



The Tidal Page

News of the Rhode Island Salt Ponds

saltpondscoalition.org

Summer 2022

Watershed Council for RI Salt Ponds, Est. 1985

SPC HOSTS LOCAL SCHOOL GROUPS

by Alicia Schaffner



Executive Director, Alicia, working with 3rd grade students from Stonington Elementary at the Kettle Pond Visitors Center in Charlestown.

Photo Credit: Susan Carr

In 2022 SPC developed field trip and primary school programming to advance our educational mission. We are almost finished with phase one of this project which included creating salt pond-centric programming for grades 3-7. This Spring we delivered these programs to third graders from Stonington Elementary and fourth graders from Kingston Hill Academy!

Additionally, we worked with Chariho's 8th graders and the Compass School's kindergarten and first grade classes. Bringing local students to the salt ponds and showing them why it is important to protect our coastal environments is deeply gratifying work for the SPC staff.

Thank you to our volunteers Ann Whaley-Tobin (Education Comm. Chair), Fred Seebeck (Education Comm. Member), Art Ganz, Susan Carr-Sparkman, Kim DiGangi, and John Crandall.

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Pond Watchers 2022



In Memoriam: Bill Lester



Nuisance Algae on the Salt Ponds



Keep the Ponds Plastic Free!



Message from the President



Dear Members,

Happy Summer from the Salt Ponds Coalition! I want to acknowledge all the work accomplished over the past few months by our staff members: Alicia, Angie and Claire. They deserve our thanks as we have been hard at work.

The Education Committee has created several curricula for field experiences; some which has already been utilized. The Marketing/Development/Communications Committee has secured contributions for our annual (online) auction. Bidding starts July 15! Many thanks to local businesses for their generosity. Remember these businesses when you are shopping, dining or just having fun. Also, we are upgrading our website, so it is both more fun and informative.

The Environmental Committee has been working with the Town of Charlestown and CRMC to maintain Charlestown Breachway, which continues to have shoaling problems. Hopefully funds will be secured once the state budget is approved and signed, and work can be done in late winter 2023.

This year marks a transition for our Pond Watchers Program, as we thank our retiring volunteers and welcome the new. Barbara Engel continues to serve on our Board, but retired from running this program. During the transition, we learned how much organization and attention to detail this job requires. We welcome Julia Murphy and Sheila Andrew who have stepped up to co-coordinate the program.

We were shocked and saddened by the sudden passing of Bill Lester. Bill was always a steady hand on the Board. He along with Dick Sartor secured private donations to ensure the Quonnie Pond dredging happened. We send our love and condolences to Sue and the family.

Thank you to our Board who continue to serve in person and via Zoom! We haven't missed a meeting. And finally, thank you all our members and supporters who continue to fund us through memberships, donations, and special events such as "Giving Tuesday" and "401 Gives".

We hope to see you this summer at our Salt Pond Safaris, and please join me for a Guided Beach Walk. As always, volunteers are needed! Also, save the date for the SPC Annual Meeting on August 15!

Happy Summer,



Salt Ponds Coalition is the officially designated Rhode Island watershed council for the coastal ponds region.



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Arthur Ganz
President, Charlestown

Richard Sartor
Vice President, Charlestown

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Treasurer, Westerly

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Westerly

Leo Mainelli
Charlestown

Ann Manion
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Chris Randall
Westerly

Ted See
Charlestown

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Charlestown, RI 02813
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saltpondscoalition@gmail.com

saltpondscoalition.org

SUMMER SCHEDULE 2022

GUIDED BEACH WALK

Join SPC President, Art Ganz, on a guided beach walk where he will discuss barrier beach ecology and how to protect our beautiful Rhode Island beaches. Program is free. Please pre-register.

JULY 26

TIME: 6:30 PM

PLACE: QUONOCHTAUG EAST BEACH

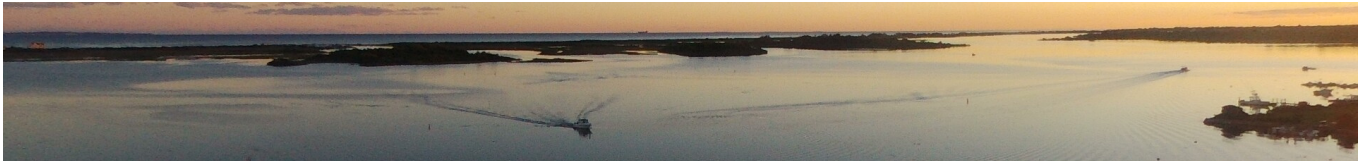
Directions to Quonochontaug East Beach Association Beach from Route 1: Turn onto West Beach Road, turn left onto Sea Breeze Avenue, turn right onto Highland Road. Entrance is located at the end of Highland Road in Charlestown, RI.



