



Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area News from the Superintendent



May 2008

*Each month on this page I share what has been happening on the Harbor Islands. Island accomplishments would not occur without the **Boston Harbor Islands Partnership** and the many dedicated people who work in support of the park. Thanks to all.*

*See you on the islands!
Bruce Jacobson
Superintendent*

Civic Engagement & Volunteers

A volunteer group from Winthrop conducted a clean up of Snake Island. It was a great example of a partnership effort as the conservation commission worked with NPS staff to choose an appropriate date to avoid nesting shore-birds. In total, 12 volunteers removed 22 large bags of debris, 12 tires, and flotsam and jetsam of varying sizes. The debris was loaded on a derelict rowboat the volunteers found on the island. The Winthrop Harbormaster towed the boat to the yacht club pier where the debris was off-loaded.



Snake
Island
Cleanup

We conducted the first community stewardship program of the season at Grape Island. Volunteers from John Snow, Inc. joined long-time stewardship volunteers to contribute over 50 hours of service removing the accumulated thatch of invasive non-native reed, Phragmites, from a small wetland. This was a landmark action in the 3-year effort to control the extremely dense stand of phragmites, and will allow a diversity of plant and animal species to again utilize this area, which is one of only a few freshwater wetlands throughout the Harbor Islands.

Resource Stewardship

A research study to identify nest predators of the Least tern colony is underway on Lovells Island. Least terns, a State Species of Special Concern, form nesting colonies every June on Lovells and Rainsford Islands. Early results are surprising: rodents are not the culprits! It appears that gulls are helping themselves to eggs on the island.



Tern on
Lovells
Island

In late-April, informational signs were posted on Rainsford, Lovells, and Snake Islands for tern nesting habitats. An American oystercatcher nesting site was also flagged on Spectacle Island. A successful training was held on May 7 at Spectacle Island for the first full year of the

volunteer bird monitoring program. This year there are 9 volunteers: 6 returning from the pilot year and 4 new. Newcomers include resource professionals, Wayne Peterson, Mass Audubon; Andrew Bernick, Ecologist; Peter Gawne, New England Aquarium; and Arthur Pearson, Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center. Birders will have 10 field days to gather data. Already this year we have had increased reporting of breeding pairs of American Oystercatchers on the islands.

Facilities Management

Harbor Islands Express is operating our new kiosk on Long Wharf at Christopher Columbus Park. Thanks to the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) for working out the details that allow us free use of the new kiosk for ticket sales. Staff has more room to work, can serve more customers, and the facility presents a more professional appearance than the temporary kiosk that we used for several years.

Boston Parks & Recreation also helped enliven the ferry departure location at Long Wharf by installing new banners on light poles in Christopher Columbus Park. They sport the new look of the park's branding campaign, inviting visitors to the islands.

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