

*Fall 2025*  
NEWSLETTER

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Louise Meekins: First Female Interpretive Park Ranger in the Outer Banks



**FUN FACT:**

There are five species of sea turtles that lay their eggs on Cape Hatteras National Seashore: the Leatherback, Hawksbill (rarely seen), Kemp's ridley (also rare), Loggerhead, and Green. The smallest species, Kemp's ridley, can weigh between 75 and 100 pounds, whereas the Leatherback, the largest of the species, can weigh almost 2,000 pounds! Did you know that it's the temperature of the sand that determines whether a baby sea turtle will be male or female? Warmer sand will develop mostly females, and cooler sand produces mostly males.

*Adopt A Sea Turtle Nest 2025*

**DID YOU KNOW** that biologists at Cape Hatteras National Seashore carefully track, learn from, and protect hundreds of sea turtle nests each summer?

Check out our sea turtle stats (as of Sept. 27, 2025) to learn more about the 2025 nesting season.

**NUMBER OF NESTS:**

**210**

**2025 NEST SPECIES:**

Loggerhead, Green, and Kemp's Ridley (rare)

**NESTS ADOPTED**

**210**

**FUNDS RAISED \$27,037**



Outer Banks Forever is the official nonprofit partner of our Outer Banks national parks, helping you protect and enhance these special places. Established in 2019, Outer Banks Forever has helped support projects like the mobility-friendly Oregon Inlet Kayak Launch, programs like Adopt a Pony and Adopt a Sea Turtle Nest, virtual experiences that help keep visitors connected to our parks year-round, and many more. To learn more please visit [www.OBXForever.org](http://www.OBXForever.org)

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## Director's Letter



### THANKFUL FOR OUR PUBLIC LANDS

I have had the opportunity to explore the East Coast from Florida to Maine. The Outer Banks, in my opinion, is the most beautiful place on Earth.

If you live on the Outer Banks, you by default live by the ocean. Getting fresh, locally caught seafood is just a short drive to the local fish market. You learn that constantly washing your vehicle is very important, unless you want to watch it rust away. Houses quickly take on a weathered look, as paint fades quickly from the intense North Carolina sun and never-ending winds carrying sand which creates a sand-blasted effect.

The Croatan Highway and Highway 12 are packed during the summer months, bringing in friends and families making new memories. The visitors' first stop, after unloading their gear, is usually the procurement of supplies. As families push their shopping carts through area stores, the excitement in their voices is undeniable. The families saved all year for this week in paradise. And although the drive may have strained their nerves, as soon as they crossed the Wright Memorial Bridge to our chain of barrier islands, all those aggravations disappeared.

The Outer Banks are not unique in their architecture, the smell of the ocean, or the challenging beach traffic. What sets the Outer Banks apart are the vast areas where there are no buildings — open, publicly-owned wild lands that provide the opportunity to experience these islands today as they may have looked thousands of years ago.

Here, our economy is fueled by our public lands. In fact, nearly 3.5 million people visited our three national parks last year and spent close to \$698 million in the communities surrounding our parks, supporting more than 7,500 jobs, generating approximately \$296 million in labor income and \$913 million in economic output, and adding almost \$528 million in value.

These public lands not only create a unique experience for anyone visiting the Outer Banks, as they are beautiful and ecologically rich, but they are also critical storm buffers and natural defense systems. They allow the islands to function as nature intended, absorbing the impacts of hurricanes, protecting inland communities, and ensuring the barrier island chain continues to evolve rather than disappear.

The news of several houses in Rodanthe and Buxton succumbing to the ocean's power illustrates the constantly changing environment of a barrier island. Mother Nature can't be stopped. She has shaped these islands and always will.

Our public lands, especially our three national parks, are an integral part of the fabric that makes up the Outer Banks: a place of beauty, constant change, and memories for millions of people.

Let's continue to support and celebrate our public lands, now and forever!

Bryan Burhans  
DIRECTOR, OUTER BANKS FOREVER



# Scott Babinowich, Chief of Interpretation

## *Please tell us a little bit about yourself.*

My hometown is Pennington, New Jersey. I hold an undergraduate degree in History and Anthropology and a certificate in Museum Studies from The College of William & Mary, and a Master's of Science Education from Oregon State University. I'm the Chief of Interpretation, Education, and Visitor Services for our three Outer Banks national parks, and I work mostly at headquarters in Manteo. Prior to working with the Outer Banks Group, I worked at national park sites in Mississippi, Arizona, Nevada, South Dakota, New Mexico, West Virginia, and Virginia. In my free time, I enjoy exploring the outdoors with my three kids and dabbling in amateur woodworking. My favorite part of living in the Outer Banks is the fun, welcoming community, and the passion our locals and visitors have for our national parks. (And the seafood!)

## *What inspired you to follow this career path?*

As a child, my parents took me and my siblings to many national parks, and I always enjoyed meeting and talking with park rangers. It amazed me that these individuals knew so much about these special places and would spend the time with me and my brothers to help us understand the importance of our parks (and help us have fun!). In college, I dreamed of becoming an archaeologist and had the opportunity to complete internships at Harpers Ferry National

Historical Park and Colonial National Historical Park, which helped me realize I wanted to be a park ranger.

