The Henry L. Ferguson Museum

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From the President

After this winter's serial storms and low temperatures, I can't wait to get back to Fishers for warmth, sunshine, friends, and Museum events. One of our primary goals set forth in our new strategic plan is to increase engagement across our community with year-round residents, seasonal residents, and fellow institutions. The Museum is offering many new ways to participate, and I hope you will join us.

Over this past winter, participants enjoyed a whimsical program creating birdseed ornaments as well as a more educational "Lunch and Learn" focused on Osprey monitoring. Visitors during our Saturday winter hours were welcomed by Program Assistant and Docent Patti Norton. Our Land Trust Coordinator, Jessica NeJame, instituted a nature-based after-school program for F.I. School 3rd to 6th graders. The Museum looks forward to continuing and furthering collaborations with other Island institutions, including the Lighthouse Works, the Conservancy, the Movie Theater, and the Community Garden. The Museum is contributing to the upcoming 100th anniversary book projects for the F.I. Club (1926) and the F.I. Fire Dept. (1927).

Twelve miles of Land Trust trails are open for your enjoyment and there are expanded opportunities to participate with Citizen Conservationist programs. If your interests are more land-based, pitch in clearing trails, replacing invasives with native plants, monitoring birds, and more. If you are drawn to our waters and coast, help the Fishers Island Seagrass Management Coalition (FISMC) monitor human activity in the seagrass meadows. If you prefer a one-day event, sign up for the eelgrass boat tour or the native plant workshop.

Our year-round lecture series ramps up for the summer with a great line up of speakers. Dr. Tina Morris will recount her personal story of reintroducing eagles into the Northeast in the 1970s. Dr. Paul Spitzer will survey the growth of Osprey populations since the late 1960s when he conceived a project to move healthy eggs into DDT-ravaged nests in our region. Dr. John Pfeiffer will give his overview of Native American life on Fishers Island, informed by two decades of onsite archaeology in the 1980s and 1990s. Dr. Andrea Bogomolni will speak about the return of seals to New England after centuries of near extinction. Dr. Ned Friedman, director of the Arnold Arboretum, will inform us of the history and purpose of that legendary Olmsted-designed institution. For the children, all our popular programs are back this summer – the Wednesday drop-in program, the one-week-intensive Fishers Island Nature Discovery (FIND) program, and the popular Treasure Hunt. The full listing of programming starts on page 17.

I also invite you to explore the many exhibits in the Museum on your own time. In addition to our permanent exhibits on the history, pre-history and natural history of Fishers Island, Museum Director Pierce Rafferty has organized three new annual exhibits for your viewing. This year's main exhibit extends between both floors and features Matt Kaelin's portraits of F.I. year-round residents taken between 2016 and 2023. The 2nd floor Side Gallery hosts an exhibit documenting Sarah Upson's Fishers Island murals created in collaboration with IPP between 1990 and 2026. The 1st floor Natural History Gallery displays a colorful series of monoprint paintings of the Brick Yard Marsh by artist Sukey Bryan.

Finally, I hope you join us at our opening party on June 27th. It is always such a great way to connect and launch the summer season.

—Elizabeth McCance

Satellite photo of Barley Field Cove taken August 2025 showing eelgrass extent. See page 12 for article on eelgrass mapping.

2026 Annual Exhibitions
Sarah Tuttle Upson's Collaborative IPP Murals

Beach Plum mural, 2025

Portraits of the Year-Round Community by Matt Kaelin

FIFD Chief Bruce Hubert
by Parade Grounds, 2017

Nancy Tirabassi, Bee, and Rachel
with Parker the cat, 2023

Brick Yard Marsh Monotypes by Sukey Bryan

Brick Yard Marsh 3

Join us for the opening reception on Saturday, June 27th, 5 to 7 p.m. All are welcome!

Land Trust Report Spring 2026

by Bob Miller, Vice-President Land Trust

New Land Trust pending purchases from FIDCO are marked in white. Nearby Land Trust properties are lightly shaded.

I am happy to report that our purchase of sixteen additional acres of environmentally sensitive land from FIDCO is on track. A revised Memorandum of Understanding was signed on February 26, 2026, and surveyors and counsel are now working to procure Town approval of a lot line change to formalize the transaction. We had a tremendous response to our request for donations to effect this acquisition and hope to close this summer.

A key purpose of the Land Trust is, of course, to preserve and protect habitat for diverse flora and fauna. In 2024, nesting activity by a pair of Bald Eagles was observed on relatively inaccessible Land Trust property located in the middle section of the Island, but no eggs or chicks were observed in the spring of 2025. The nest was expanded later last year, and visits by the pair of birds became more frequent last fall and winter. I am thrilled to report that one eaglet was photographed in the nest by Board member Todd McCormack on April 11. He also observed an adult eagle bending over to feed a second eaglet that was not visible. We are not aware of any historical record of breeding eagles on the Island. (See section on next page for additional cautionary information on interaction with this nest.)

The first Osprey to arrive this year was spotted on March 19 by JR Edwards, and a female Osprey first landed on the Osprey Cam nest on March 27, joined by a male on March 30. Ospreys apparently detest eagles, and fierce dogfights can be anticipated as the eagles traverse Osprey nesting areas.

The nesting eagles bring to mind the appearance of other species that were uncommon or unknown here until recent years. Black sea bass (biologically a small grouper) are now

TODD MCCORMACK

Detail view of eagle and eaglet on nest, April 11, 2026.

A female was the first to arrive on Osprey Cam nest, March 27, 2026.

plentiful but were considered non-resident and accidental in local waters prior to approximately 2010. On Gardiners Island and on Block Island, gray seals – up to ten feet long – can be seen by the score; these animals were unusual strays from arctic waters prior to 2000. Frequent sightings and catches of sandbar sharks (aka brown sharks) and other species of large sharks in local waters are unprecedented.

Other species are now appearing here in unusual abundance. Striped bass fishing has been excellent for the last few

NOAA FISHERIES

Gray Seals *(Halichoerus grypus)* are increasingly common in our area.

seasons. Not far to our south, humpback whales are plentiful in summer months and catches of bluefin tuna are again possible. By contrast, years ago hundreds of American Kestrels and Sharp-shinned Hawks could be observed streaming past the mound at Race Point on a northwest wind in October; these smaller hawks are now quite rare. Eider ducks, considered rare prior to 1970, are now common around our coves and beaches. Anecdotally, we now see many fewer monarch butterflies, tree swallows, flounder, and bluefish, all of which were almost astoundingly abundant in recent memory.

There is much uncertainty about the causes of these changes in range and/or abundance of disparate species. What we can know is that our protected lands and pristine waters and seagrass beds will provide opportunities for flora and fauna to feed and breed for generations to come. Thanks to all of you who have supported our various efforts.

JIM ARRUGONI

Black sea bass (*Centropristis striata):* a more frequent catch.

J R EDWARDS

Sandbar shark *(Carcharhinus plumbeus*) at Club Beach, August 2, 2025.

