

## Junior Rangers Create Outdoor Marine Mammal Exhibit; Explore Sandy Neck

In early August the Sandy Neck Junior Rangers went above and beyond their stewardship duties to create an outdoor marine mammal exhibit on Bodfish Beach. The exhibit displayed images and fun facts about various marine mammals including the right whale, common dolphin, and harbor porpoise. For each marine mammal represented, string was stretched between two posts to correspond with the length of the animal, allowing visitors to fathom the immense size of many of the sea creatures and the relatively small size of others. The exhibit was displayed for three weeks in August.



Jr. Rangers smile next to their completed marine mammal exhibit.

During the 5 session program the Jr. Rangers also explored Sandy Neck's front beach, maritime forest, and marsh identifying plants and animals, learning natural resource management, and playing games that demonstrate ecological concepts. In addition to the creation of the exhibit, the Jr. Rangers also participated in the removal of a Diamondback Terrapin Turtle nest from the road, learned techniques for locating plover nests, and rescued a fiddler crab trapped in an aluminum water bottle which was discovered while picking up litter from the beach. Each Jr. Ranger received a certificate and patch for completing the program.

## Sandy Neck Shakes the Greenhead Blues - Barely

Greenhead flies had arrived in full force by July fourth to harass and bite beach goers. While the lifecycle of greenheads (*Tabanus costalis*.) can take 1 to 3 years, adults emerge each year around the first full moon of July and begin to disappear approximately one month later. This year stubborn greenhead stragglers were still feasting on staff late into August.

Box traps, painted blue to attract greenheads, align the marsh trapping many flies before they reach the front beach. However, once the strong fliers reach the north side they begin to bite bathers using their razor sharp mouth parts. Brands of insect repellent and homemade remedies are swapped like recipes on the beach, but unfortunately no deterrent seems to effectively fend off the carnivores. To reduce exposure to bites, it is recommended to wear light-colored clothing, including a hat, especially on warm, windless, sunny days when flies are most active.



Horsefly box traps

## Milk Crates Protect Turtle Nests - Puzzle Hikers

To protect Diamondback Terrapin nests from digging predators such as skunk, raccoon and coyote, Biologist Kate Heaslip placed plastic crates on 112 of 114 located turtle nests. The holes in the crates are small enough to keep paws out and large enough to allow turtle hatchlings to crawl through. While the crates have labels describing their function, new comers to Sandy Neck often scratch their head as they stroll by an "unusually" large number of crates that seem out of place.



## 2011 Endangered Shorebirds

### Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*)

Sandy Neck's federal and state protected piping plover population produced 1.3 fledglings per nest - just under the target success rate of 1.5. This year 44 pairs of piping plovers nested throughout the front beach, primarily at the point. They collectively laid 189 eggs, 80 of which hatched. A total of 57 of the 80 chicks ultimately fledged. Despite the adult plover pair's dedicated parenting, eggs and chicks are often lost due to inclement weather, exposure, or predation.



A protective adult plover watches over its chick.

### Least Terns (*Sterna antillarum*)

Sandy Neck was a summer home for 180 pairs of least terns which are listed by Massachusetts as a species of special concern. Tern shelters were constructed and strategically placed to



Chicks resting by a tern shelter.

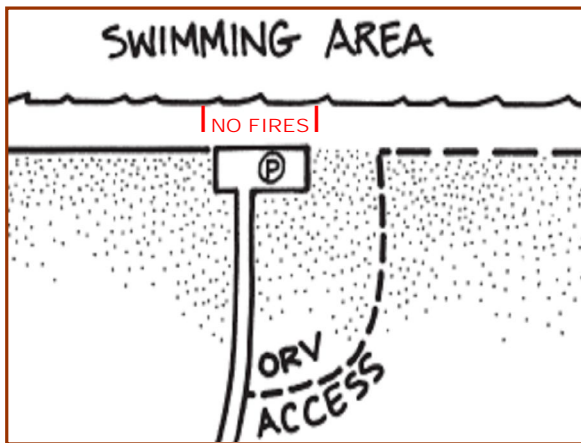
provide cover for newly hatched chicks. However, overall productivity was estimated as low.

## Camp Fires - A Favorite for Friends and Families

To many visitors, the Sandy Neck experience is not complete without sitting around a campfire with friends and family making smores and telling stories. Evening camp fires are allowed after 7:00pm or sunset, whichever comes first. However, this can only occur when weather conditions are permitting, so please



check with Sandy Neck staff on the day you would like a camp fire.



No fires are allowed within the public beach area directly in front of the parking lots.

## Irene - Not So Mean to Sandy Neck

Tropical Storm Irene hit Barnstable in late August. While most of Barnstable was faced with power outages and a significant mess to clean up, Sandy Neck Beach was left relatively unscathed. Sandy Neck did lose power to the ORV air compressor leaving many visitors tires flat, but the strong south winds and associated storm surge caused little erosion.

## THESE DUNES AREN'T MADE FOR WALKING

Sandy Neck's dunes are vital to endangered plants and animals, provide storm protection for Barnstable Harbor, and contribute tremendously to the culture and scenic beauty of Cape Cod. However, the rolling hills are as fragile as the plants that hold them in place. Hiking feet can kill vegetation in a single pass allowing sand to wash or blow away. The deterioration of the dune seems gradual to the casual observer, but is alarmingly rapid to the trained eye. Unfortunately, once the damage is done, the dune may never re-establish.

While awareness of the vulnerability of Sandy Neck's dunes has increased since the early 1980's, reports of people "tearing up" the dunes is common during the summer months. The reports are essential and have helped us keep human impact on the dunes to a minimum. Thank you to Sandy Neck's unofficial stewards.

## Dunes and Marsh Inspire Artists

Sandy Neck Beach in partnership with the Cape Cod Art Association hosted a series of excursions in late August and September. A handful of artists took advantage of the opportunity to spend the day and/or night at the Halfway House letting Sandy Neck's beauty inspire their creativity.

## Tent Site Use Increases Despite Strenuous Sandy Hike

The secret is out. The tent sites at Sandy Neck provide a wonderful backpacking experience. However, the 3.3 mile hike to the camp site proved strenuous to backpackers not taking into account the lack of shade on hot days and the increased difficulty of hiking in sand.



Many hikers raved of the beauty, but described the hike as a "learning experience" vowing to bring more water and less equipment next time.

Park Manager  
Nina Coleman

Natural Resource Officer  
Matt Gough

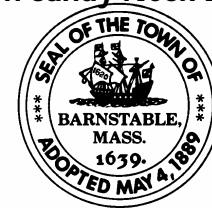
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For the latest Sandy Neck information  
visit the Sandy Neck website at:

[www.town.barnstable.ma.us](http://www.town.barnstable.ma.us)  
(Click on Sandy Neck Beach Park)



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All questions and comments are welcome.  
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