

SPRING 2021 volume 38 issue 1

watermark

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watermark

A newsletter for members of
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the Wells National Estuarine
Research Reserve

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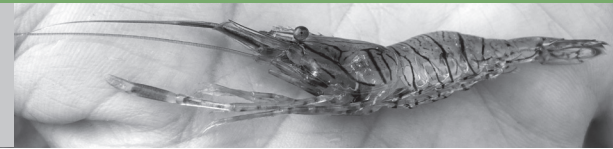
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flotsam



Testing a New Technique for Measuring Algae in Estuaries

Wells is one of 13 reserves evaluating a new method for measuring algae by detecting chlorophyll-a in estuarine waters. The 1-year project will develop, test, and share protocols for using fluorometric sensors while continuing the existing method for direct comparison. To date, measurements have involved filtering monthly water samples and extracting algal pigments, but this approach is ineffective for tracking phytoplankton dynamics that can fluctuate hourly. The new instrument is meant to allow near real-time measurement of algal blooms and eutrophication.

Bird Banding Schedule Announced

The Biodiversity Research Institute will once again set up a bird-banding station on the Laudholm campus for the summer. Weather permitting, banding will occur on Tuesday mornings from June to mid August. The team suggests the most opportune time to visit is typically between 7:30 and 9:30 am.

Beaches Conference Postponed

The next Beaches Conference has been pushed to 2022, though a new *State of Maine's Beaches* report is expected this fall.

Call for New Cohort of Davidson Fellows

The call for 2022–2024 Margaret A. Davidson Graduate Fellowship candidates will be released this summer, with a December deadline for applications. Selected fellows

will begin their projects in August 2022. Wells Reserve priorities will be posted at wellsreserve.org/fellowship.

Marine Invader Monitoring Expands in Casco Bay

Maine's monitoring network for marine invasive species added eight volunteers and two new sites in Casco Bay during 2020. The season was marked by a lack of star tunicates (*Botryllus schlosseri*) and a sudden and uncommon occurrence of the colonial tunicate *Diplosoma*, which had been rare in the first 13 years of monitoring. The Casco Bay Estuary Partnership has proved to be a vital collaborator in this effort.

Photo above: MIMIC volunteers discovered their first European rock shrimp on Chebeague Island during 2020.

Big Campus Improvements on the Way

The Laudholm campus will gain several upgrades over the next 18 months thanks to funding from NOAA and members of Laudholm Trust.

Look for the parking lot to be repaved, walkways to be resurfaced (with pervious treatments where feasible), and lighting to get the attention it has long needed. Plans are also under way to replace roofing on the farmhouse and redesign the welcome booth.

These improvements are in addition to another set of solar panels going in north of the barn and two electric vehicle charging stations for public use.

On the cover: Laudholm Beach seen from above in early spring reveals complex patterns of sand, tide pool, wrack, cobble, footprint, and ancient peat. Post-glacial salt marshes extending seaward of today's meadows have been subsumed by sand deposits over millenia. Reserve researchers now use twice-a-year drone flights to study the shifting shoreline.



nik's notebook

Small Things

In a year of Zoom, of visiting colleagues and friends and family mostly via screen, it's refreshing to zoom out. Our cover photo, intricate and fractal, reveals Laudholm Beach from a tern's eye view. Not the usual perspective on one of Maine's best beaches,

and fascinating to behold. Oh, to see the world that way — with no need to log in!

...Ah well, enough of that. The pandemic's not quite over yet. Time to zoom back in. It's been a year with time for introspection and musing on the small things in life. How our lives, our economies, our governments and societies were turned upside down by a tiny coronavirus, each only 100 billionths of a meter in size. It boggles the mind but perhaps it shouldn't: by now we all know that increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide by a mere 70 parts per million is enough to raise global temperatures by a couple degrees Fahrenheit (so far). And millimeters of annual sea rise will ultimately accumulate to a meter or more before the end of this century. Little things, they do add up.

