
The greatest challenge in reading this book is to resist the temptation to jump in the car and head east as quickly as possible. *The Coasts of Carolina* is a beautiful, evocative tribute to one of our state’s most treasured regions.

The book combines text by Bland Simpson with photographs by Scott Taylor. The essays are arranged chronologically and describe Simpson’s experiences in different areas of the coast. However, they do not read like trip logs. Simpson’s beautiful prose flows through the history and geography of the coast like some of the slow, deep coastal rivers it describes. Simpson touches on many aspects of coastal life: nature, fishing (commercial and recreational), small towns, and seasonal changes. The stories from Simpson’s family history are particularly fascinating. Taylor’s photographs echo the scope of the writing. The grand and famous are juxtaposed with the humble. Images of Cape Lookout lighthouse and Tryon Palace are set alongside those of fishing cabins and boat-building. One of the strengths of the book is the attention paid to the quiet waters off tourists’ radar and to ordinary people going about their daily business of making a living from the sea. The authors’ love for the coastal environment is evident on every page.

There could be no better guides for the reader’s journey. The authors have spent many decades exploring the Carolina coast. Bland Simpson is well-known as an English professor, musician, and writer. He grew up in Elizabeth City, and his family has deep ties to many places in eastern North Carolina, some of which are explored in the book. Scott Taylor is a successful photographer based in Beaufort, North Carolina.

Any criticisms are minor and do not detract from the enjoyment of the work. Although Simpson’s essays are interspersed with a few pictures and some of Taylor’s images have descriptive captions, the book feels somewhat too bisected into a text half and a photography half. More integration would have strengthened the whole. Some of the text has been previously published in magazines. A map of eastern North Carolina would have been a useful reference for those readers less familiar with the geography of the region.

This book would make a wonderful gift for any fan of the beaches, swamps, or towns of the North Carolina coast. *The Coasts of Carolina* is recommended for all types of libraries.

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