

President's Corner



In the last issue of Great Bay Matters, I wrote about the efforts to restore Great Bay to good health and referenced organizations that are working collaboratively to develop solutions

to the problems caused by nitrogen loading. A new coalition, Rescue Great Bay, has formed as an advocate for "clean waters and a healthy, thriving Great Bay Estuary."

The mission of Rescue Great Bay is, "to work together to advance and foster public support for meaningful and immediate regulatory actions and sound management of the Great Bay Estuary and associated marine resources consistent with the Clean Water Act and other environmental laws." The Great Bay

Stewards are pleased to join this distinguished and diverse group in the effort to return Great Bay

to good health.

As an advocate for a healthy Great Bay, Rescue Great Bay will work to educate the public on various issues related to the health of the Bay; promote regional cooperation rather than confrontation; attempt to address misinformation being published about the science supporting regulatory decisions; and will emphasize the current rate of ecosystem degradation and the importance of taking corrective action quickly. We will do our part to help Rescue Great Bay meet its goals. To learn more about RGB and its founding members visit clf.org.

GREEN ALLIANCE

The Green Alliance is a consortium of businesses and organizations in the coastal regions of New Hampshire. The mission of the Green Alliance is to help businesses and organizations minimize their impact on the environment through mentoring and strength in partnership, and to encourage consumers to make more sustainable deci-

Welcome

Administrative Coordinator

We are pleased to announce that Crystie McGrail has joined the Great Bay Stewards as our Administrative Coordinator. Crystie's background includes a B.S. in Wildlife Ecology with a minor in Forest Ecosystem Science from U. Maine. She has worked at the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, (Laurel, MD) as a Biological Technician, and at the Frost Valley YMCA, where she lead programs in Environmental Education. We are very pleased to have Crystie on our team.



PLEASE JOIN US!

All interested parties are cordially invited to become Great Bay Stewards. Members receive Great Bay Matters and other pertinent mailings.

Annual dues may be paid by check made payable to the **Great Bay Stewards** and sent to: Membership Committee, 89 Depot Road, Greenland, NH 03840

- Guardian \$150 Protector \$75
 Steward/Family \$35 Student \$20 Other \$ _____

name _____
 address _____
 town _____
 state _____ zip _____
 email _____

sions in regard to the products they buy and services they use. The Great Bay Stewards are one of the newest Green Alliance Business Partners. We will benefit from the environmental consciousness of the organization, and will have our story added to that movement. Incoming Great Bay Stewards members will be able to purchase a discounted membership in the Green Alliance and will receive discounts from dozens of diverse businesses and organizations in the region, including energy efficiency consultants and installers, retailers and restaurants. Part of ensuring a healthy Great Bay is to encourage sustainability and environmental awareness in the communities around Great Bay, which is part of the reason that this is such a good fit for the Great Bay Stewards.

Jay Diener
President, Great Bay Stewards

The Sport of Citizen Science

I enjoy watching birds in my yard and I'm not alone. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bird watching has exploded into the number one sport in North America, with over 50 million birders in the U.S. alone. Some might argue that it isn't a sport, but serious birders will walk miles to see a particular "life bird" for their "life list", a stealthy competition in its own right. Every year birders start out with a clean slate and try to break their record of number of birds seen or earliest sighting of a particular bird (which they list as FOY or first of year). The bird watching sport has many accessories that you can use from field guides to binoculars, spotting scopes, bird recording apps and of course bird feeders and feed of every kind imaginable, to attract birds to your own piece of the Earth.

In 2000, I learned of a Citizen Science monitoring project called *Project FeederWatch* based out of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca,



Eastern bluebirds

New York. At that time, they were in their 14th year of a continent-wide survey of North American feeder birds. We decided to introduce the survey to our Great Bay Kids Ecology Club participants who attended sessions at the Discovery Center on Saturdays. We took time out of our mornings to have the students learn common feeder birds and help tally them. Not only were they discovering some of the birds they might see around their own houses, but they were helping to collect data for a national program as citizen scientists. A sport and science all in one, the perfect combo!

