



**THE WATCH HILL CONSERVATOR**  
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Watch Hill, Rhode Island 02891

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THE WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2012 VOL. 5 No. 2 WATCH HILL, R.I.

## Planning for protection of coastal resources: It's complicated

Recent events in Rhode Island's coastal communities illuminate the complexity of issues surrounding the protection of fragile environments and valuable properties in the face of climate change and sea level rise. If the issues themselves aren't complex enough, consider the mental, political, and economic gymnastics required to find solutions. With a seemingly endless list of stakeholders and bureaucratic entities involved, how does one make sense of it all and move forward with confidence?

While many of us discuss these matters casually with friends and colleagues, a number of key players are working to find real answers. But can their planning efforts keep pace with the flow of new projections, the very measurable change in shorelines, and the demand for answers "now, please!"?

In both the Matunuck neighborhood of South Kingstown and the Misquamicut area of Westerly, town officials and residents, working with state agencies, are faced with the impact of change on both natural areas and essential infrastructure.

In Matunuck, erosion has been so severe in the past decade that structures that once sat a hundred feet from the water are now at risk of being swept into the sea in the near future. The only road access to much of the community (which carries water and power lines) is at risk of being inundated or breached, leaving over 1,600 people stranded without access to about 240 properties. In a controversy which has attracted national press attention, the Town has struggled over recent months with both the Coastal Resources Management Council and the Department of Environmental Management to find a short-term solution – quickly. First, the Town sought approval for a seawall; that was denied. Next the Town proposed that the CRMC category for the shoreline be changed to "manmade"; that

was denied. Finally, after months of applications, hearings, debate, appeals, and, finally, concession, permission has been granted to allow for the construction of a wall that all acknowledge is not the ideal solution, but the best that can be achieved for the moment.

But in such a complex situation, even a solution that most can agree on presents new problems or unintended consequences. What effect will the wall have on the direction of currents toward the nearby shoreline? Will the backwash from the new hard barrier take significant amounts of sand with it, exacerbating the rate of erosion and disrupting the marine life in the immediate area and along the adjacent shore? The questions fly faster than the best planning efforts can keep up with.

In Misquamicut, the question is not how to protect existing infrastructure, but whether or not to expand sewer lines as a means of protecting fragile salt pond and barrier beach ecosystems from the impact of outdated private cesspools, seeking a balance between doing the right thing ecologically and mitigating the economic impact on taxpayers and the risk of increased population density – which many feel would be unsustainable – and loss of neighborhood character.

*In the late 1990s, this house at Matunuck was moved inland sixty feet to protect it from flooding — or worse — as the beach eroded. Within a few years, the sea crept closer than it had been before the house was moved. Now only huge sand "burritos" prevent it from being swept away. Retreat had appeared to be a reasonable solution, but proved to be only a temporary measure.*

