



North Carolina Birding Trail

mountains • piedmont • coast

The Town of Sunset Beach is proud to be included in the North Carolina Birding Trail. The Coastal Plains portion of the state-wide trail includes 102 birding sites organized into sixteen groups east of Interstate 95.

5 Spots in Sunset Beach

Cross the Mannon C. Gore Bridge to the Island. The bridge causeway ends at a T-junction at Main Street. Directly ahead of you is the Town's free parking lot. Go through the gazebo and use the beach access way to view the variety of shorebirds. If you prefer to view the birds from the adjacent pier, you may do so for a small entrance fee.

As you face the ocean on this barrier island, you are facing South, East is to your left, and West is to your right.

In winter, look for Common and Red-throated Loons, Horned Grebes, Gannets, Hooded and Red-breasted Mergansers. In addition, Brown Pelicans abound.

To explore the East end, turn right out of the parking lot on to Main Street and go 1 mile where the road will end at a gated community. Use the beach access path and follow the beach front around to the Eastern tip of the island towards the marsh. There you should see a flock of Skimmers to your east on the beach or on a sandbar nearest to Ocean Isle Beach. A spotting scope is almost mandatory.

Main Street forms a "U" with Canal Drive. Drive **#2** Canal for ½ mile, turn right onto Cobia Street and right again in 2/3 of a mile onto North Shore Drive East. Listen and watch for Painted Buntings in trees and on wires.

Between 17th and 18th streets you will see a pullover on the left. Be careful of too soft sand — in which case, park along the road.

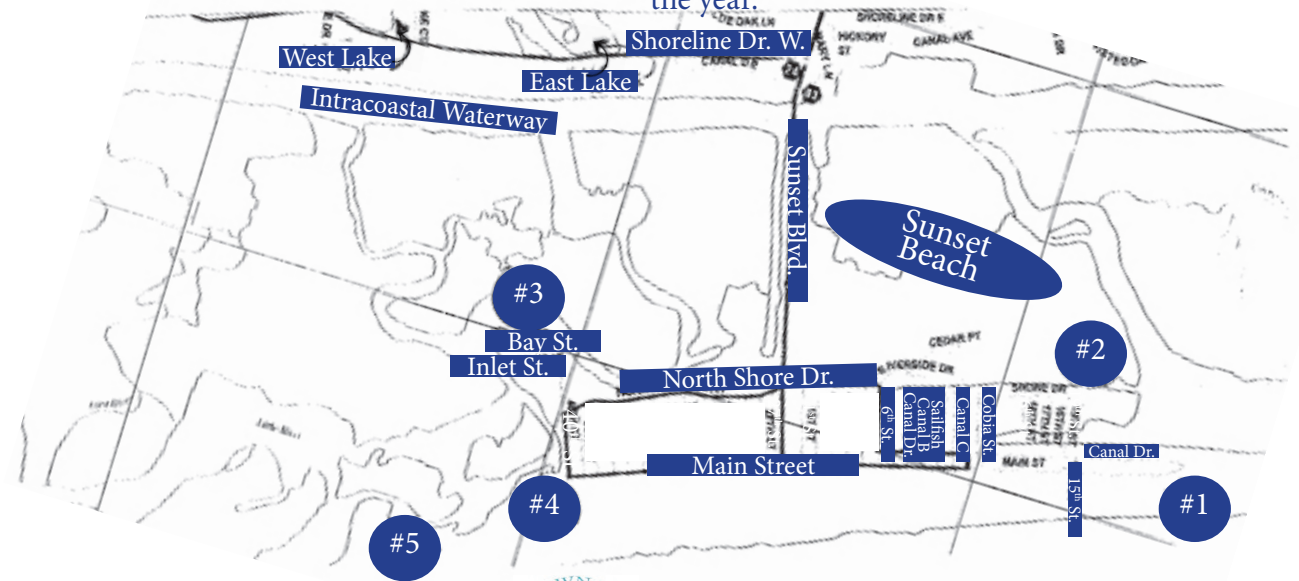
Walk to the end of North Shore in the spring and you will find a Least Tern Colony with a few Oystercatchers nesting. DO NOT walk into the colony during breeding season.

At the end of 19th Street is a beach access (on your left) which will take you partway around on the beach to get a closer look at the birds you saw from the end of Main Street.

To explore the West end of the Island and Bird **#3** Island, backtrack on Cobia turn right onto Canal, proceed to 6th Street and turn right, proceed to North Shore and turn left, cross over

Sunset Boulevard and drive to 40th Street. Turn right and immediately on your right is a marshy tidal area where you can sometimes call up Clapper Rails. From here proceed to Bay Street where you can park and check out the flats for wading and shore birds at low tide. The marsh grasses are full of Sharp-tailed Sparrows in the fall.

Return to 40th Street and drive to Main Street **#4** where there are some public parking spaces on the right. Check the marsh directly in front of you. Follow the beach access boardwalk to the beach. Go right about ½ mile to an area where the dunes are smaller and roped off. A few Wilson Plovers and possibly some Least Terns nest among the grasses. This area is a good place to study Sandwich, Royal, Common, Forster, Least (spring & summer), Black (late summer to fall), Caspian (fall & winter) Forsters, and Royal Terns throughout the year.



The Town of Sunset Beach

Continue walking west to Bird Island, which is #5 no longer an island thanks to Hurricane Hugo in 1989.

Be sure to stop at the Kindred Spirit Mailbox, where you can jot down your thoughts about this special place and read what others have written in the journals.



There is a marker indicating the North Carolina/South Carolina border so you may keep track of your state bird lists.

Return to the mainland to explore nearby lakes. Go left onto Shoreline Drive, travel ½ mile to the East Lake of the Twin Lakes on your right. While there are no designated parking spaces, you may pull off the road. Check the trees for a daytime roost of Wood Storks in the summer. Black-crowned Night Herons, White Ibis, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Green Herons all roost on the lake during their respective seasons.

Check the bushes for migrants, especially in the spring and fall. In the winter and fall there is a good assortment of waterfowl in this lake. Some winters a family of Tundra Swans will stop for a few days. Bald Eagles also turn up periodically.

On the left side of the road is an extensive marsh along the waterway - look for wading birds and shorebirds.

Continue west to West Lake and you'll see a big daytime roost of wading birds, including Wood Storks. Keep an eye out for American Alligators sunning on the banks.

Guidelines

- ◆ Park motorized vehicles in designated areas or along the streets where permitted.
- ◆ Respect the plants and animals. Use the access ways to and from the beach, marshes, and other viewing areas. **DO NOT** walk on the dunes or enter identified nesting areas.
- ◆ **DO NOT** litter. Please dispose of trash in appropriate receptacles or carry it with you until a receptacle is available.
- ◆ Be considerate of others. Please respect private areas and avoid loud noises and horseplay.
- ◆ Observe your pathway carefully. **NO** management of dangerous animals or poisonous plants has been undertaken.



Welcome to Sunset Beach

Official Stop on the North Carolina Birding Trail

www.sunsetbeachnc.gov
www.ncbirdingtrail.org