

Hatteras Island: Keeper of the Outer Banks

Hatteras Island is a barrier island, part of the famed Outer Banks that runs parallel to the North Carolina coast. But any map, let alone a satellite view from space, will show the island is not of North Carolina at all. Hatteras belongs to the Atlantic Ocean, as much a part of the sea as fish and waves, and as much at the sea's mercy as sandcastles on the beach. And it belongs to the heart.

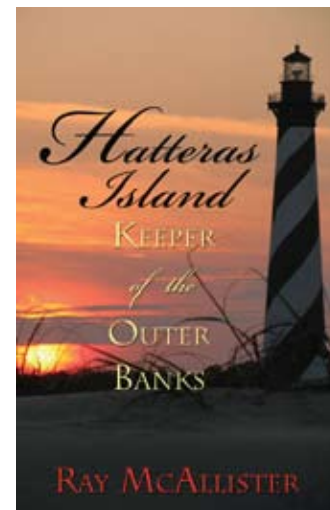
In *Hatteras Island: Keeper of the Outer Banks*, award-winning coastal writer Ray McAllister returns to the site of his family's annual vacations a quarter-century ago. Much has changed on Hatteras. But even more has not. Elsewhere, fast-food restaurants, strip malls, and beach-dominating duplexes have overcome resort islands. But the storm-buffeted Hatteras—as much as 30 miles from the mainland and largely protected against intruders by national seashore status—has kept its soul.

Hatteras has long been known as a world-class sportfishing and windsurfing spot. Its famed lighthouse, historic lifesaving stations, pristine beaches, and six small towns are magnets for tourists. But the Hatteras soul is also built on an extraordinary history: early Native Americans who glimpsed Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci in the 16th century, raids by Blackbeard and other cutthroat pirates, hurricanes that ripped apart the island, so many shipwrecks that its treacherous coastline earned the sobriquet "Graveyard of the Atlantic," Civil War battles, and even a coastal war with German U-boats. It was here that radio pioneer Reginald Fessenden in 1902 transmitted the first musical notes received by signal, that a heroic lifesaving crew saved 42 British seamen whose tanker was destroyed by a German submarine in 1918, and that General Billy Mitchell's 1923 demonstration of the effectiveness of air power helped lead to the

establishment of the U.S. Air Force.

Hatteras Island also includes the stories of fishermen, tourists, surfers, beachgoers, historians, and Hatteras families who have lived here for generations and others who hold dear this island constantly being redefined by wind and wave.

Ray McAllister is a former columnist for the Richmond Times-Dispatch and the current editor of Boomer Life magazine. He is also the author of two other volumes about coastal North Carolina: Topsail Island: Mayberry by the Sea and Wrightsville Beach: The Luminous Island. He lives in Richmond, Virginia.



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