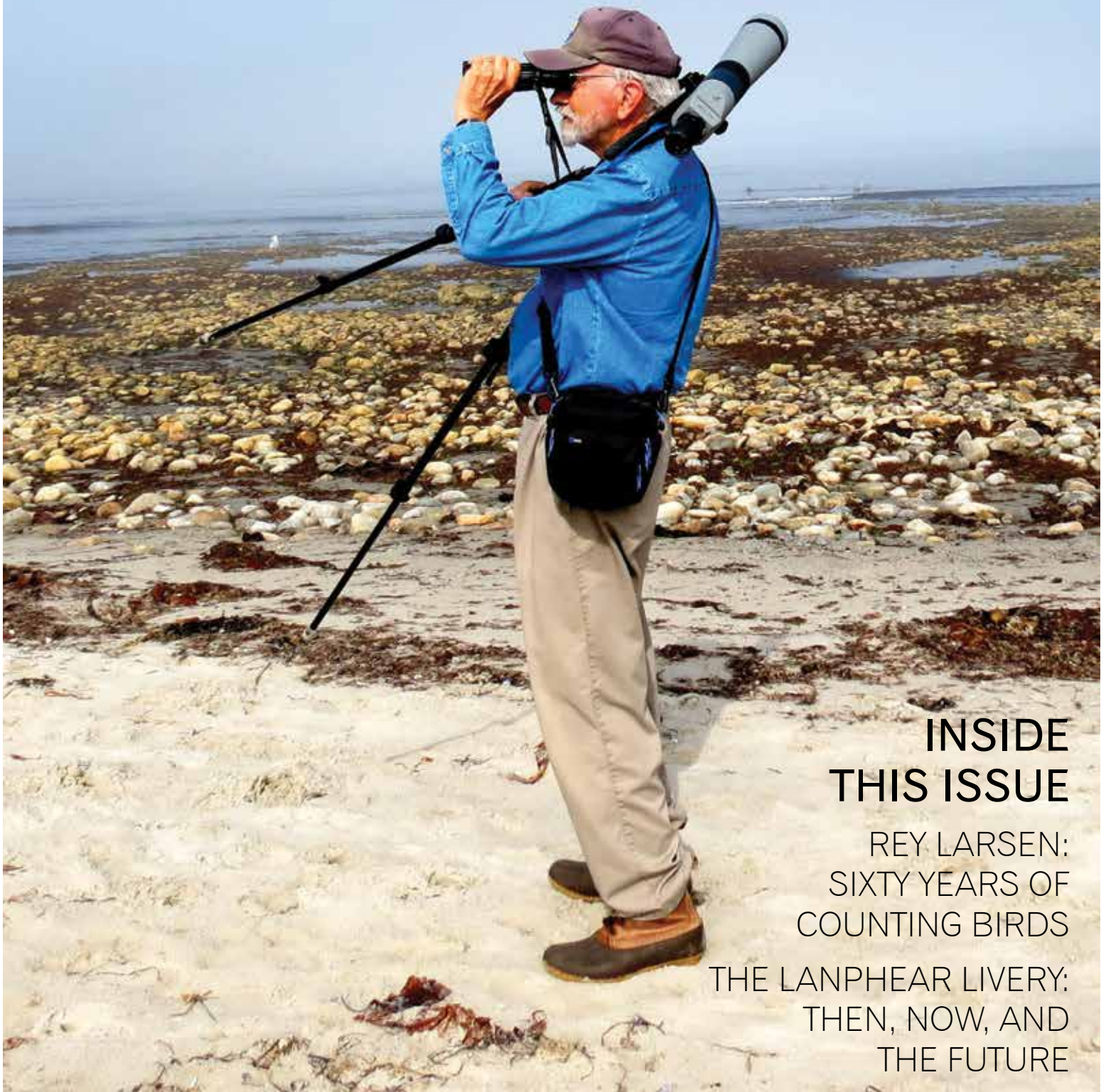




The Watch Hill Conservator



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Preserving the values of Watch Hill and Little Narragansett Bay would not be possible without the dedication of those who educate the public about the vital stewarding of Napatree Point Conservation Area and about maintaining the historic and community character of Watch Hill.

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Whitney South Sea Expedition Vessel, *France*. Royal Geographical Society.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

VIEWS FROM BAY STREET

EX·PE·DI·TION (NOUN):

a journey or voyage undertaken by a group of people with a particular purpose, especially exploration or scientific research.

