

#### **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 the Napatree Point Conservation Area and about maintaining the historic and community character of Watch Hill.

We are especially grateful for the support of the membership of the Conservancy, our Community Programming Sponsors, the A.M. Roberts, Jr. Charitable Foundation, the URI Coastal Institute; and our staff, Board of Directors, Science Advisors, and volunteers who give so much of their time and wisdom to achieve our mission.

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# FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I was born and raised in New England and have always had a love affair with the Northeast, particularly the quaint, historic seaside towns dotted along the Eastern seaboard, proudly standing as the memorials of centuries past. It is the mysteries held within these long-standing places that pique my interest; the unknown architects of the classic stone walls strewn across the landscape, stacked in messy tiers, and decorated with splotches of lichen and spongy green moss. The significant ancestral homes, both the regal and the humble, still standing to offer a peek into an era gone by, holding the secrets of the generations within their walls. The majestic ocean, forever in motion, untiring and unyielding, heard in the distance as a soothing lullaby on a warm summer evening or as the deafening crash of an angry sea roaring like a freight train. Places like Watch Hill.

There is a quiet stateliness here. As I sit at my desk in our office at the Lanphear Livery, an exquisitely preserved Watch Hill landmark, I look out the window onto Bay Street and see a magnificent Napatree Point sunset reflected in the windows of the house on the hill across the street – a view that probably hasn't changed in 100 years. I marvel at the beauty and ponder the fragility of the moment.







I have arrived at the Conservancy during the milestone event of its 25th Anniversary year. It is a heralded time of success, achievement, and celebration of the sustained efforts of the remarkable people who have guided endeavors to enhance and maintain the natural scenic and historic values of this charming seaside town for a quarter century.

Guiding conservation and preservation efforts is not for the faint-hearted. It takes passion, knowledge, commitment, time, energy, vision, patience, and funding to be impactful. It is a daunting responsibility to be the guardian of history and a proud accomplishment to successfully protect it through honorable care and thoughtful maintenance.

Watch Hill and the Napatree Point Conservation Area are glorious, igniting wonder for those who live and visit here. Through triumphant conservation and preservation, they remain distinctly their own, and these locations provide a unique opportunity for us to imagine them in a former time. Through almost imperceptible whispers, their voices do not go unnoticed, heard loudly by those who steadfastly stand guard, loyal to the mission of their continued care.

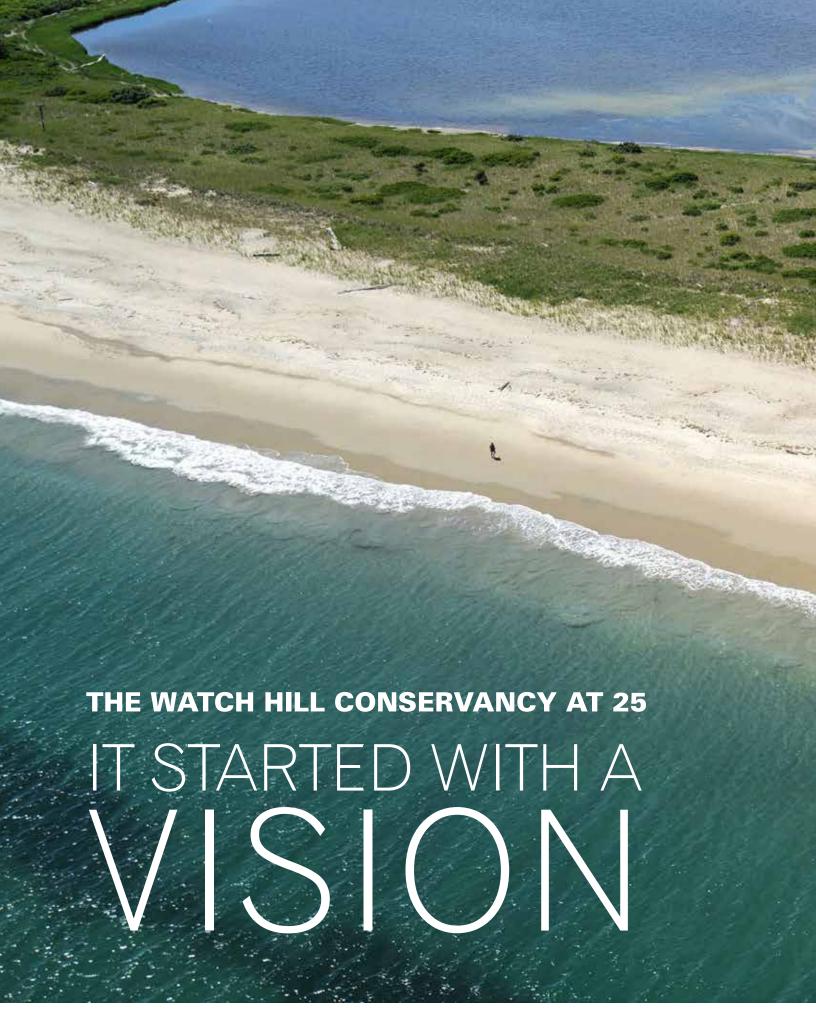
The classic stone walls. The ancestral homes. The majestic ocean. I am confident I am not alone in recognizing the feelings evoked by the beauty of Watch Hill and ask you to applaud the important work of The Watch Hill Conservancy. It is a significant community organization, vital to the conservation and preservation endeavors of the past 25 years, and critical to the fruition of those efforts for the next 25.