But they're not all bad. My family's pandemic puppy is another small thing that's turned our lives upside down. Under my home office desk as I write this and alternately licking and biting my barefoot toes, the little guy (Fauci is his name) is a welcome change, a good change, a return to a semblance of normalcy. And, like any new child, he's part of our commitment to the future. May there be more of these good, familiar, small but beneficial changes in the months ahead.

Won't you ponder and celebrate little things with us this summer at the Wells Reserve at Laudholm? We're starting to enjoy small victories, like staff meetings outside and together again through the magic of masks and vaccines. More volunteers and visitors returning, first a trickle, soon a flood. Come take a look. You'll see all the small but meaningful changes we've been making at Laudholm over the past quiet year: fresh paint here, a new sign there, a bench and tree where none used to be. Even a gallery of photographs depicting the beauty and complexity of life as seen through the light microscope, on display in our newly refurbished Coastal Ecology Center exhibit space.

Let's all start preparing for a return to life as we knew it, with some small changes. I hope you're preparing to return to the Wells Reserve too. See you soon.

wellsreserve at laudholm

A PLACE TO DISCOVER

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Office for Coastal Management, National Ocean Service
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The Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve is one of 29 reserve sites throughout the country. All reserves require local funding to match federal grants from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The Wells Reserve is the only reserve that receives its match from a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Each year, Laudholm Trust contributes private funds and in-kind services to support Wells Reserve operations and capital improvements.

The paper in this newsletter:

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administration / partnership

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System is a network of protected areas established for long-term research, education, and stewardship. This partnership program between NOAA and the coastal states protects more than one million acres of estuarine land and water, which provides essential habitat for wildlife; offers educational opportunities for students, teachers, and the public; and serves as living laboratories for scientists. Learn more at nerra.org.

The 29 Sites in the NERR System

- ACE Basin, South Carolina
- Apalachicola, Florida
- Chesapeake Bay, Maryland
- Chesapeake Bay, Virginia
- Delaware, Delaware
- Elkhorn Slough, California
- Guana Tolomato Matanzas, Florida
- Grand Bay, Mississippi
- Great Bay, New Hampshire
- Heʻeia, Hawaiʻi
- Hudson River, New York
- Jacques Cousteau, New Jersey
- Jobos Bay, Puerto Rico
- Kachemak Bay, Alaska
- Lake Superior, Wisconsin
- Mission—Aransas, Texas
- Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island
- North Carolina, North Carolina
- North Inlet/Winyah Bay, South Carolina
- Old Woman Creek, Ohio
- Padilla Bay, Washington
- Rookery Bay, Florida
- San Francisco Bay, California
- Sapelo Island, Georgia
- South Slough, Oregon
- Tijuana River, California
- Waquoit Bay, Massachusetts
- Weeks Bay, Alabama
- Wells, Maine



Proposed Boost in NOAA Funding Could Aid Research Reserves

While details of President Biden’s budget for fiscal year 2022 are not expected until late spring, the administration’s budget blueprint includes \$6.9 billion for NOAA, an increase of more than \$1.4 billion from the 2021 enacted level, with at least \$800 million allocated to climate programs.

Among the NOAA programs targeted for additional funds are those that would “provide better data and information to decisionmakers [and] support coastal resilience programs that would help protect communities from the economic and environmental impacts of climate change.”

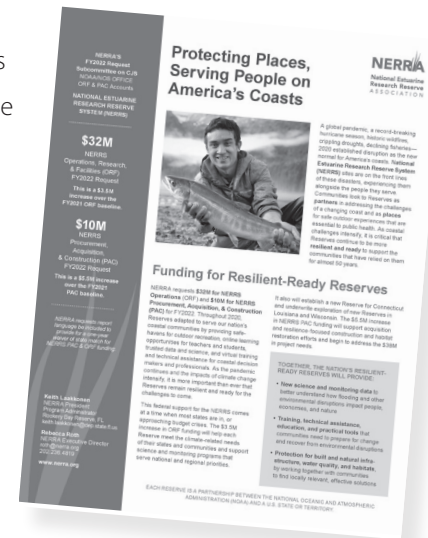
In recent months, representatives of the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association

have contributed to briefings, provided testimony, and met with officials to emphasize the importance of reserve research and the ways reserve programs serve their communities. NERRA has requested \$32 million for operations, research, and facilities and \$5.5 million for procurement, acquisition, and construction funds for the reserve system in FY 2022.

