

The Myth of Wild Horses

Written by Mark Shaffer
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The Backyard Tourist explores St. Mary's and Cumberland Island National Seashore

The young bay mare breaks through the dunes and out onto the



vast sugary beach at a canter, tossing her head and flaring her nostrils as she spots us. Someone's built a pretty impressive sandcastle near the tide line. She slows to a leisurely walk, examining this curiosity before stopping to stare at us. Her dappled grey companion ignores us completely and continues to graze off into the fore dunes, munching on the sparse vegetation that literally holds the beach together. She is an equine conundrum and the center of fierce debate and a decades long controversy.

Her hooves carve deep scars through the fragile sands. Game trails and hoof prints run through, over and around the huge dunes – Cumberland Island's first and only defense against the fickle whims of the Atlantic Ocean only a few hundred yards away.

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