

The Wrack Line

Newsletter of Parker River National Wildlife Refuge • Newburyport, MA



United States Fish & Wildlife Service

Summer, 2013

The Changing Faces at Parker River!

By Matt Poole, Visitor Services Manager



Graham Taylor, out-going refuge manager.

It has often been said that the only constant in life is change. And so it goes here at Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, where certain significant changes in the refuge's permanent staff have either recently occurred, or are about to:

After seven years at the helm, Refuge Manager **Graham Taylor** has left to take a new position in our regional office (located in Hadley, MA). He will be joining the senior leadership team for the Division of Refuges, where he'll have an opportunity to make new and greater contributions to the future of national wildlife refuges in Region 5 (Maine to West Virginia).

Maintenance worker **Gary Burke** retired at the end of May after 20 years of service at the refuge. His significant contributions were recently acknowledged when it was announced that Gary had been selected for the Region's *Unsung Hero Award*!

The refuge has long had two fulltime law enforcement officers on its organization chart. However, for the last several years one of those positions had been vacant. Earlier this year that position was finally filled by **Gareth Williams**. Gareth, who originally hails from Massachusetts, most recently worked as an officer at the Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge Complex near Washington, D.C.

Invasive species are frequently described as "public enemy number one" on America's national wildlife refuges. **Frances Toledo**, a newly arrived biological technician, will be actively involved in helping to manage such species as perennial pepperweed and phragmites. Originally from Puerto Rico, Frances has spent time at several other refuges including Chincoteague, Rappahannock River Valley, and Iroquois. She recently completed work on a M.S. in ecosystem science and management.

They're Back!



Piping plover parent and chick at Sandy Point.

Photo: Matt Poole/FWS

We Couldn't "Get'er Done"... Without Summer Help!

By Matt Poole, Visitor Services Manager

Sze Wing Yu (first name pronounced "C-Wing") is Parker River's new Student Conservation Association intern. Sze Wing recently finished her sophomore year at the University of Maryland, where she is a biodiversity and conservation biology major, as well as a violin performance minor. This summer she will learn about refuge management from her supervisor Frank Drauszewski. In addition, she will help other staff with biological research, visitor services, law enforcement, and maintenance. Sze Wing hopes to have a fun and educational summer, with as few bites from mosquitoes and greenheads as possible!

Alex Fox is a Natural Resource Conservation major at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. This summer he is interning at Parker River NWR, where, so far, he has had an opportunity to dive into many different biological projects. Alex, who loves to be outdoors, is an avid hiker and rock climber.



Sze Wing Yu , on the right, is a Student Conservation Association. Alex Fox, on the right, is a refuge volunteer.



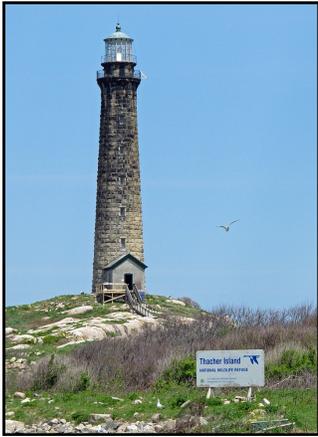
The boardwalk at lot 1 required significant renovation in the wake of a later winter storm.

Storm-Ravaged Boardwalk Reopens!

By Matt Poole, Visitor Services Manager

If the climate change prediction about increased frequency and ferocity of storm events has any legs to stand on, then surely this past winter on Plum Island must have been the poster child for that prediction! One of the casualties proved to be the Lot #1 boardwalk, which was undercut and rendered unsafe by a March storm. For much of the spring, no boardwalk at Lot 1 meant no access to the refuge beach. Thanks to the hard work of the refuge's maintenance staff of Bob Springfield and Gary Burke, supported by some very talented and dedicated refuge volunteers, the new and improved boardwalk was opened shortly after Memorial Day.

The other epicenter of recent, major maintenance activity on the refuge was the rehabilitation of the lower road (the gravel portion from Hellcat to Sandy Point). Over a three week period 15,000 tons of gravel was trucked onto the refuge and contributed to the existing road bed. The reconditioned road looks great and should serve refuge staff and visitors well into the future.



