Newly Protected Bill’s Island Documented as Haven for Shore Birds

Tom Tetzner is an avid wildlife photographer and was a participant in our spring expedition into the interior of newly protected Bill’s Island, in Quonnie Pond. Tom volunteered to return to the island in the fall and check on what kind of birds were present. So on Sept. 17th he donned his camo, rigged up his Nikon and trailered his aluminum skiff to the Quonnie launch. He was hardly prepared for what he found.

The island was packed with dozens, perhaps hundreds of shore birds including Great Egrets, the smaller Snowy Egret, Great Blue Heron, Green Backed Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, juvenile heron, and a variety of other wading birds. Not only were they along the grassy shoreline, many were roosting in the tree canopy. Last fall, when development of the island with a private estate was looking quite likely, a number of environmental

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Message From Our President

Dear Members,

I am writing on the morning following our Volunteer Appreciation cookout, which was a wonderful evening. It is events like this that highlight what Salt Ponds Coalition is. It is a group of talented volunteers, from all backgrounds, doing their part to keep South County the wonderful place that it is. Our thirty-plus Pond Watchers faithfully test the pond waters every other week—rain, wind, or shine. Another group of volunteers routinely help out at the Kettle Pond Center each week to off-set our rent. We have many volunteers who have helped with Coastal Clean-up, more who transplant hundreds of bushels of quahogs, and still others who lead pond tours and educational groups. Not only is the volunteerism a wonderful thing, but everyone has a good time doing it. To say the least I am grateful to everyone who helps Salt Ponds Coalition through their work and financial support.

On the same note, I wish to congratulate our Membership Committee for the clever and very successful “Non-event” fund-raiser. We are also thankful to George and Cathy Hill who volunteer to host our annual Pizza Fundraiser, the social event of the summer.

I would like to thank Dr. Ted Callender for a tremendous amount of work analyzing reams of pond water testing data. Ted has developed water quality health indices for each pond that are easy to read and understand and are posted on our website for all to review. Elise Torello is utilizing her Masters (degree) in computer science to better organize our data and develop an interactive online map that will complement Ted’s work. When completed, you will be able to click on a particular sampling station and all the water quality results will be presented. Ted and Elise are a terrific team.

I am also pleased to report that Dr. Roy Jeffries will coordinate the pond testing operations starting in the Spring of 2010. Roy has retired from a faculty position at UConn and is a long time resident of Shelter Harbor.

And of course a heartfelt thanks to all of our members and supporters and our volunteer board of directors. The generosity of all these wonderful people is what makes our organization work.

Art Ganz

Please consider Salt Ponds Coalition in your year-end giving

Salt Ponds Coalition is working year-round on issues facing the salt ponds. We are supported by members and concerned people like you. If you are planning year-end giving, please consider including Salt Ponds Coalition in your plans.

Salt Ponds Coalition is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. Gifts to SPC are tax-deductible.
Newly Protected Bill’s Island Documented as Haven for Shore Birds

(continued from page 1)

organizations came together to make the case that this was really important habitat for wading birds and migrating song birds as well. Letters of concern over the pending loss of Bill’s Island habitat came in from Audubon, The Nature Conservancy, US Fish & Wildlife, Save the Bay, local bird watchers, and RI DEM. These letters are still posted on our website at www.saltpondscoalition.org/billsisland.

Shore birds are drawn to quiet coastal habitat, away from people and dangerous animals. During the summer they forage here, along the grassy banks and tidal flats. They roost on the island in the evenings and perhaps even build nests in the dense interior. In the fall they congregate on the island. With the change in light and their brood fledged, the birds put on the feed in preparation for fall migration to Central America, or perhaps South America.

Finn Caspersen was responsible for protecting many important parcels of land on the pond, or in its watershed.

Finn Caspersen - Benefactor to Quonnie Pond and Westerly Area.

Finn Caspersen, an active and high profile seasonal resident of Westerly, passed away in September. Mr. Caspersen was a public figure and will be remembered my many people, for many different things. SPC will remember him as a benefactor of Quonnie Pond and a protector of local open space.

Finn and his wife Barbara first became involved with the Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation (WFC) in 1991, two years after its founding. Since that time, he served as a Trustee for nine years, including two as Chairman. He remained a Trustee at the time of his death.

