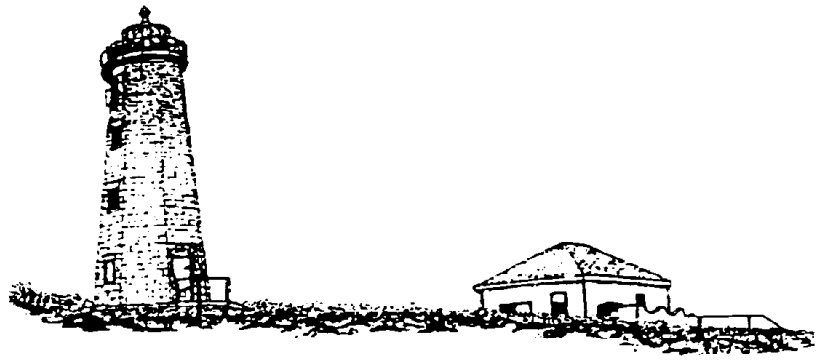


Benton Beach Beacon



December 1994

Pumpkin the Beach Cat

by Ellen Fales

Benton Beach has had a somewhat permanent visitor these last few months. In April, our family spent a weekend in Guilford and a lot of time at the beach. Our first day there, we encountered the most wonderful orange cat. He followed us everywhere and was amazingly affectionate. We loved him. Again in June, there he was waiting intently on the rock next to the beach house, like he knew we were coming. It seems that everyone knows Pumpkin, whose official home is in Indian Cove and who travels home from time to time, according to his owners.

His heart must certainly be at the beach, though. All through July and August, he could be found there regularly. When the Whelans and the Fales camped at the beach in mid-August, he camped too. He walked out and back to Turkey Point with the kids, sat on the dock and looked out to sea or just lounged on a towel sunning. Holly reported that one morning she and Tyler woke early to watch the sunrise. Pumpkin watched intently and Holly swears he enjoyed it more than they did. In mid-September, the Fales family

took a fast dash to the beach one evening at sunset. Sure enough, there he was, sitting, waiting for us on the rock, like always.

Pumpkin seems to have adopted Benton Beach as his own. Perhaps he'll winter in Indian Cove and summer each year at Benton Beach. We'll be waiting.

##

Vineyard Meadow Restoration

by Joel Helander

Anybody who uses Benton Beach and reads the Beach Newsletter (an Ott-Chemacki publication) already knows about the ongoing battle against the phragmites reeds in the Vineyard Meadow. This hardy plant grows along the periphery of our tidal wetland and spreads slowly but insidiously. Uncontrolled, the reeds can destroy the fragile ecosystem of a good salt marsh. Over time, phragmites growth marks the succession towards a deciduous hardwood forest!

Benton Beach, Inc. has controlled phragmites spread with the conservative use of *Round-Up* spray (1.5% concentrate), which is a chemical

herbicide accepted by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and available over the counter. The job of spraying is a laborious and endless chore; besides, there have been concerns about *Round-Up's* long-term cumulative effect on the environment.

Last June 16, 1994, Heather B. Collinson, H. Milton Benton, and Joel Helander met with Mr. Paul Capatosto of the new State (DEP) Wetlands Restoration Unit for a field inspection of Vineyard Meadows. The hope was that easier, alternative methods could be found to continue the program of phragmites eradication.

Mr. Capatosto used a refractometer to measure salinity levels in the meadow, which vary according to the level of disturbance on the marsh floor. Marsh floor elevations determine what vegetation grows, e.g.:

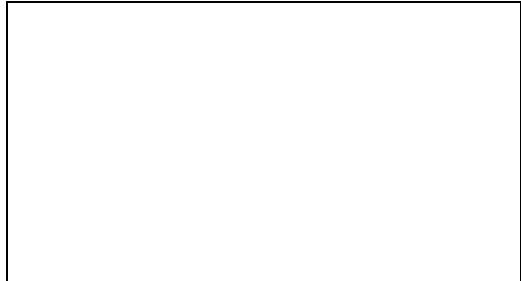
- Lowest marsh..... chord grass
- Middle marsh..... prized grasses like spartina
- High marsh..... Elder or Iva
- Highest marsh..... Phragmites.