Administrator Nominee Knows NOAA

In April, President Biden nominated Dr. Richard W. Spinrad to administer the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the parent agency of the NERR System. NOAA has been without a confirmed leader since January 2017.

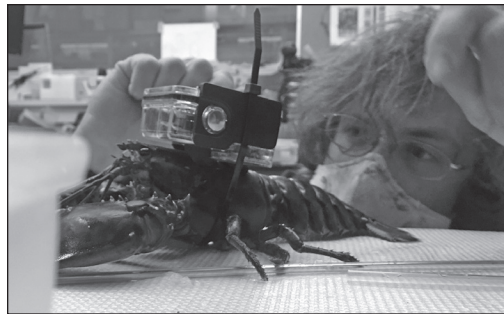
Dr. Spinrad is an internationally recognized oceanographer and executive with more than 35 years of experience. During his first tenure at NOAA, he served as the head of NOAA’s National Ocean Service (2003–2005) and Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (2005–2010). During this time he wrote key components of the Ocean Action Plan and established agency-wide policies for scientific integrity and independence, among other accomplishments. He also served as NOAA’s chief scientist from 2014 to 2016.



Spinrad began his career as a research scientist at the Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences. He is past president of The Oceanography Society and recipient of Presidential Rank Awards from Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

C-HAT and the Mocklobster: Reducing Waste in the Lobster Supply Chain

When Jason Goldstein took the reins of the reserve's research program in 2016, he brought with him an abiding interest in using hobbyist technologies for environmental monitoring. Tested, top-tier instruments are essential in some applications, but Jason is drawn to low-cost, high-capability substitutes when running experiments calling for custom equipment.



Dr. Ben Gutzler positions a tracker so one of its specialized sensors can pick up the lobster's heartbeat.

Soon after his arrival, for example, Jason co-led a NASA-funded project that engaged inventive students and faculty from St. Joseph's College and the University of New Hampshire in developing inexpensive monitoring tools based on devices like the Arduino and Raspberry Pi. Among the tinkerers on that project was a doctoral candidate at UNH who crafted—on a tight budget—a nifty gadget for tracking lobster activity.

Last year, Jason invited that colleague, the freshly degreed Dr. Ben Gutzler, to complete a post-doctoral research fellowship at the reserve. They have been collaborating on lobster-centric tech ever since.

The Crustacean Heart and Activity Tracker

The latest iteration of Ben's lobster tracker incorporates an infrared sensor that can detect a lobster's heartbeat through its shell. It's part of a package dubbed the C-HAT (Crustacean Heart and Activity Tracker), which also houses an accelerometer for sensing movement, temperature and light sensors, a microcontroller, a battery, and an SD card for data storage, all in a clear, waterproof container small enough to get strapped to a carapace.

To collect data, a researcher mounts a C-HAT to a lobster when it's caught and powers it on. The device records the animal's heart rate and motion multiple times per second as the lobster endures a journey from live tank to storage crate to delivery truck to wholesaler or processor. At the end of the ride, the C-HAT is recovered and its data downloaded.

The C-HAT has become a key tool for a 2-year project, funded by NOAA Fisheries, involving UMaine collaborators and lobster industry partners: Improving Business Practices to Reduce Mortality in the Lobster Supply Chain. Through the project, researchers aim to improve lobster survival by identifying the stress points on the journey "from capture to kitchen" so suppliers can reduce them, thus saving money and preventing waste.

