



The Norman Bird Flyer

Volume 18, No. 3

Fall 1998

Seals and Glossy Ibis: Porters of Aquidneck Island

by Fred Orwiler
NBS Education Coordinator

I am a relatively new visitor to Aquidneck Island. Since my home is in Wakefield I consider my drive to and from the Sanctuary as one of the more scenic routes for Rhode Island commuters.

For instance, driving over to Newport this winter and early spring, I was greeted by seals sunning themselves on the exposed rocks just north of Rose Island. Those grayish brown shapes curved upwards at the head and feet would flop into the water, heads bobbing in the water like buoys. These marine mammals overwinter along the coast of Southern New England. There are a number of sites to view them besides over the railing of the Newport Bridge, such as Wickford and Prudence Island.

As the spring months grew warmer, the seal sightings became less frequent since this is the time of year they swim to their northern breeding grounds. The commute, of course, was still pleasant. In fact, the evening drive home became quite spectacular. After daylight savings began in April, my drives home were spent gazing into sunsets over Conanicut Island and South County. Shades of pink, magenta and azure blended with yellow streams flowing from the hot core of the sun. The influence of a sunset like that on a mind still wondering whether all of the spots will fill for summer camp is quite effective. Numbers, programs, and deadlines sifted away as our neighboring star recreated beautiful landscape scenes each evening.

*"Never a day
passes but that
I do myself
the honor to
commune with
some of nature's
varied forms."*

George Washington Carver

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On one of those drives off the island, I was caught by surprise. I had just gotten onto the bridge when I saw a small group of dark birds flying, barely over the railing, towards Rose Island. At first, I assumed they were cormorants, but when they were directly in front of the windshield, I saw the profile of a long curved bill. Earlier in the week a Glossy Ibis had been sighted on the Sanctuary property. Since I had not seen one before, I was anxious to spot the unique marsh bird. Well, there they were flying over the bridge and clearing my car by only 15 feet. I was ecstatic. At the time, I thought that was it. I probably was not going to see another Glossy Ibis for the remainder of the season. The next evening however, I was treated to an almost identical viewing. Like a porter holding the door, these birds sent me off into my sunset drives.

One evening before going home, I stopped by a cow pasture in Middletown to watch a flock of Ibis feed on snails and worms. They took off in a rush when I inadvertently startled them. While I got in my car I kept an eye on the group flying away. Traveling down Green End Avenue to Miantonomi Park, I could still see the group of 10 or so Ibis flying along a similar path. As I entered the ramp to the bridge I looked back and to the right to see the flock just passing over the Naval War College heading straight for the bridge. I smiled as the ramp turned me to the right and I was

lined up on a perpendicular course with the small flock. "Flap harder" I said, encouraging myself more than the birds. I bounced on the bridge and rolled my window down in hopes of hearing wing-beats or a call. I looked to the right and here they came, flap, flap, flap, flap, flap..

G l i d e... Repeating that sequence over and over as they sailed in front of my car in a landing pattern for the rocky shores of Rose Island. Gazing back across the bridge, I saw other groups of Ibis converging towards their evening roost--their long, downward curving bills with feet extending beyond their tails pumping their wings through the evening sky.

A pleasant feeling it is to know that humans are not alone in the evening commute. Pleasant too, is the knowledge that that commute can be shared with such an elegant bird.

Soon the cooler Autumn months will be upon us and the Glossy Ibis will leave for a warmer climate. I will indeed miss those birds sending me home in the evening. Nevertheless, I have my wintery morning drives to look forward to. There, seated on the rocks the Ibis roosted upon this summer, will be the seals, welcoming me back to Aquidneck Island.



Environmental Programs

Birding Along Rhode Island's South Shore

Day: Sunday
Dates: September 12th
Time: 8:00 am - 12:00 noon
Fee: \$8.00 non-member
\$6.00 NBS Member

Pre-registration and pre-payment required
ADULT PROGRAM

Join the Norman Bird Sanctuary's Executive Director, Larry Taft, for a day of birdwatching at some of Rhode Island's most pristine wildlife habitats. Hawk migration (the front end) and shore migration (the tail end) should make this an exciting adventure for everyone. Please bring binoculars, a bag lunch, and something to drink. Please wear comfortable hiking shoes and dress for the weather.