Finn’s service and commitment to the Foundation were invaluable. He was an effective fundraiser who led by example, but his contributions went far beyond fundraising. He utilized his extensive connections to help build the WFC holdings to over 1,000 acres of diverse habitat. Projects include the commissioning of scientific research in Quonnie Pond and Winnapaug Pond by URI and Salt Ponds Coalition; the funding of a survey of Flora and Fauna on WFC Properties in 2003; engineering, environmental studies and legal work to further the much needed dredging of Quonnie Pond; and the acquisition of 404 acres of land formerly owned by a local utility. This land became the Shelter Harbor Golf Club, which has conservation restrictions barring any further development and which seems to make a strong effort to be environmentally sensitive.

Finn gifted land and development rights to the WFC and last fall played a key role in the acquisition of Bill’s Island, which is profiled on page 1. Without his expertise and support, the island would likely have been sold to a developer and the results would have been disastrous for the pond and all those that utilize it.

Thank you Finn, we will miss your stewardship of our local lands.

Dozens and perhaps hundreds of shore birds congregated on Bill’s Island in September. The large white birds are Great Egrets, the small white ones are Snowy Egrets. Large darker birds are Great Blue Herons and the bird in the tree (top center) is a Night-Heron. SPC and partners maintained that Bill’s Island was unique habitat for shore birds and migrating song birds and the proof is in the pictures. Photo Tom Tetzner

Bill’s is ideal habitat, because it is surrounded by tidal flats for feeding as well as a border of grass and rocks, and it offers tree canopy for refuge. And it’s all on a densely vegetated island, which reduces the likelihood of predators lurking in the shadows, dogs or cats roaming loose, or people creating commotion. It is also rich with berries to fuel song birds on their trip south in the fall.

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of assistance. Some of the ideas we’ve explored include following.

Stormwater management: A lot of pollution flows into the ponds via precipitation runoff. Just think of the big rains we had in June, and again in October – 4” to 5” per event. Rain like that quickly saturates the ground and results in thousands and thousands of gallons of water flowing over yards, through the woods, along roads, and into storm drains, which flow straight into the ponds. Along the way that water picks up fertilizer, pet waste, wild animal waste, petroleum products from roads and driveways and in some areas, agriculture waste. Diverting that water into a constructed wetland made up of rip rap and vegetation can filter out the suspended solids as well as a lot of the unwanted nutrients and bacteria.

On a private lot scale, similar practices can have a meaningful effect. A vegetated buffer of fifteen to thirty feet planted between the edge of the pond and a littoral yard, can reduce pollution by up to 85%. Such buffers – often nothing more than un-mown native grasses and low growing shrubs – also discourage Canada Geese from visiting. We all know how geese leave their nutrient and bacteria rich calling cards on open grassy areas.

Fertilizer ordinance: Fertilizers and associated herbicides and pesticides can cause a lot of damage when they wash off into a salt pond. Lush green lawns are nice, but there are places where the responsibility to maintain a delicate wild resource makes chemical landscaping inappropriate. The neighborhoods around the salt ponds are likely one of these spots. Charlestown is looking at ordinances enacted by other communities that restrict or prohibit lawn chemicals, with an eye for enacting their own set of regulations.

Dredging: When the breachways were dredged and lined with rocks back in the 50s and early 60s, the plan was to perform maintenance dredging on a regular basis to keep sand from ocean storms from building up. That dredging has largely never happened and now all of the ponds are filling in around the inlets, cutting down on the turnover of water between the ocean and the ponds. We are collectively looking at ways we can 1) stop the silting from getting worse, 2) dredge what has filled in and 3) maintain the inlets. The state and Feds have not done their part and we are looking at alternatives.

Shellfish transplants: Oysters filter up to fifty gallons of water per day and remove nutrients in the process. One million oysters x 50 gallons equal 50-million gallons of water per day. A partnership of Salt Ponds Coalition, Save the Bay and The Nature Conservancy have been conducting transplants in Ninigret and Quonnie, and a co-op of oyster growers has transplanted tens of thousands of oysters into sanctuaries around Ninigret Pond, hoping to jump start native sets of these natural filters. Unfortunately Rhode Island sanitation laws prohibit planting shellfish into Green Hill Pond because it is closed to shellfishing due to bacteria pollution. We are looking for a way to one day introduce shellfish to Green Hill Pond.

