

PROTECTING THE OUTER BANKS

Why Coastal Conservation Matters

COROLLA

RODANTHE

AVON

HATTERAS

OCRACOKE



OBCC
OUTER BANKS
COASTAL CONSERVATION

— OUR COAST. OUR WILDLIFE. OUR FUTURE. —

Protecting the Outer Banks: Why Coastal Conservation Matters

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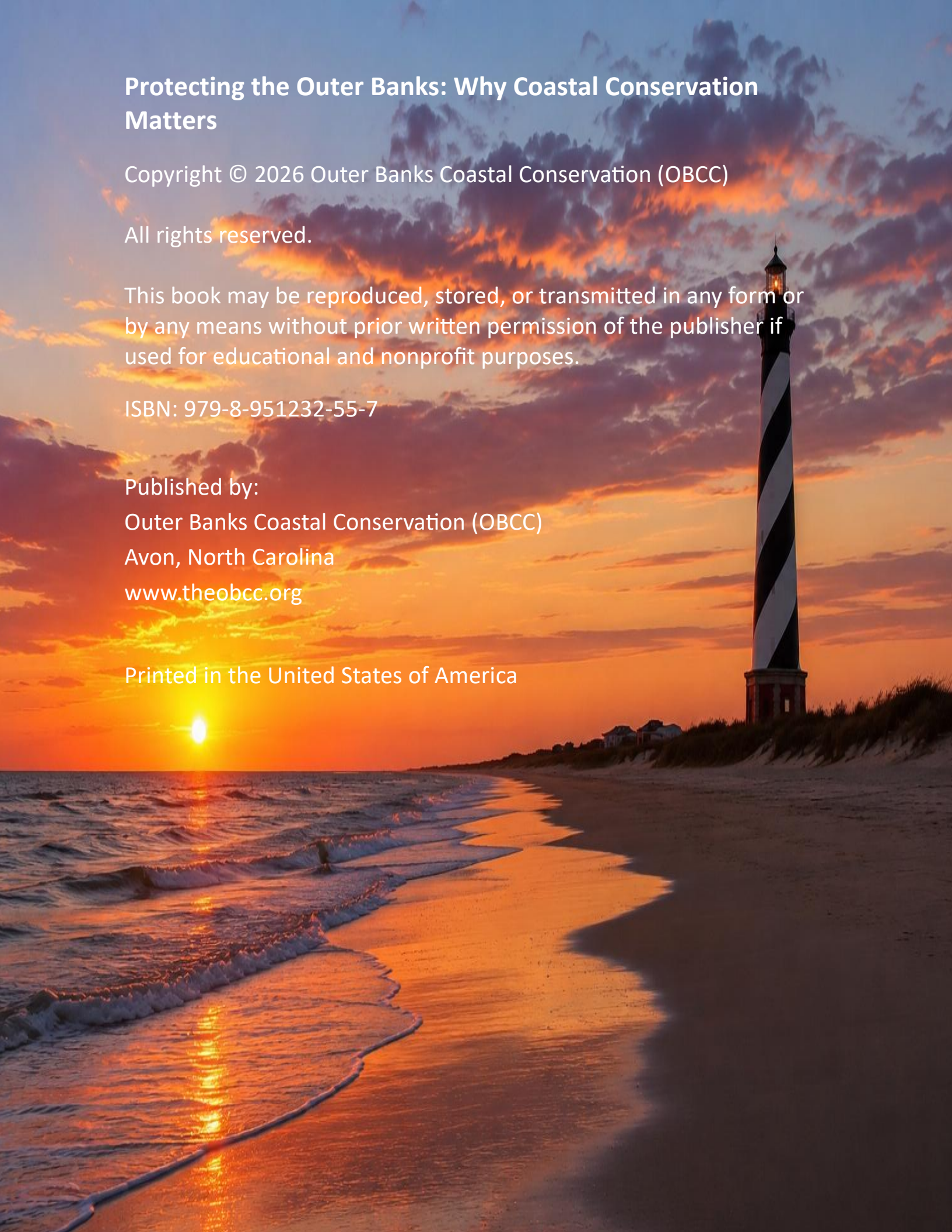
