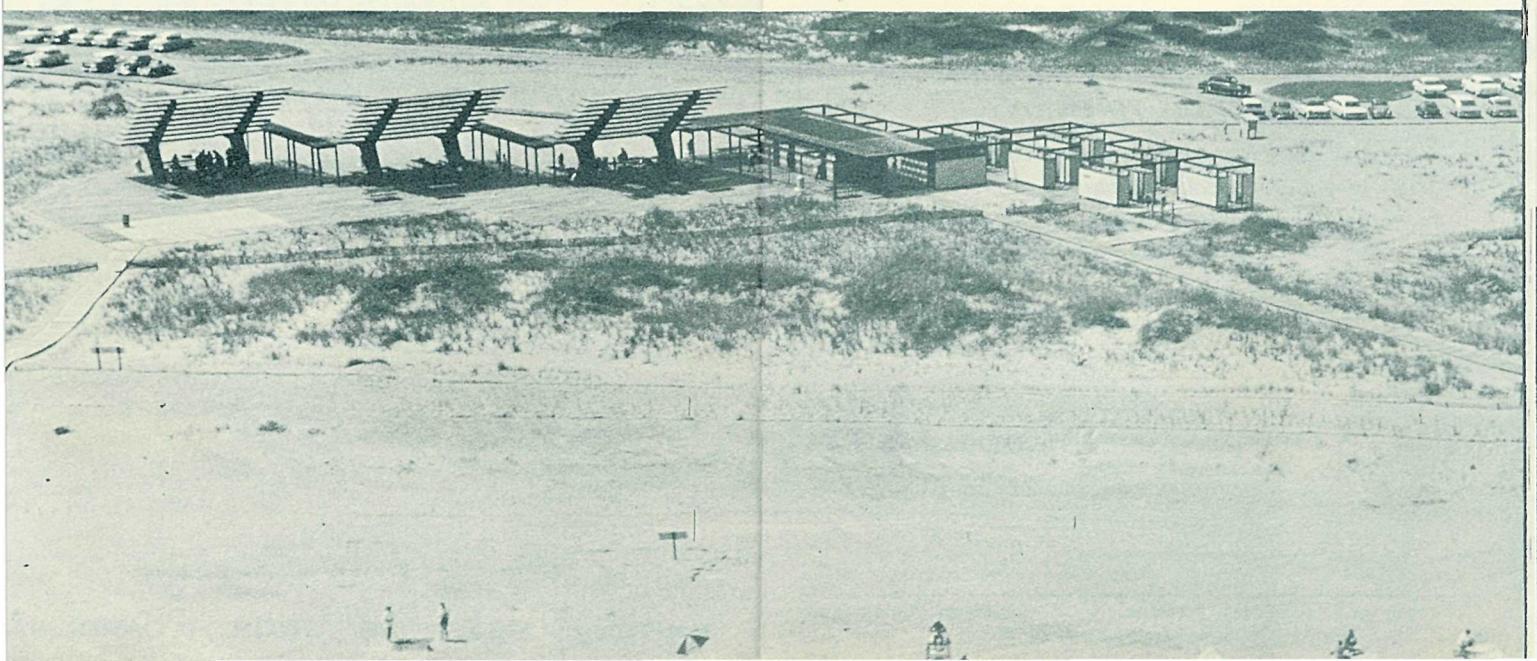
Between broad, shallow sounds and foaming ocean surf lies Cape Hatteras National Seashore, a thin barrier of sand on the windswept Outer Banks of North Carolina. On these lonely barrier islands, opportunities for stimulating outdoor recreation and rewarding explorations in history and nature await you.

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 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, 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, in authorizing this National Seashore, excluded these eight villages from the Federal area and left sizable expansion room around each to permit its independent growth as a tourist center.

Coquina Beach on Bodie Island

AYCOCK BROWN PHOTO



Congress also provided that only those parts of the area that are especially adaptable for such recreational uses as swimming, boating, sailing, fishing, and similar activities should be so developed. The rest of the area was set aside permanently to preserve the plant and animal life and the primitive wilderness shoreline. A later amendment allowed hunting in certain sections.

## SAND, SEA, AND SKY

On this long strip of barrier islands, the sea, the winds, and the land have contended for many human lifetimes, reshaping shore and landscape in a pattern of never-ending change. Land and shore change, but the extensive coastline is still the wild, lonely beach that Sir Francis Drake's men sighted in 1586.