More on Bald Eagles on Fishers Island

by Jessica NeJame, Land Trust Coordinator

A successful nest of bald eagles on the Island is a great ecological sign, indicating that Bald Eagles along the Connecticut River are expanding. Bald Eagle and other raptor populations (including Osprey) were severely impacted by DDT, and despite the passage of legislation banning DDT and protecting these birds, it has taken decades for populations to recover. Forty years ago, there were no nesting pairs remaining in the Connecticut River Basin, and very few Bald Eagles in all of New England. Now, there are an estimated 55 pairs in Connecticut alone. Bald Eagles are territorial and need a lot of space. Depending on the abundance of their food supply (predominantly fish and waterbirds), their nesting territories can range from 2.5 square miles to as large as 15 square miles. With the Connecticut population rebounding, they need more space, which is likely what led to these new Fishers Island arrivals.

Despite being a symbol for strength and bravery, Bald Eagles are quite sensitive, especially in a new nesting site. Eagles are far less tolerant of human activity than Ospreys, and Land Trust staff blocked a portion of the nature trail near the eagle nest in 2025, which may have contributed to its success. We ask that no attempts be made to approach the nest – especially by drones. If they are disturbed, they may abandon their nest, along with its fledgling birds. Moreover, harassing, disturbing or injuring a Bald Eagle is a federal offense and carries a penalty of up to $20,000 and/or one year in jail. Federal law, under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, mandates a minimum buffer zone of 330 to 660 feet around eagle nests to avoid illegal disturbance. We are considering a blind or remote camera to permit live viewing of the eagles in the nest, but our highest priority at this point is to not disturb the birds until the eaglets are fledged. We will conduct long-distance camera surveillance of the nest and will add photos to our website as they become available.

To avoid distressing the birds, the NY Department of Environmental Conservation recommends the following:

- Remain a quarter mile away when viewing these birds.
- Use binoculars or a spotting scope to help you see the birds.
- Do not try to get closer to the nest to view the birds.
- Refrain from making loud noises.
- Do not use drones or other devices that disturb the birds.
- Do not share exact location on social media to prevent excessive human traffic.
- Respect all posted signs and avoid restricted areas..

It is a privilege to witness this landmark environmental event. If we work together as a community to celebrate these birds and respect their space, hopefully, they will agree that Fishers Island is a great place to raise a family and remain a part of our community for years to come.

Education Collaborations Bring HLFM Mission to Students and Students to Nature

by Jessica NeJame, Land Trust Coordinator

I'm crouched beneath the Museum birdfeeder with a handful of 3rd and 4th graders, each of us holding a long stick aloft. We are still and silent, except for the occasional "psh" as we try to summon birds. Suddenly, a Black-capped Chickadee flits down from a tree and grasps onto the top of one student's stick. Her mouth drops open, but she remains still as the little bird hops over to the feeder, then back to the stick. "Did you see that?" she half whispers, half squeals.

I've taught the students all about Black-capped Chickadees—how to identify them based on size, color, behavior, habitat, or song; what sort of food they like to eat; how they survive the winter. But nothing I've said could compare to that moment of wonder as these students experience one firsthand.

To encourage more moments like these, the Henry L. Ferguson Museum and the Fishers Island School have expanded our partnership this year. We are creating hands-on learning activities, bringing the students to the Museum and bringing the Museum to the students. Fishers Island School principal Christian Arsenault explains, "The partnership between the Henry L. Ferguson Museum and Fishers Island School represents the very best of our Island. It is an ongoing and ever-evolving opportunity for education, history and community to come together in a meaningful way. It gives our students the ability to connect directly with the Island's natural environment, bringing their learning to life while strengthening pride in our community."

Our recent series of collaborations first began back in 2020, with Land Trust Manager Jack Schneider and Fishers Island School teacher Adam Murray. Murray teaches courses in environmental science, construction and woodshop, and land conservation. It was a natural fit to identify stewardship projects that aligned with the skills he was already teaching. "The partnership Jack and I created has provided so many opportunities for our students. It expanded my classroom far beyond the four walls that surround my tiny room. Students have not only been able to see and experience the vast beauty that makes Fishers Island so special, but they have also been able to actively help in its preservation," says Murray. Over the years his students have constructed signs, benches, and overlooks; cleared invasive plants and cultivated native plants; and assisted New York Natural Heritage Program scientists by cutting coverboards and deploying pitfall traps. Their hard work has been instrumental to the Land Trust.

As a new addition, last spring we began a weekly nature program for the grades 3-6 after school club. Each week, I take students to trails and beaches all over the Island where they learn about the natural world by identifying birds, using a compass, following animal tracks, and more. The students are not only learning about the flora and fauna of Fishers Island and the interconnectedness of the ecosystems around them, but they are also building their independence and comfort in the outdoors, all while being safely super-

JESSICA NEJAME

Grade school students taking a break on nature walk, December 3, 2025.

ADAM MURRAY

Posing by newly constructed barrier at trail overlook, March 20, 2026.

MARNIE BRIGGS

Archaeology class for F.I. School students at HLFM, November 19, 2025.

vised and guided by myself and FIS staff Caroline Toldo and Caelen Haddock.

At about the same time, I began a collaboration with Jen Burns and her 3rd/4th grade class. Burns brings her students on a nature walk almost every day, but by partnering, we've been able to take the students further afield and build broader connections to their classroom learning. Burns and I collaborate on programming, meeting to discuss New York State learning standards and relevant topics that connect with the Museum's focus of pre-history, history, and natural history on Fishers Island. Right now, we're working with baseplate compasses. The students think that they're creating

JEN BURNS

Learning about earthworms at the HLFM, October 8, 2025.

a hunt for buried treasure at Chocomount Beach—and they are—but they are also learning about cardinal and ordinal directions, angles, shapes, distances, and creative problem solving. "The collaboration with the Museum serves a wide variety of purposes: it gets the students outside experiencing the environment of Fishers Island, making connections with their learning in and out of the classroom, as well as establishing a sense of place. The Museum owns and maintains

ELIZA SCHMIDT

Foraging walk in collaboration with Lighthouse Works, May 20, 2025.

so many trails, and it has been fantastic for students to now know where they are and share that with their families. I find the different light bulb moments each student has, whether we are exploring the Museum or out in the field so inspiring. I can then immediately connect back to those moments in class or out on our daily nature walks."—Jen Burns

More connections abound. Hannah Vagts, Fishers Island Seagrass Management Coordinator, visits science teacher Michelle Zimberlin's classroom to teach students about eelgrass, then brings them out to the ocean to help with taking samples and measurements. These collaborations don't just benefit the students—they benefit the Museum. For example, Zimberlin's students took water quality measurements in the Museum Sanctuary pond and found that there was no quantifiable amount of dissolved oxygen in the water, leading to our decision this fall to install an aerator to improve pond health. By involving Fishers Island students, we are increasing our capacity for stewardship.

JESSICA NEJAME

After school group in Nature Sanctuary, April 29, 2026.

HANNAH VAGTS

Students measuring eelgrass samples for FISM, Sept. 22, 2025.

Restoring Biodiversity with Native Plants

by Jack Schneider, Land Trust Manager

Fishers Island's landscape has been changing for the past 14,000 years. From tundra to forest to pasture to resort: Each ecological community that was wiped out became replaced by a new community.

Despite this turmoil, nature persisted, albeit challenged and diminished. Native biodiversity has declined while non-native species have increased. Exotic plants and animals have occupied the Island since Winthrop days. More recent imports aided by destabilizing land use practices—and now climate change—are increasingly vigorous and prevalent. The Land Trust is testing several methods to reintroduce biodiversity on our parcels.

