

LYNDE POINT LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 2012

"Sunset 2012" by photo contest winner Sam Stout

The Endangered Plover

*ATTRACTIVE YOUNG COUPLE VISITS FENWICK WITH
OBJECTIVE OF FINDING A HOME AND RAISING A FAMILY
BUT DECIDES TO GO ELSEWHERE*

This headline resembles those in recent months reporting on national problems of real estate and mortgage rates. Instead, it reports on the endangered birds, piping plovers, which were seen this spring on the Fenwick beach. Their appearance was noteworthy because, although piping plovers have been sighted in Fenwick in recent years, there have been no known nesting birds since the late 1980's.

Wildlife technicians from CT DEEP (Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) have been monitoring Fenwick beaches in early June in every year since 1986. In 2012 they observed a pair of plovers acting territorial, meaning they will most likely nest in a given area, and this was the cause of optimism.

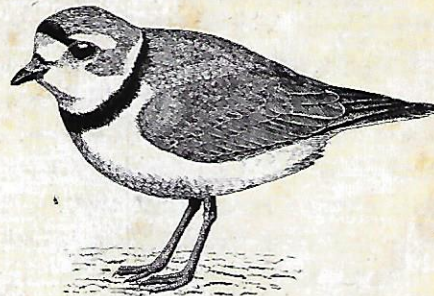
Piping plovers have become endangered since they were hunted some 100 years ago for their plumage, and in more recent decades became victims of human behavior including development along the shoreline for recreation and housing.

Piping plovers nest directly in a shallow depression on the beach. Here they are highly vulnerable to predators such as dogs, cats, raccoons and skunks as well as humans. These disturbances affect breeding by keeping birds away from their nests and preventing them from attending their eggs and young.

In Connecticut plover eggs are first laid about the end of April. Both the male and female incubate the eggs which hatch in 27 days with the young leaving the nest within hours of hatching.

Young birds fledge (learn to fly) in an approximately 27 additional days but stay with the adults through migration time which begins about mid-August. In some cases plovers may lose their nests and young and will attempt to renest into early July. In 2012 it is possible the mating couple of Fenwick plovers attempted to nest, but an exceptionally high tide occurred June 2, about the same date as the anticipated hatching period. This tide is known to have washed away other nests on the Connecticut shore, and it might have put an end to a Fenwick nest.

A colony of plovers has nested continuously at Griswold Point, the opposite shore of the Connecticut River in Old Lyme, where considerable conservation efforts have been in place for several years. A young environmental technician with The Nature Conservancy, Holly Bagley, maintained residence there throughout the 2012 season. She reported there were 9 nests (one a renest) in 2012, 35 eggs, 25 hatched and 8 fledged. While these results seem meager and discouraging, this is approximately the same result as in past years at Griswold Point. A bit further east in Old Lyme, a conservation area at Hatchett Point, there was 1 nest, 4 hatched and 3 fledged.



Although life expectancy of piping plovers is quoted as 8–14 years and the birds are able to breed their first year, the perils of nesting plus hazards of winter migration to the southern United States coast and the Caribbean makes it difficult for the species to increase in number.

The Fenwick marsh restoration has dramatically improved bird habitat, and we are hopeful that in addition to the results that have been attained there will be successful plover nesting in 2013. Frank Conroy, a skilled birder and Lynde Point Land Trust director, has identified more than 100 species in Fenwick following the marsh restoration. He reports piping plovers can be seen feeding in the salt marshes during low tide. Being the color of dry sand they stand out on dark, wet sand or mud. However, when they are on dry sand, they have a translucent appearance. They can be differentiated from lighter, smaller snowy plovers because their legs are yellow, not black, and they have a yellow, shorter black-tipped beak. A single black chest band remains unconnected in the front in summer plumage. He suggests taking a walk along the Fenwick shore during low tide to view the plovers. However, during nesting season one must be careful not to disturb the birds.



Steve Schmitt with his greenhead fly trap

RETURN OF THE GREENHEAD FLY



Success in restoring the Fenwick marsh has one unfortunate side effect: return of the greenhead fly. Eradication of invasive *Phragmites* has enabled salt marsh grasses to return, and this is the preferred habitat for the female *Tabanus nigrovittatus* to lay eggs.

Adult flies mate on marshes in late spring. To produce large quantities of eggs, the female needs a blood meal. Female greenhead flies move from marshes to nearby woodlands and open areas to seek suitable blood sources and there attack with vengeance both animals and humans.

As might be expected, the salt marsh greenhead fly is an abundant and bothersome summertime pest in New Jersey, and Rutgers University has researched life history and habits of greenheads for several years. Bothered by increasing attack by greenhead flies at his Folly Point house adjacent to the Fenwick marsh, Steve Schmitt investigated the problem at the Rutgers website and followed instructions to construct simple box traps, shown in the adjacent photograph. These have succeeded in substantially reducing biting flies on his property.