Public education: Reaching out to people who live in proximity to the ponds and educating them on the issues facing the ponds is important, both in terms of building public support, and helping to solve pollution problems on their own property. SPC is looking forward to helping with public outreach campaigns.

In light of the town plan, DEM indicated in a recent meeting that it was open to modifying the regulations as applied to Charlestown. Their proposal picks up on several elements of the Title 5 program in Massachusetts, most notable of which is the policy that identifies transfer or sale of a property as the primary event requiring an upgrade to the wastewater system.

Under this idea, owners of a cesspool in all zones other than zone 1, which is right along the ponds, could upgrade from a cesspool to a traditional system and continue using that system until it failed or the property was sold or transferred. The same logic would apply to repairs to failed leach fields and additions that require enlarging the leach fields. This policy could substantially ease the financial burden for homeowners, while speeding the replacement of obsolete cesspools and also, ironically, the installation of the new denite systems. According to DEM calculations, offering relief to folks staying put, while requiring property transferring hands to be upgraded, captures more properties more quickly. Additionally, the sale of a property presents an opportunity to lessen the financial sting, because the cost can be factored into the deal, or rolled into a mortgage. Homeowners who have already upgraded, would find themselves in a stronger bargaining position with prospective buyers.

SPC is very happy to be involved in the generation of ideas that help develop sound public policy. We look forward to further work with Charlestown and DEM and hope these efforts will result in policy that not only benefits Charlestown and its ponds, but also appeals to other South County towns and leads them towards better plans of their own.

“To stand at the edge of the sea, to sense the ebb and flow of the tides, to feel the breath of a mist moving over a great salt marsh, to watch the flight of shore birds that have swept up and down the surf lines of the continents for untold thousands of years, to see the running of the old eels and the young shad to the sea, is to have knowledge of things that are as nearly eternal as any earthly life can be.” Rachel Carson
Casino Update

Sen. Byron Dorgan, a North Dakota Democrat, has introduced a measure to amend the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, which was at the center of the recent Carchieri vs. Kempthorn case. If enacted, the bill would alter the meaning of the 1934 act and empower the Secretary of Interior to take land into trust for all tribes, regardless of when they were recognized.

You might recall from previous issues of the Tidal Page that the U.S. Supreme Court case was argued on the meaning of the word “now” in the 1934 act. Rhode Island argued that “now” meant as of the time (in 1934) that the act was passed. The Narragansett Tribe and the Bureau of Indian Affairs maintained that “now” meant the present. The Supreme Court sided with Rhode Island and twenty four other states who wrote friend of the court briefs.

Senator Dorgan and some others feel this needs to be remedied. Many states fear that such a change would open the door for tribes to take newly-purchased land into federal trust and out of state jurisdiction. Such an action would take the land out of local and state tax roles and create conditions in which new casinos could open without state or local consent. Federal trust status is what allowed Foxwoods and several other casinos to open.

Salt Ponds Coalition remains very concerned about the possibility of a large scale gaming facility in South County on Narragansett land and does not have much faith in the process being controlled should the law be changed. The land in this area simply cannot support large operations with many visitors.

The process seems to be moving quickly and the Obama administration is receptive to righting old wrongs for America’s native population. If you have feelings regarding this issue, be sure to contact your representatives soon.

Bill’s Island (continued from page 3)

Read this passage from the letter the Nature Conservancy wrote and then look at the picture at right.

“The forest portion of Bill’s Island provides vital habitat for nesting and roosting ospreys; roosting areas for wading birds including great blue heron, black-crowned night heron, and great egret; and nesting area for a wide variety of songbirds and ducks. The island location, the surrounding high quality estuarine habitat and the lack of disturbance make it an ideal site (potentially one of the best in the area) for the avian species. It is safe to say that if a residence was built on the property that this disturbance would drastically change the bird species makeup of this island.”

Here’s part of what Audubon had to say about the habitat value.

“The mature trees on Bill’s Island provide roosting sites for egrets, osprey and passerine (song) birds. Even if trees were left on the island in a developed scenario, the presence of humans and their artifacts would deter birds use of the area.”

