Submitted by Justine Kibbe for the Fishers Island Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy

Fishers Island’s extensive natural resources and land preserves coupled with its limited development and lack of tourism make it a special place. The marine environment surrounding the island is also distinctive – it supports some of the last remaining seagrass meadows in Long Island Sound.

Justine Kibbe, Naturalist for the Fishers Island Conservancy, teamed up with The Nature Conservancy scientists, Northeast Marine Program Director Sally McGee and Long Island Sound Program Director Chantal Collier, in August 2014. They surveyed and selected potential new monitoring sites around the island to support and guide the development of protection and restoration strategies for the island’s valuable and irreplaceable seagrass meadows. Initial parameters to be monitored in 2015 include seasonal water temperatures and activities in and adjacent to seagrass meadows. By understanding and reducing threats to eelgrass within our local control, such as the amount of nitrogen going into our waters, we can help seagrass meadows to persist and cope with warming temperatures.

Seagrasses are a unique group of flowering marine plants that live fully submerged in shallow coastal waters around the world. They form extensive underwater meadows which provide valuable benefits to nature and people. Seagrasses provide shelter, feeding grounds, and serve as nurseries for thousands of ocean animals, including commercially and recreationally important species such as lobsters, flounder, and bay scallops. They generate oxygen, improve water quality by absorbing nutrients, and even help reduce shoreline erosion. Of the 58 known kinds of seagrass, eelgrass (Zostera marina) is the only species found in the Sound. Historically abundant throughout the bays and harbors of the Sound, today, less than 10 percent of its historic acreage remains, and 98 percent of the eelgrass in the New York waters of the Sound is found around Fishers Island.

Around the world, seagrasses are dying and disappearing at an alarming rate. The declines have been attributed to numerous sources ranging from nutrient pollution, sedimentation, dredging, anchoring, propeller scars and fishing gear, to disease, algal blooms, warming temperatures and sea level rise.

In 2009, The Nature Conservancy received funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to research the causes of seagrass decline in the Southern New England and Long Island regions. The study, completed in May 2014, demonstrates that nitrogen pollution – from sewage, fertilizers and the atmosphere – and warming water temperatures, are the biggest threats to eelgrass throughout the region. A key finding was that the sources of nitrogen and relative risks from nitrogen pollution can differ from one bay to the next. Around Fishers Island, the primary source of nitrogen pollution is from septic systems and fertilizer application. However, with the exception of East Harbor, the risk to seagrass persistence from nitrogen pollution around the island is relatively low compared to other study sites in Long Island Sound; while the risk from thermal stress is relatively high. To view the full study, visit nature.org/seagrassresearch.
Wildlife Biologist and PhD student from University of Delaware, Adam Mitchell, is new to the island and like some residents is already involved in a big home renovation. But you won’t see him painting or scraping or shingling a roof – his project is unique – so unique some say “It’s for the birds”! With ongoing environmental initiative and conservation support from the island community, Adam is helping to restore wildlife habitat – especially for the birds.

This month I caught up with Adam and encouraged him to share this very interesting educational outreach with all of us.

“My research, in collaboration with members of the Fishers Island Conservancy, aims to investigate the impacts of non-native plants on food webs, focusing on the impacts of non-native plants on plant, insect, and bird communities. Our hope is to use this information to help guide management strategies to reduce the impact of non-native plants on Fishers Island, and to restore native habitat for birds. We also want to inform residents of the impacts non-native ornamental plants may have on local wildlife, and encourage residents to incorporate native plants into their landscape.

The introduction of non-native plant species can have negative consequences for wildlife species like migratory birds. Many species of birds fly for days before finding stopover points to replenish their energy. When a stopover point is located, birds will search for food, which consists of native berries, fruits, and insects. However, many non-native plant species replace native plants in the landscape, reducing the number of plants that provide fruit for migratory birds. In addition, most insects feed only on a few species of plants and cannot recognize non-native plants as food.

This is a major concern for Fishers Island, as the majority of land on the island consists of non-native plants, and as they become dominant throughout the landscape, it is less likely that migratory birds will visit the island. This loss of links in the food chain can have broad consequences for the island’s ecosystem, as well as impact the island’s reputation as a bird sanctuary. As such, it is important for us to understand the impact of non-native plants on habitat quality for birds.