Sincerely,

Barbara Axmacher

Executive Director, The Watch Hill Conservancy









agreed that an organization was needed to protect the unique character of Watch Hill. The Watch Hill Conservancy was always intended to be something more than just a land conservation organization. Land conservation was certainly one of the main missions. But another purpose was to preserve the historic character of the community which included the built environment and over time that led to the kinds of projects the Conservancy has taken on, from the beautification of Bay Street with the undergrounding of utilities to the creation of various books and regulations that Chap Barnes wrote and commissioned with Rich Youngken and others, all in an effort to preserve and protect the existing character of the community." (See Rich Youngken's story elsewhere in this issue.)

Thus, the Watch Hill Conservancy was incorporated in 1999 with the purpose to conserve and preserve. To foster collaboration and transparency, its Board of Directors is made up of both at-large directors and representative directors from six other Watch Hill nonprofit institutions.

As early as 2010, Chap Barnes was hard at work creating a conservation easement for Napatree. "Chap worked a lot on that," said Lamm. "He really investigated the best practices, interviewing all kinds of conservation law attorneys and professionals, and checking in with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), about incorporating the highest level of conservation protection in the state."

"Chap was a brilliant attorney. He was very organized, and able

to handle all kinds of data coming out of the work to present to others. We all relied on his great mind that way. The conservation easement was executed in October of 2013."

With the purpose of the conservation easement clearly stated, the Conservancy got to work diligently building stewardship plans accordingly. Fully committed to the critical responsibilities of maintaining a property like Napatree, through thoughtful, evidence-based and consistent conservation efforts, the area is thriving as an incredible wildlife, open space preserve.

According to Lamm, The Watch Hill Conservancy is needed more than ever for both historic preservation and conservation. "The conservation easement gives The Watch Hill Conservancy the rights and the responsibility to care for Napatree. It lays out our purpose and identifies the needs and conservation values. But it doesn't initiate action. It's a structure through which conservation can be accomplished, but it's The Watch Hill Conservancy that does the work. We work closely with the Watch Hill Fire District, and we have a team of amazing people: staff, Science Advisors, partners and volunteers, and of course, all of our members, who commit year after year to support and steward this beautiful, precious natural resource. They're a passionate team with huge talent and enthusiasm for the work being done. The Conservancy is needed now more than ever. While the conservation easement is vital, it is just the guidebook. The action comes from the Conservancy, the Fire District and the others that year after year actually protect and preserve Napatree and the historic community."

Like today, twenty-five years ago, people in Watch Hill were concerned about the density of buildings and the chance of losing the sense of place that is Watch Hill.



The Watch Hill Conservancy's mission is to conserve, enhance, and maintain the natural, scenic, and historic values of Watch Hill and Little Narragansett Bay.

# **To Achieve Our Mission, We:**

- Conserve, preserve, and expand the scientific understanding of the natural environment of Watch Hill and Little Narragansett Bay.
- Educate the public about the importance of the natural environment and cultural values of Watch Hill. We accomplish this through educational programs for children and nature walks for all ages, and through lectures and presentations that inform and educate all members of the community on current events, issues of social importance, and celebration of achievement in sport, the arts, humanities, and science.
- Maintain and enhance the historic and community character of Watch Hill, with an emphasis on the Village. We promote the preservation of the natural and built environments of Watch Hill by preserving, maintaining, and enhancing the scenic, open space, and historical values and character of Watch Hill. We support the continued vitality, sustainability, and resiliency of our community.
- Conserve and maintain open space and habitat in Watch Hill by managing Watch Hill's premier natural resource, Napatree Point Conservation Area in collaboration with the Watch Hill Fire District, and by acquiring and preserving interests in real property.



The easement charges the
Conservancy to "...assure that the
Protected Property will be retained
forever in its current natural and
scenic condition; to protect any
rare plants, animals, or plant
communities on the Protected
Property; and to prevent any use
of the Protected Property that will
significantly impair or interfere
with the conservation values of the
Protected Property."



# WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY STEWARDSHIP: Highlights of 25 Years

By Richard Youngken

Photo Credit: The Watch Hill Conservancy

Chaplin Barnes' Watch Hill Through Time: The Evolution of a New England Shore Community, published by the Conservancy in 2005, is a case statement of the efforts



CHAP BARNES

of this remarkable organization then and now. What Chap so thoroughly covers in his book is the unique and complex natural, architectural, and cultural identity of Watch Hill. He builds the argument that Watch Hill evolved to what it is today through the vision, commitment, and passion of many people over numerous decades. Many of the individuals active in the Watch Hill community in 2005 were from families

who came to the area for generations to enjoy its summer ambiance. Chap considered this multigenerational continuum of stewardship to be extremely important for preserving Watch Hill's sense of place. It is easy to believe that he hoped future residents of Watch Hill, either summer visitors or year-round residents, would take up the mantel of stewardship. The founding of The Watch Hill

Conservancy in 1999 was part of this strategy.

In 2006, the Conservancy took on the Bay Street Zoning initiative, drafting a new set of regulations to ensure all development on Bay Street conforms to detailed architectural standards and guidelines. Adopted into the Town's zoning ordinance, these design requirements, the Shore Commercial-Watch Hill Special District, help preserve the historic character of Bay Street. In 2007, a five-year action plan entitled *Watch Hill Vision 2012*, was put together which launched several planning initiatives, and provided guidance on programming. Offering historic preservation design assistance, a number of significant projects were redesigned to achieve architectural outcomes that better fit with community's sense of place.

