



# The Henry L. Ferguson Museum

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## From the President

The muddy paw prints running across my kitchen floor are a sure indication that spring has arrived. The Museum has been just as active in preparing for a great summer season as my dog has been in the spring puddles. I am very pleased to announce that over the winter, the Museum has hired two fantastic new staff members. In the fall, we welcomed Emily Bodell as the Fishers Island Seagrass Project Coordinator. She has galvanized the Seagrass Coalition to further their work, including developing management goals and implementing monitoring programs. For complete information on the important seagrass work that has taken place see page 5.

In the winter, we welcomed Jack Schneider as our new Land Trust Stewardship Coordinator. Jack, in addition to developing management schedules for conserving the land trust properties, has developed a comprehensive list of volunteer stewardship opportunities. If you are looking to get out into nature this summer, we have lots of worthwhile outdoor activities. Please see pages 3 and 4 for the Land Trust report and details on volunteering.

Over the winter, Pierce has organized not one but two great exhibits for us to enjoy. On the first floor, *Against the Tide: Prohibition on Land and at Sea, 1919-1933*, takes us back a full century to a contentious chapter in the history of this region and America. On the second floor, *The English Springer Spaniel on Fishers Island*, celebrates the period from the mid-1920s through the late 1940s when Fishers Island was *the* center for English Springer Spaniel field competitions in America. Both exhibits are generously sponsored by Altus Partners and Chubb. The popular Instagram exhibit has been

expanded with more iconic photos revealing island life.

The Museum's lecture series continues in July and August with a great group of speakers. For all the bird lovers in the crowd, we have two ornithologists coming, Maggie Jones, director of the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center, will discuss bird communications and migration, while Alan Poole, long associated with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, will speak about his new book on the worldwide revival of the osprey. Fred Krupp, the president of the Environmental Defense Fund, will give a provocative talk on climate change and how organizations are working to mitigate its effects. While we contemplate our changing world, historian and writer William Hosley will talk about "going local" and sustaining place and community. Writer Mark Borton will lead us on a journey through the millennia as great thinkers from Socrates to Isaac Newton attempt to unravel the riddle of the tides. Last but not least, Pierce will entertain us with his talk about prohibition and rumrunners, *Scotch on The Rocks*. Please see pages 14-16 for a complete listing of speakers and dates.

Our children's programming is in full force again this summer, with programs offered every Wednesday afternoon in July and August. This year children will have the opportunity to build fairy houses, dip into the pond, howl at the moon, and interact with many fascinating creatures.

Thank you to all the Museum members whose generous contributions have enabled the Museum to provide such a wide range of events and programming. I look forward to seeing everyone at our opening party at the Museum on Saturday, June 29th, 5 to 7 p.m.—*Elizabeth McCance, President*



U.S. Coast Guard patrol boat stopping rumrunner off Atlantic Coast. May 16, 1925. International Newsreel Photo. Museum Collection.



Rumrunner *Thelma Phoebe*, wrecked on Chocomount Beach, April 29, 1923.

The Henry L. Ferguson Museum 2019 Annual Exhibitions

## Against the Tide: Prohibition on Land and at Sea, 1919-1933



## The English Springer Spaniel on Fishers Island



English Springer Spaniel Field Trial, Fishers Island, N.Y., c.1935.

Exhibitions sponsored by:



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Join us for the opening reception on Saturday, June 29th, 5 to 7 p.m. All welcome!

# Land Trust Report 2018/Spring 2019

by Bob Miller

We are delighted that Jack Schneider has become our Land Trust Stewardship Coordinator. Jack came to us early this year with a wealth of experience in planning, project management, budgeting, fundraising, and communications. He was animal curator at The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, Mystic Aquarium, and The Oklahoma City Zoo. As director of education at The Maritime Aquarium, Jack developed programs and systems from the ground up. The Board believes that Jack is the ideal person to help us continue to develop and expand solid programs and systems for the stewardship of our sanctuary areas.



Jack Schneider.

Jack will be working with me and other members of the Land Trust Committee to protect and enhance the environmental value of our approximately 350 acres of Land Trust properties. The Land Trust Committee currently consists of Donnie Beck, David Burnham, Ken Edwards, Jeff Edwards, Justine Kibbe, Steve Malinowski, Elizabeth McCance, Terry McNamara, Bob Miller, Pierce Rafferty, Scott Reid, Megan Raymond, Jack Schneider, and Joe Woolston. We would welcome the assistance of volunteers on a number of stewardship endeavors. A list of these stewardship projects can be found at the bottom of page four of this newsletter.

While on the subject of stewardship, it may seem that the lush grassland so many enjoy at Middle Farms during the summer has always existed and requires little maintenance. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Grasslands tend to transform themselves into shrublands, then forests. When the Museum assumed ownership of this property—which included at least five and potentially as many as ten building sites—Block Island Sound was not visible from the main road. Maples and gum trees up to 30 feet in height and 6 inches in diameter extended completely across the flats. The trees were cleared by Otis Horn and Museum volunteers. The current management plan calls for burning and, if necessary, mowing one-third ev-



Middle Farms Flats after burning and mowing, May 13, 2019.

ery three years to control woody growth, while allowing the sides of the flats to the east and west to transition to brush and trees for a diversity of habitat.

This year the central section of the flats was burned by our volunteer fire department. Because it had developed very dense and heavy woody growth, it was necessary to mow the entire area after burning. I did most of this in early May with my 1949 Ford tractor, before ground-and brush-nesting birds had settled in. Mowing for hours on end is not exciting, but it is not unpleasant. The tractor engine hums, and one can get lost in its drone as the surface of the land reveals itself in 5-foot swaths. It is a bit like a long voyage on a boat, which is appropriate because the amount of standing water this year



Vernal pond 18 inches deep, at east end of driving range, May 11, 2019.

was, I think, unprecedented. The outlet from Middle Farms Pond was a rushing stream. The areas to the east and southeast of the driving range contained vernal ponds up to 18 inches deep. Ducks, yellowlegs, and smaller sandpipers were present, perhaps nesting. Woodcock flushed from the drier (but still moist) areas.

There are what seem to be the beginnings of sinkholes where water has stood for long enough to seep through the topsoil to the better-drained glacial till below. Areas where topsoil was excavated many years ago—why and by whom unknown—have subsided considerably relative to the undisturbed grade. Vestiges of old roads or driftways—perhaps from horse-drawn wagons used in farming or to gather firewood—traverse the area.