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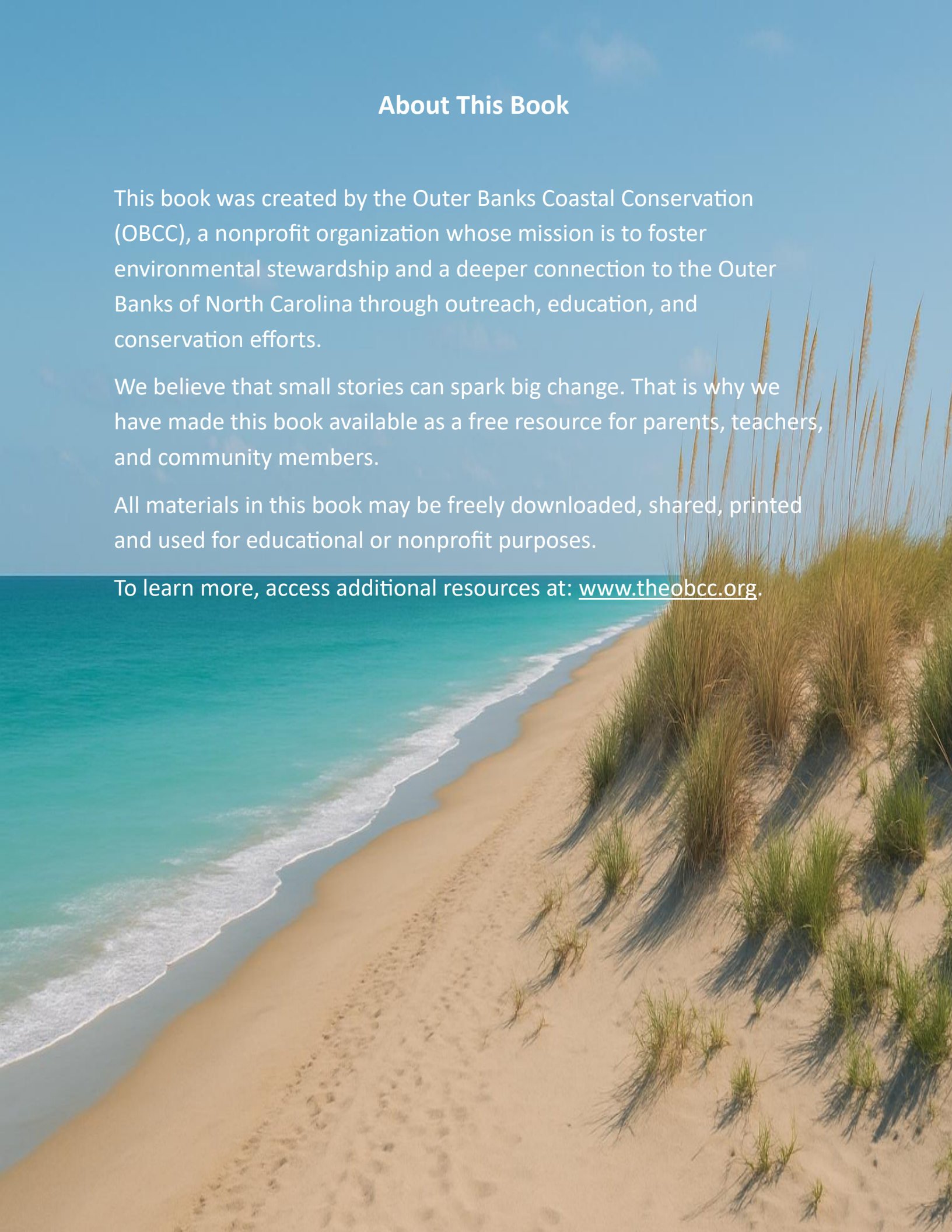
About This Book

This book was created by the Outer Banks Coastal Conservation (OBCC), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster environmental stewardship and a deeper connection to the Outer Banks of North Carolina through outreach, education, and conservation efforts.

