

Outer Banks Wildlife Road Safety Guide



Outer Banks, North Carolina

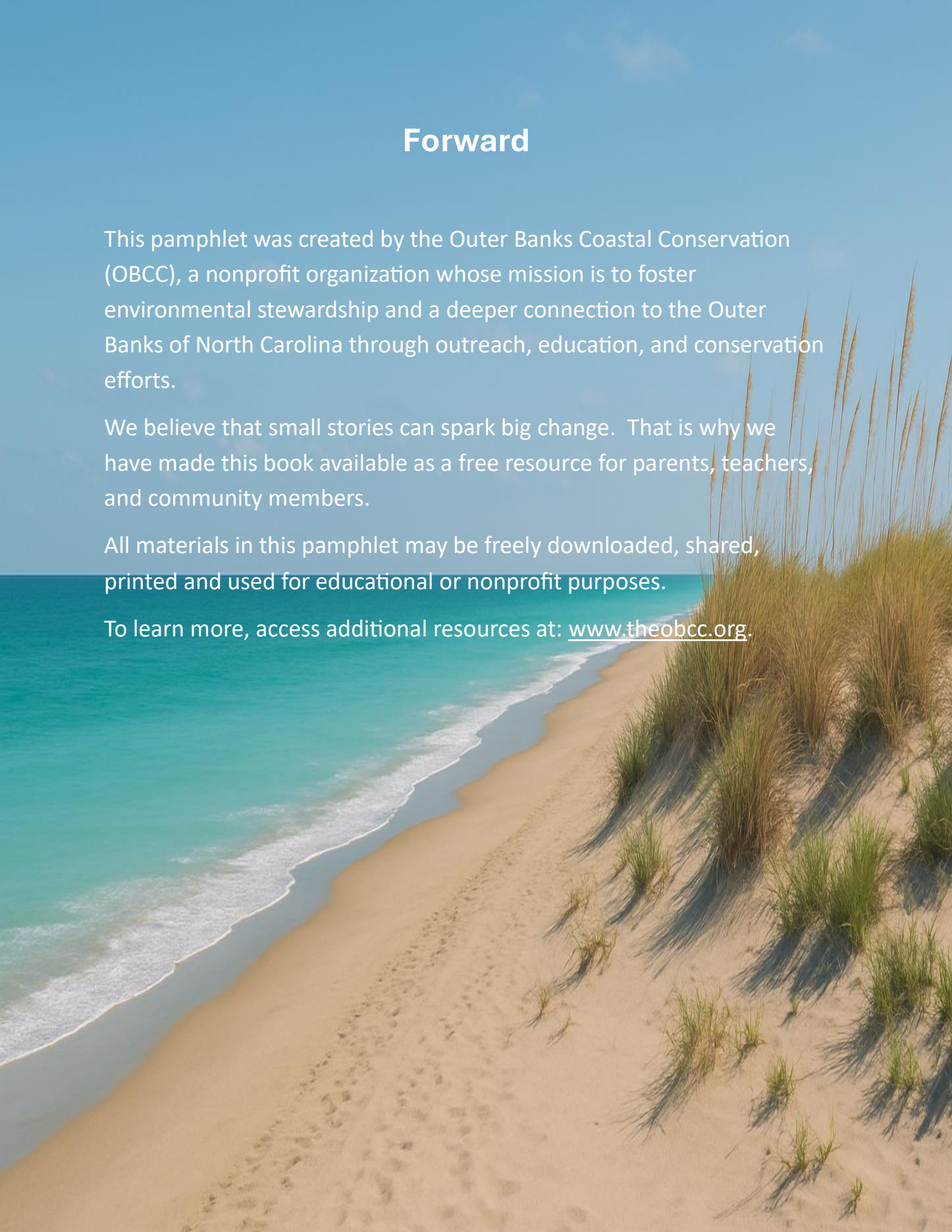
Forward

This pamphlet 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.

All materials in this pamphlet may be freely downloaded, shared, printed and used for educational or nonprofit purposes.

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



Outer Banks Wildlife Road Safety Guide

Roads can be dangerous places for wildlife. As they move between habitats, your slow, careful driving can make all the difference. Please keep an eye out and give wildlife the right of way.