According to information on the Rutgers website, "The impact of these flies on daytime activities is hard to imagine. We have collected in traps over 1000 greenhead flies per hour all seeking a blood meal. Greenhead fly populations reach peak numbers during July, but extend from late June into September." Females live three to four weeks and because of this relatively long life, large numbers of blood hungry flies build up in areas near salt marshes. Fly population can multiply over several seasons because larvae overwinter and emerge from the pupa as adults in late spring. "The physical removal of large numbers of flies can reduce this build up and thus decrease the greenhead fly problem locally." Control by insecticide is impractical.

Based on Steve Schmitt's experience, we urge Land Trust members to retreat to home workshops during winter months to build a greenhead box trap, perhaps as a project with children, or at least prepare materials for assembly next summer. Instructions are simple but specific. The trap is a four sided box having a screen top and open bottom. The box stands on legs about two feet tall so flies are attracted to the box from below and then move upward into a secondary collector which in Steve's case is a supermarket plastic container.

Traps were developed by Rutgers researchers who found that large numbers of blood-seeking flies can be captured at the edge of marshes or in adjacent uplands where flies concentrate. While a single trap can reduce greenhead annoyance, researchers believe multiple traps in local areas will capture flies in numbers great enough to significantly decrease total population over several seasons.

Instructions are available at the Rutgers website under "greenhead", and copies can also be obtained by contacting Stanford Brainerd at shbrainerd@sbcglobal.net. Alternatively, precut kits can be purchased by internet. Although Steve has removed his traps for the winter, he invites interested participants to see them stored underneath his house at Folly Point.



Greenhead Fly (enlarged)

PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

The 3rd Annual LPLT Photo Contest, held in 2012, culminated with a show, displaying all photos submitted from the contestants at 4 Nibang Ave. in Fenwick on August 26th. We had almost 50 attending the show, a record number. At the show everyone was asked to vote on the photo they liked best, for the "People's Choice Award". Sam Stout's "Sunset 2012" won this award. (see cover page photo)

The contest, focusing on Fenwick's natural beauty, was open to all amateur photographers with ties to Fenwick in two categories, age 16 and under and over 16. This year there were 25 submissions in 4 categories from 12 photographers. It was judged by Judy Perry, an award-winning portrait artist, who resides in Old Saybrook.

2012 Lynde Point Land Trust's Photo Contest Winners Adult – Over 16

Plants and Trees

1st Sandy Chase	"Into the Woods"
2nd Robert Boody	"Fenwick Poppy"
3rd John C. Walsh	"Spring Splendor"
HM Rich Patterson	"Cata-Pilla Millet"

Wildlife and Birds

1st Sallie Boody	"Mom and Baby"
2nd Rich Patterson	"King and Queen"
3rd Jeff Patterson	"Walking on Thin Ice"

Landscapes and Seascapes

1st Sam Stout	"Sunset 2012"
2nd Frank Conroy	"Lynde Point Driftwood"
3rd John C. Walsh	"Rapture in Bloom"
HM Rich Patterson	"Safely Home"

Still Life

1st Jeff Patterson	"As the Crow Flies (In a Hurricane)"
2nd Rich Patterson	"Petite Anne's Lace"
3rd Sandy Chase	"After the Storm"

Junior Division – 16 and Under

Landscapes and Seascapes

1st Victoria Arute	"Starboard"
--------------------	-------------

We encourage your participation in the 2013 Fourth Annual LPLT Photo contest. Start early and begin to take pictures for next year's contest. Remember that the eligible period is the entire twelve months and that there are wonderful subjects during the winter months in Fenwick.

DAN MCGOWAN JOINS FENWICK CONSERVATION TEAM



Dan McGowan

The Borough of Fenwick and Lynde Point Land Trust are most fortunate to have obtained the assistance of Dan McGowan this year. Dan has become a part time environmental staffer for the Borough and in that capacity his first task was drafting an Ecological Maintenance Plan for the entire Borough to be implemented by the Land Trust and Borough working together.

Historically, conservation work such as annual marsh mowing and spraying has been performed by Borough staff and paid by the Land Trust. In recent years much of this work has been accomplished very satisfactorily by an outside contractor, All Habitat Services, LLC of Branford, but this year and in the future it is anticipated the bulk of this work will be performed by Borough staff under the direction of Dan as well as Larry DeBlasiis, General Manager, and Daryl Aresco, Parkland Superintendent.

Prior to this new arrangement in 2012, Dan was employed by All Habitat, so, in effect, he is accomplishing the same work but more efficiently and directly as a member of the team. One illustration of this improvement in efficiency is that Dan holds a CT DEEP Supervisors License for application of various chemicals required, and now these can be applied under his supervision by Borough employees who hold Operator Licenses.