I traveled to the island this month to survey the number of bird species using the island as habitat. I recorded a total of 43 species of birds on the island, with the majority of migratory birds including common grackle and tree swallow. I also gave a presentation to upperclassmen at the Fishers Island School on the impacts of non-native plants to the ecology of the island, and encouraged students to participate in the point counts and future research opportunities with the Conservancy’s work as it develops.”

Mitchell’s Fishers Island research and studies will accompany him these next years while he continues to work in The Department of Entomology (study of insects) and Wildlife Ecology.

And, what makes our island ecosystems so unique compared to let’s say The Galapagos? Adam, who is indeed familiar with that very environment, shared his view “Unlike the Galapagos where tourism is frequent, the isolation of Fishers reduces the number of possible invasive plant species that can arrive on Island with human intervention, such as by boat. We also have a higher density of people and landowners here, which could help us determine where the invasive plants are and manage them before they spread any further. Given these qualities, Fishers Island has the potential to reduce the impact of invasive plants and restore habitat for wildlife.”
BEACH CLEANUP

By Beth Stern, FI Waste Management

Fishers Island Waste Management, along with the American Littoral Society, sponsored a Beach Cleanup event on Saturday, September 20, 2014. This year’s event attracted more participants than any previous year. We would like to point out that Carol Giles and Karen Goodwin at Fishers Island School were a tremendous help with getting the word out. As in the past, Liz Furse generosity donated ice cream from Toppers to those who took part in the event.

In truth, each and every one of you who participated made the event a success.

62 of you returned with your full trash bags and data cards that indicated exactly what beach trash was collected. Some of the information from your data cards tells us this

1. Some of the areas covered were Silver Eel, North Hill, Barley Field, Darby’s Cove and Race Point
2. 600 Plastic Bottle Caps, 329 Plastic Bottles, 27 Shoes, 141 Balloons were recovered

One team walking the Race Point area came across a seagull that was stranded with a fishing plug imbedded in its side. They were able to free the seagull from harm and watch it fly away.

On a less fortunate level, several dead seagulls were seen. Marine debris, especially plastic, kills more than one million seabirds every year.

Next year we hope to sponsor the event in July and again in September. When the time comes look for announcements. We look forward to seeing everyone participate in 2015.

FERRY ORIENTATION

The Fishers Island Ferry District held an orientation for the Fishers Island School students and faculty Thursday, September 11, 2013.

The crew of Captain Jon Haney, Manager of Marine Operations RJ Burns and Deckhand Amy Ruffin taught everyone the safety features aboard the M/V Munnawket that made a special trip to the Island for the morning.

The Munnawket’s cabin was transformed into a classroom where students learned where to find and how to wear life jackets, including the 75 new ones on board. They had a tour of the boat including the top deck, and found out about the life raft deployment, fire extinguishers, the sprinkler system, and learned who to contact in case something seems out of sorts.

The highlight of course was their visit to the pilot house. All the students were very enthusiastic and the first and second graders really enjoyed blowing the air horn!
A Fritze Family Thank You

It is now a month since Gunther died in a bike accident on the island, and our family does not cease to be astounded by the love which has poured forth, and continues to do so, from every corner of this community.

It began with the young men who stopped at the site of the accident – and moved on to the members of the Fire Department, who showed incredible expertise and grace in coping with the mechanics of the death itself. Until we were faced with such a situation, we tended to take their service somewhat for granted, but, let me tell you, such service is above and beyond the call of duty. It’s quite simply extraordinary.

Thereafter it has been the thoughtful acts, food, boat rides, notes and primarily hugs.

Gunther died doing what he loved, with people he loved, on a beautiful summer’s day – not a bad script. That he died on this island, a place that he loved, is a gift to us all, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Anita Fritze

Announcements: Weddings

September 6, Fishers Island
Charlotte Taylor and Menno Goodman

September 28, Fishers Island
Catherine Guimaraes and Richard Hoggard

Birth

September 25, 2014
Violet Isabella Hunt to Phoebe and Robert Hunt
IN MEMORIAM: ROBERT J. COLEMAN

Robert J. Coleman, beloved husband and proud father of five children and fourteen grandchildren, died peacefully at home on September 14, 2014 following complications from cancer. He was born in New York City on September 24, 1935 and raised by his parents, William and Gertrude, in Irvington, NY. His father was a Partner at Adler Coleman and Company of New York.

