

Winds of the Outer Banks

Why Properly Securing Trash Cans Protects Wildlife and Keeps Our Coast Clean



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.

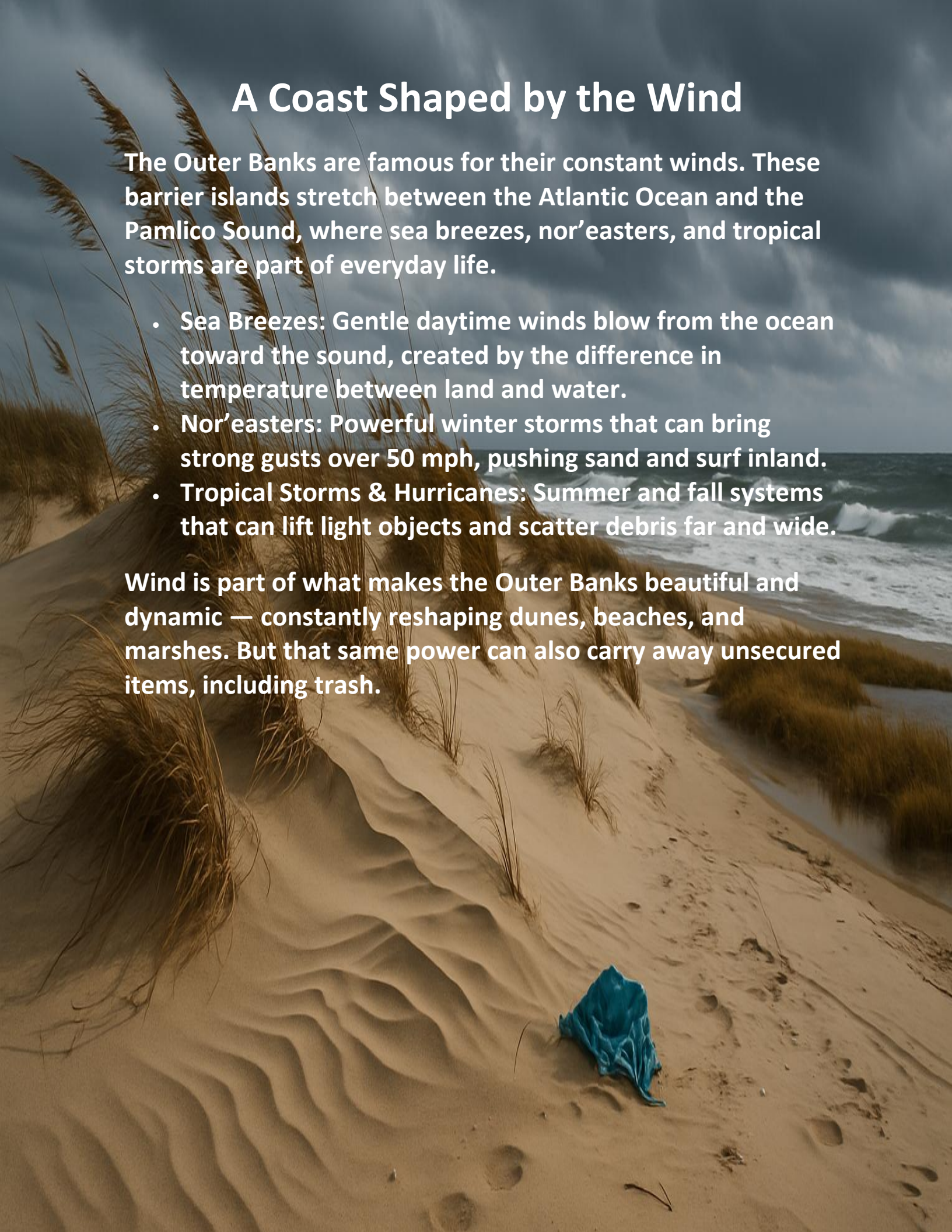


A Coast Shaped by the Wind

The Outer Banks are famous for their constant winds. These barrier islands stretch between the Atlantic Ocean and the Pamlico Sound, where sea breezes, nor'easters, and tropical storms are part of everyday life.

- **Sea Breezes:** Gentle daytime winds blow from the ocean toward the sound, created by the difference in temperature between land and water.
- **Nor'easters:** Powerful winter storms that can bring strong gusts over 50 mph, pushing sand and surf inland.
- **Tropical Storms & Hurricanes:** Summer and fall systems that can lift light objects and scatter debris far and wide.

Wind is part of what makes the Outer Banks beautiful and dynamic — constantly reshaping dunes, beaches, and marshes. But that same power can also carry away unsecured items, including trash.



When Trash Takes Flight

Strong coastal winds can easily tip over trash cans or lift lightweight items from open containers. Once blown away, litter becomes:

- Marine debris — plastic bags, bottles, and wrappers swept into the ocean, threatening sea turtles, dolphins, and seabirds.
- Wildlife hazards — animals can ingest or become entangled in trash, leading to injury or death.
- Neighborhood nuisances — windblown garbage clutters yards, dunes, and roadways, harming the natural beauty of the islands.

Even a single windy night can scatter hundreds of pieces of trash — and much of it ends up in the water.



How to Secure Your Trash in the Wind

Help protect the Outer Banks' fragile ecosystems by following these simple steps:

1. Use heavy-duty bins with tight-fitting lids. If possible, choose models with latches or locks.
2. Store cans in a sheltered spot — behind a fence, in a garage, or beside a sturdy wall.
3. Put trash out the morning of pickup, not the night before.
4. Do not overflow trash cans.
5. Avoid lightweight bags that can tear or fly away easily.
6. Pick up litter immediately if you notice items blown onto the street or into dunes.



Why It Matters

Every piece of trash that stays in the bin is one less threat to wildlife and fish. Keeping trash secure:

- Reduces pollution in the ocean and sound
- Protects nesting areas and dunes
- Prevents wildlife entanglement and ingestion
- Keeps our beaches beautiful for residents and visitors alike



Did You Know?

- A single plastic bag can drift for miles and be mistaken by sea turtles for a jellyfish.
- Windborne trash is one of the most common forms of litter found during Outer Banks beach cleanups.
- Many Outer Banks towns have “secure-can” ordinances to reduce waste scattered by storms and winds.

Together, We Can Keep the Outer Banks Clean

- By securing our trash, we let the winds shape sand — not scatter litter — and protect the wildlife that calls these islands home.



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