



N.C. Aquarium at Fort Fisher

In 1976 three state facilities known as Marine Resources Centers were built on Roanoke Island, at Pine Knoll Shores and at Fort Fisher. Free to the public, these 30,000-sq.-ft. facilities operated with minimal staffs and budgets. Each one provided equipment and space for teachers and researchers along with small aquarium exhibits and touch tanks. In 1986 the Centers

were renamed the North Carolina Aquariums and a non-profit support organization, the Aquarium Society, was created. Ten years later an ambitious renovation and expansion program was launched resulting in doubling the size of the facility on Roanoke Island in 1999, tripling the size of the facility at Fort Fisher in 2002 and tripling the size of the facility at Pine Knoll Shores in 2006.

2005-06 in Numbers

- **Total attendance** 410,881
- **Animal species in collection** 286
- **Total specimens** 4,524
- **Complimentary admission to children under 6 and disabled** 45,609
- **NC school children admitted free** 31,969
- **Fees** Adults \$8, Seniors >61 \$7, Youth \$6
- **Permanent staff** 38
- **Temporary staff** 40
- **Volunteers** 200-300 annually
- **Volunteer hours** 25,634
- **Participants in public programs and classes** 177,185
- **Appropriated budget** \$1,985,264
- **Admission fund budget** \$928,403
- **Admission revenues** \$1,945,907
- **Operating expenses** \$2,801,007
- **Free Days** 3 (MLK Day/January, Residents' Appreciation Day/March, Veterans Day/ November)
- **Hours of operation** 9:00 am-5:00 pm everyday except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Days
- **Aquarium Society members** 56,000

Current Features

- **Location** 15 miles south of Wilmington off U.S. 421
- **Size** 93,000-sq.-ft. bldg. on 23-acre site
- **Combined tanks' water volume** 455,000 gallons
- **Water volume of largest tank** 235,000 gals.
- **Theme** Marine life and habitats primarily from Cape Fear River basin and Atlantic Ocean
- **Signature animals** Loggerhead sea turtle, green moray eels, alligators, seahorses, sharks, stingrays
- **Popular programs** Trick-or-Treat Under the Sea; Salt Marsh & Crabbing, Canoeing, Surf Fishing programs; interactive SCUBA shows; animal feedings; Sleeping with the Fishes
- **Signature exhibits** Two-story Cape Fear Shoals tank and 20,000-sq.-ft. conservatory
- **On-site vendors** Gift Shop, TCBY Snack Bar, Showtime Souvenir Pictures
- **Rental features** 125-seat auditorium, classrooms, wedding & reception space, business functions

