

Rachel Carson Reserve

The Rachel Carson Reserve is inside the Town of Beaufort's jurisdiction.

The Rachel Carson Estuarine Research Reserve is part of the North Carolina National Estuarine Reserve system, which is a collection of coastal regions that have been preserved and protected to safeguard the wide variety of wildlife that these regions support. It is the most significant natural heritage area within Beaufort. The Rachel Carson Reserve includes a collection of islands, salt marshes, and surrounding water, and encompasses a total area of 2,315 acres. The complex of islands includes Carrot Island, Town Marsh, Middle Marsh, Bird Shoal, and Horse Island, and the entire site was completely acquired by the North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve system in 1989.

The reserve is situated close to Downtown Beaufort directly across Taylors Creek, and is in between the mouths of the Newport and North Rivers, with the Back Sound serving as its southern watery border. As a result of this geography, the estuaries and islands that comprise the reserve are heavily affected by river, tide, and inlet dynamics, with some areas becoming water-logged and soggy with every incoming or outgoing tide.

The result of this unique system of water flowing to and surrounding the Rachel Carson Reserve is a mix of fresh and salt waters that in turn allows a wide variety of marine life to thrive. Juvenile fish tidal flats, salt marshes, ocean beach, sand dunes, shrub thickets, submerged aquatic vegetation, and maritime forest. As a result, countless birds, mammals, reptiles, and fish species carve out a home on the desolate islands and can be admired by virtually any visitor who can make the trek to the isolated series of islands (Town of Beaufort).

and invertebrates can be found in the marshes and just offshore, while the local mammals can include everything from gray foxes and otters to the famed wild horses.

An array of habitats can be found within the reserve as well, which includes tidal flats, salt marshes, ocean beach, sand dunes, shrub thickets, submerged aquatic vegetation, and maritime forest. As a result, countless birds, mammals, reptiles, and fish species carve out a home on the desolate islands and can be admired by virtually any visitor who can make the trek to the isolated series of islands (Town of Beaufort).

Learn more at <https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/coastal-management/nc-coastal-reserve/reserve-sites/rachel-carson-reserve>

Explore the Rachel Carson Paddle Trail today!

Supporting Documents

Beaufort Jurisdiction GIS Map