2008 was a seminal year for the Conservancy. The Conservancy started its public historic preservation program to help protect buildings, structures, and landscapes of the Watch Hill Historic District (including Bay Street) and its cultural heritage. *The Watch Hill Conservator* newsletter was established with the first issue coming out in June of 2008. The dual conservation/preservation mission of the Conservancy was the theme and the issue had articles on each of these major and interrelated mission points. In 2009 Watch Hill Style was published as an educational tool to bring to the community an awareness of historic architectural elements and styles represented in Watch Hill's

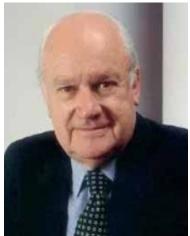
Watch Hill evolved to what it is today through the vision, commitment, and passion of many people over numerous decades.



# The easement ensures that the Napatree lands owned by the Fire District would remain protected into the future and the public would have free access to Napatree to enjoy forever!

houses and landscapes. The Conservancy joined the Town of Westerly's advisory committee to assist with the formation of its comprehensive plan. The Westerly Comprehensive Plan was completed and adopted in 2009. The Conservancy also became involved in a similar role with the Town's harbor

management planning.



FRED WHITTEMORE

The Bay Street
Improvement Project,
a dream of both Fred
Whittemore and
Chap Barnes, is the
single largest project
the Conservancy has
undertaken in its 25-year
history. This endeavor
to bury the utility wires
and remove the unsightly
utility poles on Bay Street
was first announced
publicly in *The Watch Hill* 

Conservator in 2008. From its initial inception to actual finish in 2019, the project moved along through design, fund-raising, permitting, and several phases of construction. The effort encompassed burying unsightly telephone wires, construction of new sidewalks, fresh paving, and the addition of historically appropriate streetlamp fixtures. In 2014, the Conservancy committed to supporting the restoration of Bay Street's historic Lanphear Livery Stable, known at the time as the Holdredge Garage.

For years The Watch Hill Conservancy and the Watch Hill Fire District partnered to steward Napatree Point to further protect its natural resources and conservation values. In 2005, the Conservancy commissioned the Rhode Island Natural History Survey to conduct a thorough ecological reconnaissance of the conservation area. Their report identified the rare and endangered species on Napatree and identified the most urgent stewardship activities requiring attention. This report established the baseline for the Conservancy's management of the Napatree Point Conservation Area. Staff were hired and Napatree stewardship and education programs began. The

Conservancy's flagship youth education program, The Napatree Investigators, held its first summer session in 2007 (see article on Beach Ambassadors in this issue). Many hundreds of children have now participated in the program to learn coastal natural history and conservation; they are the next generation of custodians of our natural environment. A major event supporting the conservation of Napatree Point occurred in 2013. The Watch Hill Fire District issued the Chaplin B. Barnes Napatree Point Conservation Easement to The Watch Hill Conservancy. The easement ensures that the Napatree lands owned by the Fire District would remain protected into the future and the public would have free access to Napatree to enjoy forever!

The Lanphear Livery Stable renovation was finished in 2018 and became the new home of the Watch Hill Conservancy with office space for staff, a large outdoor terrace for entertaining, distant views Napatree, and the Chaplin B. Barnes Reading Room, a large, accessible meeting space for public educational programs and other events. The summertime lecture series - *Lanphear LIVE!* - hosted by the Conservancy and held in the Reading Room had its inaugural season in 2018 and has become a popular, free, evening educational activity for the community.

In 2020, the Conservancy adopted an updated strategic plan reaffirming and simplifying its mission into a simple and memorable tag line: *Conserve/Preserve*, which is precisely what the Conservancy has been doing for the past 25 years. Four years into this plan, the Conservancy has accomplished many of its near-term objectives and has asserted itself again as the primary non-profit steward of Watch Hill's natural and built environments.

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# NAPATREE AND THE WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY MILESTONE EVENTS CELEBRATING CELEBRAT

**1999:** \tag{ The Watch Hill Conservancy is established.

**2005**: Conservancy publishes *Watch Hill Through Time* by author Chaplin B. Barnes.

2005: RI Natural History Survey completes ecological reconnaissance of the Napatree Point Conservation Area.

Updated in 2010.

2006: Shore Commercial-Watch Hill zoning district established to protect and preserve the historic Watch Hill village.

**2007**: Five-year strategic plan *Watch Hill Vision 2012* completed.

2007: \ Julia Royster hired as first Napatree Manager, educators Stephen Brown and Hugh Markey start Investigators youth

education program.

**2007:** Historic preservation design assistance program begins.

2008: Bay Street Improvement Project, an initiative to underground unsightly utility lines and install new decorative street

lighting, begins design phase.

**2008**: First issue of *The Conservator* is published.

**2009**: *Watch Hill Style* by Richard Youngken is published.

2010: Fundraising for Bay Street Improvement Project begins, more than 120 Conservancy members contributed nearly \$2

million with matching and other significant funding provided by the A.M. Roberts, Jr. Charitable Foundation.

2011: \ \ Napatree Science Advisors formed, and first annual science meeting held.

**2012**: Construction begins on the Bay Street Improvement Project.

2013: The first State of Napatree Report is released, 12 Chapters, 51 pages, 12 authors.

2013: The Watch Hill Conservancy is granted the Chaplin B. Barnes Conservation Easement over Watch Hill Fire District

Properties on Napatree.

2015: Because of the diversity of birds and importance to migratory species, Napatree Point is designated a "Globally

Important Bird Area" by the National Audubon Society and Birdlife International.

2018: Lanphear Livery renovation is completed, and the Conservancy establishes new headquarters.