Fortunately, all the pieces came together - SPC got involved early on and brought in great partners to oppose the destruction of habitat, and approached the developer to explore buyout options. And thankfully the Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation rose to the occasion and structured a deal that ensures generations of birds will use this piece of land as those pictured above are doing this year.

Special thanks to Tom Tetzler for supplying the bird pictures in this issue of the Tidal Page. Tom offers a variety of fine wildlife prints as well as calendars and can be reached at 364-9707. Tom is also president of the Friends of the National Wildlife Refuges in RI.
The Tides in South County
Mark Bullinger

Ever wonder what makes the tides high and low along our coast? Or perhaps why some days we have extra high tides and other days there doesn’t seem to be much of a change? Read on! We've done our best to gather the basics here for a general understanding of the ebb and flow. I spoke with a number of people to gain insight, but most helpful was Rob Pockalny of URI. Rob develops tidal flow models to help study marine systems and is considered an expert in area tides.

Basics and moon phase

Most people know that the moon influences tides. It is, in fact, the largest factor, but there are up to 27 other factors that go into calculating the tide charts. The periods of highest predicted tidal range occur at the full moon and the new moon. These periods are fourteen days apart and represent the periods when the earth, the sun, and the moon are in a line. During the new moon, the sun and moon are aligned on one side of the earth and during the full moon the earth is in the center and the moon is 180-degrees from the sun. That's why the full moon rises as the sun sets and why, from our vantage point, the entire face of the moon is illuminated. During the new moon a sliver is visible shortly before or after the sun rises or sets. These strong tides are called Spring Tides, because they “spring” or well up higher than others. They occur throughout the year and the name has nothing to do with the season. During the time when the moon and sun are at right angles from our perspective on earth, the tides are weaker and are known as neap tides.

The Tides

I bother you with all of this because it is critical to understanding the basics of the tide cycle. The gravitational pull of the moon creates a bulge of water in the oceans between the earth and the moon. As the earth spins on its 24-hour rotation, our little part of the world comes into that bulge every 12.2 hours, at which point we have a high tide. As we rotate out of that direct gravitational pull, someplace further west has high tide and we move on towards low. As figure B shows, there are two bulges – one under the moon and one on the opposite side of the earth. The one opposite the moon is a result of lower gravitational pull and a global sloshing effect that sets up as a bulge. Our two high tides per day are a result of passing through both of these zones. As mentioned just above, these bulge zones will track with the progress of the moon and so each day it will take us an additional fifty minutes or so to rotate around into that bulge. Therefore, our tides are roughly an hour later each day.

Now, this is simply looking at the moon and as mentioned earlier there are many lesser influences that can and do factor into the mix. The sun is one of them. It exerts about 46% as much pull as the moon does and you can imagine that when the moon and sun are not aligned, the competing gravitational forces distort each other substantially.

But astronomical forces are just part of the story. There are also regional influences and fluid dynamics involved. For example, the bathometric (sea bottom) profile and basin shape play a big part. In the Bay of Fundy, where tidal range is in excess of fifty feet, there is a rhythm that sets up that is driven by the astronomical forces and the shape of the greater basin. The resonance amplifies the ebb and flow and creates something akin to a standing wave that moves back and forth creating exaggerated tides. Many basin shapes that start out wide and narrow down can also exaggerate tidal height. As a large force of...
water pressure pushes into the narrowing basin, the water has got to go somewhere. Water doesn’t compress; it can’t go down or very far to the left and right, so it has to go up. In our area we might see this in Narragansett Bay up by Providence, and on a larger scale in Long Island Sound where a sustained easterly wind can drive a great volume of water down the wider reaches of the Sound, which is then forced up as the Connecticut and Long Island shores start to converge around Westport and Stamford.

Down here in SoRho, we see tides that average a couple of feet between high and low. But throw in a few variables and that can change substantially. Wind is one such factor and it can create extra high and extra low water. With nor-easters, we often get days of wind blowing in from the east, which can pile water up against our shores and prevent it from fully draining on the outgoing, resulting in overflow tides. Also, during nor-easters the atmospheric pressure is usually low, which allows water to well up a little higher because there isn’t as much atmospheric weight holding it down. The same principles work in reverse. Sustained northerly winds combined with high pressure can push water off shore and hold it down.