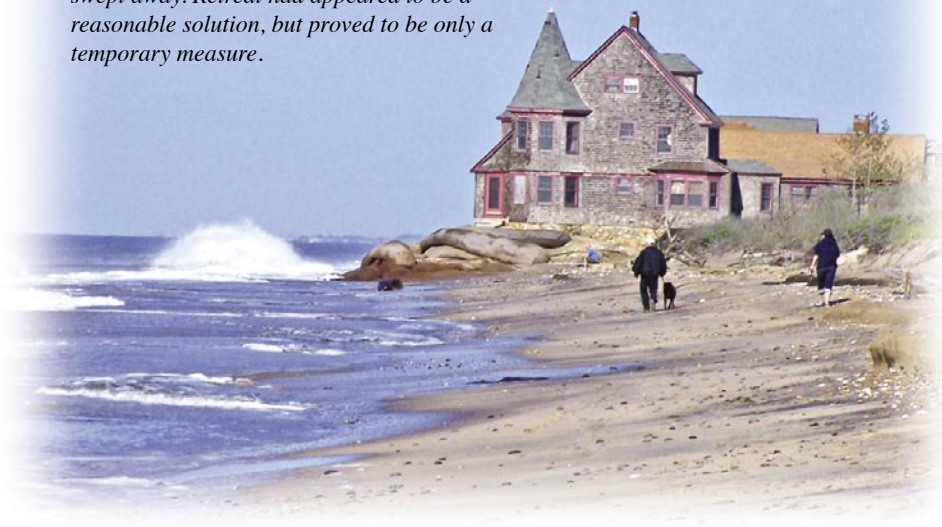


Photo Joan Youngken

### THE WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY

222 Watch Hill Road  
Watch Hill, Rhode Island 02891  
(401) 348-6540

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Joan Youngken, *Contributing Editor*  
Design, Puffin Enterprises

For information about community events, lectures, concerts, nature walks, educational programs for children, and others, see the Conservancy's website below.

[www.thewatchhillconservancy.org](http://www.thewatchhillconservancy.org)

### *Watch Hill Conservancy Annual Meeting*

August 11, 5 p.m. at the Ocean House

"Bay Street as Main Street:  
Preservation and Revitalization"

Guest speaker: Wendy Nicholas



Wendy Nicholas is the former Northeast Regional Director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the leading national advocate for America's historic places, where she led the National Trust's education, advocacy, and grant-making programs for New England, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. She was a leader and spokesperson for historic preservation and guided National Trust policy-making in the 10-state region. From this experience, Wendy has gained a deep knowledge of what's working and what's not in community revitalization and place-based economic development. Greatly respected in Rhode Island and in regional and national historic preservation circles, Wendy was the executive director of the Providence Preservation Society for many years prior to her National Trust post.

The subject of this year's annual meeting program will be our work on Bay Street: how revitalization works and how it can benefit all of Watch Hill. Wendy will bring us examples of successful "Main Street" projects from elsewhere on the east and west coasts as well as her perspective on the future of Bay Street itself and our efforts to date.



DEM regulations require that cesspools on all properties within 200 feet of a coastal shoreline feature be replaced with denitrification septic systems, thus reducing the amount of nitrogen leaching into those features and reducing fish populations, increasing algal bloom, and otherwise impacting the health of the ponds. The proposed septic systems are costly to the property owners who would have to pay for them, and it is agreed that they are not fully effective; officials have determined that extending sewer lines is a better solution.

But not one without consequence. What happens when shoreline communities add to infrastructure or amenities? Unless up-to-date and forward-looking land use regulations are firmly in place, all too often those amenities fuel an even higher rate of growth. Westerly officials point to zoning regulations that should ensure that an increase in infrastructure will not result in unchecked growth, but Westerly residents are understandably wary. They are concerned about the capacity of the Town system to accommodate increased effluent and about potential changes in the low density character of the shoreline community.

Land use planning is the key to protecting both our natural coastal features and public and private property. Who is addressing this in a meaningful way? Casual conversation about these issues is common; concern increases as it becomes clear that coastal communities are indeed changing, that shoreline properties and activities are at risk, if not in the immediate

future, then most assuredly as time goes on. But who is actually doing something about it?

On the local, state, and federal levels, in both the public and private sectors, planning efforts move forward. The challenge is to keep up with the science: plans that were modified only a few years ago to reflect then up-to-date information are already being reviewed with an eye to revision.

CRMC and DEM have revised regulations concerning development and activity in coastal areas to reflect recent findings regarding climate change and sea level rise, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has recently issued new flood insurance rate maps for the state.

CRMC, in collaboration with the University of Rhode Island, has produced a Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) for the waters off the Rhode Island coast. While focusing on the environmental impacts of off-shore wind farms, the placement and support of such facilities will have an impact on nearby coastal communities. (The SAMP is the first of its kind to be approved by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a testament to the state’s commitment to sound planning.) An additional SAMP is proposed for the south coastal shore and coastal waters from Narragansett to Napatree, a plan which will reflect the latest findings regarding sea level rise.