Wild Mushroom Walk

Day: Saturday
Dates: September 26th
Time: Session A: 11:30 am to 1:00 pm
Session B: 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm
Fee: \$8.00 non-member
\$6.00 NBS member

Pre-registration and pre-payment required
ADULT PROGRAM



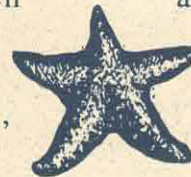
This is a great time of year to learn about those mysterious fungi. Join Dr. Roger Goos, URI Mycologist and long-time mushroom walk guide, to learn how to identify and about the many mushrooms and fungi found locally and the important role they have in our ecosystem. Limited space, please register early. And as always, please dress for the weather and wear comfortable walking shoes.

Kayak & Snorkle Around Sachuest Point

Day: Friday
Dates: September 18th
Time: Session A: 9:00 am - 11:00 am
Session B: 12:00 - 2:00 pm
Fee: \$70.00 non-member
\$65.00 NBS member

Pre-registration and pre-payment required
ADULT PROGRAM

The Norman Bird Sanctuary is teaming up with a local shop, *Let's Go Diving*, to guide a great kayaking opportunity. Session A shoves off from Third Beach and paddles to the rocky shores of Sachuest Point. De- pending on water conditions, paddles and pull up the masks for a strap on the snorkling expedition. After looking at our local underwa- ter sealife, get back in the boats and paddle to Second Beach to ride in the waves (Session B, does the opposite loop). The NBS van will be there to greet you and bring you back to your car.



Rhode Island Home-A-Syst

Day: Thursday
Dates: October 15th
Time: 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Fee: \$5.00/person

Pre-registration and pre-payment required

ADULT PROGRAM

A great opportunity to assess environmental risks in and around your home and act to correct any identified problems. RI Home*A*Syst is sponsored and coordinated by the University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension in partnership with federal, state, and local agencies.

The heart of the program uses a community based approach. For example, this upcoming workshop will focus on Drinking Water Wells and Septic Systems on Aquidneck Island. The objectives discuss the basics of groundwater, private drinking water well protection and maintenance, and septic system operation and maintenance. **Included in the**

cost of the program is a 116-page *Environmental Risk-Assessment Guide for the Home*. Look for future workshops discussing topics such as Indoor Air Quality and Sustainable Landscaping.

Plum Island Birding Trek

Day: Saturday
Dates: November 14th
Time: 9:00 am - 6:00 pm
Fee: \$46.00 non-member
\$42.00 NBS member

Pre-registration and pre-payment required

ADULT PROGRAM

Plum Island offers miles of public sandy beaches and the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, on 4,662 acres, is home to over 800 species of birds, plants, and animals. The featured guide for this birding trek through the



refuge is Jay Manning, NBS Sunday Morning Bird Walk leader. This winter birding expedition also includes a stop in the town of Newburyport for an all expenses paid lunch at The Grog. Meet at NBS promptly, so we can load up the van and fly off ASAP.

Welcome Winter Water Fowl

Day: Saturday
Dates: November 21st
Time: 9:00 am - 12:00 noon
Fee: \$8.00 non-member
\$6.00 NBS member

Pre-registration and pre-payment required
ADULT PROGRAM

Winter is prime time along the rocky shores of Aquidneck Island for water fowl. Join Larry Taft, Executive Director, for a two part course on identifying and learning some of the behaviors of harlequin ducks, eiders, loons and others. The first half of the morning is spent looking at specimens up close and viewing a slide show presentation. Then we'll take the NBS van to Sachuest Point for a walk around the shore. You may even be lucky enough to see a seal sunning itself on the rocks. Binoculars and field guides are recommended but not required.



