



Newsletter

December 2013

Volume 4, Issue 4

Association Leaders

Brian Harrington,
President
Lee Pulis, Vice President
John Foye, Treasurer
Rali Esterman, Secretary
Ken Cannon & Kate von
Goeler, Webmasters
Claire & Emma Esterman
Student Assistant
Webmasters
Dave Clark Government
Liaison
Paula Kuketz, Water
Safety Committee
Geri Williams,
Newsletter Editor
Lee Pulis, Education and
Outreach Committee
Eb von Goeler, Water
Quality Committee
Marleen von Goeler,
Program Committee
Robena Haigh,
Membership Chair and
Volunteer Coordinator

Upcoming Events

**April 26, 2014 Herring
Run Field Trip** Learn
about the habits of the
Herring as they return
to the ponds to breed.
More details to follow.

**May 17, 2014 7am
HPWA Annual Bird
Walk** Brian
Harrington will lead this
informative walk to see
spring birds. More
details to follow.

**May 19, 2014 7pm
General Meeting HPWA**
Plan to join us. Speaker
will be announced in the
next Newsletter

Website

TheHerringPondsWatershed.org

President's Message

Brian Harrington, President

The approaching end of 2013 is a good time to reflect on the accomplishments of your watershed association, and to reaffirm our thanks to those residents who have supported it.

Although we are only 7 years old, we reached a number of significant milestones during the year, and we did this through the work and support of an entirely volunteer-based organization. Looking back, I am awed and excited by what we accomplished. Highlights include composing, publishing and hand-delivering your watershed stewardship guide (all 24 pages of it!) to more than 1600 homes in our watershed. Success came through the work of a very dedicated Education Committee, a grant from the Makepeace Neighborhood Fund, a private donation, and worn shoe-leather from our cadre of grandparents and grand-children who hand-delivered the booklet throughout our neighborhoods. The very informative booklet includes some geography, some history of our watershed, and ideas for practices you can adopt to be a thoughtful watershed resident.

We also continued to monitor water quality during 2013 in Little and Great Herring Ponds, and we could sleep and swim knowing that all measured well. There were lots of other accomplishments, but perhaps the one where we can stand with greatest pride was a successful struggle to help protect a key parcel of land along the Carters River. If any of the above news surprises you, consider regular visits to our website (www.theherringpondswatershed.org) to stay up to date.

A common theme in our success is the dedication and hard work among your volunteer-neighbors. Their work is helping to ensure that we continue to enjoy our wonderfully beautiful setting. We are blessed with a beautiful location, a high-quality fun place to live, and best of all, good and thoughtful neighbors! By working together we can keep it this way.

Heartfelt thanks and best wishes for the holidays to all who are 'with us', and greetings plus an invitation to those who have not yet joined. - Brian Harrington.

Happy Holidays

Safety Concern – Cold Shock

From Paula Kuketz, Water Safety Committee

MA State regulations require life jackets be worn between October 15th and May 1st.

Cold water removes heat from the body 25 times faster than cold air. Survival time can be reduced to minutes. Strong swimmers have died before swimming 100 yards in cold water. Exposure of the head and chest to cold water causes sudden increases in heart rate and blood pressure that may result in cardiac arrest.

Without a life jacket, a victim may inhale while under water (involuntary gasping reflex) and drown without coming back to the surface.

Only you can prevent a tragedy by wearing a life jacket at all times in the off-season while on the water.
There is no second chance.

Introducing The Wildlands Trust: A New Partnership

By Allegra Wrocklage

The Herring Ponds watershed is an invaluable local resource, and the HPWA is doing exciting and vital work to protect it. Yet, given our region's fast pace of development, a long term plan is essential to safeguard the land that maintains the watershed's ecological quality. The Wildlands Trust would like to be a part of this effort by helping to conserve land in and around the watershed, ensuring the integrity of this resource for generations to come.