If you are on the Island in late spring or early summer, you will find portions of our trails through the flats very wet and perhaps impassible, but the cleared portion provides an opportunity to walk, to view unusual birds, and to seek clues of the history of the area. Also, the clearing has uncovered many golf balls that have strayed from the driving range—we would be grateful if they could be collected and reused or, if they are not in good condition, removed. By the end of June, the water will recede; all paths should be walkable, and the native grasses—bluestem, switchgrass, Indian grass—and other flora will cover all this.

## Land Trust

### Volunteers Needed

The Museum's Land Trust has miles of nature trails that need to be kept clear and passable. A relatively small group of board members and volunteers tackle this herculean project in all seasons, seeking to maintain the level of clearing we attain collectively during our annual Thanksgiving group effort. Please consider contributing time and labor to this important project. The necessary work and types of activity required to keep our trails in good shape vary with each trail. We'll help you to find a suitable role on a trail of your choice. You can pick your favorite one that you use most frequently, or perhaps choose the one that needs immediate attention. Similarly, the level of engagement and the amount of time spent is yours to decide. You may be most comfortable using loppers to cut back the bushes and weeds. Or, if you are cleared to use heavier cutting tools, you could help create new observation points at approved locations. Working together, everyone's combined efforts create a safer, more accessible trail network of benefit to the entire community.



Buckthorn bagged for elimination on Chocomount Trail, May 7, 2019.



Bench overlooking swamp on Chocomount Trail.

We are also seeking volunteers for another major, on-going work project. The varied ecosystems that our trails pass through are under constant assault from different types of invasive flora. It is a stated goal of our Land Trust to preserve these diverse habitats that support our Island's wildlife. Volunteers are key participants in the struggle to keep in check the Japanese knotweed, glossy buckthorn, and oriental bitter-sweet, to name just a few. There are a wide number of opportunities available to any and all who wish to contribute time and effort to this tough battle. A list of locations with recommended instructions will be available at the Museum.

*Jack Schneider is the Museum contact person for volunteer trail clearing, invasive remediation, and associated projects. Jack will coordinate these efforts and handle scheduling, partnering, tools and instruction, as needed. He can be reached through e-mail: [hlflmlandtrust@gmail.com](mailto:hlflmlandtrust@gmail.com) or at the Museum: 631-788-7239. We look forward to working with you!*

## Summer Stewardship Projects • Volunteer Opportunities

### Museum Sanctuary and Pond area:

Remove thickets of greenbrier encroaching on the pond  
Identify and mark desirable plants to protect and remove competing vegetation  
Eliminate specific invasives like porcelain-berry

### Middle Farms Area:

Collect golf balls that bounced into Sanctuary beyond driving range limit  
Identify, mark and control porcelain-berry and exotic grasses  
Remove invasive vines from trees along the edges of the grassland

### Chocomount Trail Area:

Assist with the continuing removal and control of glossy buckthorn  
Assist with reestablishment of beach plum along the shore

### Clay Pit Trail Area:

Assist with knotweed & porcelain-berry removal

### Stony Beach:

Cut back honeysuckle at end of spit  
Collect plastic debris  
Retrieve & store bird-nesting signs

### Land Trust Areas bordering the Recreation Path

(such as the Brickyard trail area):  
Cut honeysuckle, vines, etc. impacting the shrubs and trees  
Cut back encroaching greenbrier and blackberry  
Remove nascent invasives like glossy buckthorn and porcelain berry

### Clay Point Road:

Investigate and, if necessary, pull ground honeysuckle and greenbrier that is impacting the

ground bird populations.

### Wetland Areas:

Visit properties identified as having wetlands and document size, condition, and inhabitants

### Improve online information:

Create trail and property descriptions using Esri Story Maps  
Create trail maps for inclusion in All Trails app

### Natural History Reporting:

Assessment of plants and animals at locations identified in the Tucker & Horning Report (1993)  
Identification and verification of birds that nest throughout the Land Trust properties

### Eelgrass Project:

(coordinate with Emily Bodell, see page 5)  
Water quality monitoring  
Human activity monitoring

*If you wish to volunteer, please contact Jack Schneider prior to going into the field. [hlflmlandtrust@gmail.com](mailto:hlflmlandtrust@gmail.com)*

# Fishers Island Seagrass Management

## Coalition Update

Fishers Island may be relatively quiet over the winter months, but the Fishers Island Seagrass Management (FISM) Coalition has kept busy continuing its work to establish a co-management process for the Island's seagrass meadows with the island community and the state sharing authority and responsibility. In 2017, with expertise provided by Chantal Collier of The Nature Conservancy, the Museum launched the FISM Coalition. Its members represent organizations and stakeholder groups who interact with the island's seagrass habitats in many different ways, including recreational activities, transportation, governance, and marine dependent businesses. These individuals generously share their time, knowledge and concerns at Coalition meetings, and communicate information back to other members of the stakeholder groups they represent.

As of May 2019, the Coalition has met seven times, focusing at each meeting on fact-finding through guest speaker presentations, on defining the vision and mission of the group, and on developing Coalition goals and decision-making processes to guide further action. The hiring of Emily Bodell, the FISM Project Coordinator, in November 2018 has been instrumental in facilitating the work of the Coalition. Next steps include supporting on-island monitoring, implementing education and outreach involving seagrass habitats, and continuing to develop a management plan.

This summer, the FISM Coalition will be sponsoring water quality monitoring in Hay Harbor and West Harbor, both lo-



Eelgrass dampening wave action, Barley Field Cove, F.I. Photo: seagrassli.org.

cations with significant areas of seagrass. In addition, the Coalition is planning to launch a “human use” monitoring program that evaluates how people use the seagrass areas around the island—think boating, fishing, and land use. Volunteers are needed for these endeavors! No prior experience is necessary—only enthusiasm for the cause. If you are interested in volunteering for either of these programs, please contact Emily Bodell at [fishersislandseagrass@gmail.com](mailto:fishersislandseagrass@gmail.com).