Shading and General Cutting At the Chocomount Cove properties, we're testing the use of native plants to suppress invasives by shading and cutting. In sunny locations, where invasives like English ivy or stands of glossy buckthorn sprouts spread diffusely across the ground, we're favoring tall, perennial native species that grow in dense masses, reproducing by rhizomes and/or prolific seed production. These natives cast shade on the surrounding invasives and tolerate being cut back once or twice annually. These can be grasses or forbs.

Outcompeting and Selective Cutting In another sunny location, where the invasives are more singular and spaced, like beach rose at Chocomount Cove Beach, we're planting the natives in the spaces created by cutting back the invasives multiple times during a growing season. As the invasive plant weakens, the native plant grows. All of these parallel planting methods maintain the root structures that assure soil stability, creating a living bulkhead against coastal erosion.

Bolstering Natives Where invasive species are less of a problem and not our main conservation target, we want to plant natives that enhance the biodiversity of those more stable communities. Native species evolved as part of the Fishers Island ecological communities and are best adapted to survive the Fishers Island soil composition, moisture, and climate.

Additional Benefits When established in appropriate habitats, natives need neither wasteful water, nor polluting fertilizer, nor harmful insecticides. Each plant species has a role in supporting the entire community, particularly those specialized fungal and animal species that have co-evolved into a mutualistic relationship with the specific plant species. Native plants support the healthy, biodiverse ecosystem characteristic of Fishers Island.

Sourcing Native Plants We prefer purchasing "straight species" (not cultivated varieties) of plants and seeds with Atlantic Pine Barren provenance. Since Ecoregion 84 sources and species diversity are limited, we source plants from Northeastern Coastal Zone, Ecoregion 59, as well.

JESSICA NEJAME

Jack collecting native plant seeds at Middle Farms, Oct. 27, 2025.

Each region is classified based on biotic and abiotic factors, including geology, topography, vegetation, climate, soils, land use, wildlife, and hydrology. The relative importance of each of these varies from one ecological region to another. Fishers Island and the other nearby areas formed by glacial retreat, are part of the Atlantic Pine Barrens, Region 84.

Southern and Local In a warming climate, planting species having a more southern provenance enhances long-term landscape resilience, particularly for long-lived, slow to mature trees. However, it is also important to replenish locally, co-adapted plant species to address the impoverished native plant diversity. This provides a critical lifeline to the plummeting native pollinators and other animals, and our native plants and animals may harbor enough genetic diversity to adapt to climate change and persist.

Planting Natives at Home More information and resources for plants and seeds and native planting programs are available at the Museum and our website.

US EPA

Level III Ecoregions of the Continental United States (Revised April 2013) US Environmental Protection Agency.

The Fading Light of the Firefly

by Terry McNamara, Chair Wildlife Committee

One of the highlights of residing on Fishers Island is interacting with the many creatures that also call the Island home. The appearance of fireflies or "lightning bugs" in late June and early July is one of these experiences that has etched itself into the childhood memories of generations of Fishers Islanders.

Hands holding fireflies in jar.

Observers often describe the fireflies' luminous mating display as ethereal and magical. These glowing insects don't elicit the feeling of unease that many people suffer when encountering six-legged creatures. Fireflies don't sting, bite, or land on you or your dinner. Being solely focused on procreating, they are easy for even small children to approach and capture as they fly about. Behind these magical early evening summer appearances lies a fascinating story of transformation and survival.

Fireflies or "lightning bugs" are neither flies nor bugs.

Common Eastern Firefly *(Photinus pyralis)* on leaf.

These names are used in New York and New England to describe more than twenty species of beetles (family *Lampyridae*) that can produce a glow in their abdomens via bioluminescence, a chemical reaction. They use this ability to attract a mate and to warn predators that they are poisonous and foul-tasting.

During their lifespan, fireflies will undergo complete metamorphosis from egg to larva to pupa to adult, with most of that time spent as larvae underground. Life begins when the female lays eggs in moist areas such as moss or tree roots. The larval form that hatches lives underground or under the leaf litter.

Firefly larva on leaf.

At this stage, the larva produces the characteristic glow of *Lampyridae* to warn away potential threats. It is a fierce predator that can feed on organisms much larger than itself, including earthworms, slugs, snails, and soft-bodied larvae. They possess mandibles that first inject poison into their prey to immobilize it, and then a chemical mix to dissolve it. This form is solely dedicated to eating and growing larger, like the grandchildren on your couch.

After one to three years, a larva will find a safe place to metamorphose into a pupa for a few weeks before emerging in its adult form. Their adulthood is the shortest of their life stages, lasting only a few weeks. During this time, they do not eat. They are single-mindedly focused on reproducing.

During the summer, males in flight flash to attract the attention of females on the ground. The female has attracted males into her vicinity by releasing potent pheromones. When she encounters a male that she deems worth mating with, she flashes back. Each species has its own flash pattern. The mating takes the entire night with the male injecting sperm and other "nuptial gifts" (a term biologists actually use) containing proteins to enhance egg production and chemicals that increase the female's ability to produce toxins to dissuade predators.

Some female fireflies of the *Photuris* genus can mimic the flash patterns of other firefly species, usually *photinus*, Fishers Island's most common residents. Having lured and devoured the males of the other species, the "femme fatale" *Photuris* then moves on to mate with a male of her own species.

You too can interact with many firefly species. The flash codes of many individual species are available in the book "Silent Sparks: The Wondrous World of Fireflies," by Sara

Fireflies mating.

Nighttime close-up of illuminated firefly *(Photinus pyralis).*

Lewis, that is available at the Museum store. Her 2024 HLFM talk is available on our website under Programs/Recorded Guest Lectures. Studying the species-specific flash codes and imitating them using a penlight is an entertaining way to identify the firefly species in your area.

These magical moments are increasingly rare as firefly populations in the Northeast and elsewhere are shrinking. Habitat loss, pesticide use, and high levels of ambient light in the evening hours are the principal culprits.

The Ferguson Museum, through its conservation programs and Land Trust stewardship work, is improving habitat for native insects including the firefly. Fishers Island residents can help by reducing or eliminating the use of pesticides on their lawns. Pesticides kill more than the targeted pest and are a direct threat to our soil-based insect populations. The harm of pesticides has a cascading effect, as these declining insect populations have led to a decrease, if not the complete disappearance of the bird species that feed on them, such as the bluebird and kestrel.

Due to their life cycle and mating behavior, fireflies are non-dispersive, meaning that once they are gone from an area, their return is not likely. Perhaps the most apt metaphor is one using a room full of hundreds of lit candles. When a few are being extinguished hourly, it is not noticeable. By the end of a month, all that remains is darkness.

In our metaphor, it is not yet the end of the month on Fishers. There are still nights where the grandchildren can dance on the front lawn amongst the fireflies, laughing as they catch and cup them in their hands. However, unless we work together to limit the damage being done to these remarkable creatures through responsible pesticide use and habitat restoration, the magic of the firefly may one day only exist in stories.

Why Count Ospreys?

by Jack Schneider, Land Trust Manager

Ospreys are central to the Museum's identity. The species was chosen as the Museum's iconic logo and is the star of two of the Museum's important wildlife observation programs: (1) the Osprey nest monitoring camera at Middle Farms and (2) the annual Island-wide nest survey.

Annual nesting reports in the Museum's records date to 2005. Assisted by other Islanders, Ken Edwards has been the consistent and reliable organizer of this effort. Currently, there are 37 nest sites on the Island, 22 of which are active as of May 1, 2026. This census is no small undertaking. These records provide a snapshot in time based on one observation period each year during June or July.