Preschoolers with Parents

Ages: 3 - 5 years

Day: Wednesdays

Dates: Session A: October 7, 14, 21, & 28th

10:00 - 11:00 am or 1:00 - 2:00 pm

Session B: November 4, 11, 18 & 25th

1:00 - 2:00 pm

Fee: \$30.00/session non-member

\$25.00/session NBS Member

Pre-registration and pre-payment required

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

This series of one-hour programs is a gentle and fun way to introduce your preschool age child to the wonders of our natural world.

We'll explore nature during the autumn months through our five senses, with songs, crafts, hikes and also by studying the plants and animals of the many habitats here at the Sanctuary--an enjoyable time for all. Marilyn and Lisa have been teaching this very exciting program for several years and they have quite a following, so be sure to register early. Please dress for the weather.



Autumn Night Hike with Newport Children's Theatre

Ages: Grades K - 5

Days: Fridays & Saturdays

Dates: October 16, 17, 23 and 24th

Time: 7:00 - 8:30 pm

Fee: \$8.00 non-member

\$6.00 NBS Member

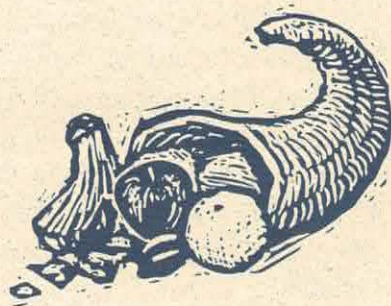
Pre-registration and pre-payment required

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

Bats and owls fly through the darkness. Foxes and skunks sulk through the night covered forests and fields. Nighttime, for them, is for

being out and about and these animals have the instincts and nocturnal senses necessary to help them survive under cover of darkness.

Join the Sanctuary staff and the wonderfully talented actors of the Newport Children's Theatre (NCT) for a hike through the forest on an October night. The NCT will cleverly interpret the animals and their adaptations bringing alive the nature of the night. Please dress warmly, wear comfortable shoes and if you bring a flashlight please cover it with a red filter. See You There!



Thanksgiving Kettle-Neck Gourd Design

Ages: Grades 2 - 5

Day: Saturday

Date: November 21st

Time: 9:00 am - 12:00 noon

Fee: \$17.00 non-member

\$15.00 NBS Member

Pre-registration and pre-payment required

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

This a great Thanksgiving program featuring Strong Woman from the Aquidneck Indian Council. This holiday is based on gifts of food, like squash, from the Native American Indians to the Pilgrims. During this program, each participant will receive a large, kettle-neck gourd, a symbol of sharing with others in a time of need. Following the guidance of Strong Woman, participants will learn traditional methods of painting and weaving these beautiful gourds. If time permits she will lead a hike exploring the Sanctuary and the fall foliage.

Programs for the Entire Family

Hurricane Watch with Tony Petrarca

Day: Saturday
Date: September 19th
Time: 10:00 am - 11:30 am
Fee: \$8.00 non-member
\$6.00 NBS Member

Pre-registration and pre-payment required
FAMILY PROGRAM

We have escaped Hurricanes Bonnie and Danielle, but the season has just begun. Learn more about these powerful storms with Channel 12's weatherman, Tony Petrarca. Not only is this year a potentially heavy hurricane year, but it is also the 60th anniversary of the 1938 hurricane. Mr. Petrarca will show a video presentation about this and other weather phenomenon including El Nino. Sign up early for this very popular presentation.



Halloween Camp-out

Saturday, October 31st

\$18.00/adult, \$15.00/child non-member
\$15.00/adult, \$12.00/child NBS member

Undersea Nightlife Glassbottom Boat Cruise

Day: Friday
Date: September 25th
Time: 5:45 pm - 9:15 pm
Fee: \$23.00/adult, \$17.00/child non-member
\$21.00/adult, \$15.00/child NBS Member

Pre-registration and pre-payment required
FAMILY PROGRAM

A great trip for any age! Snug Harbor on Point Judith Pond is home of the glassbottom sea vessel, the *Night Heron*--a custom designed excursion boat that shows you marine animals in their natural environment. Since many marine animals are nocturnal, this is an ideal opportunity to observe their behaviors when they're most active. After meeting here at NBS, we will load up the van and drive to Snug Harbor Marina for a 7:00 pm bon voyage. Food and drinks can be bought at the harbor or you may bring your own.