The private sector is both seeking information and supplying it. Climate Central, a not-for-profit organization based in Prince-

ton, New Jersey, conducts research about climate change and sea level rise and serves as a clearing house for studies by other organizations and agencies. Information about risk levels is community-specific: at Climate Control’s website, individuals can enter their zip codes and see detailed maps with up-to-date projections.

The proposed National Endowment for the Oceans, an initiative introduced by U. S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, will, if enacted by the Congress, provide funding for a variety of coastal projects, including expanding aquaculture and developing wind farms. Such projects would rely heavily upon data regarding sea level rise in order to ensure protection of coastal features and property.

Skeptics insist that it’s all for naught, that there’s no point in planning, because our coastal areas are going to be inundated eventually, and even the best of plans won’t change that. Be that as it may, as stewards of the biodiversity of the natural world around us, from the sea to the freshwater ponds and streams in the uplands and every important feature in between, it is our job to protect them, adapt as they evolve, and do nothing to hasten their demise. Nature is more powerful than man, and change and loss are inevitable. To understand the change and to adapt with it is not to squander resources, but to ensure that we’ve done all we can to protect what we need to protect. JY

THREE AREA SITES NAMED “BEST” OF THEIR TYPE

Two national publications, each widely read by the traveling public, have taken note of Watch Hill treasures and shared them with their readers.

The web version of *Yankee Magazine* last summer named Napatree as one of the ten best beaches in New England. The various beaches were elected on the basis of such criteria as the smoothest sand, warmest water, or (gasp!) best honky-tonk entertainment; Watch Hill can take comfort in having been recognized as having the best beach for an unspoiled walk.

The May 2012 issue of *Travel + Leisure* lists our own Flying Horses Merry-Go-Round as one of America’s best carousels, noting that it is one of the country’s oldest still in operation, and that it is unusual in that the horses are suspended rather than fixed to either the floor or ceiling, allowing for “more of a floating feeling.”

In addition, Shelter Harbor Country Club was listed third among New England’s top 25 private golf courses by *New England Golf Monthly* (May 2012).

SPECIAL PLACES

Even Westerly residents, surrounded as they are with beautiful beaches, places to hike, and cultural attractions galore, might want a change of scene occasionally. There are a surprising number of places of interest nearby that might easily be overlooked, but well worth the short drive. With this issue, the *Conservator* offers the first of an occasional series of suggestions.



Photo Joan Youngken

Hale House, Matunuck

This 1873 house at 2625 Commodore Perry Highway (Route 1) was the summer home of American author, orator, and clergyman Edward Everett Hale and his family from 1873 until 1910. The property has recently been restored by the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society, and welcomes visitors on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday afternoons from mid-June until mid-October. More than a house museum, the site is now a place to “unplug” and connect with the beauty of the Matunuck hills and ponds as the Hales and their friends did more than a century ago. Lectures, exhibits of contemporary art, live music, and other programs enhance the experience for all ages. See Pettaquamscutt.org/halehouse for more information.

SUMMER EVENTS 2012

Watch Hill Chapel

Services: Sundays, June 24 – September 9  
Roman Catholic Mass, 8:30 a.m.  
Nondenominational “Union” Service, 10 a.m., Visiting Clergy  
Communion at 10 a.m. services, July 29 and August 26  
Community Hymn Sings, 5 p.m., July 22 and August 26

Watch Hill Business Association Summer Concert Series

Tuesdays, June 26 – August 28, 6 – 8 p.m., Village Park

Watch Hill Memorial Library and Improvement Society

Library Hours, July 2 – August 31, Monday through Friday 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., Story Hour, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10 a.m.  
Road Safety, Amy’s Torch Safety Program, week-long, June 30 – July 4  
Children’s Bicycle Parade, July 4, 4 p.m. (Decoration at 3:30 p.m.)  
Art Show  
Opening reception July 27, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.  
Show, July 28 – August 5, daily, 12 noon to 4 p.m.  
Benefit sale: Singhvi Jewels, August 1, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., Trespasso, 3 Lighthouse Road  
The Boutique Sale August 3 – 4, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (see whmlis.com)

Watch Hill Conservancy

Celebration of Summer 2012 (annual benefit party), July 14, 6 – 9 p.m., Misquamicut Club Beach Club (all welcome)  
Annual Meeting, August 11, 5 p.m., Ocean House (guests welcome; please see back page for details)  
Napatree Naturalists, July 10 – August 23, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.  
Saturday morning Nature Walks, June 9 – September 8, 9 a.m.