Ospreys in the Northeast are migratory. The timing of their journeys coincides with the availability of their primary food: an abundance of smallish forage fish swimming within a bird's diving depth. A recent collapse of the Osprey population in the Chesapeake Bay region, likely due to commercial overfishing of the forage fish menhaden, is a cause for alarm. The Bay hosts the largest concentration of nesting Ospreys in the world, some 10,000 to 12,000 pairs.

A William & Mary study (2024-2025) revealed that Osprey reproduction in Chesapeake Bay was below DDT levels of the 1960s: "large numbers of Osprey pairs weren't laying eggs; many of those that did couldn't keep chicks alive to fledge. Adult Osprey, it seemed, couldn't find enough fish to create the next generation of birds…"

Fishers Island's Osprey fledgling success increased from 2015, peaked in 2020, and has slowed or reversed during the past five years despite added nesting platforms. Our Ospreys could be vulnerable to declines similar to the Chesapeake Bay.

Osprey nesting success is affected by many factors such as weather, predation, human disturbance, and food supply. Counting fledglings just once, just for the few minutes required for counting, can overlook other factors that won't be recognized by the single observation. Instituting a census based on more frequent observations during the nesting season, along with a more formal reporting procedure, could help conservation biologists better understand Osprey population dynamics and factors affecting nesting successes and failures.

Recognizing the conservation need for more detailed information, Ken is leading the effort to expand the census in both scale and detail; and include more interested Islanders. Please join the Osprey conservation effort by contacting Ken directly or the HLFM Land Trust staff.

TODD MCCORMACK

Bringing Back the Ospreys

by David R. Zimmerman
Excerpted from Newsday *(Suffolk Edition), Sunday, Aug 20, 1972 ·Page 222*

Newsletter editor's note: The following article brings to light the history of a project in the late 1960s to move healthy Osprey eggs from nests in the Chesapeake Bay area to nests in our region where productivity levels had been destroyed by DDT poisoning. It also reveals an all-but-forgotten detail: nests on Fishers Island played a key role in confirming the success of this restoration effort. Paul Spitzer, the man who conceived the egg-moving solution that arguably saved the Osprey population in the Northeast, will be speaking at the HLFM on July 12, 2026, 4:00pm.

CHARLES MORGAN

Female on nest as male Osprey delivers stick, circa 1970s.

On summer weekends, visitors to Long Island's East End may have seen a young man step out of a battered old car with a canoe lashed to its roof and then climb a utility pole to check a huge nest on its top.

The man is Paul Spitzer, 25, who has come up with an experiment he hopes will help save the Island's threatened osprey population. As an article in this magazine noted earlier this year, ospreys are one of a number of wildlife species facing extinction in this area. DDT has damaged the bird's reproductive processes, and only a small number of ospreys still nest in such places as Gardiners Island, around Gardiners Bay and on Shelter Island.

Spitzer, a friend and neighbor of ornithologist Roger Tory Peterson in Old Lyme, Conn., devised a solution for saving the osprey which sounds so simple that a schoolboy might have thought of it. Starting in 1968, Spitzer began moving baby ospreys and eggs from nests near Chesapeake Bay, where there was less pollution and thus a higher hatch rate, to nests in the Connecticut River estuary and nearby Long Island Sound locations.

His hope was that the essentially barren local birds would foster the transferred young, which then might fledge, migrate, and return to Long Island Sound—not Chesapeake Bay—when their time came to breed three or four years later. Spitzer marked them with bright-colored plastic leg bands and streamers, or jesses, so that later he could identify them from a distance.

By last year, Spitzer had succeeded in the first parts of his experiment. He had demonstrated that osprey eggs and chicks can be moved safely hundreds of miles by canoe, plane and car, and would be accepted readily by their northern foster parents, from whose nests they successfully fledged. The big unanswered question was: Would they return to Long Island Sound to breed?

If so, then egg transfer might be a workable way to keep the Long Island osprey colony's traditions and migratory habits alive until the environment could be cleansed enough for the birds to reproduce themselves unaided.

While a few transferred birds had been due back last year—and could not be found—this past spring, 1972, was a critical test. Up to 10 or a dozen of them might be expected. Spitzer planned to examine by telescope every osprey nesting along the four-state littoral of New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island and southern Massachusetts to find them.

He began in the chill of late March, visiting the massive stick nests that osprey pairs return to year after year. March ended: no birds. In April, most of the birds that were coming back came back. Spitzer, cartopping his battered canoe on an ancient blue sedan, zigzagged back and forth across the Sound from Connecticut to Long Island, and to the Sound's lesser islands -Shelter, Gardiners, Plum and Fishers—where, beside somewhat less polluted waters, many of the remaining ospreys are to be found.

It was a long quest—Long Island alone has hundreds of miles of coastline—but not a lonely one. Besides the half dozen or so conservationists who work directly with him, Spitzer, now a graduate student at Cornell, has developed a network of landowners, birdwatchers and other osprey aficionados who help keep track of the birds and serve as unofficial wardens to protect their nests.

Many nests are on private property, to whose owners Spitzer is beholden for access. He has won the help of Robert Gardiner, the garrulous Lord of the Island Manor, and of Gardiner's gruff-spoken manager, Jock Mackay. Shelter Island's husky police commissioner and ferry captain, Benjamin Byington, watches—and watches over—the birds, as does Dr. J.J. Callis, who is chief of the highly quarantined Communicable Animal Disease Research Station on Plum Island. A mosquito-control worker on Orient Point, Elisha Habermann, monitors the ospreys from the marshes he tends. On Fishers, Spitzer has the help of schoolteacher, Ed-

win Horning, and an occasional assist from a utilities worker who will boost him up to a pole top nest in the bucket lift of his maintenance truck. The crew of one ferry wave Spitzer and his car aboard for free, and on the New London-Orient Point run he is a guest at table in the galley.

Following his informants' directions to each uncharted nest, Spitzer "scoped" ospreys all through April. No Maryland birds could be found. Reporting his progress in a phone interview early in May, his voice sounded faint and far away. He was, he said, running out of birds. He was extremely downcast. Then, on Sunday morning, May 7, Spitzer's luck changed. He rode out early with a companion from New London to Fishers Island, the dragon-shaped outpost of New York State that swims in the Sound close by the Connecticut-Rhode Island border. Fishers is a highly private, upper-class retreat of large estates and quiet shores; tourists and transients are not warmly welcomed.

Spitzer found his Maryland bird there, a 3-year-old male. He had mated a native-born female. Their nest was atop a telephone pole alongside the Island's main road. The male osprey was wearing a faded red plastic band on one leg, a faded yellow one on the other. This identified him as a transfer bird brought north in his egg in 1969. He had been hatched, raised and fledged by foster parents in a nest near the glide path to Trumbull Airport in New London, about eight miles as an osprey flies from the nest on Fishers where, in his maturity, he now was starting his family. Encouragingly, moreover, his mate's eggs felt heavy and fertile when Spitzer climbed up to weigh them.

Then, there were more good finds. A second Maryland bird, a 4-year-old female, turned up breeding on Shelter Island. Spitzer had moved her, as a 20-day hatchling, to a nest on Great Island, near Old Lyme. She had lost her color markings, but retained a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lock-on metal band. Spitzer first read the identifying band numbers by telescope, then trapped the bird to confirm them.

