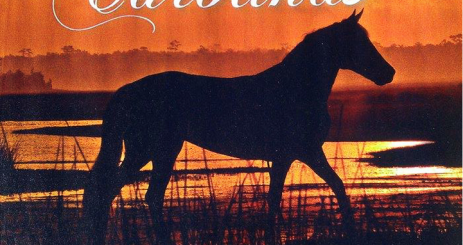


Jewels of the Carolinas



The Banker and Marsh Tacky carry on their Spanish lineage on the rugged coasts of the Carolinas.

By Audrey Pavia

On the outer banks of North Carolina, amid the soft sand and rolling surf, wild horses graze among the marsh grass. Their ancestors arrived on this windswept shoreline 500 years ago.

To the south, another group of wild horses dwells within the coastal swampland, living out its existence among the saltwater marshes. They also came to the Carolinas in the 16th century.

These horses, the North Carolina Banker and the South Carolina Marsh Tacky, are descendants of the Spanish horses that landed on the Atlantic coast with early European explorers centuries ago. Today, they are considered not only rare but truly unique.



The Marsh Tacky originated in South Carolina, descended from stock that arrived with Spanish explorers.



Marsh Tackies excel in a variety of pursuits, including trail riding.

The Marsh Tacky

The Marsh Tacky developed south of where its Banker relatives live. The Marsh Tacky shares the same history as the Banker horse, and carries the same Spanish DNA. But the Marsh Tacky originated in an isolated area of South Carolina, living along the lowland saltwater marshes of the area. And unlike the Banker horse, the Marsh Tacky is domesticated and no longer lives in the wild.

Throughout its history, the Marsh Tacky has served as a riding and work horse for residents in the area where it developed. During the Revolutionary War, Marsh Tackies were used by troops of the famous "Swamp Fox," military leader Frances Marion, who fought against the British occupation of South Carolina. Through the years, local families kept Marsh Tackies, and breeders of these horses are currently active trying to preserve and promote the breed. Unlike the

Banker horses, it's common to see the Marsh Tacky used in a number of different disciplines.

"Marsh Tackies are great riding horses because they are easygoing, confident horses," says Wylie Bell of the Carolina Marsh Tacky Outdoors group in South Carolina. "They are curious by nature, so they handle new things and new environments very well and with a cool head."

Bell describes them as quick to learn and people-oriented, so a trusting relationship forms naturally between horse and human.

"They are very surefooted and nimble, and with good conditioning, they can ride all day," she adds. That said, Marsh Tackies are finely suited to the climate of the Southeast and do best when they remain in their native area.

Many longtime breeders of the Marsh Tacky use these horses for hunting and trail riding, especially where they excel: in

the woods and swamps where they developed.

Some owners of Marsh Tackies have competed in trail challenges and done well. Bell describes one owner who has shown her Tackies in halter and western pleasure classes, while another has started her Tacky in dressage. "These horses are very versatile, and could excel in any discipline with proper training," she says.

A tradition among Marsh Tacky owners is the spring Beach Race, which takes place in March. First run in the 1960s, it was resumed again in 2009. Tackies are raced through the sand for about 300 yards with thousands of spectators cheering them on.

Only about 300 Marsh Tackies exist today. The Carolina Marsh Tacky Association hopes to increase the number of horses to help ensure the future of the breed. ■

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