Scan QR Code to Register

Questions? Contact Us
401-322-3068 • angela@joinsaltponds.com
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POND WATCHERS 2022



Pond Watchers is our longest running program, and is the cornerstone of everything that we do. This year has brought a lot of changes to our Pond Watching Program.

THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO RETIRED AFTER MANY YEARS OF SERVICE

After the 2021 season, **Barbara Engel** retired after over ten years of service as Pond Watcher Coordinator. Barb has served on the Board since 2006, and continues to do so. During her time as Pond Watcher Coordinator she drove countless hours making sure samples made it safely to the University of Rhode Island, as well as coordinated our over 25 samplers every year. She always ensured that each station had a monitor and that those monitors were trained and well-supplied. Everyone of her countless hours of work is deeply appreciated by SPC.



Richard "Dick" Sartor has retired after fifteen years of service as a Pond Watcher at the Midwest Basin site on Ninigret Pond. Dick has served as a member of the SPC Board of Directors since 2007 and continues to do so as our Vice-President. We are grateful for Dick's many years as a Pond Watcher and for everything that he does for SPC.

Long-time Pond Watcher **George Hill** has retired after twenty-five years of service testing our Indigo Point site on Green Hill Pond. For many years, George also hosted the spring training for our samplers at his home. Not only a devoted Pond Watcher, George also served on the SPC Board of Directors for several years as the organization's Treasurer and hosted SPC's summer Pizza Party Fundraiser for many years at his home along with his wife, Cathy. We can't thank George enough for the generosity of time and hospitality over these many years.



WELCOME TO OUR NEW POND WATCHER COORDINATORS

Sheila Andrew was born in RI, but her passion for agriculture and dairy production took her around the country. Sheila and her husband returned to Charlestown, RI in 2017. She is a recently retired Professor of Animal Science at the University of Connecticut, and spent her career supporting the economic and environmental sustainability of dairy farmers and the health and welfare of dairy herds in Connecticut and New England. She earned a B.S. at the University of Rhode Island, and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees at the University of Illinois and the University of Maryland, respectively. She serves on the Town of Charlestown Zoning Board of Review and provides water quality support for her community water association. She is glad to serve as a SPC Pond Watcher co-coordinator. Sheila believes monitoring water quality assures we will continue to have vibrant, clean, hygienic salt ponds that support activities that we all enjoy.



Julia Murphy, a New England native, has been visiting Quonnie with her husband George and their children since the mid-1980s. They have returned every year since and now are full-time residents, enjoying all four seasons on the Rhode Island shoreline. Julia is an Assistant Dean at NYU College of Dentistry and earned both her law degree and recently, a Masters degree in Irish Studies from NYU. When not reading something Irish-related, Julia loves spending time at East Beach and on Ninigret Pond. Julia is committed to SPC's mission to protect the ponds and is happy to play a small part as a co-coordinator of the SPC Pond Watchers Program and a Safari volunteer.

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR 2022 POND WATCHERS!

Thank you to all the volunteers who monitor our over 25 sites across the six salt ponds and the lower Saugatucket River. Your generosity of time helps us to keep our ponds healthy for future generations! Have a great sampling season!

Winnapaug Pond

Kathy Caval
Susan Carr-Sparkman

Quonochontaug Pond

Bruce Loeckler
Jennifer Scappatura
Rich Thomsen
Chris Randall
John Crandall
Kent Kreutler
Joseph Catalano

Ninigret Pond

Pam Ganz
Lauren Classey
Don Smith
Louise Nicolosi
Susie Fehrmann
Joanne Niland
Rick Anderson