A Brief Visit to Thacher Island National Wildlife Refuge

By Matt Poole,
Visitor Services Manager

As many of our readers will already know, four national wildlife refuges are administered out of refuge headquarters in Newburyport, MA. One of the lesser known and certainly less visited refuges is the 22 acre Thacher Island NWR. Located a mile off the coast of Rockport, MA on a rocky island that shares the same name, the refuge was historically the site of a nesting colony of common terns. In more recent years the terns were displaced by nesting gulls. Management goals for the refuge center on discouraging gull-nesting in hopes that terns may return to the island at some future juncture.

Beyond its ecological value, Thacher Island is an extremely interesting place from a cultural resources standpoint. The island is home to the Cape Ann Light Station, which has been designated a National Historic Landmark. The twin lighthouses, constructed in 1861 and each 123 feet tall, are a unique feature. The North Tower is located on refuge property. The South Tower, light keeper's residence and associated buildings are located on adjacent town property. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works in



Photo: Matt Poole/FWS

Once a colonial nesting site for the common tern, that species has been displaced by several species of gulls.

partnership with the Thacher Island Association and the Thacher Island Town Committee to manage this important historic resource.

Thacher Island NWR is open to visitors. For a fee, the Thacher Island Association operates a boat shuttle out of Rockport Harbor during the warmer months. (Check their web site for specific details). Experienced kayakers also frequent the island. Refuge visitors can look forward to hiking the island's trails, viewing and photographing wildlife, and climbing the North Tower for commanding views of the entire island.



Photo: Matt Poole/FWS

Gone But Not Forgotten OR “Oral Histories R Us!”

By Matt Poole, Visitor Services Manager

Ever since I arrived at Parker River in September of 2010, we have talked off and on about how “cool” it would be to interview long-retired refuge employees to capture what it was like to work at the refuge in the early years. Recently we moved beyond the talking stage and actually conducted two “oral histories.” Tom Stubbs was the first person to be interviewed. Tom started work at the refuge in the late 1940s as a maintenance worker and remained on the staff for the next forty years! He was there almost at the very beginning of the refuge and was very involved in the construction of the series of dikes that trap water in our impoundments. At one point during our conversation Tom made reference to the “new headquarters building” – a reference which caused me to scratch my head for a moment before realizing that he was talking about the *old* headquarters on the north end of Plum Island! That structure was built in the mid 1950s.

In early May we had an opportunity to interview Don Grover, who worked at the refuge as a fulltime law enforcement officer from the early 1960s until



Photo: Matt Poole/FWS

Longtime refuge colleagues Tom Stubbs and Don Grover (l to r) — though they’d stayed in touch over the years — had not been in the same room in 20years!

the late 1980s. We had been forewarned that Mr. Grover is a very good storyteller. Suffice it to say, he didn’t disappoint! Don worked on the refuge during the heyday of visitation, when the annual total was twice of what it is today. His entertaining stories conjured visions of “The Wild West!” Tom Stubbs, who has stayed in touch with Don over the years, was able to participate in the interview. It wasn’t until the very end of the interview that Tom mentioned, in passing, that he had not actually been in the same room with Don for more than 20 years. The photo below documents their in-person re-acquaintance!

Both Tom Stubbs and Don Grover have been very generous with their refuge history-sharing. Two stalwart refuge volunteers – Alix McArdle and Victor Tine – have been very instrumental in the success of the oral histories that we’ve completed to date. Here’s hoping that there will be many more to come!



Tom Stubbs operating equipment on the refuge — probably in the mid-1950s.

Refuge By Kayak:

The Ultimate Behind-the-Scenes Tour!

By Matt Poole, Visitor Services Manager

Many will say that the best way to see and experience the refuge's salt marsh is from the cockpit of a kayak. Taking that belief to heart, the refuge will start offering interpretive kayak tours beginning in August. To move this new interpretive program from concept to reality, a number of things needed to occur. First, because the network of creeks that wend their way through the salt marsh can be a bit disorienting, it made sense to establish a water trail – a series of markers placed out on the marsh that will serve as navigational aids for refuge visitors. Those markers are now in place and the water trail is well on its way to becoming a reality. The next step will be to develop a water trail map that visitors will be able to download from the refuge web site. Thanks to volunteer **Walt Thompson** for sparking interest in the water trail!



Photo: Matt Poole/FWS

Water trail in place, it was next time to start thinking about *how* the actual tours will work and who will lead them. Tours will be lead by a small group of refuge staff and volunteers – all of whom are experienced paddlers. All tour leaders will have completed kayak rescue training and will possess current CPR and first aid cards. Refuge tour leaders will not be teaching kayaking skills. Kayak tour participants will be required to provide their own boat, paddle, and PFD. For safety purposes, participant boats will need to have flotation and have a minimum hull length of 12 feet. Finally, all tour participants will be required to sign a waiver.

