

The Best Fly Fishing on North Carolina's Crystal Coast

Fly fishing for redfish, sea trout, bluefish, cobia, false albacore and more on the North Carolina coast.



Fighting a bluefish off of North Carolina's Crystal Coast | photo by Sage Marshall

When I was invited on a fly fishing trip based out of Morehead City, I was surprised. I knew the area as the home of the [Big Rock Blue Marlin Tournament](#), so I assumed the fishing scene was all big boats and offshore fishing with conventional tackle.

I was wrong – it turns out there's plenty of fly fishing to be done.

Fly Fishing Around Morehead City

Morehead City is one of several waterfront towns that make up [North Carolina's Crystal Coast](#) — an 85-mile stretch of south-facing beaches running from Emerald Isle to Cape Lookout.

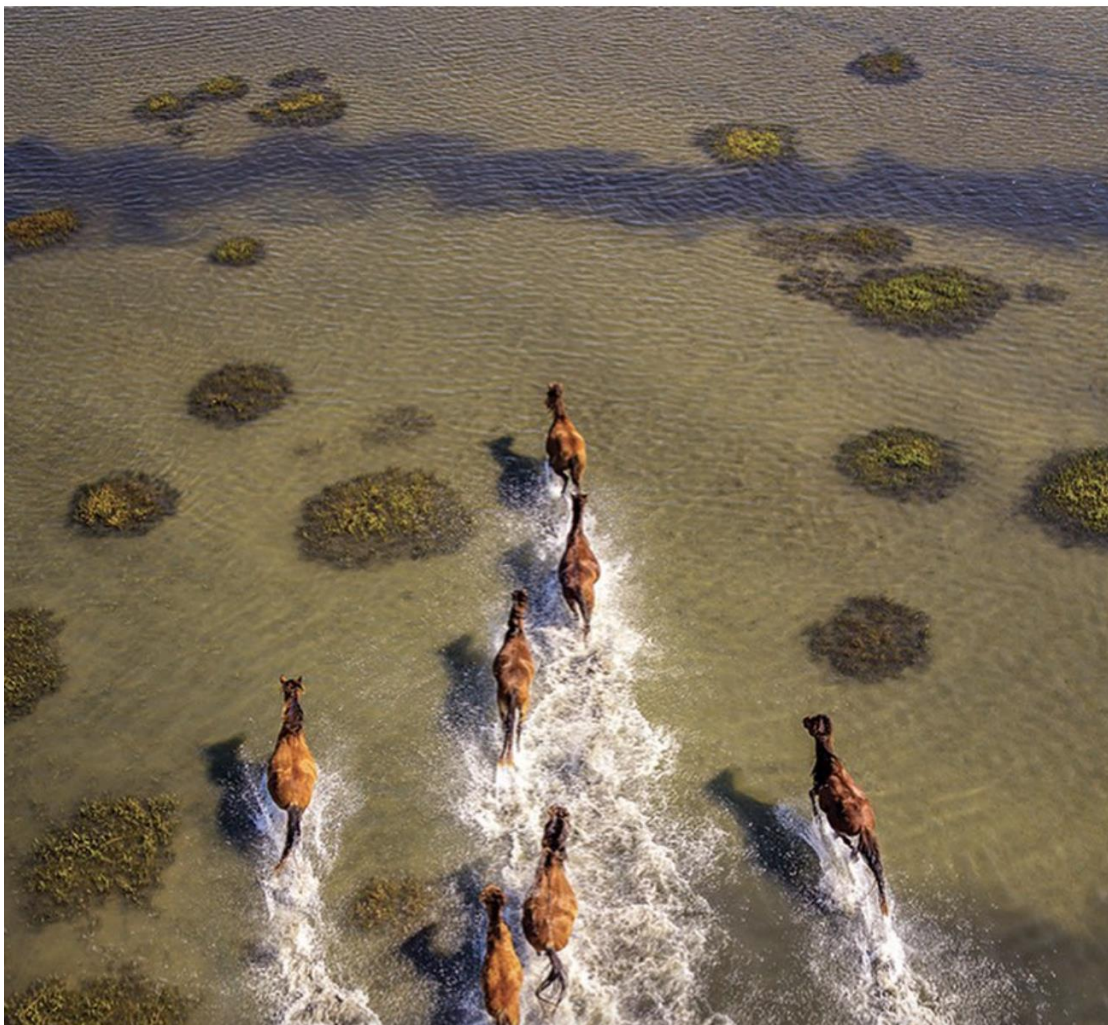
The offshore fishing is a major draw, but the inshore and nearshore opportunities are real too. There are redfish and sea trout around year-round – plus seasonal runs of migratory species like bluefish, Spanish mackerel, bonito, cobia, and false albacore.

Cape Lookout Fly Fishing

The bluefish bite has been hot recently, so that's what we were after. We launched a 22-foot bay boat out of Morehead City and ran east toward Cape Lookout – passing [Shackleford Banks](#) and the [wild horses](#) that have roamed the barrier island for centuries.