The Mocklobster

Taking a lobster's pulse and logging its sways are given context by Ben's latest invention, the Mocklobster. This sleek contraption is a clear plastic cylinder about 5 inches across and twice

```
#define IRPin 0
#define TempPin 1
#define LightPin 2
#define statusPin 1
#define errorPin 8
const int chipSele
File logfile;
int IRReading;
int TempReading;
int LightReading;
float TempV;
float TempC;
unsigned long mil
unsigned long mil
int millis_diff;
uint16_t seconds_;
```



Research scientists Ben Gutzler (pictured) and Jason Goldstein built special loggers to track inundation in tidal creeks and salt marsh pools. The device, mounted inside a PVC pipe for protection, uses pressure to measure water levels at a fraction of the cost of commercial sensors.

continued on page 9

community / volunteering

Trail Ranger Enjoys Long History with “The Farm in My Front Yard”

Volunteer Opportunity

Be at the “center” of it all as a volunteer at our Visitor Center reception desk.

The desk is a summertime hub where volunteers greet visitors and take calls, fielding questions and directing people toward experiences they’ll enjoy.

Time commitment is 2 or 3 hours on a weekday, 2 to 4 times per month.

Orientation, ample training, and plenty of support are provided. Interested?

Lynne would love to hear from you!

207-646-1555 ext 118

lvachon@wellsnerr.org



Liz Vezeau says she always had a soft spot in her heart for the place she describes as the “farm in my front yard.” In 1969, she could see the big barn’s cupola from her kitchen windows.

I can remember pushing the baby carriage down Laudholm Farm Road and looking at the old farmhouse and wondering what was going to happen to it. [The house] looked like it was going to wither away. I was thinking, oh my gosh, I could be looking at high rise condos if any private enterprise gets hold of that property. One of my foremost passions has been having the farm in my front yard with just Route 1 between us.

The baby carriage gave way to a stroller, then daughter, Josee, taking her own steps down the road to the old farm. For Liz, what began with casual walks and wonderings led to an abiding commitment of membership and volunteering that has spanned decades, and a special relationship with the Laudholm landscape.

Growing up outside Worcester, Massachusetts, Liz loved the annual family trips to Nantasket Beach. But, she wanted more.

I vowed that one day I would live where I could go to the beach whenever I wanted. I had come up [to Wells] one summer to work at Howard Johnson’s and I met this young sailor who was home on leave and 16 months later we got married. He had lived in Wells, down at the beach since he was 8 years old and there was no doubt in his mind that he was coming back. I wasn’t going to argue with that!

In the 1970s, Liz purchased raffle tickets sold by Mort Mather and others who sought to raise money to purchase the property. After the Laudholm Trust was founded in 1982, Liz and late husband Norman Vezeau continued their support, and have been Laudholm Trust members since 1984. Trust President Nik Charov says their 37-year commitment is one of the longest runs of continuous support for the Wells Reserve.



Liz began volunteering at the reserve in the early 1990s, first at the Visitor Center, then as a volunteer ranger patrolling the trails and beach. Later she joined the team of volunteers helping to park cars during the Laudholm Nature Crafts Festival and Punkinfiddle events.

It has always felt like a big family here. I was interested in giving back. I guess it is just the fact that I have a great life, I take in so much. What can I give back? It's been wonderful during the pandemic for people to be able to come here.

Nature inspires Liz in ways both personal and artistic. She sought out sunrises on Laudholm Beach, and learned how to cross-country ski so that she could enjoy the wintertime landscape. A graduate from the Massachusetts College of Art with a degree in fashion design and illustration, she worked as an elementary school art teacher, visual merchandiser, advertising artist, as well as stencil and window treatment designer. In retirement, Liz taught herself the art of tapestry weaving.