Based on the experience Deputy Manager Frank Drausewzski has had leading his own tours of the marsh over the years, there is every expectation that the refuge's new interpretive kayak tours of The Great Marsh will be wildly successful. Stay tuned.



Photo: Matt Poole/FWS

Deputy Refuge Manager Frank Drausewzski installs one the new water trail markers while staff and volunteers look on.





It's Purple Martin Season!

By Jean Adams, Outdoor Recreation Planner

Many of you may have seen the gourds hanging next to the visitor contact station at Lot 1. These gourds are there for the purple martins—the largest swallow in North America. Starting in April, the martins start returning, but do not nest until mid to late May or early June. In the past, the Refuge used multi-unit birdhouses (still quite popular with many martin enthusiasts), but has started to emphasize the use of gourds. Martins are secondary cavity nesters, which means that they use already excavated holes in which to build their nests. The correct style gourd seems to work great for this purpose.

Purple martins can be found throughout the U.S., but on the east coast they are dependent upon man-made housing. This has largely come about due to habitat destruction and the increase in housing developments which have destroyed the open spaces and demolished the dead trees that supplied nesting cavities. The Refuge, therefore, has become one of the most productive purple martin breeding spots in Massachusetts.

Another reason the martin population may falter is because of competition from other bird species. This is especially true with the non-native invasive house sparrow who can (and will) quickly overtake a martin nest site. The sparrow is very aggressive and has been known to kill martin chicks and even adult martins. That is why you may see some martin holes plugged up early in the season, as this discourages sparrows from nesting. As the martins begin to get serious about nesting, these holes will be unplugged and carefully monitored so that only martins acquire the nest sites.

Martins are very showy birds. They are agile flyers and consume huge numbers of flying insects every day (even greenheads!). Sometimes people may confuse them with barn swallows or tree swallows (also on the Refuge). but their beautiful blue-purple, iridescent feathers, and their larger size, distinguish them from the other species.

If you're thinking about encouraging martins in your yard, keep in mind that martins are pretty picky about their housing. With martins, it's location that matters most. They like to be near water (helps attract the flying insects they feed upon) and also near buildings (but not too close), in open spaces at least 60 feet away from trees. They are picky about the houses too, requiring size specific openings, proper ventilation, house color, and orientation. The website purplemartin.org is a great website to reference if you're serious about attracting martins. They are worth the effort.

2013 Photo Contest is Here!

By Matt Poole, Visitor Services Manager

The refuge's third annual nature and wildlife photography contest begins in middle July. This year, qualifying images may have been taken at any national wildlife refuge in Massachusetts, Wapack NWR (NH), Great Bay NWR (NH) and Rachel Carson NWR (ME). Those interested in participating in this year's contest may submit up to two matted prints. The prints can be dropped off at the refuge visitor center in Newburyport. The \$5 (cash) submission fee covers one or two entries. Entries will be judged and winners announced during the annual Phabulous Photo Weekend (Oct. 18—20. Visit the refuge web site for a complete contest description.



This photograph of a dragonfly by Egils Zarins won "Best of Show" in the refuge's 2012 photo contest.

Meet Volunteer Janet Egan!

By Jean Adams, Outdoor Recreation Planner

Janet Egan has been a volunteer at Parker River NWR longer than any other current volunteer: 17 years as a Plover Warden. That's a lot of beach time! She is also the author of the "Plover Warden Diaries" — a really great blog about her warden experiences. In fact, when I was offered the job here at Parker River 14 years ago, it was her blog that I came across when I was trying to learn about the refuge! Janet gave me my first impression of the Refuge and of the piping plover. I asked Janet to answer a few questions about her experience as a volunteer. Her responses follow:

What do you do as a volunteer at Parker River?

Plover warden! My favorite job is talking to people about piping plovers. I love explaining how they live, what their nesting habits are, and all about them. I also love answering visitors' questions about birds they see on the beach and sometimes I even get to talk about beach grass — another of my favorite subjects, though not as favorite as piping plovers.

In addition to your plover warden duties, do you volunteer elsewhere? Yes, I am a volunteer board member at the International Dendrological Research Institute (they study trees).