Are you doing the same old thing this Halloween? Well, try something different, a cool evening camp-out including night hike and campfire. Meet at 3:00 pm to set up camp and get to know everyone else (bring your own tent, if you need to rent a tent, we do have a few). Then we will meet again at 6:30 for a night hike and star gazing with Fred Orwiler, Education Coordinator. After the hike, gather around the fire for s'mores and fun stories (non-scary). Finally, snuggle in your sleeping bag for a nice sleep under the autumn sky. *It can be cold this time of year, so please be prepared.* Call (401) 846-2577 for more details.

Prudence Island Trip

Day: Saturday
Date: October 10th
Time: 9:15 am - 4:30 pm
Fee: \$23.00 non-member
\$21.00 NBS Member

Pre-registration and pre-payment required
FAMILY PROGRAM

Join Kim Botelho, Audubon Society of Rhode Island's Education Coordinator, along with the NBS staff for this day of exploration. Prudence Island, home to many scientific research

projects, is a great place to hike, birdwatch, and explore the varied shoreline. We will meet at NBS and load up the van to take the 10:00 am ferry ride to the Island, returning on the 4:00 pm ferry. Be sure to sign up quickly for this trip learning about the ecology and history of one of Narragansett Bay's precious jewels. Prudence Island is a great place to spend the final day of *Coastweeks*, a celebration of the ecological significance of our nation's coastal shores. Please bring a lunch, plenty of water, dress for the weather and wear comfortable walking shoes.

Special Opportunities

Parent / Teacher Workshops: Combining Outdoor Activities with the Classroom Setting

Day: Thursdays

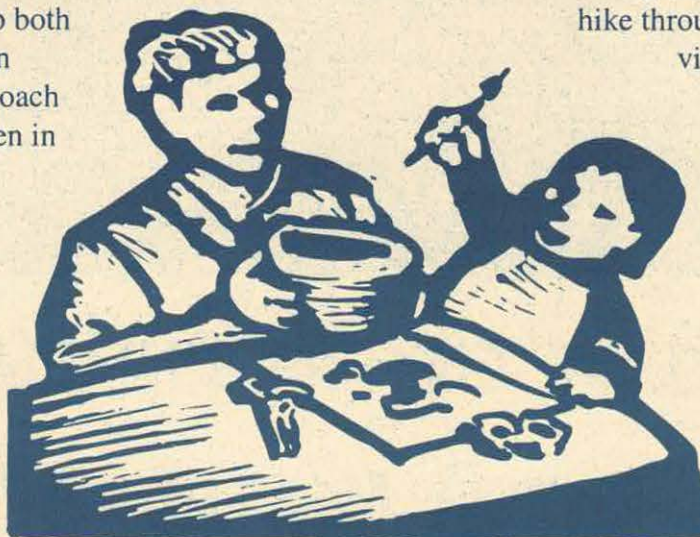
Dates & Topics:

Sept. 24th	The World of Birds
Oct. 1st	Exploring Wetlands
Oct. 8th	Learning About Nature Through Games & Natural Crafts
Oct. 22nd	Geology for the Non-Geologist

Time: 3:00 - 5:00 pm

Fee: \$24.00/person

These workshops will help both educators and parents learn about the Sanctuary's approach when working with children in an outdoor setting. Using nature to set the stage, each workshop will combine use of outdoor techniques and resources with indoor projects and games. Many hand-outs will be distributed. Space will be limited.



