

# Outer Banks Living

- 
- Nature photography
  - Cap'n Bodie's  
cheeseburgers
  - Fishing offshore
  - Summer cabaret

OUTER BANKS  
**Sentinel**

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FREE



The tour at Jockey's Ridge State Park takes photographers on a sand nature trail that runs along Roanoke Sound. Ranger David McDaniel (in the lead) says objects that wash ashore often make for interesting pictures.

*Continued from previous page*  
noted.

"Some people still use Kodachrome 25," McDaniel said. "It's been around for a million years."

A polarizing filter is also a good idea. It can cut down on the haze and give you clear, crisp pictures. Bring sunglasses and a hat to protect yourself.

Guard your gear from sand and inclement weather by using a gear bag, the ranger advised. Point-and-shoot cameras can be easily and effectively protected by putting them inside a ziplock bag.

"You can put your point-and-shoot inside a high-grade sandwich bag and shoot right through it," McDaniel says. Bring bellows and lens paper to get the sand off your gear.

He explained that just one grain of sand can easily ruin both expensive and inexpensive cameras and lenses. Some visitors prefer one-use cameras, and he likes Kodak's Panoramic model.

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With all that said, McDaniel was itching to get started on the hike. "Let's take a walk," he said as he marched toward the dunes.

The first stop was a bay berry shrub. He

explained that the plant's leaves have a wax coating to protect them from sea spray. Next, he pointed out a cluster of poison ivy to avoid.

The tour passed a loblolly pine tree, and McDaniel said it was short and stumpy because it's totally exposed to the wind. On Roanoke Island, they grow much taller, he added.

He also explained that you usually can tell which way the wind was blowing in a recent storm because the needles all die on that side of the tree. An extensive root system supports the evergreen.

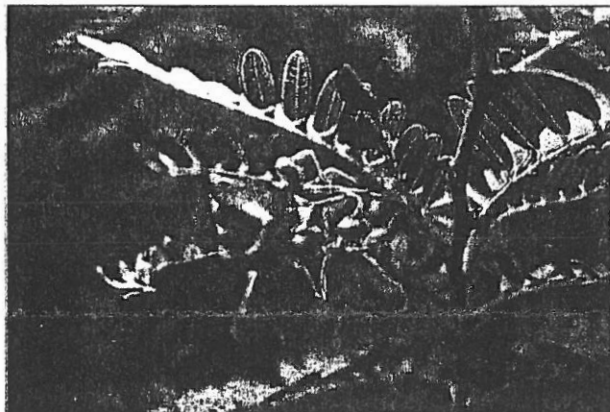
"They don't blow down very often," McDaniel said.

Southern wax myrtle, black cherry, and red bay trees also are found in the park. "Red bay is used just like a regular bay leaf for cooking spaghetti and things like that," the ranger said.

A set of tracks near the cherry tree indicated that white-tail deer had been feeding there. McDaniel said a herd lives in the nearby Nags Head Woods maritime forest.

As with most creatures living in or near Jockey's Ridge park, the deer usually come out early or late in the day to feed. If you want pictures of raccoons, foxes, and rabbits, plan trips for those times.

Wind-blown blades of grass make their own interesting tell-tale signs. They "draw"



The rattle box has a deep red bloom.

a circle around the base of their cluster, which also makes for unusual pictures.

McDaniel explained that the trees, bushes, and flowers, such as the duney aster, can grow along the dune system because the water table is so high here.

Unlike arid areas such as the Sahara Desert, rain at Jockey's Ridge often gathers in low spots and can remain for extended periods, he explained. Frogs and toads live in these pond areas.

They burrow into the sand when it's hot and dry but "pop out" when it rains in order to reproduce quickly, the ranger said.

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Once the hikers passed over the dunes, they followed a trail decorated with various flowers and bushes along the sound. The red blooms of the trumpet vine made for excellent pictures.

"This is one of our most spectacular flowers," McDaniel said.

Vacationer Carrie Lykins of Williamsburg, Va., agreed. She carefully photographed the blooms with her point-and-shoot. The high school student said she enjoyed photography as a hobby.

Another reason Lykins liked this tour

was simple: "It's free."

As the sandy trail wound along the sound, yucca, pennywort, and cat briars were everywhere. Deep red rattle box flowers were in full bloom.

"Put yucca blooms in the foreground for good sunset shots," McDaniel said as they passed both live and red oaks.

Once past a low-lying marshy area, McDaniel informed the hikers that they had just made it through the worst snake area. Eastern black racers and hog-nose snakes are the primary inhabitants.

