

PEP Talk

The Newsletter of the Peconic Estuary Program

Volume 4, Issue 2.....Summer 2008

The Community Preservation Fund

Celebrates Its 10th Anniversary

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has designated the Peconic Estuary as one of “The Last Great Places” in the western hemisphere. In order to protect this great natural resource, the Peconic Estuary Program, the five east end towns, New York State, Suffolk County and numerous other stakeholders sought to establish Community Preservation Funds (CPF) to preserve critical lands and open spaces.

In the past decade Peconic Estuary Program’s partners have made great strides in protecting the Estuary by preserving open space. Between its inception in 1999 through March 30, 2008, the CPF

has generated \$526,032,200.01. Approximately one half of these funds are spent preserving lands within the Peconic Estuary watershed. TNC records indicate approximately 4,000 acres have been preserved within the estuary’s watershed by using CPF revenues between 2001 and 2006. Prime examples of preserved open space include: the 57-acre Duke parcel (East Hampton); 86.7-acre Iron Point parcels (Southampton); 27.7-acre Tri-State Horticulture parcel (Riverhead); and the 47.3-acre Pipes Cove parcel (Southold).

In 2004, the Peconic
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Birding in the Peconics

Eastern Long Island is wonderful habitat for wildlife. Local and migrating birds find an abundance of food in our estuaries. Shorebirds will soon arrive before heading down to South America for the winter. Little sandpipers, such as the dapper little Spotted Sandpiper, teeter along on fragile legs searching for beach fleas and other invertebrates during July and August. Nesting terns park their babies in nursery cooperatives while they our search waterways for food to feed their young. It is fascinating to witness the parents pick out their own chicks from the many. Larger shorebirds such as Oyster-catchers also make stopovers during late summer.

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A small undistinguished shorebird at the center of a great controversy is the Red-Knot, a migrant species, who often feed upon horseshoe-crab eggs for food. The Red Knot’s travels take them from our far north in

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Top Accomplishments of 2004-2008

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), the sponsoring agency of the program, is conducting a "Program Evaluation" (PE) of the PEP. The purpose of this process is to help the USEPA ensure each of the 28 National Estuary Programs are making adequate progress in implementing their Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans. The PE process also helps highlight environmental results. The PEP was last evaluated through this process in 2004. The following are some of the top accomplishments realized by the PEP and partners in the past four years.

Involved Stakeholders:

- An active and engaged Management Conference.
- Significant funding supporting CCMP implementation.
- Reconvening of the PEP Citizens Advisory Committee.

Water Quality:

- Continued monitoring of surface and groundwater resources.
- Completion of the System-wide Nitrogen Total Maximum Daily Load; implementation initiated.
- Completion and initiation of implementation of 21 Pathogen Total Maximum Daily Loads for impaired shellfishing waters.
- Preparation of four comprehensive Subwatershed Management Plans; implementation initiated for two of the four.

Natural Resources & Habitats:

- Preparation of the Critical Lands Protection Report and identification of priority parcels aligned with Town Community Preservation Fund (CPF) requests, preservation of significant open space.
- Initiation of a large scale shellfish restoration project and the establishment of shellfish sanctuaries.
- Initiation and implementation of

an early detection rapid response (EDRR) monitoring and eradication program for *Ludwigia peploides* (water primrose) from the freshwater Peconic River.

- Installation of a temporary fish ladder on the Peconic River and awardance of over \$570,000 for installation of permanent structures.
- Eelgrass monitoring and restoration trials; convening of a seagrass experts meeting and meeting proceedings.
- Completion of the New York Sea Grant Brown Tide Research Initiative.
- Progress on the Benthic (bay bottom) Mapping Project.
- System-wide mapping of shoreline hardening structures and impervious cover.
- Documentation of Wetland Status and Trends.

Pollution Prevention:

- Passage of the Suffolk County Fertilizer Reduction Law.
- Establishment of the Golf Course Nitrogen Management Challenge.
- Recommendations for lawn and landscape care and education/outreach materials.
- Education/outreach efforts for the vessel waste No Discharge Zone.
- Implementation of Suffolk County's Agricultural Stewardship Program.

Outreach:

- Enhancements of the PEP Website and the PEPTalk Newsletter.
- Preparation of a State of the Bays Report and Conference.

As part of the evaluation process, an on-site review consisting of a visit to the Peconic Estuary by members of the review team will be conducted in July. Results of the 2008 National Estuary Program Evaluation will be available in the fall.

~Kimberly Paulsen, SCDHS



PEP Talk is published by the Peconic Estuary Program (PEP), a partnership of governments, environmental groups, businesses, industries, academic institutions, and citizens. The PEP's mission is to protect and restore the Peconic Estuary system. Learn more at www.peconicestuary.org.