Drive Slow. Stay Alert. Protect What Makes the Outer Banks Wild.

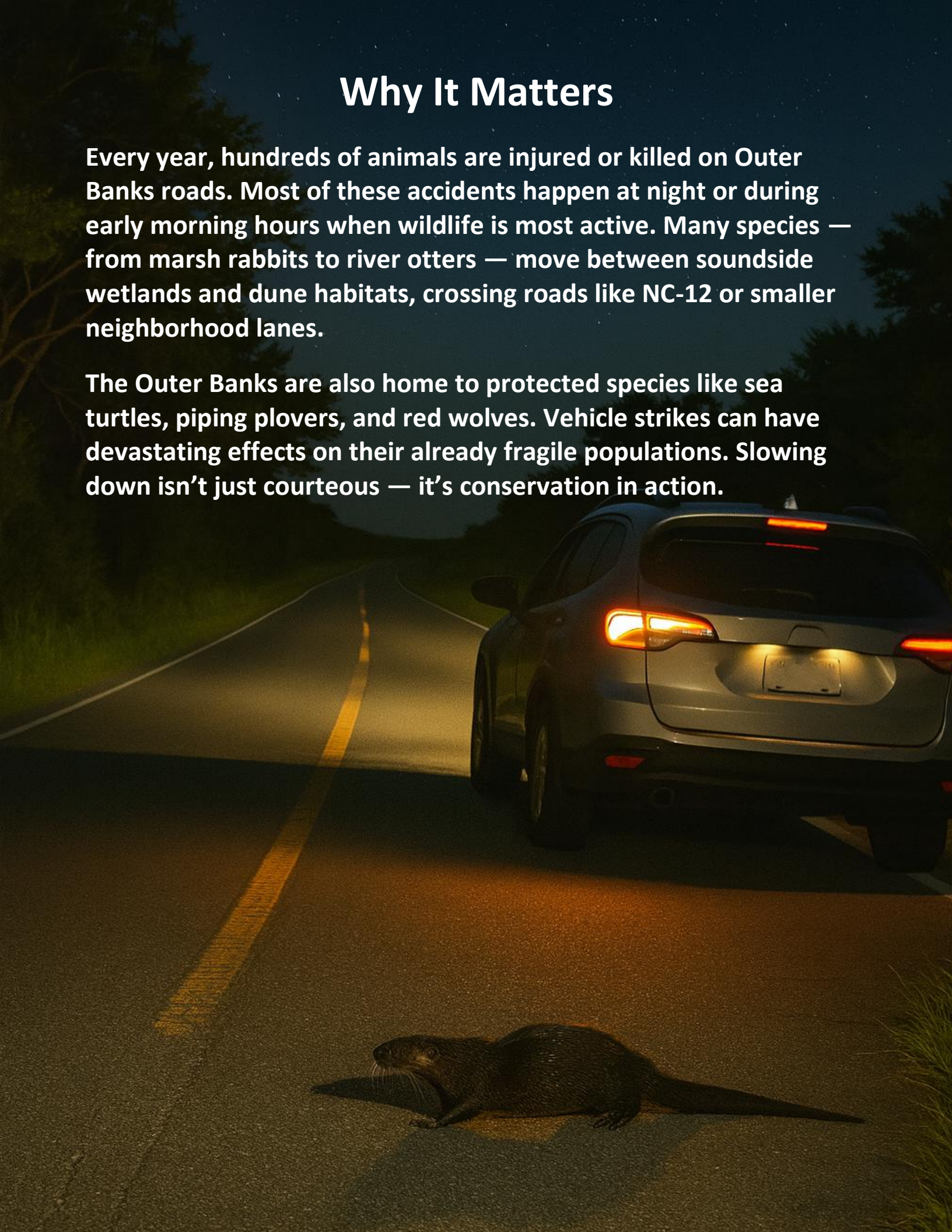
The Outer Banks aren't just famous for their beaches — they're a living, breathing ecosystem where wild creatures and people share the same narrow islands. Roads often cut through wetlands, maritime forests, and dunes where wildlife travel daily to find food, mates, and shelter. When we slow down and stay alert, we help ensure that wildlife make it home safely.