Watch Hill Lighthouse Keepers Association Lighthouse Museum Hours

Tuesday and Thursday, 1 – 3 p.m., July 1 to Labor Day

Watch Hill Fire District

Annual Meeting, July 14, 9:30 a.m., at the Firehouse

See oceanhouser.com for a calendar of events to be held at the Ocean House.

Please check the websites of individual organizations for full schedules and times and locations, which may be subject to change.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

The Watch Hill Conservancy is a non-profit organization. Your membership supports the protection of the natural and cultural resources of Watch Hill, a variety of programs, and educational publications, including this newsletter.

Member name: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

INDIVIDUAL: \$25  
No: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

BUSINESS: \$100  
No: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

FAMILY: \$100  
No: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPORTER: \$250 - \$499  
No: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

SPONSOR: \$500 - \$999  
No: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

PATRON: \$1,000 - \$2,499  
No: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

BENEFACTOR: \$2,500 - \$5,000 or more  
No: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER CONTRIBUTION Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to:  
THE WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY  
222 Watch Hill Road  
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Please include names of family members 18 and under. If you are making gifts of memberships, please include the names and addresses of those to receive these gifts.



Photo Joan Youngken



Continued—  
“Our” Ospreys

Napatree Naturalists sometimes refer to these birds as “our” ospreys. Of course, the Conservancy doesn’t own these birds. We call them “ours” because of their habit of returning to the same nest year after year. We don’t know for sure that the ospreys you see on the beach each summer are the same as the ones that were there last year, but the chances are good that they have been watching you Investigators in seasons past!

The nest is built of straw and sticks arranged in a rough circle that is three feet deep and five feet across. Most years, the ospreys raise two chicks. The young can be seen as they begin to “fledge”, or learn to fly, around the beginning of August. By the end of the summer, they’re nearly ready to fly off to warmer climates – as far off as southern South America! – to continue growing and learning, just the way you fly off to school to do the same thing!

Find out more about us by going to [www.thewatchhillconservancy.org](http://www.thewatchhillconservancy.org)

Stephen Brown: *Naturalist and director of our Napatree Investigator program*

Hugh Markey: *Naturalist*

Tom Pappadia: *Greeter*

Grace Lentini: *Beach Patrol*

Donnie Cornell: *Warden*

Kathy Hallal: *URI Coastal Fellows alumna*

Juliana Berry: *Environmental Project Coordinator*

Janice Sassi: *Napatree Point Conservation Area Manager*

Editor—Hugh Markey

The Watch Hill Conservancy and the Watch Hill Fire District operate summer educational programs at the Napatree Point Conservation Area in Watch Hill. The *Napatree Investigator* is a publication of the Watch Hill Conservancy.



## The Lagoon: Soon to Disappear?

One spot where we love to take Investigators is the lagoon at the tip of Napatree Point. The muddy bottom of the lagoon has been a favorite feeding area for shore birds, which use their long bills to dig for shellfish and clamworms. Investigators often have a great time digging for clams in the same area, as well as seeing the many horseshoe crabs that come in to lay eggs at high tide. The fact that sea water (until recently) had been gently flowing from a small inlet kept the lagoon quite calm.

Over the last two years, an interesting thing has happened: the lagoon has changed. The little inlet that fed the lagoon no longer exists. It’s likely that wind carried enough sand to create a blockage to the water. At the same time, at least one part of the Bay side of the lagoon is now open! We’re not sure when this happened, but we suspect that the higher winds and stormy weather in the winter probably carved a path right across the dune. The result is that the water flows in and out at a faster rate, which in turn may change the life that exists there. In fact, it’s just possible that the whole lagoon may disappear in time, as the waves continue to erode the rest of the dune that separates it from the open water. Even the earth is on the move at Napatree Point!