Several times during the year we will experience particularly high and/or low tides. Often these are the results of the perigee (Fig. A), which is when the moon is at its closest point to earth. The orbit of the moon is not perfectly circular, but instead somewhat elliptical. Each month when the moon is at its perigee with the earth the tides are higher and lower than average. When the perigee corresponds with a spring tide (the sun, moon and earth aligned) it is called a Proxigean Spring Tide and the tidal results can be strikingly high and low water. Add to a Proxigean Spring Tide strong low or high pressure, sustained winds, or other factors and the results can be dramatic.

The earth’s orbit around the sun is also elliptical and now and then the sun and moon will be at their closest points to earth at the same time as a spring tide and the results can be extreme. Our South County tides generally flow west during the flood and back towards the east on the ebbing tide. Some places it will become quite still during the slack (dead high and dead low) but in others it never really stops and instead swings around the compass until it’s running the opposite direction.

The breachways are an important factor when looking at tides in the salt ponds. The narrow openings restrict the amount of water that can flow through and so delay the changes in tide by 1 1/2 to 2 hours relative to the beach face. Let’s say high tide at the ocean end of the breachway is 6:00 am. At that point the water level in the ocean will be significantly higher than it is in the pond because water can’t get through the constriction fast enough to quickly equalize the levels. By 6:45 am the water level in the ocean will be receding, but there will still be higher water in the sea and the tide will still be coming into the pond. It won’t be until 7:45 am or so that the levels equalize, which will result in slack tide. Not long thereafter the tide will start to flow out the breachways. The same effect occurs at low tide. Water will be rising along the beach front, but the tide will continue to flow out the breachways for another hour and forty-five minutes before it starts flowing in. An interesting subtlety is that in the breachway the water level will start to rise near the bottom of the tide, even while the tidal current is still flowing out. I’ve observed this at my boat slip many times – the bow will be ashoore on the sand an hour before low, but then half an hour later – close to the change, but while water is still flowing out- the bow will be a few inches off the sand. I believe the wall of rising ocean water acts like a dam - the head of pond water is still forcing water out, but it is backing up as it wrestles with the rising ocean tide.

There are many fascinating things about how the tides interact with other forces such as the wind and weather. A flooding ocean tide will often bring in cooler ocean water, which can interact with the air to stir up or quiet down winds. Waves usually build on the incoming and around the change of tide and then fall off towards low. Chris Littlefield, who made his living off the sea around Block Island, reports “as the tide drops the barometric pressure drops, and if the air is saturated enough, you get condensation and rain.” “Also, the wind often dies on the outgoing tide.” The mechanism at work here is the rise and fall of the ocean surface acting like a very large piston, which is displacing, compressing and then making room again for about 3-million cubic yards of atmosphere per square mile, given a three-foot tidal cycle. Over a thirty-mile by twenty-mile sound – roughly the size of South County shore out to Montauk and the far end of Block Island, that’s close to 2-billion cubic yards of displaced/compressed atmosphere.

Anyway, that’s about as far as I can go with details on the tides. Hope you learned something. If you have your own observations, or tidal lore of yore, please drop us a note... we’d love to hear.
Potter Pond - A Hidden Gem

Potter Pond is the second most easterly of our salt ponds and is connected to the sea via a channel to Point Judith Pond. There is little public access to the pond, so many South County folks don’t really know about it and fewer have actually been out on its waters. That’s a shame for paddlers and others who love to discover great new places.

From Route 1 you can only catch a glimpse of Potter Pond. About halfway between Matunuck Beach Road and Succotash Road you might notice a beautiful enclosed cove in the woods on the south side of the highway. This is and hold fish, such as perch. Today, you can still see the remains of these walls as well as rock piles on the shore that were used to create the dams. The northern part of the pond is also quite deep - twenty feet in places. It is a great example of a kettle hole, a glacial feature created as the last chunks of glacier melted, leaving a depression in the ground.

Heading south towards the midpart of the pond, the waters are less deep and support one of healthiest crops of eel grass in our area. During a recent survey we spotted blue crab, a large flounder and a really big eel - perhaps a conger eel.