**2018:** First *Lanphear LIVE!* presentation series offered.

**2019**: Bay Street Improvement project is complete! Bay Street looks fabulous!

2019: The Conservancy joins 10 other community organizations committed to address sea level rise and storm surge issues

in Watch Hill.

2020: Conservancy purchases the Chaplin B. Barnes Reading Room and office space at the historic Lanphear Livery.

**2020:** S-year strategic plan is reconsidered, refreshed, and adopted.

**2022:** The tenth *State of Napatree Report* is produced, 28 chapters, 328 pages, 46 authors.

2024: \[ Napatree Point: A Decade of Stewardship by P. August, J. Sassi, and D. Cole is published.

**2024**: 25th Anniversary of The Watch Hill Conservancy.

# SCIENCE DRIVEN DECISIONS

# A moment of reflection with our team of Science Advisors

We are fortunate to have a cadre of highly respected scientists who constantly monitor conditions on the beach, focusing on birds, fish, geology, and more. Whether visitors applaud or decry the answers to those questions, it's important to know one thing: beach stewarding decisions are made based on science.

We wanted to introduce the science team members and have asked each of them to comment on the essential work they do.



PETER AUGUST
Emeritus Professor
Department of Natural Resources Science
University of Rhode Island
GIS Mapping, Landscape Ecology, Wildlife Biology

Napatree is a key ecosystem in the overall mosaic of habitats in Little Narragansett Bay. All the major components - Barn Island Wildlife Management Area, Sandy Point Nature Reserve, Napatree Point Conservation Area, the submerged habitats in the Bay (eelgrass, mussel beds) and the offshore reefs - interact with one another. For example, American Oystercatchers breed on Sandy Point and forage off Napatree; horseshoe crabs breed on Napatree's bayside shore and overwinter in the estuary and Block Island Sound. The biodiversity of the Little Narragansett Bay coastscape is indeed remarkable. Napatree is arguably one of the most pristine barrier spit ecosystems in southern New England.



ALAN DESBONNET
Assistant Director
Rhode Island Sea Grant
Marine and Estuarine Ecology; Marine Fishes and Invertebrates; Shellfish and Shellfish Aquaculture

Little Narragansett Bay, the estuarine ecosystem on the lee side of the Napatree Point barrier beach, is an important nursery ground for many ecologically important species. Small baitfish that feed recreational and commercially important species like bluefish and striped bass grow up in the bay behind that barrier. The quiescent waters of the bay provide a unique habitat for a variety of marine worms and tiny crustaceans important to those juvenile baitfish and to highly regarded birds like oyster catchers, piping plovers, and the wide host of shorebirds that visit Napatree during migration to feed and refuel en route to and from nesting areas. The Napatree barrier beach is an incredibly important component of this unique ecosystem and is a true jewel for scientists and beachgoers.



KEITH KILLINGBECK Professor Emeritus Department of Biological Sciences University of Rhode Island Botany and Plant Ecology

Napatree is a continually shifting, dynamic ecosystem that supports plant species adapted to the vagaries of shifting sands, wind-driven salt spray, and periodic overwash. The unique adaptations of the grasses that dominate much of Napatree and the shrubs that form 'islands' in this matrix of grass are instrumental in minimizing long term disruptions to the biota of Napatree.



HOPE LEESON Independent Field Botanist Part-time Faculty Rhode Island School of Design Botany and Plant Ecology

Every day spent on Napatree Point is a gift. Plants growing in the shrub, dune, marsh, and water habitats provide such diverse sources of food and cover, that there is never a moment where I am not learning something new or observing something that causes me to slow down and watch. The lichen crust that covers the sand in between stems of American beach grass, the anticipation of finding each year's new location for the rare seabeach sandwort and seabeach knotweed, and the magical way that tree swallows hover over bayberry shrubs to gently release the fruit from its pedicel, are just a few examples of the interconnectedness of life one can learn from on Napatree.



BRYAN OAKLEY
Professor
Environmental Earth Science
Eastern Connecticut State University
Coastal Geology

Napatree, as a largely undeveloped barrier system, remains an excellent laboratory to better understand the dynamics of barriers both during and after storm events. The science-based management approach of the Watch Hill Conservancy makes it an ideal location for my students and I to conduct fieldwork.



PETER PATON
Professor and Chair
Department of Natural Resources Science
University of Rhode Island
Ornithology

Napatree is an international destination for a suite of short- and long-distance migratory birds. This coastal location provides key stopover habitat for numerous avian guilds including shorebirds, swallows, and raptors. Few places along the western Atlantic Coast can boost such a high diversity of migratory birds, which makes Napatree such a special place to study migrants.



JANICE SASSI Former Napatree Manager Conservation Policy

As the Napatree manager for more than a decade, I marveled at the constant change of the system. Seeing newly hatched horseshoe crabs, Black Skimmers and American Oystercatchers, seaside sandwort (*Honkenya peploides*) and butterfly migrations makes clear to me the complexity of this special ecosystem and the fragility of its connections. Napatree's weather, plants, birds, insects, marine life, and animals (including humans) intertwine to create this dynamic place. Our Science Advisors, all recognized experts in their respective fields, volunteer their time to guide our policy decisions.



# BEACH AMBASSADORS: NAPATREE NATURALISTS

If you've come to Napatree during the high season, you've seen them. They're up and down each side of Napatree Point all day and part of the night. Resplendent in blue and beige colors, these creatures are a vital part of the ocean environment. They can often be seen with youngsters or adults in tow. Yet these are not another species of bird: they are the Conservancy's naturalists. In most cases, our naturalists are the first people visitors meet, whether they arrive to Napatree by boat or on foot. Their duties are numerous and varied.

