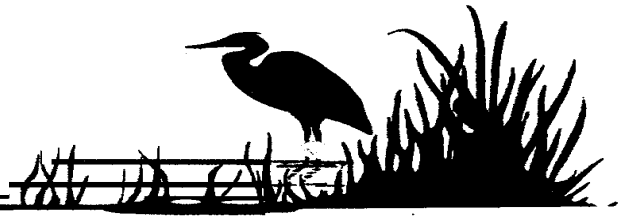


The Rookery



Published Quarterly by The Friends of Eastern Neck, Inc.

Volume 16, Number 3

Fall 2012

*This year celebrating the 15th anniversary of the Friends of Eastern Neck
and
The 50th Anniversary of the establishment of Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge!*



A Very Special Gift: The Saga of the Gunning Skiff **By Gren Whitman**

As we related in the Summer issue of *The Rookery*, in 2009 then-Refuge Manager Jonathan Priday discovered an old wooden skiff stashed in the pole shed on Cedar Point, resting on bare ground and covered with briars. We contacted Pete Leshner, curator of collections at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michaels, who examined the skiff and determined that Ira Hudson probably built it in Chincoteague, VA, possibly in the 1910s or '20s.

Leshner recommended moving it to a protected location and not to do any sort of restoration work. Priday and a crew from Blackwater moved the skiff to a dry shed, where she sat ... and sat ... and sat ... until early this year, when board member Melissa Baile and long-time volunteer Terry Willis proposed building a shed to display the skiff properly. The FOEN board agreed to fund it, Melissa and Terry agreed to coordinate the project, the shed was designed by John Donnelly and constructed by the Jay Yerkes Construction Company, and the skiff went on public display in July.

Gunning Skiff: The Rest of the Story

On July 5, Craig O'Donnell reported on the new display structure in the *Kent County News*, and his story was reprinted in Easton's *Star-Democrat*, where it caught the eye of Joe Walsh, son of Dr. Harry Walsh, author of *The Outlaw Gunner* (a book about market gunners available in the Eastern Neck bookstore). Joe was positive that the skiff had once been part of his father's extensive waterfowl-hunting collection (wooden boats,

(Continued on page 4)



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President's Message**Fall 2012**

Friends:

I have to say once more that we will miss Colby Hawkinson at Eastern Neck. Colby was a breath of fresh air and performed his duties so well and enthusiastically that his shoes will be hard to fill. Now we all know what a big difference an energetic and competent Visitor Services Specialist can make!

While Refuge Manager Cindy Beemiller has been on maternity leave for most of the summer, we've been treated to two guest managers: Shawn Gillette, from Bosque del Apache NWR in New Mexico, and Sandy Spencer, from the Patuxent Research NWR near Laurel, MD, across the Bay. Neither Shawn nor Sandy was here long enough for us to really get to know them, but we appreciate them filling in.

Sadly, our long-time friend and helper at Washington College's Center for Environment and Society, JoAnn Fairchild, is leaving CES so she can concentrate on planning educational and ecological programs on her new family's farm on the banks of the Chester River in Queen Anne's County. JoAnn helped plan and conduct the oyster seeding project three years ago and had many excellent suggestions for new activities on the Refuge, including bird walks, kayak adventures, lectures and slide shows. She also helped enormously with planning, publicity and food for our first two December Open Houses. She has introduced us to Rachel Field of the College who will assist us with similar programs as well as the Open House in December.

So much for departures! We welcome Dustin Murray as the Refuge's new maintenance expert, and we will welcome Manager Beemiller back in September -- if she can tear herself away from her new twins. (See page 7 for a look at them!)


OUR MISSION

The mission of the Friends of Eastern Neck, Inc. is to provide support to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge through educational outreach programs and volunteer service on the refuge, including the operation of the refuge bookstore.

The Rookery

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Inc.*

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Friends of Eastern Neck

Memberships

Friend: \$25

Patron: \$50

Eagle Society: \$100

Blue Heron: \$250

Tundra Swan: \$500

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Phil Cicconi: Vice president
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Jackie Cicconi
and Kay Snelson:

Bookstore

REFUGE UPDATE

What's Happening on Your Refuge

Fishing Derby a Huge Success -- Again!

We didn't think we could do much better than last year's Fishing Derby in June, but we sure tried. We again had more than 80 kids who registered, and once again they caught lots of fish, both catfish and perch, and also ate all the food that the Friends donated (free lunches for all!). We appreciated the Blackwater crew's help, as usual. All in all, a wonderful fun day!