Green Hill Pond

Joan Pavlinsky
Lori Keough
Erma Russo
Rachel Lyons
Ray Gradale

Potter Pond

Kim & Paul Hooper
Pablo Rodriguez
Elise Torello & Bill McCusker

Point Judith Pond

Nikki Vanasse
John Slusarski
Don Vivenzio
Rick Black
Tony Brunetti
Tom Hunt

Saugatucket River

Margaret Hayden
Rachel Dahl
Susan Marcus



IN MEMORIAM: WILLIAM "BILL" LESTER

by Alicia Schaffner

SPC mourns the loss of one of our Board Members, William "Bill" Lester. Bill served on the SPC Board of Directors since 2006, and was passionate about protecting the ponds. It was always clear that he loved his Weekapaug community which is located on Quonochontaug "Quonnie" Pond. He was an avid sailor and active member of the Weekapaug Yacht Club (WYC); he fostered connections between SPC and WYC. SPC now works with WYC campers on an annual basis. He advocated for us to be able to host our first ever auction at WYC in 2018 and helped to make that event a success. Additionally in 2018, he was instrumental in securing private funding to enable the Quonnie breachway dredging and subsequent marsh restoration to occur. At every board meeting he attended, he listened earnestly and had insightful suggestions. He will be missed. Below are some reflections about Bill from several members of our Board of Directors.



"There are so many great qualities about Bill, hard to describe them all here. But I would say to sum it up, he was a man who said what he was going to do and then did what he said he was going to do. Very important in an organization like SPC, or any organization."

- **Leo Mainelli**

"For the 2018 Member Event and Auction, I remember fondly working with Bill on the logistics of SPC's use of the Weekapaug Yacht Club. Together we collaborated on ways to ensure that all guests were warmly received and that we delivered a smooth parking operation for this sold out event. The evening was a huge success in part because of Bill's contributions and care throughout the planning process. SPC delivered a celebrated member experience and the fundraiser tripled monies raised from previous years. I'll always remember the pride with which Bill introduced board members like myself to his family whom he clearly loved so much. I know I speak for all SPC board members when I say how grateful we are for Bill's contributions as a board member these last 16 years. He will be dearly missed."

- **Ann Manion**

"I enjoyed talking to Bill about our common interest in sailing and Wednesday night races. Bill and I came from different worlds but, we have many similarities. Like Bill, I keep the thermostat low and heat with a wood stove, he and Sue sailed Comets and Pam & I sailed my Lightning. Everyone who enjoys Quonnie Pond should remember that Bill and Dick Sartor, worked with Shelter Harbor Conservation and the Weekapaug Foundation to gather hundreds of thousands of dollars of private donations to make the recent dredging and salt marsh restoration happen."

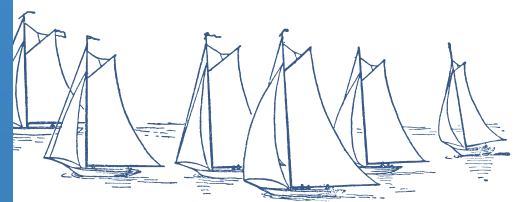
- **Art Ganz**

"I share many of the same passions that Bill had in terms of messing about in boats, fishing, love of family, and passion for our salt ponds. This past spring, I had the opportunity to work with Bill on how to make SPC's Annual Fundraising Auction more successful than ever. His enthusiasm and creative ideas as to how to generate new and expanded interest through a more diverse offering of auction items was truly inspirational. He was very much a 'go getter' and was a tremendous help to me. He will be missed."

- **Rick Black**

"Bill grew up in Shelter Harbor and moved to Weekapaug with his own young family. His love of boating, fishing and being with family inspired his commitment to saving the ponds, monitoring their health and paying attention to working toward a future for his children and grandchildren that was as rewarding as his own. He worked hard at many things in his communities that he shared with many friends. Rhode Island was treasured and inspiring for him. He was a great friend."

- **Barbara Engel**



NUISANCE ALGAE ON THE SALT PONDS

by Art Ganz



Early this season we received numerous reports of large mats of macro algae washing up along our shores. Much of the wash-up was the result of the tropical storm late last summer with strong easterly winds. The winter easterlies continued to mound the mats on shore. By late spring the warming temperatures combined with the ever-increasing nitrogen levels (which act to fertilize the pond waters) produced a bumper crop of algae throughout most of the ponds. Ninigret was by far the worst, but complaints came in from upper Point Judith, Potter, Green Hill, and Quonochontaug.