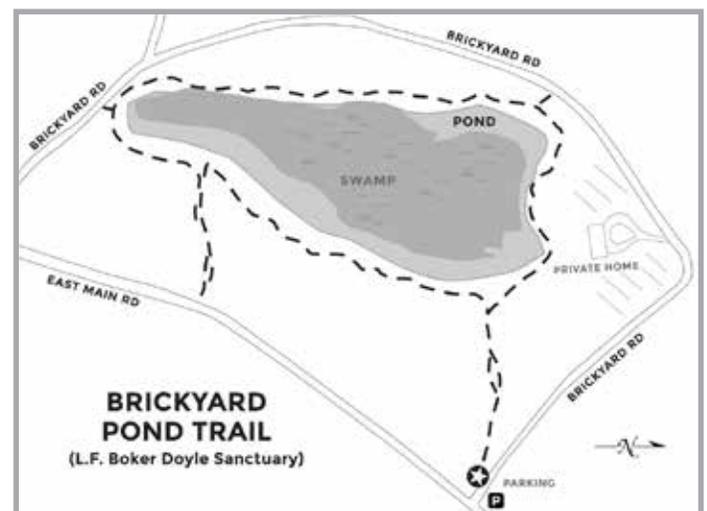
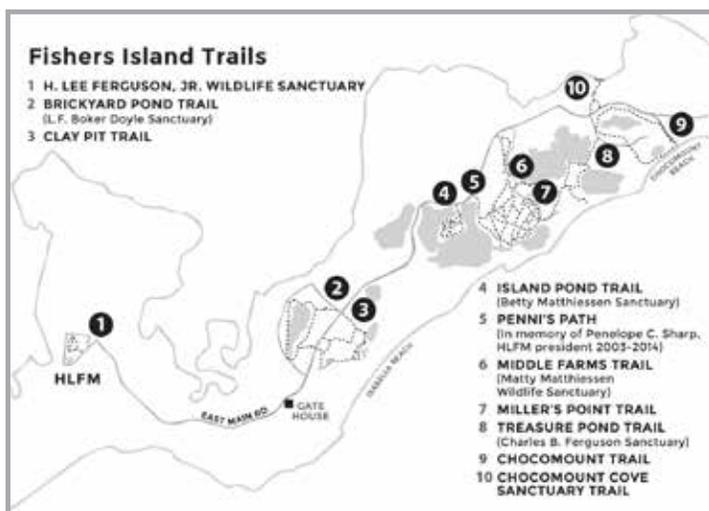
All community members are invited to attend, observe, and offer comments at Coalition meetings, which are held every two to three months at the Museum. Meeting dates can be found on the community calendar.

## New Trail Guide

An updated Trail Guide will be published in time for this summer season that provides individual maps and descriptive text for each of 10 Museum Land Trust trails. The Guide was first published in 1995 and republished with revisions in the early 2000s. The acquisition of new Land Trust properties, plus the creation of several new trails led to the publication of this new, third edition.

HLFM board member Terry McNamara, who leads the

Museum's nature walks, and naturalist Maggie Jones, director of the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center in Mystic, CT, were the primary writers for the new Guide. They both did a great job editing the old text and providing new observations on flora and fauna for each of the trails. Beth Jepsen of Insite Design, New London, CT, designed all the maps. You can purchase a copy year-round at the Museum, or at the Craft Fair during the summer.



## Nature Notes

### North American River Otter

(*Lontra canadensis*)

by Terry McNamara

The sight of a group, or “romp,” of otters crossing the bank of a pond with their playful, loping gait can't fail to elicit a smile. Sleek and weasel-like, these carnivorous mammals have rich brown fur and grow to between three and four feet long. Though sightings of the river otter on Fishers Island are rare, there is abundant evidence that they are present here. As a species they are mostly nocturnal from spring through fall, making them hard to spot. During the quiet winter months, however, river otters become active during daylight hours. On a chilly afternoon, this past February, a singular river otter was observed in the Duck Pond near the Ferguson Museum.

#### Identification

If you're lucky enough to spot one, look for these telltale characteristics. River otters have the same general body shape as mink, but they are much longer and heavier, weighing 16 to 26 pounds. At night, a river otter's eyes shine a pale amber in the glow of a flashlight, while a mink's eyes appear a yellowish-green. Their tails are different, too; a mink's tail is thin but bushy like a feral cat's, while an otter's is thick and oval at the base but flattens out and tapers to rounded point. Finally, mink have pointed faces, while otters have broad muzzles.

#### Aquatic Predator

Principally an aquatic predator, the river otter often swims with only its nose, eyes, and ears protruding above the surface. Occasionally an otter will bring its entire head and neck out of the water to look around, a behavior called “periscoping.” While other aquatic mammals like the muskrat and beaver tend to swim in straight lines, otters change course frequently in their hunt for prey.

Otters are opportunistic hunters, but research indicates that they prefer fish between 4 and 7 inches in length. They are



Up periscope. Courtesy of Zac Cota/iNaturalist.org



Photo by Tom Koerner/USFWS.

ambush predators who rely on their acute hearing, sense of smell, and sensitive whiskers to locate prey. In certain regions, blue claw crabs are a much sought-after meal, but a wide range of other crustaceans, snakes, frogs, salamanders, and even hibernating snapping turtles also find themselves on the otter's menu. A healthy otter consumes 2.2 to 3.3 pounds of food per day. Otters forage 3-5 hours per day, though a nursing female will spend up to 8 hours a day hunting. These caloric needs require up to 15 miles of shoreline as a home range, depending on the abundance of prey. Fishers Island provides an ample amount of suitable habitat. Our Island has more than 23 miles of saltwater coastline and 4 miles of brackish and freshwater shoreline around the ponds. Otter territories often overlap, so several groups could be in residence here.

#### Reproduction and Early Life

Given the opportunity, a male otter will mate with multiple females. Female otters are capable of a reproductive strategy called delayed implantation, in which the embryo can be kept in a state of dormancy for up to 12 months. Gestation takes just 5 to 7 weeks. Young are born from April to May in a den on a bank with an underwater entrance. The female cares for the young alone. After a month, young otters are ready to leave the holt. In two months, they learn to swim. By the time they're a year old, they are ready leave their mothers and to go out into the world. Young otters often travel together and are known for their sense of play.

#### Endurance Swimmers

Otters are very aquatic, able to swim at 7 mph, dive to 66 feet, and remain underwater for over 4 minutes (though 20 seconds is the norm). They can travel up to 26 miles per day. Because otters are vulnerable out of the water, they always take the shortest overland path between two waterways. This lessens their exposure to their principal enemies: large dogs, coyotes and, for the young, raptors.

