



## THE WATCH HILL CONSERVATOR

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Watch Hill, Rhode Island 02891

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THE WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2013 VOL. 6 No. 2 WATCH HILL, R.I.

### THE WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY

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

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

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

### Watch Hill Conservancy Annual Meeting August 17, 5 p.m. at the Misquamicut Club Golf Club

*“Science and Management of the  
Napatree Conservation Area”*

Guest speaker: Peter V. August, Ph.D.



Peter August is Professor of Natural Resources in the Department of Natural Resources Science at the University of Rhode Island. Dr. August received his Ph.D. degree (Biology) from Boston University in 1981. In 1985, he joined the URI Department of Natural Resources Science to begin development of a Geographic Information System (GIS) database in a cooperative project involving the University and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM). He established the Environmental Data Center (EDC) in the Department of Natural Resources Science to serve as the Center of Technical Excellence in Rhode Island for GIS information processing and data distribution. As Director of the URI Coastal Institute from 2000 to 2009, Dr. August was responsible for developing programs and activities that assist in the creation of solutions to environmental problems in coastal ecosystems. Dr. August has been a leader in the Napatree Advisors, a team of volunteer scientists who have been studying Napatree for the past several years on behalf of the Watch Hill Conservancy.

Dr. August will review the scientific data collection that is happening at Napatree and how these data can and will be used to inform management practices for this ecologically important area. “The Napatree ecosystem is incredibly dynamic,” he states emphatically, “and it is imperative that careful monitoring be done to ensure that management practices are having the desired effects.”

## EELGRASS IN LITTLE NARRAGANSETT BAY

Michael Bradley (URI), Marci Cole Ekberg (Save the Bay), and Peter August (URI)

### What is eelgrass?

*Zostera marina*, commonly known as eelgrass, is the primary sea-grass species found in Rhode Island coastal waters. Eelgrass is a flowering underwater plant that grows in shallow waters at depths ranging from approximately 3 to 12 feet in Little Narragansett Bay (LNB). Like all flowering plants, eelgrass requires sunlight for photosynthesis and has a root system (rhizomes) in the subaqueous soil for absorption of nutrients and stabilization. The long, slender, green blades capture rays of sunlight to produce oxygen and bend with the ebb and flow of the tides. It reproduces by seed or by sprouting new shoots from rhizomes. Contrary to popular misconception, it is neither seaweed nor algae, which float in the water or anchor to a rock. Eelgrass can form large meadows or small separate beds, which range in size from many acres to just a yard across.

### Why is eelgrass so important?

Eelgrass is one of the most diverse and productive underwater habitats found in North America. This critical estuarine habitat provides a primary source of food and shelter to an abundance of marine life, including economically-important finfish and shellfish species, such as flounder, tautog, bay scallops, quahogs, lobsters, and blue crabs. The bay scallop fishery has been nonexistent in Rhode Island since 1957, largely due to the loss of eelgrass beds. Recently-born bay scallops as well as blue mussels rely on eelgrass beds as attachment sites where they are afforded protection, food, and structure. It is widely understood that the vitality of an estuary's eelgrass beds is an indicator of its health. Because of its importance, eelgrass is protected both at the federal (EPA) and state (CRMC) levels of government.

Historically, eelgrass beds flourished in many areas of Rhode Island and helped support a thriving commercial scallop industry. Increased water pollution, shoreline development, boat traffic, eelgrass wasting disease, and hurricane damage have significantly reduced the Bay's eelgrass beds. The loss of eelgrass beds has affected fish and wildlife populations and has virtually eliminated commercial scalloping in Rhode Island. Eelgrass is also sensitive to increased water temperatures, as we are now seeing with climate change.

### Monitoring eelgrass in Little Narragansett Bay using aerial photography

Beginning in about 1994, Save the Bay (STB) began mapping and monitoring eelgrass in Narragansett Bay. In 1996 and 2006, aerial photographs were taken to map the extent of eelgrass in Narragansett Bay and other locations including Block Island. Previous to 2012, eelgrass had been mapped in Rhode Island on a piece-meal basis, meaning some sites were mapped in one year and others the next. LNB, for example, is part of the effort by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to map eelgrass for Long Island Sound. In 2011, STB and numerous other state agencies undertook an ambitious project to map eelgrass for all coastal Rhode Island waters, including the coastal ponds, Block Island, and LNB, during the same calendar year. In order to do this, aerial photographs had to be taken for all coastal areas in Rhode Island during a specific time of year and under certain environmental conditions conducive to identifying eelgrass on an aerial photo. To accurately map eelgrass, the photos need to be taken when eelgrass is growing (June – July) and during low tide, calm winds, low sun angle, little or no cloud cover, and low water turbidity. After a year of unsuitable conditions due to hurricanes (Irene) and other bad weather, the photos were finally taken on June 28th and 30th, 2012.