I love working with textiles and soft materials. When I retired I looked at all the things my mother had in terms of leftover embroidery floss, leftover yarns from her collection, yarns from my collection. Nature often dictates what color goes where. I like to work this way instead of doing a drawing. Nature is always there, and probably has some of the most perfect design. I like the outdoors. It seems to lend itself to what I do. Tree trunks have the most beautiful colors.

Take a walk down the Muskie Trail and you will come across one of Liz's favorite spots. Just before the trail opens out to the wet meadow, a footbridge sits among the trees and ferns. Listen for the barely-there ripples and purls of the forest stream that passes underneath and continues away and off to the marsh.

I did a project one year, of taking one picture each week, I photographed that spot and have them all together in an album. I think of that project every time I do that particular walk. You can hear the water going under the bridge. I was just getting into Tai Chi and the ideas of rooting into the ground and the bubbling spring of energy. I love standing by the bridge and hearing the bubbling water, it is very peaceful and energetic.

This is the first summer in a long time that Liz will not be heading out on the trails as a volunteer ranger. A broken leg sustained last year is requiring patience and a little more healing. Thanks to the enduring support of volunteers and members like Liz herself, that special bend in the Muskie Trail will be here when she is ready to return.

Thank you, Liz!

— LYNNE BENOIT VACHON

FronDS and Fiddleheads

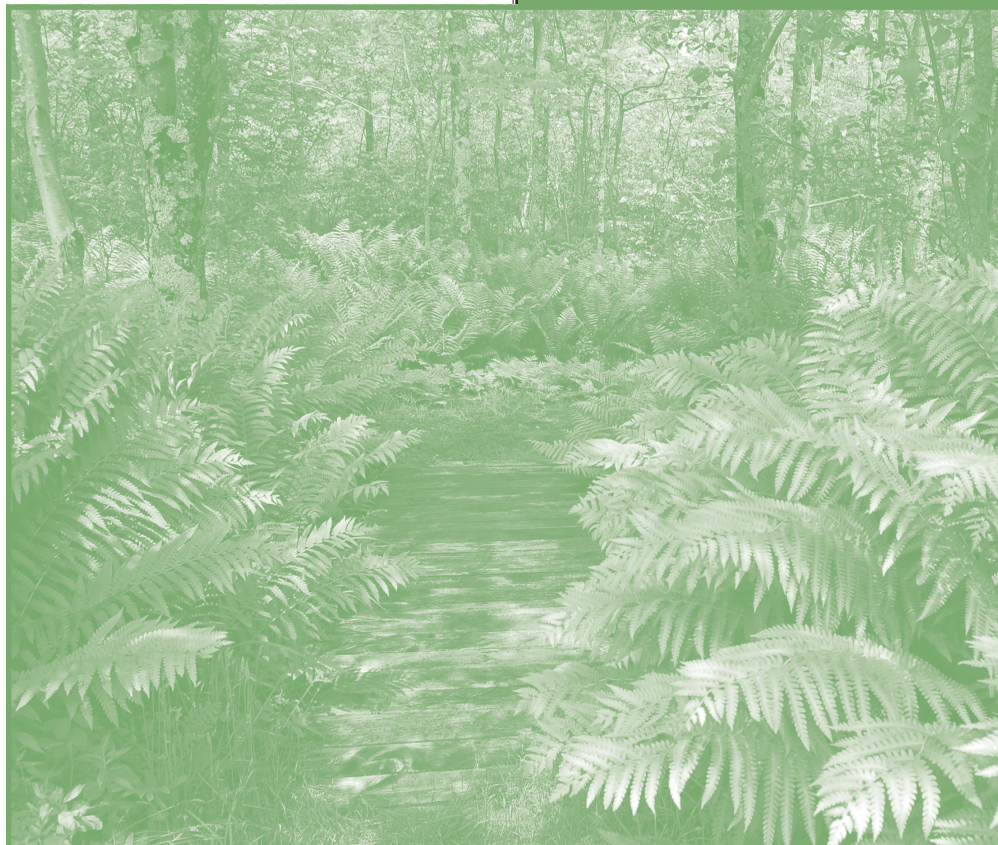
June 12, 10-noon, \$6 per member

Discover the natural history of some common ferns of coastal Maine with Maine Master Naturalist instructor Jeff Pengel. Jeff will emphasize the ecology and unique biological adaptations of the ferns and allies we encounter on the trails of the Wells Reserve. A hand lens is helpful but not required. Cameras are welcome.

