

Benton Beach Beacon



May 1999

In Memoriam

Within months after Sharon and I moved to Littleton, Colorado from Denver, an unspeakable tragedy took place far too close to home. As you have probably all seen in the papers and on the news, two young men savagely took the lives of 15 fellow classmates at the Columbine High School here in Littleton. One of the students murdered was the daughter of a woman who works in my building at Hewlett-Packard. I never thought something like this could happen in my town. I guess I was wrong.

This issue of the *Beacon* is dedicated to the students who were murdered, those who were injured, the families and friends of the dead and wounded, and all those who were affected by this horrific tragedy. May the deceased rest in peace and may the grieving all have the strength to heal their sorrows.

Annual Work Party

This year's annual Benton Beach work day will be a work weekend, as it has the past couple of years. It will be Saturday, May 22nd and Sunday, May 23rd. Many hands will be needed to get the beach ready for another summer at our wonderful beach. Choose the day that is best for you, or come both days.

A few of the jobs this year will be laying the dock pieces and checking the crosspieces on the dock, straightening out the fire pit, painting the beach house and a couple picnic tables, raking up seaweed and lots more. There will

be something for everyone, adults and kids alike. The sand is in great shape this year and it looks like no bulldozing will be needed. The high tide that weekend is around 6:00 p.m. The workday is being coordinated by Ellen Fales and she will be calling everyone a week or two before to get an idea of who is coming when and to give more information to anyone who needs it. If you have any questions or ideas of projects you might like to see done, call Ellen at 401-783-2429. Hope to see you on the 22nd or 23rd!!

Returning Animal Friends

by Joel Helander

In the homeland of Sachem's Head, which is a sanctuary of wildlife as well as a sanctuary for us, we feel the excitement and optimism of spring. There is perfume in the air. Wild roses and tangy sea breezes will soon add to the blend. The old beach never looked so good, with a fine new cover of winter sand. Long Lot pasture is greening with carpet-like patches of bluets. Even the skunk cabbage looks magnificent. Everywhere the wildflowers are bursting with color. We wait for the tree buds to burst.

Redwings and other songbirds have come back. In the tan salt meadow, a stray egret has been spotted foraging for food. Our resident flock of mallard ducks skid into the ponds and Canada geese honk and strut with glee.

Thanks to Uncle Roger's new backyard aviary, squawking ring-necked pheasants will again roam the meadows. Everywhere, Mother Nature is alive against the backdrop of Long

Island Sound. April/May is truly the changing of the guard. At such times, we become keenly aware of how much the sweetness of life depends upon these simple things. Such things as the song of the field sparrow, the chanting of spring peepers, the aroma of the land, and the sight of returning animal friends.

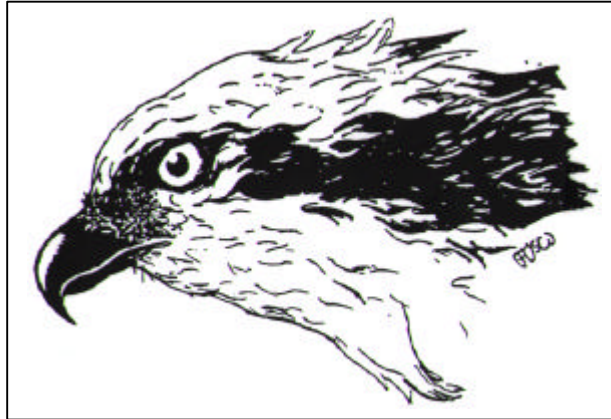
Notable among these friends are the ospreys and cattle. Uncle Edwin's nesting platform on the edge of Long Lot promises to have a successful nesting pair of osprey for the second year in a row! As early as March 26, they were seen staking out our properties, always returning to the platform.

The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Wildlife Division has tabulated the results of the 1998 osprey season. It was another record-breaking year with 141 active nests recorded - 8 of which were in Guilford, including "ours." This is a reflection of the increased numbers of breeding age ospreys returning to Connecticut. After the nesting season, according to the DEP, adult and young osprey fly to the wintering grounds of South America, Mexico, and the southern United States. The adults return every year to breed, while the young remain at the wintering grounds for two or three years until they are sexually mature.

Despite the positive trend in nesting success, monofilament fishing line still poses a major hazard to osprey chicks in their nests. Adult osprey are notorious trash collectors and "decorate" their nests with discarded beach trash. AS a result, monofilament fishing line carried into the nest can entrap and entangle chicks. The tangles chicks either starve to death or remain trapped in the nest and cannot fly.

Did you know that the English translation of the Indian name Faulkner's Island, "Massancummock," means "place of the great fish hawk?" This was undoubtedly the osprey.

Of all the species belonging to the hawk family, only the osprey is considered a fish hawk. Large populations of these birds of prey inhabited Long island Sound, including the offshore islands, three or four centuries ago. Over 100 years ago they became endangered in the Northeast. Their comeback has created great excitement and appreciation for offshore residents.