The Wildlands Trust is a non-profit dedicated to conserving land and preserving the natural heritage of Southeastern Massachusetts. One of the largest and oldest regional land trusts in the Commonwealth, we were founded in Plymouth 40 years ago and have protected almost 10,000 acres in the region. We work to protect and steward important habitats and landscapes by preserving open and undeveloped land.

The Wildlands Trust is excited to work with landowners in the Herring Ponds watershed who want to learn more about how they can protect the watershed by conserving their land. We provide information about a range of land conservation options including conservation restrictions, donations, sale for conservation, and agricultural preservation restrictions, and we offer free and confidential consultations with landowners to explore these options. Wildlands Trust staff would be glad to hear from landowners in the Herring Ponds watershed who may be interested in conserving their land and learning more about our work.

I am an AmeriCorps volunteer with the Massachusetts Land Initiative for Tomorrow serving for a year at the Wildlands Trust, I am looking forward to collaborating with the HPWA on land conservation initiatives and landowner outreach in the watershed in the coming months.

Please visit our website www.wildlandstrust.org to learn more about the Trust and our work, or call me at 781-934-9018 to discuss your interest in protecting your land. Also visit the HPWA's website <http://www.theherringpondswatershed.org/> for updates on the Association's work, potentially including future collaborations with the Wildlands Trust.

Allegra Wrocklage
AmeriCorps - Massachusetts Land Initiative For Tomorrow
Regional Conservation Coordinator
Wildlands Trust

Report of the HPWA Water Quality Committee

By Eb von Goeler, Chairman

The last pond water sampling of the year took place on October 28 – a beautiful Fall day. Volunteer samplers were Dennis White in his kayak on LHP and Carters River, and Robbie Haigh, Jack Kedian, Carole Stone, Kim Tower, and myself on GHP, on Rick Kaloshis' pontoon boat. We owe all these intrepid volunteers a heartfelt 'thank you' for their work.

The results of the newest water analysis are posted on our web site theherringpondswatershed.org. These data show no problems, similar to earlier data from 2012 and 2013. Phosphorus is low, below eutrophic conditions. At some sampling points the results are even close to the low detection limit, as has been the case for about 2 years. However, transparency was about 2 -2.5 m, more or less the same as in August, indicating a considerable amount of algae activity still there. Remember that we had transparency about 8 m in early Spring, incredibly clear water with the pond bottom visible almost everywhere. Nitrogen is a bit elevated, but not worrisome. pH is just slightly acidic, typical for our area. e-coli are also at minimum detection capability of the lab. That means no problems with septic systems, animal waste, fertilizer,

etc. The next sampling will occur at the end of April 2014. We are – I mean you are - doing a fine job keeping pollutants out of the water!

Remember the big storm rolling in early on the Wednesday morning before Thanksgiving, and dropping more than an inch of rain on us? Perfect weather to collect stormwater runoff! Several of our volunteers went outside in the downpour and braved the wind whipped deluge, to collect runoff water samples at a location near their homes. By noon, the storm was over, and the lab in Sandwich had received our water samples from six locations around GHP – the first step in possible future runoff mitigation. Thank our volunteers: Brian Harrington, Norm McLaughlin, Dennis White, and myself.

If you know of a location with significant rain runoff near your home, please let me know. If you want to volunteer as a sampler at that location, that's even better. Make a New Year's resolution to become a volunteer, for regular sampling or stormwater sampling, or both. You can contact me at 508-833-2136. We thank the Town – your taxes – for paying part of the cost of the analysis for the regular water sampling. The rest, more than half, is paid by your dues to HPWA. All the analysis cost for the stormwater sampling is presently paid by the Town of Plymouth.