Jeff was trained as a botanist and geologist at the University of Akron. He is a former high school science teacher who worked as an outdoor educator for Nature's Classroom in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Jeff now volunteers as a naturalist for the Appalachian Mountain Club.

Please email suzanne@wellsnerr.org or call 646-1555 ext 116 to reserve a space.

Liz's Muskie Trail footbridge



community / coastal training

Rising Tides Require New Tactics

"If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail." — Benjamin Franklin

We know rising seas and stronger storms are already affecting coastal communities in southern Maine, and scientists project larger and faster changes to come. But while science looks toward 2100 and the Maine Climate Plan sets sights on 2045, town planning often peers ahead only a decade or so, too brief a span for addressing many challenges posed by inexorable climate change.

To help towns peer further and plan better, the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC), with help from Maine Sea Grant and the Wells Reserve's Coastal Training Program, has engaged town leaders and planners in Wells, Kennebunk, and York in a project called "Tides, Taxes, and New Tactics."

This spring, more than 100 municipal employees across the three towns participated in online workshops meant to expose town vulnerabilities and capture ideas for addressing them.

In meetings tailored to each town, project partners detailed the economic risks a more intrusive ocean poses to businesses, infrastructure, residential properties, and municipal budgets.

An analysis by project partner GEI Consulting assessed vulnerability based on three vetted projections for where sea level may be in 2100 (1.6, 3.9, and 6.1 feet of rise). It's a worrying story.

Among the three towns, Wells had the highest total property value at risk: \$433 million, \$754 million, or \$1.1 billion in today's dollars, depending which scenario comes to pass. These values represent 13, 22, or 32 percent of the town's total valuation, the highest percentages across the three towns. (The Wells Reserve has long known that more than two-thirds of the town's \$3 billion valuation lies in the lowlands between Route 1 and the beach.)

In Kennebunk, one-third of the "coastal residential" area would be inundated with 1.6 feet of sea level rise. That increases to well over half with a rise of 6.1 feet. Damage and destruction from flooding will dramatically affect the town's tax base and, ultimately, drown even the healthiest municipal operating budget in a sea of red.

An economic risk analysis by rbouvier consulting showed that restaurants in the flood zone and hotels along arterial streets are in the most danger. A rising sea promises to be a persistent, annual drag on businesses, placing tourist destinations in jeopardy.

The workshops delivered data the town leaders needed. In turn, municipal officials signaled their willingness to act, and in what fashion.

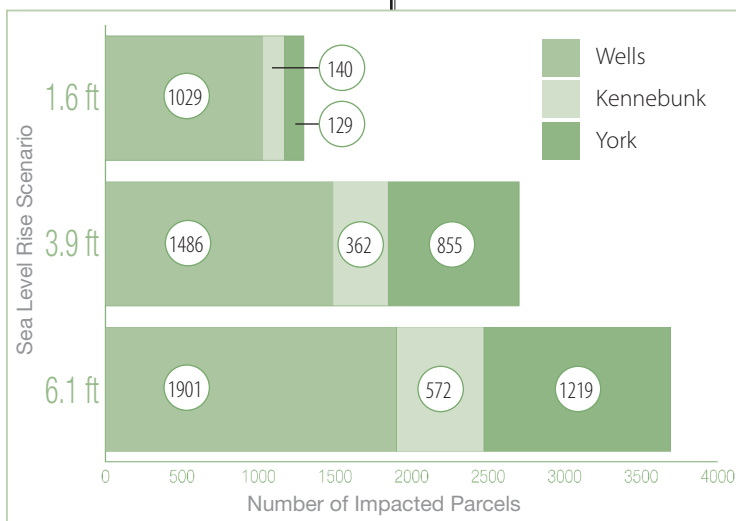
This summer, the project team expands its presentations and workshops to the broader public in each town. The feedback they receive will provide a better understanding of where to direct precious planning resources that will aid



BILL GRABIN

Number of Wells, Kennebunk, and York parcels, with buildings and land, impacted under three sea level rise scenarios.