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 herring-bone designs with white-capped breakers, while scalloped sheets of surf spread obliquely along the beach at either side.

There, too, one can watch the Atlantic bottle-nose dolphin (often called porpoise)—within yards of the beach—rolling, playing and feeding upon the abundant fish.

Of course the sand beaches themselves are a prime attraction. You will want to cross the barrier dune to them. But be sure to walk—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.

Matching the vivid colors of ocean sunsets and sunrises are wildflowers growing profusely in the humid climate, and blossoming over a long growing season. 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 (a species of holly), beautiful at any time of the year but at its 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 and near the village of Buxton is the widest part of the Outer Banks, almost 3 miles across. From here 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. Marshy valleys, some with fresh-water ponds, lie between the ridges. Bordering the ponds and marshes are dense banks of ferns, shrubs, and clinging vines. A fleeting glimpse of a white-tailed deer is not unusual.

Little community or family cemeteries and scattered lonely graves along the Banks hold the remains of many heroes of the Coast Guard, or earlier Life-Saving Service, and 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. Their famed ironclad ship lies in her watery grave, a few miles southeast of the lighthouse on the dread Diamond Shoals.

A quiet harbor on the sound



All eight villages are on the sound side of the barrier strip that 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. Some became pilots and guided ocean vessels across shallow Pamlico Sound to mainland ports. Fishing also has always been an important occupation on the Outer Banks.

Of the villages, possibly Avon and Ocracoke differ most from mainland towns. Ocracoke hugs the almost landlocked harbor of Silver Lake. Trawlers, sport-fishing boats, and pleasure craft line the piers in season; and, during a storm, the harbor is crowded 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, Roanoke Island was the scene of the first English attempt at colonization of the New World. This venture lasted only about 10 months. A second attempt, no more successful, was marked by the birth of Virginia Dare, first child of English parentage born in America, on August 18, 1587. The fate of the members of this colony remains a mystery. The settlements are 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 bits of wreckage, the remains of ships that fell victim to storms, accidents, or human violence.

Fishermen haul their nets as the storm approaches



Wreck of the Laura A. Barnes, wooden schooner, beached in 1921 on Bodie Island

Probably the best-known shipwreck story is that of the ghost ship *Carroll A. Deering*—a five-masted schooner found stranded on Diamond Shoals in 1921, with 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 had grounded on Diamond Shoals. Later, the bow drifted westward, came ashore on Ocracoke Island, and 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, ruthless buccaneer, 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, Coast Guard men 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 four 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 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 20 miles at sea. This tower, tallest lighthouse in the United States, is ascended via 265 steps. For information about visiting hours, inquire at park headquarters on Bodie section or at the visitor center 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.

Ocracoke Lighthouse—oldest on the North Carolina coast



To Elizabeth City, N. C. and Norfolk, Va.

To Williamston and Raleigh, N. C.