*Continued on page 3*



Photographing eelgrass beds. (Photo Michael Bradley)



## Why Watch Hill? Why the Watch Hill Conservancy?

A Personal Perspective, Chaplin B. Barnes, Executive Director

As with all things, change must come.

In 1999, as a practicing attorney, also counsel to the Watch Hill Fire District, I helped Fred Whittemore and an initial Board of Directors to incorporate the Watch Hill Conservancy as a charitable organization promoting the preservation of the natural environment of Watch Hill and seeking to conserve, maintain, and enhance Watch Hill's scenic, historical, open space and outdoor recreational values, as well as sensitive areas that are habitat to many species of birds and wildlife. The model Fred had in mind was the Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation, which Fred had helped to establish there, some ten years earlier.

Chuck Royce was an early Director of the Conservancy and, like Fred, provided valuable seed money for the operation of the new entity. I was an initial Director, as well as Secretary and a Vice President. Since 2001, when I "retired" from my private legal practice, I have been serving part-time as Executive Director.

Only recently, the Conservancy celebrated its first decade of operation. I had every expectation that I would continue to serve and be able to help shape the next decade of its operations. Unfortunately, personal medical issues have now arisen to make that unlikely, and, over the coming months, I will gradually be stepping back from some of my responsibilities and working with the Board to develop a plan for a smooth transition to the future and helping to oversee that transition.

The "Highlights" of the Conservancy's current program are listed on its website and provide a summary of its on-going activities. They and articles regularly appearing in the Conservancy's newsletters tell some of the story of an unusual and vibrant organization, doing a great deal more for the community it serves than a land trust or other conservation organization might normally be expected to do, and more, too, than many in the community realize.

The Conservancy is a land trust; it acquires environmentally-significant open space and protects natural areas, most notably the highly ecologically-significant Napatree Point Conservation Area barrier beach. There, the Conservancy and the Watch Hill Fire District operate a joint conservation management program, involving free summer environmental education programs for children; under an advisory group of prominent scientists it conducts scientific surveys and support for other environmental agencies (federal, state, and non-profit) in the protection of wildlife and habitat. In just the last year (2012),

the Conservancy was given two islands in the Pawcatuck River, one with an osprey platform and a family of ospreys who return each year to nest.

Early on, the Conservancy added to its mission the protection of the built environment of Watch Hill, and the preservation of its architectural heritage. One result was the proposal by the Conservancy, followed by passage by the Westerly Town Council, of a new zoning ordinance, providing architectural design standards for Bay Street, the first and (to date) the only such standards in the Town of Westerly. Subsequently, the Conservancy published a book on the architecture of Watch Hill, *Watch Hill Style*. Earlier, the Conservancy had published my history of Watch Hill, *Watch Hill Through Time*, which starts with the glaciers and runs through the colonial and High Victorian hotel and summer "cottage" resort periods, to today's family and resort vacation community.

Finally, who would have thought that the Conservancy, as part of its mission to protect the built environment of Watch Hill, would have initiated and constructed a utility infrastructure project to revitalize Bay Street, with the aesthetic, safety, and economic development benefits which that will bring? That project, now in its 6th year, and having cost \$5.5 million (almost all privately raised), is now scheduled for completion in 2014.

It's been an exciting time.

Why conserve Watch Hill? Because it is a place of great natural beauty, a welcoming recreation destination, a wildlife haven, an architectural treasure, and the home to which its residents, even if their businesses and professions have taken them around the world, have returned for generations, to enjoy family time by the sea, visiting, swimming, sailing, golfing, and playing tennis.

Thus, for generations, the people of Watch Hill have stepped up to save natural areas and properties threatened with inappropriate development and have acquired and maintained property for open space and public access -- parking areas, docks, bathing facilities, and some of the finest beaches in the world.

The Conservancy will continue to uphold the high standards and aspirations that inspired its formation.

It has been a rare privilege to have played a part in the work of the Conservancy. Its future is before it, and promises to be brighter still. As Robert Browning wrote in a different context, "...the best is yet to be..."



