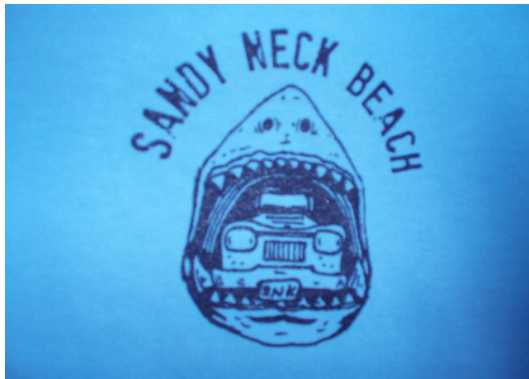


2012- Summer of the Shark

This summer brought an increase in the number of great white shark sightings on Cape Cod. Many of the east facing beaches on the National Seashore saw closures due to the toothy predators. Scientists attribute increased numbers of sharks to the increase in the grey seal population. There were even great white sightings in Cape Cod Bay just a few miles north of Sandy Neck Beach. Great whites have not been seen in the Bay in the past 5 years. The best way to avoid a human shark interaction is stay out of the water during dawn and dusk and get out of the water if you see seals. The most common reason for shark attacks is mistaken identity. Don't get mistaken for a seal.



The sightings have been well documented by local media outlets, prompting a new Sandy Neck t-shirt option, designed by SNK Supervisor Bret Conefrey, which can be purchased in the Gatehouse.

Fall Junior Rangers

The popular Jr. Ranger program will have a Fall session for the first time this year. During the program, participating youths explore Sandy Neck's front beach, maritime forest, and marsh. They learn plant and animal identification, natural resource management, and they play games that demonstrate ecological concepts. Jr. Rangers can also expect to learn techniques used in marine mammal rescues and learn about shark biology. Each Jr. Ranger receives a certificate and patch for completing the program. The program will run on Thursday nights from September 20th to October 18th from school dismissal to 5 pm.

Parking Plan

In order to make Sandy Neck a safer and more enjoyable beach experience, the Sandy Neck Park Manager implemented a new parking configuration for the summer of 2012. The plan was necessary because there was a 40% increase in the number of ORV permits sold. The plan established a well defined ORV Corridor which minimized pedestrian/vehicular interactions and provided equal space to both campers and day trippers.

The plan was kept in place until all the plover chicks fledged. The parking plan also made it easier for Sandy Neck Natural Resource Officers to patrol and keep the beach safe for everyone. It did not take long for the beach community to realize the plan was a good idea as the staff received a lot of positive feedback.

2012 Endangered Shorebirds

Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*)

Sandy Neck's federal and state protected piping plover population produced 0.05 fledglings per nest. This year 41 pairs of piping plovers nested 62 times throughout the front beach, primarily at the point. They collectively laid 197 eggs, 14 of which hatched. A total of 3 of the 14 chicks ultimately fledged. This is an historic low productivity for plovers on Sandy Neck which can be attributed to both the late Nor'easter in June and the increased number of predators in the park. Plover productivity was low throughout the entire state in 2012.



A protective adult plover watches over its chick.

Least Terns (*Sterna antillarum*)

Sandy Neck was a summer home for 75 pairs of least terns which are listed by Massachusetts as a species of special concern. Tern nests were also heavily predated by the coyotes and fox family.

Predators of SNK



Sandy Neck has new permanent residents in 2012. A family of red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) set up residence in the spring and stayed all summer long. These “smart” predators made quick work of the eggs of nesting shorebirds on the beach. Their tracks can be observed on the beach going from one bird nest to another picking up eggs along the way. Plovers and terns already have to hide from coyotes, skunks, raccoons, crows, and gulls, now we can add fox to the list.

Benjamin Bodfish Memorial Park Dedication



In July, Sandy Neck held the rededication of Bodfish Memorial Park. A stone marker was installed last winter when the new Bathhouse was constructed. Members of the Bodfish family were present along with MEA staff and many members of the public.

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.

Spotted Knapweed Removal

The battle with exotic invasive species continues on Sandy Neck. This summer Sandy Neck staff continued with their removal of exotic plant species this time targeting the spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*). This plant spreads quickly if not controlled. It outcompetes other plants not only by sucking up water faster but it also releases a toxin from its roots that stunts the growth of nearby plants. If you see this plant please remove it and dispose it in the trash because its seeds will still be viable if left on the ground.



Park Manager
Nina Coleman

Natural Resource Officer
Christopher Nappi

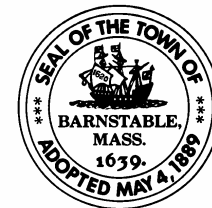
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For the latest Sandy Neck information
visit the Sandy Neck website at:

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



Sandy Neck TRACKS is written and compiled
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noted.

All questions and comments are welcome.
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