

SANDY NECK TRACKS

The Sandy Neck Beach Newsletter

Fall 2010

Bathhouse Construction Begins

In October, to make way for the new bathhouse, the West Barnstable Fire Department conducted a controlled burning of the old bathhouse as part of a training exercise.



West Barnstable Fire Department during October training exercise

Now construction of the new bathhouse and garage is well underway despite some bad weather



conditions. The foundation of each building has been poured and framing has begun. The buildings are

scheduled to be completed by Memorial Day. Parking in the upper lot will be limited while construction continues. We thank our visitors for their patience.

PHEASANT SEASON ON THE NECK

Hunting pheasant on Sandy Neck has long been a tradition for many Barnstable residents and non-resident alike. This year pheasants were stocked twice weekly throughout the season and approximately two-thirds were taken.

Sandy Neck Visitors and Staff Rescue 9 Kemp's Ridley Turtles

Every November Sandy Neck Staff patrols the beach for washed up Kemp's Ridley sea turtles. The turtles are often juveniles prone to being cold-stunned as ocean temperatures drop. The immobile turtles often die of exposure if not retrieved and rehabilitated at a proper facility. This year, with the help of visitor sightings, Sandy Neck Staff retrieved nine living Rيدleys and turned them over to the Wellfleet Audubon Society who transported them to Boston for rehabilitation. The rescues are significant because Kemp's Ridley Turtles (*Lepidochelys kempi*) are an endangered species and considered the rarest of sea turtles.



Gatehouse Supervisor Bob Plikaitis and rescued Ridley

Sandy Neck Stranding Contacts

Sandy Neck Gatehouse

(508) 362-8300

Marine and Environmental Affairs

(508) 790-6272

Seals and Dolphins

IFAW Marine Mammal Rescue

(508) 743-9548

Sea Turtles

Wellfleet Audubon Society

(508) 349-2615

Bird Census: A Glimpse of Sandy Neck's Ornithological Diversity

Jeremiah Trimble, of Harvard University's Museum of Comparative Zoology Ornithology Department, visited in December to conduct a census of bird species on Sandy Neck as part of the 111th annual Cape Cod Christmas Bird Count.

Species seen in one hour of observation include Dunlin, Sanderling, Bufflehead, Black Duck, Eider, Long-tailed Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Horned Lark, Snow Bunting, and Redpoll.



Stock Photo of Surf Scoter

Students to Raise New Osprey Pole

Students from Wheaton College and Boston University will use designs provided by Chris Walz of the Audubon Society to construct a new osprey pole to be placed south of the halfway house. Materials were delivered in November and the platform has been built. The location of the pole will be ideal for studying the behavior of Osprey from the Halfway House.

Sandy Neck's Diamondback Terrapins Get Headstart

Each year on Sandy Neck Beach, a small percentage of diamondback terrapins (*Malaclemys terrapin*), a state-listed threatened species, nest on sandy roads where their eggs are in danger of being crushed by vehicles. These eggs will likely not survive without intervention. Sandy Neck Staff carefully remove the eggs from these roads, incubate them, and raise the hatchlings over the winter. When the turtles are released into Sandy Neck's Great Marsh in the spring they will have grown the size of a three year old turtle in just nine months. Their relatively large size enhances their survivorship. This process is called "headstarting".

Normally these turtles are raised at our department, Marine and Environmental Affairs; however, we are authorized by the state through a permit to place these turtles in classrooms and other locations in the Town of Barnstable and Sandwich. Placing the hatchlings in schools, libraries, and community centers provides the necessary care the terrapins need over the winter while simultaneously providing students and the community with the opportunity to learn about turtles, endangered species, and general ecology.



Six month old, Daisy, is being raised by Mrs. Capobianco's Class at West Villages Elementary in Marstons Mills

Erosion Raising Eyebrows

Strong north winds combined with high tides caused significant erosion near the parking lot this December. The erosion peaked the interest of those who recall losing a portion of the lot in the 1970s. While sand is likely to return in spring, Sandy Neck Staff will be monitoring the effects of further winter storms closely.



Portion of parking lot from the 1970s exposed by December 2010 erosion

Invasive Phragmites Gets Special Treatment

Over the last two decades an invasive reed grass, *Phragmites australis*, has migrated into Sandy Neck's fresh water swale system reducing native vegetation and wildlife habitat value. In 2002, The Nature Conservancy initiated a Phragmites control project with the Town of Barnstable. This project has continued with support from the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, USFWS Partners Program, NRCS WHIP grants and gifts from private foundations. This year Sandy Neck Staffers, Erica Erskine and Officer Justin Willey, treated 73 swales (27.7 acres) continuing the battle to keep phragmites at bay.

Sandy Neck Beach Park

Park Manager
Nina Coleman

Natural Resource Officer
Matt Gough

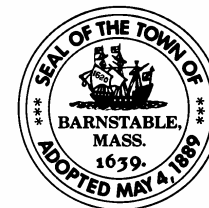
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For the latest Sandy Neck information
visit the Sandy Neck website at:

www.town.barnstable.ma.us
(Click on Sandy Neck Beach Park)



Sandy Neck TRACKS is compiled at the end of each
season by Matt Gough
Edited by Debbie Lavoie

All questions and comments are welcome.
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