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summer to a winter spent at the bottom of South America. Populations of Red-knots have crashed in recent years perhaps as horseshoe-crabs populations decline

On the positive side, the Osprey is a conservation success story in and around the Peconics. By the late 1960's, the Osprey had virtually disappeared, as the pesticide DDT. led to the thinning of their egg shell, making eggs prone to breaking before successful hatching. The banning of DDT. and other conservation measures allowed these birds to make a strong comeback. They can be seen on Long Island from mid-March to mid-September.



Osprey Landing, Paula DiDonato, North Fork Audubon Society

There are many parks and preserves in which to view shorebirds. One in particular is Indian Island County Park near the mouth of the Peconic River. The shoreline is beautiful and accessible and there is an extensive woodland trail west of Rt. 105. There you can look for many of the woodland birds that summer and raise young here: Great-crested Flycatcher, Scarlet Tanager, and Baltimore Oriole just to name a few.

From September to November, we can observe the great raptor migration of vultures, Osprey, eagles, hawks, and falcons as they journey south. Look for these fast moving birds along our shores as they catch a quick meal. Northern Harriers are fun

to watch as they glide effortlessly just above our marshes looking for prey. A good place to go to observe raptors is the Fire Island Hawk Watch located inside Robert Moses State Park west of the Light House. Newcomers are always welcome. Just bring binoculars and lunch.

As fall progresses, winter waterfowl will arrive from their breeding grounds. To them, the Peconics are ideal winter grounds. Sea ducks find much to eat on the bottom of the bays such as small crustaceans. You can watch as they dive and resurface with food.

Pelagic (open ocean) birds are seen close to shore diving from high up into the water for fish. Look

in the bays and creeks for diving ducks like the little, but beautiful, Buffelhead Duck. The more hardy sea ducks, such as Harlequin, are found farther out in Peconic Bay or at Montauk, Orient or Horton Points.

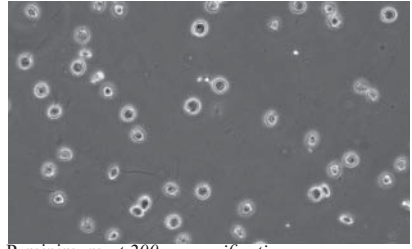
The observation of wildlife continues year round. Go to a meeting or lecture of, or join one of our many environmental organizations and enjoy yourself. The people are friendly and there are many good times afield as you make new friends see things you never thought existed here on Long Island. To learn more, please visit <http://www.northfork-audubon.org>

~Rick & Linda Kedenburg,
North Fork Audubon Society

Mahogany Tide Blooms in Meetinghouse Creek

The smallest things can sometimes have a very large impact on our environment. An example of this is a harmful algae bloom of such high intensity that it changes the color of a body of water, or worse. During May of this year, portions of Meetinghouse Creek in Aquebogue, and the Forge River, in our sister estuary on Long Island's south shore, appeared to have a mahogany hue.

The name of the plankton causing the mahogany color is *Prorocentrum minimum*, a dinoflagellate with reddish pigments that can bloom when certain conditions (temperature, light, nutrients, etc.) converge. It can expand its population to such high densities that not only will the water turn reddish-brown, but it can be potentially toxic to shellfish. Scientists believe it may be a cause of some fishkills. In areas of where densities of *P. minimum* are extremely high and dissolved oxygen in the water may be very low,



P. minimum at 200 x magnification,
Phil DeBlasi, SCDHS

fish may swim to more oxygenated parts of the river, leaving attached or slow moving organisms in the area to struggle, and possibly die, as the condition persists.

Heavy rains this spring may exacerbate the situation, as stormwater runoff into Meetinghouse Creek and the Forge River may carry nitrogen and phosphorus from the soil and contribute to the bloom's intensity. To a degree, algae blooms are a naturally occurring phenomenon and often an important part of a marine ecosystem. However, they don't need our help, so we should make every effort to prevent excessive amounts of nutrients from reaching the rivers.

~Phil DeBlasi, SCDHS

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Estuary Program sought to assess the non-market benefits associated with open space preservation. The resulting case study, "Non-Market Benefits and Costs of Preserving Estuarine Watershed Open Space: A Case Study of Riverhead, Long Island, New York" (Grigalunas et al, 2004) estimates non-market value of wildlife viewing to range from \$16.1 to \$46.2 million. The value of improved water quality for swimming is approximately \$1.1 to \$3.6 million. One of the most significant findings demonstrates that properties adjacent to preserved open space has a 13% higher value than a similar parcel

located elsewhere. A copy of this case study can be obtained at: <http://www.peconicestuary.org/EAIOpenSpaceRpt.pdf>, or by contacting the Program Office.