Chaplin B. Barnes, Executive Director, is an attorney, a conservationist, and an amateur historian. During his active career, he has served as Director of the Office of International Activities of the National Audubon Society, President of the (nine-county) Piedmont Environmental Council, Warrenton, Virginia, and as Senior Advisor for International Activities, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the (White House) Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

He returned, full time, to his Watch Hill and Westerly roots in 1985 and practiced law until 2000. He has served since 2001 as Executive Director of the Conservancy and is the author of the Watch Hill Conservancy's *Watch Hill Through Time* and a collaborating author of its *Watch Hill Style*. In 2009, the Watch Hill Fire District awarded him its Citizens Service Award.

Chap has served on the Town of Westerly's Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee and on its recently-formed Architectural Advisory Board. In May 2013, the Westerly Town Council awarded him a Commendation for his "...generous and untiring contributions as a conservationist and author toward the preservation of the natural beauty and historical character of our community for the pleasure and enrichment of future generations."

Photo by Sarah Chaplin Barnes Moore

## Calendar of Summer Events 2013

### Watch Hill Conservancy

**Celebration of Summer 2013** (annual benefit party),

Saturday, June 29, 6 - 9 p.m. Misquamicut Club Beach Club (all welcome)

### Napatree Naturalists

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings July 9 to August 29, 8:30 to 10:30. See Napatree Notes elsewhere in this issue.

### Saturday Morning Nature Walks

June 15 - August 31, starting 9 a.m. from the entrance to Napatree Point Conservation Area, near the Misquamicut Club Beach Club

**Annual Meeting**, August 17, 5 p.m., Misquamicut Club Golf Club

### Watch Hill Chapel

**Services** Sundays, June 23 - September 8

Roman Catholic Mass, 8:30 a.m.

Nondenominational "Union" Services, 10:30 a.m.

Communion at 10:30 services, July 7 and August 4

Community Hymn Sings, July 28 and August 25, 5 p.m.

**Choral Evensong**, Sunday, June 30, 5 p.m. Led by the Reverend Dr. W. Alfred Tisdale, Rector, Calvary Church, Stonington, Connecticut. Music will be provided under the direction of Chapel Organist and Choir Director Andrew P. Howell, by the Chapel Quartet, the Anglican Singers of St. James Church, New London, and other local singers and instrumentalists.

### Watch Hill Business Association

**Summer Concert Series** - Tuesdays, July 2 - August 20, 6:00 p.m., at the Village Park.

Note: This year the only rain date will be August 27.

### Watch Hill Memorial Library and Improvement Society

**Library Hours** - July 1 - August 30, Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Story Hour - Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10 a.m.

Bloomsday (a garden market fair) June 14th and 15th, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. daily

Children's bicycle parade July 4 at 4 p.m. beginning at the Improvement Society

Library Decorating starts at the WHMLIS Building at 3:30.

"Amy's Torch," a road safety awareness campaign; July 5 - July 7

Photography Show - Opening Reception July 26, 5:30 p.m. Show July 27 - August 4, 12 noon - 4 p.m.

**Boutique Sale at the Ocean House** August 2 and 3, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily

### Watch Hill Lighthouse Keepers Association

**Museum hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, July 2 through August 29, 1 - 3 p.m.

### Watch Hill Fire District

**Annual Meeting**, Saturday, July 13 at 9:30 a.m. At the Firehouse, 222 Watch Hill Road

Smokey the Bear Parade, July 18, 7:15 p.m.

Fire Prevention Night at the Firehouse, August 7, 6-8 p.m.

### East Beach Association

**Annual Meeting**, August 24th, 10:30 a.m. at the Chapel undercroft

See [oceanhouser.com](http://oceanhouser.com) for a calendar of events to be held at the Ocean House

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

Are you on our e-mail list? The Conservancy will occasionally want to send notice of important meetings, events, or issues. If you are not already receiving such messages from us, and would like to do so, please contact the office to add your address to our list.

Photos Richard C. Youngken

## 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  
Watch Hill, R.I. 02891

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.





G: Makes you want to hand over another clam cake, doesn't it? Mmm... Anyway, my friends and I have been hanging around up here in the Northeast for a really long time. We're slowly expanding our territory further south and closer to the Great Lakes these days. I hear the mussels out there are super-delicious!

I: Do you have kids?