Over a decade ago, Chaplin Barnes and Grant Simmons contemplated what they were looking for in a naturalist program. A mutual friend recommended Steve Brown, an educator at Connecticut's Pine Point Academy. Brown seemed a likely candidate, as he had already done several nature talks at local venues.

"They thought I would be a good fit," Brown said. "I'm an educator with a science background, so they thought, 'Maybe he can help us with the science on the beach too.'" Brown began to develop the basis for what would become the

Investigators children's program.

Soon after, Brown and Simmons hired Julia Royster, who was then finishing up her master's degree. Brown and Royster set to work to create both an educational program for kids and programs to educate adults about the unique conservation values and marine environment of Napatree Point. They also tackled tougher topics, such as dealing with prohibited dogs on the beach. Between being the only two naturalists on Napatree and brainstorming what they wanted to do in a solid science program, It was a monumental agenda and the pair often worked 60 hours a week.

"We came up with the name Investigators over lunch one day," Brown said. "We were just throwing names out. We finally came up with Investigators because we wanted a program that was more student driven rather than just coming from us."

Despite the hectic schedule, Royster remembers those early days fondly. "It was fun, Steve and I remember sitting in the basement of the Watch Hill Memorial Library coming up with ideas about what we were going to do for this new program.



"I'm an educator with a science background, so they thought, 'Maybe he can help us with the science on the beach too." Brown began to develop the basis for what would become the Investigators children's program.

Finally, we thought, 'It's like anything else: you schedule it, you make a plan, you see who shows up, and then whatever happens, happens. My favorite part was that you didn't really know what you were going to see. You showed up at the gazebo to meet the kids. Then you walk the kids over to the beach and you had your nets and guidebooks, plus lots of energy, water, and sunscreen! From there it was like, 'Okay, let's just walk the beach and see what we'll find'."

Investigators initially got off to a slow start because there wasn't an extensive outreach program. However, there was one family that really boosted interest. The mother saw the value in the program and began to discuss it with friends. Steve says that soon after that, the Investigators grew into a full program.

"Early sessions were simple explorations of whatever organisms the groups found on the beach," said Brown. It soon became obvious that more children were returning week after week, so eventually the decision was made to create a series of weekly themes.

"I borrowed some things from my school, like a seine net, just to see if those types of activities were going to work, because it was all so new. There were no models anywhere for this type of a program. It was a breakthrough when people realized, 'This is a cool program because we're going to learn a lot, and the Conservancy is doing good things and including people from surrounding towns.'"

Over the years, the duties of the naturalists have grown to include bird protection, guiding beach walks, and helping Science Team members with their work to conserve Napatree. The Investigators is now a well-established program that kids look forward to every summer. One sign of that success is that even after a child has aged out of the program, many ask to stay on as volunteers to help the naturalists.

And even in those hectic early days, Brown said he received plenty of support. "I think Grant Simmons and Chap Barnes deserve a lot of credit for creating the program. Chap and Grant had no idea how to set up the science programming, but they gave us carte blanche to develop it, which was really nice. They gave us the leeway to figure out what a solid program should look like."

"Grant was out there on the beach pounding in fence posts with us in the heat of summer. He certainly cares about Napatree. And Chap Barnes really had the foresight to get the whole Napatree end of things rolling. One thing I loved about Chap is that he trusted people. He trusted me, he trusted Julia. He trusted that we were going to do the right things.

"They were a dynamic team that worked really well together to provide a vision for where the Conservancy could go."



# **Education Programs**

# Napatree Point Investigators Education Program: Ages 7–13

Foster your child's curiosity for the flora and fauna of the various habitats and ecosystems of the beautiful beach environment of Napatree Point, a premiere RI coastal Conservation Area. With a different environmental theme each week, participating Investigators will spend the morning on the beach with Watch Hill Conservancy Naturalists as they learn and explore. Each child will take home a custom t-shirt as a reminder of this special opportunity to be up close and personal with nature and the beautiful shoreline.

#### **PROGRAM DATES:**

Week 1: July 9th to July 11th
Week 2: July 16th to July 18th
Week 3: July 23rd to July 25th
Week 4: July 30th to August 1st
Week 5: August 6th to August 8th
Week 6: August 13th to August 15th

To register, visit https://forms.gle/QM8ri5qQhDz1zuJSA

# Beach Bums Children's Program (New): Ages 4-6

Educational beach time is fun for the little ones. This hour-long program with the Napatree Naturalists will consist of a children's story and an interactive activity covering topics such as horseshoe crabs, beach birds, hermit crabs, and beach clean-up. Each participant will take home a small, child-safe keepsake to remind them of their time on the beach. Parents must accompany their children.

#### **PROGRAM DATES:**

June 24th, July 22nd, August 26th, September 23rd

# Public Outreach Programs Napatree Discovery Table

Visit our interactive information table and meet our Naturalists! Protecting Napatree's wildlife and habitats is a complex process. Take a family stroll on beautiful NapatreePoint – it is the perfect opportunity to learn more about the purpose and benefits of the conservation efforts. Children can touch beachcombing items, shells, crab exoskeletons, and even observe wildlife through binoculars and scopes. No registration is required. This program will take place every Sunday in June, July, and August, from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm.

