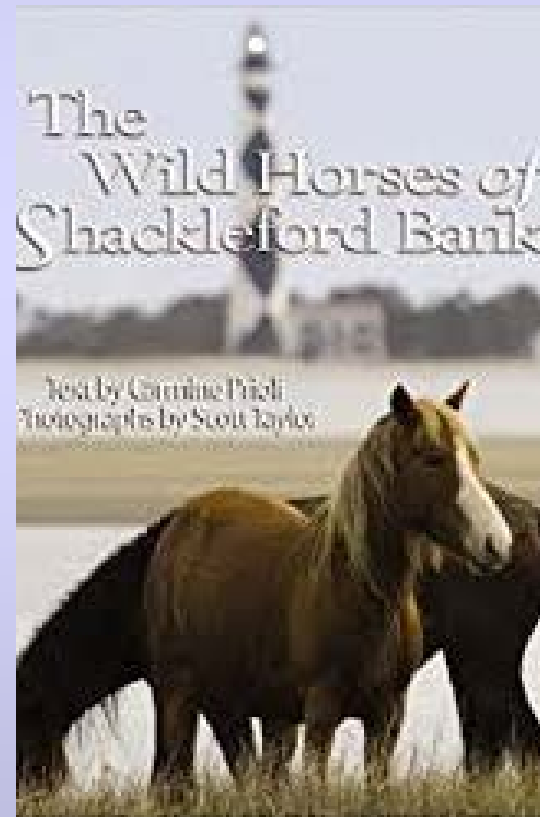


# Wild Horses of Shackelford Banks



# Wild Horses

- Wild horses are found all over the U.S.
  - Montana, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, California, Virginia, North Carolina, North Dakota, Nevada, Oregon
- The ponies on Shackleford Banks are extremely well known
  - Book, *[The Wild Horses of Shackleford Banks](#)*



# Where Did They Come From?



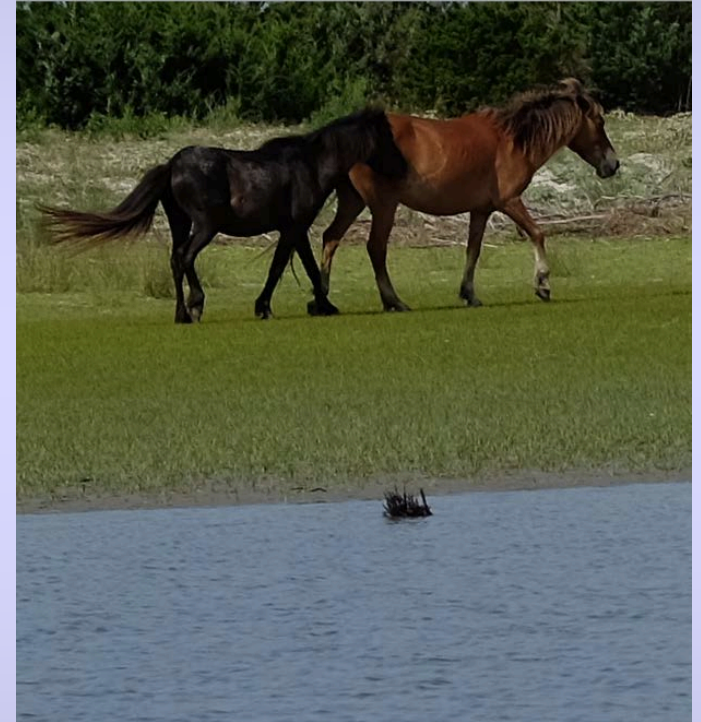
- There are several unconfirmed **rumors** concerning the origin of the horses
  - Horses swam ashore from shipwrecked Spanish galleons in the 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries
  - Horses swam ashore from a wrecked ship bound for the English colonies
  - Pirates brought the horses to the island

# One Known Explanation

- horses were brought to Shackleford during the 17<sup>th</sup> century by mainland owners; these likely bred with existing horses
  - Early settlers used Shackleford Banks as a natural corral to avoid fencing laws and taxation of livestock

# “Wild”? “Horses”?

- **Feral** and **wild** are both used when referring to the horses
  - Because they take care of themselves in all seasons with minimum help from humans, they can be considered wild
  - They can also be referred to as feral because they are descendants of domestic animals that have reverted to a wild state
- They can also be referred to as ponies because of their naturally small size, most likely due to harsh conditions of the island



# Shackleford Banks Horses

119 STAT. 2526

PUBLIC LAW 109-117—DEC. 1, 2005

Public Law 109-117  
109th Congress

An Act

Dec. 1, 2005  
(H.R. 126)