What do you do when not volunteering? I am not retired. I have worked on and off as a technical writer in the computer and telecommunications industries.

Any favorite memories that stand out? I had been volunteering as a plover warden for a couple of years before the first time I saw a chick. Piping plovers are the cutest things on the planet and seeing one for the first time was an amazing experience. In fact, every time since then that I've seen a chick I feel privileged. One other memory that stands out was when a young girl who was visiting the beach with her foster family asked me about all the different birds she was seeing on the beach that day. She wanted to know how to tell the different species of gulls apart, the names of all the shorebirds she was seeing, and just got more and more enthusiastic about birds the more I answered her questions. When the family was leaving, she asked her foster Mom if they could go to the library to borrow a bird book. I was thrilled to have turned her onto birds!



Any advice to other volunteers? Wear light colors in greenhead season. Stay calm and enjoy the volunteer experience.

We here at Parker River are so happy to have Janet helping out and giving her time to help us help the plover. She is a consummate volunteer and the best friend the plovers, and the refuge, could ask for. Thanks, Janet!



A Unique Contribution

Those who have visited the refuge visitor center have no doubt enjoyed the life-like bird carvings of Bob Durgin. Bob recently made yet another great contribution when he carved and painted a "clutch" of biologically accurate plover eggs for use in environmental education programs...no small feat. Thanks to Bob for supporting the refuge!

Getting Your Child Out Into Nature: Planting the Seeds of Wonder

By Nancy Pau, Wildlife Biologist (and proud mom!)

In 1956, Rachel Carson wrote about the importance of sharing “the Sense of Wonder” with children. In this age of smart phones, iPads, and 24 hour on-demand media content, this is more true than ever before. In his book, “Last Child in the Woods”, Richard Louv talks about how our children have disassociated from nature, with multitudes of implications for their physical and mental wellbeing. Children today are involved in more activities than ever before. However, one thing that they are losing is unstructured outside play. When children engage in free play outside, they are learning about the world around them first hand. They learn to be observant of their environment, to assess risk and to problem solve. Being in the natural world is also a restorative experience. In this fast paced world we live in, children can get easily over stimulated, making them irritable, agitated, and unable to concentrate. Research shows that a daily dose of nature helps children and adults alike to relax and better concentrate.

Children, especially very young children, approach nature with wonder and excitement. “If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in,” wrote Rachel Carson. But don’t worry if you’re not an expert on nature. “For the parent seeking to guide [the child], it is more important to pave the way for the child to want to know than to put him on a diet of facts”. If you would like to be the guide for your child, here are some tips from literature and from some local parents:

Start in your own backyard. You don’t have to go very far to find nature. A child can spend hours observing an ant hill, or watching the clouds move across the sky. Whether you live in the country, a subdivision, or downtown Newburyport, find a spot where you child can explore on their own. Ideally, this would be an untamed corner, a piece of wooded lot in your subdivision, an overgrown corner of the garden with some wildflowers, a pond, stream, or even a ditch. You want to provide a place where your child can come face to face with wildlife, of the miniature kind—insects, frogs, and toads. Plant some nectar and berry plants and put up bird feeders to attract birds to your yard.

Give them a spot where magic and imagination can run wild. Lead a child to a natural area and they will intuitively start building their imaginary world. Let your child claim a bit of the garden as their own — where they can dig, plant, and keep their treasures. Create a spot under a shrub or a tree where they can build a shelter. Leave



building materials in the form of sticks, rocks, flowers, etc. that they can use to build lean-tos, forts, or fairy houses.

Emphasize all five senses. Children naturally live through all their senses. Nurture this by calling out different sensory inputs. Here are some examples:

- Listen to the sounds of nature. Sounds like rain falling on trees; crash of the ocean waves; frogs; whip-poor-wills, and owls at night. Spring is a great time to listen to birds; and kids seem to intuitively love bird songs. Katie Hone’s daughters have monopolized her tablet since she’s installed iBird app on her phone. My younger Dylan similarly claimed my backyard birdsong book when he was about 10 months old. Now 22 months, he knows about 20 birds by sight and sound. More importantly, he laughs with pure joy each time we play the bird songs, and when we’re in the backyard or walking the neighborhood, I can see him listening to the birds singing and searching for them.
- Let your child feel as many things as possible. Close their eyes and feel the bark of some trees; feel grass and moss in between your toes; let them hold some frogs, snakes, salamanders; put a butterfly or dragonfly on their hands or nose (they will typically stay put for a few minutes).
- Taste. Children love nothing better than eating off the land. If you’re comfortable and familiar with wild plants, there are plenty of things to eat in nature, including wild asparagus, blueberries, raspberries, grapes, beach plums, and cranberries. Your average garden pests, like dandelions and clovers, are fully edible as well. Otherwise, help your child plant a garden where they can pick and eat fruits and veggies off the vine.
- Smell. Have your child take a deep breath at the ocean, in the woods, on a lake. Let them smell pine needles, garden herbs, or fragrant flowers, like honeysuckle and roses.

