

Edited by Becky Cushing

Fall/Winter 2009

## **Big changes call for adaptations: Allens Pond's answer to a dynamic environment**

We're hearing more and more about climate change, and not only the big one involving disrupted weather patterns and ecological systems. The economic climate is still reeling from major upsets. These two, along with a changing social climate in our region, call for creativity and adaptation. Fortunately, these are things that Mass Audubon has practiced over its 105 years. Mass Audubon knows how to respond, rethink, and resize as the need arises. With the end of the period covered by our last Strategic Plan (1999-2009), Mass Audubon has launched a process to draft the next version that will guide our work through tumultuous climates to come. Look for it soon!

Here at Allens Pond, we're adapting in many ways in response to new information, new patterns, and new members of our community. For starters, we've shrunk our newsletter to reduce both the economic costs and carbon impact of printing and mailing. We're exploring other ways to reach you including more on-line communication. As you read about the Osprey Project, you'll see that our goals leapt to meet the opportunity presented by our partnerships. Our involvement with youth from the Green Youth Brigade to the High School Climate Change Challenge reaches the next generation of planet stewards. This coming summer, we'll be installing photovoltaic panels to meet most of our electricity needs. Even the seeds we planted in a recently cleared section of the grassland were based on our understanding of the site's soil dynamics and what rising sea level is likely to cause. Perhaps our best example of adaptation is how we respond to people, by learning where they are coming from and figuring out a way for them to contribute to our collaborative stewardship model. When Vince, our spotlight volunteer, appeared with his practical skill set, we absorbed and applied him to a host of unsolved challenges — offering in return friendship, a few bowls of soup, and a sense of accomplishment through successful solutions.

Together with you as members of this dynamic community around Allens Pond, we can continue to be adaptive, attentive, and effective. Please let us know how you think we're doing and if you see ways we can improve. Your communication and participation is important to us!

*Gina Purcell*

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## **Rubber Ducky, You're the One!** By 2009 Duck Derby winner and Dartmouth resident Margo J. Moore

The old adage says a journey begins with a single step, in my case it starts with a single duck!

On a hot July day the Padanaram sidewalks were jammed with people and festival vendors. The father of a former student stood under a big, black umbrella on the corner of Elm St. and Seaward Ln. I stopped to ask Mr. Johnston how his son was doing. We chatted briefly and I looked at the fliers on his table. He was selling ducks for Allens Pond's annual Duck Derby. My son, Julian, had been telling me to buy ducks. So – since I happened to have money in my pocket, just enough for one duck – I bought one and named it, “Julian”!

The weekend of the Duck Derby I was in the Adirondacks and I came home to the news that I was the big winner of “Dinner for Two Anywhere in the World”! I still find it a bit mind-boggling to think that Julian the duck came in first out of more than 4,000 rubber duckies.

Friends have expressed genuine delight with my good fortune and given me advice on where to go for dinner. Many suggest going as far away as possible – Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Japan or China – because a 20 hour plane trip makes it a better prize! Others suggest the place they or their family came from including Italy, Japan, and Cape Verde. All are excellent ideas; this is a big world with many possibilities.

However, for me, it is always about people. Thus, I will travel to the French Alps to visit my oldest friend, Lise, who has lived there for more than three decades, has three children, and two grandchildren. Our friendship goes back to first grade and for years Lise has been asking me to visit her in Revel. Now, thanks to a little rubber duck, I will travel to France to visit her. She tells me there are wonderful places to eat in her region. In any event, good food tastes better when shared with good friends.





### Duck Sorting Party Success!

Thank you to all the volunteers who washed, sorted and repaired 4,107 Duck Derby rubber ducks on a sunny afternoon at Stone Barn Farm this fall. “Leaky” ducks were retired and replaced. Warm soup, bread and other delicious treats sustained us for the 4 hour project – which we completed just in time for the sunset.

Thank you also to the mystery donor who left two bags of “wish list” items including rubber boots, an electric drill and gardening supplies at the Duck Sorting Party! We’d love to know who you are ...

### Volunteer Spotlight: Butterfly Garden “cycle” complete, thanks to Vince Standley

Sunlight, water and nutrients are important ingredients for any successful garden but until this past summer Allens Pond did not have an efficient system for supplying its butterfly garden with two of these: water and compost. Enter Vince — carpenter, writer and handyman extraordinaire — who not only built new compost bins from entirely recycled materials, but configured our existing rainbarrel system to water the garden using a solar-powered pump.