We believe that small stories can spark big change. That is why we have made this book available as a free resource for parents, teachers, and community members.

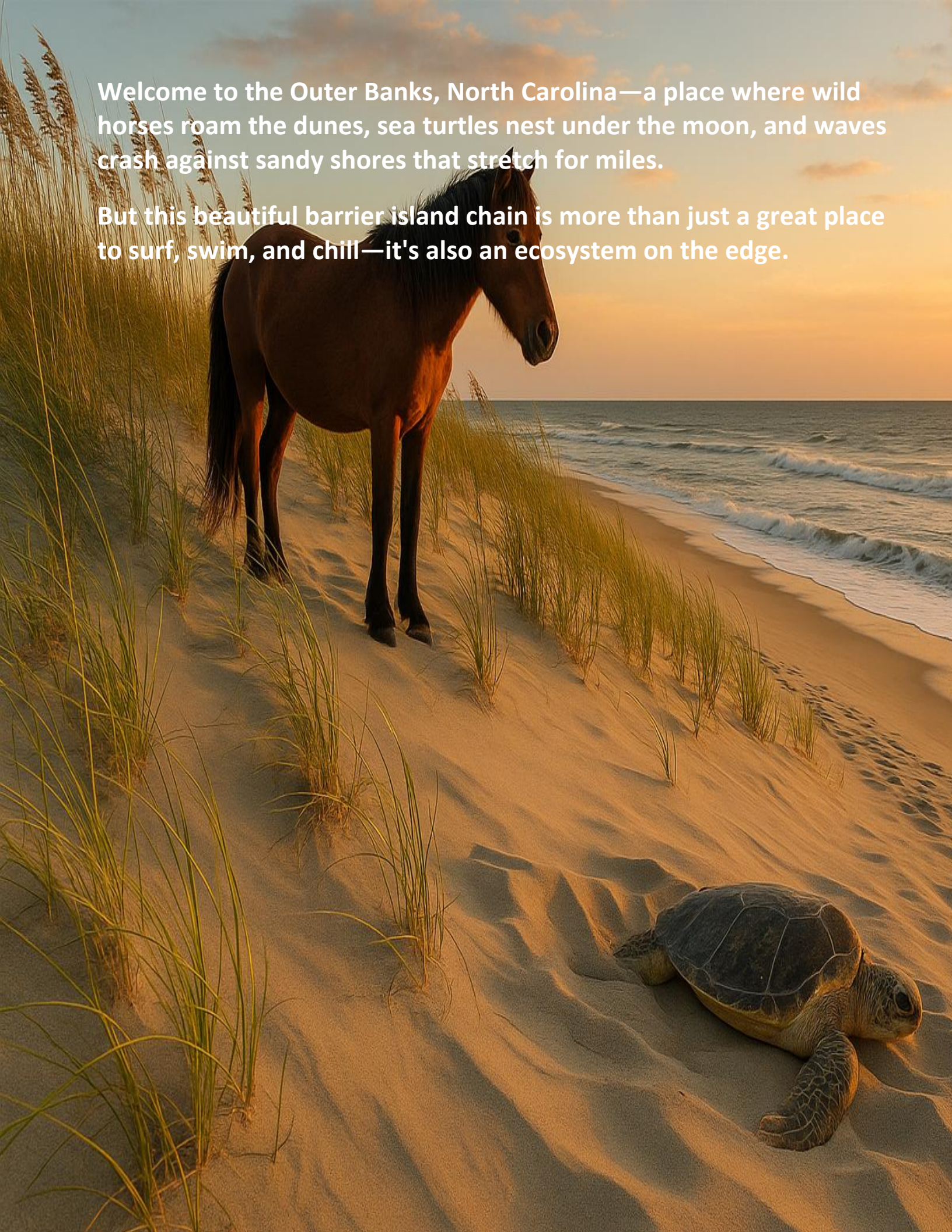
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To learn more, access additional resources at: www.theobcc.org.



