

## Trail Information

- **Difficulty:** Easy - Loop Trail & Middle Trail  
Easy to Moderate - East Trail & Creek Trail
- **Length:** Loop Trail - 0.4 mile  
Middle Trail - 0.6 mile  
East Trail - 0.5 mile  
Creek Trail - 0.7 mile
- **Parking:** Two golfcart parking decks are available on Federal Road to access the Reserve at the head of Loop Trail and the foot of Middle Trail
- **Facilities:** Public restrooms are available at the Bald Head Island Conservancy offices and at the Bald Head Island Marina
- **Habitats:** Evergreen maritime forest, maritime shrub swamp, interdune ponds
- **Wildlife:** Land snails, cotton mice, gray squirrels, raccoons, gray foxes, non-native red foxes, white-tailed deer, opossums, and numerous bird, amphibian and reptile species.

## How To Find Us

The Bald Head Woods Coastal Reserve is located on Bald Head Island, a private island off the coast of N.C. in Brunswick County. The Island may be accessed by a 20-minute commercial ferry ride from Indigo Plantation & Marina in historic Southport. Cars are not allowed on the island but bicycles and golf carts are available for daily rental at the Bald Head Marina. Ferry schedules and rates are available at (910) 457-5003.



## Bald Head Woods Nature Trails

The Bald Head Woods Coastal Reserve nature trails pass through upland and wetland habitats representative of local maritime forest communities.

### Creation of the Reserve

In 1988 the Coastal Resources Commission determined that maritime forest ecosystems should be a high priority for coastal preservation efforts. As a result, the 186-acre Bald Head Woods Coastal Reserve was acquired by the state using funds from the Natural Heritage Trust Fund, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and through land donations from Bald Head Island Ltd. The N.C. chapter of the Nature Conservancy and the Smith Island Land Trust were instrumental in the protection of the reserve.

### Purpose of the Reserve

This natural area is one of 10 sites that make up the North Carolina Coastal Reserve. Preservation of the Bald Head Woods maritime forest allows this unique coastal ecosystem to be available in perpetuity as a natural outdoor laboratory where scientists, students and the general public can learn about coastal processes, functions and influences that shape and sustain the coastal area. The coastal reserve accommodates traditional recreational activities as long as they do not disturb the environment or research and educational activities.

## Rules & Tips For Visitors

- Hiking and walking trails are for foot access only.
- Trails are open year-round during daylight hours.
- Fires, dumping, target shooting, littering and off road vehicle use are not permitted. No personal property may be left on the site for more than 48 hours.
- Removal or disturbance of plants and animals without a valid permit is prohibited. Do not feed wildlife.
- To protect natural features, please stay on designated trails and leave nothing behind except your footprints.
- Beware of biting insects (flies, mosquitoes, ticks, chiggers) and poisonous plants (poison ivy) on the trails.



### North Carolina Coastal Reserve

Wilmington Field Office  
5600 Marvin K. Moss Lane  
Wilmington, NC 28409  
(910) 962-2998  
[www.nccoastalreserve.net](http://www.nccoastalreserve.net)

Bald Head Woods is managed by the N.C. Division of Coastal Management to protect a portion of the island's maritime forest for research, education, and compatible recreational uses. Support and assistance of the Bald Head Island Conservancy for trail development and overall stewardship is gratefully acknowledged. This site is also a dedicated state nature preserve.

The North Carolina Coastal Reserve is a part of the N.C. Division of Coastal Management, a division of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

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## Bald Head Woods Coastal Reserve

Bald Head Island, NC



# Bald Head Woods Nature Trail

## Maritime Evergreen Forest

- The dune ridges and slopes within the forest are dominated by live oaks, but host a mix of live and laurel oaks, cabbage palmettos and loblolly pines, with scattered individuals of red cedar and flowering magnolia. The forest understory contains flowering dogwood, wild olive, Carolina laurel cherry, American holly, wax myrtle, beauty berry and tough bumelia. Numerous vines are present including cat brier, summer grape, poison ivy and peppervine.
- The trees of the forest canopy are adapted to salt spray and wind shear. These forces acting together give the forest its characteristic sloped shape and serve to create a dense protective blanket over the plants and animals that dwell within the forest. The vast root systems of the forest also provide water purification and soil stabilization functions for the overall benefit of the island systems and organisms.

