

## Leatherback Sea Turtle Lands on SNK



*Sandy Neck Supervisor Donna Bragg poses with the stranded leatherback sea turtle.*

Typically sea turtles wash up on Sandy Neck during the late fall and early winter when winter storms and dropping temperatures trap cold stunned juveniles in Cape Cod Bay. This year SNK had an early stranded turtle in Great Marsh. This giant, adult leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) was caught by surprise by rapidly falling tides on the flats in Barnstable Harbor and became stranded. She was a little underweight but otherwise in good health. Veterinarians took blood samples, gave her some antibiotics and sent her on her way. This amazing turtle was originally tagged on a nesting beach in Guatemala. After leaving here she will make the over 2000 mile journey back to nest once again.

## Fall Junior Rangers

The popular Junior Rangers program is back for its second Fall Season. 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 19<sup>th</sup> to October 17<sup>th</sup> from school dismissal to 5 pm.

## Successful Summer

This summer brought many uncontrollable variables to the beach that determined how the park was managed. Early in the season we were met with very soft sand because of extensive erosion from winter storms, we had an unusual beach closure, and a very rainy June. Through all of this we still managed to have a fun, safe, and happy summer season. Beach visitors enjoyed great warm weather on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and all of August. In September the weather was cool and dry, the fishing was great, and the crowds were small. This is a great time to come get your seasonal ORV Sticker. Going forward, check our website or call the Gatehouse for hours.



## Hiking trails grow in popularity

The months of August and September are prime time for hiking the trails on Sandy Neck. The weather is cooler, the bugs are tolerable, and the crowds have gone away. These months also coincide with berry picking season. If you know where to look, you can find a plethora of beach plums, blueberries, and cranberries ripe for the picking. These berries are popular ingredients in jams, jellies, or dried. So after all the crowds have gone, get out of the house and come experience the other side of Sandy Neck.

## New Gatehouse Mascot

If you have been in the gatehouse recently you may have noticed the new diamondback terrapin we have. He was one of the headstart terrapins from last year and has not grown much. His name is "Fifty" because he is the size of a 50 cent piece. He is a dwarf terrapin that will not grow to the full size of an adult terrapin. Since it is unlikely that he would survive in the wild he will be a permanent fixture in the gatehouse. Stop by and see him next time you drive thru. He loves visitors.

## 2013 Endangered Shorebirds

### Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*)

Sandy Neck's federal and state protected piping plover population produced 0.35 fledglings per nest. This year 27 pairs of piping plovers nested 45 times throughout the front beach, primarily at the point. They collectively laid 169 eggs, 36 of which hatched. A total of 16 of the 36 chicks ultimately fledged. Although plover numbers rebounded from last year the total productivity is still very low. There was a powerful storm early in the nesting season that washed out many of the nests along the front beach. Predators accounted for a large percentage of chick and egg loss after post-storm renesting occurred.



*Three newly hatched piping plover chicks rest and wait for their next sibling to arrive.*

### Least Terns (*Sterna antillarum*)

Sandy Neck was a summer home for 72 pairs of least terns which are listed by Massachusetts as a species of special concern. The Sandy Neck tern population has been at historic lows for the past two years. We are trying to determine why terns are not choosing Sandy Neck to nest in the numbers they have in the past. Stay tuned for more information.

## Hunting Season Upon Us

*Hunting season started in early September and will continue through the winter months. Please be aware of hunters when hiking on the back trails in the upcoming fall season. Hunters are required to check-in at the Gatehouse so staff will be able to inform you if there are any hunters on the property. Hunting can occur any day of the week except Sunday. It is a good idea to wear bright, visible clothing while hiking.*

## COAST SWEEP A HIT

This September Sandy Neck is gearing up for COASTSWEEP 2013. This program is sponsored by the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management and coordinated by the Urban Harbors Institute. Cleanups take place at local beaches in Barnstable in September and October. The Sandy Neck Coastsweep was held on September 28<sup>th</sup> and was very successful. Twenty-five volunteers from Boyscout Troop 54, Cape Singles, and helpful families collected 12 bags of garbage and 10 bags of recycling. The strangest item recovered from the beach was a top to an old wood burning stove. The data for the debris collected is sent to the Ocean Conservancy who compiles it into a marine debris database. This information is used to identify sources of marine debris to help stop the problem from the source. For more information contact the SNK Gatehouse.

### Park Manager

Nina Coleman

### Natural Resource Officer

Christopher Nappi

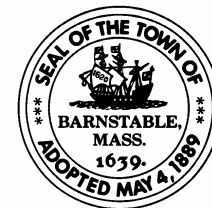
Town of Barnstable  
Marine and Environmental  
Affairs Division

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



Sandy Neck TRACKS is written and compiled  
by Christopher Nappi unless otherwise  
noted.

All questions and comments are welcome.  
[chris.nappi@town.barnstable.ma.us](mailto:chris.nappi@town.barnstable.ma.us)