Last September we held our 1st picnic. Great turnout, lots of fun! If you would like to help plan one for next summer contact Robbie Haigh at herringswan@verizon.net

Ruddy Duck Visitors

By Brian Harrington

During a recent walk along Roxy Cahoon Road (don't you love that name?) a 'distant nearby' neighbor



approached saying that he had recently seen Ruddy Ducks on Great Herring Pond (GHP). Indeed, we have had almost a hundred of these 'dandy ducks' in our neighborhood lately, with the flock growing from the first few pioneers that arrived in mid-November, to 110 by my quick count a day or two after Thanksgiving.

Ruddy Ducks are not seen everywhere, and indeed they seem to be quite particular about which ponds they will linger at ... not too deep, not too shallow, and with just the right foods. Although I check often, I don't recall ever seeing one on Little Herring Pond. The scientist in me keeps me thinking at night about the possible reasons of why this could be so. So with a quick 'online visit' to a science site (the Birds of North America series at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology), I learn that during migration and winter Ruddies like open lakes (check # 1!), that they dive for their foods (check #2!), and that after their oblique dives they typically re-surface within a yard or two of the spot where they first dove (guess I missed that ... with a hundred of them diving here and there it's hard to tell!) My source also says that they like to eat aquatic insects and the like, but that during migration and winter they eat more vegetation snatched from the bottoms of favorite lakes.

I also learned that these little ducks often separate themselves from other ducks. The last flock I saw was tucked away in the southwest cove of GHP, in their own friendly flock, save for one lonely (or maybe mixed-up) scaup duck, and a group of buffleheads a short distance away.

Ruddies are fairly small ducks. Right now only a few of them show the bright, ruddy plumage distinctive of the males. The relatively non-descript young birds and the females look similar. Only a few in my flock of a hundred were the ruddy-colored males. If you find the flock, watch for their 'cocked-up' tails, a habit common

to Ruddies.

Last winter the ruddies stayed with us until GHP froze almost completely over. Then all but a few disappeared. [I wonder where they went.] OK, OK ... maybe just get out and have a look at them; they really are "dandy ducks"!

The Carters River Campaign

By Brian Harrington

This past summer our watershed association learned that a key parcel of land in the Carters River floodplain, an ecologically sensitive valley between Little and Great Herring Ponds, had been purchased and was slated for development. Although the property had been identified by Plymouth's Community Preservation Committee (CPC) as a parcel that should be purchased and placed in conservation, a private purchase and sale agreement was negotiated and a key deadline was missed, forfeiting the Town's "first refusal" rights to purchase the land. Recognizing the extraordinary aesthetic and ecological value of "Parcel 15A", your association board joined with some extraordinary members to raise funds needed to negotiate a buyout agreement with the prospective buyer. Our effort restored the opportunity for Plymouth to purchase the 5-acre parcel with Community Preservation Act funds. Our Herring River watershed,

including the Carters River, has long been recognized by the State as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

" This ACEC area contains one of the largest herring runs along the coast, with an important freshwater recreational fishery, boating, and three major summer camps for children. The area is critical for the public water supply. State-listed rare and endangered species, including the box turtle and spotted turtle, are present. Historical and cultural resources include remains of the core habitation area for the Herring Pond Wampanoag tribe." (Source: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/conservation/acec/herring-river-watershed.html>)

These words succinctly describe how the Herring River watershed, including the Carters River, is a critical resource to the state. But its importance to us local residents is even greater. We have the unusual fortune to live in a neighborhood that is not only beautiful, but which also affords high-value recreational opportunities that we are all privileged to enjoy. We are thankful that some of our neighbors stood tall and pitched in to protect this simply beautiful and environmentally critical piece of the watershed.

Elections

At the HPWA Annual Meeting in August, Lee Pulis was elected Vice President and Rali Esterman reelected secretary. Outgoing Vice President Dave Clark was thanked for his efforts.



Dave Clark, President Brian Harrington, Vice President Lee Pulis, Secretary Rali Esterman, Treasurer John Foye.

Why Are Pond Surfaces Sometimes Streaked With Foam?