A competitive college racquets player and social science major, he earned his undergraduate degree from Fordham University in 1956. After serving his country as a First Lieutenant in the United States Army, he worked as a General Partner with Carlisle and Jacqueline and then with Allen and Company as a Vice President. In 1985, he founded his own firm, West Corner Corporation, where his keen insight and adept business entrepreneurship enabled him to specialize in private equity and real estate.

In addition to his business career of over thirty-five years, he was passionate about 19th and 20th century American paintings and furniture, he served on the Board of Trustees for the New York Historical Society, and he was deeply proud of his Irish heritage. He loved his homes in both Grafton, VT and on Fishers Island, NY where his gardens and architectural restorations there provided a welcome outlet for his creativity. Most importantly, his faith and family were his foundation. He loved and doted on each of his grandchildren and they affectionately referred to him as “Poppy”.

Predeceased by both his brothers William and Peter, he is survived by his wife of 54 years, Suzanne Stepan Coleman of Chicago, Illinois and New York City, his children Robert J. Coleman of Charlottesville, VA, Suzanne Coleman Bancroft of Mill Neck, NY, James P. Coleman of Bedford, NY, Jennifer Coleman Creel of New York City, Kevin C. Coleman of New York City, a sister, Carol Coleman Buckner Manning of Palm Beach, FL and fourteen grandchildren.

Private burial services have been held, and a memorial service will take place at the Church of St. Ignatius of Loyola on Thursday, October 9th at 11:00 am.

Published in The New York Times on September 21, 2014

IN MEMORIAM: LOIS EDWARDS DERRDERIAN

Lois Edwards Derderian, 84 of Fishers Island, NY, Boynton Beach, FL, and formerly of Wyckoff, NJ, died September 14, 2014 in Vitas Hospice at West Palm Hospital in West Palm Beach, FL. She was predeceased by her husband Peter Derderian who died in September 2004. The Derderians spent vacations and summers on Fishers Island since 1971.

Born in New York City on March 25, 1930 she was the daughter of Phillip H. Edwards and Lucille W. Edwards of Fishers Island, NY and East Lyme, CT.

Lois was active in the Wyckoff Reformed Church, contributing hand made crafts for the church fairs and helping to prepare and serve senior luncheons.

Survivors include a son Paul Derderian of Bridgewater, NJ, a daughter Jill Derderian of Bethesda, MD, twin grand-daughters Katherine and Sara Derderian of Bridgewater, NJ, a brother Richard C. Edwards of West Palm Beach, FL, and a sister Viola E. Meyers of Fishers Island, NY and Lake Worth, FL.

A service will be held at Union Chapel, Fishers Island, NY next summer. Burial will be at St. John’s New Cemetery on Fishers Island. Donations may be made in her memory to Union Chapel, Fishers Island, NY and the American Cancer Society.
EBB AND FLOW

IN MEMORIAM: WILLIAM “WILLIE” GAINES GWATHMEY

William “Willie” Gaines Gwathmey, beloved son of Gaines Gwathmey and Rose Harvey; devoted brother of Katie Gwathmey; passed away on September 19, 2014, in Washington, D.C. He was 20.

The 6’2”, freckle-faced New York native, with a big smile and an even bigger heart, lived life to the fullest. He was known for his easy charm, boundless energy and infectious enthusiasm.

A 2012 graduate of Collegiate High School, in New York, Willie excelled both in the classroom and on the court. During his junior and senior year, he helped lead the school’s varsity basketball team, the ”Mighty Dutchmen,” to back-to-back state championships. He was also an avid tennis player.

Willie was a junior at George Washington University (GW), pursuing a degree in Finance and Economics at its School of Business, at the time of his passing.

In addition to his parents and older sister, Willie is survived by an extended family of relations and friends from every walk of life.

A service to commemorate Willie’s life was held at the Unitarian Church of All Souls, located at 1157 Lexington Ave, NY, at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, September 24, 2014. Anyone wishing to make a contribution in Willie’s memory might consider a donation to the Collegiate School’s Athletic Fund.

IN MEMORIAM: JANE ELLSWORTH HOTCHKISS

Jane Ellsworth Hotchkiss, June 23, 1932 - September 26, 2014. Born in New York City, Jane Ellsworth Hotchkiss, a resident of Hobe Sound, FL and longtime resident of Bernardsville, NJ and Fishers Island, NY, died on Friday, September 26th at her daughter's home in Lakeville, CT.