The Ecological Maintenance Plan created by Dan has been adopted by the Land Trust as its operating budget over the next three years. It addresses the current status and objectives of the diverse areas of the Borough under Land Trust ownership and conservation easement; namely, the grove forest, grove meadow, tidal marshes, Crab Creek uplands and river buffer areas along the Connecticut River. Total cost over the three year period is budgeted at approximately \$48,000 to be met by Land Trust funds, annual Land Trust membership, contributions and grants.

Dan's involvement with Fenwick and Long Island Sound wetlands goes back to his graduation from Trinity in 2003 with a degree in biology and environmental science.

Interestingly, his first job a decade ago was with The Nature Conservancy monitoring piping plovers nesting at Griswold Point in Old Lyme and not nesting at Lynde Point in Fenwick. He is a Branford native, and his early involvement with Branford Land Trust led to his employment at All Habitat and subsequently the Town of Branford where he is enforcement assistant to the Inland Wetlands and Natural Resources Commission.

Dan is passionate about the Lynde Point peninsula and its unusual resources of meadow, forest and marsh and its role in the environment of the River and Sound. He rightfully describes it as a "living shoreline". One of the long range factors he finds challenging is the future of the Fenwick marshes and the consequences of rising water levels and tidal surges of future storms.

If you see a handsome young man walking in Fenwick without a golf club in his hand, it may be Dan. Please introduce yourself.

President's Letter

For the past several years the Land Trust has arranged a beach cleanup during Memorial Day weekend. This event has been a sociable community gathering with the highly successful result of making the ocean fringes of Fenwick more attractive and useable by all.

This fall, for the first time, Lynde Point Land Trust joined a similar and far larger event, the 16th annual "Source to Sea" cleanup sponsored by the Connecticut River Watershed Council. Over this span of years our peninsula at the terminus of the 410 mile river has been spared the tons of debris annually collected upstream by "Source to Sea" volunteers.

Each fall the Watershed Council assembles an army of boy scouts, land trusts and volunteers of all sorts to spread out over the length of the Connecticut River and its tributaries in one coordinated assault. Because this was the first time Lynde Point Land Trust became involved, we joined Essex Land Trust at an assigned territory known as "Great Meadow" just north of the Essex village, a salt marsh area, a portion of which was recently acquired by Essex Land Trust.

A team of all ages (from yours truly down to cub scouts) picked up an astounding quantity of trash on the appointed day, September 29. By far the largest volume our group collected was of no-deposit plastic water bottles. Virtually no five-cent-deposit soda containers were found. Perhaps Connecticut Yankees know the value of five cent tax-free income, but the larger lesson is that the Connecticut container deposit law really works in reducing trash. Would that it be extended to all water bottles.

Two apparently stolen automobiles were removed upstream in Glastonbury, but that is a separate story.

Connecticut River Watershed Council is a sixty year old conservation organization headquartered in Greenfield, Massachusetts, with a "river steward" assigned to the lower valley resident in Middletown who was in charge of our cleanup. It's interesting to note that Ellsworth Grant was one of the foresighted early chairmen of this organization.

Another vivid lesson learned on cleanup day was provided by the impenetrable tangle of Phragmites at "Great Meadow". This contrasts with the Fenwick marsh where restoration commencing in 2003 combined with ongoing efforts to control invasive species has largely eliminated Phragmites in Fenwick. Essex Land Trust is just beginning an attempt at cutting and spraying, but the "before" and "after" example is striking and a reminder that Phragmites will rapidly reappear without constant effort. Your annual dues will assure that our land trust will be able to continue its successful efforts to date.

Which brings me to a word of thanks to all the volunteers and contributors who have made the projects of Lynde Point Land Trust so successful. Please initiate or continue your annual membership to enable our land trust to carry on both its struggles and its cooperation with man and nature to conserve the Lynde Point peninsula.

Stanford Brainerd
President

LYNDE POINT LAND TRUST BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2012-2013

Stanford Brainerd, President, Babbie Conroy, Secretary, Frank Conroy, Kacey Constable, John Coutts, Linda Frankel, Burgess Representative, Bill Freeman, Jessica Gay, Park Commission Representative, Chris Jones, Debbie Neely, Vice President, Cindy Patterson, Molly Patterson, Tom Riggio, Park Commission Representative, Larry Ritzhaupt, Treasurer, Wendy Savin, Martha Staniford, Margaret Wade

Lynde Point Land Trust Annual Membership 2012 - 2013

Name: _____

Address: _____

Please mail membership check payable to Lynde Point Land Trust in amount of your choosing
to: Lynde Point Land Trust
P.O. Box 126
Old Saybrook, CT 06475