Nature Guide Training

Day: Wednesday

Date: September 23rd

Time: 2:00 - 4:00 pm

If you have any interest in volunteering at NBS, but are not sure what you'd like to do, you might enjoy being a nature guide. If you have any experience teaching (not necessarily in school), science education, or a general knowledge of the outdoors--you can be a nature guide. As a nature guide you will work with a group of 10 to 16 school children leading them on a two hour

hike through the property and visiting the various habitats. Sharing nature with children is a very rewarding experience, and if this sparks your fancy please contact us to sign up for the training session this Fall.



OCTOBER 3 & 4

**10 am - 5 pm, RAIN OR SHINE
\$4/ADULT, \$1/CHILD**

**HAY & PONY RIDES • FACE PAINTING • CRAFTS •
FOOD CONTESTS • HOME & GARDEN COMPETITION •
SACK RACES • NEW & IMPROVED MUD PIT •
HIGH ROPES CHALLENGES • AND MUCH MORE**

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

*Call the Norman Bird Sanctuary office for
more information at 846-2577*



*A very cool, TNA, Andy Dutra, during
Native American Week*

Thank You To Our 14 Outstanding Teacher Naturalist Assistants

For the past 4 summers, the Sanctuary has been fortunate to have a group of very dedicated teenagers who volunteer as Teacher Naturalist Assistants (TNA). They volunteer a total of 3 weeks working everyday from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm assisting the Teacher Naturalists with everything from tying shoes, to running the games each morning and setting up the day's activities. Their dedication helped to make sure camp ran smoothly.

*Sarah deLeiris
Mary Dolan
Andy Dutra
Jenny Henderson
Sarah Hoffman
Shaina Hoffman
Crissa Keen*

*Rebecca Kowalczyk
Megan MacDonald
Meghan McCoy
Blake Nance
Dane Ryan-Sponberg
Ashley Zinowich*

Making A Difference

Each year hundreds of children come to the Sanctuary to experience and learn about nature first hand. We make every effort to ensure this opportunity is available for as many children as possible, especially to those of limited economic means.

This year, thanks to the generosity of those individuals and organizations listed below, we have never had a more successful year. Previously, between 5 and 10 children were supported through our scholarship assistance, but this year we were able to help 22 children experience the fun of Nature Day Camp. In addition, 42 children were able to make day trip visits to the refuge. Many thanks to those who made it possible...

*James Bulman
Lorrie & Tim Burns
Lauren & Peter Carson
The Champlin
Foundation
Diane Corriveau
Betsy deLeiris
Janet Larson
Richard C. Loebs
Karen Mahanke
Laurie Mandly
Robert McLaughlin
Newport Garden Club
Daniel Snyder &
Martha Ulmann*

Volunteer Profile



When we look at MaryAnn Amrose, we see someone who has really come out of her shell (no pun intended) since coming to the Norman Bird Sanctuary. Not really knowing the difference between a robin and a raptor, MaryAnn caught the birding bug after starting to volunteer here in earnest in 1996.

In the beginning we only saw her as a volunteer to help in the crafts tent for the Harvest Fair. After a few years, MaryAnn decided this was a place she wanted to spend more time and began working in our store, greeting and orienting visitors. It has truly been a pleasure for the entire staff to watch her enthusiasm and birding knowledge grow.

With an original goal in 1996 of 30 birdsightings (most of which were seen in her backyard), she now boasts more than 60 entries on her life list! A frequent participant of our Sunday morning birdwalks, as well as many other walks throughout Rhode Island, MaryAnn, is now an avid birder and lead her first walk here during this year's Birds & Breakfast!

A woman of many talents and interests, MaryAnn plays the piano, guitar, banjo and organ and enjoys

collecting stamps and crocheting. Her dedication to helping out at the Sanctuary only goes so far though. When we call on her to help out on weekends, we always hope we won't be conflicting with her other love-- watching the NASCAR races!

Marrying an officer in the Navy, took MaryAnn traveling far from her home in Pennsylvania. After living in Florida, Virginia, California and Hawaii, she and her husband finally decided to make Newport their home 15 years ago. Think of all the birds you could have added to your life list, MaryAnn!