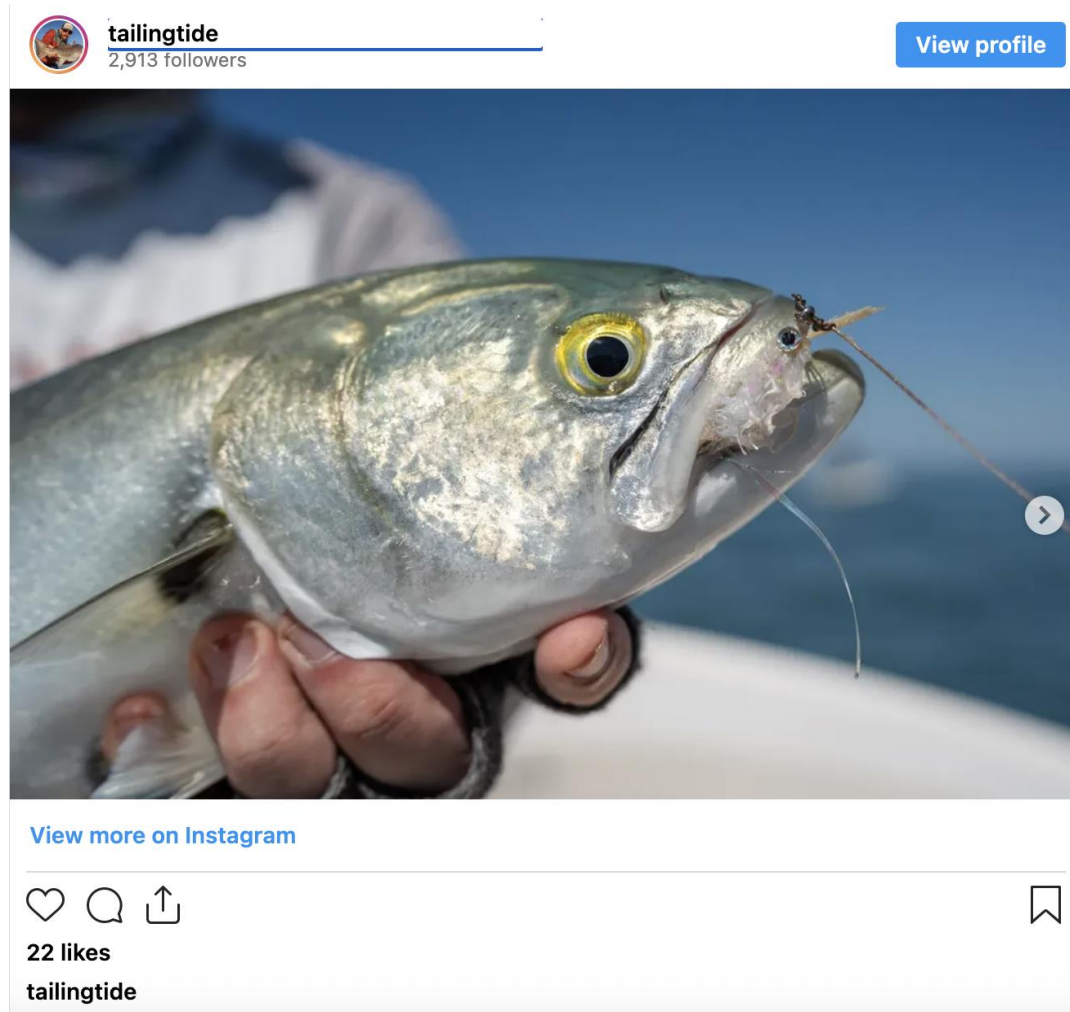


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It took a while to find fish, but it was well worth the wait. Birds were diving across the Cape Lookout shoals, eating baitfish that were pushed up to the surface. The water was a clear shade of green, and it was easy to see the dozens of torpedo-shaped fish darting through it.

I had never fished for bluefish, but I can now say I'm a fan. A Clouser Minnow dropped anywhere in the vicinity of the school was immediately eaten, and – though they're not huge fish – each one took me to the reel.



Best Time of Year to Fish North Carolina's Crystal Coast

It's bluefish now, but the Crystal Coast fishery changes throughout the year. Winter brings reliable redfish and sea trout fishing in the marshes and creeks, while spring and summer see the arrival of migratory species.

Fall might be what the area is best known for in fly fishing circles, when false albacore move up along the beaches and shoals in huge numbers.

Naturally, I'll be planning a trip back up in a couple of months.

Why Fly Anglers Visit the Crystal Coast

It was my first time visiting the Crystal Coast, and I only experienced a small part of it. There's a whole lot more water to explore, plus the many beaches, laid-back restaurants, and unique towns up and down the coast.

Even if fishing isn't your thing, it's worth a trip.