*As usual, they all lined up around Headquarters Pond. ⇨
⇩ Some got special help!*

Wind Turbine Removed

As anyone who has visited the Refuge knows, a small scale wind and solar energy project was initiated in 2002 with the installation of a 10kw wind turbine and a 5kw solar array at the former Headquarters building. The wind turbine was damaged by Hurricane Irene in August of 2011, and safety inspections were done to ensure public safety in the area around the turbine. Analysis of these inspections revealed that parts of the turbine were severely damaged. Due to the age of the equipment, it was determined that any repairs would actually require complete replacement. Because the staff has no capability to lock down or secure the damaged blades, it was decided to remove the turbine from the tower to ensure both public and avian safety. Ongoing studies to evaluate the long term viability of the wind energy project showed that the turbine was not producing the expected power anyway -- partly due to tower height (too short) and wind resources falling far short of the predicted 11-12 mph average. (The solar array has been enlarged and is acting as an alternative energy source for the building.) No decision has yet been made regarding removal of the remaining tower.

Annual Deer Hunts Scheduled

If it's Fall, it's time for the annual whitetail deer hunts on the Refuge. These hunts are necessary to manage the deer herd (they have no natural predators) which in turn protects wildlife habitats. **The Refuge is closed to the public on hunt days**, which this year are:

- Wednesday, October 3
- Saturday, October 6
- Friday, October 12
- Monday, October 15
- Monday, October 22
- Friday, October 26
- Friday, November 9



The wind turbine and tower in 2004, above, and after the turbine was removed this summer, right.

The Skiff Saga (continued from page 1)

guns, decoys, etc.). And Kent County Commissioner/Rock Hall town manager Ron Fithian thought that his father-in-law, Kenneth Fletcher Sr., a long-time Rock Hall resident, might also have more information.

Sure enough, all the story lines started merging, and making sense. Joe Walsh sent me several photos of his father's skiff taken in 1969 (see below) and, after comparing the photos with the skiff itself, several marks on the hull clearly confirmed that it is the same boat. It also confirmed that the skiff pictured on page 116 of *The Outlaw Gunner* is the same boat. And Fletcher told me that, as a Fish and Wildlife Service employee at Eastern Neck NWR in the 1960s, he had been instructed to truck the skiff from Chincoteague NWR to Eastern Neck. Why this was done, he didn't remember; "that was in 1969, but it could have been later." Fletcher also recalls storing the skiff in the pole shed in the '70s. Ta-da!

Joe Walsh visited the Refuge in early August to see the skiff for himself, and we agreed that she's the same boat that "disappeared" in 1969, only to reappear in 2009. The skiff was built in 1917 by Ira Hudson of Chincoteague (Hudson was also a skilled decoy carver); acquired by Joe's father, Harry Walsh, for his collection; donated by Walsh to Chincoteague NWR for its museum (which never became a reality); transported to Eastern Neck in the late 1960s; exhibited in the lodge for a while; and stored for the better part of 40 years in a pole shed.

Is there more to the saga of the ginning skiff? We'll keep you posted!



The ginning skiff in 1969 (upper left) and when she was discovered in 2009 (left).

The photo above shows the skiff as she was then outfitted with a battery gun. These guns were used to kill as many waterfowl as possible with one shot, thus giving the "market gunner" more game to sell to the restaurants in Baltimore and Wilmington who were their major markets.

A battery gun is on display in the Refuge lodge, but it is most likely not the one pictured here.

The two 1969 black-and-white photos were taken by Dr. Harry Walsh.

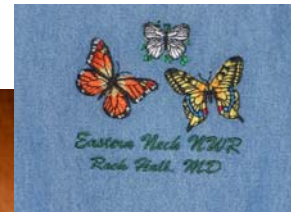


FRIENDS' DOINGS

Is It Fall Already?

Well, not quite, but when the ospreys begin to leave their Chesapeake Bay summer homes and the summer boaters start asking to have their boats hauled for the winter, I know it's on its way. Of course, Fall is one of the most beautiful seasons around here -- leaves of reds, oranges and golds with many leftover greens, mild temperatures, *no bugs* -- and a good time to visit the Refuge. But to be sure you're prepared for the Fall and Winter ahead, I thought I'd remind you of the cold-weather outerwear that the Bookstore offers.

We have *denim shirts* for both men and women, the former introduced way back in 2004 and the latter only two years ago. Both sell for \$25.95. Our ENNWR *sweatshirt* was also introduced in 2004 and has been a consistent seller ever since at \$26.95. And even though our *hoodie* (\$32.95) was just introduced this spring, we sold out of our first batch and had to order more. They come in sizes M, L and XL. One of the unusual aspects of these garments is that each has a different logo -- many parks, refuges, towns, etc. use the same logo on everything. Come and see how one would fit you! (Or a loved one!)



Logos -- we got 'em! The men's denim shirt has our tundra swan, the sweatshirt a blue heron, the women's denim shirt has butterflies and the hoodie has an osprey. How's that for variety?

Changing of (the rest of) the Guard



In the previous issue of The Rookery, we told you that Ed Hatfield had resigned from the Friends board, and we were in the process of finding his replacement. It didn't take us long; we knew who we wanted -- and she said "Yes!" Jolene L'Tainen was voted onto the board in July, and we welcome her heartily. Jolene and her husband Don live in Rock Hall, and she is a very faithful bookstore volunteer. We know she'll do a good job for you.