#### **PROGRAM DATES:**

June 9th, June 16th, June 23rd, June 30th, July 7th, July 14th, July 21st, July 28th, August 4th, August 11th, August 18th, August 25th, September 1st







# Public Outreach Programs Scientific Stroll

To highlight over a decade of stewardship and monitoring work, five specialty programs will be offered in the Napatree Point Conservation Area. The topics include the short- and long-term shoreline change of Napatree, the plants of Napatree Point Conservation Area, the Project Limulus horseshoe crab monitoring program, the Little Narragansett Bay ecosystem, and shorebird activity on Napatree.

#### **PROGRAM DATES:**

The Geology of Napatree: June 15th 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM Little Narragansett Bay: September 21st 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM Plants of Napatree: September 28th 9:30 AM -11:00 AM

# **Saturday Natural History Walks**

Start your day with coffee and a nature walk! Join our Naturalists for a themed walk (plants, birds, marine life) based on participants and enjoy this excellent opportunity to learn about the natural history of Napatree Point Conservation Area.

#### **PROGRAM DATES:**

June 8th, July 6th, July 20th, August 3rd, August 17th, August 31st

# **Seine Net Programs**

Cast a wide net! The Seine Net program highlights the importance of the Little Narragansett Bay ecosystem and its connection to the Napatree Point Conservation Area. Join the Naturalists as they literally cast a large net into the water, catching marine life for up-close and personal examination. Grab your own mini dip net and delight in what you can bring to the surface.

#### **PROGRAM DATES:**

June 29th, July 13th, July 27th, August 10th, August 24th, September 7th

# **Napatree Night Sky Walk**

Join us to observe the night sky on Napatree. Take a walk with local astronomers as they point out constellations and celestial bodies while Napatree Naturalists educate participants on the nightlife found on Napatree. This program is in partnership with the Skyscrapers Inc. astronomer club.

#### **PROGRAM DATE:**

August 7th



## TO REGISTER

For More Information, Please Contact the Conservancy Office at 401-315-5399



Celebrating a milestone like this would not be complete without giving a thought to the next 25 years. What are your hopes or concerns for Napatree?

## **Barbara Axmacher**

**Executive Director** 

# THE IMPORTANCE OF STEWARDSHIP

The conservation stewardship of the Napatree Point Conservation Area is essential for preserving its ecological values, as well as ensuring its resilience in the face of environmental challenges. The Watch Hill Conservancy is proud to be the conservation steward of Napatree Point, doing our part to protect its fragile ecosystem and managing this vulnerable natural resource to ensure sustainable use for future generations. Stewardship efforts are critically important to provide biodiversity and maintain ecological balance to the area's natural beauty, but also to create and preserve opportunities for outdoor recreation, environmental education, cultural heritage, maritime history, as well as attracting visitors and supporting local businesses.

The Watch Hill Conservancy stewardship of Napatree Point is a thread woven into the fabric of the Watch Hill community. Like footprints in the sand, through the protection and management of this treasured coastal habitat, our efforts imprint themselves to the well-being of both present and future generations and foster a harmonious relationship between people and the natural world.

#### **Daniel Cole**

## Manager

# MONITOR, EDUCATE, ADVOCATE

Each week, as I stroll along Napatree, I am astounded by the changes that nature has sculpted into the landscape in such a short time. I understand that the barrier spit is an ever-changing ecosystem, where the beach undergoes rapid changes while the dune system changes slowly. Despite this knowledge, I am always taken aback to see the lagoon closed, mats of seaweed washed ashore, and new deposition or erosion of the beach caused by the ever-present waves. These visible changes, coupled with my comprehension of the movement of Napatree and stories from visitors, prompt me to consistently think about the future of the Conservation Area.

We are currently living in a time of sea level rise and ocean warming, which can lead to an increased likelihood of severe storms and hurricanes. We do not have to look back too far to recall how Napatree was transformed by a severe storm that struck during an unusually high tide. In 1938, Sandy Point was separated from the main barrier - what might occur if a category five hurricane were to strike now? Could Napatree breach in the center of the spit, turning the peninsula into islands? How would that impact the management and stewardship of the area? How will future generations enjoy the conservation area if it becomes an island? These are the concerns that weigh on me as the manager of this natural area. How do we safeguard something that can be altered by a single episodic event? How can we help individuals grasp the value of the natural systems that make Napatree and our coastline resilient in a changing environment?

My thoughts always return to what The Watch Hill Conservancy has consistently carried out over the past 10 years. We must monitor, educate, and advocate. Our past achievements lay the foundation to adapt our stewardship for a changing future. The data we gather today may help us in addressing the unknown questions of tomorrow. When we study and understand that we are facing an increase in nuisance tides that can impede the enjoyment of the point and impact nesting wildlife, we can plan how to steward the Conservation Area. Then we must connect people to these changes and help them understand why they are occurring and why areas like Napatree are crucial to wildlife and our community. Individuals must appreciate these landscapes and acknowledge that they are also the stewards of these natural spaces. This is why expanding our future programming on Napatree will be so vital. We must engage with individuals to ensure they advocate for nature. This is accomplished by investing in education and outreach that is accessible to our entire community. This is no simple task. We have a constantly changing population that often feels detached from nature. To address this, we must enhance our engagement with our current community and the leaders of tomorrow. In my view, this is what the future on Napatree entails - connecting our scientifically based monitoring and stewardship to current and future generations to safeguard our coastline habitats. This is a significant challenge, but one that The Watch Hill Conservancy and its partners must rise to meet.

# Peter V. August

### President

# THE HUB OF COMMUNITY

"Our past guides and inspires the future of The Watch Hill Conservancy," said Grant Simmons. The Lanphear Livery at 1 Bay Street was the hub of the community when it was built in 1887. Not only was it the transportation center of Watch Hill, it was also the social center, a place where neighbors could meet and share the news of the day.