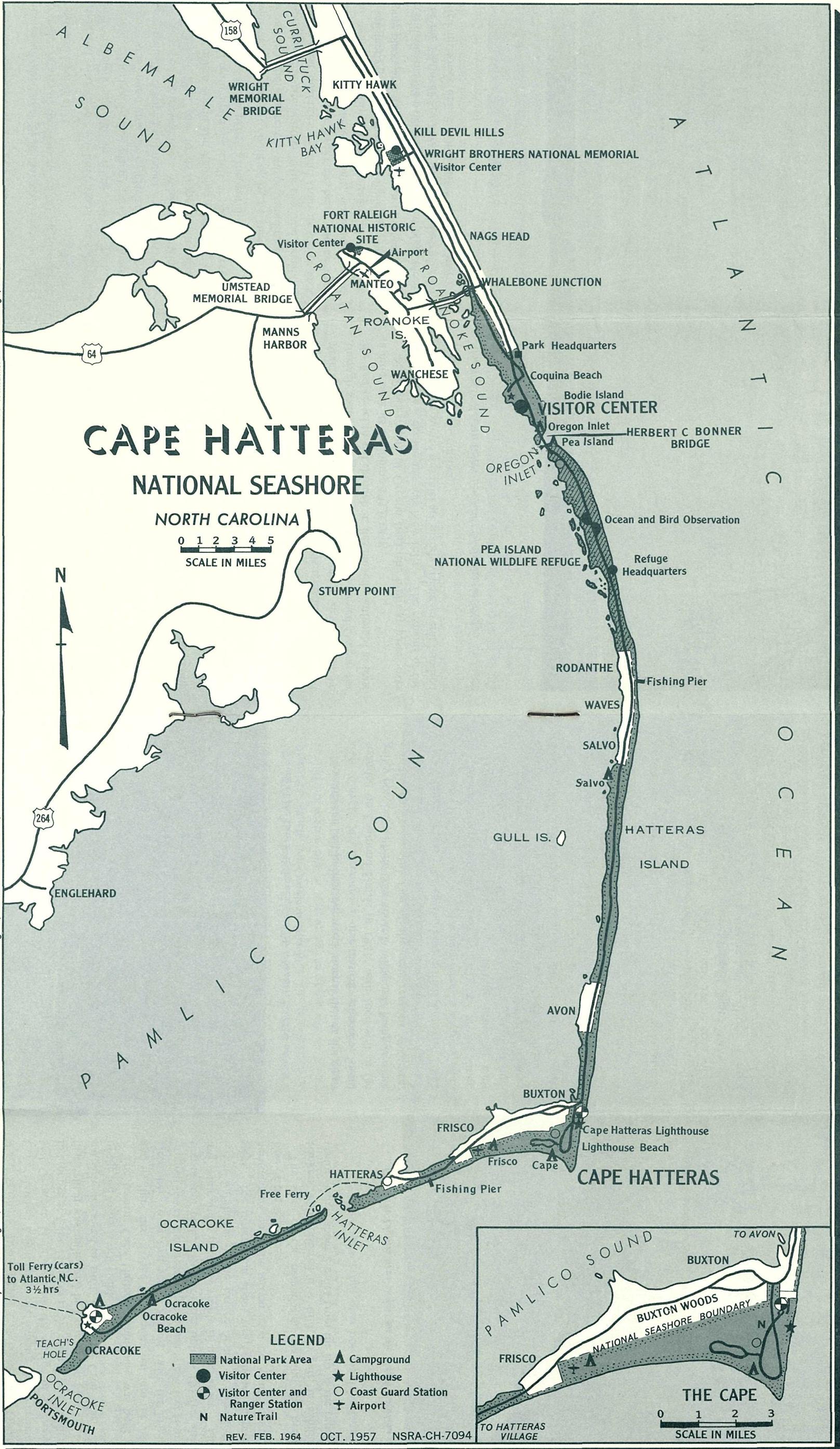
To Washington, N. C. and Greenville, N. C.

To Morehead City and Wilmington, N. C.

# CAPE HATTERAS NATIONAL SEASHORE

NORTH CAROLINA

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SCALE IN MILES



REV. FEB. 1964 OCT. 1957 NSRA-CH-7094

## GEOLOGICAL FEATURES

Cape Hatteras and the Outer Banks have been recognized as major geographic features of the Nation. They are of interest to the geologist and layman alike.

Several thousand years ago, sea level stood considerably above its present height and the shoreline was far back on today's mainland. During the last glacial period, as more of the world's water was bound up in ice by glaciers farther north, sea level here gradually dropped to produce a shoreline several miles to the seaward of the present one. When the continental ice sheet melted, sea level rose to its approximate present height, creating Pamlico Sound and flooding other low areas. Today the sea is still rising upon the lands, as shown by recordings of tide gauges in various parts of the world.

The present shoreline has been built up by a combination of wave action and longshore currents—waves pounding on what originally were shoals situated farther to the east, and longshore currents moving great quantities of sand from its source area to the north. Now the Outer Banks are being moved by a similar combination of longshore currents, wave action, and wind action, which generally 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 Coast are near Nags Head, just north of the National Seashore. Along the beach, wind has also piled up lower dunes, which serve as a sea barrier.

This process has been accelerated by fences acting as catchments, which were built under the supervision of the National Park Service beginning in 1935.