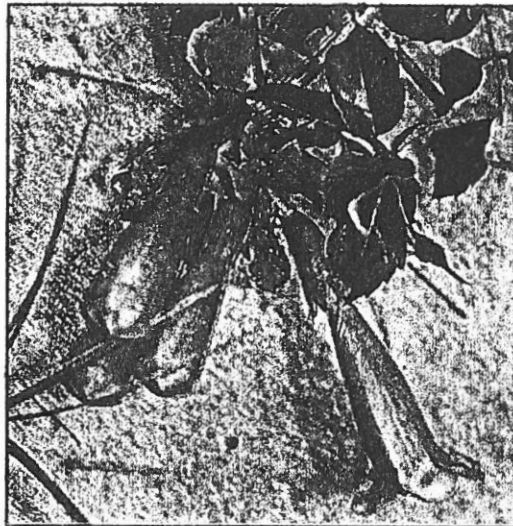
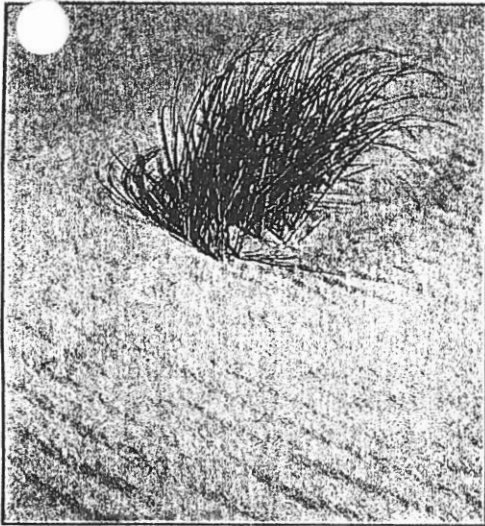
"Snakes are our friends," he said. "Hog-nose snakes root out frogs and toads. It will try to scare you, but if not, it plays dead."

Sisters Michelle and Valerie Gladu, here on vacation from Maryland and Kansas respectively, both said they didn't care to see any snakes and moved along the trail at a quick pace.

They were both shooting Kodak Gold 100 and said photography is one of their favorite hobbies. "I like shooting pictures," Michelle said. "But I don't have an amazing camera."

Once back out on top of the ridge, McDaniel recommended shooting landscapes or people flying kites. The planned hike was over, but the day's photography opportunities at Jockey's Ridge had only just begun.





# A photo op that clicks with nature

STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
DARYL LAW

If you're looking to capture breathtaking images on film, try a nature photography tour offered every Thursday at Jockey's Ridge State Park in Nags Head.

Every day, visitors shoot hundreds of pictures of the park's massive sand dunes, usually with kids tumbling down the slopes or hang-gliders taking off from the high ridges.

The weekly ranger-guided nature tour enables visitors to expand their fields of vision by learning about — and photographing — the park's ecosystem, including flowers, trees, and wildlife.

Participants are advised to dress comfortably for the brisk hike and to bring plenty of film.

Once everyone was assembled at the pavilion at 9 a.m., retired biologist David McDaniel shared some ideas on how best to shoot the various plants, animals, and landscapes.

"There is a great many opportunities to get pictures in the park," he explained. "Many people come here to take family photos."

But McDaniel's main interest is nature. He likes capturing the blossoms of different flowers or landscapes that show the contrast of stark white sand against a dark sky.

He says visitors are fortunate when big billowing clouds drift by because they make for an excellent background for dune compositions. McDaniel recommends using the rule of thirds (framing your photo with the horizon closer to the top or bottom) to make pictures more appealing.

Animal tracks are another neat subject made even more interesting when several kinds of wildlife share the same trail, he says. Ospreys, egrets, and blue herons can be found along a trail that follows the sandy shore of Roanoke Sound.

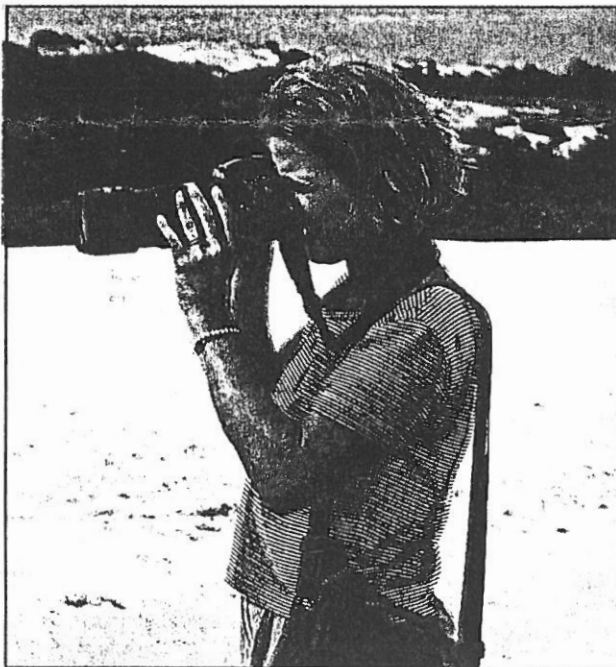
McDaniel recommends shooting birds with a telephoto lens or not at all. Subjects that are too far away appear tiny once the prints come back, and that can prove to be frustrating.

The ranger also recommends using a slow-speed film for sunny-day shoots. Lower ASA films are best for enlargements. Try Kodak Ektachrome Elite 50 or 100.

He likes Fuji film because it tends to have the best color saturation. For prints, Fujicolor Super G Plus 100 or 200 should do. For slides, try Fujichrome 100 or the new Velvia 50.

All these brands are available at Jim's Camera House in Kill Devil Hills, the same place McDaniel recommends for repairs. Even with all these great new films, many visitors stick to the basics, he

See next page



The Jockey's Ridge State Park, with its high sand dunes and diverse ecosystem, is one of the most photographed spots on the East Coast. The top photos show (from left) a clump of American beach grass, the red flowers of a trumpet vine, and a deer track. In the photo, ranger David McDaniel points out interesting subjects to a group of amateur photographers taking the weekly photo tour. At left, Shirley Wilkinson of Carson, Va., frames a picture of a dune with her 35-mm Nikon N90S fitted with an 80-200 mm zoom lens. Taking pictures is one of her favorite hobbies.