Throughout history, great expeditions have required significant support from enthusiastic people driven by a purpose. From Shackleton’s groundbreaking explorations of Antarctica to the Whitney South Sea Expedition, (the longest ornithological voyage in history), breakthrough discoveries have been made possible by people like you and me.

The Conservancy is on year 23 of its journey to conserve, enhance, and maintain the natural scenic and historic values of Watch Hill and Little Narragansett Bay. Our work has expanded, the members of our team have changed, and the world is a different place compared to 1999, the year of the Conservancy’s



Sketch from the journal of José G. Correia whilst on the Whitney South Sea Expedition. American Museum of Natural History.



Shackleton’s *Endurance*. The vessel was the used during Shackleton’s attempt to make the first land crossing of the Antarctic. Royal Geographical Society.

incorporation. Yet one thing has not changed- we still need your support. We need your support to look after our community, to protect our spectacular natural amenities, and preserve the unique historic and architectural character of Watch Hill.

You have the chance to follow in the steps of those who have supported noble missions of scientific and historic exploration by joining us as a Conservancy member. Not only will you be able to see the results of our work in the community, but you will also be able to enjoy learning of successes through our education and outreach programs. The Watch Hill Conservancy is a nonprofit, membership-based organization, and you can feel good knowing that your contribution makes it possible for all members of the community to attend our programs at no cost.

As French philosopher Albert Camus once said, “Real generosity toward the future lies in giving all to the present.” The Watch Hill Conservancy is protecting our community’s natural and manmade gifts, and will continue to do so for generations to come. As a member of the Conservancy, and by supporting all our stewardship and historic preservation work, you leave a legacy for future conservationists and preservationists. Like the explorers of the past, the Conservancy is laying the groundwork for understanding of this community’s protection. I hope you will consider leaving a significant mark on the future as a backer of our mission and organizational journey.

Jocelyn

Jocelyn Lahey, Executive Director



The zephyr above is named for one of Shakleton’s financial sponsors, Sir James Key Caird. Pictured is Shackleton and his crew towing *James Caird* across the ice during an attempt at the first Antarctic land passage. Royal Geographical Society.

THE LANPHEAR LIVERY: THEN, NOW, AND THE FUTURE

BY PETER AUGUST

During the Gilded Age of the late 19th century, Watch Hill was a bustling resort community. Summer visitors arrived by steamship and were shuttled from the wharf to their hotel destinations by carriages from Lanphear Livery at One Bay Street. The northern wing of the livery was built in 1887 and began to expand soon after, eventually growing to triple its original size and housing horses, carriages, cars, drivers, and grooms. By 1910, rooms and apartments in the building housed staff and their families.

Village meetings were held in the livery, with the ground floor functioning as a community meeting place. Many issues concerning Bay Street were worked out in this space. Before radio dispatch, the local police used the livery as a communications hub. In the off hours, workmen played cards and threw darts to pass time. Indeed, one panel in the building today still shows the markings of the dart board



and numerous games played.

When a road was completed from Westerly to Watch Hill, horse and carriages were replaced with automobiles, and the use of the livery pivoted to serve autos. As they had previously done with carriages, in the auto age visitors and residents of Watch Hill could hire a chauffeur and a vehicle to meet their local travel needs. In the 1920's a cadre of 100 drivers and a large fleet of rental automobiles from local businesses served the community.

The Lanphears eventually sold the building to the Holdredge family, who renamed it the Holdredge Garage. Many in Watch Hill and Westerly have known the place by that name. According to an oral history, the decision to save and restore the famous Watch Hill Merry-Go-Round was made here in the 1970s by Harriet Moore and Jessie Holdredge.

Summer visitors arrived by steamship and were shuttled from the wharf to their hotel destinations by carriages from Lanphear Livery at One Bay Street.



As the decades passed, liverys began closing their doors and even the Holdredge Garage went the same way. By 1994, the building and parking lot were being sold to a developer. Fortunately, Fred Whittemore and Chap Barnes rallied 57 residents to create the Watch Hill Limited Partnership (WHLP). The group raised over 1.2 million dollars to purchase the property.

Eventually, building codes changed and the structure was pronounced uninhabitable. Rather than let the aging beauty disappear, the WHLP brought in a historic preservation team to consider alternatives. The group pursued numerous funding sources.

In 2014, a group of local citizens formed a nonprofit corporation (One Bay Street Center) to restore the building to its original prominence as a community center. One of the key supporters of the project, Charles Royce, said it well: "The Lanphear Livery was the historic gateway to Watch Hill Village. It was a signature building that served multiple practical functions for the Village. It can again!" They assembled a team of preservationists, architects, and master craftsmen who restored the building to its original character and historic features.