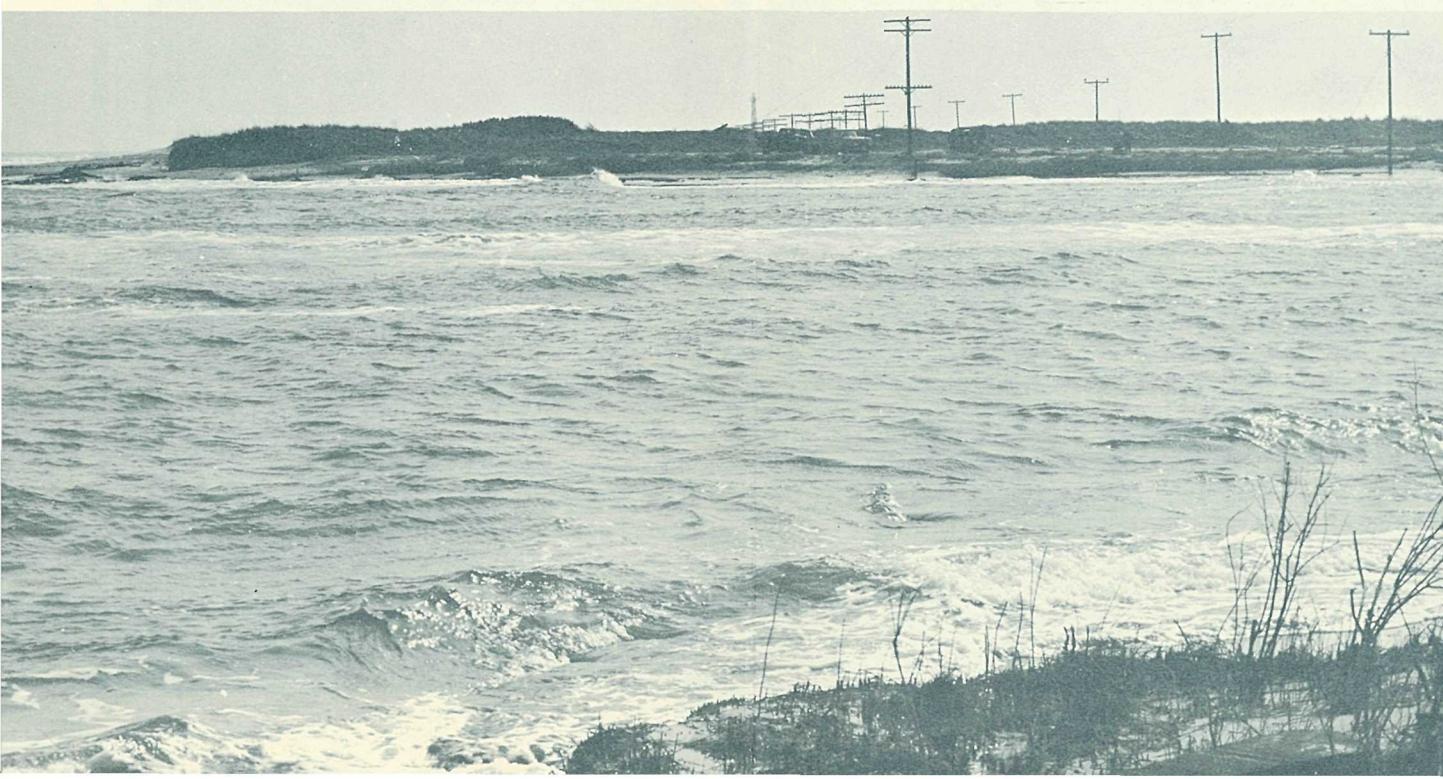
The sands of Cape Hatteras actually continue underwater as gigantic shoals for 12 miles out into the Atlantic. In places they almost reach the surface, and on a stormy day you can stand at the cape and watch the waves come together in an awesome display of savage fury. This ocean spectacle is produced chiefly by wind waves breaking over Diamond Shoals. Few places offer a more dramatic demonstration of the power and majesty of the sea.

Interesting features of this coast are the inlets connecting the ocean with broad, shallow sounds. Most of these inlets follow a pattern of opening and southward migration. New inlets are born in great storms, and usually have a lifetime of a few hundred years or less. One such inlet was cut through Hatteras Island to the sound by a surprise northeaster during March 1962 and was filled in by the U.S. Corps of Engineers a year later.

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 where 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.

*Storm-cut "Buxton Inlet" was filled by dredge in 1963*



*Laughing gulls soar overhead in summer*

## BIRDLIFE

Around 300 species of birds have been recorded in the National Seashore. The ponds, shores, and shrubby growth around Bodie Lighthouse offer the greatest year-round variety. Both migratory and nonmigratory waterfowl use the National Seashore as wintering grounds and for nesting. About 40 species of shorebirds have been recorded here.