To amend Public Law 89-366 to allow for an adjustment in the number of free roaming horses permitted in Cape Lookout National Seashore.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

SECTION 1. ADJUSTMENT IN NUMBER OF FREE ROAMING HORSES PERMITTED IN CAPE LOOKOUT NATIONAL SEASHORE, NORTH CAROLINA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The first subsection (b) of section 5 of Public Law 89-366 (16 U.S.C. 459g-4) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking "100 free roaming horses" and inserting "not less than 110 free roaming horses, with a target population of between 120 and 130 free roaming horses";

(2) in paragraph (3), by striking subparagraph (B) and inserting the following new subparagraph:

"(B) unless removal is carried out as part of a plan to maintain the viability of the herd; or"; and

(3) in paragraph (5), by striking "100" and inserting "110".

(b) REPEAL OF DUPLICATE SUBSECTION.—Section 5 of Public Law 89-366 is further amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking "(a)" after "(a)"; and

(2) by striking the second subsection (b).

Approved December 1, 2005.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 126:

SENATE REPORTS: No. 109-154 (Comm. on Energy and Natural Resources).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 151 (2005):

Mar. 14, considered and passed House.

Nov. 16, considered and passed Senate.

- The **National Park Service** is in charge of the island
- Population is around **120 horses**
- **Federal Law** states that the number needs to be between 120 and 130 horses
- **Two agencies** work together to maintain the herd
  - The National Park Service
  - The Foundation for Shackleford Horses

# Population Growth

- In order to control the population growth, a contraceptive is used as a method of birth control
  - Non-hormonal contraceptive vaccine that stimulates the mare's immune system to produce antibodies which will block fertilization at high levels of antibody
  - The effect is temporary, lasting about one year, but can be extended with an annual booster shot
- At some point, repeated annual boosters result in infertility, so this method is used judiciously



# Horse Penning & Removal

- Early on in the management of the herd, horses were penned to check numbers and health
  - After penning, extra horses could be removed to maintain the appropriate population range
- Both the Foundation and the Park currently take a hands off approach to the management of the heard
  - Case by case decisions are made in terms of unhealthy horses, but most of the time nature is allowed to take its course
- In rare cases, animals are removed from the island for sickness, deformity, or to allow greater genetic variation
  - This is often done with foals (baby horses)
  - Most foals are easily tamed and adapt well to domestic life, often being adopted out by the Foundation



# What is the Habitat Like?

- Horses are neither fed nor watered.
- Natural food sources are present, including Spartina marsh & island grass and Uniola (sea oats).
- Fresh water is available in various ponds, pools and digs along the length of the island.
  - The horses only drink fresh water
  - In certain places, the horses dig holes and wait for fresh water to seep up.
- Protection in storms is afforded by the stretch of rare maritime forest (live oaks) and thick shrubs on the north (sound) side of the island.



# National Park Service



## » [Park Service Website](#)

» The National Park Service is responsible for protection of the island, including the wildlife.

## » [Dr. Sue Stuska, Ed.D, Wildlife Biologist](#)

» Article on Pages 38-41

» Leads tours for educators to spread information about the island and horses

» Works to effectively manage the human/animal interactions on the island

[Shackleford Banks Horses Video](#)



Sue Stuska, Wildlife Biologist

# Foundation Information

- [Foundation Website](#)
- The Foundation was established in response to a perceived threat to the horses.
- [Carolyn Mason, Founder Article](#)
- Works with National Park Service on the island. Cares for horses removed from the island
- Works to get removed horses adopted if possible

[Foundation Informational Video](#)



Soprano, one of the horses available for adoption

# Protecting Our Local Wild

# Horses

*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.

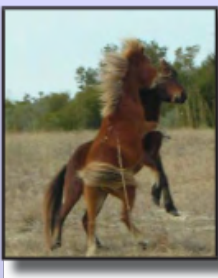
The horses don't recognize our food as edible - which is good. We don't want an 800 pound stallion to challenge you for your granola bar. If he did, you could be hurt and he could lose his wild lifestyle. Food scraps can harm other wildlife, so please don't allow them access to your food or bait.

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](mailto:paula.gillikin@ncdenr.gov), or after hours call 252-726-1911.



The Park Rangers cannot cover all of the island all of the time:

- What are some of the things you can do to help protect the Wild Horses of Shackleford Banks?
  - Create a poster making people aware of the rules and dangers
  - Make an awareness video
  - Write a poem or song about their history
  - If you see a problem, take a photo and call the park at 252-728-2250



(April 2013)





