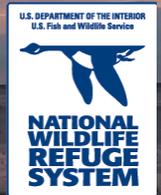


JUNE 18-JULY 1, 2018

ISSUE 2

MONOMOY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



Biweekly Newsletter

Adam Ells/USFWS

VOLUNTEER SHOUT OUT



Kaiti Titherington/USFWS

Common tern in flight

This week, we'd like to thank all of the volunteers who assisted with horseshoe crab surveys and tagging! We are extremely grateful for the help of over 30 volunteers, including a youth group from the Wampanoag Tribe.

Volunteers for the spawning surveys waded in chilly, sometimes waist-deep water to spot the crabs. Half of the surveys were conducted in the middle of the night, which required headlamps to work on the beach.

For tagging, volunteers waded through the water to gather crabs. They also took measurements, recorded data, and attached tags to crabs.

Horseshoe crabs are not dangerous, but they can be feisty when lifted out of the water! Thanks again to everyone who helped out with the horseshoe crab field season. We hope to see you again next year!



USFWS

Horseshoe crab on the beach

SUNNY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN

With the end of school and beginning of summer, we're seeing even more human and animal activity at Monomoy! This newsletter is packed with updates about the tern colony, horseshoe crabs, lighthouse repairs, and other refuge initiatives.

Whether you're coming for the first time or a returning visitor, we have plenty to see. If you stop by the visitor center, we'll be happy to tell you more about the refuge and help you plan your trip.

Chicks on the Beach

We've come to the special time of year when eggs are hatching for many species of nesting birds. Common tern, laughing gull, piping plover, and others now have chicks on the refuge. Staff are monitoring 25 active nests of the federally endangered roseate tern as well. The chicks are growing every day, and they will be fledging (learning to fly) in the coming weeks.

On June 21st, refuge staff began banding common and roseate tern chicks. To date, staff have banded 6 roseate and 516 common terns. Staff banded chicks from productivity plots to monitor survival rates and contribute to long-term data sets. The plots serve as a sample of the reproductive success of the tern colony. A mass banding of chicks throughout the colony will be held later this season.

Banding birds helps biologists learn about migration patterns, population dynamics, and life history, as each band sports a specific number that can identify individuals when they are resighted or recaptured.



A. Jorgensen/USFWS

Refuge staff member holding a newly banded roseate tern chick



Alyssa Pool/USFWS

Above: Refuge staff and volunteers hard at work tagging horseshoe crabs

Below: close-up of an old tag on a horseshoe crab

Tag! You're It!

Despite poor weather conditions, the final horseshoe crab tagging was a tremendous success. Fifteen volunteers worked diligently on June 27th and managed to tag 258 horseshoe crabs, meeting the refuge goal of 500 for the season.

If you find a tagged horseshoe crab, take a picture of it! Later you can call the phone number on the tag and report the tag number in exchange for a small reward.

Horseshoe crab surveys were also conducted this season on Morris Island. The nighttime survey on June 14th yielded the highest crab count with 53 individuals. Data from the surveys will be reported to the state of Massachusetts so they can set informed catch limits. These data help to track population dynamics of horseshoe crabs over time.

Shorebirds like red knots depend on horseshoe crab eggs as a vital food source during their long migrations. As a result, horseshoe crab harvesting is not permitted at Monomoy.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

South Monomoy Bird Survey

Sean Williams and Maili Waters conducted a bird survey on South Monomoy Island on June 21st. They surveyed for over 8 hours, hiking over 10 miles throughout the island. They observed 59 species in total, including a black-billed cuckoo, an American bittern, 3 soras, 14 Arctic terns, and 59 gadwalls.

Sean and Maili are volunteers working to determine whether Arctic terns are breeding on South Monomoy. There is only one known Arctic tern pair currently breeding in Massachusetts.

Without their efforts, the refuge would not have recorded the presence of some of these rare and unusual birds. Thank you Sean and Maili!



Sean Williams

A banded black skimmer standing on the beach

Sean and Maili reported their data to eBird, a citizen science initiative to record avian biodiversity. If you're interested in birds, try reporting a list of your sightings next time you visit the refuge!

To view Sean and Maili's full bird list, [click here](#)

To explore the eBird website, [click here](#)



Alyssa Pool/USFWS

A new cone beginning to grow on Pitch Pine, a species on the phenology trail

What in the World is Phenology?

Phenology is the study of the timing of seasonal events. Plants and animals have different life stages each year, such as when lilacs bloom or robins migrate. Phenology tracks these phenomena over multiple years. Recording phenology data is valuable for long term habitat management, especially in light of climate change.

Refuge staff are establishing a phenology trail on Morris Island. The 1/4 mile loop has 4 labeled stops for visitors to track changes in plant species on the refuge. Worksheets to track the changes will be available in the visitor center.

TLC for Monomoy Point Lighthouse

Refuge staff spent several days working on much needed repairs to the keeper's house after damage from winter nor'easters. They fixed the solar panels with new brackets, reset the doors, replaced locks and doorknobs, added new flashing to the roof, and replaced broken shingles all over the building.

Monomoy Point Light is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The current lighthouse has been standing since 1849. With proper care, we hope to preserve this landmark for another 169 years!



Rebecca Arnold

Monomoy Point Lighthouse in June

Are you interested in fishing at the refuge? The beach along Morris Island is a great place to catch striped bass. The shorelines and water around the Monomoy Islands are abundant with shellfish and other fin fish. To learn more about Massachusetts regulations or to purchase your fishing license, click the links below.

Recreational Saltwater
Fishing in MA



Obtaining a MA
fishing license

VISITOR SERVICES

Weekly Nature Walks

On the weekend of June 29, we held our first guided nature walks of the season on Morris Island. 13 visitors came to the refuge to explore the trails with a refuge staff member. Wildlife sightings included snowy egret, osprey, red-tailed hawk, and even a few gray seals!

Refuge staff will be leading many more walks throughout the season, Friday-Sunday at 9am and 3pm. Each tour lasts 1-1.5 hours, but shorter walks are available by request on weekends. Join us outside the doors of the visitor center to learn about the refuge's flora and fauna as well as the cultural history of the area.

Refuge Boat Tours



Chelsi Burns/USFWS

Boats off the coast of Morris Island

View the beauty of South Monomoy Island in person on a boat tour led by refuge staff. Through a partnership with Monomoy Adventures, we are working on establishing regular boat trips throughout the season. The tour involves a 30 minute boat ride, 2.5 mile hike, and wet beach landings. Maximum group size 4. Contact annafaith_jorgensen@fws.gov for available dates and additional information.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

July 12th Beach Cleanup



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Refuge volunteers hard at work in 2017

In partnership with Americorps, the refuge is holding a beach cleanup day on South Monomoy Island. We are seeking one to two more volunteers who are willing to help collect trash that has washed ashore. There is no shade available and the boat trip requires wet beach landings.

Contact matthew_hillman@fws.gov for additional information.

July 18th Lecture Series



USFWS

Kate Iaquinto (left) demonstrating roseate tern banding

Refuge wildlife biologist Kate Iaquinto will be discussing wildlife management techniques at her talk "**Bird Research and Conservation at Monomoy: from Terns to Knots and Everything in-Between.**" The talk will be held at the Chatham Community Center. Sponsored by the Friends of Monomoy. 7pm, free of charge.



Stay connected with updates from our official Facebook Page!