In the southern part of the pond there are a lot of sand shoals from centuries of storm overwash. Matunuck Oyster Farm is located on one of these shoals and produces oysters for export and for sale at the Matunuck Oyster House on Succotash Road, which is owned by the same individual and specializes in oysters from a variety of Rhode Island growers. They say you can taste a difference from one pond to the next. I don’t know if that’s true, but based on the popularity of this new eatery, they must taste good!

The southwest portion of the pond is the most developed, with neighborhoods branching off Matunuck Beach Road.

If you want to explore the pond in a kayak, you might be able to pay to park at Wackamo Park, which is just south of the inlet on Succotash Road. Off season you might poke around Matunuck Beach Road and look for a drop-off spot and safe parking. Kayaks and small boats can enter the pond from Point Judith Pond, but the channel can run very fast at times and have rapids like a river. The clearance to the bridge is low. The launch at the end of the Escape Road in Galilee is close to the entrance to Potter.

SPC hopes to run a guided paddle to Potter Pond next season, but that will depend on arranging suitable access. It’s a beautiful pond with a lot of history and would make for a very enjoyable paddle for folks of all abilities.
Volunteer Night

On Thursday October 22nd, SPC hosted a volunteer appreciation cookout to thank the people who helped make our 2009 season a big success. We took over the Kettle Pond Visitor Center and had a wonderful function. It was a warm evening, so we opened the doors and people flowed out onto the back deck with a lovely view of the woods and sunset. Board members brought salads and desserts and Dick Sartor manned the grill, flipping burgers and sausage. The two main groups of volunteers are those who work at Kettle Pond to help subsidize our office rent and the Pond Watchers who get out on the water and do the survey work. We are so appreciative of their efforts and all they do to help our organization. Several volunteers had departed for the winter and we missed their presence, but look forward to reconnecting in the spring.


Pond Watchers Needed for 2010
We are seeking volunteers for the 2010 season to sample water. Testing days are every other Wednesday from May through Oct. We provide full training and all the supplies. Sampling is a great way to help protect our salt ponds.

Testing Fee Support Needed
We are still not fully funded for the $600 lab fees associated with some of our stations. If you can sponsor a station for 2010 please help.

Technology Help Needed
Are you good with websites, blogs, electronic commerce etc? If so, we could sure use your help.

Are you really good with sorting and organizing electronic data? We could use expert assistance cleaning up several mailing lists.

SPC is Seeking a Treasurer
Our long-time treasurer is ready to retire, so we are seeking a replacement. Position requires a modest amount of weekly transactions, which spike when we do membership mailings. It also requires preparing the 990 tax return.

If you think you can help, please call 401-322-3068

SPC Conducts Eelgrass Survey for US Fish & Wildlife Service

Art Ganz, Elise Torello and Mark Bullinger spent most of a recent October day on Potter Pond doing a ground-truth survey for eelgrass. US Fish & Wildlife (with SPC encouragement) extended a scheduled aerial photo survey of eelgrass beds in Long Island Sound to include the coast of southern Rhode Island. After initial analysis of the massive 450MB images (a standard digital picture is about 2MB) they needed eyes in the water to confirm whether certain areas were eelgrass or other forms of aquatic vegetation. We were happy to oblige and Art and Mark checked on Point Judith Pond a week later. The completed maps will be an asset to the people and groups working to manage and protect the ponds. With future flights, a better record of eelgrass trends should emerge.

No they are not sea sick - Art Ganz and Elise Torello are looking through view boxes to check on eelgrass density in Potter Pond.
SPC Seeking Funding to Develop and Print Kayak Guide

SPC is seeking funding to greatly expand its kayak guide of the salt ponds this winter, with an eye towards having it ready by spring. We recently submitted a grant proposal to Washington Trust Company and are preparing additional applications.

The current guide has suggested launching sites and short descriptions of the ponds as well as their overall health and reproductive success. This work was conducted underwater using scuba equipment and by boat utilizing a venturi suction sampler, which dredged the top 30cm of sediment and discharged it and all creatures and objects therein through a 5mm mesh collection bag. Quadrants were plotted by GPS coordinates and then marked out in meters² using square PVC structures. Jules and Mary then counted and assessed the clams, dissecting them as necessary to gain the specific information needed to measure their growth and reproductive actions.