G: Oh, sure! The missus and I had our full limit of three this season. We usually like to find a quiet spot on an island or marshy area to nest. Then the little chicks usually hang around for almost two months before they're ready to go.

I: Sounds like a good life! Have you always had it so easy?

G: Well, there was that time way, way back in the 1800s when humans used to pluck our feathers to decorate their clothes. Brrr.... Makes me cold just to think of it!

I: That's awful! How did you survive?

G: Two ways: first, you know how fashion is: one minute humans are wearing tie-dye t-shirts, the next they're on to something new. So after a while, they lost interest in us. The bigger factor, though, is that humans are slob.

I: How does that help?

G: Think about it: when people settle in an area, they leave garbage around. When humans settled more areas, they created more garbage. Since a large part of my diet is garbage, the more of it that's left around, the better my life is!

I: I'm glad you're good at foraging, because we're getting better at keeping our beaches clean. Well, thanks for your time. I learned a lot!

G: No problem. Are you going to finish those clam cakes?

.....

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

Stephen Brown: *Naturalist and Director, Napatree Investigator program*  
Jessica Cressman, Hugh Markey, Jesse Malo, Kevin Rogers: *Naturalists*  
Tom Pappadia: *Greeter*  
Donnie Cornell: *Warden*  
Scott Ruhren: *Environmental Project Coordinator*  
Janice Sassi: *Napatree Point Conservation Area Manager*

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.

Critter Corner: Blue Crab

Imagine being in a fierce battle with someone. Your arms are pinned by your opponent, and he's moving in to do some serious damage. Just when it looks like you're a goner, poof! You drop your arm off, leaving sand in your opponent's confused face and saving yourself to fight another day. And the arm? Don't worry, you'll grow a new one in no time!

Meet *callinectes sapidus*, better known as the blue crab. This is one of the largest crabs you're likely to run across around here, with a carapace (shell) of nine inches. Even when their color may not be quite blue, these big guys are easy to identify by the long spines that stick out on each side of their shells.

Unlike many other crab species, blue crabs are very good swimmers. The last pair of legs they have are rounded like paddles, which allow them to move surprisingly quickly through the water. They also have a pair of claws that are extremely strong. They use these to pull apart their food, which includes plants, dead animals, and even other crabs! Plus, while some crabs can be picked up safely by the very back of the carapace, that is NOT the case here: blue crabs can easily reach back and deliver a nasty pinch!

And as for that arm business, crabs molt, or shed their shells, as they grow. If they lose an arm in a tussle with another blue crab, the new arm will grow as the crab molts. If only we could grow body parts like that!

That's all for now! Keep investigating your surroundings, and we'll see you on the beach!



The Watch Hill Conservancy  
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Email: [thewatchhillconservancy@yahoo.com](mailto:thewatchhillconservancy@yahoo.com)  
Website: [www.thewatchhillconservancy.org](http://www.thewatchhillconservancy.org)

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Eelgrass mapping – the process

Once photos are taken, they are opened in a computer program for viewing and interpretation. The eelgrass data layer is developed in a Geographic Information System (GIS) by digitizing and delineating the bed edges. The GIS enables scientists to view large photographic files and zoom and move to many study areas quickly and efficiently. In addition, because other agencies (like the USFWS) use a GIS to develop their eelgrass layers, they can be shared and overlaid on top of each other to view changes in the extent of the beds. The GIS also enables scientists to calculate the acreage of eelgrass that has been mapped.

Because other photographic signatures such as algae-covered rocks also look the same in the photos as eelgrass beds, the delineations of eelgrass are taken into the field and verified. A GPS and an underwater camera are used to record the location and the habitat type. While we are still analyzing historical data to determine the trends of eelgrass within LNB, the changes for eelgrass north of Napatree Point indicate in just three years that eelgrass bed edges are fairly dynamic in nature. With a total area of 201 acres in 2012, the eelgrass beds here represent the largest beds in Rhode Island coastal waters. LNB stakeholders should do what they can to conserve and protect this important estuarine habitat.



NEWS & NOTES

An important reminder: Watch Hill Conservancy Summer Celebration, Saturday, June 29, 6-9 p.m., Misquamicut Club Beach Club. Call the Conservancy office for details.

Update: Beach SAMP

As reported in the last *Conservator*, the Beach Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) effort, organized by the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center for the state Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), is underway in earnest.

