The Nature Conservancy
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

The Nature Conservancy, Long Island Chapter
250 Lawrence Hill Road
Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724
www.nature.org/longisland

~ Read Inside ~

FALL/WINTER NEWSLETTER

12th Annual Beaches and Bays Gala

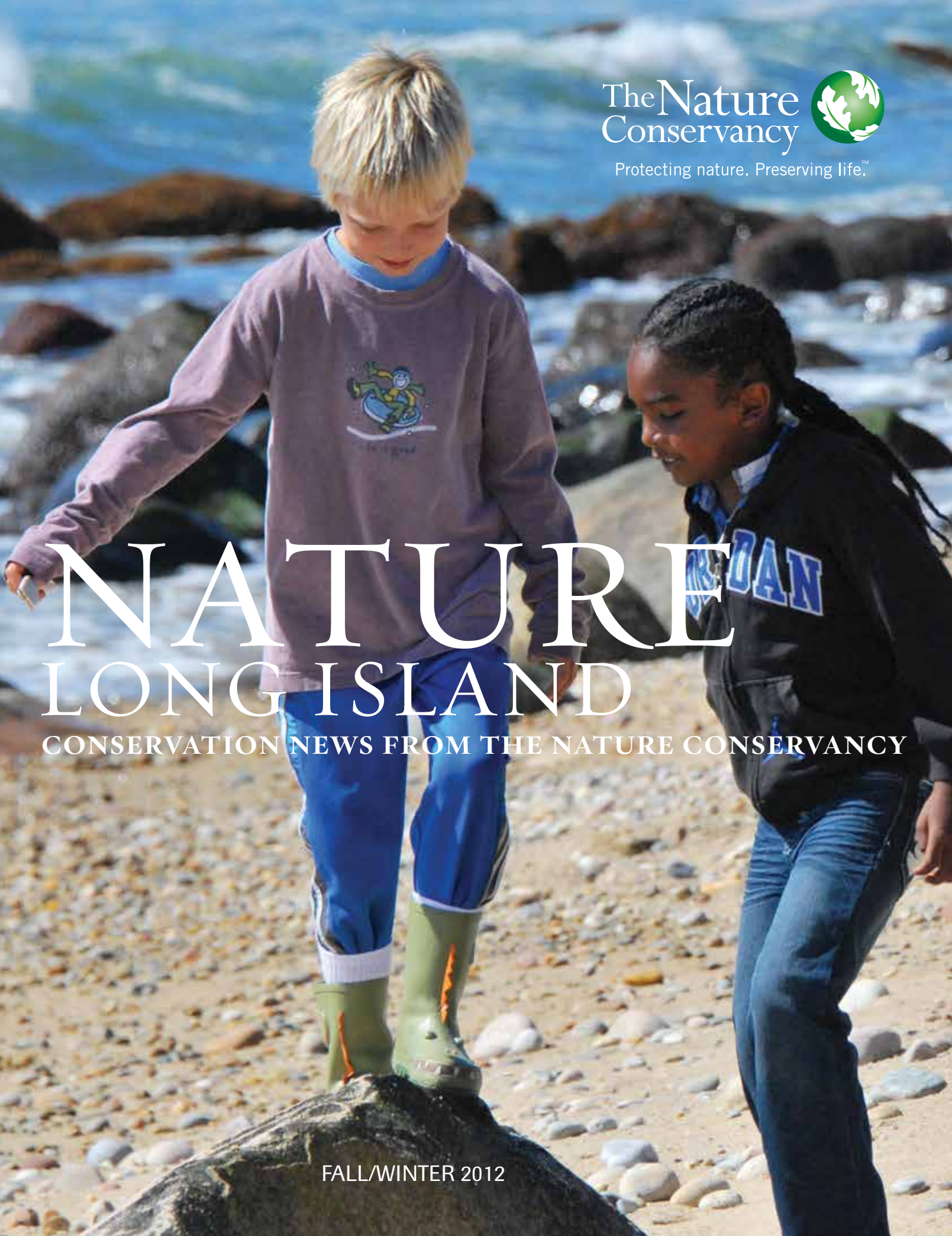
R.Cole for Rob Rich/SocietyAllure.com

Hundreds of supporters joined The Nature Conservancy for a spectacular evening under the stars at the 12th Annual Beaches and Bays Gala. The event, held June 30th, raised $630,000 for conservation programs on Long Island.