The results of the survey work put survival rates at greater than 80% in both ponds and showed clear reproductive action in Quonnie Pond. No spawning event was detected in the 2009 Ninigret transplants. It is possible the Ninigret clams spawned before being moved, or suffered greater stress adapting to their new home. Based on good survival rates, however, our experts are not concerned. “There are so many variables in the first year, you just can't draw conclusions” said Art Ganz. “Survival is good and the clams look strong, so we're optimistic that they are going to do well.”

From the Crime Doesn’t Pay Files...

The Quonnie clam sanctuary was subject to organized poaching this year. DEM police, acting on a tip, staked out the access road in Weekapaug and apprehended a band of nocturnal poachers from Connecticut who had illegally dug many bushels of clams in the sanctuary. Digging at night made the charges a felony. (Interstate shellfish sanitation laws prohibit digging at night.) To make matters worse for the perpetrators, they had date-stamped digital pictures on a camera of their haul from previous nights. Hopefully the judge has traded their clam rakes for sledge hammers!
Late Season Fun

SPC led a team in the International Coastal Cleanup, which is sponsored by the Ocean Conservancy and, here in Rhode Island, Audubon. Our team cleaned the Quonochontaug state access site and the eastern breachway jetty and adjacent beach. As usual, we collected a lot of trash. Last season we cleaned in a monsoon, but this year the weather was gorgeous and we were blessed with a troop of Chariho Brownies, who being energetic, agile and close to the ground, made for great picker uppers. Their parents probably wish they cleaned their rooms with such enthusiasm!

The Kayak Paddle on Sept. 26th was a great success. Cold early-morning temps were a bit scary, but the temp rose quickly with the sun and we ended up with a perfect fall day. We toured the central part of Ninigret Pond, where we heard some history, visited an oyster farm and explored hidden waterways.

SPC “Non-Event” Fundraiser Really Happened.

Thanks to all of you who helped make our so called “non-event” fundraiser a big success. Remember the invitation that arrived in the mail and read “Oh no... not another summer fundraiser?!” The tongue-in-cheek piece encouraged the recipient to make a donation and in effect buy an excuse to stay at home for a nice quiet evening. This concept was new to us and a bit of a gamble, but the fundraising really happened and it out earned our 2008 wine tasting event by a wide margin!

We received many comments that it was a very amusing piece and based on the results, deduce that most recipients got a good laugh. We did hear from a few who were less amused and to those folks we apologize for bruising their sensitivities and remind them that the income is going a long way in protecting our mutually cherished salt ponds.

You might also recall that we offered a kayak in raffle as part of this fundraiser and that every $25 in donations earned one ticket. We are happy to announce that Mr. John Allsopp won the drawing and enthusiastically accepted the prize, which he then gave to his son. We hope the lucky scion will join us on our future guided kayak paddles on the ponds!

Thanks to Elaine Megrew for providing a discount on the kayak and for drawing the winning ticket for the raffle. Looking on (L to R) Martha Hosp, Sassy Dodd and Sheri Frost.

Our August 13th Outreach Event at Quonnie state launch area was well attended, despite the weather. Wind, rain and cool temps gave everyone flashbacks to June and forced us to cancel the kayak tour. But the shore-based activities were a success - particularly the face painting by Mary Horrigan, who is hands down the best face painter we’ve seen!
Please Help Us Help the Ponds

2009 memberships expire at the end of December. Please use this form to renew for 2010 and ask your friends and neighbors to become members, too.

- An SPC membership for the 2010 season helps fund protection of the ponds.
- With your membership, you will receive future issues of the Tidal Page.
- Donations are tax deductible and can help reduce the tax you owe.

Please make checks payable to Salt Ponds Coalition. Memberships run from January through December

Please enroll the individual/family at right at the following membership level

☐ $40+ Standard 2010 Membership
☐ $75+ Select Level
☐ $250+ Steward Level
☐ $500+ Patron Level

$________ Donation to the Aukerman Scholarship Fund

Please consider a gift to SPC. Your donations to our 501(c)(3) organization are tax deductible.

☐ Please find enclosed my gift of $________
☐ I would like to sponsor a testing station for $600

Abby Aukerman Scholarship Fund

Please help us fund this worthwhile scholarship, which helps support a deserving undergraduate student in marine studies at URI. The fund is down this year and we could sure use your help to ensure it is there for future marine scholars. If you would like to make a contribution to the scholarship fund, please use the form above.