Three other Maryland birds, a male and two females, all fledged from the Connecticut coast, have returned as 3-year-olds to Gardiners Island. One of the females is breeding. Because of loss of markers, Spitzer believes other unidentified Maryland birds also may be back. He feels that five verified returnees from the 33 Maryland birds fledged in 1968 and 1969 is a good score, since death normally claims two thirds of fledglings before they can breed. Spitzer has proved that ospreys removed as eggs or hatchlings will integrate their "foster homes" into their complex—and still baffling—migratory and homing behavior, and return there two to four years later to breed.

Will such a procedure save Long Island Sound's ospreys?

The answer is not yet known. Certainly, it could help, along with other conservation techniques that Spitzer and his colleagues are trying . . .

JOHN WILTON

Osprey nest along Middle Farm Road, circa 1990.

TIMOTHY J HALLETT

Silhouetted Osprey family, Money Pond, 2009.

Already three eggs in Osprey Cam nest by April 25, 2026.

TOM PELTON

Dr. Paul Spitzer, Choptank River, Eastern Shore, MD., circa 2015.

Mapping the Future: Advancing Eelgrass Monitoring in Long Island Sound

by Hannah Vagts, Project Manager, FISMC

Eelgrass *(Zostera marina)* is essential to coastal ecosystems like Long Island Sound. Eelgrass meadows provide critical habitat for numerous marine species and contribute to improved water quality, reduced coastal erosion, and carbon sequestration. Understanding the location of eelgrass is the essential first step in assessing the factors that affect its survival. Historical nautical maps from the 19th century first documented its extent. However, a significant decline in the 1930s due to wasting disease highlighted the need for reliable mapping methods. Initially, researchers used historical photos and small-scale surveys, but by the 1960s, aerial photography became the primary technique, capturing images from planes to identify eelgrass locations. The resulting hundreds of individual photos are stitched together to create a single large aerial photo mosaic of an area of interest, such as Long Island Sound. After scientists manually mark eelgrass areas on the photo, ground truthing is performed to verify these areas. Aerial photography is expensive and time-consuming, so this method of eelgrass mapping occurs infrequently (approximately every 5 years).

In recent years, several organizations in Long Island Sound have sought to develop more cost-effective, accurate, and time-efficient methodologies for consistent monitoring of eelgrass extent. Low-resolution satellite imagery is much easier but less accurate than aerial imagery. Drone imagery and acoustic sonar are accurate but time-consuming and best suited for smaller-scale projects.

The Fishers Island Seagrass Management Coalition (FISMC) is pioneering a new and revolutionary approach: high-resolution satellite imagery. The images have the same resolution as aerial photographs at a fraction of the time and cost. This is the third consecutive year mapping eelgrass around Fishers Island and due to our success, we have expanded to include parts of Connecticut as well. In 2026, FISMC will publish maps covering over 90% of all eelgrass in Long Island Sound.

Although satellite imagery is less expensive than aerial images, it still comes with a large price tag; each image costs roughly $3,500. Therefore, I am very particular about the parameters. Each photo needs these "stars" to align:

- Cloud Cover: Nothing ruins a photo faster than clouds!
- Heat Index: Have you noticed waves of heat rising from the pavement? Imagine seeing that from space.
- Tides: Taking photos at low tide solves two issues: 1) it standardizes a variable for statistical analysis, and 2) it maximizes what we can see underwater.
- Sea Conditions: Big, crashing waves can obscure what might be visible underwater.
- Wind: Slower wind speeds calm both the land and seascape.
- Air Quality: Wildfires can produce smoke clouds that obscure the photo.

When I find an optimal weather window, I check in with our satellites, which move in predetermined orbits. These orbits make the satellites available only at specific times of the day. I track the satellite to determine its orbit and when it will be above our area. With a bit of luck, I can find a satellite orbit that matches our weather window. If everything aligns, I check one final parameter: the sun angle. This parameter is important because light interacts differently with surfaces at various angles. If the sun angle is acceptable, I send code to the satellite to take the photo with at least five hours' advance notice. Once the satellite is scheduled, I cannot retract the request if the weather window worsens. So, for several hours, I cross my fingers and try not to check the weather, the one time my browser is blissfully clear of weather, tide, and wildfire-tracking tabs.

To date, I have captured 18 perfect, cloud-free satellite photos and one photo with 6% cloud cover. You can check out our gallery via the QR code seen below.

The additional longitudinal data ensures we fully understand trends in eelgrass extent. It also enables us to detect previously unmarked eelgrass areas, a remarkable leap in our research and mapping capabilities. This knowledge is the foundation for more detailed assessments of eelgrass health and distribution in the years to come. This is a promising journey, as we seek to transform these insights into conservation strategies that foster habitat restoration and bolster the resilience of coastal ecosystems. We are committed to uncovering knowledge that not only benefits the environment but also uplifts our Fishers Island community that is so connected to these vital habitats.

Satellite image of F.I. taken August 2025 with eelgrass areas marked in white. The QR code links to additional satellite imagery.

Island History – How the Museum Grew with Its Collections

by Pierce Rafferty, HLFM Director

Adding History to the First Museum

The Museum was founded in 1960 to honor prominent Fishers Island civic and business leader Henry L. Ferguson. Originally located in a rented 600-square foot storefront in Baker Cottage, across from today's Fire House, the collection included bird specimens and Native American artifacts primarily found on Fishers Island.

It was not until a Board meeting six years later – on August 30, 1966 - that curator Charles B. "Charlie" Ferguson suggested "a collection of Fishers Island historical data including pictures, letters, and anything of this nature would be a worthwhile project for the Museum…" This simple but far-reaching recommendation was unanimously approved by the Board of Directors, which authorized a budget of $200 to launch the Fishers Island Historical Collection.

FRANKIE FISHER-OWENS

The first Museum (1960-1971).

Jump Starting the New Collection

In January 1967 Charlie Ferguson sent a questionnaire and letter to Fishers Islanders, explaining "Our first step is to locate and catalogue all material that is of possible interest, and which might be available. We are particularly interested in early photographs, postcards, paintings, prints, letters, documents, maps and diaries. Gifts will be exhibited with the donor's name. Material too valuable to be given or loaned could be photographed and returned." His appeal letter envisioned "The concerted cooperation of everyone in this process will provide the Island with a new, interesting and educational segment of Island life both now and for the future."

Expanding Collection, Musical Chairs, and the Second Museum

As objects of all shapes and sizes arrived over the next year, the need for more display and storage space became clear. Several options were explored. Charlie met with the F.I. Library Board to discuss a Library addition. The Old Fire House - today's Beach Plum - was also considered. In July 1969, the Red Barn Gallery hosted an exhibit of selected items from the Museum's new Historical Collection. Albeit in a borrowed venue, Fishers Island history was finally on display and on its way to becoming a cornerstone of the Museum's mission.

The question of where to house the growing Museum collections continued through 1970, as the Board debated buying and repurposing the Old Fire House or constructing a prefabricated or site-built structure at the edge of the H. Lee Ferguson, Jr. Wildlife Sanctuary. One board member even proposed adding the Museum to the new school being planned near Silver Eel Cove. The Library addition option also resurfaced, as evidenced by the 1971 HLFM Board minutes detailing that the Library would be willing to accept a Museum addition provided the librarian would not be responsible for it.