Feed their curiosity. Children naturally try to put names to things. You and your budding naturalist can research the

names of plants and wildlife you see. Wildflower, backyard bird, butterflies, and seashells field guides are good resources to start with. Kellie DiFilippo checks the Daily News for the birds seen around her local reservoir before going on walks with her kids so that they can more easily identify the birds they see. Katie Hone started a pictorial backyard buddy list for her girls. When her kids see a bird, they go online and find a picture of the bird, print it out, and paste it on the board. In just over one year, they've found 77 birds in their yard. A caution about labeling things. Let your child's interest guide you. You can label things for your kids, but never insist that they learn them. Often times, they will amaze you with what they commit to memory. My older son Lucas is not interested in the name of birds, but he loves mnemonic phrases for bird songs. He will go around the house, imitating barred owls (*Who cooks for you?*), towhees (*Drink your tea*), and Savannah sparrows (*Take it easy*).

Collect natural things in craft and learning. Children are natural collectors. Give them old coffee and mason jars to keep the treasures they've picked up around the yard or from local outings. You can use these collections to compare texture, shape, color, etc.; and use them in crafts.

Connect your child with their food. Most children don't know where food comes from. Eating is one of the strongest connections to nature, and reinforces the cycle of life and death in its very act. By understanding where their food comes from, kids learn their moral bearings and learn to be stewards of nature and other animals. Help your children to make these connections. When they ask what beef

is, tell them it's a cow. Take them fishing, and consider cooking that fish for dinner. Visit local farms. Plant a garden with them, and involve them in the care of the garden, the harvesting, and the cooking. You don't need much space for gardening. Lettuces and carrots can be grown in a sunny window sill. A bean tepee can double as a secret fort, and a tub planted with potatoes can become a scavenger hunt in late summer.

Rejoice in the seasonal cycles of nature. Because there is a rhythm and cycle to nature, it's easy to establish traditions and special parent-child experiences for your child. Take your child on full-moon stroll. Go hunting for frogs during the first spring rain. Celebrate the return of the first spring bird. Watch the night stars. You may have to break bedtime rules to do these activities, but these will be the memories your child will remember fondly.

Learn to slow down on hikes. When you're ready to take your kids on a hike, start with a small, easy one. Children will stop every few minutes to look at things closer. Let them explore. Your purpose in hiking is to get your kids in the woods—more often than not, you're not going to get to your destination. Engage young children in games to keep their interest while hiking. Sing hiking songs to encourage young kids to keep going. Let your children collect things (rocks, pine cones, etc) as they hike. (Note: Check the rules first—some places don't allow you to collect natural things.) Explain that everything is used by some critter for shelter or food.

We're blessed to be living in an area with lots of public open space. Essex County Trail Association has a full listing of local trails on their web site: <http://www.ectaonline.org/> Some good hikes for young children include: Mill Pond and Cherry Hill Reservoir in West Newbury, Moseley Wood and Mosley State Park in Newburyport, Ipswich River Sanctuary in Ipswich, and Parker River National Wildlife Refuge in Newburyport (Pines trail, Hellcat trail).

The most important thing about helping your child to enjoy nature is your enthusiasm. If you are a parent that is not all that comfortable with the natural world, be careful not to transfer your apprehensions to your child. Your interest and support will boost their confidence and allow them to explore more freely and comprehend more deeply. By connecting your children with nature, you are not only raising future stewards of the earth, but you're gifting your child with valuable life skills, paramount being a "sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, an unflinching antidote against the boredom and disenchantment of later years."

Many thanks to fellow moms Katie Hone, Kellie DiFilippo, Louise Nelson, Kelly Mahon, and Amy DeMello!



