



# MONOMOY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

## BIWEEKLY UPDATE



JULY 21 - AUGUST 11, 2017 [ISSUE 3]

Sanderling foraging. (USFWS)

## A Message from Monomoy

A running theme of this issue is our reliance on partnerships and volunteers to keep the Refuge running. In the next three pages, you can read about taking down tern camp, planting a new pollinator garden, and hosting a beach cleanup and a field trip!

We want to thank our readers for being so supportive and enthusiastic about Monomoy's Biweekly Updates. Please help share the Refuge's story and come visit us!



Beach cleanup on 8/3. (USFWS)

## Monomoy Tales

*One August afternoon in 1977, my Dad and I headed out in our motorboat enroute to Monomoy. It was my first visit to the elusive island that had captured my curiosity for years. I'd imagined a wild place, void of humans, but filled with deer, spawning horseshoe crabs, and shorebirds clamoring for real estate. I was not disappointed. Little did I know that it would be the last time I would visit Monomoy for four decades.*

*This past July, I once again visited Monomoy as a guide for the Monomoy Point Lighthouse Tour, a trip organized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Friends of Monomoy. Again, the island did not disappoint. In addition to migratory shorebirds, a new species was taking up real estate on Monomoy—pinnipeds! And what a treat to visit the beautifully completed restoration of the Monomoy Point Light and keeper's house. I am already planning my next visit, and guaranteed, will be a lot sooner than forty years.*

- Elaine Abrams, Friends of Monomoy Volunteer

# 2017 Field Season

Each May to July, Refuge biological staff stays on South Monomoy Island where interns and technicians monitor our common tern colony as eggs are laid, chicks hatch, and terns start to fly. Last week, we took down our field camp. While the busy time of the season is over, our team still goes out on the island for day trips to continue monitoring the colony.

Last week, Refuge biological staff swept the East side of South Monomoy Island to locate and monitor piping plovers. Most of the plovers have begun migrating and therefore it is increasingly difficult to find breeding pairs and chicks. At the moment, technicians continue to monitor three chicks from one nest on the southern tip of the Island and three additional chicks from a nest on Minimoy. There is one American Oystercatcher chick from a nest on the east side of South Monomoy, which just fledged on August 3rd!

The fall migration southward has begun and Monomoy serves as an important stopover site. One can see many species of terns such as Arctic, Black, Common, Roseate, and Least off of the south tip of South Monomoy and around Powder Hole. There are also many migratory shorebirds roosting and feeding on the refuge including black-bellied plovers, short-billed dowitchers, and semipalmated sandpipers. There are also Cory's, Sooty, and Great Shearwaters as well as Wilson's Storm-Petrels that can be viewed on the open water! Storm-petrels are quite the sight hopping along the ocean on the waves, then suddenly taking off in flight.



The tern team is hard at work out in the colony!  
Pictured: Devan Blazey, Jackie Claver, Erin Lefkowitz  
Credit: (USFWS)

Last, but certainly not least: juvenile Fowler's toads are all over the southern portion of the island near the Monomoy Lighthouse. The majority of these young have lost their tails and are fully metamorphosed, albeit very tiny. If you spend a day out on the island, you may see these toads, as well as their predators, garter snakes.

The clamming on any of the Monomoy flats is still excellent, as long as you have a shell fishing permit from the town of Chatham. Spending just a half hour or less can give you a cornucopia of steamers, quahogs, and razor clams! Striped bass are still biting all around Morris Island and are plentiful off of the shoals of Monomoy. A saltwater fishing permit from the state is required.

The Refuge is a beautiful and dynamic place this time of year. Come enjoy Massachusetts' only federally designated wilderness area and all it has to offer!

## August 3 Beach Cleanup



Our crew loading the boat with marine debris. (USFWS)

On August 3rd, 9 volunteers and several Refuge staff members ventured out to the northern tip of South Monomoy for Monomoy Beach Cleanup Day. For most of the volunteers, this was their first visit to the Monomoy Islands. They witnessed the common tern colony, the beautiful island scenery, and unfortunately, an unbelievable amount of marine debris. The crew filled up three boatloads of bottles, balloons, nets, tires, and much more. We want to thank our dedicated volunteers for helping us protect wildlife and keep the ocean clean!

# We're Abuzz with Pollinator News!

We have officially completed a new Refuge pollinator garden with 25 species of flowering plants! This project was made possible through the expertise and generous plant donations from MaryKay Fox of Friends of Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge and Marjorie Williams of Cape Cod Museum of Natural History.

The plants will continue to grow and spread to fill in the 8'x8' plot, blooming from early spring to late fall to provide nectar to many species of native pollinators including butterflies, moths, bees, wasps, and more! We have already seen several bee species visiting the pink-flowered speedwell, a drought-resistant perennial.



Monomoy pollinator garden. (USFWS)

The garden is located across from the public restrooms in the parking lot. Come check it out when you visit the Refuge! We welcome anyone interested in helping keep up the pollinator garden to contact us at 1 (508) 945-0594 or at [r5rw\\_mnwr@fws.gov](mailto:r5rw_mnwr@fws.gov).

## Visitor Services

On August 2nd, twenty second through fourth grade students from Monomoy Community Services' Summer Camp participated in a field trip on Morris Island.

Our Refuge Manager, Matt Hillman, shared the Refuge's commitment to protect wildlife and wildlife habitat with the young adventurers. Next, Refuge staff members Tien, Devan, and Megan, and a volunteer, Campbell, led a guided nature walk that included interactive demonstrations of Monomoy's shifting shorelines and sand dune ecosystems. The group enjoyed exploring the Visitor Center and the activities in the Kids Corner.

We want to thank Monomoy Community Services for collaborating with us on this field trip!



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## Upcoming Events

Every Tuesday: 2:30-5:00pm  
Chatham Farmer's Market  
We will be talking about visitor and volunteer opportunities at the Refuge with the Friends of Monomoy.

Ocean State Job Lot  
1652 Main St , Chatham, MA 02633

August 20: 9:30am-1:30pm  
Monomoy Point Lighthouse Tour  
You will have the chance to experience South Monomoy island. Pre-registration is required. If you are interested in this tour, please contact [tien\\_tran@fws.gov](mailto:tien_tran@fws.gov).

August 22: 7pm  
FRIENDS OF MONOMOY SUMMER SERIES TALKS  
Cynthia Wigren, "Awareness Inspires Conservation: White Sharks in the North Atlantic"  
Chatham Community Center  
702 Main Street, Chatham, MA 02633