After last year's bitter disappointment of not having livestock in the pasture, which is essential for our *Public Act 490* farmland tax deduction, we were rewarded with their return on April 24. Five robust white-faced Herefords were delivered by David Offredi and his family using a horse trailer.

Two of them are crossbred with an angus and all of them are 2 years or younger, including a steer that was born in November 1998.

David Offredi is a remarkable young farmer who reminds us strikingly of Jay Medlyn, the farm tenant for many years. His grandfather was "Big Joe" Offredi who established a 27 acre working farm near the intersection of Little Meadow and Stepstone Hill roads about 1900. His grandfather kept draught horses and earned a modest living by "teaming", i.e., he dug cellars, plowed gardens, and logged in the woods. David's father, Arthur, and David himself, grew up in the same farming tradition. And David is empathetic to the point that he intends to "keep the farm until the day I die..."

What is even more remarkable is that David Offredi, who graduated in the Guilford High School (GHS) class of '77, works full time as a mechanic/welder for the Guilford Public Works Department. The farm is a pastime and love affair. Although he sold the horses last year, he has 14 sheep and 9 more beef cattle (all due to calve). On top of all this, Dave splits about 100 cord of wood every year, stockpiled on the farm for resale.

Please welcome the Offredis when and if you see them. We are grateful for their farming venture on Benton Beach properties. David's wife is Jeanneatte. Their two children are Cara and Arthur, who proudly state that their animal pets are a nanny goat named "Crispie," a German shepherd puppy named "Jessie," and some goldfish.

The Battle of Sewage

by Joel Helander

Long Island Sound is a vital natural resource for Connecticut, not just environmentally, but commercially and recreationally, too. Our state legislators and environmental groups have stepped up the effort in recent years to protect the sound.

Can you believe that four sewage treatment plants in New York City dump 7 million pounds of nitrogen into the sound every year?!? Sham on New York City! There is a heated battle between NYC and Connecticut over this outrageous dumping.

The Long Island Soundkeeper Fund (Norwalk, CT), under the leadership of Terry Backer, our "Soundkeeper," has gallantly led the battle. The first battle has been won. On March 9, 1998, the Soundkeeper followed through on a promise to sue NYC for discharge of pollutants. NYC has attempted unsuccessfully to have the case thrown out of court, but the judge ruled that the case will go to trial. Hooray!

If you are interested in the good work of the Long Island Soundkeeper, you may find their website at <http://www.soundkeeper.org> or write to them at P.O. Box 4058, Norwalk, CT 06855.

Robert Kennedy, Jr., who is now a Connecticut resident working for Pace Environmental Litigation Clinic, is working pro bono (without charge) for the cause! We need to do everything in our power to support this campaign. Terry is no stranger to Guilford. He supports the work of Faulkner's Light Brigade to save Faulkner's Island and has met with citizens in Guilford on more than one occasion.

Save The Date!

Saturday, July 17, 1999 has been scheduled for the annual cook-out on Benton Beach, when we look forward to greeting family members from near and far. Last year, there was a record attendance of 74 people!

This year's event may involve a chicken barbecue instead of a clambake, but details will be forthcoming. If you have an idea or would

like to work with the subcommittee for this event, please call Roger Benton at 203-453-9375 or Forrest Helander at 203-421-5065.

It is high tide at 3:15 p.m. on July 17. The inclement weather date is the next day, Sunday.



Photo Caption: Benton/Norton family picnic on Benton Beach, circa 1940.

Save the dates!

Long before old Benton Beach became popular as a swimming place, it was frequented for family outings. In this classic view, recorded with a Brownie camera by Carolyn Benton Helander, we see a canvas tent pitched in the sand. Eliot H. Benton is sitting directly in front of the tent post; Mabel Norton Benton is seated; Florence Norton Benton and her mother are sitting over to the right with their backs facing the camera. Others include: Janice Eliot (Pavilionite), Elisabeth Norton Eliot,

Fred Davis, Ethel Norton with daughter, Rossiter Eliot, Phil Norton, Roger Benton, Joel Davis, Doris Norton (Horton), and Martha Davis (Rebuzzini).

Notes

- **Calendar of Events:**

Annual Work Day: Saturday, May 22, 1999 starting at 9:00 a.m. Alternate day is Sunday, May 23, 1999. Ellen Fales is coordinating.

Family Picnic: Saturday, July 17, 1999. Alternate date is Sunday, July 18, 1999. Roger Benton and Forrest Helander are coordinating.

Please call Donna Chemacki (203-245-2998), Benton Beach, Inc. secretary, for scheduling a special beach event. This is not necessary for small, spontaneous gatherings.

- Please submit any articles or family updates to Tim Chemacki for incorporation into the next issue (note the address change!).

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