The restoration of the Livery was driven by the vision of returning the Livery to its prominent role as the gateway to the village and the center of the community. The Watch Hill Conservancy's programs and projects strive to bring the community together just as the Livery did in the early years. Through Lanphear LIVE! and the Napatree Investigators, we inform the community, young and old alike. Our social events, like the Celebration of Summer, provide opportunity to renew old friendships and make new ones. The Conservancy's stewardship of Napatree protects its fragile habitats and wildlife populations and ensures that all visitors have a safe and informative experience as they enjoy the pristine conservation area. And finally, The Watch Hill Conservancy, in partnership with many other community organizations, strives to celebrate and protect the unique historical and architectural character of our area.

# LANPHEAR LIVE!





# Society, History, Nature, Technology





#### Summer - 2024

The Chaplin B. Barnes Reading Room
Lanphear Livery
One Bay Street, Watch Hill
Free Admission

## July 15 - Monday - 6:00 PM

The (Discreet) Pursuit of Exceptional Gems

Simon Teakle. Gemologist, Simon Teakle Fine Jewelry & Objects, Greenwich, CT

## July 22 - Monday - 6:00 PM

Edesia: Feeding the World's Children

Amanda Wallack. Development Director, Edesia Inc., North Kingstown, RI

## August 5 - Monday - 6:00 PM

War Gaming in Newport Since 1887: A History of War Gaming and the Navy

Professor Jon S. Logel. War Gaming Department, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI

## August 19 - Monday - 6:00 PM

Underwater Archaeology and the Shipwrecks of RI

Charlotte C.W. Taylor. Archaeologist, RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, Providence, RI

August 26 - Monday - 6:00 PM

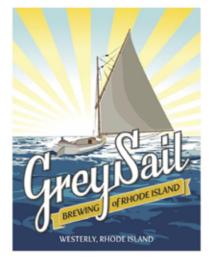
Annual Meeting of The Watch Hill Conservancy

Hosted by: THE WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY www.thewatchhillconservancy.org

# THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS 2024 COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING SPONSORS



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CHAP BARNES & FRED WHITTEMORE

CABANA GROUP

WATCH HILL YACHT CLUB

If you or your business wish to support community programming, please contact us at (401) 315-5399 or email whcethewatchhillconservancy.org.

# GUESS WHO JUST ARRIVED!

# Piping Plover chicks on Napatree!

Born May 2024





# Celebrate with us! Join our Adopt A Plover Program

For \$25 symbolically adopt a Piping Plover to support the Napatree Point Conservation Area.

Donate and receive a beautiful Adoption Kit which includes:

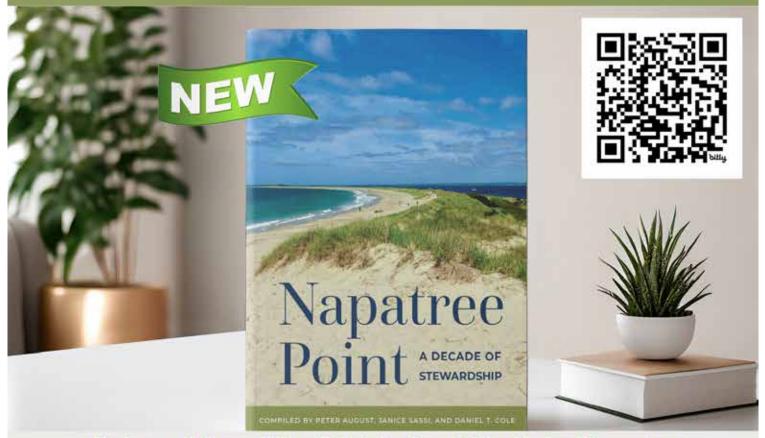
Thank You Letter
Adoption Certificate
Plover Fact Sheet
Plover Sticker



thewatchhillconservancy.org



# For ordering information visit: bit.ly/Napatree\_Point



## Ecology and Stewardship of a Pristine Coastal New England Ecosystem

Since 2013, The Watch Hill Conservancy has published an annual State of Napatree report that contains monitoring data on its fauna, flora, and geology. This comprehensive overview represents a decade of monitoring, stewardship, and public education programs on Napatree.



# Become a Watch Hill Conservancy Member!

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead

To continue the important work we do, we need your help.

Your support will best position the Conservancy to meet the challenges of the the next 25 years!

Our success is made possible through your generosity. We can't do this without you. Become a member today!

Visit: https://thewatchhillconservancy.org/join/



### THE NAPATREE INVESTIGATORS ARE BACK!

Ahoy Investigators! Steve and I hope your winter was fun, and that you're setting your sights on another season of exploration, fascination, and investigation on the beautiful beach that is Napatree Point Conservation Area! In this issue, we'll look at a surprise guest that we saw at the tide pools, a squirmy animal that loves mud, and another look at **seine** netting! Plus, there's a crossword puzzle to challenge your brain. Let's get started!



# THE MIGHTY MINK



You just never know what you'll see on the beach! Last summer, Investigators worked their way all the way up to the tip of Napatree to have a look at tide pools (pools of saltwater left in the rocks when the tide goes out). Just as we were about to start our exploration, an animal darted between the rocks. It was covered in dark brown,

# THE MIGHTY MINK CONTINUED

wet fur. Its body seemed to slink around as it worked itself into spaces between the rocks that we couldn't even see. It would pop out at one point, disappear under a rock, and then



pop up at another point closer to its destination. We soon realized that we were meeting a **mink**!

