

Soundside Learning

This Week On Core Sound

From Core Sound to Currituck Sound

Core Sound Team Establishes Links

Gazing south from the grounds of the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum, one can take a mental trip back in time to the distant shores of Shackleford Banks where gardens of “arsh” potatoes, crews of whalers, & mud flats of clams and oysters once supported a thriving community of banker residents known as Diamond City. These men and women not only lived, but *thrived* along the estuarine shoreline of Core Sound as the sound’s waters provided valuable foodstuffs no matter the season. This proximity and dependence on the water produced from these people master boatbuilders, expert fishermen, net makers, and mariners capable of navigating the sound’s waters in even the most hazardous of conditions.

Upon arrival at the Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education in Corolla, the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum’s education team was met with a similar landscape. The building is situated in the shadow of the Currituck Beach lighthouse. Nearby the shores of Currituck Sound - waters across which Ms. Sharon Meade, the Center’s director, commutes across each morning as she *boats* to work - were rippled only by banks of Swan as they landed on the calm surface. Ms. Meade explained, as we walked among exhibits of herring nets - that the institution’s proximity to the sound’s waters offer her unique teaching opportunities. Beginning in the spring with the renewal of life on the sound, visitors can look forward to seminars on crabbing, trot-lines, and dragonfly harvesting! In the coming months, they can also expect to benefit from an increased partnership between the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and the Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education as the respective education teams begin collaboration on projects dealing with topics from water quality to waterfowl and everything in between!



18th century map of Currituck Sound, showing Currituck Inlet.
Photo: Library of Congress



Sound Reading
Material For You &
Your Child

Where The Sea Meets The Land

By: Melinda Donnelly,
Linda Walters, & Joshua
Sacks

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In this book the authors tell you about the plants and animals that depend on coastal shorelines and estuaries. We, as humans, need to protect this fragile habitat as we depend on many of these species for our food, our recreation, and to protect our shorelines from washing away.

Much like the communities of Down East that pepper a map of Core Sound, the Currituck Sound has supported coastal communities like Currituck and Corolla, for centuries. A visitor to both the Core Sound Museum and the Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education can enjoy examining the nuanced differences in boatbuilding & fishing techniques between the coastal peoples of these areas. These differences, as well as others between the two sound regions, are a result more of geography and ecology than they are anything else.

Unlike Core Sound which houses a plethora of inlets with direct links to the greater Atlantic Ocean, all of the previous inlets in the Currituck Banks have since closed. Because of the closure of these inlets the waters of the Currituck Sound are now, by all accounts, at a lower salinity level than at any time in the sound's recorded history. Since the opening of Oregon Inlet in 1846, it has existed as the outer banks' northernmost inlet. One of the most well known of the historical outer banks inlets, though, was Currituck Inlet which scientists believe was first opened in the late sixteenth century. Through the 18th century, the inlet functioned as one of North Carolina's most important ports of entry, but by the early 19th century the inlet had shoaled substantially and closed entirely with no plans by the government to dredge the once popular passageway.

After the closure of the inlet, Currituck Sound transitioned - in its northernmost areas - to an entirely fresh water habitat that today mixes into brackish in its southern extremities. Because of this unique ecosystem, Currituck Sound has become a "Mecca" of sorts for migratory waterfowl traveling via the Atlantic Flyway. The sound's unique salinity - an average of two parts per thousand - creates an ideal ecosystem for underwater grasses that provide valuable wintertime food for migrating birds.

On Willow Pond With Mr. Woz

When we think of predators in the woods or meadows, we usually think of fox or cougar, owl or hawk. But a silent predator patrols the forest along the Willow Pond Trail. The rosy wolf snail is a hunter of other snails and slugs. During the day, rosy wolf snails hide in leaf litter or the shady sides of trees, bushes and buildings. When the sun goes down, it follows the fresh slime trails of other land snails for most of the night. Because the rosy wolf snail can move three times faster than most other snails, it often catches its prey. Eating another snail (small snails, shells and all) can take from 5 to 30 minutes depending on the size of the predator and prey. The shells of rosy wolf snails can grow to almost 3 inches long. Rosy wolf snails are territorial, so they don't often meet other wolf snails except during mating periods. But if a rosy wolf snail wanders into another's property, one would be the diner and the other, dinner—cannibal snails, another name

Away from the forest, rosy wolf snails are welcomed by gardeners throughout the southeastern United States because they are carnivores, eating the snails and slugs that eat garden plants voraciously. They are a natural pest killer for gardeners and farmers.

The rosy wolf snail is a land mollusk that is related to the sea mollusks of Core Sound and the ocean including moon snails, tulip snails and whelks. Land and sea snails differ in a number of ways, a major difference being the way they breathe. Land snails have a rudimentary lung. Sea snails breathe through gills. The shells are also very different. Sea snails usually have thicker and stronger shells to counteract water pressure and the repeated pounding of wave action.

Mr. Woz



Rosy Wolf Snail
Photo: Mr. Woz Collection