The culprit was primarily *Gracilaria*, which has over colonized areas that once supported healthy eelgrass beds. As it grows it covers sandy bottom areas blanketing it and its dense mats smother shellfish below. As it dies out and decomposes, dissolved oxygen is reduced interrupting the decomposition process, leaving behind a smelly black muck covering once healthy substrate. Of course, other plant species add to the situation. Early summer *Enteromorpha*, or stringy sea lettuce, blooms showing its brilliant green. *Ulva*, or sea lettuce, also forms large mats. Add in some miscellaneous blue-green algae and we have a biological soup!



What can we do about it? In a short term, physical removal and composting works. How to avoid this will take a larger community effort. The use of lawn fertilizers, which bring about green lawns, wash into the salt ponds and “green” them too! Spring runoff from tributaries and roads add to the mix. Nitrogen compounds from other sources, such as septic, also exacerbate the problem. Animal waste also is a small contributor. In a lot of cases the damage is done, but we can reverse the trend by eliminating the use of chemical fertilizers. People have said to me, “Oh Art, it's organic...,” but so is cow manure, which is a contributor in agricultural areas. Nitrogen compounds are nitrogen compounds whatever you call them, and they all contribute to contaminating the ponds and drinking water wells. Please reduce the nitrogen loading however you can, and where possible encourage neighbors to do the same.

Photos taken by Elise Torello on Ninigret Pond.

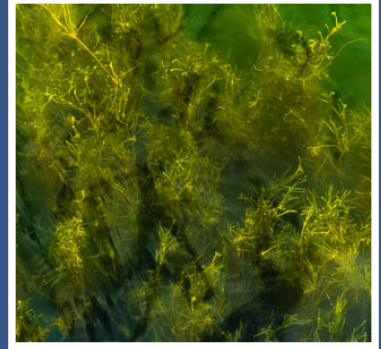
6 FACTS TO KNOW ABOUT THE SALT PONDS

Eldredge House, Quonochontaug, R.I.



QUONOCHONTAUG POND

In the early 1900s, Quonochontaug Breachway was a bustling community of hotels and shops!



GREEN HILL POND

Is the only pond where widgeon grass is currently found due to the lower salinity levels of the water.

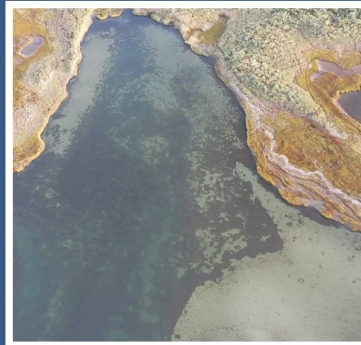
NINIGRET POND

Ninigret Pond is the largest of the salt ponds measuring just over 1,580 acres.



PT. JUDITH POND

Galilee on Pt. Judith Pond is one of the top squid landing hubs on the East Coast. It is why the RI state appetizer is calamari!



POTTER POND

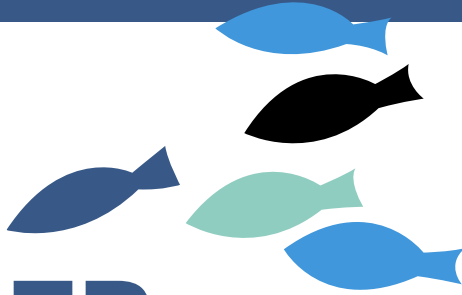
Has the deepest area in any of the ponds; a 30 foot deep glacier formed kettle hole.

WINNAPAUG POND

Winnapaug is also known to many as Brightman's Pond named for one of the families that settled near the pond.



KIDS' CORNER



CREATURE SPOTLIGHT:

Northern Sea Robins

Northern Sea Robins can be easily identified by their **rounded, fanlike pectoral fins** that are so large they overlap the anal and second dorsal fins when laid back.