Several heavily traveled lanes of waterfowl traffic converge on the north end of Hatteras Island at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge (administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). It is an important way station on the Atlantic flyway. Pea Island marks the southern end of the greater-snowgoose 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 swans spend the winter in the refuge.

In addition, you can observe glossy ibis, gannets, pheasants, and mourning doves, as well as a variety of species of loons, grebes, herons, egrets, gulls, terns, rails, hawks, blackbirds, and warblers, at various times during the year.

## THINGS TO DO AND SEE

**Bodie Island (Whalebone Junction to Oregon Inlet).** When you enter the National Seashore from Nags Head you are on Bodie Island (now the tip of a peninsula) at Whalebone Junction. Two miles southwest of park headquarters is the Bodie Island Visitor Center, where special exhibits, slide pro-

grams, and informational literature tell the Cape Hatteras story and help you to plan your stay on the Outer Banks.

The Bodie Island lighthouse, operated by the U.S. Coast Guard, is closed to the public. Behind the lighthouse is the lighthouse pond, where varying species and numbers of water birds and shorebirds can be observed throughout the year. A short distance south of park headquarters is Coquina Beach day-use area, with facilities for surf bathing and picnicking.

**Hatteras Island (Oregon Inlet to Hatteras Inlet).** On the south side of Oregon Inlet you enter Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. Pea Island Campground lies left of the highway, and Oregon Inlet Coast Guard Station is on the right. Ocean-and bird-observation points are 5 miles from Oregon Inlet, the bird-observation points being at the end of a walk on a dike. Farther on you pass the refuge subheadquarters and the abandoned bridge across former New Inlet. The old Chicamacomico Coast Guard Station is the outstanding feature of the village of Rodanthe, about 14 miles south of Oregon Inlet. Salvo Campground, near the shore of Pamlico Sound, is just south of Salvo. The villages of Waves and Salvo are situated along the highway, but Avon, 15 miles beyond Salvo, is off the highway on Pamlico Sound. Cape Hatteras Lighthouse is reached via a park road that joins the State highway at the eastern edge of Buxton. A protected beach for swimming and a small visitor center are nearby. Buxton Woods Nature Trail is about a mile west of the lighthouse on a park road. Frisco Campground is reached by a side road just below the village of Frisco. The highway on Hatteras Island ends at Hatteras Inlet ferry landing.



Boats in Silver Lake Harbor, Ocracoke

*Ocracoke Island (Hatteras Inlet to Ocracoke Inlet).* Until recently Ocracoke was an isolated place. It had connections with the outside world by sailing ships, yet it was hard to reach from the mainland. Now a hard-surfaced road runs the length of the island, amid low dunes and trees and shrubs dwarfed by wind-driven salt spray.

Ocracoke Village, at the southwest end of the island, retains much of the charm of isolation. Picturesque live oaks and red cedars shade its sandy lanes. In and near the village are some old cemeteries, the oldest lighthouse on the Outer Banks, and a small National Park Service visitor center. West of the village is Teach's Hole, traditional site of the battle in which the pirate Blackbeard was killed.

*Interpretive Program.* Guided walks, talks, nature trails, and exhibits are provided to acquaint you with the human and natural history of Cape Hatteras National Seashore. The National Park Service cordially invites you to attend these events, offered June 15 through Labor Day without charge. At Bodie Island Visitor Center, incoming visitors are invited to see a short slide program giving a preview of the National Seashore area, its attractions and facilities. Scheduled events originate from visitor centers at Bodie Island, Cape Hatteras, and Ocracoke Village. Schedules of all events can be obtained at each visitor center. Groups can arrange for off-season interpretive services by writing to the superintendent. Naturalists or historians are usually on hand at visitor centers to answer your questions about the area.

Camping is permitted only at designated campgrounds, shown

on the map. Campsites are generally on shadeless, windswept, sandy areas, so awnings and long tent stakes are advised. Comfort stations, outdoor showers, drinking water, tables, and grills are available at most locations. Utility connections are not provided. Although mosquito abatement by fogging is conducted, we suggest that you bring netting and insect repellent to extend this protection. Detailed information about camping can be obtained at ranger stations and visitor centers.

