

Take This Learned Companion On Your Next Coastal Jaunt

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

Brunswick County's five island havens are among the quietest resort areas in the state, despite being sandwiched between the boisterous locales of Pleasure Island and North Myrtle Beach."

This is how Greensboro-based travel writer and former Southern Living editor Glen Morris begins his assessment of our little piece of the North Carolina coastline in his comprehensive guide to coastal access.

North Carolina Beaches, published in June by the University of North Carolina Press, leaves no grain of sand unturned in giving travelers and coastal residents a complete picture of our oceanfront world.

Every waterway is examined, mapped, photographed and its access detailed. Historic and pleasure sites, even those "off the beaten track," are described, with explicit directions and, often, telephone numbers. Fishing piers, boat ramps, indigenous wildlife, and docks get equal time with museums, ferries and lighthouses. It is, in short, a complete guide to a diverse and

North Carolina Beaches

By Glen Morris
University Of North Carolina Press
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beautiful stretch of coast.

Morris said he wrote with two purposes: to provide a road map of the outer North Carolina coast, offering information on public access to the ocean and sounds. Secondly, he wanted to give access in a much broader sense, accompanying travelers on their journey, opening their eyes to all that can be glimpsed and known and enjoyed in a given locale. This begins with its history and extends to the people and wildlife who live there, as well as the character and personality of the places themselves.

History is so important to this

writer, he devotes several pages of his introduction to the earliest settlement of North Carolina and subsequent explorations here. His simple but well-researched style make this a readable and compact history lesson.

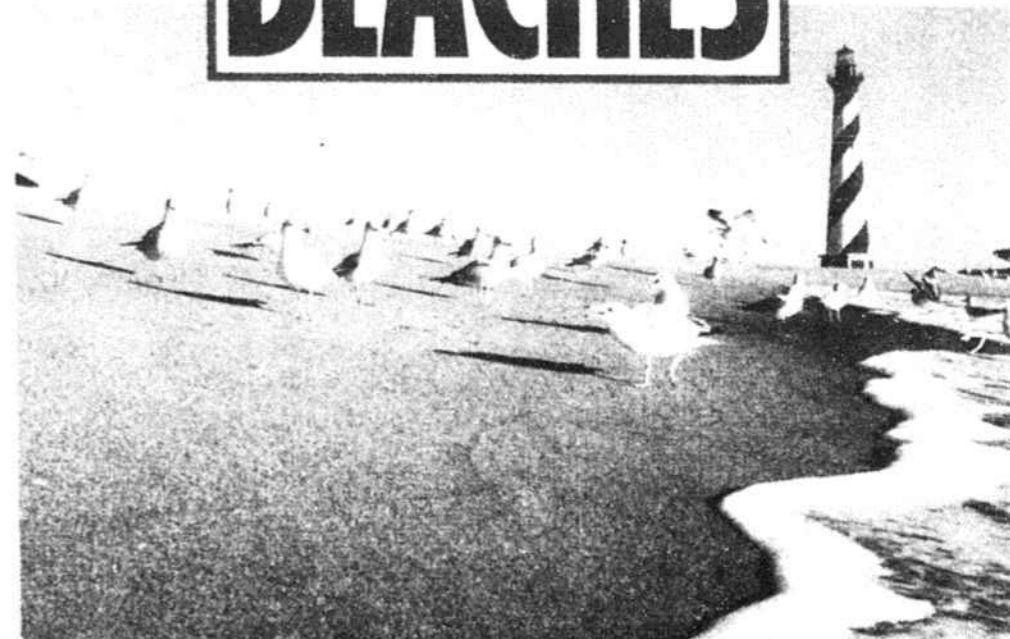
Ecology is another of his concerns, and he repeatedly notes the diversity along our sounds, with "pine savannas, hardwood forests, sweeps of salt marsh, low and high swamps, even abrupt bluffs." With the sixth largest coastline in the nation, North Carolina, he reports, has 22 coastal counties bordering on tidal waters.

The 278-page book is organized by counties, following a lengthy and extremely helpful introduction that discusses history, highways, parks and precautions for children. We then travel from Currituck County south to Brunswick County, beginning each county visit with a personal, narrative-style introduction and an appealing photograph.

There follows, in each case, a map on which all waterways are clearly marked, as well as major towns.

Morris describes access, both to waterways and to nearby attrac-

North Carolina BEACHES



A visit to national seashores, state parks, ferries, public beaches, wildlife refuges, historic sites, lighthouses, boat ramps & docks, museums, & more

tions, such as, in our case, Orton Plantation and Brunswick Town. He lists hours of operation, facilities and telephone numbers for additional information. Handicapped access is always included.

Each sizeable town and island community gets its own section—in the case of Brunswick County, all island towns, Shallotte, Southport and Calabash, with additional photographs to give the flavor of the county.

Brunswick County gets a glowing and accurate description, with one notable exception. Morris calls the bridge to Ocean Isle Beach the Odell "Wilkinson" bridge. Tsk, tsk, tsk!

The appeal of the South Brunswick Islands is described in this way:

"Holden Beach, Ocean Isle Beach and Sunset Beach exist in their own island worlds...almost as if they were in a different era, some 30 years ago...The tempo of life, the mood of the islands, is more in step with earlier, less frenetic times."

Morris points out the family appeal of the beaches, crediting county and town officials with working to preserve the ecology of the beach and dunes. In concluding his introductory chapter essay, he speaks of our "botanical wonderland...hosting more species of restricted distribution than any county in the state."

One cannot imagine a question or an interest one might have in traveling up and down our coastline that is now answered fully in *North Carolina Beaches*. For sheer quantity of pertinent information, it earns a place, not just on your bookshelf, but in the car, backpack or boat.

Additionally, Morris's prose, his eloquent photographs and clearcut maps make the book a joy to thumb through and read.



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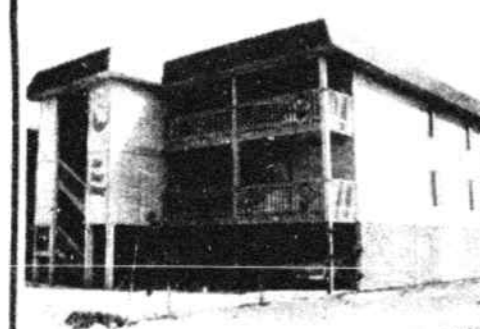


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