The matter was settled that same year when Jansen Noyes, Sr. generously donated funds for a new building on Equestrian Ave. Contractor William Faulkner designed and built the one-story structure, which opened in September 1972.

Additions, then the Third Museum

And yet space constraints persisted. In August 1979, the HLFM Historical Committee even questioned whether the Museum was the proper entity to continue housing the history collection. In response, in 1981 a History Room was added to the rear of the 2nd Museum dedicated to history-related exhibits, historical objects, pamphlets, and books. Ten years later a new archaeology wing was added to the northern end of the building.

In the late 1990s, the debate about whether to expand or start afresh resumed. Remarkably, the forces of change won out. The second Museum was demolished in late 2001 to make way for today's third Museum. The new building, designed by Albert, Righter & Tittmann Architects, Boston, Mass., and built by Z & S Contracting, almost tripled the exhibition and storage space, with the History Room retained and repurposed as the first-floor office. The July 4, 2003, opening celebration of the new Museum, attended by more than four hundred people, reflected the generosity of Fishers Islanders and the deep commitment of the HLFM Board to preserving and exhibiting our collective history.

The second Museum (1972-2001).

CHIP RIEGEL

The third Museum (2003 to date).

A Sampling of Donations to the Museum's Collection in 2025

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

Carol Dailey. Watercolor painting by noted American artist and illustrator Nicholas Solovioff (1927-1994) of Race Rock Light and surrounding islands as seen from Race Point, entitled, "The Race – Fishers Is." (n.d.)

Jeff Carpenter. Painting by donor, "The Christmas Storm 2022 at Race Point," oil & mastic on canvas, dated Sept. 2023 and signed on reverse.

Karen Marshall. Nine original B/W photographs by Adelard T. Legere documenting damage from the Hurricane of 1938 at Fort H.G. Wright, NY. Eight of the nine have captions indicating they were taken on Sept. 22, 1938, the day after the storm.

Robert J. Coleman. White ceramic bowl illustrated with Fishers Island, N.Y. scenes created by noted potter Dorothy Long. Signed by artist and dated "1991" on bottom of bowl along with "Pandion Gallery, Fishers Island, N.Y."

Heidi Henderson. Trompe l'oeil oil painting on wood by artist Charles Benner Ferguson (1918-2018) portraying duck decoy, fishing lure, feather, and hunting stamp.

John Doucette. Misc. ephemera, including ferry schedules for F.I. Navigation Co. dated 1924 and 1931; misc. F.I. Ferry District schedules from 1960s; misc. F.I. Tel. Directories from 1930s and 1960s; HHC Directory for 1930. Assortment of F.I.-related pamphlets, magazines, brochures and books. Orig. blueprint: "HIGHLAND PARK: PROPERTY OF G.H. BARTLETT EST[ATE] and OTHERS, 1919."

David Edwards. Two QSL ham radio cards, including call sign "W2LXQ," received in 1940 by a Coast Artillery soldier stationed at Fort H.G. Wright.

Deb Walters. Donation includes four oral history cassette tapes recorded in 1987 by Mrs. Walters' Fishers Island School 3rd and 4th grade students. People interviewed include Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Horning, [Helen] Best, Judge Edwards, Mary Linda Strunk, and Mary Grebe.

A Sampling of Acquisitions for the Museum's Collections

Real photo postcard published by G.L. Thompson depicting the moving of disappearing gun barrel over temporary tracks on current site of F.I. School, circa 1910s.

Original stock certificate for Fishers Island Telegraph Company, 1888. Unsigned.

Photo of Steamer *Restless* by James S. Casey, c.1906.

Charlie Ferguson trompe l'oeil oil painting on wood, (n.d.)

Oil painting by Jeff Carpenter of Christmas storm at Race Point in 2022.

Illustrated white ceramic bowl by potter Dorothy Long,1991.

Fort H.G. Wright disappearing gun on temporary rails, circa 1910s

How to Bury Treasure

A Field Guide to Designing Treasure Hunts

By Mike McNamara, Board Member

Local legend holds that over three hundred years ago, Captain William Kidd came ashore at Fishers Island by night and buried some of his treasure on the Island's east end. Academics dismiss the story, pointing to a lack of historical evidence. That has not dimmed the excitement of generations of treasure seekers from both on and off the Island. Over the years, several attempts have been made to get to the bottom of Treasure Pond, both literally and figuratively.

Perhaps the legend is kept alive in part because Fishers is the perfect setting for a tale of lost pirate treasure: there are desolate beaches; coves hidden around rocky corners; deep forests stitched with foot trails, tranquil fern glades and mysterious abandoned military bunkers. If that weren't enough, a formidable lighthouse stands guard at the west of the Island, a stern grey fortress looming above the frothing sea.

The Museum does not have any maps showing the location of Kidd's hidden riches, as far as you know. And if we did, it would certainly not be hidden beneath a false bottom in the antique iron treasure chest from the late 1600s or early 1700s that sits beneath the "Pirates of Fishers Island" display just inside the Museum's front doors. And the key to that old English chest is most definitely not hidden in a hollowed out copy of Howard Pyle's Book of Pirates on the second floor, where long shadows strangely gather on even the brightest summer days. No, sadly, we cannot point you to the map, nor Kidd's treasure.

But we are able to help you put together your own treasure hunt.

What follows is a short but thorough guide to designing your own pirate adventure, based upon the principles that underpin the Museum's own annual Fishers Island Treasure Hunt. Now, your treasure hunt doesn't have to be as sweeping and grand as all that. A hunt can be a small afternoon diversion or a large production. It can unfold over an hour or a week, and it can take place in an apartment, on Dock Beach, or across an entire Island. All that really matters is that you have fun, that you've awakened the joy of discovery in your treasure hunters, that you've helped keep the dream of finding lost pirate treasure on Fishers Island alive.

Start with the Story

Most treasure hunts follow a simple sequence of clues, progressing from point A to point B to point C. Before jumping into the action, take a moment to build and explain the mythology. A creative backstory gives the hunt structure and personality, and answers two questions the

players will have: Why are we doing this? What are we looking for? Use the backstory to establish the internal logic of the game's world, and use your clues to add more pieces to the story.

Map the Territory

Before writing any clues, map out the playing area. Start at the end - where the final chest will be found - and work backward to your starting area. Ten clues are usually more than enough. Make sure you put some distance between clues—kids on a quest move faster than you expect. After all that work, you don't want the hunt to end in ten minutes.

Put yourself in the shoes of the most 'adventurous' kid in the group - where are the nearest hazards? Unless there is direct supervision, don't put clues where swimming is necessary, or where airplanes may be landing. And while graveyards and the attics of old churches are atmospherically correct, they are not places you want to have a gaggle of kids sprinting through. Make the clue placements unexpected, but not out of bounds.

The Art of the Clue

Writing good clues is often the hardest part of designing a treasure hunt. Consider the age and reading level of your players – not everyone is a miniature Alan Turing.

It is tempting to drench your clues in colorful pirate speak using centuries-old jargon and yellowed literary flourishes. Be careful not to let the style drown the substance. Figure out the riddle first, and then add a waft of seaweed and cannon smoke afterward.

For the Museum's hunt, we use rhyming riddles that mix tidbits of Island history with references to local landmarks. You might also use crosswords, word searches, anagrams, or, depending on your artistic skills, Rebus puzzles where

pictures, symbols, and letters are used to represent a phrase or word (e.g., a picture of a marathon winner next to a picture of a boulder for "Race Rock").