Data from GEI Consultants for Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission

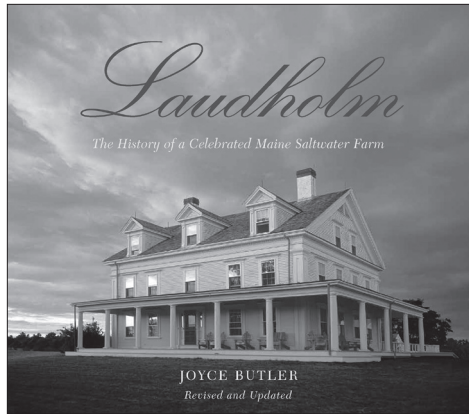


Laudholm History Book Revised and Updated

In *Laudholm: The History of a Celebrated Maine Saltwater Farm*, Joyce Butler recounts the evolution of this prominent piece of coastal land in Wells, from colonial settlement through the late 20th century. The first printing, published by Wells Reserve & Laudholm Trust in 2005, was out of stock by 2019. Last year, we took the opportunity to revise and update the volume.

Joyce's research and reporting were solid; we did only minor tinkering on the chronology between 1643 and 1977—from Henry Boade's arrival on the site to George C. Lord II's departure. But in this new edition, we say more about what happened next, by retelling the Laudholm creation story and chronicling the first few decades in the history of the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Copies are available in the gift shop for \$17.95 (don't forget your member discount). To receive a book through the mail, please write editor@laudholm.org or call 207-646-4521 ext 114.



New Tactics, from previous page

the region in collectively rising to this unavoidable challenge.

Tides, Taxes, and New Tactics is just starting the conversation; it is the beginning of a plan not to fail but to adapt. As stated in the vulnerability report: "The impacts from sea level rise are unique to each town, their population, and the assets on which the communities rely. Adaptation strategies to address community vulnerabilities will need to be developed over time to protect people and places while maintaining the character and values of each town."

To review workshop presentations and feedback, and to stay abreast of developments, visit wellsreserve.org/ttnt.

Mocklobster, from page 5

as long. Freed from the size constraint imposed by a lobster's length, the stand-in contains a stack of circuit boards measuring temperature, dissolved oxygen, ambient light, immersion, and movement. A rainbow of wires interconnects them with requisite power, control, and data storage functions. The assembly fits snug inside the waterproof tube with a battery to run it all for 2 weeks.

A Mocklobster joins a C-HAT'd subject on its trek, recording environmental conditions in parallel and with greater detail. The paired sets of timestamped data will give Ben and the team a way to link physiological response to ambient conditions (such as temperature swings or rough handling). By discovering the critical stimuli that cause the most stress to lobsters, they will provide industry partners with good leads for limiting shrink.