## What To Look For

On Fishers Island, direct sightings of otters between spring and fall are rare due to the animals' nocturnal schedules. In winter, otters have been observed in many of the ponds on the Island, but they are most often sighted in the vicinity of the Duck Pond. Species verification often depends on locating latrine sites where scat is present. Tracks in soft ground can also indicate an otter's presence. When conditions are favorable, footprints are separated by the long impressions of the tail being dragged, as pictured below.



Otter tracks in sand. Photo by Justine Kibbe.

Scat sites can be found within 7 feet of the water on points of land, isthmuses, large trees, or rocks. The scat is greenish (when fresh) and contains scales, fish bones, and crab parts. In 2013, over Fishers' 4.2 square miles, an otter expert from Long Island identified 23 latrine sites. Many of these sites are on Land Trust property and are easily accessible. Keep an eye out and you might discover more.



Map showing locations where otter scat was found. 2013 data.

## Settling Down or Passing Through?

It is unclear whether the river otters are looking to resettle here or using the Island as a stopover on their way to Long Island. Surprisingly, it is difficult to track otters. Following their nocturnal and aquatic activity would require some form of telemetry, such as the radio collars used to track coyotes and wolves, which periodically transmit location data to receiving equipment for monitoring. An otter's head and neck diameters are the same, however, so tracking collars cannot be used. Only an implanted transmitter works, and that is expensive enough to prohibit regular use.

The limited data available on the movement of otters suggests that despite their aquatic capabilities, they rarely travel more than 4 miles in open water, making most of Long Island Sound impassable. Yet under this constraint, they are easily able to travel the 1.9 miles from Connecticut or Rhode Island to Fishers—and, it's likely, the 4.6 miles to Little Gull, from which they might island hop to Southold. It is hypothesized that the otters now being sighted on Long Island followed this route.

Regardless of whether Fishers Island is a destination or a place to rest on a longer journey, the river otter is a fascinating and welcome addition to our Island. Please share your personal sightings with the Museum. We will in turn share them with naturalist and wildlife biologist Mike Bottini who is based on Long Island. His 2013 research paper about otters on Fishers Island helped inform this article.

## Four Ospreys on OspreyCam Nest, May 2019

A struggle for occupancy of the OspreyCam nest east of the driving range broke out on May 7th. At first three ospreys were involved, then four. According to ornithologist Rob Bierregaard, these "nest in turmoil" (a.k.a. "nit") scenarios sometimes stem from one of the paired mates arriving back late from migration, interrupting a usurper on the nest. Ornithologist Alan Poole posited that with the female not yet incubating, another male (and possibly a third) may have opportunistically intervened. As of May 16, 2019, the aerial battles have ceased, but it remains to be seen whether the nest will be productive this year. <http://fergusonmuseum.org/osprey-cam/>



Osprey nest in turmoil, May 9, 2019. Screen grabs by Vicki C. Rafferty.

## Island History

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### Pirates in Our Region

by *Pierce Rafferty*

#### On Block Island

On July 12, 1690, the residents of Block Island were alarmed when a small fleet—consisting of one bark, one ketch, two sloops and smaller craft—appeared off their coast. Although the vessels were flying English colors, there was no certainty of their allegiance to the English crown. King William's War (1688-1697) had broken out in North America two years earlier pitting the English against the French (New England against New France), a smaller part of the Nine Years' War raging in Europe. Pirates and privateers were frequenting the waters outside and within Long Island Sound; these marauders were masters at masquerading their true loyalties, when they bothered to have them.

After the fleet anchored outside the harbor, a flat-bottomed sailboat carried a landing party to shore, but only one man stepped out. He was met by a large, anxious crowd, including armed soldiers, who demanded to know his party's intentions: Where did they come from? Where were they going? What was the name of their commander?

The solo man identified himself as William Trimming, an Englishman, and answered each question forthrightly. He assured the assembled men and women that he and his compatriots were friends, not foes. He told them that his fleet's commander was George Asten, an English privateer well known to all in the crowd for his successes against the French and Spanish. He stated that they were coming from Jamaica, headed to Newport and needed a pilot boat to lead them into the harbor, where they could purchase supplies and secure water before proceeding. Trimming provided enough details about his commander, Captain Asten, that the islanders were assured. They allowed the landing party to return to the fleet so that it could be guided safely into the harbor.

The voluble Trimming had neglected to mention that he was the only Englishman aboard any of the vessels; all the rest of his mates were French pirates—with a few Spanish and mestizos thrown in. He also left out the detail that their French captain had a good deal of experience in plundering.

Rejoining his fleet, Trimming summoned a pilot boat. The moment its crew stepped aboard, they were seized and thrown into the hold for questioning. The pirates needed to determine the relative strength of the defending forces at Newport and Block Island before deciding which site to plunder. Because the Block Islanders had swallowed Trimming's lies hook, line and sinker, that site was chosen as the easier prey.

Three boats brought about 150 armed men to shore. Upon landing, they pulled out their hidden weapons, disarmed the soldiers, and quickly took control. The penalty for resistance, they announced, was death. The gullible islanders were shocked to discover that Englishman Trimming had betrayed

them, for he had played his role of decoy perfectly. Foreign pirates (technically "privateers" under license to France) were now in perfect position to loot and terrorize.

After herding and locking the men, women and children into a large stone house, the pirates began to strip Block Island of its valuables. The occupation lasted a week, during which time the invaders pillaged most houses and farms on the island. There were cruel beatings, whippings, and several killings carried out as the marauders tried to discover the location of any hidden wealth. The vandals slaughtered cattle and other livestock both for food and to deprive the islanders of property and provisions.

After word reached the mainland that French pirates had seized Block Island, local citizens and guards lit beacon fires signaling alarm along the shore from Pawcatuck Point, Connecticut (then part of Rhode Island), to Seaconnet, Rhode Island (then part of Massachusetts). These bonfires helped inform the pirates' decisions to leave Block Island and to bypass a forewarned Newport, a city with a large population and fortifications.

The pirates chose instead to attack New London, suspecting that its citizenry would be less aware that they were in the neighborhood. But as their fleet, once again flying English colors, passed Watch Hill and Napatree Point, residents of Stonington caught sight of it. Those on shore had enough concern to dispatch a cautionary warning to New London by messenger on horseback.

The pirate fleet sailed around the south side of Fishers Island to mask their approach to New London. As they rounded Race Point, Trimming's boat, carrying a small number of men, broke off from the rest of the fleet and made a landing on Fishers Island, likely at West Harbor. The other pirate vessels continued on toward New London.