Early Island Conservation: **Who Was Annie Hamilton Brown?**

By Gerard Brown, Master Naturalist

From the research that I have completed, to date, Annie H. Brown could be described as a philanthropist and birder who left a lasting legacy to Massachusetts and the natural world. In her will (1929), she bequeathed money to the citizens of the town of Stoneham and to, at least, two Boston-based bird clubs / organizations: namely the Federation of the Bird Clubs of New England and the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

In Nancy Weares first printing of, '*Plum Island The Way It Was*' (1993), the author highlights the story of Annie H. Brown's generosity in donating money to the Federation of the Bird Clubs of New England for the purchase of land to establish an animal and bird sanctuary. Weares writes that the Federation began buying land for this purpose almost immediately. Originally known as the Annie H. Brown Wildlife Sanctuary, circa 1929, these initial land purchases, coupled with Massachusetts Audubon Society support, would eventually be incorporated into the Parker River NWR in 1942. According to on-line archival records held by the Massachusetts Historical Society, Mass Audubon merged with the Federation of the Bird Clubs of New England in 1936 thus acquiring the Annie H. Brown Wildlife Sanctuary and Paine Sanctuary on Tern Island, Cape Cod.

Annie Hamilton Brown was born in Stoneham, Massachusetts on December 4, 1869. She was the daughter of Charles Hamilton and Oriana (Tidd) Brown. William B. Stevens' 1891, '*History of Stoneham*', gives a detailed account of Charles H. Brown. Here is an excerpt:

"Charles Hamilton Brown, a retired leather manufacturer, is a native Leominster, Mass. where he was born. He attended the common schools of Leominster until he was 16 years of age, and in the following year went to North Woburn, Mass. and served an apprenticeship in the currying trade."



Annie Hamilton Brown played an important role in the early years of conservation on Plum Island.

Stevens account goes on to say that Mr. Brown went on to work at several companies in the Woburn / Stoneham area, all with a Tidd connection. For the record, Tidd was one of the early family names in Woburn, MA. Annie H. had one brother, William Tidd. He would later go on to work in one of the firms in which his father had been employed.

Annie H. Brown lived in Stoneham for her entire life. In her early years, she resided at her parent's stately mansion, located at the corner of Maple and Chestnut Street. Historian William B. Stevens describes it as "one of the finest homesteads in Stoneham, situated on the corner of Maple and Chestnut Streets." An examination of period street directories and Poll Tax listings shows her father living at the 29 Maple Street address in 1899 (earliest one available). Annie's father died in 1904. No records could be found of details about her mother's life. Interestingly enough, there is no listing for 29 Maple St. in the 1910, 1911, 1913, 1916 and 1917 Street directories. According to Stoneham historian, Mary Marchant, the home was torn down many years ago and the lot stayed vacant until a church was built on the site. The Stoneham Memorial Seventh Day Adventist Church stands there today.

continued



Portrait of Annie Hamilton Brown in her later years.

Further perusals of Street and List of Persons records confirmed that Annie H. Brown resided at 31 Maple Street from as early as 1926 to 1929. Her occupation is listed as 'At Home'. Prior to 1926, the bound records list only males twenty years of age and older. Thus, early town data of female residents is essentially non-existent. How long had she been living at the 31 Maple St. address is not known. The house, a now white, circa 1890 turreted Victorian, still exists today.

One reference gleaned from a 1917 Bird-Lore magazine listed a Miss Annie H. Brown as a life member, since 1914, of the National Association of Audubon Societies, now known as the National Audubon Society. I could not find any other material connecting her to this organization. However, it does corroborate the fact that she also generously supported bird (wildlife) causes during her life.

Another reference taken from a 1910 issue of the Auk magazine indicated that Annie H. Brown of Stoneham, Mass and 120 other elected Associates attended the 27th meeting of the (AOU) American Ornithologists Union at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. This indicates her strong support for the scientific study of birds and their conservation.

Annie Hamilton Brown died on September 19, 1929. She was buried in Lindenwood Cemetery in Stoneham three days later. A recent visit to the site indicated that a Theresa Hitchler is buried with her.

Annie H. Brown's obituary in the Friday, 9/20/1929 edition of the Stoneham Independent newspaper reveals a lot about her character. Here are some excerpts:

Her education was received in the local schools and Lasell Seminary. Her intense love of birds and animals prompted her to a particular devotion to their care and protection. The grounds surrounding her beautiful home and her garden on Maple and Lincoln Streets have become real sanctuaries for wildlife. In her quiet life at home, she was surrounded by the books she loved and to the collections of which she devoted so much intelligent interest. She has been a generous contributor to the First Unitarian Church. During the past year Miss Brown has had the companionship in her home of her friend, Miss Theresa Hitchler, whose devotion has been untiring thru the long weeks of suffering.