Capatosto considers the Vineyard Meadow a "high marsh" without a lot of standing water; hence, it has moderate to low value for wildlife. Phragmites can dominate over time. He introduced the Open Marsh Water

Management (OMWM) techniques for restoring habitats in grid-ditched marshes, like ours.

The technique requires that shallow ponds or pans, reservoir ditches, connector ditches, and re-ditching of existing ditches be established to let fish (like mummichogs) survive from full moon tide to the next full moon tide to eat mosquito larvae. This restores an aquatic habitat that both fish and birds like. Once these habitats are established or enhanced, wading birds and ducks use the pan areas for food and nesting. Specialized low ground pressure and amphibious equipment is used for the work. A few carefully designed ponds, about 12-18 inches deep and about 20 ft. x 20 ft. in area, could replace some of the present phragmites stands.

A salt meadow the size of Vineyard Meadow (approximately 17 acres) would cost about \$10,000 to \$15,000 for a habitat restoration, according to Capatosto, and could be *fully funded* by



the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's new program, "Partners for Wildlife." The partners involve the Fish and Wildlife Service (Federal), who provides funding, the Wetlands Restoration Unit (State), who provides the services, and the private landowners.

Benton Beach, Inc. formally requested DEP to consider its meadow for a project; on August 30, 1994 we were advised that our meadow is a "prime candidate." An informational meeting of many of the meadow owners (Benton Beach shareholders, Vineyard Point Associates, and Albert Stevens) met at Janice and Jack English's house on November 10, 1994. Ann Kilpatrick of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Mr. Paul Capatosto of DEP made a formal presentation, followed by a long question and answer period. In order to develop a project plan, the next step is for DEP and the Wildlife Service to prepare a map of the meadow elevations and assess the existing wildlife habitat. They have agreed to do this by early spring 1995.

Another meeting of all Vineyard Meadow owners is tentatively scheduled for the spring. All Benton Beach shareholders and future shareholders are invited to participate in the planning process.

##

Family Update

- Cheryl and Erin Falvey have had several modeling opportunities over the past several months. Cheryl participated in a fashion segment of the television show *For Women Only* in Vermont and performed in a live fashion show for a press breakfast at the Plaza Hotel in New York City, each for Geiger of Austria. Cheryl and Erin both modeled for L.L. Bean in Bailey Island and Popham Beach, Maine and for Old Navy (a Gap

division). According to Cheryl, Erin absolutely loves modeling.

- Matt Falvey recently flew two friends out to Lake Ontario for a charter fishing trip. During the charter, Matt caught an enormous salmon.
- Lisa and Emily Ott have just returned from their week long trip to Colorado, where Lisa's sister Deborah is attending graduate school. Lisa states that Emily was not at all bothered by the air travel.

Family Update (Continued)

- Emily Ott was baptized on Sunday, November 27, 1994 at the First Congregational Church of Guilford.
- Early in November, Tim Chemacki performed the role of an extra in a 1929 speakeasy scene for the upcoming movie *Killer* starring James Woods (*The Specialist*) and Robert Sean Leonard (*Dead Poets Society*).

Filming took place at the Bayliss and Swift Co. at the corner of State Street and Green Street in downtown New London. Tim says that although it was a long day (6:20 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.) for about two minutes worth of film, he'd love to do it again. The film should be released during the summer of 1995.

- Eliot and Debra were married on October 1, 1994. Congratulations to them both!!!
- Forrest Helander has begun pruning his Christmas tree lot in preparation for the holiday season. The Helander

Christmas tree lot on Vineyard Point Road will be open each weekend in December. Call Forrest for details.

- Lynne Ott's car, which was stolen in New Haven, was recovered.
- Michael Kerner played the role of an extra in the film *Man Without a Face*, starring Mel Gibson. Look for him in the graduation scene.

##

Open House

On November 13, 1994 Joel Helander hosted an open house to commemorate the completion of the John Benton House restoration project. The event began at 11:00 a.m. and lasted until 7:00 p.m. Those who attended the open house enjoyed touring the house, speaking with Joel, and mingling with the other guests.