Look for Vince’s full story in our upcoming e-news!



### Southcoast Climate Change Challenge continues ...

Allens Pond’s Becky Cushing joined with Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance (SEEAL) partners and the Alliance for Climate Education (ACE) to deliver 19 dynamic, auditorium-style climate change presentations reaching thousands of Southcoast high school students this fall. Thanks to a SEEAL grant, she will continue her work with the students, helping them form environmental clubs and design projects within their schools to reduce their carbon emissions and raise awareness about climate change issues.



*New Bedford hip hop artist, Tem Blessed, Becky Cushing and ACE educator, Alan Palm, pose after their Dartmouth High School presentations*



*Bishop Stang students look on as Becky Cushing points out Phragmites, a problematic invasive plant at Allens Pond.*

### High School Students Contribute to Research, Stewardship

Over 150 students visited Allens Pond this fall through area schools including, Dartmouth High School and Greater New Bedford Voc Tech. The students’ work contributes to ongoing ecological and stewardship projects including the Butterfly Garden, Shrubland Restoration, and new amphibian Coverboard and Salt Marsh Invertebrate projects. AP Biology students from Bishop Stang High School will visit the Sanctuary throughout the year as part of their independent research projects. Project topics include invasive Brown Knapweed, beach erosion, water quality and a Mute Swan populations census.

**Not Your Average Grass Seed** — This past fall Allens Pond’s property manager Lauren Miller-Donnelly seeded the western edge of the warm-season grassland with a mix of native grasses and wildflowers. The mix included two wetland grasses, freshwater cordgrass and rattlesnake grass, as well as wildflowers such as boneset and swamp milkweed (right) that will provide insect pollinator habitat.

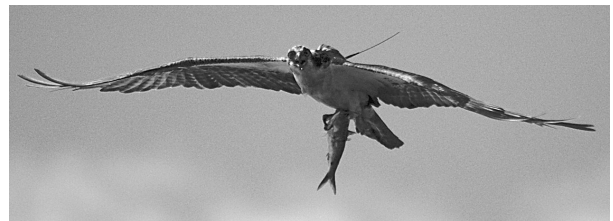


## Westport Ospreys wintering in Cuba, Venezuela

A full cafeteria of 4<sup>th</sup> graders at Westport Elementary School answers in unison: “Osprey!” That’s right, if the question is: What nests in trees or on platforms, eats only fish and spends its winters in Central and South America? These students learned about Ospreys and other birds through the Feathery Focus program and now they are following “Ozzie” (a bird they named) and “Hudson” through the Osprey Transmitter Project, a joint venture between Westport River Watershed Alliance and Allens Pond Wildlife Sanctuary. Allens Pond’s Osprey monitor, Becky Cushing, visited the students this fall to explain the project, an example of cutting edge science happening right in their community.

Thanks to satellite transmitter technology and guidance from Osprey researcher Rob Bierregaard, we are learning new information about our local Osprey, including their preferred fishing spots, which extend well into Rhode Island. Over the last couple of months we have “watched” and waited as two adult male Osprey made their southward migration. Their hourly travel points, relayed to us via satellite, show us two distinct routes – Ozzie hugged the eastern seaboard before heading down to Cuba while Hudson jumped from South Carolina over to the Bahamas and island-hopped down to Venezuela. Bierregaard, who’s been tracking Ospreys since 2000, has found these migration routes typical of adult Ospreys; juveniles tend to take longer, riskier, overwater flights. Westport Elementary students followed Ozzie and Hudson on a giant map in the school lobby, which was hand-painted by local artist Ruth Edwards. During the fall, Cushing updated the map every week with pieces of colored tape to show the migration routes of the birds. She will do the same this spring as the birds return north for the breeding season.

Of the four birds originally outfitted with transmitters, Hudson and Ozzie are the two remaining in the project. Rafael “opted out” by somehow removing his transmitter and the juvenile Hix fell victim to a Great Horned Owl during his pre-migration meanderings up in Maine. While Rafael’s transmitter proved unrecoverable, Hix’s retained a faint signal even after his demise. The adventurous and resourceful Bierregaard called Cushing upon landing in Maine: “Guess where I am ... I’m going to find Hix’s transmitter!” And a couple of hours later, he did.