Minks are about two feet long, with small eyes, ears, and a long tail. It's a carnivore, which means its **prey** include things like rabbits, mice, chipmunks, and even birds. The one we watched came down to the water's edge, stuck its head into the water, and came up with a crab! It quickly turned around and headed up the beach, disappearing into heavy cover. Minks are usually found near salt or fresh water. They're good swimmers and can dive down as deep as 16 feet!

We were very lucky to see this secretive animal that day. It shows what wonderful things you can discover if you pay attention to your surroundings.

And one last thing: when a **mink** is happy, it **purrs** like a cat!

# **LAGOON DWELLER:**

# THE CLAM WORM

Every summer, Investigators take a walk to our **lagoon** to explore. The **lagoon** is a small body of water that is fed by a saltwater stream on the bay side of Napatree. When the water **recedes** (goes out) at low tide, the **lagoon** area often becomes a mud flat. Investigators usually like digging in the mud, and when they do, they often find a squiggly creature burrowing though the mud. These are **clam** worms, many-legged creatures that spend most of their lives digging in the mud for assorted meals. Their skin is beige to dark red. They move like a snake, flexing their body segments to crawl.

How can a **clam** worm see where it's going? Those same body segments (called parapodia) have tiny things sticking out that look like legs. Those are "sensory bristles", that gives them the ability to "taste" chemicals and act as feelers to help them figure out where they are, and where their **prey** is.



**Clam** worms can be found on the west coast as well as the east. In addition to living in the mud, they can also be found under rocks in tidepools, in seagrass beds, and even free-swimming along mud flats. If you decide to pick one up to examine it, be careful! Their jaws hold two pincer-like parts that have many small teeth. They normally only use the **pincers** to hold their food, but they can also give you a nasty bite. **Clam** worms are often used as bait when saltwater fishing.



# **SEINE NETTING**

One of Investigators' favorite activities is learning to use a **seine** net. You've probably used a small hand net along the shore before. This is a similar idea, except the net we use can be as much as 30 feet long! Each end of the net is tied to a small pole. The top of the net has Styrofoam floats on it to help keep it near the water's surface. The bottom of the net has **weights** that help pull the net down. Together, the floats and the **weights** act to keep the net open and allow it to scoop up fish and other organisms.

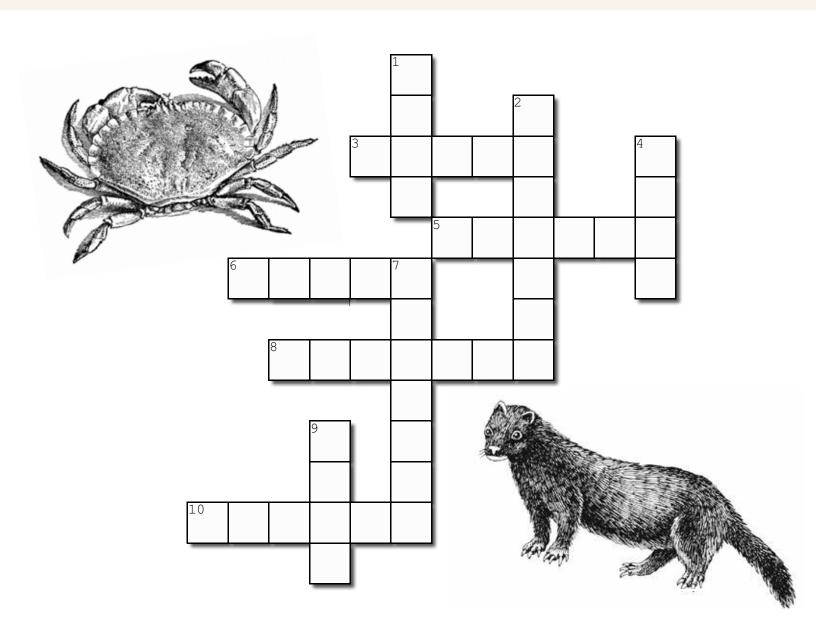
Once we have Investigators holding a pole at each end, they decide who will stay in the shallow water close to shore, and who will "go deep". The person going deep slowly walks straight out from the shore, while holding their pole upright. The person close to shore stands holding the pole to keep the net tight. Once the "deep" person has gone out about ten or fifteen steps, they begin to walk in a semicircle toward the shore. It's important to keep the pole standing up straight so the fish don't escape by swimming over or under the net.

Once they reach the shore, they quickly scoop the net up and lower it to the sand. With luck, there may be dozens of fish flopping around in the net. We quickly scoop them out of the net and place the more unusual ones in a clear plastic container. In a minute, we bring the net back to the water, flip it over to release any living organisms, and get ready to start the process over again! Everyone who wants to use the net gets a turn, while others use our field guides to try to identify as many organisms as possible.



# It's the Investigator Crossword Puzzle!

Here's a new challenge for you: a crossword puzzle! All these words are taken from this issue of The Investigator. Do you know the answers?



## **ACROSS**

- 3. The long net we use in the program.
- 5. You can find lots of mud here at low tide.
- 6. When it's happy, this animal \_\_\_\_ like a cat.
- 8. Watch out for these when handling a clam worm!
- 10. These hold the net at the water's surface.

#### **DOWN**

- 1. Crabs and birds are part of what our animal will on.
- 2. These hold the net toward the bottom.
- 4. A furry surprise we saw at the tide pools!
- 7. When the tide goes out, the water \_\_\_\_\_.
- 9. The \_\_\_\_ worm spends most of its time in the mud.