

# Sea Islands Face Stern Test

By Mike Frome, reprinted from American Forests magazine

Off the coast of the two Carolinas and Georgia a string of barrier islands has struggled through the centuries, somehow surviving the force of wind, storm and tide and of modest human use and abuse.

Within the past fifty years these places were remote, as though they were across the world, and virtually worthless. Lately they have become prime property, sought from one direction as rare undeveloped coastal real estate and recognized from another direction as potential public preserves.

Perhaps there should be another factor involved, based on thoughtful evaluation of their highest value to the region and the whole country — that is, if serious thought may intrude into the earthy arena of hard cash and col-

outstanding form of recreation, along with sport fishing, hunting, photography and folklore.

Likewise, the gateway community of Beaufort has the chance to benefit from the grim, overcommercialized history of other North Carolina towns at the border of national parks and to safeguard its pleasant environment before the damage is done.

In the case of Smith Island, farther south at the mouth of the Cape Fear River, we face an area of enormous conservation importance, a remnant of wilderness down to the ocean's edge, covering almost 12,000 acres.

It was considered by the Park Service among the five most outstanding undeveloped locations along the coast, extremely valuable in biological terms, with salt marshes, fresh water lakes and live oak forests providing habitat

Now a prominent year-round resort community, it owes its existence to the genius and courage of young Charles Fraser, whose father was the head of a syndicate that came in 1950 to log all the merchantable timber on the island.

Fraser, however, foresaw something more; he convinced his father to spare the south end, with its ancient live oaks, pines, palmettos, magnolias and laurels for a new resort. Hilton Head may not quite be for poor people, but it has grown free of the archaic bigotry that characterizes Sea Island, Georgia.

Moreover, Fraser has spared 1,600 acres in the heart of his development for a nature conservatory, alive with deer, turkey, squirrel, birds and, as I can attest, jumping chiggers.

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# Mystery Fish Caught

By TOM HIGGINS  
Observer Sports Writer

Charlottean Ham Barber has hooked into something he doesn't quite know how to "handle."

More precisely, he doesn't know what kind of "handle" — or name — to put on it.

What has Barber puzzled is a fish he pulled from the surf while angling at the point of Cape Lookout a few weeks ago.

He's never seen anything like it, and neither has anyone else who has gotten a look at the fish.

"Not even the oldtime fish-

ing boat captains at Morehead City know what this critter is," Barber said Saturday. "And I showed it to some of them who go way, way back."

"I've been through every fish encyclopedia I can lay my hands on and I have yet to see anything that even closely resembles its physical characteristics."

BARBER'S catch measures only 19 inches, but it is thickly built and weighs nine or 10 pounds. Its head features somewhat inset eyes and there's a strange notch between the head and dorsal fin. The notch is covered with scales and there is

no scar, so Barber has ruled out that it was caused by some kind of wound.

Most intriguing of all, however, is the fish's mouth, which contains a set of sharp teeth that jut out at almost a 45 degree angle. "They don't mesh at all . . . they're weird," said Barber, who revealed the fish struck fresh shrimp while he was angling for black drum.

Anyone who has an idea what the strange creature might be can contact Barber at Carolina Jeep, which he operates in Charlotte.

He'd like to get some idea, too.



Mouthful Of Unusual Teeth