*Swimming.* Lifeguard service is provided from Memorial Day through Labor Day at the organized beaches—at Coquina Beach on Bodie Island, Cape Campground on Hatteras Island, and Seaside Campground on Ocracoke Island. There is no prohibition against swimming anywhere along the beach, but for safety we urge use of the guarded beaches. Strong and shifting currents, particularly during periods of heavy weather, can make swimming very hazardous. Beware especially of tidal currents and deep waters in the vicinity of inlets. Observe warning signs and ask a park ranger for a list of suggestions for water safety. Heed the advice, which is based on long experience.

*Boating.* The waters of the sound offer an extensive area for use of small boats. Launching facilities can be found at the Oregon Inlet Fishing Center on Bodie Island and at privately operated facilities in the villages of Buxton, Hatteras, and Ocracoke. The use of outboards in ocean waters can be extremely hazardous, especially in the vicinity of the inlets, where shore currents and rough waters have meant disaster to many small boats and their operators. Small-boat operations should be confined to waters of the sounds. For further information on use of small boats, consult a park ranger—and heed his words

of caution. Docking facilities for boats of "party boat" size are provided by marinas at Oregon Inlet and Ocracoke. Privately operated docking facilities are available in Hatteras village.

*Sport Fishing.* The waters surrounding this National Seashore provide a wide variety of excellent sport fishing. Channel bass arrive in early April and leave in mid-May. They return in September and remain through November. They can be taken from piers, by surf casting, or by trolling from boats. The autumn months are generally more productive for surf casting.

Bluefish, marlin, tuna, dolphin, and mackerel arrive early in May, and remain through October. These fishes are usually taken by deep-sea trolling. Smaller fishes of many kinds are taken with bait. Charter boats are available at Oregon Inlet and in Hatteras and Ocracoke villages.

*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 National Park Service rules and regulations and is confined to three parts of the area. No hunting is permitted within the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge and adjacent closed waters.

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

*Photography.* Throughout the National Seashore, you will find subjects to keep your shutter clicking. Sand dunes, skeleton shipwrecks, gnarled live oaks, rough seas, and picturesque

The seashore from Cape Hatteras Lighthouse



villages make it difficult to decide which to shoot first. Birdlife and unusual plants are plentiful the year around. Lighthouses, Coast Guard Stations, and waterfront and beach scenes challenge 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.

#### SUGGESTED READING

*The Archeology of Coastal North Carolina*, by William G. Haag, Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge, 1958.

*The Edge of the Sea*, by Rachel Carson, The New American Library, New York.

*Graveyard of the Atlantic: Shipwrecks of the North Carolina Coast*, by David Stick, Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1952.

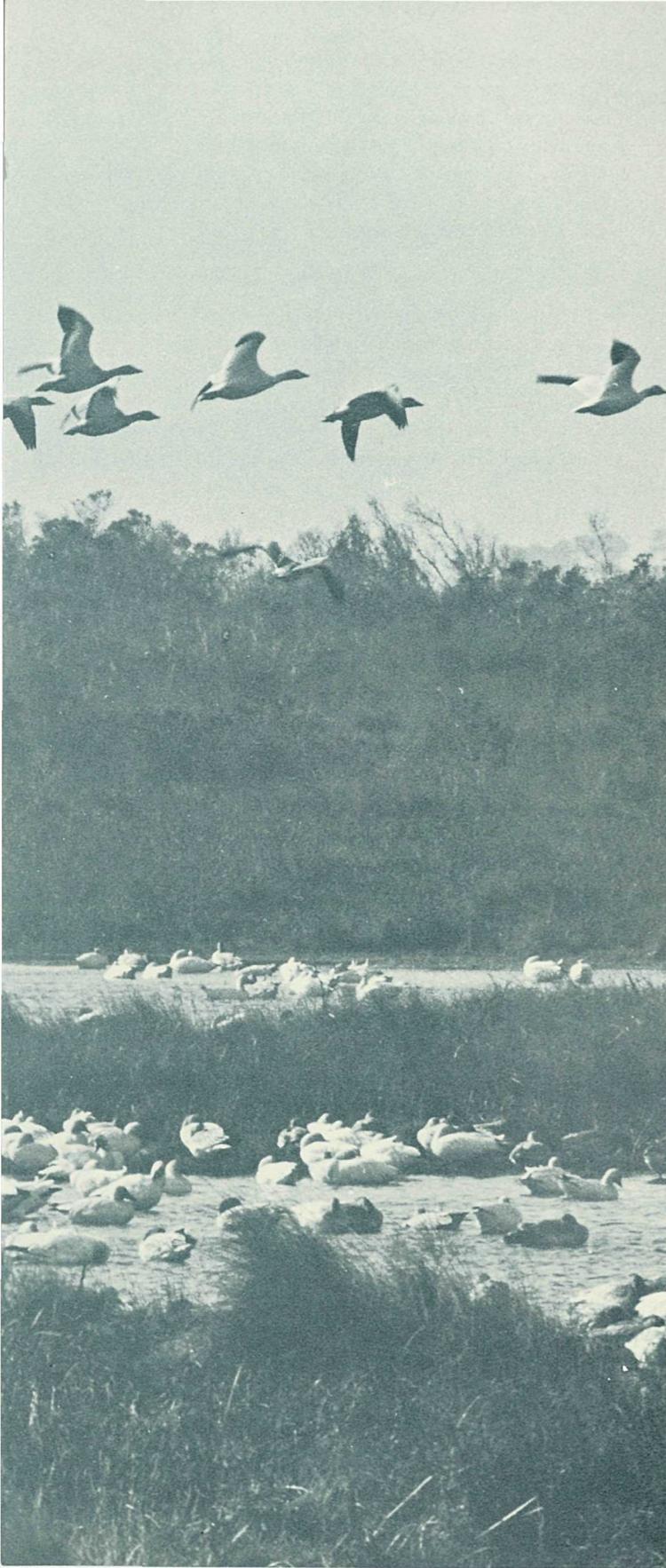
*Historical Geography of the North Carolina Outer Banks*, by Gary S. Dunbar, Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge, 1958.