## *What does a typical workday or work week look like for you?*

My main focus is to make sure that the visitor side of our national parks is operating smoothly. This includes everything from our visitor centers to our lighthouses, ranger-led programs, educational programming, distance-learning, social media, websites, exhibits, and volunteer programs. I make sure they are working efficiently so that our visitors have the information they need to have a safe and fun visit, while also helping visitors understand why these parks are significant and worth protecting.

## *What do you enjoy most about working in our Outer Banks national parks?*

I love seeing the deep connections people have with our parks and community. It's exciting to see people awed by their first visit to our parks but equally humbling to see families returning year after year and sharing their childhood memories with their children and grandchildren.

## *Why are our Outer Banks national parks important?*

There are so many important stories that our national parks can help us explore. Every important era in our nation's history can be measurably seen and experienced in our three parks. From Indigenous culture to the colonial-contact era, early exploration



and settlement, the Civil War, the World Wars, conquering powered flight, the Civil Rights Movement, the Cold War, it all happened here on the Outer Banks. That, paired with the amazing fact that these parks serve as living scientific laboratories where we can experience science in action and continue to learn more from our natural world. From the ongoing archaeologist excavations and historical investigations at Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, to the incredible work on recording sea turtle data at Cape Hatteras National Seashore, these parks help us explore our complex national narrative while offering locals and visitors beautiful places to experience nature in its truest form.

## *Is there anything else you would like people to know about you or our Outer Banks national parks?*

Make sure you follow us on social media to hear about all the neat ways to engage with our national parks. We are always looking for individuals to volunteer at our parks. Check out [www.volunteer.gov](http://www.volunteer.gov) to search for opportunities in the Outer Banks parks and in parks around the nation!





# Louise Meekins: First Female Interpretive Park Ranger in the Outer Banks

Though her name may be unfamiliar to many, Louise Meekins helped shape our Outer Banks national parks into the special places they are today.

In fact, Meekins made history of her own: she was the first female Historical Aide to work at Fort Raleigh National Historic Site and was the first Park Historian at Cape Hatteras National Seashore! She was also one of the first women to enlist in the Navy in World War I.

Meekins was a Manteo, North Carolina, native and a member of Manteo High School's first graduating class of 1916 (which was the same year the National Park Service was established). She worked as a teacher in the Dare County School System before joining the National Park Service around 1950 (although there is some discrepancy in historical records as to her start date), when she took the position of Historical Aide at Fort Raleigh National Historic Site.

As a history buff, Meekins proved invaluable to the Outer Banks national parks. She spoke to locals and visitors about the significance of each park, fulfilling the role of what today would be known as an "interpretive ranger."

By 1951, Meekins had extended Fort Raleigh National Historic Site's educational programs into the local community and schools by creating a special slideshow that she presented. Seven years later, Meekins became the head of the Museum Records Project at Fort Raleigh National Historic Site.

Meekins was awarded the Department of Interior pin for her 20 years of government service (which included her time in the Navy and her role as a member of the selective service) in 1962. She earned high praise from a reporter for The

Coastland Times, who wrote: "At Fort Raleigh, Mrs. Meekins has been especially noted for her courtesy and unfailing enthusiasm in meeting the public and interpreting the events connected to the national historical site. Her knowledge of history and of local conditions is unsurpassed. ...Her competence and versatility merit the recognition she receives."

In 1966, Meekins received an Outstanding Service Award (and \$100) from the Eastern National Park and Monument Association (now called Eastern National) for her hard work and dedication to the National Park Service. Shortly after

receiving her award, Meekins retired from the National Park Service, concluding a 16-years-long career.

Meekins remained an active Outer Banks resident for the rest of her life and was given the Dare County Outstanding Senior Citizen Award by the Outer Banks Woman's Club in 1975. In a Coastland Times article that was written about her winning the award, Meekins is quoted as saying,

"Everything I've done was out of love for my country. There were things that needed to be done. Dare is just what I'm interested in. I was born and reared here, and I've spent the last 53 years here. ...I've got lots of things I want to do, you see. I'm interested in the betterment of Dare."

Meekins passed away on June 15, 1986, at the age of 89. Her commitment to excellence and her passion for the parks paved the way for other female interpretive rangers to join the Outer Banks Group and ensured that our Outer Banks national parks would continue to delight visitors and locals for years to come.

*By Rachael Graf, Community Engagement Coordinator*

*Special thanks to Jami Lanier, Deputy Chief of Cultural Resources and Historian for our Outer Banks national parks, for contributing to this article.*





**OUTER BANKS**

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NEWSLETTER



*Save the Date:*

**GIVING  
TUESDAY**

**GIVING TUESDAY IS  
DECEMBER 2!**

Giving Tuesday is a global day of giving celebrated each year following Black Friday and Cyber Monday. We're inviting you to join the global movement and give back to our Outer Banks national parks! If you would like to make your gift early, scan the QR code to get started!



SCAN ME

*Here's what's inside:*

**Adopt A Sea  
Turtle Nest 2025**



**Meet Your Ranger  
Scott Babinowich**

**Louise Meekins: First  
Female Interpretive  
Park Ranger in the  
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*Plus:* NPS 2024 ECONOMIC IMPACT DATA