As an integral and invaluable member of our volunteer staff, MaryAnn's work here is something the staff has come to rely on. Many thanks to her for the many hours she has donated to the Sanctuary over the years!

BIRD NOTES

The American Robin

The Robin has always been known as the harbinger of spring. As the winter melts away, people commonly believe the robin has "returned" to Aquidneck Island. In actuality the robin has been here all year long. They live in our backyards during the breeding season then congregate in large communal roosts during the winter. If you spend an afternoon hiking the Sanctuary's trails you are bound to find a couple hundred robins roosting in a large oak or maple. Watch your heads!

The American robin is ubiquitous, and since it is here all year long you would think we would know all about the bird. In fact, there have been several major studies of its behavior and life and there still remains a number of unanswered questions. One

of these questions concerns its song. Because the robin is common and widespread, its song brightens both forest and suburb with a loud, liquid, variable *cherily-cheer-up-cheerio*. The song is a rich, fluid series of distinct phrases that rise and fall. The calls include a soft *tut...tut...tut* and a loud wink. The song is given by the male but does not seem to be associated with any particular aspect of the birds life. In most birds song is used to advertise territory, to attract a mate, or both, but in the robin, it is not strongly associated with either of these. The robin sings most just before its young hatch, and this same frequency is repeated in each of its summer broods.

A familiar large, heavy-bodied thrush of parks and gardens, the American Robin offers beginning and advanced birders alike an excellent opportunity to study bird behavior and learn more about this common bird here on Aquidneck Island.

ROBIN FACTS

Breeding

2 broods, occasionally 3

Nest

unkempt foundation of protruding twigs and grass with a cup of mud lined with fine grass

Eggs

pale blue usually unmarked
approx. 1.1"

Diet

earthworms, snails, and lots of fruit.
Young fed on insects

Lifespan

recorded maximum is 13 years 11 months. Although 80% die within first year

Description

Adult male has dark gray-brown upperparts, tending toward black on head, underparts bright brick-red except throat, which is whitish with dard streaks, and lower belly, which is white; bill yellow. Adult female is similar but duller with a more brownish head.

REGISTRATION/MEMBERSHIP FORM

PLEASE JOIN US! NBS Membership Form

- ☐ INDIVIDUAL (\$20) ☐ FAMILY (\$30) ☐ SUSTAINING (\$50)
- ☐ PATRON/BUSINESS (\$100) ☐ SUPPORTING (\$250) ☐ BENEFACTOR (\$500)

ADDRESS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

Name: _____ Phone #: _____
Address: _____
Town: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____

Form of Payment: CHECK VISA MASTERCARD

Card # _____ Exp. _____

Signature: _____

Please Make Check Payable to: Norman Bird Sanctuary
583 Third Beach Road, Middletown, RI 02842

Program Fees	\$ _____
Membership	\$ _____
TOTAL DUE	\$ _____

Please Register the Following:

Name	Age & Grade (if under 18)	Program	Fee
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

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Middletown, RI 02842

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

for the

1998 HARVEST FAIR October 3rd & 4th

*A donation of just 2 hours can
make a world of difference.
Choose the area and time you
would like to work.*

**Please call the NBS office
for details at 846-2577**

TO CURRENT RESIDENT OR

Upcoming Events

Get The Drift & Bag It

**Saturday, September 19th
9:00 am to Noon**

*Help celebrate Coastweeks by participating in the
Coastweeks clean-up. The information gathered during
the clean-up is vital to increase and improve our
enviornmental efforts. Please call the Sanctuary at
846-2577 for more information!*

Holly Days

Saturday, December 5th

*A day long celebration of the coming of winter and the
holiday season. See our 19th century barn decorated in
its winter finery and enjoy a host of activities for the
entire family. Look for more information
coming in November.*

Thank You

to

Newport Auto Center

*for their assistance and
generosity to make the new
Norman Bird Sanctuary
van a reality!*