*The Outer Banks of North Carolina: 1584-1958*, by David Stick, Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1958.

*Vegetation of the Outer Banks of North Carolina*, by Clair A. Brown, Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge, 1959.

#### HOW TO REACH THE AREA

The area is reached from the north by U.S. 158, from the west by U.S. 64 and 264, and from the south by U.S. 70 to Cedar Island, N.C., and toll ferry to Ocracoke. There is daily bus service to Manteo from Norfolk, Va., and Elizabeth City, N.C. Free ferries carry vehicles from Hatteras Island to Ocracoke Island.



## ACCOMMODATIONS

Dining and lodging accommodations, groceries, camping supplies, etc., are available in the villages and towns on Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands, in the resort towns just north of the National Seashore, and on Roanoke Island.

## THE SEASONS

From about June 15 through Labor Day, lifeguards are on duty at the protected swimming beaches. During this season, you can enjoy a full range of activities including talks and conducted walks by naturalists and historians, camping, boating, fishing, bird-watching, beachcombing, and picnicking.

The other seasons have their own appeal, and also offer opportunities for recreational activities. Visitors are fewer; those seeking solitude are more likely to find it in the off season. Visitor centers are usually open. Bird-watching is interesting the year around, with concentrations of birds during spring and autumn migrations and during winter when spectacular species such as snow geese are seen in great numbers. Sport fishing begins in April and continues into November. From November through April, camping is recommended only for hardy individuals well equipped for cold and wind.

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

Because of surrounding waters, spring develops more slowly here than on the nearby mainland. Summer weather is commonly warm and pleasant. Despite high humidity, comfort is usually maintained on hot days by strong, steady breezes. Afternoon thundershowers are common, especially from July on. One or two periods of unsettled weather can be expected in each summer month. The northeaster blows often last about 3 days, bringing cloudy skies, chilly winds, and frequently rains. Hurricanes are infrequent; when they occur it is usually in August or September. Ample warning is given to enable people to leave low-lying areas.

Surrounding waters hold their heat into autumn, when cold periods are often short and separated by long stretches of mild, sunny days. Such pleasant days here extend far into winter; but changes to cold, windy weather can be very sudden. High humidity and fresh to strong northerly winds make winter weather seem much colder than temperatures indicate.

Snow geese at rest and in flight

## ADMINISTRATION

Cape Hatteras National Seashore, established on January 12, 1953, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

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.

Development of this area is part of MISSION 66, a 10-year conservation program to unfold the full potential of the National Park System for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

A superintendent, whose address is Box 457, Manteo, N.C., 27954, is in immediate charge of the seashore.

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

## AMERICA'S NATURAL RESOURCES

Created in 1849, the Department of the Interior—America's Department of Natural Resources—is concerned with the management, conservation, and development of the Nation's water, wildlife, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and territorial affairs.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that nonrenewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States—now and in the future.

### 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.*



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