The guest list was organized into four groups of friends, neighbors, and relatives:

11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Clapboard Hill, Norton Avenue, and High Street neighbors - 64 invitations;

1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Preservation Alliance, Land Trust, and

Faulkner's Brigade - 71 invitations;

3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Guilford Town Hall, Public Library, Police, Ambulance, and Page-Taft employees- 113 invitations;

5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Sachem's Head neighbors and relatives - 79 invitations.

Joel has done a wonderful job restoring the farmhouse. We wish him the all the best with his new home!!!

##

Lost at Benton Beach

Last August 1994, Benjamin Whelan lost a blue tin box at Benton Beach. It is rectangular in shape and has a picture of dinosaurs on its top. Some of the contents include Ben's cherished baseball card collection, which he is deeply lamenting. If you have any information, please call the Whelans at 617-837-3150.

##

Pumpkin to the Rescue

by Joel Helander

Little Katie was crying because Pumpkin had not appeared on his daily routine for several days. The two children and their mother, tenants at the cottage, took turns sleeping with him and even set up a cardboard box with a special mattress.

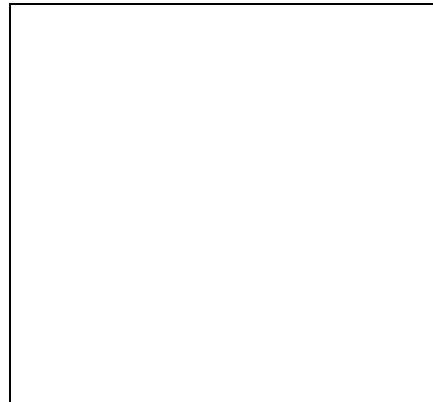
One evening (sometime between Halloween and Thanksgiving) the Guilford Fire Department sent the rescue squad to a neighbor's home in Pumpkin's favorite neighborhood along Vineyard Point Road. Happily, the incident had a good ending because the patient did not require the emergency room and the commotion attracted Pumpkin. While the EMTs, a paramedic, rescue squad captain, and police officer were engaged with the patient, a snappy m-e-o-w was heard through the glass slider. Pumpkin to the rescue! He was promptly allowed inside to join the scene of the emergency.

Anybody who knows Pumpkin knows that he is nomadic in nature, fiercely independent, a strong survivor, and a marvelous hunter. His affinity for Benton Beach is matched by his affinity for the Benton yards, especially south of Vineyard Point Road.

Pumpkin's routine is something of a circuit - not too unlike the legendary Leatherman's - but on a daily basis instead of every 34 days. He usually starts out at Benton Beach, where he watches the sunrise (ask the Whelans). By mid-morning, he is basking in the

sunshine on the old gray stone wall behind the Beach House. Sometimes he lies on the flat ledge there. Then he makes a slow trek up the Beach Road on reconnaissance for food. He is alert to every noise and movement in the grassy borders. Pumpkin hunts a good part of the day, leaving the Beach Road for the edges of the meadow. In Long Lot pasture, the beef cows command his respect as he weaves around them. Mice and moles are his specialty, but one neighbor reports his successful capture of a whole duck.

During the chillier fall days, Pumpkin usually makes his appearance around 3:00 to 4:00 p.m., coming down one of the driveways at 345/365 Vineyard Point Road towards the 360-410



Vineyard Point Road block. Pumpkin's day is done at dusk. He's ready to be loved and comes to those who love him.

##

Notes

- This is the final issue of the Benton Beach Beacon for this season. Please submit any articles or family updates to either David and Lisa Ott or Tim Chemacki for incorporation into next

year's issues. Their addresses are as follows:

David and Lisa Ott
Guilford, CT
(203) 458-7964

Timothy Chemacki
83 Mansfield Rd., Unit 325
New London, CT 06320
(203) 443-0409

- It's not too late! *Please* return your Benton Beach Corporation questionnaires to Donna Chemacki. Your opinions are important!

Donna Chemacki
48 Old Post Road
Madison, CT 06443

- Thank you to everyone who contributed towards maintaining Benton Beach this year. Your help is greatly appreciated!