In addition to her husband of 59 years, Winchester Fitch Hotchkiss, she is survived by their three children, Winchester Fitch Hotchkiss, Jr., Leslie Hotchkiss Arndt and Mary Hotchkiss Harvey. Her seven beloved grandchildren include Leslie W. Hotchkiss, Winchester F. Hotchkiss, III, Ashton H. Harvey, Alexander S. Harvey, Duncan M. Harvey, Sarah E. Arndt and Hannah R. Arndt.

Mrs. Hotchkiss attended the Chapin School, Foxcroft School and Smith College.

As a noted miniaturist with the late Kathleen Pitney, she created prize winning dioramas at shows in New York and Philadelphia.

Funeral services will be Thursday, October 9th at St. John’s Church in Salisbury, CT at 11:30am. A private burial will be on Fishers Island, NY at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to The Ellsworth Memorial Health Center, PO Box 2003, Springfield, VT 05156.

Published in The New York Times on September 30, 2014
FROM MÉLIE’S GARDEN

I have always had a fantasy of growing a field full of pumpkins for my grandchildren to happily pick for Halloween. This certainly has turned out to be a fantasy, because I have been completely unsuccessful in growing pumpkins in a field on Fishers Island. I remember so well, the wonderful ones Ken Edwards grew along the road by his house and Paul Tombari’s pumpkins growing on the way to the hardware store. Rabbits usually ate the pumpkin seedlings I planted and even an occasional pheasant took a bite or two. I also often forgot to water and fertilize the vines in the field, which was a big mistake, because pumpkins love water and fertilizer, so my efforts were a failure.

I now have resorted to growing pumpkins in my vegetable garden, where I have been more successful due to the watering system. For the past couple of years I have had three or four grow to maturity, but they rotted before Halloween. So I decided this year to do a bit of research about how to harvest and store pumpkins and this is what I found out.

Pumpkins rot if harvested too early or allowed to stay in the field too long.

Mature pumpkins should be uniformly colored and have hard shells before being picked off the vine.

They cure in dry sunny weather; if the weather gets cold or damp, remove the pumpkins from the garden.

Once picked, wash the pumpkin exterior with a solution of 1 T. of bleach per gallon of water and place them in a dry area under cover. A shed, garage or porch should be fine.

The pumpkins can be stored at 50 – 60 degrees for ten weeks, but need 50 to 70% relative humidity in order to not dehydrate.

It is also important to have air circulate around them, so I have put my pumpkins on plastic crates on a porch, where I hope the temperatures will remain no lower than 50 degrees and that they will also get enough humidity from the sea air. Fingers crossed they will be happy there for the next few weeks before being carved into Jack O’ Lanterns by five little Indians for Halloween.

I would welcome any further tips on growing pumpkins on Fishers Island that we can share in the Fog Horn for next year’s crop.

Here is one from Dave Denison: For what it’s worth, my biggest pumpkin mistake was planting them too early. I used to plant them when I planted squash, around Memorial Day, but they’d start getting ready to pick way before Halloween so now I don’t plant the seeds until June 10. (Except if I want to grow the huge ones, like Dill’s Atlantic Giant.)
UNION CHAPEL
Fall Fair
Saturday, October 11
10:00 am-1:00 pm
Hand Crafts, Edible Goodies, and lunch will be served from 11:00-1:00

FALL VISITING ARTISTS
Open House
October 18, 2014
5:00-7:00 pm
Ferry Annex
Reading at 6:00

SENIOR LUNCHEON
First of the Fall
Thursday, October 16
Noon
Union Chapel
Hosted by

LIBRARY BOOK GROUP
Thursday, October 9
7:00-9:00 pm
Fishers Island Library

IPP HALLOWEEN PARADE
Fl School Gym
Friday, October 31
Time to be selected

FISHERS ISLAND FOG HORN
P.O. BOX 464, FISHERS ISLAND, NY 06390

If you have something you would like posted on FishersIsland.net or in the Fog Horn - a story idea, an event ‘save the date’, photos to share, suggestions or an interest in advertising, please contact Jane Ahrens at (631) 788-7487 or info@fishersisland.net. Contact Sarah Porter to place an event on the Community Calendar at www.fishersisland.net/events/ at (631) 788-7683 or fishersislandevents@gmail.com.

POST OFFICE REMINDER:
PLEASE visit the Fl Post Office to register your Post Office Box, if you haven’t already. Please contact Gail or Allison with any questions at (631) 788-7835

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:
- Habitat Restoration
- Beach Clean Up Day
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Masthead Photo by Jane Ahrens

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