Why It Matters

Every year, hundreds of animals are injured or killed on Outer Banks roads. Most of these accidents happen at night or during early morning hours when wildlife is most active. Many species — from marsh rabbits to river otters — move between soundside wetlands and dune habitats, crossing roads like NC-12 or smaller neighborhood lanes.

The Outer Banks are also home to protected species like sea turtles, piping plovers, and red wolves. Vehicle strikes can have devastating effects on their already fragile populations. Slowing down isn't just courteous — it's conservation in action.



DRIVE WITH CARE

KEEP IT SLOW

Posted speed limits exist for a reason — most roads on the islands double as wildlife corridors. Slower speeds give you time to react if an animal darts out.



USE YOUR LIGHTS WISELY

Dim high beams when approaching animals or other cars, bright lights can confuse or freeze wildlife in place.



WATCH SHOULDERS AND DITCHES

You may spot eyeshine or movement before the animal crosses.



AVOID DISTRACTIONS

Stay off your phone — even a few seconds of inattention can mean tragedy for small wildlife.



MIND THE WEATHER

Rain and fog push animals toward higher, drier roadsides. Be extra alert during storms or after heavy rainfall



Beach Driving and Wildlife Awareness

Driving on Outer Banks beaches can be a unique experience — but it comes with responsibilities. The sand is home to nesting sea turtles, resting shorebirds, and small dune creatures that depend on quiet, undisturbed spaces.

- Stay below the high-tide line to avoid dune and nesting areas.
- Always check for posted signs or roped-off nesting zones before driving or parking.
- During nesting season (May through October), be extra cautious — sea turtles may be laying eggs at night or hatchlings may be emerging early in the morning.
- Turn off headlights and spotlights near the beach after dark. Bright lights can disorient nesting females and hatchlings, leading them away from the ocean.
- Avoid night driving whenever possible during nesting months, especially in areas known for turtle activity.
- Report any sightings of nesting or hatchling sea turtles to the NEST Hotline (252-441-8622) immediately so trained volunteers can protect the site.

By driving gently, keeping lights low, and giving wildlife space, beachgoers can help ensure future generations of sea turtles find their way safely to the sea.



Wildlife You Might See on the Road

- Deer and foxes often cross at dawn and dusk.
- Turtles and snakes may bask on warm pavement or move slowly between ponds and marshes.
- Opossums, raccoons, and rabbits use culverts and roadside vegetation as travel routes.
- Herons, egrets, and oystercatchers sometimes wander near causeways or bridges that cut through wetlands.

Feral horses and waterfowl may be near roads in northern areas like Corolla and Carova — give them plenty of space.



What to Do if You See Wildlife

- Slow down and stop if safe. Allow the animal to cross without honking or flashing lights.
- Never swerve suddenly. Sudden turns can cause accidents or harm other drivers.
- If you must assist a turtle, move it gently across the road in the direction it was heading. Never relocate it to a new area.
- Do not feed, chase, or photograph wildlife in the road. It can cause confusion and stress to the animal.
- If you find an injured animal, contact:
 - Outer Banks Wildlife Shelter (252-240-1200)
 - Network for Endangered Sea Turtles (NEST) Hotline: 252-441-8622
 - Local Animal Control (through Dare or Hyde County dispatch)



Community Stewardship

Everyone who drives here — residents, contractors, vacationers — plays a role in keeping wildlife safe. Encourage others to:

- Share this guide or post reminders on social media.
- Advocate for wildlife crossing signs in high-risk areas.
- Support environmental educational programs and conservation projects.
- Report repeat roadkill sites to help identify hotspots for future protection.