*Hudson with transmitter. Photo by John Van de Graaff*

The recovery of Hix’s transmitter means that next spring potentially three new Ospreys could receive transmitters (including the two currently on Ozzie and Hudson) to increase the sample size of the project. Another upcoming component of the project is to combine the new satellite tracking information about where the birds are fishing with on-the-ground observations about what they are catching. While Cushing and the Osprey monitoring team may be able to do some of the observations, ideally this effort would involve a network of scientists, students and volunteers familiar with local fish populations. In fact, who better to ask about Westport fishing than the local fishermen?

As Cushing wraps up the presentation at Westport Elementary, students are bursting with questions and anecdotes that only young imaginations could invoke. Their enthusiasm spills over into follow-up school visits by teacher naturalists from WRWA and the Lloyd Center for the Environment, who are working with Cushing to bring these Osprey lessons into the classroom. This spring, they hope to introduce the Osprey Transmitter Project into Dartmouth schools, as well.

If you are interested in following the birds or learning about other ways you might get involved with Osprey Transmitter Project, please visit [www.westportosprey.org](http://www.westportosprey.org) or contact Becky Cushing, (508) 636-2437.



**Got Pigs?** Neighboring Round the Bend Farm’s mixed herd of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs continue to use the grassland and overgrown pastureland in the Allens Neck section of the sanctuary for grazing. The farm’s hungry pigs had a hankering for some invasive Oriental bittersweet — and in the process of rooting, helped restore abandoned fields by clearing the non-native understory and leaving behind perfect Eastern Bluebird habitat.



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*Protecting the Nature of Massachusetts*  
**Allens Pond Wildlife Sanctuary**  
1280 Horseneck Rd., Westport MA 02790

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- David Cole
- Fred Dabney
- Buell Hollister
- Malcolm Johnston
- Sally Johnston
- Bill Lapointe
- Lou Othote
- Ted Raymond
- Sally Sapienza

**Thanks to a streamlined issue, this newsletter used 1/2 as much paper compared with the spring edition. For more news, sign up online to receive our monthly electronic newsletter [www.massaudubon.org/allenspond](http://www.massaudubon.org/allenspond) and check out our FaceBook page!**

**Staff**  
Gina Purtell, Director  
Lauren Miller-Donnelly, Property Manager  
Becky Cushing, Volunteer Coordinator  
Margaret Jones, Administration

**WISH LIST**

- ▶ Color (laser) printer
- ▶ Plastic banquet tables
- ▶ Folding chairs
- ▶ Field guides
- ▶ Battery operated power drill

Many thanks to those who fulfilled earlier wishes!

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

**We need your help year round! Here's a sampling of winter volunteer opportunities. For more information please call (508) 636-2437 or email [allenspond@massaudubon.org](mailto:allenspond@massaudubon.org).**

- ▶ **Publicity volunteers** — Help us spread the word about Sanctuary events through press releases, online calendar listings or displays
- ▶ **Duck Derby volunteers** — Opportunities to suit all interests including, food committee, kids' activities, auctions and duck race
- ▶ **Bluebird Nestbox project coordinator** — Keep track of seasonal bluebird data (as submitted by volunteer monitors). Communicate with 5-6 nestbox monitors throughout the season to help monitor/maintain 50+ nestboxes throughout the Sanctuary

**CONTACT US:**

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## Winter/Spring 2010 Allens Pond Wildlife Sanctuary Events



All events meet at the Allens Pond field station parking lot located at 1280 Horseneck Rd., Westport, MA unless otherwise noted. Please call (508) 636-2437 for more information or to pre-register.

### Winter Bird Walks with Paul Champlin

**Saturdays: 9am-11am**

**Dates: 1/9, 1/23, 2/13, 2/27, 3/13, 3/27**

Winter birding at Allens Pond promises some of the best opportunities to see bay and sea ducks in their dapper alternate plumages, loons, overwintering passerines, and winter hawks on the Southcoast. Join guest ornithologist Paul Champlin as we bundle up against the elements to prowl the thickets and shoreline of the Sanctuary.

\$4 members; \$6 nonmembers

### Moonrise Walk

**Friday, January 29<sup>th</sup>: 4pm-6pm**

Join us to witness the full moon rising over Allens Pond, looking and listening for owls and other nightlife along the way.

Hot chocolate will be provided.

