

SANDY NECK TRACKS

The Sandy Neck Beach Newsletter Winter 2011

New Osprey Pole at Research Cottage Enables Visitors Close-up Viewing

Hikers, Artists, and Scientists can now observe osprey up close thanks to Wheaton College students and the Audubon Society.



The new pole was raised less than 100 yards south of the Halfway House, Sandy Neck's research cottage, and osprey have been observed using the platform. A camera was installed above the platform and has already captured video images of the birds of prey.

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A: Dr. Pete Auger Installs Finishing Touches
B: Students Enjoy the Fruits of their Labor

Deceased Harbor Porpoises Wash Up Unusual? Yes and No

This winter a relatively large number of deceased harbor porpoises have washed up on Sandy Neck. According to the International Federation for Animal Welfare (IFAW) Marine Mammal Stranding Network, over 50 deceased harbor porpoises were washed up on Cape Cod's beaches - approximately 10 of which were found on Sandy Neck. It is the largest number of harbor porpoise strandings since 2005. While seemingly alarming, IFAW believes this year's trend is part of a natural cycle.

When a marine mammal has stranded on Sandy Neck, IFAW is notified and sends a volunteer or staff member to collect measurements, genetic material (skin sample), and to look for physical clues that may shed light on the cause of death. No pattern has been revealed that point to one specific cause of death for this year's harbor porpoise strandings.



Harbor Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)

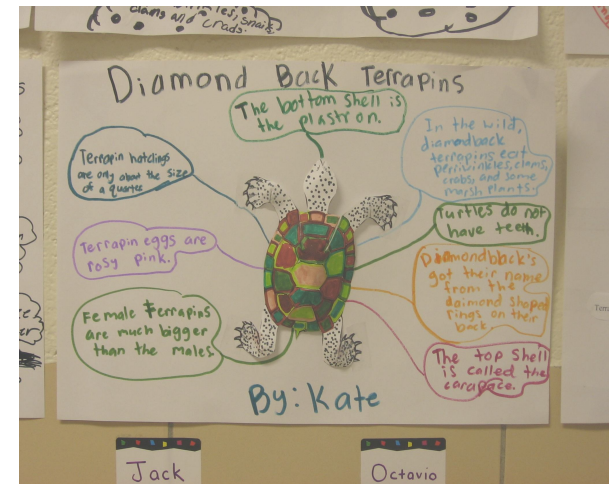
New Walkway: Nearly Complete and Ready for Feet

A new walkway from the Gatehouse to the parking lot is functional and near completion. The walkway will separate cars from pedestrians providing a safe and scenic stroll to our new bathhouse and access to the front beach.



Diamondback Terrapins Inspire Learning

We continue to receive praise for the Diamondback Terrapin Turtle Headstart Program not only for the helping hand it gives the threatened species, but for opportunities it provides connecting the community to their environment. Hatchlings are being raised in captivity at 12 different locations and have sparked curiosity and creativity throughout Barnstable and Sandwich.



An example of posters created by Mrs. Keenan's class at Horace Mann Charter in Hyannis

The turtles are thriving and logistics for their spring release are being planned. Students and community members will travel to Sandy Neck in June to celebrate the Terrapins' return to the marsh. We are proud of the partnership that has developed between Marine and Environmental Affairs and participating schools and community based organizations. We look forward to continued collaborative success.

Fun in the Sun at Annual Run
Sandy Neck hosted the 5th annual *Frozen Fat A** Ultra Run* February 12th. Thirty-eight runners traveled from as far as Louisiana to participate in Cape Cod's only "ultra run" - any race over 26.2 miles. This year runners started the 33 mile jaunt at the gatehouse and finished only after they ran down the marsh trail to trail 5, north to the front beach, and back to the gatehouse - TWICE!



Ultra-runners begin their frozen trek

Bob Jensen, who started the Cape Cod Ultra Running Society with fellow runner Pete Stringer, organizes and facilitates the *Frozen Fat A*** each year with his wife, Fiona. He chose Sandy Neck as the location because it's his favorite place to run and schedules the race in winter to add to the epic spirit of ultra running. There is no fee and therefore no excuses not to participate - unless you count the extreme mileage and often harsh winter elements runners must endure. This year the sun came out and temperatures were relatively mild reaching the upper thirties. Still, despite the good weather, Sandy Neck

staff stand-by each year to respond to cold related and other medical emergencies.

The race culminated with a presentation of decorated quahog shells for each finisher and a mini feast of Fiona's turkey soup, Bob's quahog chowder, and other homemade goodies. To find out more about future races and the Cape Cod Ultra Running Society go to www.capecodultrarun.com.

Winter Spares Parking Lot; Exits in Style.

Sandy Neck failed to escape the winter's annual pounding of wind and waves. Throughout winter, Nor'easter erosion morphed many of the Neck's tranquil dune slopes into abrupt cliffs including those in front of the parking lot. Though foul weather combined with high tides threatened to wash the lot out to sea, it appears the parking lot is safe. Let's hope that winter will exit gracefully as signs of spring appear.



Photo taken at Trail 5 in late March

Park Manager
Nina Coleman

Natural Resource Officer
Matt Gough

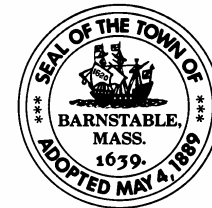
Town of Barnstable
Marine and Environmental
Affairs Division

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 written and compiled at the end of each season by Matt Gough unless otherwise noted.
Edited by Debbie Lavoie

All questions and comments are welcome.
matthew.gough@town.barnstable.ma.us