The younger the players, the more direct the clue should be. Be cryptic, but not at the expense of being specific. If you are lucky enough to be working with a partner, bounce the clues off each other. It'll be frustrating, because you'll have spent good time working on some of them and your spouse will still just be staring at you blankly. What you might think is clever, someone else might find impenetrable. Give yourself time to get the clues right.

Choose a Narrator

The clues tell a story while selectively revealing information. Conjure the speaker in your head and give them a role in the story. Is the narrator the pirate whose gold they seek, who taunts the players at each turn? Or is the narrator an ally who offers encouragement in the face of great danger? Perhaps the narrator is a ghost, imploring the players to complete the mission so its soul may rest. Spoiler: choose an antagonist and you'll be surprised how much you'll enjoy making fun of your players through the clues. The antagonist works so well because children love to prove a sneering villain wrong — and nothing drives a reluctant treasure hunter forward like a clue that ends with 'if you even dare.'

Don't Make It Like Homework

There will be a temptation to design the treasure hunt you always wished for yourself—full of Shakespearean riddles and a well-thumbed copy of H.L. Ferguson's Fishers Island, N.Y., 1614–1925 to solve. This is not what most kids are looking for.

Make the puzzles slightly easier than you think they should be, and mix in some physical challenges. Have the players knock all the cans off of a fence before they can proceed, or jump from deck cushion to beach towel to welcome mat to rescue a stuffed animal without falling into the crocodile-infested lawn. Reward mental and physical leaps of skill.

A Few Good Props

Cheap plastic eye patches and polyester costumes rarely improve the treasure hunt experience. Let the kids make their own costumes out of clothes from the OLOG rummage sale and grandpa's yacht club pants. If you want to add some special touches, splurge on a few quality props online that can elevate the experience. Life-size skeletons, gold and silver replica doubloons made out of real metal, and small but well-constructed wooden treasure chests are all worth the investment.

The Second-Best Treasure is Ice Cream

It is not uncommon to feel pressure to blow your players' socks off with the final treasure. I am happy to tell you that after decades of experience designing and running these games, that the best prize is never money. The best treasure isn't whatever is in the final chest – it's the fun of the hunt itself.

I hope this guide helps you run an adventure for your own crew of eager adventurers. They are all welcome to join in the Fishers Island Treasure Hunt. The Museum runs it because we believe the Island's natural spaces and historical landmarks should be conserved and preserved—but also explored.

For centuries people have searched Fishers Island for Captain Kidd's buried treasure. Perhaps one day someone will find it. But until then, there is another kind of treasure waiting here—hidden in the woods, among the chirping frogs, around the bend in the trail ahead, in the imagination of any child handed a map and a first clue.

All it takes is someone willing to write it.

There will be two Museum Fishers Island Treasure Hunts this year; each will happen the weekend after the July & August IPP Craft Fair. You can find the latest information and register your team in advance at fergusonmuseum.org/programs/fith

MISSION STATEMENT

To preserve our shared history and conserve our natural habitats by engaging, educating, and inspiring all Fishers Islanders.

Museum Speakers and Programs 2026

Programming announcements are sent to our e-news mailing list the week before the scheduled program. You can sign up for our e-news list at the footer of our website, fergusonmuseum.org. Check the FishNet and website calendars, or our e-news announcements for details on whether talks are in person and/or virtual. .

Museum Opening Reception: Saturday, June 27, 2026. 5 to 7 p.m.

Return to the Sky: The Surprising Story of How One Woman and Seven Eaglets Helped Restore the Bald Eagle. In the spring of 1975, on the eve of the US Bicentennial,

Tina Morris, a Cornell graduate researcher, was selected to reintroduce Bald Eagles into New York State in the hope that the species could eventually repopulate eastern North America. Young and female in a male-dominated field, Tina was handed an assignment to rehabilitate a population that had been devastated by the effects of DDT. The challenges were prodigious, but Tina soon found that her own path to self-discovery and confidence-building was deeply connected with the survival of the species she was chosen to protect. **Sunday, June 28, 2026.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor. Reception and book signing to follow.

Intro to Cyanotypes. Learn more about one of the earliest forms of photography in this hands-on, nature-centered workshop. Photographer Emily Barresi will guide attendees through the unique camera-less process of Cyanotypes. Participants will bring home 2-3 original artworks on paper. Great for adults and children alike! **Sunday, July 5, 2026.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor.

Awesome Amphibians. We love our slimy friends! Learn what amphibians are, meet live frogs, and find out why amphibians are so important to the environment. A Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center (DPNC) family program for ages five and up. **Wednesday, July 8, 2026.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: Museum. Limited to 15 children. Advance registration recommended. Suggested donation: $10.

The Once and Future Osprey. Join us for Dr. Paul Spitzer's talk on the recovery of Osprey populations over the past 70 years in the post-DDT period and their potential collapse today due to menhaden shortage. Presented by the pathbreaking ornithologist who led the campaign to restore ospreys in the northeast in the 1960s and 1970s, a project in which Fishers Island played a key role. **Sunday, July 12, 2026.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor. Reception to follow.

Every Seed Tells a Story! From a tiny acorn to a towering tree, seeds grow into the plants that create food and shelter for wildlife. Discover how seeds become habitat for owls, hawks, turtles, and frog—and how animals help plants grow in return. Meet live animals, explore the journey from seed to ecosystem, and create a seed craft to help plant native habitat in your own community. A DPNC family program for ages five and up. **Wednesday, July 15, 2026.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: Museum. Limited to 15 children. Advance registration recommended. Suggested donation: $10.

The Fourth Annual FI Treasure Hunt kicks off on **Saturday, July 18, 2026.** See fishersisland.net and fergusonmuseum.org for details. Please note that there will be a 2nd hunt that begins on **August 22, 2026.**

How Native American People Lived on Fishers Island. Join us at the Museum for an illustrated talk with archaeologist John Pfeiffer who will give an overview of Fishers Island archaeology that focuses on the excavation of sites, artifacts discovered, and John's interpretation of how Native American people lived on the Island. **Sunday, July 19, 2026.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor.

Hidden Creatures. Some animals are masters of staying out of sight! Discover hidden creatures who hide in plain sight, come out only at night, or live beneath our feet. We'll meet real animal ambassadors and learn how their special adaptations help them survive

sight unseen. A DPNC family program for ages five and up. **Wednesday, July 22, 2026.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: Museum. Limited to 15 children. Advance registration recommended. Suggested donation: $10.

Biography as Pilgrimage: On the Trail of Peter Matthiessen. Author Lance Richardson discusses his eight-year undertaking to write a biography of the twentieth century literary titan Peter Matthiessen, a novelist, naturalist, and Zen roshi, whose trailblazing work championed Native American rights and helped usher in the modern environmental movement. Matthiessen's books include travel classic *The Snow Leopard,* and *Men's Lives,* a moving account of the lives and struggles of East End Bonackers. He spent many childhood summers on Fishers Island. **Sunday, July 26, 2026.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor. ***Talk cancelled. Replacement will be announced.***

Amazing Owls. Meet DPNC's ambassador owls and discover what makes these remarkable birds so unique! Learn about our native owl species and explore the incredible adaptations that help them thrive as nighttime hunters. Get hands-on with real owl artifacts, then create your own owl craft to take home. A DPNC family program for ages five and up. **Wednesday, July 29, 2026.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: Museum. Limited to 15 children. Advance registration recommended. Suggested donation: $10.