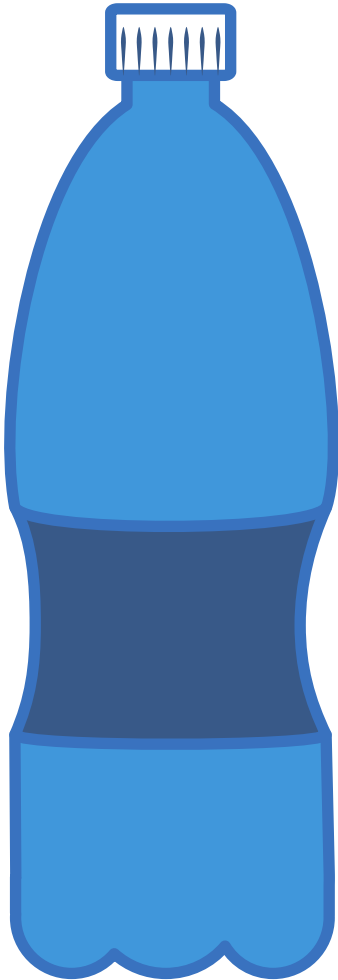
- Sea Robins can grow to be **12 to 16 inches** long.
- Appear **seasonally** May to October.
- Feed on a **wide variety of invertebrates**, including shrimp, crabs, amphipods, squid, bivalve mollusks, and segmented worms.
- They are **active swimmers** often found close to the surface.
- These fish often produce an **audible "croak"** when held out of the water.

www.edc.uri.edu/restoration/html/gallery/fish/robin.htm



KEEP THE PONDS PLASTIC FREE!

by Claire Hodson



Plastic makes up 80% of all marine debris found in the oceans, from surface waters to deep-sea sediments. It is estimated that there are nearly 5.25 trillion macro and microplastic pieces flowing in the open ocean. Scientists are only beginning to understand their potential impacts on ocean life, ecosystems, and human health. What can you do to help?

The best thing we can do to protect our waterways is to try to keep as much plastic as possible out of the waste stream in the first place. Here are five simple "swaps" you can make to help reduce your plastic consumption:

1. Carry reusable shopping bags.
2. Drink your favorite beverage like coffee, tea, or water from a re-usable cup or bottle, and avoid single use containers.
3. Steer clear of plastic straws (if you're able) and cutlery.
4. Shop at a farmers market.
5. Avoid buying clothes made with plastic.

Additionally, plastic on the street often ends up in our oceans. Challenge yourself to pick up bits of plastic rubbish every time you leave the house. And encourage others to do the same!

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram as we will continue to share tips for reducing plastic use and highlight research on marine plastic pollution!

WE INVITE YOU TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Piggybacking off our initiative on plastic reduction awareness is our option for our members to save trees and **GO DIGITAL!** Thanks to our handy database we can track if you prefer to receive your membership communications (that is, your renewal reminders and your donation acknowledgements) digitally vs snail mail. Not only does going digital significantly reduce paper, but it also saves the organization staff time and postage costs.

If you are interested in signing up to go digital, just scan the QR code here or reach out to angela@joinsaltponds.com. We encourage you to consider this eco-conscious option. Even little changes add up!





2022 FUNDRAISER
July 15-17
 Our largest fundraising event of the year, hosted online at:
www.32auctions.com/SPCAuction2022




VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!
 Want to help at our safari programs?

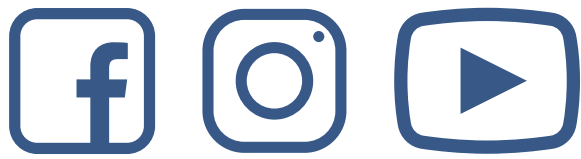


Sun in your eyes?



Protect your face from the sun with one of SPC's ballcaps. Go to joinsaltponds.com to purchase!

FOLLOW US!



JOIN US TODAY

Because It Takes A Coalition To Protect RI Salt Ponds

YES! I want to show my support for Salt Ponds Coalition and my commitment to protecting the irreplaceable salt ponds that make Rhode Island so special.

To ensure our salt ponds are always protected, cared for, and shared, I am joining SPC with a generous membership contribution of:

- Contributing \$45 - \$74
- Supporting \$75 - \$149
- Sustaining \$150 - \$249
- Advocate \$250 - \$499
- Steward \$500 - \$999
- Benefactor ... \$1000 - \$2499
- Patron \$2500+

Memberships last for a year from the date they are processed.
 Members receive The Tidal Page Newsletter as well as electronic newsletters. Please include valid mailing and email address below!

I want to be a Station Sponsor! (\$700+ membership)

Visit joinsaltponds.com to sign up online.

Or complete this tear out form and mail to:
 Salt Ponds Coalition, P.O. Box 875, Charlestown, RI 02813



Name _____

Mailing Address

E-mail _____

Phone _____

Your information will never be shared.
 Salt Ponds Coalition is a 501(c)(3) non-profit.
 Your membership donation is tax deductible.

Got Questions? 401-322-3068



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Watershed Council for the RI Salt Ponds, Est. 1985