#### On Fishers Island

Concerned residents of Stonington, seeing the single boat peel off, organized a force of 17 men to sail to Fishers Island, where they planned to make inquiries and intervene if needed. They landed at a different location than the pirates and reached the only house on the island (likely located near today's ballfield) without being seen. During this period there were only a few tenant farmers and Indian farm laborers living and working on the island; Fitz-John Winthrop, the New London-based owner of the Island, was away commanding English forces against the French, and preparing to invade Canada. Preoccupied by a distant campaign, Winthrop would have been shocked to know that the enemy had already landed on his island and was about to attempt the sacking of his hometown.

As the Stonington group approached the house, William Trimming emerged from inside and greeted them in a casual and friendly manner. According to witnesses, he kept his gun hidden behind his back. When queried as to what he and his men were doing on Fishers Island, Trimming replied that they had recently been "cast away" (shipwrecked), a blatant lie that



was immediately apparent to the Stonington men who had just witnessed his approach to the harbor. With his men's fear palpably rising, the Stonington group's leader tried to defuse the situation. He addressed the pirates, saying "If you are friends, lay down your guns, and come behind us." Before the pirates could answer, a man in the Stonington group panicked, aimed his pistol, and shot Trimming dead. The other pirates scattered and fought their way back to their boat. They managed to rejoin the larger fleet, suffering the loss of only one additional man during the skirmish.

After the pirates made their escape, an Indian farm laborer scalped Trimming's corpse and took the trophy to the mainland as a gift for the English. The Stonington man who had killed Trimming came under criticism for firing prematurely, but many had a sense that poetic justice had been served. Samuel Niles, a chronicler of the encounter, expressed this sentiment: "Thus he that delighted in false hood in life died with a lie in his mouth; and received, it seems, the just reward of his perfidious, villainous, and multiplied treacheries."

## New London

On July 17, 1690, the pirate fleet began its raid on New London. Flying English colors as they entered the harbor, the fleet sailed past the town and anchored upriver within shouting distance of shore at Mamacoke Point, across from today's Naval Submarine Base.

There they repeated some of the tactics they'd used at Block Island, professing friendship, explaining that they had come from Jamaica, etc. The crowd on shore, already numbering about 150, was growing; it included many who had come in from the countryside. Seeing no advantage in their location, the French pirates changed course and sailed back to New London, making anchorage next to a docked ship in the town. From that position, the pirates called out several invitations for those ashore to come aboard, but these went unanswered. Had they been accepted, the taking of hostages would have almost certainly resulted, likely followed by threats, ransom demands and attempted pillaging.

As the ranks of the shore defenders continued to swell, exceeding 400 by one count, the prospect of a successful pirate attack grew dimmer. With the wind turning against them, it was now or never. The French flag was suddenly raised, apparently a triggering signal, for all the ships began to fire a coordinated volley shoreward. Their fusillade was met by counter volleys from land-based cannon. The pirate fleet, in a strategically untenable position, retreated to the middle of the river under power of oars before pulling to the mouth of the harbor, beyond cannon range, to anchor for the night. They were relatively unscathed but had achieved none of their goals.

One observer scornfully contrasted the fleet's "formidable and swaggering" entrance into the harbor with their "sneaking and shameful" exit. A large guard of 350 men kept watch from shore throughout the night to prevent any new incursion or attack.

## Back on Fishers Island

The next day, the three smaller ships from the pirate fleet sailed to Fishers Island and anchored off its west end between the hammocks and the main harbor. The 50-ton bark, the largest vessel, ventured out into the Sound and captured a sloop, then returned and anchored with the others. Fishers Island was theirs for the taking, as all the farm workers and Indian laborers had fled after the skirmish between Trimming and the Stonington men.

A letter dated August 11, 1690, from Wait Winthrop to his brother Fitz-John, reveals what little is known of the pirates' activities on the Island: "The pirates lay in the harbor at ye island two or three days and burnt the house; and what mischeife else I know not certainly yet, but tis said a great deale." The tone of the letter is remarkably dispassionate, given that the house was the only one on the Island and Fitz-John Winthrop was its owner.

The fire on Fishers Island was quite evident from Stonington, triggering concern among the farm hands who had fled about the availability of future housing on Fishers Island (a concern that remains relevant more than 325 years later). In his letter, Wait Winthrop assured Fitz-John that he had convinced the men to return again to the island farm, promising that "[they] shall have a house before winter if it may be; in the mean time have sent to the Indians at the farme to help them about a wigwam while they secure the corn and hay." Until winter set in, wigwams would have to suffice.

After departing Long Island Sound, the pirates' largest vessel, the 50-ton bark, was routed in an engagement with a heavily armed Rhode Island sloop off Block Island. The captain of one of the pirate ships and 13 crew members were killed. Following the battle, the rest of the fleet made their escape under cover of darkness. Although saddened by this successful flight, Block Islanders and all in the region must have gotten great pleasure from accounts of the French pirate captain's final moments.

During the battle, he brashly shouted insults at the opposing captain, promising that the English vessel would soon be boarded. To accentuate his swaggering display, he began drinking a bottle of wine as he stood fully exposed on deck. He was still swigging his wine, and presumably still shouting, when an English musket ball pierced his neck, ending his insults forever.



The Board of Trustees would like to extend its heartfelt thanks to all who gave during 2018. We are grateful to each and every one of you!

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*Please excuse any inadvertent misspellings or omissions.  
\*Deceased.*

## A Grant for Today and Tomorrow

In December 2017, the Museum received a generous five-year grant from the Jeanann Gray Dunlap Foundation to make the Museum's collections more interactive and accessible for its members and visitors. In 2018, the first year of the grant, the Museum chose several thousand images and hundreds of historical documents from our archives that were then professionally scanned. Beginning this summer, curated selections from these images and documents will be posted on a new Museum "Exhibits" webpage. At the start of the summer season, the link to the new "Exhibits" site will be published on fishersisland.net and on fergusonmuseum.org.

The first group of featured images to be posted online will be a selection from the late Charlie Ferguson's daybooks that date from the mid-1970s to the mid-2010s. New groups of digitized images and documents covering varying subjects will be added at intervals. Stories announcing and describing each release of new content will be posted to allow people interested in given topics to follow up.