Welcome to the Outer Banks, North Carolina—a place where wild horses roam the dunes, sea turtles nest under the moon, and waves crash against sandy shores that stretch for miles.

But this beautiful barrier island chain is more than just a great place to surf, swim, and chill—it's also an ecosystem on the edge.



What Makes the Outer Banks So Special?

The Outer Banks is a unique coastal region made up of narrow barrier islands. These natural sandbars shift and reshape over time, helping protect the mainland from storms and hurricanes. But that's not all—they're also home to:

- Endangered sea turtles that return each summer to lay their eggs
- The legendary Corolla wild horses that have roamed for centuries
- Migrating birds that use the islands as a resting spot on long journeys
- Fragile dune ecosystems that support crabs, grasses, and rare plants



Human Impact

As the Outer Banks becomes more popular, it's also more vulnerable. Here's how people sometimes hurt these delicate environments—often without meaning to:

- Walking on sand dunes crushes vegetation and ruins habitats.
- Leaving trash on the beach leads to marine debris that injures or kills wildlife.
- Digging deep holes can trap baby turtles or injure beachgoers.
- Feeding or approaching wild animals like horses or birds can cause stress and harm.

Even small actions can have big consequences—especially on narrow barrier islands where space and resources are limited.



So, What Can You Do?

You don't have to be a scientist to be a conservationist. Here are ways you can help:

- Follow "Leave No Trace" Rules

Take everything you brought with you—trash, toys, snacks—and leave the beach cleaner than you found it.



- **Respect the Dunes**

Stay on marked paths and boardwalks. The dunes help prevent flooding and provide homes for animals like ghost crabs and nesting birds.



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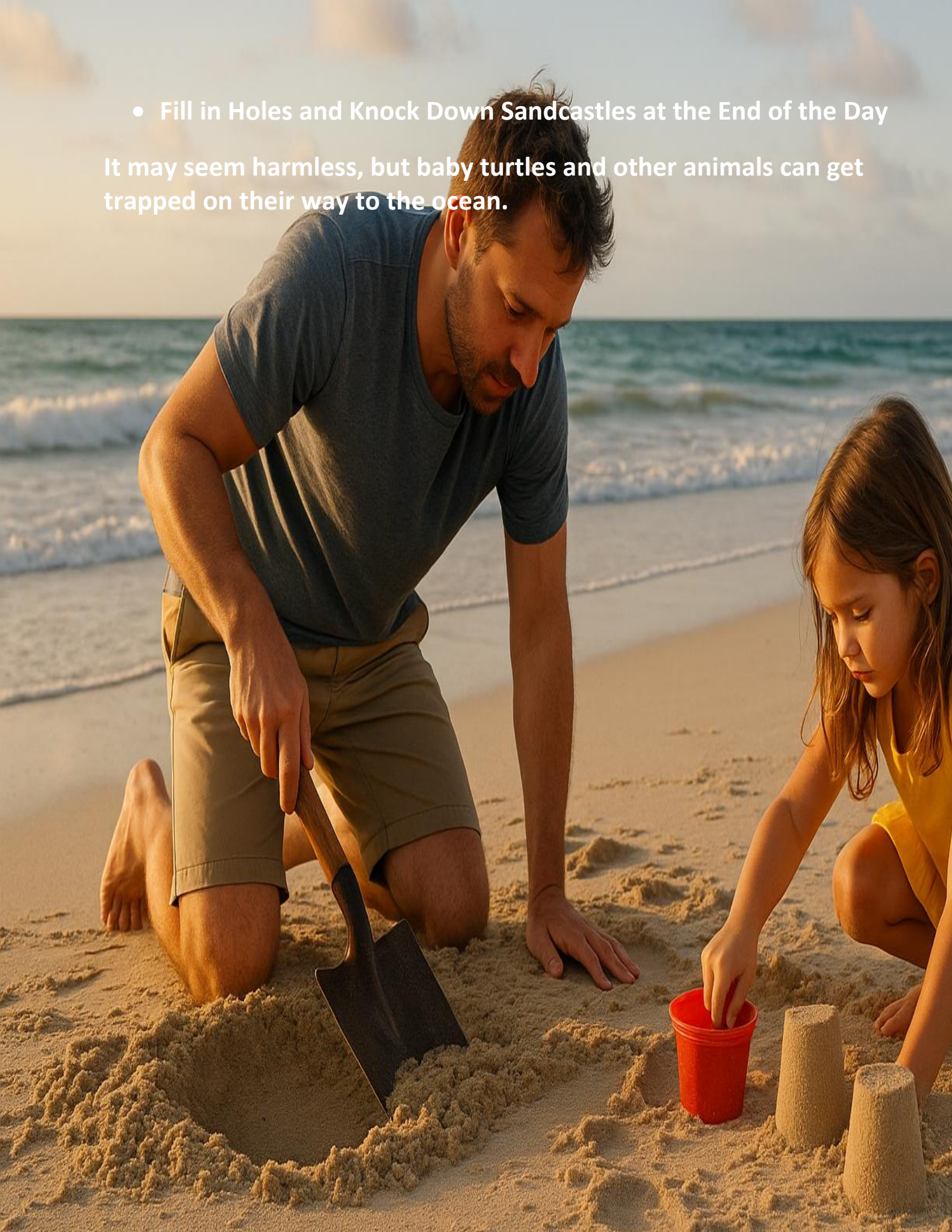
- Keep Your Distance