Shorebirds of the Northeast: Success Stories and Species on the Precipice. Join Maureen Durkin, a RI-based wildlife biologist with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, for an introduction to shorebirds and their ecology—and an exploration of what makes them unique and vulnerable in a changing world. This presentation will highlight some of the species that can be seen on local beaches, including both resident breeding species and Arctic-nesting migrants, with a special focus on American oystercatchers and red knots. **Sunday, August 2, 2026.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor. Reception to follow.

Super Animal Senses. Explore the incredible senses animals use to understand the world around them! Meet live animals and discover how sight, sound, smell, and touch help our native animals find food, avoid danger, and survive in the wild. A DPNC family program for ages five and up. **Wednesday, August 5, 2026.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: Museum. Limited to 15 children. Advance registration recommended. Suggested donation: $10.

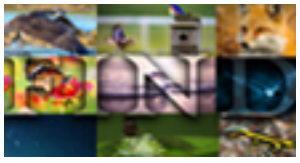
Seals and Society: Lessons on Conservation, Resilience, Research and Discovery. Join Dr. Andrea Bogomolni for an illustrated talk on the history and current state of our complex relationship with seals in the New England region. She is currently the Chair and co-founder of the Northwest Atlantic Seal Research Consortium. With the return of seals to New England after decades of near absence, there is a need to understand the role seals play in our ecosystem and to appreciate their role as sentinel species. Andrea will be sharing insights into how we study seals, what we are learning about their place in the greater ecosystem, and what seals are telling us about ocean and human health and our human connection. **Sunday, August 9, 2026.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor. Reception to follow.

Prehistoric Creatures. Travel back in time to meet the animals and plants that lived long before humans—and discover which ones are still here today. Unearth the story of ancient wildlife and meet their modern relatives. A DPNC family program for ages five and up. **Wednesday, August 12, 2026.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: Museum. Limited to 15 children. Advance registration recommended. Suggested donation: $10.

Eelgrass Boat Tour. Embark on an eelgrass journey with us! Breakfast is provided. **Saturday, August 15, 2026.** Time: 8:30 a.m. See calendar under "Programs" at fergusonmuseum.org to find event/sign up details. .

From Glaciers to Gardens: How Earthworms Shaped Northeastern Forest Soils. Join us for an illustrated talk by Annise Dobson, Associate Research Scientist at Yale University, who will share how the history of earthworms in North America has been shaped by ancient glaciation, centuries of human-mediated introductions and spread, and multiple waves of biological invasion. **Sunday, August 16, 2026.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor.

Fishers Island Nature Discovery Program. The FIND program will be held in the morning from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm during the week of **August 17th to 21st** for children ages 5-10. The schedule and sign-up details will be sent out by e-news and posted on fishersisland.net and fergusonmuseum.org.



Inspect an Insect. Gain an appreciation for the diversity of insects as we examine insect specimens, meet a live insect, and use nets to see what insects are living near the Museum! A DPNC family program for ages five and up. **Wednesday, August 19, 2026.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: Museum. Limited to 15 children. Advance registration recommended. Suggested donation: $10.

The Fourth Annual FI Treasure Hunt returns **Saturday, August 22, 2026,** after first appearing on July 18, 2026. See FishNet and the HLFM website (fergusonmuseum.org) for event details.

Tour of Olmsted Brothers' landscape design under restoration at East End. Join RoAnn Costin and Ned Friedman, Director of Harvard's Arnold Arboretum, for a tour of RoAnn's property, Rose Nest, which she is restoring to the original Olmsted Brothers landscape design. In the late 1920s, the legendary Olmsted Brothers Firm of Brookline, MA. created an elaborate landscape design for the George E. Hardy property overlooking Island Pond (later owned by the Mallory and O'Keefe families). RoAnn invites you to tour the grounds on **Saturday, August 22, 2026.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Costin house at the East End. Reception to follow. Attendance is limited. Please register to secure a spot by contacting the Ferguson Museum by phone (631-788-7239) or by e-mail (info@fergusonmuseum.org).

Evolving Landscapes: Olmsted, Design, and the Arnold Arboretum. Join William (Ned) Friedman, director of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, for an illustrated lecture on the origins and design history of Arnold Arboretum, one of Frederick Law Olmsted's most renowned and best-preserved landscapes. The Arboretum is today a world-leading scientific research enterprise dedicated to the study of woody plants, and also a crown jewel in Boston's Emerald Necklace – a public park that is free and open 365 days a year. The talk will connect past to present, culminating in a reminder that we can learn from legendary designs and make them relevant for our times. **Sunday, August 23, 2026.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor. Reception to follow.

Innovative Animal Adaptations. Discover the world of biomimicry and learn about human inventions that were inspired by animals and plants in the wild. Explore hands-on activities to replicate some of the incredible adaptations that animals have perfected over millions of years. Meet DPNC ambassador animals and observe their innovative adaptations! A DPNC family program for ages five and up. **Wednesday, August 26, 2026.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: Museum. Limited to 15 children. Advance registration recommended. Suggested donation: $10.

The Blue Humanities: Reimagining America's Maritime History. Dr. Chris Pastore, author and professor of history,

will present a fast-paced tour through America's maritime history, exploring how and why sea stories have changed over time. During the early twentieth century maritime topics drew considerable interest, but this dwindled during the later part of the century. More recently, historians, geographers, and literary scholars have breathed new life into salty subjects, filling shelves with books organized around the idea of the "blue humanities." Intended for fishermen, sailors, and beach combers alike, this lecture explores why the field has faced this ebb and flood—and provides a winter reading list in the process. **Sunday, August 30, 2026.** Time: 4p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd floor.

Eelgrass in the Salish Sea. Join Dr. Olivia Graham for an illustrated lecture about her eelgrass research in Washington State. Discover online or in person how her work is informing us about our Fishers Island ecosystem! **Sunday, September 20, 2026.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: Museum, 2nd Fl .

Invasive Plant Trail Walk. Come for the walk, stay for the hot apple cider! **Saturday, October 10th, 2026.** Time: 1:00 pm. See calendar under "Programs" at fergusonmuseum.org for event/sign up details.

Nature Walks

Nature walks will be led on Thursday mornings by guest naturalists and by board member Terry McNamara. Meet at the Museum at 10 a.m.

Museum Hours

June 28th 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. Closed Mondays. Expanded hours on summer rainy days . Call to confirm. **Off-Season Hours.** To be posted. For special appointments, please call Museum Director Pierce Rafferty at the Museum. (631) 788-7239 or email info@fergusonmuseum.org.

Planned Events and Excursions

Race Rock Light Tours. The HLFM is coordinating with the New London Maritime Society to offer trips this summer to visit Race Rock Light and tour the interior. Announcements about dates and pricing will be sent out by e-blasts and posted on fergusonmuseum.org and fishersisland.net.

Boat Trip to Great Gull Island Research Center, Great Gull Island. "Only 17 acres, the island is home to a dense city of its own in the summer: the largest breeding colony of Common Terns in the world and the largest Roseate Tern colony in the Western Hemisphere." (Quote from birdcollective.com) An HLFM summer boat excursion to neighboring Great Gull Island is in the planning stages. Please look for e-blasts and postings on the Museum's website and on FishNet.

Heronese. Etching by Charles B. Ferguson, c.1950.

The Henry L. Ferguson Museum