Grant Simmons helped guide the project, and by 2016 the restoration was complete. The large open area that originally housed the stables was named the Chaplin B. Barnes Reading Room to honor one of the original visionaries of the project.

Recognizing the importance of having its own space to reach

THE LANPHEAR LIVERY SHINES AS THE GATEWAY TO WATCH HILL VILLAGE AND IS A HUB OF THE COMMUNITY.

and serve the community, The Watch Hill Conservancy purchased the reading room in 2020. The Alfred M. Roberts Jr. Charitable Foundation, the Lattner Family Foundation, and the Conservancy each provided funding for the acquisition. The Chaplin B. Barnes Reading Room is a critical asset in meeting the Conservancy's mission to conserve, enhance, and maintain the natural, scenic, and historic values of the community. The Watch Hill Conservancy

The Chaplin B. Barnes Reading Room is a critical asset in meeting the Conservancy's mission to conserve and preserve Watch Hill and Little Narragansett Bay.

programs such as the popular Lanphear LIVE! presentations, community forums, and other public events are held in the beautiful reading room. The Conservancy also makes the room available to other non-profits as a venue for their meetings and events. Once again, the Lanphear Livery shines as the gateway to Watch Hill Village and is a hub of the community.

Sources of Information:

Chaplin B. Barnes, 2005. Watch Hill Through Time. The Watch Hill Conservancy. thewatchhillconservancy.org/publications/books/

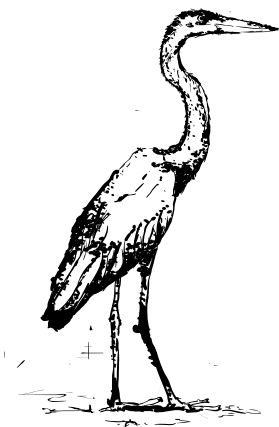
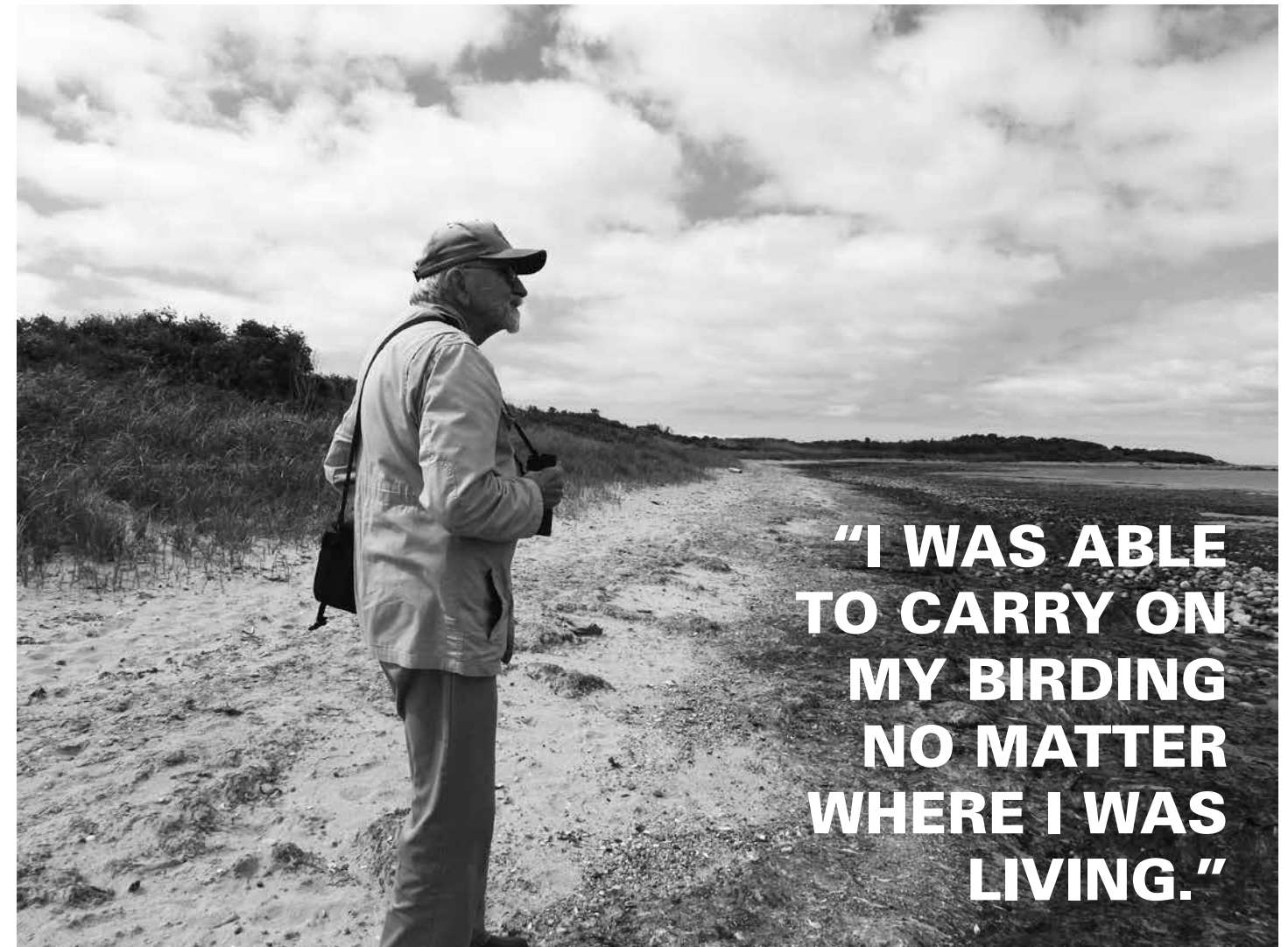
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Special thanks to Richard Youngken and Brian Thompson for their thoughtful review and editorial input for this article.



