

Protecting Our Local Wild Horses

Cape Lookout National Seashore and Rachel Carson Reserve

Did you know?

Shackleford Banks, part of Cape Lookout National Seashore, and the Rachel Carson Reserve (RCR) are both home to wild horses. The horses are distantly related but now they don't intermingle.

If you see horses from Beaufort, you are seeing the RCR horses.

The wild horses are protected by law.

Enjoy the horses by being safe and respectful

Use a telephoto lens and binoculars to get an up-close and safe view of the horses without interrupting their natural behavior.

Wild horse behaviors are fascinating. Try to figure out from their actions which horse is the alpha (dominant) stallion or which mare may have just joined the group (the stallion may be extra interested in her, and the other mares may pick on her).

Horses have personal space bubbles like we do - but much larger.

If you get too close to a wild horse, you could be charged, kicked or bitten. Horses that seem very docile and tolerant (even those who live in a pasture on the mainland) can be dangerous.

Watch from 50 feet (about the length of a large bus) away. If horses come toward you, move away or, if you can't, stay very still while they pass. Horses have the right-of-way.

If a horse stops what it's doing to stare at you, stop or back up. If a horse moves away as you approach, you are already too close.

Interfering with the horses' grazing, drinking or resting can endanger their social welfare and health.

Pets are welcome if they are restrained on a 6' leash attached to you or a solid object. Unleashed pets can impact wildlife and other visitors, and can be hurt or killed by horses.

The horses don't recognize our food as edible – which is good. We don't want an 800 pound stallion to challenge you for your granola bar. If he did, you could be hurt and he could lose his wild lifestyle. Food scraps can harm other wildlife, so please don't allow them access to your food or bait.

Feeding, touching, teasing, or intentionally disturbing wildlife including horses is dangerous and can result in a fine and/or jail time.

If you see a problem or violation

At Cape Lookout, call 252-728-2250, x 4444 (after hours, you can leave an anonymous recording).

At the Rachel Carson Reserve, call 252-838-0886 or email paula.gillikin@ncdenr.gov, or after hours call 252-726-1911.



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