Most North Carolina residents are familiar with the North Carolina Zoo and the three North Carolina Aquariums, but it may come as a surprise to learn that trekking with llamas, howling with red wolves, and racing woolly worms are among the animal-related activities that are available in our state. These and other unusual opportunities are described in Jennifer Bean Bower’s Animal Adventures in North Carolina, a guidebook to seventy tourist attractions in North Carolina that feature animals.

The sites described in the book include educational institutions such as museums, zoos, and aquariums; recreational facilities like amusement parks and golf courses that feature llama caddies; commercial facilities such as fish hatcheries and dairy farms; and sanctuaries for injured and endangered animals. Bower describes each in detail, giving a narrative of the experience that a visitor will have at each site, as well as standard guidebook information such as the establishment’s address, contact information, hours, driving directions, and the availability of food, gift shops, and other facilities. Bower puts special emphasis on ways that visitors can get the most out of each site and gives specific recommendations to make a visit more enjoyable, such as arranging for a guided tour of a facility, visiting at a certain time of the day or year, or taking advantage of other nearby opportunities. The geographical organization of the book (with sections for the mountains, Piedmont, and coast, each with a map showing the location of each facility) makes it easy for readers to find sites near where they live or where they will be visiting. The excellent index has entries for each species described in the book, allowing readers who are interested in particular animals to locate the sites where they can be found.

Bower is the author of two previous books, Moravians in North Carolina (2006) and Winston & Salem: Tales of Murder, Mystery, and Mayhem (2007). In the preface to Animal Adventures, Bower describes her reasons for writing the book. In addition to her personal interest in animals, she hopes that visitors to these sites, especially children, will become more connected to the natural world and aware of their own responsibility for conserving animals and their habitats. Her obvious enthusiasm for her subject matter, as well as the tremendous amount of research she has put into this book, make this an excellent guidebook that will inform readers about many opportunities that they would otherwise have overlooked. The book is recommended for public libraries, as well as libraries that collect guidebooks about the state.

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