We have continued to conduct bird surveys from the Discovery Center since 2000. This means that we have over a decade of our own data to look at and learn from. A couple interesting things jumped out at me after looking back over the online tally sheets. The most species we ever recorded in one day was 20, but we've had 34 different species visit our feeders over the last 12 years. If I had to pick one species that

has been the most exciting to watch, it would be the Eastern Bluebirds. We didn't start seeing these during our count periods until 2008. Each year since then their little brilliant blue flock has increased. This past winter we saw 10 at our suet feeders on one count day alone. A record high number of these beautiful birds was set this past year in New Hampshire during another great citizen science count administered by NH Audubon; the Backyard Winter Bird Survey.

If you enjoy feeding the birds during the "bear free" months of November to March you can participate in *Project FeederWatch*. You need only to keep a feeder full and peek out your window every so often to see what birds might be enjoying the fare. Record those birds, the weather and a few other details over a two-day span each week and you too can become a citizen scientist. Why not give it a try? Visit birds.cornell.edu to get started.

Beth Heckman

Assistant Education Coordinator, GBNER

Destination: *Virginia*

Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

The Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Virginia (CBNERR), designated in 1991, is located within the York River Basin, about an hour north of Norfolk, Virginia. This Reserve encompasses 3,072 acres which are divided among four sites: Sweet Hall Marsh, Taskinas Creek, Catlett Island and the Goodwin Islands.

Chesapeake Bay, the largest estuary in the country, includes a number of different habitats including oyster reefs, sea grass beds, tidal wetlands, sandy shoals and mudflats, maritime-forest uplands and submerged aquatic vegetation beds. This multi-site Reserve aids in preserving some of the Chesapeake's diversity, as each site component is comprised of a different variety of habitats. For example, Sweet Hall Marsh, an area of 1,094 acres, includes an extensive tidal freshwater marsh system in the Pamunkey River (one of the two major tributaries to the York River), whereas the Goodwin Islands, an area of 366 acres, are an archipelago of saltmarsh islands surrounded by submerged aquatic vegetation beds and shallow open estuarine waters near the mouth of the York River.

The Virginia Institute of Marine Science, College of William and Mary (VIMS/W&M), is designated as the entity responsible for the overall operation and management of CBNERR. In June, over 40 individuals representing local, state and federal organizations, gathered at the VIMS/W&M to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA); the National Estuarine Research Reserve System was created under CZMA as a partnership between NOAA and participating states. Speakers at this celebration, who included Tayloe Murphy, former VA Secretary of Natural Resources, Douglas Domenech, VA Secretary of Natural Resources, and Sally Yozell, Director of Policy and Senior Advisor to the Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere at NOAA, highlighted the importance of CZMA and how this Act has helped coastal states improve and maintain ecological health. Guests enjoyed a boat tour of one of CBNERR's site locations, the Goodwin Islands.

Public access to CBNERR is limited on a site-specific basis. The Catlett Islands and Sweet Hall Marsh are privately owned, so access is limited to research and education purposes for CBNERR. The other two sites of CBNERR, the Goodwin Islands and Taskinas Creek, do allow public access.

Limited public access is allowed on the Goodwin Islands from dawn to dusk. Goodwin Islands are accessible only by shallow draft boats and there is no dock or walking trails. Visitors may enjoy walking around the islands, picnicking, or spending time on the beach, as long as they obey all public access rules.

Taskinas Creek Reserve lies within the boundaries of the York River State Park; access is controlled by state park regulations. The grounds are open year-round, 8:00 a.m. to dusk. There is also a Visitor Center and outdoor amphitheater which are opened seasonally (closed for winter months) and visitors are encouraged to enjoy over 25 miles of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails as well as the York River fishing pier and boat ramp.

For more information on this diverse Reserve, check out their website: vims.edu/cbnerr/.

Shannon O'Brien
Naturalist, GBNERR



The blue crab is an essential part of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.

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