WHAT IS THAT?

One way to have more fun and learn more about the beach is to bring a field guide when you come! What kind of shell is that? How about that bird? I have a crab in my bucket: is it a blue crab or a green one? Taking along a simple field guide can answer many of your questions, and then you can be an amateur naturalist yourself! The guides can be as simple as laminated foldout pages, or more sophisticated books that give more details. Before you return to Napatree, visit your local library, bookseller, or one of the merchants near Napatree and pick up a field guide. Expand your mind!

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Website: [www.thewatchhillconservancy.org](http://www.thewatchhillconservancy.org)

Photo Hugh Markey

Photo below Richard C. Youngken



## THE HORSESHOE CRABS ARE COMING!

You may have already noticed a strange, fossil-like creature swimming around in the shallow waters of Napatree on the Bay side; in fact, if you’re a Watch Hill regular, you probably recall seeing them this time of year every year. They’re Atlantic horseshoe crabs, *Limulus polyphemus*, and despite their name they are more closely related to spiders and scorpions than they are to true crabs. An ancient species, they are much the same as they were 450 million years ago, and are one of the most unique and valuable organisms in our coastal ecosystem.

*L. polyphemus* mate at high tides around the new and full moons during May, June, and July, so the chances of spotting them then are pretty good. Males attach to the females using their first set of legs, which look a lot like little boxing gloves; the other sets of legs have v-shaped pincers (which don’t close very well at all, actually). The female carries the male around (if you see two attached, now you’ll know which is which) until she’s ready to dig down up to nine inches into the sand at the tide line and deposit thousands of eggs the size of pinheads, whereupon the male will immediately fertilize them. Only two or three eggs from each cluster will survive to adulthood. Those are harsh odds!

As juvenile crabs grow after hatching, their outer shells, or carapaces, harden and they regularly molt, shedding the old shells for new ones. A horseshoe crab will molt as many as twenty times before reaching maturity at 9-

12 years, at which point it can live for another ten more years. After the breeding season, adult crabs return to deeper estuary bays and continental shelf waters down to 75 feet for the rest of the year. If you find a lightweight, small horseshoe crab shell on the beach, most likely it is a molt. If you spot *L. polyphemus* swimming around, particularly in late spring and early summer, it’s probably an adult.

Horseshoe crabs not only play an important role in the marine food chain; they contribute to biomedicine as well. Their blood (unusual in that its oxygen is bound by a copper protein instead of iron so that exposure to air turns it a dark blue), is vital due to a clotting agent called *Limulus Amebocyte Lysate*, or LAL. LAL detects microbial pathogens in medical IV fluids and supplies, and is the FDA-required standard test for microbial contamination in injectable drugs. Astronauts in the space station test their own blood for bacterial diseases using LAL, too. Not only that, but horseshoe crabs have been instrumental in eye research, the development of wound dressings and surgical sutures, and are the subject of studies to discover remedies for drug-resistant diseases. They are bled in a controlled, prescribed manner at certified facilities. Although their blood level returns to normal within 1-3 weeks and the FDA mandates that they be returned to the water alive, up to as many as 20-30% still will die.

In addition to being harvested for biomedical purposes, horseshoe crabs are also



Photo Janice Sassi

harvested as bait for eel and conch fisheries with little regulation. Habitat destruction, including beach erosion, has a detrimental impact on these singular creatures’ population. In an effort to monitor those populations and determine *L. polyphemus*’ migration and spawning behaviors, several private, state, and federal agencies, including the Conservancy, keep tabs on them through surveying, recaptures, and sonar and disc tagging. Sacred Heart University and their almost 10-year-old Project *Limulus* study the ecology of horseshoe crabs by way of a network of volunteers in Connecticut, New York, and one site in Rhode Island: Napatree. If you’re interested in learning more about these living fossils and would like to assist in our monitoring endeavors, we will be tagging and counting during specific lunar cycles into July. See the calendar for dates, and contact [Napatreenaturalist@live.com](mailto:Napatreenaturalist@live.com) to register. JB



### Napatree Notes

Our 2012 season began with our annual beach cleanup on April 7. Thanks to all who came out to lend a hand!