For 2019, the second year of the grant, the Museum has hired a professional videographer to record and edit videos of many of Director Pierce Rafferty's past PowerPoint lectures. The illustrated presentations cover a variety of Fishers Island topics. Titles include: "History of Brickmaking on Fishers Island," "Race Rock Lighthouse," Captain T.A. Scott: Legendary Master Diver, Builder and Wrecker," "Fishers Island Ferries Over Time," "The Rise and Fall of Hotels on Fishers Island," and the humorous "Public Relations: 250 Years of Outside Views of Fishers Island."

A parallel project in progress is the creation of virtual exhibits for display on kiosks that will allow the viewer to scroll through visuals with matching captions from past annual exhibitions dating back to the early 2000s. Core information about the history of the island will be rescued from dead storage and presented in an easily explorable format.

The Museum would like to acknowledge and thank Ben Gray and the Jeanann Gray Dunlap Foundation for their thoughtful, forward-looking grant. When fully implemented, it will continue to give back to the Island community for many years to come.



*Eiders Surfing.* Watercolor by C.B. Ferguson from daybook "Fishers Island 2006."

## A Sampling of Additions to the Museum's Collection in 2018

Please note that although space constraints prohibit a complete list, we greatly appreciate all of your donations.

**Jane Ahrens.** Binders of Fog Horn newsletters for years 2014 to 2017.

**Peter & Jan Burr.** 12 photos showing interior rooms on Officers Row, exterior views of barracks, sidewalk with Parade Ground in background & ceremonial cannon. 1 real photo postcard of 6-inch disappearing gun.

**Diane Christman.** F.I. Farm envelope with illustration of F.I. Farm's prize chickens. F.I. School report card for Eleanor C. Hine, 4th grade, term beginning Jan. 1906.

**Carol Doherty.** Plaque presented to the yacht Juleen III and her owner A. John Gada, Sr. by the F.I. Fire Department Ambulance Squad in recognition of their service "in furnishing emergency transportation of the sick and injured from this island community to the mainland." October 1975.

**Alfred Ferguson III.** Ten hand-carved and hand-painted miniature wooden birds. Nine whittled by Alfred Ferguson Sr. and one by Harold Baker, c. 1930s-1950s.



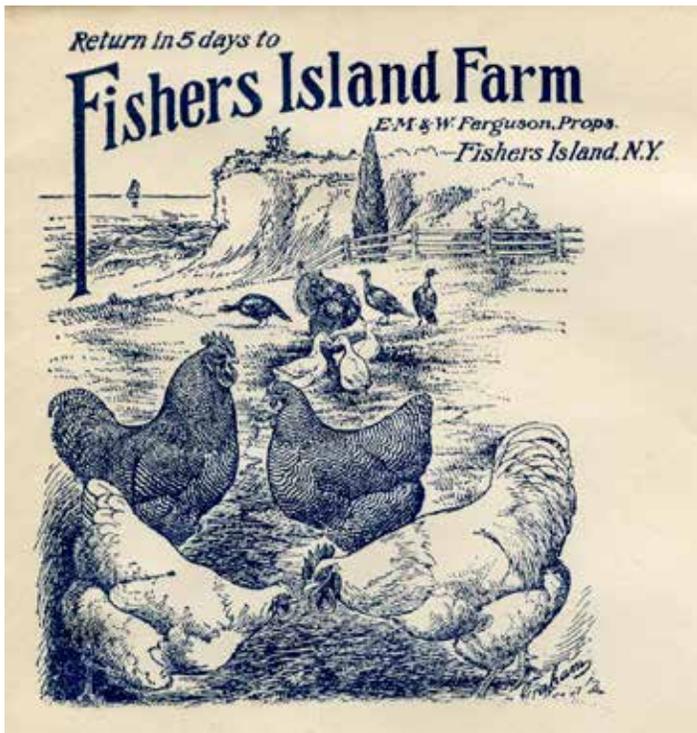
**Charles B. Ferguson Estate.** Books & ephemera: F.I. Telephone Directory 1946 & 1958. *The Peregrine Falcon at the Eyrie*, by Francis Heatherley, 1913. Our Marriage Vow: The Service and Minister's Certificate for the Marriage of Henry Lee Ferguson and Marion Bartow Benner on June 28th, 1910. *The Owls of North America (North of Mexico)* by Karl. E. Karulus. *The Journal of Henry Ferguson, January to August, 1866* by Henry Ferguson. *Oyster Culture* by George C. Matthiessen. *The Amateur Archaeologist's Handbook* by Maurice Robbins. F.I. Telephone Directory 1946 & 1958. *The Peregrine Falcon at the Eyrie*, by Francis Heatherley, 1913.

**Mike Imbriglio.** Patch from the Fishers Island Rod & Gun Club.

**John A. Newton.** Binder of research relating to Julius C. Newton, the donor's grandfather, who managed the E.M. & W. Ferguson farms beginning in 1891 and ending c.1901. His wife died on Fishers Island in the diphtheria outbreak of 1893.

**James Wall.** Five pieces of silver-plated cutlery, manufactured by the International Silver Co., c.1930s, for the F.I. Club.

**Rick Waters.** 248 issues of Wooden Boat Magazine from years 1974 to 2018.



## Museum Acquisitions in 2018

**Books:** *Stars & Lights: Darkest of Dark Nights* by David Zaparka. *A Useful Friend: A Companion to the Joshua Hempstead Diary, 1711-1758* by Patricia M. Schaefer.

**Objects:** World War I felt banner: "Fort Michie, N.Y., U.S. Army in Service, German American War, 1917." Abercrombie & Fitch lamp with Charles B. Ferguson etching "Morning Mallards" on side.

**Photographs:** Aerials of West Harbor & Elizabeth Field Airport, F.I., 1972. "Society golfs at exclusive Hay Harbor Club—Sam Ferguson of Hartford, Conn., F. Duane Austin of Long Island, and Miss Gwendolyn Talbot of New York watching Morris Austin drive off." Photo by Acme Newspictures, 1926.

## Items wanted for Collection:

**Pre-1950 scorecards for Hay Harbor Club and Fishers Island Club.**

**F.I. Civic Association Annual Reports:**

All reports pre-1967, 1977/78, 1992, 1997/98-1999, 2001-?.

**F.I. Club Membership Directories:**

1926, 1928, 1931-1933, 1935-1975, 1977-1978, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2008 to date.

**F.I. Telephone Directories:**

All years prior to 1930, 1931-1934, 1943-1944.