For many years she was too ill to participate in town functions and events. In her will, Annie H. left money for a number of charitable organizations in Boston and Stoneham.

From an on-line history of the Stoneham, MA library, of the \$100,000 bequeathed to the library, \$83,000 was left for the purchase of land to expand and build an addition to the original (1904) Carnegie-endowed library in 1931. The remaining fund, ~ \$17,000, was eventually used to provide minor building upgrades in 1956 and for the purchase of books. To this day, library books are still being acquired from this trust fund according to a library source. The history goes on to say that an undisclosed amount of money was also set-up for the hospital care of Stoneham residents at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Brooke Steven's account of Plum Island history in the Bird Observer (2007), states that the Federation of the Bird Clubs of New England, Inc. received \$25,000 from the Annie H. Brown estate. I could not confirm an on-line reference that \$15,000 was to be used for the purchase of land for a wildlife sanctuary and \$10,000 for its maintenance. At the time, the Federation of Bird Clubs of New England was located at 50 Congress St. Boston.

Local historian, John Nelson, who recently completed a detailed history of the Brookline Bird Club, informed me that he came across few documents about the Federation of the Bird Clubs of New England during his research. However, he did confirm that the Federation of the Bird Clubs of New England was an umbrella group for a number of Bird organizations, of which the Brookline Bird Club was a member. They were active in the 1920s. Mr. Nelson's story of the Federation's conservation efforts is compelling:

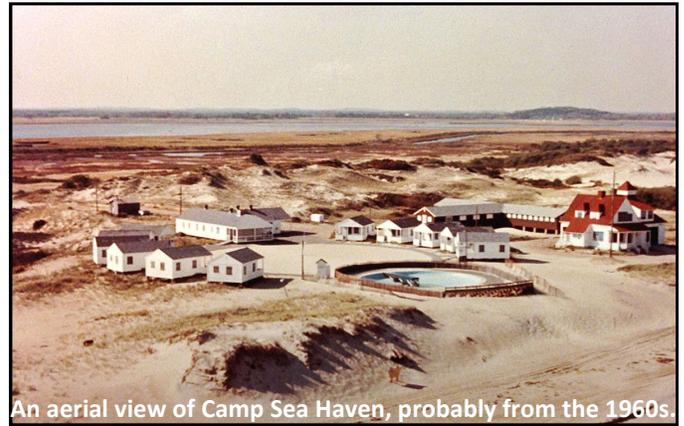
"The Federation helped to establish sanctuaries on islands off Chatham, Lynn, and Rockport; protected coastal tern colonies; made "a final attempt to save the Heath Hen from extinction;" and campaigned "to stop the iniquitous practice of abandoning house-cats, THE GREATEST ENEMY OF THE BIRDS."

According to Massachusetts Audubon Society on-line records, archived by the Massachusetts Historical Society, the organization received \$100,000 from the estate of Annie H. Brown in 1930. It was Mass Audubon's largest bequest to date. In 1942, Massachusetts Audubon Society transferred the Plum Island property to the U. S Fish and Wildlife Service who combined it with other acquisitions to establish the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge.

It is apparent from recent research that detailed information about Annie H. Brown's life is not readily available. It is likely that she led a private life while fervently supporting the causes that she cared deeply about. It is hoped that further research will uncover additional glimpses into the biography of this unsung conservation heroine.



Photo: Matt Poole/FWS



An aerial view of Camp Sea Haven, probably from the 1960s.

Volunteers Needed: Help Organize Refuge Memories

Like most refuges, Parker River has "tons" of old photographs and 35 mm slides that have accumulated over the years. Until and unless someone actually takes the time to go through and organize these materials, we really have no idea what we have! One thing is for sure, as the above image of the former Camp Sea Haven attests, there are bound to be some real historical visual treasures within the shoe boxes and transparency sleeves. We would love to find a volunteer who would be interested in going through this collection of images and help to make sense of it (organize things!). If interested, please contact Matt Poole, Visitor Services Manager.

The Wrack Line, official newsletter of Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, is generally published on a quarterly basis—fall, winter, spring, and summer. **Many thanks are due to refuge volunteer Ray Whitley** for helping to lay out and edit this edition!

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