Admire wild horses, sea turtles, and birds from afar.



- **Fill in Holes and Knock Down Sandcastles at the End of the Day**

It may seem harmless, but baby turtles and other animals can get trapped on their way to the ocean.



- **Speak Up and Volunteer**

Join a beach cleanup, volunteer with a wildlife group, or educate younger kids about conservation. You can make a real difference.



Did You Know?

- Healthy coastal habitats such as sand dunes, salt marshes, oyster reefs, and seagrass beds act as nature's first line of defense. They reduce storm damage, improve water quality, provide homes for wildlife, and help protect coastal communities from erosion and flooding.
- Coastal conservation isn't just about protecting wildlife—it's also about protecting people. Healthy beaches, dunes, and wetlands help reduce the impact of hurricanes, support local economies, and preserve places where millions of people live, work, and vacation.
- Although coastlines make up only a small portion of Earth's surface, they support some of the planet's most productive ecosystems. Healthy coasts provide food, clean water, recreation, storm protection, and habitat for countless species.
- Every person can help protect the coast! Picking up litter, staying off fragile dunes, respecting wildlife, reducing plastic waste, and participating in beach cleanups all contribute to healthier oceans and stronger coastal ecosystems.



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Protecting the Outer Banks: Why Coastal Conservation Matters

Protecting the Outer Banks: Why Coastal Conservation Matters introduces readers to the unique barrier islands of North Carolina and explains why conserving their beaches, dunes, wetlands, and wildlife is essential. The book highlights threats such as litter, dune damage, wildlife disturbance, and irresponsible beach activities, while providing simple actions everyone can take—including following Leave No Trace principles, respecting dunes and wildlife, filling beach holes, and volunteering. It emphasizes that protecting coastal habitats safeguards both wildlife and the communities that depend on the Outer Banks, encouraging readers to become everyday stewards of this remarkable coastline.

About the Publisher

Outer Banks Coastal Conservation (OBCC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering environmental stewardship and a deeper connection to the Outer Banks of North Carolina through education, outreach, and conservation initiatives.

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