A Long and Productive Partnership

by Charmaine Dahlenburg
National Aquarium Staff Member

The US Fish and Wildlife Service at Eastern Neck has partnered with the National Aquarium in Baltimore over the past 12 years to restore vital wetland habitat, create an interpretive kayak trail, build an observation platform and nature trail and engage numerous students in educational activities.

Since 2000, the aquarium and partners, with the help of over 700 community volunteers, school students, and environmental organizations have restored over seven acres of the Refuge's tidal wetlands along the Chester River and Chesapeake Bay, usually by planting two types of marsh grasses to help prevent erosion and recover lost tidal land. In addition to wetland restoration, in 2006 the aquarium in partnership with the Friends built an observation platform, nature trail and BayScape demonstration area adjacent to the historic lodge that now serves as the Refuge Visitor Center. The list of projects is impressive:

2002: Engaged 187 volunteers in grass planting and monitoring of four acres of wetland habitat adjacent to the bunkhouse (former headquarters building), just below the observation platform

2006: Cleared the area behind the lodge for a bayscaping demonstration area and built the observation platform and nature trail there, involving 51 volunteers; landscaped the front of the lodge

2007: 54 volunteers helped to plant two acres of wetland habitat just south of the bunkhouse

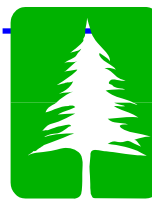
2009: 31 volunteers planted an acre of wetland habitat at Hail Cove after the cove was reinforced to prevent it from eroding and breaking through

The Refuge and Aquarium have also partnered through Nature of Learning (NOL) grants, a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation community-based environmental education initiative. Through NOL, aquarium and Refuge staffs engage nearby Maryland students in a winter classroom visit followed by a spring field trip to the Refuge, participating in Bay-related activities. In 2011, 233 teachers and students participated in these initiatives; so far in 2012, 177 students and teachers have been involved. We hope to continue this partnership for many years to come. *✍*

In 2003, volunteers monitored grasses planted near the bunkhouse in 2002. ➤



Above, the lodge in 2006 before the aquarium landscaped it, right; below, the landscaping had taken hold by 2009. Come see it now!



Save a Tree!

Many of our Friends do much of their communicating online these days, and if you're one of them, we'll send you *The Rookery* in .pdf format via email rather than via snail mail. (You'll be saving the Friends some postage and paper.)

Just send an email to wkrl@verizon.net with the subject "Rookery" and tell me you would like to have the newsletter sent to your email address. I'll take it from there. Simple!

MORE REFUGE NEWS

Introducing the Babies

By now you know that our Refuge manager, Cindy Beemiller, had twin babies on June 27. Zoey arrived first, weighing 5 lbs. 13 oz., and Logan came six minutes later, weighing in at 6 lbs.1 oz. Bookstore manager Jackie Cicconi and I went to see the happy family in mid-August, and Cindy gave us some pictures to show you. (The babies are just about 1½ months old in the picture on the right.)

Cindy's scheduled to be back at work by the time you read this, so husband Chad will have his hands full. Congratulations all around! ED.



*Introducing Zoey and Logan Beemiller
Welcome to our world, little ones!*

Calendar of Events

Upcoming events at the Refuge (and some off) include:

**Saturday, September 8: Shoreline Cleanup
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.**

Meet at the lodge; be sure to wear sturdy shoes and dress for the weather. Many like to bring their own gloves. Water and trash bags will be provided. If you want to let us know you're coming, give the office a call (410-639-7056).

**Saturday, September 29: Full Moon Paddle
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.**

Bring your own kayak or canoe, life jacket, paddle and flashlight. Meet at Bogles Wharf. Friends President Gren Whitman will lead; you can register with him at grenwhitman@verizon.net



**Saturday, October 13: Rock Hall FallFest
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

This year the festival centers around that beloved bivalve, the oyster. Come and see new things!

Calendar (Continued)

**Sunday, October 14: Big Sit! Bird Count
7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

Come help the Kent County Bird Club celebrate The Big Sit!, an annual international bird count. Drop by the Tubby Cove Observation Platform any time during the hours listed above -- although you may want to know that the morning hours have more bird activity.

And...don't forget!

**Saturday, December 8
Refuge Open House
And 50th Anniversary Celebration**

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

We'll have the usual displays by some of our partners, guided tours to "closed" sections of the Refuge, free lunch and some other surprises as we celebrate our anniversary (and the 15th anniversary of the Friends of Eastern Neck). You don't want to miss this! See you then!



EASTERN NECK'S BEAUTIES

Planted in the Butterfly Garden or growing in the wild, Eastern Neck's flowers are always a joy to see.



***The Friends of Eastern Neck, Inc.
P.O. Box 450
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