## Maritime Swamp Forest & Interdune Ponds

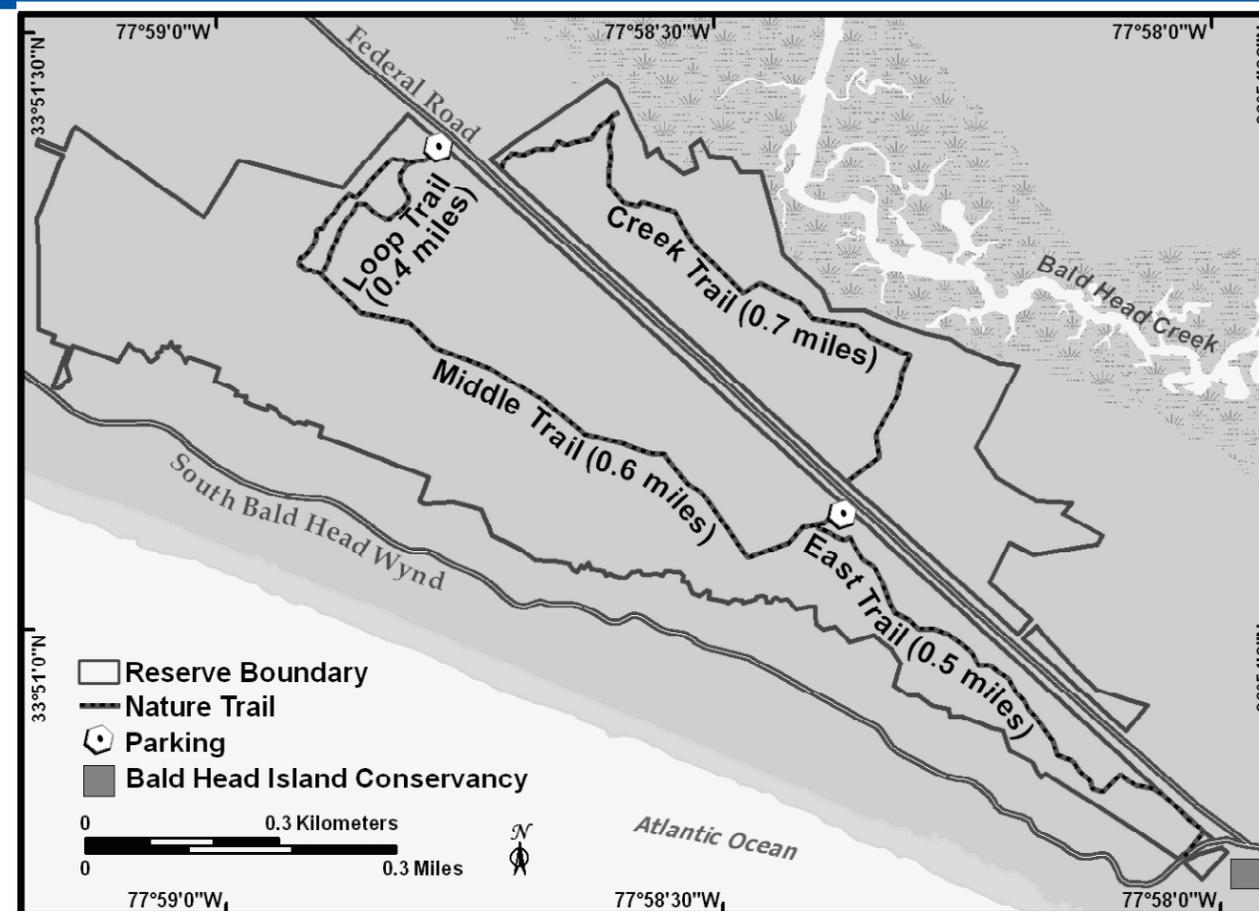
- Scattered areas of local depressions or swales are located between the higher and drier dune ridges and contain seasonally flooded habitats. These swamp forest areas contain plants such as red bays, willows, red maples, musclewood, wax myrtle and cane, as well as vines such as poison ivy and Carolina supplejack. With few examples of this ecosystem type remaining, they are considered to be globally imperiled.
- Found primarily along the southern border of the Reserve, wetter interdune areas hold seasonally to permanently wet ponds that contain herbs such as pennyworts, nettles, sedges, rushes and netted chainferns. Shrubs such as the groundsel tree and wax myrtle can be found on the peripheries. These areas are also home to a variety of frogs and toads.

## Live and Laurel Oaks

- One of the significant features of the forest is the extremely old, large trees that dominate the canopy. Many of the oaks in Bald Head Woods are hundreds of years old and have diameters over 36 inches.

## Cabbage Palmettos

- Also known as sabal palmetto, this southern tree species is at the northern extent of its range on Bald Head Island. A tan-gray unbranched trunk and large crown of fan-like leaves make this tree noticeable in the understory and reaching into the canopy of the forest.



## Dune Bluecurls

- Dune bluecurls, a significantly rare plant in North Carolina, is a mint that typically grows in small colonies on back dunes. Adapted to disturbed areas, it is also found along roadsides within the Reserve.

## Vines

- The maritime forest contains numerous vine species that knit the upper branches of the dominant trees together, increasing the protective function of the canopy.
- Particularly during the fall, poison ivy can cause an unpleasant contact rash if touched. This plant can easily be identified by its three-leaf configuration and the copious amounts of hairy reddish roots which attach its stem to its host tree.

## Red Fox

- The highly adaptive non-native red fox has increased in numbers on coastal islands in recent years. This clever predator is able to utilize a variety of food sources and has adapted to live in close association with human development. As a result, there have been noticeable impacts to threatened and rare

wildlife, including damage to sea turtle and shore bird nests.

## Reptiles and Amphibians

- Among the five extant species of snakes, the black racer is the most common.
- Although infrequent, lizard species in the Reserve include the six-lined racerunner, five-lined skink and glass lizard.
- The interdune ponds are home to frog and toad species including the southern toad, squirrel tree frog, green tree frog and narrow-mouthed toad.

## Birds

- At least 60 species of birds use the Reserve during migration and 25 species winter on the island.
- Summer residents include Carolina wrens, cardinals, painted buntings, and 20 species of warblers including: Blackburnian, golden-winged, magnolia, mourning and black-throated blue.
- The painted bunting is a common summer resident in the dense shrub thickets of Bald Head Woods.