The success of the CPF Program has had far reaching effects. Other towns and regions within New York have established their own CPF Programs. The CPF Program was featured in the American Institute of Certified Planners quarterly magazine, *Planning*. The EPA will also be featuring the Program in its 2008 National Estuary Program publication to serve as a model for other National Estuary Programs.

~Theresa Goergen, SCDHS

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body, with the small pelvic fins, closest to you. If the eyes are on your left you have a fluke, if on your right, a winter flounder. There are other major distinctions between these two species including teeth size and arrangement, diet, maximum size, spawning grounds and temperature preferences. Winter flounder spawn in the icy cold shallow waters of our local bays. Well before then, in the fall, fluke will have migrated to deep offshore waters to spawn.

Fluke can be found throughout most of the Peconic Estuary from Great Peconic Bay eastward. Some of the most popular sites for recreational fishing are between Shelter Island and the North Fork. In an effort to manage regional fluke populations, 2008 NYS regulations restrict recreational fishing to mid May through early September and limit the total possession of fluke to four each with a minimum length of 20.5 inches. In 2000, the season was from early May to the end of October and the possession limit was seven with a minimum length of 17 inches. The change resulted from a judgment by regional fishery managers that the fluke population may be overfished. Commercial fluke fishing is also regulated but with different limits. In the commercial bottom trawl fishery, undersized fluke are discarded. Emerson Hasbrouck, a senior fishery biologist at the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Suffolk County is leading a group of scientists and participating commercial draggers in a project to determine the actual fluke discard mortality, thought to be as high as 80%. The CCE project hopes to identify fishing and on-board handling practices which may improve fluke survival. Having more healthy fluke in the Peconic Estuary.....priceless.

~ Howard Reisman, LIU- CW Post

Peconic Pals

Search up, down, sideways and diagonal for native plants. Answers can be found at www.peconicestuary.org/kids.html

F	S	E	B	L	A	Z	I	N	G	S	T	A	R	G	A
M	L	R	A	H	J	C	F	X	B	L	K	F	E	N	M
Q	S	O	F	T	R	U	S	H	Z	I	T	S	D	H	E
E	H	Y	W	H	I	T	E	O	A	K	U	M	C	P	R
J	N	D	L	E	L	K	G	N	D	F	Y	E	H	F	I
I	H	F	A	R	R	O	W	W	O	O	D	G	O	A	C
U	B	G	S	F	O	I	C	T	L	V	B	B	K	L	A
B	E	W	Z	H	Y	V	N	K	R	K	L	S	E	S	N
E	A	Q	U	F	A	J	D	G	H	M	A	N	B	E	H
A	R	Y	J	S	L	D	N	J	D	H	C	K	E	I	O
C	B	I	B	E	F	N	B	D	M	O	K	V	R	N	L
H	E	F	T	E	E	M	H	U	N	Z	G	O	R	D	L
P	R	L	H	H	R	F	M	F	S	M	U	W	Y	I	Y
L	R	J	U	G	N	R	O	J	P	H	M	K	O	G	Q
U	Y	G	P	Q	F	G	Y	H	J	G	L	I	Y	O	A
M	O	U	N	T	A	I	N	L	A	U	R	E	L	Z	D

Word List: American Holly, Arrowwood, Bayberry, Bearberry, Beach Plum, Black Gum, Blazing Star, False Indigo, Flowering Dogwood, Mountain Laurel, Red Chokeberry, Royal Fern, Shadbush, Soft Rush, White Oak

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Species Snapshot: Summer Flounder



Fluke tagged with a T Bar Anchor just below the dorsal fin,
Kristin Gerbino, Cornell Cooperative Extension

Fishermen and sport fishing writers refer to *Paralichthys dentatus* as the “fluke” although, the American Fisheries Society, in an effort to reduce the proliferation of common names, established “summer flounder” as the preferred name. Scientific publications recognize this latter usage. Still, custom and brevity are reasons why the name fluke continues to be used by locals and in the newspapers.

Some may find it difficult to distinguish between summer flounder and winter flounder particularly during late spring to mid fall when they both can be found in local waters. Both species are highly compressed, flat fishes. Flounders have both eyes and all pigmentation on one side of the body. These features serve as adaptations to living flat on the bottom where these fishes avoid predation, successfully feed and reproduce. Under most circumstances, flatfishes are inconspicuous and often buried in the sediment with only their eyes exposed.

These two flounders are not as closely related as their names imply. They belong to two different families of flatfishes and are distinguished by what side of the body the eyes are placed. To determine the species of flounder in question, place the fish flat with the side having both eyes and skin pigment visible and the bottom edge of the

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