By Eb von Goeler

Have you ever noticed the regular narrow parallel stripes of whitish-brown foam, spaced 10 or 15 feet apart that may cover a pond's surface on a windy day as far as you can see? Have you pondered what it could be? Have you suspected one of your neighbors of illegally releasing their laundry suds directly into your pond, and silently (or not so silently) grumbled about it? If that is your reaction, you are not alone. But don't be so fast to blame your neighbors. If you collect your thoughts you will quickly realize that covering the whole pond with these stripes would take a lot of suds, especially as detergents nowadays must be biodegradable. Actually what you are most likely seeing is a natural phenomenon. Mother Nature has tricked you. Here is what is happening: Dissolving and decaying plant matter, leaves, etc. lower the surface tension of the water, and that in combination with wind and waves causes bubbles to form at the water surface and clump together as foam. Because the foam is very light it collects on the surface, where wind and wave action pushes it to accumulate in these very characteristic narrow bands. This natural foam has a faintly fishy smell, and that's how you can identify it. Laundry suds tend to smell, well, like laundry suds, a slightly perfumed smell. Touch the foam accumulating at the beach for a smell test.

Roadway Improvements on Valley Road and Roxy Cahoon Road

By Dave Clark

Last spring the Town Engineer, Sid Kashi, contacted property owners along Valley Road and the north end of Roxy Cahoon Road to obtain easements along the roadways to facilitate improvements including drainage and

paving on a portion of Valley Road and Roxy Cahoon Road. It is anticipated that \$200,000, of the anticipated \$450,000, will be paid for by a developer in conjunction with a project on the west site on Roxy Cahoon Road. Both of these roads are under much stress from the huge increase in traffic from nearby developments, and maintenance has become very expensive for the Town leaving the roadways in very tough shape much of the year. Many residents have complained of damaged vehicles, horrendous school bus access, and difficulty for emergency equipment to reach residents.

At the recent Selectman's Meeting on November 19th, the Town Engineer asked the Selectmen for approval to proceed with the eminent domain taking process to obtain the two (2) remaining easements. One owner on Valley Road is opposed to paving as she recently moved to the area for the ability to ride horses on the dirt roadway. She spoke in opposition while all other property owners spoke in favor. The other ownership is in a Trust and obtaining signatures has been difficult. The item passed with four (4) selectmen voting favorably and one abstaining.

It is hoped that improvements can begin in summer 2014.

Editor's Note

If you take any interesting pictures around the ponds or in the watershed, please send them to me at geri3williams@comcast.net for inclusion in future newsletters. I also welcome articles from members.

We have one 55-gallon rain barrel available for purchase at \$40; contact Lee Pulis (617-216-4921) if interested. We also have two HPWA 2013-2014 calendars left. If you are looking for a good \$15 gift, contact John Foye (508-888-5308).

Membership

By Robbie Haigh, Chairman

Membership is the life's blood of any community organization. It is critical that we, the home owners and citizens of our ponds and watershed area become involved as members and take an active roll in improving the health of our ponds and watershed. We need to protect these valuable resources for future generations.

We are threatened by: pollution, storm water issues, and shoreline and watershed development

Our ponds and watershed create a diverse habitat for wildlife providing a home for hundreds of animals, including threatened species.

It also provides us as citizens of the watershed with drinking water, aesthetic value, recreation and flood control.

We need your help - ask your neighbors and friends to join our association. We are always in need of volunteers on our association committees and projects. Please use the application below to help us increase our membership. Your membership dues will be used to provide water quality tests.

HPWA Membership Form

Name _____

Address _____

City/Town _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

___ \$15 Member, vote & communications

___ \$25 Family, 2 voting members & communications

___ \$55 Contributing Member, vote & communications

___ \$100 Sustaining Member, receive all of above

Make checks payable to **The Herring Ponds Watershed Association, Ltd**

Mail to: Herring Ponds Watershed Assoc.

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