Jocelyn Lahey points out to a visiting group of Indonesian students the original wooden structure in the Chaplin B. Barnes Reading Room. The students met in the Livery to learn about the Conservancy's stewardship of Napatree.



REY LARSEN: SIXTY YEARS OF COUNTING BIRDS

BY HUGH MARKEY

It's 1946. World War II has been over for a year, and the nation is inching its way toward normalcy. In a small Illinois town, Reynold "Rey" Larsen pedals his bike, bouncing along on the heavy springs under the seat, while the rocks he kicks up with his fat whitewall tires plink off the fender. The supplies in his

pack are simple: binoculars, notebook, snack. A sign up ahead tells him he is nearing his destination of a heavily wooded state park. Just the place to spot new species of birds.

"When I was in fourth grade, my teacher signed the class up for an Audubon program," Larsen said. "Each kid was sent a packet of stories about kingbirds and other common birds in the Midwest. That tickled my interest, and I started writing things down."

His bicycle trips continued, and by the time a year was out, he had noted bird migration seasons and identified 15 bird species. At the end of his second year that number jumped to 50, and since then Rey Larsen has continued counting species and writing them down, often right here on Napatree Point.

Years went by, and Rey spent 24 years in the Navy, some of which was aboard a submarine as a ship's surgeon. "I was able to carry on my birding no matter where I was living, even when

I would sometimes spend sixty days underwater. One time the watch officer brought the sub to a shallow depth for communication. The officer offered me the chance to take over the periscope, and I actually spotted a fulmar (a seabird resembling a gull). That was my most unusual birding circumstance."

Rey later taught at the Navy's school of medicine in New London. "A local birder told me about this amazing spot called Napatree Point. I went there with him, and it was really fascinating. There were shorebirds, gulls, and other birds. On that first trip I saw two birds I'd never seen before in my life. The variety and the numbers of gulls, terns, and migrating hawks has just been tremendous."

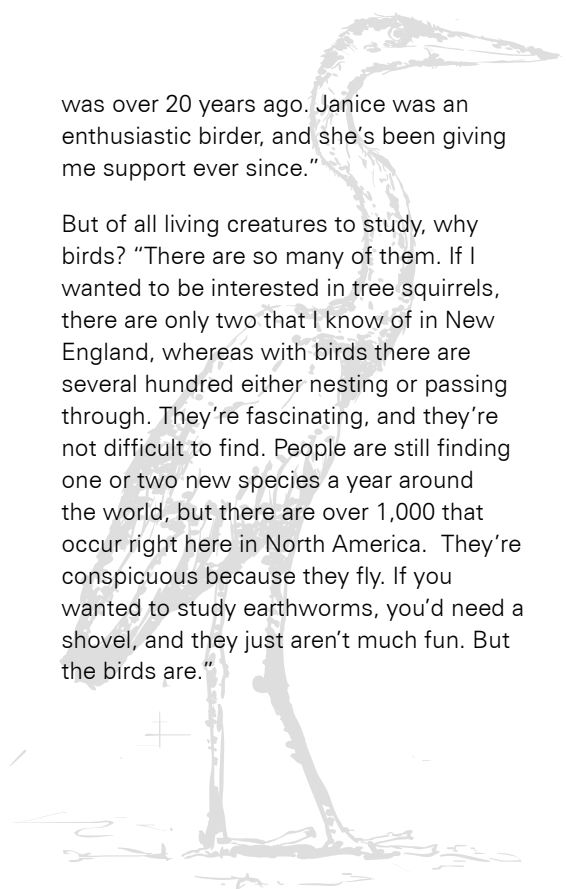
He continued birding, often visiting the Napatree Point Conservation Area while stationed in Newport. Though his work took him around the world, he and his wife eventually settled in Rhode Island. Here he began to inventory birds across the state, maintaining meticulous records that would be invaluable to both birders and ornithologists. That was in 1963.

