

Monomoy and Nomans Land Island National Wildlife Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan

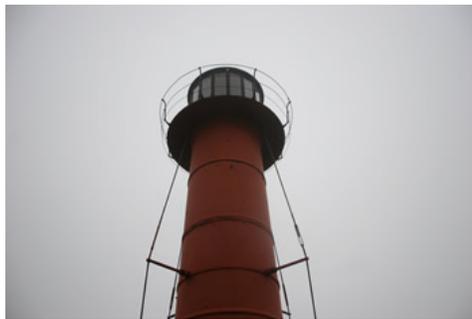
Planning Update

Spring 2007

The Monomoy—South Beach Reconnection

The south end of South Beach and the northeast tip of South Monomoy Island reconnected on November 25, 2006, almost 40 years after they had separated. The island once was a peninsula, but separated from the mainland after a storm in 1958.

The reconnection joined two parcels of separately owned land. The Town of Chatham manages South Beach, with an overlay of jurisdiction by the National Park Service Cape Cod National Seashore. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service owns and manages the Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge.



Monomoy Light/USFWS Photo

You can now walk the 15 miles from Chatham Lighthouse to Monomoy Lighthouse, something that has been impossible since the early 1960s. The new connection is about halfway between the two.

Now that you can walk from the beach onto the refuge, we need to ensure that you are aware of refuge regulations, restrictions, and closed areas. You

can find updated maps of closed areas on our website:
<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/monomoy>.

Those sensitive areas are sure to attract sightseers. However, our primary goal is to protect wildlife. Please remember, if you visit the refuge, you must observe all

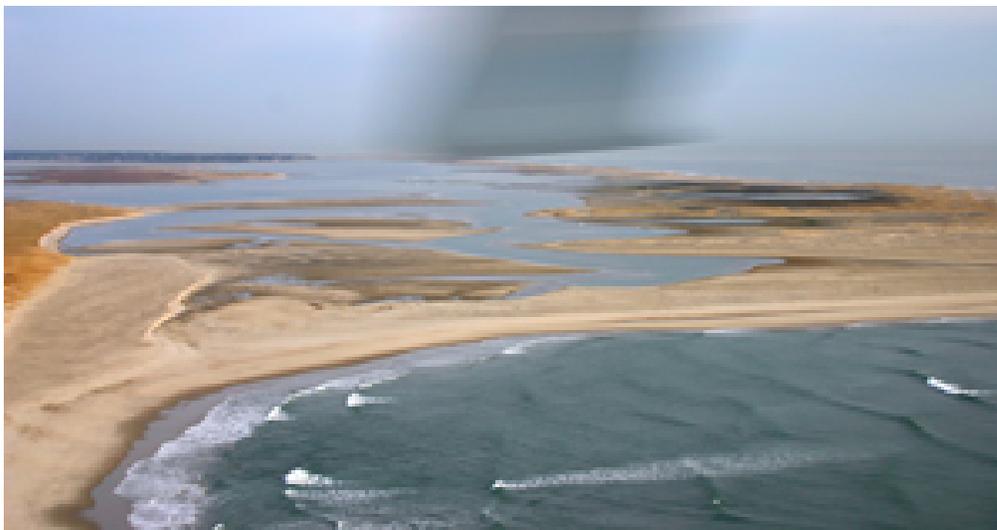
posted regulations.

For some time, we have expected the beach and the island to reconnect. Now that they have, we face a new set of challenges in this year's field season.

The two parcels reconnected in a biologically sensitive area near the tern colony on the refuge. In the past, piping plovers have nested along the east side of what was the island, near the new connection.

The reconnection also raised the possibility of small mammals crossing to feed on nesting birds and their eggs. In the past, the water around the island deterred mammalian predators, except coyotes. This year, foxes, skunks, or raccoons could cross to the area and cause extensive damage.

The refuge was established in 1944 to provide important resting, nesting, and feeding habitat for migratory birds, including federally protected species.



Monomoy / South Beach connection/USCG Photo

Contact Information

Direct all CCP correspondence to
Bill Perry, Refuge Planner
Eastern Massachusetts National
Wildlife Refuge Complex
73 Weir Hill Rd.
Sudbury, MA 01776
Email: Bill_Perry@fws.gov
Phone: 978-443-4661 ext. 32

Research

This year, we started our second full season of research to quantify the spatial distribution, abundance and age structure of shorebirds using the refuge during spring and fall migration, assess the spatial distribution and abundance of public use, and quantify shorebird responses to them.



Common tern in flight/USFWS photo

We are quantifying shorebird use by using survey plots which are marked with colored metal or plastic poles in the mudflats that form part of the refuge. The plots, except those that lie in closed areas, are open to the public. If you would like to use an area inside the plots, we encourage you to do so. Avoiding the plots could affect the amount of data we are able to collect.

We will count and observe people in the study area in the summer, as well. For the efficiency of our study, we will map public use in intertidal and salt marsh habitat from a distance, and record the activity of each person in each habitat: water, mudflat, salt marsh, or dune.

We will examine shorebird behavior and interactions among shorebirds and humans in a few ways. One experiment will simulate human disturbances by groups of one, two, or three people approaching flocks of shorebirds. We will record for each approach the species, age, and number of birds, their behavior and their distances from the observers when the birds begin to run or fly away, the distance the birds run before flying, and the weather conditions.

Whenever possible, we will also conduct counts of shorebirds near shellfishermen and compare with counts of shorebirds where shellfishermen are not present. Observers will record the number of each species and age-cohort, the number of shellfishermen in the group within 5m of each other, the total area fished, the habitat (mudflat, salt marsh, water, and dune), tidal stage, time, weather, and location.

Finally, we will randomly select birds to record all behaviors for 1-min surveys.

We will also record the distance to the nearest shellfisherman or other person, the percent of area recently shell-fished, the total number of shorebirds, habitat (mudflat, salt marsh, water, dune), tidal stage, time, and weather.



Monomoy tidal flats/USFWS Photo

If you have any questions about the research, please contact Mike Brady at 508-945-0594 ext. 10.



Rainbow Pond on Nomans Land Island/USFWS photo

Nomans Land Island Virtual Tour

Nomans Land Island is very special place. This 640-acre island, which can be seen from Aquinnah, sits 3 miles south of Martha's Vineyard and is part of the Town of Chilmark. We have managed parts of the island since 1970, when the U.S. Navy owned it. The Navy transferred ownership to us in 1997.

Because the Nomans Land Island refuge is closed to the public, we have developed a virtual tour to give you the opportunity to visit the refuge by viewing short videos about the island, its history, habitat, and management. We invite you to take the tour at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/nomanslandisland/tour.html>.

"This is an exciting opportunity to use new technology to give the public a chance to experience the National Wildlife Refuge System at any time of the year from any location," said Elizabeth Herland, the manager of the refuge. "People will be able to see and learn about an area that is inaccessible because of concerns about safety and wildlife."