The Nature Conservancy's outgoing Chairman of the Board Jeff Hughes, was honored for his commitment to local and global conservation. Hughes became involved in the work of The Nature Conservancy during the 1980's.

"This year's Beaches and Bays Gala was a wonderful celebration of nature and the beauty of the East End," said Nancy Kelley, executive director of The Nature Conservancy on Long Island. "We are thankful to all of the guests and supporters who helped raise funds for our future conservation efforts."

The evening included a live auction, "Dough for H2O," which raised $125,000 for the Conservancy's efforts to improve water quality in Long Island's harbors and bays.



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NATURE LONG ISLAND

CONSERVATION NEWS FROM THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

FALL/WINTER 2012

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A Letter from The Director

What's Important

Sometimes life presents situations that force us to think about our priorities and what is most important to us. It could be a health crisis that makes us realize we need to spend more time with family or loss of a job that allows us to turn our attention to something we are passionate about. Sometimes we take for granted what we have until it's gone. The same is true for the environment.

We always thought our drinking water here on Long Island was clean and safe and likely to remain that way. But a recent report from Suffolk County shows an alarming decline in our groundwater quality over the last 17 years. Nitrogen pollution of our underground aquifers has increased from 40% to 200% in that time.

Over that same period of time, we have seen more impacts from too much nitrogen on our natural systems and we are starting to see these impacts across Long Island.

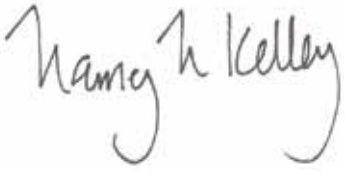
For all of these reasons, the Nature Conservancy on Long Island has made improving water quality its number one priority.

Our bays and harbors are experiencing larger, longer and more toxic algal blooms (brown and red tides) because of the nitrogen pollution in our ground water flowing out into our bays and harbors. There are increasing numbers of beach and shellfish harvest closures around Long Island. This year, for the first time, part of nearby Sag Harbor Cove was closed to clamming because of the appearance of the algae that causes paralytic shellfish poisoning in humans. Similarly, this year saw the first closures of Northport Harbor and western Shinnecock Bay to clamming because of red tide and its impacts on the shellfish population.

Too much nitrogen in our bays and harbors is also bad for seagrass, a submerged marine species of flowering plant that forms extensive beds on the bay bottom in healthy waters. Many animals, like scallops and juvenile fish, rely on the protective cover of seagrass during parts of their life cycle when they are most vulnerable to predators. Recent studies commissioned by The Nature Conservancy have shown the dramatic destructive impact of nitrogen pollution on seagrass beds.

The Nature Conservancy and others have also determined that nitrogen pollution can have profound damaging impacts on the health and durability of salt marshes. We now know that nitrogen pollution weakens and erodes saltmarsh along our shores, removing vital habitat for countless coastal species and reducing the ability of the marsh to buffer the mainland against wave action generated by large storms.

We can't undo the nitrogen pollution problem overnight. It will take time, understanding and commitment from all Long Islanders. But we must begin today to protect the safety of our drinking water and restore the water quality in our bays and harbors. It's a top priority for all of us.



Nancy N. Kelley
Executive Director
The Nature Conservancy on Long Island

On the Cover:

Montauk school children participated in a workshop at The Nature Conservancy's Warhol Preserve this fall.
© Marian Lindberg/TNC

Newly Protected Land Helps Maintain Water Quality

© Kara Jackson/TNC

If you head north from the scenic village of Sag Harbor you'll be in North Haven, a sleepy residential area where a 28-acre parcel, formerly owned by Andrew Lack, has recently been preserved by The Nature Conservancy and Suffolk County. Situated on the shores of Peconic Bay across from the Conservancy's 2,039-acre Mashomack Preserve, the property will now offer hiking and birdwatching opportunities in its forested woodlands and will help protect water quality in the bay.

Dappled with cedar and oak trees and lined with salt marsh, the property was once zoned for two-acre residential development. However, Mr. Lack decided to put it in the hands of the people by selling it to The Nature Conservancy on Long Island who later transferred it to Suffolk County and North Haven village for long-term management.

"In addition to providing a beautiful place for peaceful walks, this parcel is important for shoreline and water quality protection. The salt marsh on this parcel plays an important part in filtering land-based sources of pollution to the Peconic Bay. The upland areas provide a spot for salt marsh migration in the face of accelerated sea level rise," said the Conservancy's Executive Director, Nancy Kelley.

Rates of sea level rise are occurring faster than average along Long Island's shoreline and salt marshes here are often unable to adapt because they are located near developed areas. Having a natural buffer adjacent to a salt marsh is ideal. The Lack property provides a natural buffer and will support potential migration landward, providing climate change resilience.

For more information visit www.nature.org/longisland

Fall Migration Brings Birds to Long Island

© Derek Rogers/TNC

The Buff-breasted Sandpiper is a prime example of why The Nature Conservancy focuses our conservation efforts on a global scale. This grassland nester breeds in the high Arctic of North America and spends the winter in southern South America. Having global "stepping stones" of protected open space helps ensure safe journeys for bird species like the Buff-breasted Sandpiper. This migrating individual was iScoped by Conservancy Preserves Manager, Derek Rogers at Hecksher State Park using a MeoPix adapter by Meopta.

Andy Warhol Was Inspired by Nature Too

Andy Warhol would have been intrigued by recent happenings on the beach outside his former house in Montauk. There were castles, a dragon, a car wreck and the largest sail boat in the world.

The creations sprang from the imagination of second-graders using rocks, sticks and found objects under the supervision of Tia Blassingame, an artist whose stay in Montauk was sponsored by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and The Nature Conservancy.

Warhol, who died in 1987, did more than entertain celebrities at his famous Montauk compound, a collection of five structures built in the 1920s by Stanford White. According to one of Warhol's tenants, Lee Radziwill, sister of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Warhol often sat around a table with children helping them work on creative projects. It is in keeping with his legacy that busloads of children now create art every year at the Andy Warhol Preserve, 15 acres of shad-dominated moorlands donated to the Conservancy by the foundation.

© Andy Warhol, Diane Von Furstenberg and Marina Schiano
May 1973 - Polaroid Type SX-70

Mick Jagger, Montauk, c. 1979
Black and white print

© Marian Lindberg/TNC

© Marian Lindberg/TNC

"Art is like science," sculptor Monica Banks told a 6th grade East Hampton Middle School class before taking them to the Warhol Preserve in June. "You never know what is going to happen." What happened for the 5th graders was a giant tortoise that they worked on together. "It was amazing to see the cooperation that they fell into," Ms. Banks observed.

Many different sorts of artists have been chosen to work at the preserve by the Conservancy's Warhol Visual Arts Committee. Ms. Blassingame is a "book artist," – books, prints, lithographs and even hand-made paper – so she wanted her students to create stories with the objects they collected. "What does a book do?" she began. "It makes you smarter," came the first answer. "It's also fun," Ms. Blassingame added, "like a school day by the ocean."

The children found some natural things on the beach, such as horseshoe crab shells, and some man-made ones – a coffee creamer container and a tire. The mixture of both types of objects in the finished products probably would have suited the maker of Pop Art just fine. The students divided into teams and each team made a "book." Then the books' stories were told – from a car accident on an island to the largest sailboat in the world (involving wire and stones) to two castles and a dragon made of rocks, sticks and netting.

All of the art created at Warhol Preserve shares one trait: evanescence. No one is allowed to remove anything natural, so these are installations of the most temporary sort. The creators of the tire work accepted that its central component might float out to sea at high tide (or they might disappear during a beach clean-up).

The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts makes grants for art projects throughout the country. Recently, the foundation announced its intention to sell its remaining Warhol works to increase its endowment and grant-making capacity. Presumably, this means that school children on Long Island will continue to enjoy art programs at the Warhol Preserve well into the future.

Cities, more than nature, are associated with Warhol, but he did spend a great deal of time outdoors while growing up. Flowers, animals and sunrises all figured in his work. For all we know, castles and dragons did, too.

The Future is Looking Clam-tastic

© The Nature Conservancy

If you enjoy clams on the half shell or a good cup of clam chowder on a cool autumn day, your tastebuds may be happy for years to come – thanks to the work of the Great South Bay Hard Clam Restoration Working Group whose members recently helped enact laws to keep the clam population sustainable and thriving for the first time in the history of Great South Bay.

The group, spearheaded by The Nature Conservancy, along with Suffolk County and Great South Bay towns of Babylon, Brookhaven, and Islip, and others helped put into place a 21st century approach to the management of clam harvests. The formula is simple: when clams are abundant, they can be harvested more heavily. When clam populations are scarce, fewer clams can be legally taken.

"The best way to protect the traditions of clamming as an industry or as a recreational pursuit on Long Island is to make sure that the resource is thriving. Recovering clams is essential. These new regulations are meant to assure that the hard clam fishery is sustainable and consistent with the long-term focus on restoration," explains Nate Woiwode, coastal and marine policy advisor for The Nature Conservancy on Long Island. "Prior to these changes, there were no limits on the number of clammers or on the amount of clams that could be taken. Not surprisingly, a clamming boom in the mid-70's was followed by a catastrophic collapse in the clam population – a disaster which has direct linkages to many of the environmental challenges still facing the Great South Bay today."

In the 1970's over half of the clams eaten in the entire country were from Great South Bay. When clams were abundant, they also filtered 40% of the water in the bay every single day. Today, there are only enough hard clams to filter about 1% of this vast body of water daily. Without shellfish, water quality declines - and creatures that depend on clams, scallops, and oysters as food sources (including humans!) also suffer.

Since 2004, The Nature Conservancy has been working to restore Great South Bay's clam population in a three-pronged approach: stocking the bay with reproductive adult clams, helping to enact laws to protect the existing clam population, and working with partners to restore degraded water quality.

"The new approach strikes a balance of respecting the interests of families traditionally engaged in commercial and recreational shellfishing, while giving the three Great South Bay towns the tools they need to collaboratively work to rebuild and sustainably manage the hard clam resource moving forward in a fair and transparent way," said Carl LoBue, senior marine scientist for The Nature Conservancy on Long Island. "What the new limits mean is that when clams become abundant again, they won't be overharvested as they were in the 70's and 80's. Instead, as clams become more abundant over time, the towns can relax regulations by allowing more clams to be harvested." We can all raise a cup – or bowl – of clam chowder to that.

Part of the focus of The Nature Conservancy's effort to re-build the clam population in Great South Bay is stocking it with millions of clams, the next phase of this work focuses on restoring water quality in bays and harbors around Long Island and helping enact laws to protect the existing clam population.

The Pipes Cove Success Story - 10 Years in the Making

"Movement, as toward a goal" is how the dictionary defines "progress." In Pipes Cove in the Town of Southold, the movement has been back to nature and the goal is a functioning wetland complex stretching all the way from Peconic Bay to Long Island Sound – with no brick quarries, no farms, no houses, no barns.

In other words, progress in Pipes Cove has meant realizing a species-rich vestige of Long Island's fresh and tidal wetlands, natural shorelines, woodlands and tidal creeks as they once were, healthy and thriving, providing clean water, critical habitat and an opportunity for people to experience the outdoors in a place of scenic beauty.

© Kara Jackson/TNC

When the deteriorating house, barns and farmstand on a recently-acquired 30-acre property come down, no one will know better than The Nature Conservancy's own Randy Parsons how much time it took to realize this goal.

Parsons, with a background in land use planning, was asked to help preserve Pipes Cove when he arrived at The Nature Conservancy's Long Island Chapter in 2004. The Town of Southold had purchased one parcel in 2003 and sought help creating a greenway from the Long Island Sound to the Peconic Bay. At the time, there were 14 more parcels to acquire for preservation.

Parsons remembers thinking the area looked like a jig-saw puzzle on the tax map – so many different parcels owned by separate owners, all of whom would have to agree to sell to realize the goal of a natural corridor.

Over the next eight years, Parsons came to know and negotiate with ten different sets of owners, some with generations of family members with proprietary rights. He set foot on every parcel, ordered and reviewed multiple appraisals, worked out life tenancy arrangements for one homeowner and rental arrangements for another. He obtained state support and federal grants, toiled with Nature Conservancy philanthropy staff to raise private funds, and finally, in September 2012, he made arrangements for the last core parcel in the puzzle to be preserved (30-acre Manor Grove) by Suffolk County and the Town of Southold. Of all the projects within the 250-acre Pipes Cove area, Manor Grove took the longest to complete: six years.

After some 100 years of agricultural and residential use, the Manor Grove acreage will return to a natural state and become part of the Greater Pipe's Cove Area Preserve. Fresh water from the wetlands on this property drains through culverts, under Main Road and into Pipe's Creek, Pipe's Cove and the Peconic Estuary.

The success story at Pipes Cove was made possible through the cooperation, hard work and commitment of many – especially the Town Board of the Town of Southold, its Land Protection Coordinator Melissa Spiro and its Community Preservation Citizens Committee. Suffolk County and its Land Acquisition Unit also played an essential role in making Pipe's Cove Preserve become a reality. Today, Pipes Cove is a beautiful place for passive recreation, a healthier Peconic Bay, protection of rare maritime forest, and better habitat for fish, shellfish and birds.

That's something to be proud of, and we thank all who made it possible. There are a few more parcels outside the core which the Conservancy, Southold and Suffolk County would like to see protected, but after ten successful acquisitions, it's time to stand still, listen to the birds, and savor the quiet progress.

For more information visit www.nature.org/longisland

Monitoring Marshes as they March Inland

© The Nature Conservancy

Every gardener knows that good soil and strong roots are key to healthy and happy plants. Too many or too few nutrients make for a stressed, weak and otherwise unhealthy garden. The same is true for our natural environment and plants like the marsh grasses rimming Long Island's coastline.

This similarity between healthy gardens and healthy marshes may have led the Garden Club of Lawrence to partner with The Nature Conservancy to evaluate the condition of our coastal marshes. The Garden Club has a long history of interest in marsh conservation. They have sponsored beach cleanups for decades, and received awards for flower show exhibits featuring marsh conservation. Club members worked tirelessly to pass legislation to protect wetlands. Members concerned about tidal wetlands, inspired US Rep. Herbert Tenzer from Nassau County to sponsor the Long Island National Wetlands Bill (HR 11236), introduced in Congress in 1966.

Now, decades later, on the Club's 100th anniversary, members are sponsoring the establishment of two new long-term marsh monitoring stations as part of The Nature Conservancy's island-wide marsh elevation network—a project to evaluate whether marshes are keeping up with sea level rise and investigate the reasons they may be falling short.

The marsh elevation network started at The Nature Conservancy's Mashomack Preserve on Shelter Island in 2008 and now includes more than 20 marshes that are being studied by TNC and partners, including the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, NYS DEC, USFWS and Brooklyn College. New monitoring stations in western Hempstead Bay fill a geographic gap in the existing network.

The Nature Conservancy's marsh elevation network also allows scientists from other organizations to conduct research. Since 2008 staff from the Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI) in Gorham, Maine have been monitoring the amount of mercury found in the blood of salt marsh nesting birds on Long Island. Birds can be good indicators of changes to our environment and can help us understand the toxins found in natural areas.

Scientists at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have also been using the marsh elevation network to understand the impact of pollution on wetlands. Using low and high tech methods, such as using CAT scans of marsh plant roots, they are getting a glimpse into how pollution effects roots and stems of marsh plants.

Researchers at Stony Brook University are using this network of marsh sites to examine the role marsh plants play in removing excess pollution (mainly nitrogen) before it makes its way into our bays.

"We are thrilled that this marsh elevation network is attracting innovative researchers from academia, state and federal agencies. Marshes are vitally important coastal habitats. They filter pollution, serve as nurseries for marine life and help absorb the impact of storms. This research will help identify key threats so that we can better protect the marshes that serve both people and nature," said Dr. Nicole Maher, Wetlands Specialist for The Nature Conservancy on Long Island.

Water, Water Everywhere But Not a Drop to Swim or Fish in

© Marci Bortman/TNC

For a few weeks in early summer when most Long Island kids were splishing and splashing at local beaches, Jacob and Ariana Strieb were forbidden from doing so. Why? Because their mother said so. Their mom, Dr. Marci Bortman, is director of conservation programs for The Nature Conservancy on Long Island and she was worried about the water quality of the beaches near her Huntington Bay home.

A marine scientist, Dr. Bortman explains, "We're surrounded by water on Long Island. But our water supplies – from the water we drink to the water we swim in – are becoming more and more polluted despite efforts to protect this important resource. Each and every land-based activity – from flushing the toilet to using fertilizers – has an impact on this resource. Everything we put on or into the ground winds up in our drinking water, which flows underground to our bays and harbors. It's paramount to keep our local water supply clean and protected for the health and safety of Long Island's environment and its people."

> "In much of Suffolk County, the top threat to water quality is pollution from septic systems and cesspools. We have too much waste going into the ground, which flows into the water we drink and into the waters that we swim, fish and go boating in. From an environmental standpoint, nitrogen is being loaded to our waters at exceedingly high levels which are impacting the environment in ways that are harmful to nature, our maritime economies, and even human health," stated Dr. Bortman.

Too much nitrogen can lead to a cascade of impacts like slimy, dense mats of sea lettuce, harmful algae blooms like brown tide, and even dead zones where marine life cannot survive. Too much nitrogen can also lead to red tides which carry toxins that can be harmful to fish and people. This can also have devastating economic effects on commercial fishing, aquaculture and tourism –and of course, heartfelt impacts on pre-teens like Jacob and Ariana who just want to take a dip in the water on a hot summer day.

Luckily, Dr. Marci Bortman, and the rest of the staff of The Nature Conservancy are working to improve water quality on Long Island both for her children and for future generations.

The Nature Conservancy is working with partners to pass laws to decrease the amount of nitrogen flowing into our waters. In some locations it will be necessary to rethink the use of traditional cesspools and septic systems which are not designed to remove nitrogen. In other areas it may require modernizing aging sewage treatment infrastructure, or rethinking certain agricultural and yard maintenance practices.

"The threats to our waters can be slowed and reversed if we act now to address them – but the public needs to understand what the problems are before they can support solutions," said Dr. Bortman. "After all, there is no single culprit here we all contribute to this problem which means we all need to be part of the solution. Although it will certainly be a challenge, we know from examples around the world that this is a fixable problem. We know that to be successful, Long Island's community and business leaders must take active roles. We know that this can be done in ways that facilitate smart and lasting economic prosperity sought after by all Long Islanders – after all we owe it to our children to do so."

For more information visit
www.nature.org/longisland

Updates

Seagrass Protection Bill Passes


© Mark Godfrey/2009 TNC

Environmental groups applaud Governor Cuomo for signing the New York State Seagrass Protection Act into law recently. The Bill (S.4287B/A.7988A) was co-sponsored by Assemblyman Robert Sweeney (D, Lindenhurst) and State Senator Owen Johnson (R-C, Babylon).

Seagrass meadows provide critical habitat for local fish, shellfish and other marine life and play an important role in maintaining the water quality in New York's bays. According to NOAA's 2006 report, *Fisheries Economics of the US*, species that rely on seagrass produced over **$1.9 billion dollars in sales, $41 million in employment impacts, and $1 billion dollars of earned income** nationwide. Seagrass also provides habitat for bay scallops. Decimated by the loss of seagrass beds, the Peconic bay scallop harvest once averaged over 300,000 pounds annually, which would have been worth nearly $4.5 million to local fishermen in 2010. Protecting seagrass will help scallops recover.

Invasive Plant and Animal Species


Native plant garden. © Kara Jackson/TNC

By signing the Invasive Species Prevention Act, Governor Cuomo upholds New York's position of national leadership for environmental conservation, while protecting the state's vital farming, forestry, fishing and tourism industries.

The law prohibits or limits the sale and transport of known invasive plants and animals that threaten our communities, natural areas and industries.

Invasive species are non-native plants and animals that cause harm to the environment and/or human health and put at risk economically important industries including farming, forestry, tourism, and commercial and recreational fishing. Invasive species are expensive to manage or eradicate and cost taxpayers millions of dollars each year. These non-native plants can smother agricultural crops and aquatic invasive species may reduce water quality, property values and recreational boating, fishing and swimming opportunities. Nationally, **the impact of invasive species is estimated at $167 billion annually.**

It's a Sign


© Derek Rogers/TNC

Long Island preserves are getting a makeover as numerous signs have been replaced with clean, crisp new signs displaying the global logo of The Nature Conservancy. In July, staff installed two educational signs at Pine Neck Sanctuary in East Quogue. Others have been installed at Atlantic Double Dunes, Merrill Lake, Montauk Mountain, the Center for Conservation, and Wolf Swamp. Donors for the new signs include the Leo B. Walsh Foundation, Herman Goldman Foundation, Astoria Federal Savings and Northrop-Grumman Corporation.

For more information on these and other stories visit www.nature.org/longisland

A Profile of Mike Loriz

Standing in a 100 year-old pine forest, former Navy pilot Mike Loriz of Shelter Island compares our country's aviation program to the age of these trees. He's a soft-spoken man and it's hard to imagine he once flew F-18 fighter jets in the Persian Gulf. But his collar bones have the permanent harness marks to prove it – from years of blasting into aircraft carriers at 150 mph. On duty during Operation Desert Shield in 1990, Loriz found the experience as exhilarating as it was traumatic.

Now he flies as a commercial airline pilot for Delta and this man of the skies admits that he has turned to nature to ground him.

"Military service changes you, there is no question about it, and when you come back, it helps to immerse yourself in things you did when you were younger," Loriz explains.

For Loriz, one of those things is exploring his intimate relationship with nature by working with wood.

Photo courtesy of Mike Loriz

"A lot of things about military service are frankly destructive; it's kind of nice that nature is the opposite. Everything is creative; you can constantly see the re-birth of nature and nature's creation. You just never know what the inside of a log is going to look like and to me it's always a minor miracle to see the grain pattern. When you just open it up, you have a period of a couple minutes before oxidation starts to occur then it starts drying out. The goal of the woodworker is to get back to that beauty somehow in the final piece, to perpetuate what Mother Nature created."

To get there, Loriz salvages wood destined for the dump and turns it into furniture. It's primarily from housing developments and land clearing on Shelter Island.

"The thing that I love from an environmental standpoint is that I've helped keep well over 100 tons of wood out of the dumpster."

Loriz describes how he milled an entire wood floor for an island resident. Instead of buying cherry wood from the rainforest in Brazil, he used oak from Shelter Island. "The energy savings and the carbon savings is huge and I love giving the tree a second life."

And he undoubtedly has – and a third and a fourth life, too. Loriz has been kind enough to donate some of his hand-crafted pieces to The Nature Conservancy's Mashomack Preserve on Shelter Island, where he previously served as a trustee. The donated pieces have been auctioned off and helped fund the preserve's many restoration projects, which Loriz appreciates since he has such reverence for the site.

"It's hard to describe the feeling of early morning kayak runs around Mashomack when you are just paddling the quiet waters with the birds, with raccoons along the shore and the fish jumping out of the water," explains Loriz.

"My wife and I do a lot of kayaking and fishing and try to feed ourselves as much as possible from the water out here, which is why I really appreciate Mashomack's shellfish restoration work. When I was a kid, I used to come out here in the summer when West Neck Creek was a much healthier body of water and I think it's really declined in terms of water quality. It's great to see an organization working toward making it better."

A Profile of Jim Colligan

© The Nature Conservancy

On a crisp autumn morning, Jim Colligan, retired colonel in the United States Army takes the neatly folded American flag from the visitor center at The Nature Conservancy's Mashomack Preserve and raises it. A school group will have an on-site educational program this particular day, and Jim, a dedicated and energetic volunteer wants to make sure the building is ready. This gesture is a symbolic one – signifying Colligan's dedication to his Country, his commitment to education and his appreciation of nature.

In 1970, at age 22, Colligan spent a year in Vietnam. It was a year that changed him completely. After that, he dedicated his life to military service and to education and fostered his love of nature. He taught college classes while also serving as the director of health, physical education and recreation, and athletics in the Carle Place school district.

After retirement, he and his wife moved to Shelter Island and became involved in a host of activities including volunteering at Mashomack. There, he serves as a trustee, sits on the education committee, works on shellfish restoration, and helps run the visitor center.

Colligan strongly believes in the power of nature for good physical health but more importantly for mental and emotional health.

> "People say they don't have time to be in nature. But you have to make time – whether it is 15 minutes in Central Park or 40 minutes on a hike. Nature helps you decompress, relax and helps keep things in perspective. It forces you to turn off all of your electronics and focus in on a little maintenance for yourself. There's nothing wrong with that and very much needed by everybody," Colligan opines.

"No matter where you go in the world, travel forces you to see this; even a place like Vietnam, believe it or not, I would love to go back because when you take away all of the bullets and the war, the country itself has some really beautiful places. You can only appreciate that if you are not shooting a gun, but you are shooting a camera."

And snapping photographs of nature is one of Colligan's growing passions.

"Photography forces me to slow down, examine what's around me, and appreciate the smaller things. In fact, I came to Mashomack early one morning, went out to the meadow and realized that tens of thousands of spider webs were there, and when the dew is on those webs, they light up the meadow. In the morning mist and fog it was a little eerie because there were a couple of dead trees and it was kind of spooky looking. It was a perfect Halloween scene. Sometimes with nature you have to pick the right time and place but you do have to slow down to see it."

Colligan recommends a daily dose of nature for anyone and everyone.