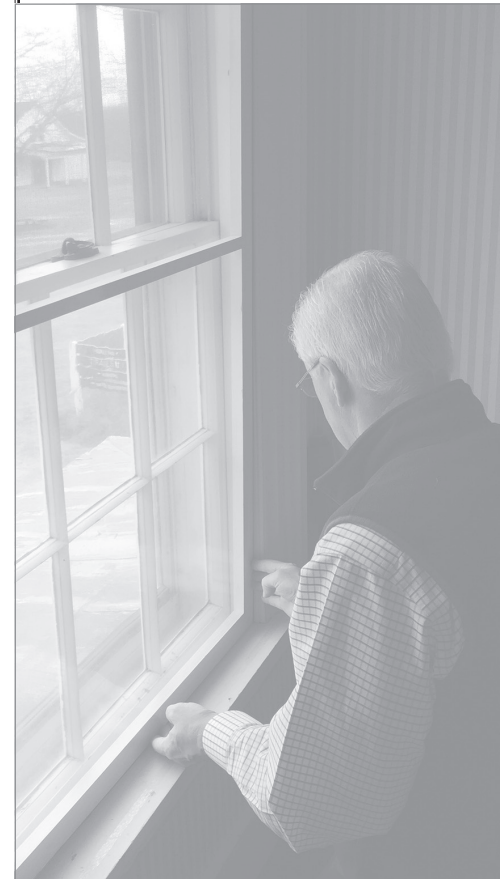
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These high quality window inserts cost less because volunteers make them. Everyone who orders inserts also participates in a local Community Build. This year's Wells Reserve build will be November 7 to 14.

Our group can take on only a limited number of homes, so sign up pronto. Measuring begins in August. windowdressers.org • 207-596-3073



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Todd Wallis
William Dest

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for her interest in the environment
Debra Hoyle
on her birthday
Ginger Laurits
for her work on the Native Plant Border
Jeffrey R. Sweet
on his birthday
Lynn Hill
in appreciation
Nancy Kinney
for sharing the soundscape library
Sadie & Ada Durodemi
on their birthdays
Tonyia Gibbons
on her birthday
Willow Hasty
on her birthday

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Wealth Management
Sugar and Harker LLC
Wonderbrook Condominium Association

In-kind Contributions

Ann & Sam Douglass / Discovery Map

thankyou

for gifts received
November 16, 2020
through April 30, 2021

*An embryonic lobster approaching hatch,
photographed by visiting scientist Dr. Lee
Pollock. In the next Watermark, we will report
on our research into early lobster development.*



© JAY ARBELO

Have a Seat

so others may also sit

Reserve your seat (or a tree for sitting beside) by making a celebratory or memorial gift to Laudholm Trust. Honor a loved one, mark a moment, or share your thoughts. We'll mount a plaque to carry your message.

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Stone Bench | \$7,500 (available 2022) |
| Wooden Bench | \$5,000 |
| Picnic Table | \$4,000 |
| Adirondack Double | \$3,000 |
| Adirondack Chair | \$2,000 |
| Native Tree | \$1,000 |

To learn more or to get started, please contact:
Nik Charov 207-646-4521 ext 144 nik@laudholm.org

Alternatives for recognition include boardwalk planks, walkway bricks, and sections of trail.

wellsreserve at laudholm

A PLACE TO DISCOVER

Will the LAUDHOLM NATURE CRAFTS FESTIVAL

be back in 2021?

yes!

September 11-12
Details early summer:
wellsreserve.org/crafts

Ted Exford **Climate Stewards** Lectures

| | | |
|-----|--------------------|---|
| MAY | Annie Cox | Tides, Taxes & New Tactics |
| JUN | Firooza Pavri | Monitoring Regional Scale Landscape Change |
| JUL | Adam Baske | Capturing Carbon with Kelp |
| AUG | Stacy-ann Robinson | Justice for Islands that Suffer Most |
| SEP | Jason Goldstein | Lobsters and Climate Change in the Gulf of Maine |

Details at wellsreserve.org/calendar. Most talks are posted to youtube.com/wellsreserve.
Financial support for the series is provided by David and Loretta (Exford) Hoglund.

exhibitsCEC

The Maine **Coastal Ecology Center** exhibit area was cleared of its old displays over the winter.

We are taking advantage of the vacancy by mounting this series of summer art shows:

- "Nikon Small World" microphotography: May 28 to July 18
- "Summer Splash" collage and sculpture by Gillian Page: July 21 to August 22
- "Herons" photography by B.A. (Tony) King: August 25 to October 24

Discussions on future use of the Coastal Ecology Center exhibit space are ongoing.