**July 10** We resume our children’s Investigator program under the direction of Steve Brown, assisted by Hugh Markey. Children seven to fourteen learn about Napatree’s coastal environment on the beach during weekly sessions devoted to different topics. Due to the popularity of this program, this year it will be offered every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 8:30 until 10:30 a.m. Children may attend one session or all. To register, contact [Napatreenaturalist@live.com](mailto:Napatreenaturalist@live.com).

#### July 14 Piping Plover Walk

Grace Lentini, a former acting Piping Plover coordinator with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, will lead a walk focused on this species, which has been the target of criticism related to beach conservation measures. Hear and see why Napatree is so important to their survival. Hopefully we will even see chicks!

#### August 4 Ever-changing Napatree

Did you know that Sandy Point was once part of Napatree? That Napatree was forested? Or that 39 homes existed on this small peninsula? Chaplin B. Barnes, Executive Director of the Watch Hill Conservancy, will conduct a walk guiding us through the history of Napatree. The author of *Watch Hill Through Time* and collaborator with Richard Youngken on *Watch Hill Style*, Barnes is a life-long summer resident of Watch Hill. This promises to be a wonderful opportunity to learn about the fascinating evolution of Napatree from a man whose passion it has been to chronicle these events.

Check the Watch Hill Conservancy website for rain dates or additions.

\*All walks and programs begin at the entrance to Napatree by the Misquamicut Club Beach Club.

**June 9 – September 8** Every Saturday at 9 a.m. we will offer a nature walk on Napatree Point led by one of our Naturalists. These beach strolls are tailor-made to the interests of the participants; families are welcome. As part of this series, we are also offering several special topic walks; see July 14 and August 4.

[www.thewatchhillconservancy.org](http://www.thewatchhillconservancy.org)



## NEWS UPDATES

### Update on Westerly's proposed Harbor Management Plan

Moorings, dockage, water quality, and access are among the issues under discussion by Westerly's Harbor Management Commission (WHMC) for a number of years. After considerable research, listening to stakeholders and the boating public, and discussing the issues with staff of the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), the WHMC has completed draft components of a new harbor management plan. The Commission is confident that the plan components incorporate goals and objectives expressed by public planning participants. This will be Westerly's first comprehensive harbor management plan to be approved by the CRMC. Among the recommendations are:

- Establishing minimum mooring equipment standards geared to mooring field locations, based upon established best practice. Mooring anchor, chain, and bridle specifications will match various mooring field safety requirements as well as boat length. Yacht clubs and boating associations can set higher standards for their mooring fields if they wish.
- Legitimizing existing mooring fields (size, location, and number of moorings) and their current managers, while establishing a system for moorings to be permitted on an annual basis to current and future users. Mooring permits will be allocated to existing users. Following standard practice across the state, moorings will also be available to new users on a quota system and wait list basis.
- Continuing the existing anchorage for Napatree's Kitchen area with boundaries and safeguards for the fragile eel grass beds and inter-tidal zone. Further west on the point, the fragile Lagoon will be off limits for boat beaching, mooring, or anchoring. The WHMC is also recommending that Napatree conservation efforts by the Watch Hill Conservancy, Watch Hill Fire District, US Fish and Wildlife, and the Rhode Island Natural History Survey be supported.
- Seeking de-authorization of Watch Hill Cove as a Federal Navigation Area. This would enable the Town to designate the cove as a mooring field in conformity with actual use over many years.
- Developing a storm and disaster preparedness plan for Westerly mooring users and the boating public.