Rey Larsen has submitted over 6,000 checklists to eBird, the state's keeper of records. His lists document 302 bird species.



was over 20 years ago. Janice was an enthusiastic birder, and she's been giving me support ever since."

But of all living creatures to study, why birds? "There are so many of them. If I wanted to be interested in tree squirrels, there are only two that I know of in New England, whereas with birds there are several hundred either nesting or passing through. They're fascinating, and they're not difficult to find. People are still finding one or two new species a year around the world, but there are over 1,000 that occur right here in North America. They're conspicuous because they fly. If you wanted to study earthworms, you'd need a shovel, and they just aren't much fun. But the birds are."



Rey Larsen takes notes and records the birds at Ninigret Pond.

Eventually, he attended a local bird club meeting with "a hot shot birder from Cornell," who told him about a new program called eBird. "That gave me the idea to start looking through my old lists," Larsen said. Reynold Larsen would submit over 6,000 checklists covering 60 years of birding to eBird, the state's keeper of records. "Once this business with Cornell came up, I realized that I was a 'scientific contributor' and that's kind of a kick too."

His lists have documented 302 bird species. These numbers are astonishing and have made a significant contribution to the body of knowledge surrounding Rhode Island birds, their migrations, and their habitat. His expertise in other winged creatures led him to produce over 470 odonate (dragonfly and damselfly) records from throughout Rhode Island while working with biologist Ginger Brown in assembling an odonata atlas. He has also mentored innumerable naturalists, students, and birders. Today, Rey still patrols the Napatree shoreline, carefully recording his observations and sharing his discoveries with everyone interested. Conservancy Science Advisor and former Napatree Point Conservation Area Manager Janice Sassi began to offer rides back and forth along the three-mile journey that comprises a round trip along Napatree's shores. "I was beginning to be a senior at that time, and so the help was gladly received. That



REMEMBERING FREDERICK B. WHITEMORE 1930-2022

The Watch Hill Conservancy recognizes with sorrow the passing of a founder and former Chairman, Frederick B. Whittemore.

Fred was a charismatic leader and a man of "big ideas." The Conservancy, and our community, benefitted tremendously from his grand vision, boundless energy, and dogged tenacity. We will miss his great wit and generous spirit.

Fred served the community in many ways: Moderator of the Weekapaug Fire District; Founding Trustee of the Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation; Moderator of the Watch Hill Fire District; Trustee of The Alfred M. Roberts, Jr. Charitable Foundation; Founding Member and First President of The Watch Hill Conservancy; Founding Member of the Watch Hill Limited Partners; and Founding Member of the Shelter Harbor Golf Club.

Through his leadership, Fred helped preserve and enhance Watch Hill and Rhode Island's southern shore for future generations to enjoy.



UPCOMING EVENTS



The Watch Hill Conservancy's Annual Meeting

August 22: After a brief business meeting, Dr. William Thompson (National Park Service, Retired) will introduce us to eBird, an on-line database of bird observations managed by Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology. The comprehensive data on eBird were the basis for Napatree being designated a Globally Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society. Dr. Thompson, one of the region's top nature photographers, will also share examples of his photography. Join us for 6:00PM. No registration is required. Light refreshments will be served.



Photo by Dr. William Thompson

A big thanks goes out to our generous
Community Programming Sponsors.



Lanphear *LIVE!*

Join us in the Chaplin B. Barnes Reading Room at the Lanphear Livery for our free summer lecture series. Presentations begin at 6:00PM and no registration is required. Check out the Conservancy's website for recordings of earlier talks.

**August 28: Pierce Rafferty, Henry L. Ferguson Museum
Director, Outside Views of Fishers Island**

Saturday Morning Guided Nature Walks

Join us each Saturday morning through August 27th at 9AM for a free guided nature walk. Learn about the human and natural history of the Napatree Point Conservation Area. Tour begins at the Napatree entrance and no registration is needed.

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