

SANDY NECK TRACKS

The Sandy Neck Beach Newsletter Summer 2010

Banner Year for Terrapin Turtles

By Kate Heaslip

This summer 122 Diamondback Terrapin Turtle nests were located, the largest number found in over a decade. In addition, Terrapins began nesting early this season. The first nest was located on May 27th making it the earliest recorded nest found since data collection on Sandy Neck Terrapins began in the 1970s.

With a high number of nests come a high number of hatchlings. Given that each nest has a clutch containing an average of 10 – 12 eggs, we estimate over 1000 tiny Terrapins hatched. Once the hatchlings emerge they make their trek from the dunes to the marsh leaving behind their bicycle tire-like tracks.



Photo by Kate Heaslip

The first hatchling was expected to emerge Labor Day weekend, but was found on August 16th, the earliest recorded hatching of a Terrapin on Sandy Neck. The photo above captures the first hatchling this year moments after leaving its nest. The success of the Terrapins has been attributed to the excellent weather.

Turtle Tips For Around Town

If you see a turtle on a paved road, remember it is a wild animal, although it may not seem "wild". Avoid talking in loud voices or making sudden movements. Pick up the turtle from the sides of its shell closer to the back (remember some turtles bite) and place it on the side of the road in the direction it is headed.

Rare Permit Issued to Escort Campers Past Tern Chicks

Sandy Neck Beach Park is pleased to announce that we have obtained a three year Conservation Management Permit from the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program that will allow limited escorts of self contained vehicles past unfledged Least Tern chicks. This is the first permit of this kind ever issued to a Cape Cod Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) beach.

Annually, Sandy Neck must close a portion of the beach to ORVs for endangered shorebird nesting. Historically, as was the case this summer, Least Terns establish a colony just east of trail two prompting the closure line to be set at approximately mile 2.1. As a result the area between the access trail and trail 2 becomes very crowded. By escorting some self contained vehicles past the closure line, this new service will enable us to reduce the congestion on the "open" beach.



Photo by Kate Heaslip

The ORV Corridor 4th of July 2010

This permit does not allow escorts past unfledged Plover chicks as this species is federally listed as Threatened. A federal Section 10 Permit as well as a state Conservation Management Permit would be required to escort past plover chicks.

A Note from Sandy Neck's Natural Resource Officers

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the users of Sandy Neck for their cooperation during the 2010 summer season. We strive to provide a safe and enjoyable outdoor experience while maintaining the integrity of Sandy Neck's natural resources and beauty. Your participation in this goal is essential and appreciated.

2010 Endangered Shorebirds

Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*)

Sandy Neck's federal and state Threatened Piping Plover population produced **1.62** fledglings per nest surpassing the MA target success rate of **1.4**. While small, the increase in productivity this summer helps counter the low productivity in 2009. This year **37** pairs of Piping Plovers nested on Sandy Neck and collectively produced **60** fledglings.



Photo by Ken Teixeira

Piping Plover nesting on Sandy Neck Point

Least Terns (*Sterna antillarum*)

Least Terns, listed by MA as a species of special concern, formed 4 colonies with approximately **490** adults. The productivity was estimated as low.



Photo by Kate Heaslip

Least Tern nesting near Trail 2

Birds and Bivalves Bridge the Summer and Fall Seasons

While ORV usership has dropped off since Labor Day Weekend, the unofficial end of summer, birding and shellfishing continue to attract new and seasoned visitors to Sandy Neck.

Birders have enjoyed various species "staging" on the Neck on their way to warmer winter climates. Great Blue Herons, Egrets, and Harriers (Marsh Hawk) can be seen gliding over the Great Marsh. On the Bay side, enormous flocks of swallows, sanderlings, and semi-palmated plovers command the awe of spectators as they simultaneously take flight. In addition, waterfowl including scoter, eider, and loon are commonly seen.

Softshell clamming has proved bountiful to the handful of shellfishermen harvesting at the eastern end of the Sandy Neck peninsula called the Point. Barnstable shellfish permit holders have easily harvested their limit of steamers while enjoying the backdrop of Cape Cod Bay and the Sandy Neck Lighthouse. The Point is most easily accessed by boat or kayak, however, ORV permit holders often drive to trail 6 and walk to the flats.

Marsh Side Shellfishing Closed

Currently the marsh side of Sandy Neck is closed to shellfishing until December 1st due to migratory bird activity and associated contamination.

Hunting on Sandy Neck to Begin

A small group of hunters are gearing up to return to Sandy Neck this October primarily for pheasant, migratory birds, and cottontail rabbit. Hunting for in-season game occurs between sunrise and sunset and open season dates will be posted at the Gatehouse and at the beginning of the Marsh Trail. All hunters must check in at the Sandy Neck Gatehouse prior to and at the conclusion of their hunt, and adhere to State laws and supplemental Sandy Neck Regulations.

NOTE TO HIKERS: While hunters are aware that Sandy Neck is a multi-use beach, consider wearing hunter's orange while hiking the Marsh Trail and connector trails Monday through Saturday. Hunting is prohibited on Sundays. In addition, hunting is not allowed on the front beach at any time.

ORV Stickers on the Cheap

Enjoy the fall and winter seasons with a drive down the beach. ORV "off Season" permits are on sale at the Gatehouse. They are good from the time of purchase until April 15, 2011. Call the Gatehouse or refer to our website for a list of required equipment. The reduced prices are as follows:

Barnstable Resident:	\$25
Sandwich Resident:	\$35
Non-Resident:	\$50

Sandy Neck Beach Park

Park Manager
Nina Coleman

Natural Resource Officer
Matt Gough

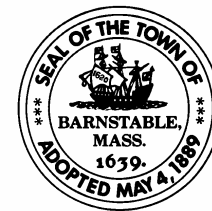
Town of Barnstable
Marine and Environmental
Affairs Division

1189 Phinney's Lane
Centerville, Ma 02632
(508) 790-6272

Sandy Neck Gatehouse
(508) 362-8300

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.
matthew.gough@town.barnstable.ma.us