There are 440 moorings in Westerly waters, 120 of which are in the Watch Hill Cove area. The WHMC is recommending that the Watch Hill Yacht Club continue to manage the moorings, for which they currently have an agreement with mooring users, as a volunteer assistant harbor manager, provided, however, that should anyone wish to place his/her mooring under direct supervision of the Town Harbor Master he/she may do so. This relationship will hold for other existing yacht club, fire district, and association-managed



mooring fields such as those at Weekapaug (to be managed by the Weekapaug Yacht Club); Shelter Harbor (Shelter Harbor Fire District); Avondale (Avondale Recreational Boating Club); and others.

Throughout the process, the Conservancy has been vigilant in its role as advocate for both protecting Napatree (primarily owned by the Fire District and the Conservancy, together with other owners, including the State, the Town, and a half-dozen private individuals and entities) and providing proper access to it, and supports this process as a means of clarifying issues and concerns while it seeks to protect these resources. As a matter of interest, the Conservancy and the Fire District are the sources of the funding for the management of Napatree and its Napatree Point Conservation Area and the scientific and educational programs offered there. RY



Photos on this page Richard C. Youngken

### Bay Street Update

Bay Street has been re-opened for the summer season, paved with an asphalt base and asphalt patching on sidewalks.



These temporary surfaces will be upgraded after Columbus Day when the construction crew returns to topcoat the street and fully repair the sidewalks and curbing, work that was postponed until fall to minimize disruption during the busy late spring to early fall season. The infrastructure now in place includes Town-funded storm drains and water lines, and the Conservancy-funded utilities duct bank. These new underground features will have time to settle this summer before final paving.

The unseasonably mild winter created ideal conditions for the installation of the duct bank along the entire length of Bay Street to be finished ahead of schedule. This project, when finished in the fall, will complete Phase 2A of the Conservancy's Bay Street project. Phase 2B will proceed as soon as funds allow. This next phase will include running the utility wires and communication cables through the underground duct bank, installing and screening above-ground transformers, energizing the system, connecting individual properties, and removing the utility poles. New street lighting will also be installed.

The Conservancy continues to seek to raise funds to complete this project. To date, generous contributions have been made by Bay Street property owners and businesses, the Alfred M. Roberts, Jr. Charitable Foundation, and the Washington Trust Charitable Foundation. RY



NAPATREE INVESTIGATOR NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2012 VOL. 5 NO. 2 WATCH HILL, R.I.

## SUMMER 2012 INVESTIGATOR

By Hugh Markey

The sun is shining and the waves are calling. It's time to get back to the beach!

*Welcome back to another season on the beach! By now, we hope you've had a chance to get your toes back into the sand, and maybe you've already taken part in one of the Napatree programs. It's hard to believe the Watch Hill Conservancy has been offering these programs for six years. During that time, hundreds of kids have had the chance to learn about the beach environment from naturalists. We hope coming along with us has really made your time on the beach all the more enjoyable, both while you're out with us and when you're with your own family and friends.*

### Critter Corner: THE OSPREY

Napatree Point is home to dozens of beautiful shore birds, many of which raise their young right here on our shores. One of the most striking of these birds is the osprey, a member of the hawk family. Big, bold, and black and white, this spectacular bird is always a favorite of visitors.

If you've walked out to the tip of Napatree Point, the chances are good that you've seen the ospreys. They perch in a large nest mounted high atop a pole overlooking the beach. Ospreys have a wingspan of about five feet, and their feathers are black and white.

If you're lucky, you may witness the dramatic way an osprey feeds. It cruises high above the surface of the water looking for fish, which are its main source of food. When an osprey has a meal in sight, it hovers for a moment, and then plummets from as high as 1,000 feet into the water with a splash. Its needle-sharp claws grab the fish and it rises into the air. As it begins to carry off its meal, it carefully turns the fish so the head faces forward in order to make it easier for the osprey to fly! That's made possible by the tough scales that line the fleshy part of its feet, making it easier to grasp the fish. *Continued...*



Photo Richard C. Youngken

Photo Janice Sassi