**F.I. Yacht Club Directories:**

All years pre-1930, 1931-1987, 1992, 1995-1998, 2013, 2016 to date.

**Hay Harbor Club Membership Directories:**

1909-1930, 1933, 1935-1936, 1940-1987, 1989-1994, 1996-1997, 2000-2001, 2003, 2005-2008, 2010, 2014 to date.

**Lloyd's Register of American Yachts:**

1903, 1904, 1908, 1912, 1915, 1917, 1921.

## Island Archaeology

*If you find an artifact, let the Museum know*

If you find artifacts, or objects of historical interest, please contact the Ferguson Museum. Many items in our collection have been uncovered by people doing ordinary things in the course of an ordinary day. These range from projectile points (arrowheads) found while walking on a beach, to Colonial-era musket balls kicked up in the garden. Certain activities increase the odds of making a discovery. An example would be excavation during construction projects. If you find something of historical interest, please contact the Museum. We will want a record of the date and location of your find. The Museum will photograph the artifacts and log them into our records. If you choose to donate the artifacts to our collection, we would welcome them, but that decision is up to you.



## A Very Small Cannon Ball

According to archaeologist Kevin McBride, what appears to be a large musket ball is actually a very small cannon ball. Found by John Harris near the Winthrop House, it was fired by the type of personal-sized breech-loading swivel gun that had the nickname, "The Murderer."

## Hunt for Hidden Wealth

*"New Londoners Dig Up Island in Search for Hermit's Money. New-York Tribune April 16, 1907.* Stories of hidden money on South Dumpling Island, in Long Island Sound, have excited the people of New London, and searchers for the supposed treasure are growing in numbers. An old man, known as "Uncle Billy" Holland, who died several years ago, lived in a hut on the island. By hoarding his earnings from the sale of fish and clams it is generally believed that he accumulated considerable wealth, and nothing has ever been learned as to what became of it. When C.J. Chester was seen last week examining the hut and digging on the island for the buried treasure the news spread rapidly, and now a large party is engaged in the same mission." (*'Uncle Billy' Holland, the lone fisherman of South Dumpling, is buried in St. John's Cemetery.*)



Man standing on ruins of "Uncle Billy" Holland's shack, South Dumpling, 1895.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of The Henry L. Ferguson Museum is the collection, preservation and exhibition of items of Pre-History, History and Natural History of Fishers Island and, through its Land Trust, the preservation in perpetuity of undeveloped property in its natural state. It is organized for the education and enjoyment of the Island's community and visitors and for the protection of habitat for the Island's flora and fauna.

## Museum Speakers and Programs 2019

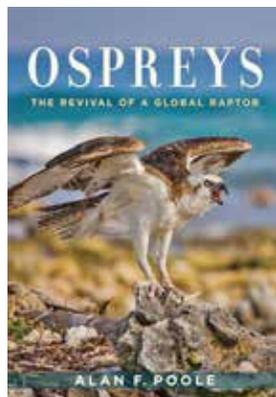


**Fairy Houses.** Join us as we custom create homes for your favorite fairies using natural and recycled materials. Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center (DPNC) family program for ages 5 & up. **Wednesday, July 3, 2019.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: Museum. *Suggested donation: \$10.00.*

**Bird Talk.** Naturalist Maggie Jones, director of the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center, will give an illustrated talk focusing on bird communication and migration. **Sunday, July 7, 2019.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor. **Reception to follow.**

**Animals! Animals!** Meet a variety of live animals and discover similarities and differences between them. Are they covered in feathers or fur? How do they move? Where do they live? What do they eat? Answer these questions and more as you explore the wild animal kingdom. DPNC family program for ages 5 & up. **Wednesday, July 10, 2019.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: Museum. *Suggested donation: \$10.00*

**The Worldwide Revival of Ospreys.** Author and noted osprey expert Alan Poole, long associated with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, will present an illustrated talk about his new book: *Ospreys: The Revival of a Global Raptor*. **Sunday, July 14, 2019.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor. **Reception and book signing to follow.**



**Celestial Creatures.** Come learn about the different animal constellations in the night sky. Unleash your imagination by designing your own constellation using your favorite animal as inspiration. DPNC family program for ages 5 & up. **Wednesday, July 17, 2019.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: Museum. *Suggested donation: \$10.00.*



**Scotch on the Rocks.** HLFM Director Pierce Rafferty will survey the history of prohibition in our region and chronicle the rumrunners that crash landed on our shores. **Sunday, July 21, 2019.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor. **Reception to follow.** (Please note: This talk will also be given on August 25, 2019.)

**Hummingbirds.** Learn everything about the hummingbird, both the smallest bird in the world and the fastest relative to its size. See if you can flap your wings as fast as a hummingbird. DPNC family program for ages 5 & up. **Wednesday, July 24, 2019.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: Museum. *Suggested donation: \$10.00.*



**Going Local: Sustaining Place, Past & Community in a Global Age.** This illustrated talk will be given by William

Hosley, a cultural resource development consultant, historian and writer who is passionate about local history and historic preservation. Mr. Hosley is former curator and exhibition developer at Wadsworth Atheneum, and former Director of the New Haven Museum and Connecticut Landmarks. **Sunday, July 28, 2019.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor. **Reception to follow.**

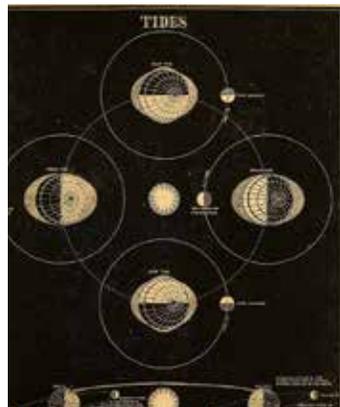
**Owls and Other Raptors.** Get up close and personal with live owls and hawks. Dissect owl pellets and learn about their unique adaptations for nocturnal life. DPNC family program for ages 5 & up. **Wednesday, July 31, 2019.** 2 to 3 p.m. Place: Museum. *Suggested donation: \$10.00.*

**Faster, Cheaper, Cleaner: The Climate Solutions We Need Are at Hand.** Fred Krupp, president of the Environmental Defense Fund, will discuss the issue of climate change and possible solutions. **Sunday, August 4, 2019.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd Floor. **Reception to follow.**



