



# River News

*Our Mission: To restore, protect, celebrate and sustain the natural resources of the Westport River and its watershed communities of Westport, Dartmouth, Fall River, Freetown, Little Compton, Tiverton & Adamsville.*

Volume 31 Number 6

November - December 2008

## Tracking Westport Ospreys

WRWA and Allens Pond Wildlife Sanctuary have partnered on a new project for those of you who've asked "Where do our ospreys go when they leave town at the end of the summer? Who are the people living near their winter homes? What are they like, and how do they view the ospreys? Where do the ospreys do most of their fishing while they are here in our area—in the river or out in the ocean? And where do they fish in their winter residences?"

To get answers to these and other questions about our Westport birds, under the direction of Rob Bierregaard and Alan Poole, two of the world's leading osprey experts, we will put tracking devices on three adult males early in the year to see where they go to fish locally. Later, the instruments will track their migration. In midsummer a device will be put on a new young osprey.

Upon learning where these ospreys spend their winters, we will establish contact with schools in nearby communities so that our school children can exchange



information with their students—not just about our ospreys in common, but also about daily lives and how we and they relate to natural surroundings. This interchange

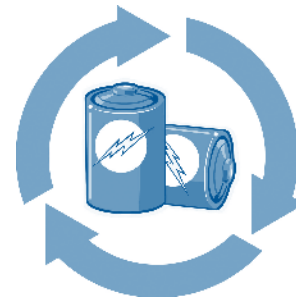
promises an excellent lesson in geography and global stewardship.

We are grateful to Chris Baldwin, Sally Reyerling, Mike Ahearn, Sally Ann Ledbetter and Bob Fowler for enabling us to purchase the transmitters and related tracking expenses. We will also be developing a new website, [westportosprey.org](http://westportosprey.org), dedicated solely to tracking these magnificent creatures. More information will be forthcoming in the New Year.

—Gay Gillespie

## The Battery Battle

Until that one cold morning when, surprise! your car's engine won't turn over, you probably don't give much thought to batteries. Yet Americans purchase three billion dry cell batteries every year to power everything from toys to radios, phones, tools and laptops.



Another 99 million wet-cell batteries are manufactured each year to power cars, trucks, boats and so on. We use silver oxide batteries in our watches, hearing aids, greeting cards, remote controls, and more. Lithium batteries power our calculators, computers, and cameras. Nichel-cadium batteries run flashlights, cell phones, power tools, and more. Batteries operate garage door remotes, wheelchairs, smoke alarms and back up hospitals. The list goes on.

Yet as helpful as batteries are to us, they also contain heavy metals such as mercury, lead, cadmium, and nickel, which can leak from landfills into the soil and groundwater. When incinerated, some heavy metals vaporize and escape into the air. Indeed, most batteries are now classified as "hazardous waste" in the Mercury-Containing and Rechargeable Battery Act passed by the United States Congress in 1996. Button batteries (mercuric, oxide, silver oxide, lithium, alkaline, zinc-air) are classified by the government as hazardous waste as are nickel-cadmium (rechargeable), sealed lead (rechargeable), lead acid, and silver oxide (sizes vary).

Mercury is toxic to the human nervous system. In the water, mercury "bio-accumulates" in fish, leading to warnings about human consumption.

So what's the best way to dispose of these toxic batteries? You have to know what kind of battery you're attempting to throw away.

Lead-acid batteries, the aforementioned car battery, are the most ominous as they are made of lead, other heavy metals and sulfuric acid. A car battery contains eighteen pounds of lead and one pound of sulfuric acid. Whew.

—continued page 6

River News is published by the **Westport River Watershed Alliance**, a nonprofit citizens' organization working to protect the environment and improve the economic, aesthetic, and recreational value of the Westport River watershed and its coastal environs.

Suze Craig, *Editor*

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### Join WRWA TODAY

Your \$40 membership supports the programs of the Westport River Watershed Alliance. Membership also gets you discounts on events, a monthly WRWA member e-mail, a subscription to *River News*, and a way to improve the conditions of the Westport River and its watershed.



River News is funded in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council & Lees Partnership receipts.

### We Love Lees Market

Please bring your Lees Market receipts to the WRWA office. Lees donates 1% of total receipts to support WRWA. It helps us pay for *River News*.

**Thank you Lees Market!**

## Case Mill Farm Troopers



Stationed as we are, set back from the banks of the East Branch, we see a lot of wildlife. Ospreys, of course, and the high wheeling buzzards for which, presumably, the Bay is named. Deer regularly traverse the open slope which was once the old farm road to browse the windfall apples under the aged tree I keep vainly promising myself I will start to prune and bring back. There's a red tailed hawk that patrols the lane and the upper pastures, kii-kii-kiing as he circles the sky. But our most devoted denizens are the wild turkeys.

I hear them at dawn, their soft, conversational chuck-chuck-chucking drifting through the slightly raised bedroom window. The sound seeps away, eastward, as they pace between the pond and terrace, to proceed as if in convoy to the front sloping lawn.

Frequently we all dine together at breakfast; they outside on bluejay-scattered sunflower seed under the feeder and choice adjacent insects and grass tufts, Russ and I inside on more mundane human fare. I am told they are very fond of acorns, so this fall is choice.

At various odd hours they stalk about the farm with great dignity, sometimes in a line, other times in a straggled group. The gait is mesmerizing. They look like they are wading slowly, carefully, through an invisible stream; up comes one leg, hesitates, then comes down with exquisite care, another hesitation, then the other leg lifts, delicately, then descends just as slowly and carefully. The head stretches forward and then back, oh so exquisitely, with each step.

If you've never seen a flock, be advised these birds are big; think peacock sized. But dark brown plumage, wings striped brown and a bit of white, tail feathers large, with chestnut or dark chocolate bars alternating with off white chevrons. A pink-white naked head (which looks distinctly odd as it slowly sails forward, seemingly disembodied, above and behind the pondside azalea bushes) tops the generous body, echoed by naked pink-white legs protruding from thigh-covering brown plus fours.

Mating season is dramatic. The gents fan out enormous tails, and slowly strut and turn, Philadelphia fancy mummers on silent parade. The ladies, practical about such matters, continue to peck desultorily at the lawn.

The Fall 2008 issue of *Edible South Shore* tells me the Latin moniker is *Meleagris gallopavo silvestris*, an inhabitant of much of the eastern U.S. and hunted almost to extinction. Happy I am I don't have to depend upon them for a meal and can enjoy the visual feast instead. Our good friend Tim allows as how one of his friends has a special turkey license, solely because they provide vast entertainment. A combination of powerful wings, excellent eyesight, extreme wariness, and an extraordinary ability to "wise up" to a hunter make them almost impossible to bag.

I reckon one important reason we see them so frequently: the absence of a dog. The two cats look, then studiously look away. Too big. And don't skitter and jerk like rodents.

Visiting older son Ole had to be informed of our troopers and I was delighted to spread the news. "Ole, we have estate birds."

"Oh," he shot back, not missing a beat, "loons?" With as much dignity as I could muster, I drew myself up. "No, turkeys." He grinned. "Well, that's almost as good."  
—Suze Craig

### Stormwater Regulation

The Board of Health is reviewing amendments to the Stormwater Regulation they hope to have in place by the New Year. Public comments were taken into consideration and, where feasible, integrated into the document. The intent of the regulation: to control stormwater quantity and rate of flow from flooding abutting neighbors and streets, causing damage and unsafe conditions.

Concern has been voiced that the regulation will be a hardship for the resident wishing to build a new single-family home. Note: the regulation has been developed to protect the homeowner from problems stormwater can inflict on a resident's personal property and on that of his or her neighbor. Having proper controls is a benefit for the homeowner.

Additionally, the fee associated with the regulation is NOT a burden. The BOH has recommended a small fee of \$75 be added as a line item to its list of fees and designated as a Stormwater Review Fee. It will cover the additional review the BOH agents will have to do for each case that falls under the regulation guidelines. Having this regulation in place is good for Westport and will be a first step in protecting property and our watershed's natural resources.

### Lincoln Park

The site of the infamous Lincoln Park is about to get a facelift. Plans for Phase One are currently being reviewed by the Dartmouth Conservation Commission. Because it's been designed as a 40R development, the Town of Dartmouth has been able to collaborate with the developer.

The development will sit at the top of the East Branch of the Westport River, directly across from Lake Noquochoke. Thus all stormwater plans must be carefully examined to guarantee there will be no adverse impact to the river and water quality. With these stipulations in mind, the Buzzards Bay National Estuaries Project and Westport officials are also reviewing the plans. We hope in the near future the Town will hold a meeting for Westport residents who wish to know more about the project and its impact.

### Head of Westport Stormwater Solutions Continue

Last year the Town of Westport received a \$15,000 grant from the Buzzards Bay National Estuaries Project (BBNEP) to analyze storm water problems and potential solutions for the west side of Old County Road from the Head to Route 88. Initial assessments suggest a large percentage of it comes from the schools and library because hard surfaces such as roofs, parking areas and driveways do not provide opportunities for it to infiltrate. These impervious surfaces adding excess water flow into the Old County drainage system. And where does the untreated storm water go? Directly into the west side of the river at Drift Road and Old County Road.

Possible solutions: rain gardens and an underground retention basin can be constructed to collect that storm water and treat it, or use it to irrigate school ball fields.

A rain garden is a simple yet effective method to control storm water. Also known as a bioretention area, it's a small vegetated depression that collects, stores, and infiltrates runoff. Containing various soil types from clays to sands, a rain garden's size varies, depending on the area drained and available space. Its design involves a bewildering number of factors: the hydrologic cycle, nonpoint pollutant treatment, resource conservation, habitat creation, nutrient cycles, soil chemistry, horticulture, landscape architecture, and ecology. But beyond its use for stormwater control, it provides aesthetically pleasing landscaping and a natural habitat for birds and butterflies. Finally, it promotes sustainable design practices while encouraging environmental stewardship and community pride. ([www.lowimpactdevelopment.org](http://www.lowimpactdevelopment.org))

One idea that was dismissed due to cost and structural issues was installing a "green" vegetated roof at the Middle School, although green roof technologies offer excellent energy savings as they add higher insulation values in winter and summer. To further examine solutions, WRWA is hiring an engineering firm to do data inventory and analysis of the school/library properties, structural evaluation of the Middle School and its current drainage system. Final designs will be contributed by the BBNEP grant.

The goal is to develop engineered solutions that can be used by the Town to apply for S319 Stormwater funds to construct the recommended pollution solutions to improve water quality at the Head of Westport. Initial work will be concluded in the spring of 2009 with final designs available for submission to the 2010 round of state grant funds.

—Gay Gillespie



## Critter Corner: Little Brown Bats

Bats, the only mammals that truly fly, have unique traits that allow them to succeed in virtually every environment except for extreme polar and desert areas. Predator evading traits: they are nocturnal and during the day they sleep up high, usually in trees or attics. When hibernating or sleeping, their clinging upside down position is easy on their weak limbs and hard on predators such as owls and snakes. It also allows them to take off for flight simply by dropping down. Some species feed on nectar, some on fruit, but most are insectivores. Many use a combination of vision, smell, and echolocation at night to locate prey and other objects during flight. Echolocation: the bat emits short high-frequency screeches and listens for the echo as the sound strikes objects to determine the distance, direction, movement, size, shape, and surface characteristics of an object. Out of that trait we got to radar.



New England hosts many species of the flying mammal, but the most abundant is *Myotis lucifugus*, the Little Brown Bat. They, like many other species, migrate south and hibernate during the winter. When not in hibernation, they prefer to roost near a water source, as many of the insects they eat have a partially aquatic life cycle.

The mating season is in late fall, but, interestingly enough, the sperm lies dormant in the female during hibernation and does not fertilize the egg until she wakes in spring. Pregnant females move to a warmer roost, form nursery colonies, and then give birth about two months later. They have one offspring, or pup, per year. The mother, producing milk for her offspring, will eat her weight in insects each day until the pup reaches adult size, about three weeks after birth. Around 50% of the offspring die in their first year, but those that survive usually can live past thirty years.

Bats are downright useful to us. Insect eaters provide pest control, important to our economy and basic comfort. And they eat a lot of insects—devouring about 50% of their body weight each night, thus helping control farm crop pests and, as mosquitoes are prime fare, lowering dramatically insect borne disease. They also produce very rich excrement, guano, historically used as fertilizer, also appearing in make-up and explosives. More recently, enzymes from bacteria in guano are used to make laundry detergents and other cleaning products. And don't forget nectar drinking species aid in pollination, and fruit-eating bats disperse seeds.

With all of these great things that bats do for us you want them nearby—but probably not so near they live in your attic. One solution is to build a bat box for them near—but away from—your house. There are several websites, for example <[www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org)>, and other resources that sell bat box kits, all of whom will tell you the best place to put these convenient bat homes, and answer any other questions you may have.

You may have seen the news that almost entire caves of bats have been found dead or dying in the past couple years in parts of New York, Vermont, Connecticut, and western Massachusetts. Tens of thousands of them were found to have died during hibernation this past winter with a white fungus growing around their nostrils and under their wings. The hardest hit species: the Little Brown Bat. Not much is known about what is called “white nose syndrome” or how it spreads, and many bat experts are very concerned about the species. If you see a bat that is acting abnormally and has white spots on its nose or wings, you should contact U.S. Fish and Wildlife or you can send an e-mail to [WhiteNoseBats@fws.gov](mailto:WhiteNoseBats@fws.gov).

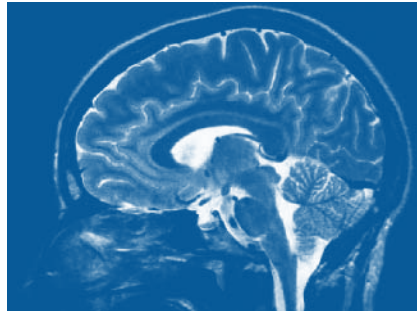
—Charles Gerrior

## Tadpole Tales Preschool Program With Openings This Winter



WRWA's preschool program, Tadpole Tales, a hands-on program for children ages 3-5. During the program WRWA staff will lead your preschooler on an outdoor adventure. Each week we have a different nature focus with new activities which will include a story, craft or activity and outdoor walk on a nature trail. Tadpole Tales will be on Thursdays lasting five weeks, at WRWA's office from 10-11 A.M. The cost of each the program is \$ 30.00 for members and \$40.00 for nonmembers. (Program fee includes a parent to accompany the child). This program is five weeks (Thursdays) and begins on Thursday, January 15. For more information please contact our office at 508-636-3016.

Somewhere between the recesses of our reptilian brainstems and the emotional center of the amygdala exists a slowly evolving instinct called, by some, human nature. You can see it at work up and down the Westport River where forested banks have become lawn or meadow with a sprinkling of deciduous trees, and heirloom livestock dot preserved farmlands like overstretching on a patchwork quilt.



Two-time Pulitzer prize-winning biologist E.O. Wilson cites research suggesting this visual aspect humans are hard-wired to desire, dating from the earliest days of hominids on the African savanna. Given a choice of settings for home or work, people across cultures preferred “to live on a height looking down and out, to scan a parkland with scattered trees and copses, closer in appearance to a savanna than to either a grassland or a closed forest, and to be near a body of water, such as a lake, river, or sea.” They want “a view of fruitful terrain”, “they like large animals scattered thereabout, either wild or domestic” and “they favor trees with low horizontal branches and divided leaves.”

I find this comforting, despite my understanding all the ways in which forest destruction threatens the health of wetlands, the river, and the myriad ecologies dependent on shade and damp. At least it’s not just selfish indifference or a modish adherence to the latest in landscaping design.

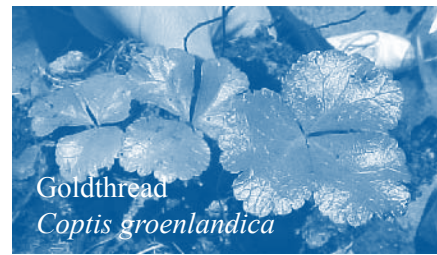
Professor Wilson, prolific author of scientific books and papers in entomology and sociobiology, has become particularly concerned at the decline of biodiversity and its meaning—economic, aesthetic, psychological and spiritual—for the future of all life. His “Creation” (2006), written to an apocryphal Southern Baptist minister, appeals for unity among scientists, educators, and ministers of faith in the common cause of preserving life in all its forms.

Personally, I keep a little list going in my head of rare or disappearing species I hear about. I know I’ll never discover an ivory-billed woodpecker because even if there really is one somewhere I’m not about to trek around the prehistoric swamps of Alabama where the mosquitoes sound like Evinrude engines. I’ve seen “The Rescuers”. Besides, we Yankees are just as adept at mowing down, crowding out, poisoning, shooting, trampling, eating and decorating for sale our dwindling flora and fauna as any redneck Southerner.

Goldthread (*Coptis groenlandica*) is one of those stunningly inconspicuous plants, which when you do find it, looks like wild strawberry or a dozen other common small shiny 3-leafed evergreens growing in moss along with starflower, partridgeberry and checkered wintergreen. Its stems are delicate, and its bright yellow rhizomes spread through the duff, or very top layer of humus in damp, cool places, often near bogs or streams. The catch is, it’s so easy to destroy that it’s mainly found only in undisturbed late-successional or old-growth forests.

I first saw it on a guided walk in an Atlantic white cedar swamp in Weetamoo Woods. Tiverton Great Swamp, near the old St. Vincent de Paul home for boys, has some too. Tiverton Great Swamp is also an important source for the West Branch of the Westport River.

Goldthread was prized for centuries for its medicinal properties, used to treat canker sore, thrush, dyspepsia and alcoholism, among others, and at one time it was the best-seller in pharmacies in Colonial Boston. Its abundance shrank from habitat constriction and over picking, and modern pharmaceuticals replaced goldthread in the popular pharmacopoeia. Wildcrafters still collect it sparingly and dispense it as an herbal concoction.



Hoping for the thrill of discovery and the elemental pleasure of being outside with other living creations, not man-made, perfectly designed for their places in the environment (our environment)—are what Wilson calls “biophilia”. Human nature (not all scientists accept the idea of a genetic human nature, but E.O. Wilson lays out a strong affirmative case) has an “innate tendency to affiliate with life and life-like processes” and values “novelty and diversity of life.”

Wilson would say my looking for goldthread is motivated by the same force which sent “earlier travelers to unnamed islands and remote jungles...to explore...to turn living creatures into emotion-laden metaphors and to install them in mythology and religion.”

Biophilia accounts for the better health of prisoners in cells with a view of farmland, the lower stress of employees whose outside view is a natural environment, lower blood pressure of dental patients looking at nature prints, and, over the course of fifteen years of psychiatric inpatient records, fewer attacks on wall art when the subject matter was literalist representations of nature as opposed to abstract paintings.

It’s why children with ADD have been found to focus

## The Battery Battle Continued

Any retailer, for example, your local garage or automotive store, that sells these batteries has to accept your used one for recycling, as required by state law. The recycling process results in a new battery that is comprised of 60 to 80 percent recycled lead and plastic.

Stores that sell electronic products often have a program for recycling. Retailers such as Home Depot, Sears, Target, Best Buy and Staples recycle both rechargeable batteries and cell phones.

Mercury-oxide and silver-oxide button batteries are estimated to be the most significant source of battery-derived mercury in the Massachusetts municipal solid waste. This type of battery is often collected by jewelers, pharmacies and hearing-aid stores who sell them to companies to reclaim the metals.

Recycling the ubiquitous alkaline battery that powers your flashlight is more difficult. Since the Battery Act of 1992, manufacturers have significantly reduced its mercury content. Duracell's website states it has eliminated mercury from all of its alkaline batteries. It adds: "Our alkaline batteries are composed primarily of common metals—steel, zinc, and manganese—and do not pose a health or environmental risk during normal use and disposal."

What's "normal disposal"? The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection claimed in a 1996 report that foreign imports were responsible for 82 to 94 percent of the mercury in our battery waste stream. These foreign manufacturers "may not have reduced mercury content to the same degree as the U.S. firms." One source I consulted notes "the regulation never really touched on battery lead content and lead is also a major environmental concern... non-rechargeable batteries are "non-hazardous by regulation only." Aquatic toxicity measurements were not a consideration in classification.

A trip to Westport's Town Landfill isn't of much help. There are no provisions for recycling any type of battery. Nor is there any public municipal collection as recommended by the Massachusetts DEP. For the past two years, WRWA has hosted an electronic recycling day—batteries are recycled along with the other components.

MA DEP suggests "saving" your batteries until there is a local recycling opportunity. There are several battery-recycling organizations that will work with towns and other groups to collect and recycle all batteries at no cost, if Westport decided to take that step.... A call to Interstate All Battery Center at Faunce Corner in Dartmouth (508-991-80019) resulted in some good news: "Yes, we accept all batteries for recycling. Yes, even alkaline batteries," they replied.

Hooray.

—Nancy Whitin

## Thanks to the Baywatcher Volunteers

The Baywatcher program is directed by the Coalition for Buzzards Bay to assess the health of each of the Bay's 30 major harbors and coves in Buzzard's Bay. Volunteer Baywatchers participate in a training session to learn the proper sampling techniques and receive a sampling kit, a hand book of procedures, and data sheets. Once properly trained, they monitor an assigned site once a week between 6 and 9 a.m. for one hour from May through September. The sites are monitored for basic parameters such as dissolved oxygen, temperature, salinity, and water clarity.



The data collected provides an immediate snapshot of the health of the bay. From these measurements volunteers can determine the percentage of oxygen saturation in the water and conditions in their specific location for marine organisms throughout the summer months.

Why is measuring dissolved oxygen important? Like its terrestrial counterparts, all aquatic life needs oxygen to survive. The amount needed varies with time of year and species. Oxygen needs vary even with the life stage of a species; young species tend to be more sensitive to low oxygen conditions than adults. Also important is the duration of periods with low oxygen. Most species can survive short periods of reduced oxygen, but suffer during longer periods.

Dissolved oxygen can range from 0-18 parts per million (ppm), but most natural water systems require 5-6 parts per million to support a diverse population. This year, Baywatcher data showed worsening conditions, compared to 2007. Nine percent of samples collected this summer had a dissolved oxygen reading less than five ppm (not good).

Thank you volunteers for your diligent work that provides essential data to evaluate the health of the Westport River. We will need two new volunteers next summer. Please call Dee Morris at WRWA 508-636-3016, if you would like to help out.

**THANK YOU**

Charlie Appleton, Head of Westport  
Lee Tripp, Hix Bridge  
Catherine Williams, Cadman's Neck  
David Gibbs, Cummings Lane  
Cindy West, Westport Point  
Ed Carey, Carey's Boatyard  
Jim Whitin, Canoe Rock  
Betsy Cady, Charlton's Wharf  
Chen Lu Yang, Hulda's Cove  
Substitute monitor: Susan Bettencourt

# Ideas for Holiday Gifts from WRWA

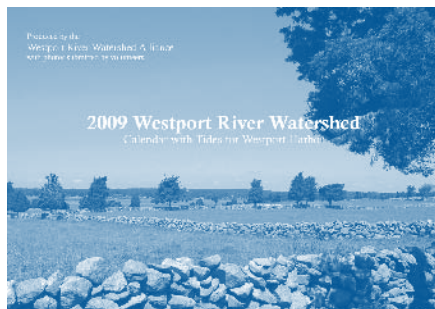
visit our new website: <http://westportwatershed.org> to place your order online



For Osprey lovers and fans of Betsey MacDonald, WRWA has a unique collection of her paintings depicting the birds in various media, on display in our Education Center weekdays. They are lovely and would make a great holiday present. Also available is our book, *Fish Hawk: The Story of the Osprey*, written by the late Gil Fernandez and illustrated by Betsey.

## WRWA's 2009 Calendar

Get your 2009 WRWA Calendar for a holiday gift today. This useful color calendar features beautiful photographs of the Westport River and the watershed, and lists daily tides and heights for Westport Harbor. This project was supported by the Westport Arts Council through a grant from the Helen E. Ellis Charitable Trust administered by the Bank of America. WRWA is grateful to the Westport Arts council for their support of community programs that inspire the appreciation and celebration of Westport's natural resources. Calendars are \$12 each and available at the WRWA office (located at 1151 Main Road), Lees Market, Westport Apothecary, Partners Village Store, plus a few other select locations throughout the area. They are selling quickly, so come by and get yours soon.



Images for the catalog were solicited from the public. Many thanks go to local photographers who sent in pictures. Contributors include: F. Richard Cottrell, Roland Koelsch, Hillary Ponte, James Kelly, Jill Kelsall, Jim Brayton, Shelli Costa, Scott Buchanan, John Davenport, Kay Lisle, David Cole, Jessica Krause Smith, Martha Rice, Cathy Swanteson, Lee Tripp, Jane Dahill Flanigan, Virginia King, Megan Madara, