



# Long Island Spring/Summer 2017 update

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## Whales, Dolphins and Seabirds Saddle Up to Long Island's Bunker Buffet

"Whales, dolphins, bluefish, osprey and seabirds all eat menhaden for breakfast, lunch and dinner, so if we want them to come, stay and be happy, we need to manage their meal accordingly," explains the Conservancy's Senior Marine Scientist, Carl LoBue.

Atlantic Menhaden, known locally as bunker, once filled New York estuaries and Atlantic coastal waters. They are not typically eaten by people, but they are caught for use as bait. Very large amounts are also harvested by fish processors to make a variety of products from pig feed to fish oil pills. But decades of largely unregulated industrial scale fishing had recently shrunk the menhaden population to a fraction of what it once was, impacting all the creatures that depend on them.

As the population shrank so did their range - until a relentless alliance of scientists and fisherman began ringing alarm bells. Then, in 2012, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved a 20 percent reduction in take from previous fishing levels.

Since then the fish have been returning to New York and they've brought the larger fish and whales back with them.

**"While striped bass fishing the nearshore ocean in the fall of 2016 I felt like I was in a National Geographic special. There were seabirds diving from above, and whales and dolphins cascading through the water chasing schools of menhaden," LoBue relates. "It's been quite remarkable to witness this recovery."**

But a lasting recovery is still uncertain. Fishery managers will need to prioritize maintaining adequate numbers of menhaden for their role in the marine food chain when setting local and coast-wide catch limits.

"What many scientists have proposed is a common sense approach that calls for leaving about 75 percent of these little fish in the water for other things to eat," LoBue states. "It's all about managing this movable feast."

# MESSAGE

FROM THE DIRECTOR, NANCY N. KELLEY



Warm weather has arrived!

Time to get out and enjoy nature. Hike through a Nature Conservancy preserve, walk on a beach, use a pair of binoculars to see birds returning from their winter habitats.

Nature affords us these priceless experiences, and even more benefits. For example, a recent study commissioned by The Nature Conservancy found that home prices are positively impacted by high-quality water bodies up to two-thirds of a mile away.

Whole communities benefit from good water quality. Therefore, one of the best investments you can make in your home and community lies beneath the ground. Upgrading your septic system – to diminish the nitrogen pollution from sewage that harms our local water quality – will help protect the value of your home and the health of the waterbodies in your community.

Homeowners and businesses on Long Island are beginning to make these upgrades, and towns such as East Hampton are taking a proactive stance, requiring new buildings to use nitrogen-reducing wastewater systems and offering rebates for retrofits to protect nearby waters. Rebates will be paid from the Community Preservation Fund (CPF), a 2 percent tax on real estate transactions.

Last November, local voters overwhelmingly supported using up to 20 percent of CPF revenues to improve water quality, building on the fund's already successful land protection work. Because our local economy is so closely tied to water, it's important to make investments in clean water NOW. Clean water helps protect jobs, businesses, public services, and quality of life.

After all, we depend on nature and nature depends on us.



LEARN MORE about  
water quality  
[nature.org/longisland](https://www.nature.org/longisland)



## Help! The Boardwalk at Sagg Swamp Preserve Needs Major Repair!

Hamptons magazine has named it one of the “prettiest walks in the East End.”

This beautiful, 105-acre preserve is an important nesting area for over 84 bird species, including great horned owl, golden-crowned kinglet and black-crowned night heron.

It is home to one of Long Island's last stands of Atlantic White Cedar and unusual “stunted” red maples. Conservancy members, neighbors and East End visitors hike the Preserve throughout the seasons, including one couple – now married over 20 years – whose first date was an evening owl walk through Sagg Swamp!

We are currently raising funds to repair the boardwalk and two small bridges.

If you'd like to make a tax-deductible contribution, please contact Anne Salmon at [asalmon@tnc.org](mailto:asalmon@tnc.org) or 631-367-3384 ext. 137.

# Our Health Depends ON CLEAN WATER

For some Long Island hospitals, the goal of “good health” implies a natural connection between human well-being and environmental health, emphasizing the importance of clean water, toxin-free landscaping and energy efficiency.

“We do use a lot of water,” says David Lopez, director of facilities and engineering at Southampton Hospital, which uses an average of 24,500 gallons per day. That quantity is sixty times the approximately 400 gallons per day used by a family of four.

Hospital administrators say they recognize how important it is to protect both the quantity and quality of Long Island’s drinking water, which comes from an underground aquifer. Hospitals rely on water distributors to treat raw groundwater to meet federal standards, and if hospitals were to lose confidence in that process, Lopez notes, they would need to consider their own treatment facilities. That would only add to the costs of health care, Long Island’s largest economic sector and source of jobs.

Water quality is also a priority at Northwell Health, previously called North Shore-LIJ. The 21 hospitals in the group perform “rigorous testing” of water, according to Gene Tangney, senior vice president and chief administrative officer. Testing is essential as water must be of the best quality when used in patient treatment, such as dialysis.

The stakes are high: in 1996, fifty people died in Brazil from dialysis performed with water from a reservoir that contained a toxin produced by cyanobacteria, which is fueled by excess nitrogen. Unsafe levels of cyanobacteria are the reason why numerous ponds on Long Island have been closed to recreation during the past few summers.



In addition to protecting the quality of water, attention must be given to the quantity of water in the aquifer to ensure that enough water is present to support Long Island’s large population now and in the future. Many Northwell buildings are LEEDS certified, which includes standards for water usage as well as energy efficiency.

Southampton Hospital monitors its water use through meters. On the discharge side, Lopez is proud that the sewage treatment plant at the hospital reduces nitrogen from an average of 28 mg/L in the influent to an average of 2.5 mg/L in the effluent, a very low amount.

For Lopez, water quality also matters outside of his job.

“I’m a fisherman,” he says with obvious pride. “I eat shellfish, and I love the bays.” He understands that polluted groundwater flows into our ponds, rivers and bays, where it not only triggers algae blooms, but also kills fish and produces dead zones that make areas unable to support marine life.

Reducing fertilizer is another way to curb nitrogen pollution, which is why Southampton Hospital has joined the toxin-free landscaping program of East Hampton’s PRFCT Earth, one of the first institutions to do so.

# Your Guide To Great Hikes This SPRING & SUMMER



Long Island offers so many varied and beautiful places to be in nature. We asked our preserve staff to come up with a list of spots they enjoy for spring and summer hikes. Those that are marked with a leaf symbol The Nature Conservancy played a key role in protecting.

## Walk in the Woods at Butler-Huntington (St. James)

The preserve's woodland trails meander over hilly ridges and swales under a canopy of black, white and chestnut oaks, beech and hickories. Spring wildflowers, such as pink and white mountain laurel, bloom before the trees leaf out and shade the forest floor. Limited parking (3 vehicles; additional roadside parking for 1-2 vehicles).

## Cool Plants at Calverton Ponds Preserve (Calverton)

This 350-acre oak-pine forested preserve is a jewel for those who enjoy a quiet hike amidst one of the rarest and most unique wetland types in North America – coastal

plain ponds. Calverton Ponds hosts 26 rare plants, several uncommon amphibians and fish, and a number of unusual damselflies, butterflies and moths.

## Spectacular Vista at Sound View Dunes Park (Peconic)

A roughly 2-mile trail cuts through 57 acres of beach, dune, wetland and forest habitats. A short but steep section through the forest offers stunning views of Long Island Sound, a glimpse of the unique maritime freshwater interdunal swale community and access to the beach. The Nature Conservancy helped acquire this preserve in 2008.

## Go by Boat to Fire Island National Seashore (Blue Point)

With beaches, high dunes, ancient maritime forests, historic landmarks and glimpses of wildlife, Fire Island truly offers it all. This dynamic barrier island allows for solitude, camaraderie, and spiritual renewal. Access via boat that crosses over The Nature Conservancy's 13,500-acre Blue Points Bottomlands Preserve.

### Great Adventures for Kids at Mashomack Preserve (Shelter Island)

Enjoy a half-mile walk and read a nature-themed story along the way on the Red Trail at this 2,039-acre preserve on Shelter Island. Read a page, walk a short distance, then read the next. By the return to the Visitor Center the story is complete. It's a perfect family nature adventure and chance to get your kids out into the woods! The 1-mile Joan C. Coles Trail at Mashomack is wheelchair and stroller friendly, too. Also trails of 3, 6 and 10 miles.

### Bring your Binocs for Bird Migration Madness at Muttontown Preserve (East Norwich)

Comprised of some 550 acres of fields, woodlands, ponds and estate grounds, Muttontown Preserve is Nassau County's largest nature preserve and a great springtime birding spot. The site draws a wide variety of migrating warblers such as Black-throated Green and Redstart as well as summer breeding birds like Scarlet Tanager and Ovenbird.

### Short but Sweet at Charles T. Church Shu Swamp Nature Sanctuary (Mill Neck)

"Shu Swamp" offers both wetlands and uplands, with most of the wildlife drawn to the waters of Beaver Lake, fed by many springs and seeps. Shu is a Dutch word meaning "cascading waters." Trails pass through the marshy estuary that is home for great horned owls, wood ducks, mink, muskrats and trout. It's also home to plants such as the trout lily, marsh marigold and dwarf ginseng. The Nature Conservancy is installing an improved fish passage here.

### Take Your Pooch Pal to Gardiner County Park (West Bay Shore)

Once owned by the Gardiner Family, Gardiner County Park is now a 230+ acre nature-oriented public park on the Great South Bay. Leashed dogs are welcome everywhere except a small grassy plot near the parking lot where there is a children's playground. The park has hiking trails through woodlands for the pups to romp on and sandy (but sometimes muddy!) beaches.

### By Land or By Sea at Accabonac Harbor (East Hampton)

One of East Hampton's most scenic and diverse tidal marsh systems, Accabonac Harbor is a bird-watcher's paradise with abundant shorebirds, waterfowl and wildlife. Enjoy this scenic spot by land (waterproof shoes recommended) at Merrill Lake Preserve or by sea on a kayak or paddle board adventure. Rentals available through the Springs General Store and other local purveyors.

### Spectacular Scenes of Long Island's Geology at Shadmoor State Park (Montauk)

No piece of oceanfront property on Long Island surpasses Shadmoor's striking beauty and panoramic views. Shadmoor's trails along spectacular fluted sand and clay bluffs that plunge dramatically down to the Atlantic are reason enough to visit.

The park, named for its open, rolling geography and the shadbush that grows there, also has freshwater wetlands, hiking trails and elevated platforms for birdwatching and enjoying the shoreline views. The Nature Conservancy played a key role in the property's protection in 2000.



# Collaborating to Save Seagrass In LONG ISLAND SOUND

A diver near Fishers Island – a roughly 4-square-mile island off the eastern end of Long Island – encounters a mesmerizing sight: a lush underwater meadow of tall, waving grass blades. “These seagrass meadows are extraordinary,” says Chantal Collier, director of The Nature Conservancy’s Long Island Sound program. They’re also rare in the Sound. Seagrass meadows, which store carbon and provide habitat for fish and shellfish, once fringed bays and harbors along New York and Connecticut’s shores. But today, 90 percent of the seagrass is gone.

Conservancy-led research identified nitrogen pollution, from sewage and fertilizers, as well as warming seas as the greatest threats to remaining seagrass in southern New England and New York. Now, the Conservancy is working to ensure the

Sound’s remaining meadows are protected and to restore the conditions seagrass needs to thrive.

“We’re working with the Fishers Island Conservancy, the Henry L. Ferguson Museum, other community members and state representatives to develop collaborative seagrass management options that benefit people and support implementation of New York State’s 2012 Seagrass Protection Act,” added Collier.

The Conservancy is also helping advance the Long Island Sound Blue Plan, which Connecticut lawmakers initiated in 2015 to balance future uses with protection of the Sound.



LEARN MORE about seagrass  
in Long Island Sound  
[nature.org/longislandsound](https://nature.org/longislandsound)



# MASHOMACK PRESERVE Has New Director

Jeremy Samuelson is the new Mashomack Preserve Director, coming to The Nature Conservancy with more than a decade of professional conservation experience. Since 2012, he served as Executive Director of Concerned Citizens of Montauk, an influential conservation group and a strong partner to The Nature Conservancy in its work to protect lands, coasts and waters.

“Under Jeremy’s leadership and with our strong team in place, Mashomack is well positioned to best serve nature and people, today and into the future,” said Executive Director, Nancy Kelley.

“His skills, experience and passion for nature combine to make Jeremy a dynamic leader for Mashomack, one of The Nature Conservancy’s premier preserves.”

Edged in white by 12 miles of coastline, Mashomack Preserve on Shelter Island is considered one of the richest habitats in the Northeast. Just 90 miles from New York City, the preserve covers nearly a third of the island with 2,039 acres of interlacing tidal creeks, mature oak woodlands,



fields, and freshwater marshes and is often referred to as the “Jewel of the Peconic.”

“Mashomack is a place of unparalleled beauty. I am humbled by the opportunity to lead the team of scientists, stewards and educators tasked with nurturing this extraordinary preserve,” added Samuelson.



Long Island once supported lucrative fisheries along every shore. Many have collapsed or severely declined in the past few decades. While there are multiple contributing factors, habitat loss, harmful algae, and nitrogen pollution are major factors in the demise of several of Long Island’s historically most productive fisheries. Nitrogen pollution from sewage is the number one threat to water quality on Long Island.

To learn more, watch our video series on water quality and explore the personal stories of how connected we are to our beaches, bays and harbors at [nature.org/longislandwater](https://www.nature.org/longislandwater)

## OUR MISSION:

TO CONSERVE THE LANDS  
AND WATERS ON WHICH  
ALL LIFE DEPENDS.



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# The world we depend on depends on you.

## SAVE THE DATE

**Summer Benefit for Clean Water on Long Island  
Saturday, June 24, 2017 at 7:00 pm**

Center for Conservation, East Hampton

Co - Chairs Anne and Nicolas Erni

Beverly and Michael Kazickas

For more information call 631-367-3384, ext. 138

or email [alader@tnc.org](mailto:alader@tnc.org)