**Pond Dipping.** Use nets to go pond dipping and discover just what is hiding beneath the surface of the pond. Learn about unique pond animals, including fish, frogs, and aquatic insects. DPNC program for ages 5 & up. **Wednesday, August 7, 2019.** 2 to 3 p.m. Meet at the Museum at 2 p.m. *Suggested donation: \$10.00.*

**Tide Talk.** Mark Borton, a writer based in Chester, Conn., chronicles how great thinkers, from Socrates to Isaac Newton, struggled over the millennia to solve the riddle of the tides. **Sunday, August 11, 2019.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor. **Reception to follow.**



**Full Moon Creatures.** The phases of the moon can affect all animals, especially noctur-

nal ones. We will learn how the moon changes the behavior of nighttime creatures. DPNC family program for ages 5 & up. **Wednesday, August 14, 2019.** 2 to 3:00 p.m. Place: Museum. *Suggested donation: \$10.00*

**Nibbling on Native Plants in Your Back Yard and Beyond.** On his previous visits over the last several years, wild edibles expert Russ Cohen has documented the presence of over sixty species of edible wild plants on Fishers Island. The focus of Russ' illustrated talk and follow-up walk this year will be on edible native species suitable for planting in home landscapes, while also acknowledging the edible weeds and invasives that are already on Island and available for consumption. Russ' talk will be on **Wednesday, August 14, 2019.** 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor. **Reception to follow.** (Please note also the related Nature Walk that Russ will lead the following day, August 15, 2019.)

**Museum Nature Walk with Russ Cohen,** naturalist and wild food enthusiast. Russ will lead a foraging walk on Fishers Island. **Thursday, August 15, 2019.** Time: 10 a.m. to approx. 12 noon. Place: Meet at the Museum. **Limited to 30 people.** To assure a spot, please sign up by contacting the Museum by phone (631-788-7239) or e-mail (fimumuseum@fishersisland.net)

**Plum Island Questions and Answers.** Jason D. Golden, Public Affairs Officer, US Department of Homeland Security, Science and Technology Directorate, Plum Island Animal Disease Center. Jason has been the public's liason with Plum Island since 2014. He will present an overview of the island's unique history, the lab's animal disease research and diagnostic program, and hold a question and answer session. **Sunday, August 18, 2019.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor. **Reception to follow.**

**Fossils to Footprints.** Go back to prehistoric times to discover what fantastic creatures roamed the earth. Find out what they may have looked like, acted like, and ate. Students become paleontologists and dissect a "rock" to find a fossil of their own to keep. A Children's Museum of Southeastern Connecticut family program for ages 5 and up. **Wednesday, August 21, 2019.** 2 to 3 p.m. Place: Museum. *Suggested donation: \$10.00.*

**Transforming the Museum: the World Comes to Mystic.** Learn about Mystic Seaport Museum's major strategic shift with the opening of the award-winning Thompson Exhibition Building and the hiring of Nicholas Bell from the Smithsonian to lead a dynamic new exhibitions program. Nicholas will talk about the current exhibition 'Streamlined' and preview the upcoming exhibition of Turner's watercolors. Not to be missed. **Wednesday, August 21, 2019.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd Floor. **Reception to follow.**



**Scotch on the Rocks.** HLFM Director Pierce Rafferty will survey the history of prohibition in our region and chronicle the rumrunners that crash landed on our shores. **Sunday, August 25, 2019.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor. Reception to follow. (Note: This talk is a repeat of Pierce's July 21, 2019 talk.)

**Museum Hours:** Sunday, June 30 to Labor Day: Tuesday through Friday: 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday: 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; Sunday 11 a.m. to 12 noon.



**Pollinator Party.** Learn about the special relationship between plants and their pollinators—insects, butterflies, birds, and many other animals. DPNC family program for ages 5 & up. **Wednesday, August 28, 2019.** 2 to 3 p.m. Place: Museum. Suggested donation: \$10.00

**Nature Walks:** During July and August, Nature Walks will start at the Museum on Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. unless changes have been posted. Terry McNamara will lead the walks. Posters will be put up on the Post Office bulletin board each week that will reveal the subject and location of the upcoming walk. However, all groups must meet first at the Museum as walk locations sometimes change.

Closed Mondays.  
**For special appointments:** Please call or e-mail the Museum.  
**Off Season Hours:** As posted, or by appointment

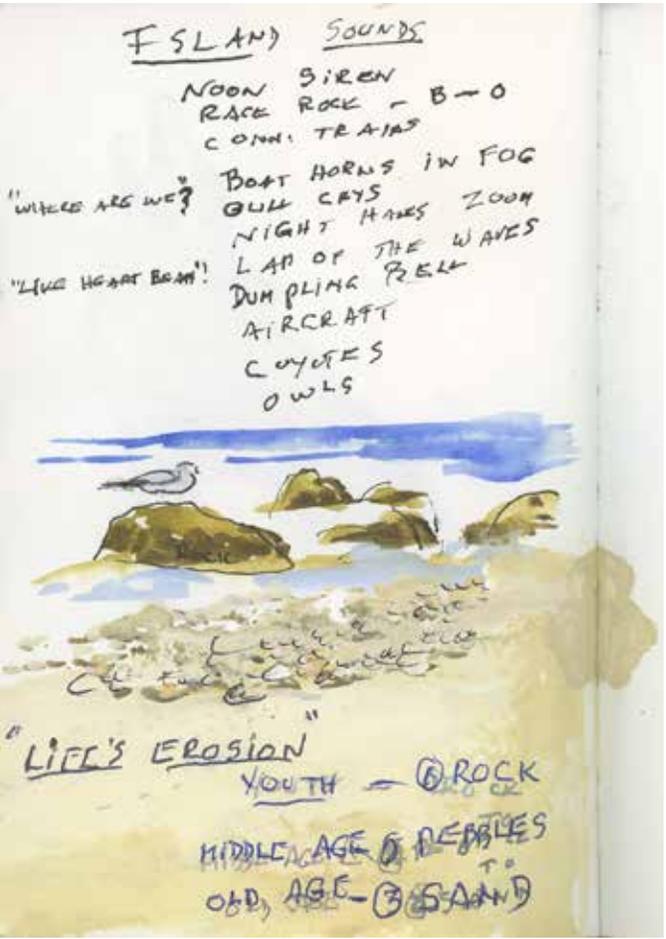
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| Jeffrey Edwards    | Barbara C. Riegel    |
| Kenneth L. Edwards | Genie Trevor         |
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A page from Charlie Ferguson's daybook: "Fishers Island 2012."