Respect the Roads and Please Drive Slowly

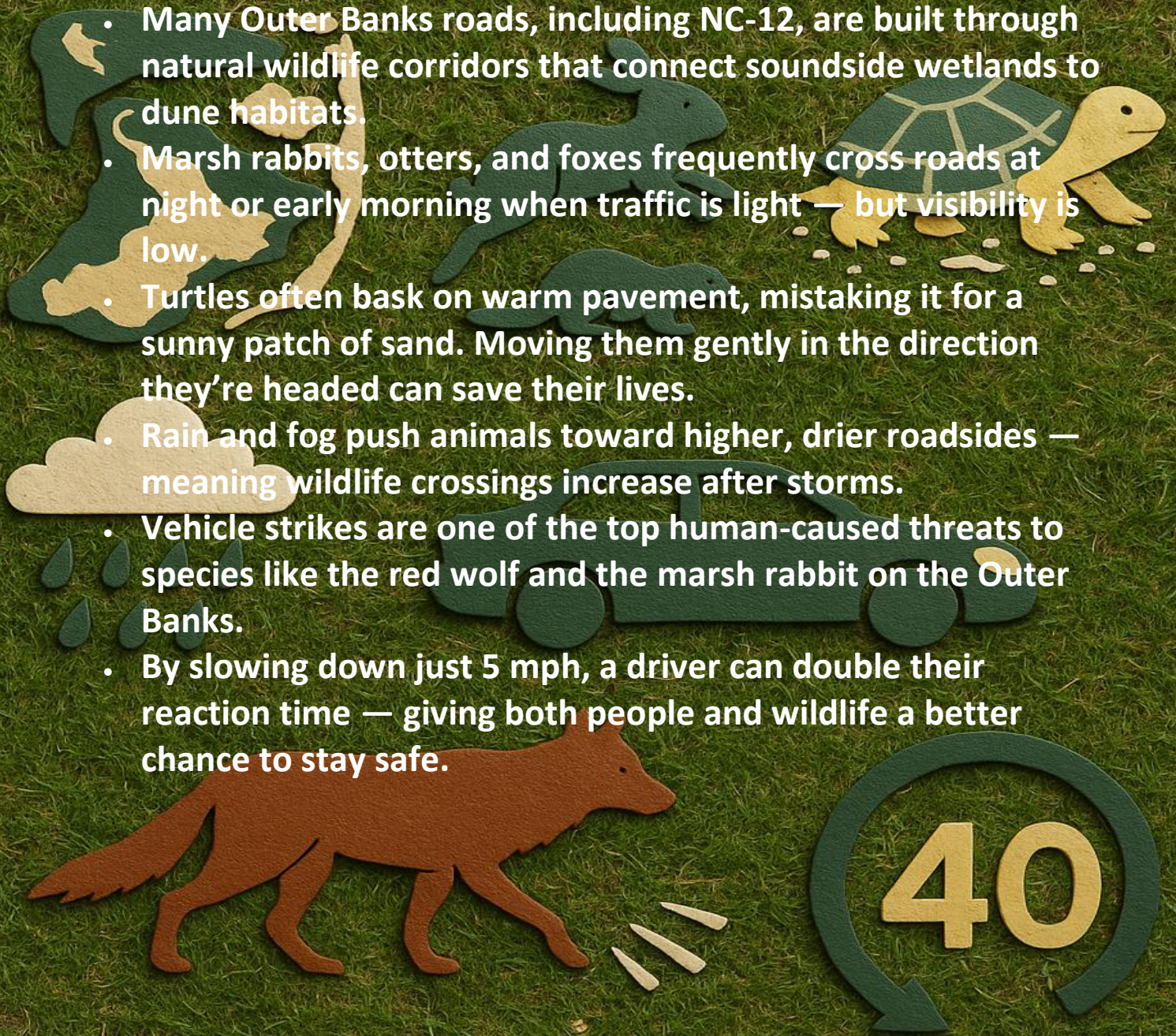
The Outer Banks are more than a destination — they're a delicate balance between land, sea, and the creatures that call both home. Driving with awareness preserves the beauty and biodiversity that make these barrier islands unlike anywhere else on Earth.

Drive slow. Stop for wildlife. Protect the coast — one mile at a time.



Did You Know?

- Many Outer Banks roads, including NC-12, are built through natural wildlife corridors that connect soundside wetlands to dune habitats.
- Marsh rabbits, otters, and foxes frequently cross roads at night or early morning when traffic is light — but visibility is low.
- Turtles often bask on warm pavement, mistaking it for a sunny patch of sand. Moving them gently in the direction they're headed can save their lives.
- Rain and fog push animals toward higher, drier roadsides — meaning wildlife crossings increase after storms.
- Vehicle strikes are one of the top human-caused threats to species like the red wolf and the marsh rabbit on the Outer Banks.
- By slowing down just 5 mph, a driver can double their reaction time — giving both people and wildlife a better chance to stay safe.



References

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