North Carolina's varied coast provides an endless supply of fascinating plants, animals, and ecosystems sure to captivate both casual beachcombers and research scientists. These two audiences come together in this brief, family-friendly guide to some of the more interesting features of coastal North Carolina. Based on an earlier work that Bryant and Davidson compiled for Georgia, this book has been adapted and added to by Hathaway and Angione who are associated with the North Carolina Sea Grant, a program that seeks to educate the public about the state's coastal region. Hathaway's role as Marine Education Specialist and Angione's former position as part of North Carolina Sea Grant's communications team gives them an excellent perspective on this goal. This book is particularly suited to educational objectives because it provides scientific facts in a fun and concise manner that not only informs but invites the reader to learn more.

As the title implies, the book is an alphabetical collection of short essays about different aspects of North Carolina's coastal ecosystems. Each entry is one page in length and includes a color illustration. The text is brief but also engaging, accessible, and often humorous. Plants and animals dominate the subject matter, but entries on other topics such as tides and shrimp life cycles provide a comprehensive view of the coastal biome. The essays generally provide a description of the subject and then follow with facts that are particularly unusual or interesting. For example, the book notes that the tail of the horseshoe crab was used by Native Americans as a spear tip, and that it is the male pipefish of North Carolina's marshes that gets pregnant instead of the female. Such information evokes the "oh wow" or "I never knew that" reaction that can inspire further learning. While the book's entries are too brief to allow them to be used as source material for school projects, the book is an excellent starting point for both classroom work and informal or even on-site exploration. The book also includes an extensive list of suggestions for further reading that may help direct further study on any of the book's topics.

This attractive book is enticing in its brevity, and it has the ability to lure both reluctant learners and dedicated coastal enthusiasts. Designed to be enjoyed by both adults and children, it is perhaps at its best when shared between the two groups in order to open the avenues for discussion, questions, and further learning. This book is recommended as an extra purchase for elementary school libraries where it may help introduce coastal topics. It is also recommended for public libraries, perhaps with one copy each for adult and children's nonfiction.

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