

Wild horse found dead on the Outer Banks—but cause is a mystery, officials say

October 29 2020, by Mark Price, The Charlotte Observer

One of the wild horses that roam the Outer Banks was found dead on a beach at Cape Lookout National Seashore, and the cause remains a mystery, the National Park Service said Wednesday.

The animal was identified only as "a younger horse" living on the Shackleford Banks, an island at the southern end of the Outer Banks.

"Unfortunately, it wasn't discovered soon enough for our staff to determine what exactly caused the death at this time," the [park](#) said in a Facebook post. "The natural mortality rate for the horses on Shackleford Banks is about 6%."

The gender and age of the horse will be released after a biologist has had a chance to examine the animal, park officials said. It was not one of the 12 foals born this year, officials said on Facebook.

This marks at least the second case of a young horse dying on the Outer Banks this year, with the other in July on Corolla. In that case, a colt named Danny choked to [death](#) when someone gave it an apple, according to the Corolla Wild Horse Fund.

The [wild horses](#) are unaccustomed to eating apples, which aren't native to the Outer Banks, and the fruit can get stuck in their throat, McClatchy News reported.

Disease, venomous snake bites and [traffic accidents](#) have also led to

deaths in Outer Banks herds in recent years.

The Shackleford Banks, accessible only by ferry or private boat, has a herd of about 118 horses. Around 100 live in the Corolla area, outside the protection of the national park system.

The wild horses are believed to be descended from mustangs abandoned on the islands 500 years ago by Spanish explorers, according to Outerbanks.com.

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Citation: Wild horse found dead on the Outer Banks—but cause is a mystery, officials say (2020, October 29) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-10-wild-horse-dead-outer-banksbut.html>

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