\$4 members; \$6 nonmembers

### Trees and Tracks Walk

**Saturday, February 20<sup>th</sup>: 1pm-3pm**

Join us for a hike along the Quansett trail, investigating winter characteristics of trees as we go. We'll stop along the way to look for wildlife tracks and signs.

\$4 members; \$6 nonmembers

### Bluebird monitor information session

**Sunday, March 7: 1-3pm**

The open fields of the Southcoast provide ideal nesting habitat for rare grassland birds such as Eastern Bluebirds. Volunteers are needed to monitor nest boxes during the spring and early summer at locations in Fall River, Westport, Dartmouth and Rochester. Join us to learn how you can participate in this ongoing project to bring back the Blues. Co-sponsored by the Trustees of Reservations. FREE

Location: TBA.

### Junior Bird Club

**1st Weds. of the month, 6:30pm-7:30pm**

**Dates: 1/6, 2/3, 3/3, 4/7, 5/5**

Geared for children of all ages and abilities interested in learning about birds. Indoor/outdoor activities depending on the season. FREE. Location: Allens Neck Friends Meeting House, 739 Horseneck Rd., S. Dartmouth, MA

### "Signs of Spring" Walk to Zylfee Brook

**Saturday, March 13<sup>th</sup>: 1pm-3pm**

We will investigate flowering trees and shrubs along a 1.5 mile hike to Zylfee Brook (3 miles roundtrip). With any luck, we will hear Wood frogs and Spring peepers having recently emerged from their winter slumbers.

\$4 members; \$6 nonmembers

### Migration of Westport Ospreys

**Wednesday, April 14: 7:30pm**

Satellite transmitters were installed on four Westport/Dartmouth Ospreys in 2009. David Cole and Becky Cushing will report on the feeding and migration patterns of these birds, and how the information is being used in local schools and over the internet to engage the community. Sponsored by the Paskamansett Bird Club. FREE

Location: Allens Neck Friends Meeting House, 739 Horseneck Rd., S. Dartmouth, MA

### Butterflies of South Dartmouth, MA

**Wednesday, May 12: 7:30pm**

Lauren Miller-Donnelly highlights the results of her study of butterflies in S. Dartmouth's farm fields, focusing on how mowing influences butterfly communities and the unique life history of the Monarch butterfly. Sponsored by the Paskamansett Bird Club. FREE Location: Allens Neck Friends Meeting House, 739 Horseneck Rd., S. Dartmouth, MA

## The Perfect Gift:

# “Dinner for Two Anywhere in the World” — only \$10

Surprise your loved ones, co-workers or friends with a chance at the  
Duck Derby Grand Prize  
100% of your purchase will go toward Sanctuary conservation and research.  
Winners will be announced August 14, 2010.

One duck \$10, flock of five \$40 or box of quackers (13) \$100

**Order online today: [www.massaudubon.org/duckderby](http://www.massaudubon.org/duckderby) or call (508) 636-2437.**



The perfect accompaniment to a Duck Derby gift certificate —  
an Allens Pond Duck Derby Bufflehead T-shirt!

W's sizes: Green, Blue, Purple. M's sizes: Gray, Orange \$18

Special order (any size, any color) \$20

Call (508) 636-2437 to place an order.



## More great gift ideas!

### For the Person Who has Everything

Osprey Platform Sponsorship for One Year: 100% of sponsorship supports Osprey Platform monitoring and repairs. Gift recipient receives personalized certificate of adoption, monthly updates during the Osprey season, and information about local Osprey events.

\$100 (tax deductible)



### For Everyone on Your List

Mass Audubon Gift Membership: Includes free admission to all Sanctuaries, *Sanctuary* magazine and *Connections* newsletter, Mass Audubon baseball hat, gift shop discounts and more!

Individual \$44 Family \$58

Allens Pond Soy Candles: Hand-made locally for Allens Pond, these delicately scented, 4 oz. jar candles feature bird photographs by Jon Van de Graaff including Ospreys, Piping Plovers and other Allens Pond bird favorites. \$8 each



### Mass Audubon Allens Pond T-shirts and Hats

T-shirts \$20 (blue, green, and tan in adult sizes S-XL)

Hats \$12 (blue, tan, green)

### For the Nature Watcher

Laminated Field Guides: Backyard Birds, Dragonflies (new!), Pondwatchers, Beachcombers and Butterflies

\$5 each



**To place an order call (508) 636-2437 or email [allenspond@massaudubon.org](mailto:allenspond@massaudubon.org).**