A public informational meeting was held on April 4th to a full house of nearly 150 people at URI's Bay Campus. Speakers focused on the coastal erosion issues facing our shoreline. National Weather Service hydrologist David R. Vallee spoke about the nature of Hurricane Sandy and future powerful storms and their possible impacts, caused in part by climate change, sea level rise, and defenseless coastal building. He and others emphasized that Sandy was only a passing blow, not a direct hit, nor was it a 100-year event. The devastation wrought by Sandy should not be considered a freak happening, but rather the new normal.

Rhode Island State Geologist Jon Boothroyd provided a detailed yet simple analysis of why our coast is in such jeopardy. Significantly, the CRMC is planning for an additional sea level rise of 1.5 ft. by 2050 and 3-5 ft. by 2100. These predictions are subject to upward change as more information is analyzed. The rate of change appears to be escalating as well. In Watch Hill, the storm surge from Sandy overwashed Napatree, flattening the dunes for a considerable stretch and carrying sand into Little Narragansett Bay. The dunes under the Watch Hill Yacht Club cabanas were also leveled and the sand carried into the harbor. A flattened Napatree means that Little Narragansett Bay and the Pawcatuck estuary are now at greater risk. Although the dunes under the cabanas have been rebuilt, they will not be stable with dune grass for some time and are therefore highly vulnerable to overwash and perhaps a breach, putting the harbor and Bay Street in jeopardy.

More public meetings will be scheduled in the coming months to engage the public in formulating a coastal shoreline special management plan to cope with these issues. The effort's website provides a wealth of information, including videos of presentations, at [www.beachsamp.org](http://www.beachsamp.org).

Misquamicut Sewers: an unlikely infrastructure option

Jon Boothroyd's aerial image of Misquamicut and Atlantic Avenue, running along the barrier beach between the ocean and Winnapaug Pond, shows how narrow and fragile Misquamicut's beach-oriented commercial zone is. The image was shown publically at the April 4th Beach SAMP informational meeting. The vastness of the ocean to the south, the vulnerable nature of the barrier, and its recent catastrophic inundation by Hurricane Sandy would give long term investors pause. However, short term investors can have a different horizon and view point.

The idea of a private sewer line to service commercial areas along Atlantic Avenue has recently been advanced, following a failed and highly-controversial effort to persuade the Town of Westerly to install public sewers in the area. In early April the commercial property owners backing the private sewer proposal withdrew their request to the Town for approval to hook up to Westerly's wastewater treatment facility in the face of a Town Council commitment to take the issue to the voters. This may not be the end of discussion on waste water management and infrastructure in Misquamicut; the Town Council has asked their special study commission, headed by Howard M. "Tim" Fry, to continue with research and the gathering of public input.

As Conservancy members will recall, Professor Boothroyd spoke at the Watch Hill Conservancy's 2012 annual meeting on the topic of climate change and sea level rise.





## Napatree Notes



Osprey (Photo Janice Sassi)

### Super Storm Sandy

It seems that Sandy made at least the shore-birds that nest in the sand happy by creating new habitat. Our American Oystercatchers seem interested in setting up a homestead in the enlarged beach area left when Sandy ripped out vegetation and flattened the dunes. The Piping Plovers also seem pleased; by May 12, a nest with an egg had been found.

The US Fish & Wildlife Service has roped off nesting areas as usual. Cross-over paths for foot traffic will be clearly marked in order to make it easier for people going from ocean to bay and to allow the dune grass to revegetate.

### Osprey Monitoring

On Napatree, our resident pair has returned and appears to be incubating already. The RI Audubon Society and RIDEM depend on information we and other monitors supply to gauge the health of this species still recovering from the use of DDT. Look for chicks in June!

Nearby, the osprey platform on the Conservancy's newly-acquired Taylor Island in the Pawcatuck River also appears to be active.

### Napatree Beach Profile

Storms are the driving force in shoreline change. Combined with sea level rise, smaller storms are having a greater impact on our coast. Since 1939, Napatree has migrated 200' towards Little Narragansett Bay due to sand being redeposited during storm surges.

To help understand this process and document shoreline changes, Bryan A. Oakley, Ph.D., an Assistant Professor of Environmental Geoscience and an associate of geologist Jon C. Boothroyd, will begin a study this summer on Napatree. According to Prof. Oakley, Napatree's lack of development and infrastructure makes it an ideal location to examine shoreline change. Information obtained from this project will be important to the Town of Westerly and the various agencies responsible for coastal planning.



Egret (Photo Janice Sassi)



Purple Sandpiper (Photo Janice Sassi)

### Calendar

March 23rd was a bitterly cold day but that didn't prevent volunteers from coming out for our annual beach cleanup. Even though we had already held a post-Sandy cleanup, there was still lots of trash. We sincerely thank our volunteers who gave up their Saturday morning!

### Fossils on Napatree?

In addition to testing water quality and other scientific projects, we are continuing our participation in Project *Limulus* through Sacred Heart University in Connecticut. Horseshoe crabs are commonly referred to as "living fossils" because they have existed for 300 million years!

Sadly, their numbers are declining, but Napatree remains a favorite spawning ground. During the high tides of the new and full moon this June and July we will be out counting and tagging them as they come to shore to lay eggs.

Join us for this magical sight and learn about their importance to human beings, the pharmaceutical industry, and as an indicator of the health of our oceans.

Volunteers can participate in the counts, recording data, and tagging.

Please contact [Napatreenaturalist@live.com](mailto:Napatreenaturalist@live.com) for dates and times.



King Eider (Photo Bob Weaver)



Mink and fox have been sighted on Napatree, posing a threat to the Piping Plover population.

Mink (Photo Bob Weaver)



Red Fox (Photo Kevin Rogers)

### Saturday Morning Nature Walks

Beginning June 15th and continuing every Saturday morning at 9:00 until August 31st, we will offer guided walks on Napatree customized to the interests of the participants. From history (Did you know there once were 39 houses on this strip of beach?), to birds and insects (Napatree is a crucial breeding and migratory area to many species), to marine life (Seaweed is actually interesting!), our naturalists will tell you that there is something new on the beach every day. Special topic walks led by experts in their field will also be offered!

### Children's Program

Our popular Napatree Investigators series begins July 9th and continues through August 29 every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday morning from 8:30 to 10:30, weather permitting. Directed by Stephen Brown, Science Chair at Pine Point School in Connecticut, who is assisted by Hugh Markey, Warwick High School teacher, the program is available on a first come, first served basis to children ages seven to fourteen.

Investigators learn about Napatree's fascinating ecosystem and the animals that inhabit it. Each week's segment will focus on a different topic while participants enjoy the unexpected finds presented by nature. What's more fun than exploring a beach with nets and buckets on a summer day?

Registration is required and begins June 1st. Children may attend once or attend each segment. To avoid being closed out of your preferred session(s), register early!

The Napatree staff this year includes Jessica Cressman, Steve Brown, Jesse Malo, Hugh Markey, Tom Pappadia, Kevin Rogers, Scott Ruhren, and Janice Sassi. Be sure to say hello if you see any of us on the beach!

All activities and programs are free and sponsored by the Watch Hill Conservancy and the Watch Hill Fire District. For more information or to register, please contact [Napatreenaturalist@live.com](mailto:Napatreenaturalist@live.com), or check the Watch Hill Conservancy website.

CUT ALONG THE DOTTED LINE AND SHARE WITH FRIENDS!



NAPATREE INVESTIGATOR NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2013 VOL. 6 NO. 1 WATCH HILL, R.I.

Welcome to another season on the beach! As you know, last winter was a wild one, and the impact was felt not only at your house, but here on Napatree Point as well. With the help of many great volunteers, we were able to clear out several thousand pounds of trash and debris that had washed up along our shore. Do you volunteer to do any cleanups in your neighborhood? It's always a great way to do some good for the Earth!

Naturalists Steve and Hugh are back on the scene with lots of new adventures for our Investigator program. We change things up a bit every year, and the kids who come out with us have a blast! Whether it's catching and identifying crabs, searching for mollusks, or collecting shells, our Investigators learn something new every time they come out!

Next time you see one of us on the beach in our blue shirts and white caps, say hello and feel free to ask questions about Napatree!

## ONE ON ONE WITH A GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

Recently, the *Investigator* spotted a large gull on Napatree Point. With its size and its black wings, it wasn't long before we discovered its identity: a Great Black-backed Gull. We spoke with it on the condition that we would share a few of our clam cakes with it.

*Investigator:* So you're a Great Black-backed Gull...

*Great Black-Back:* I am! Say my name three times fast and win a prize!

*I:* Great black back, grape back back, blake crack back...



Photo Rey Larson

G: Never mind. Call me G.

*I:* Thanks. Why do they call you that, anyway?

G: Well, although I AM great, humans call big birds "great" when they're big. It just so happens that I'm the biggest gull in the world!

*I:* Wow!

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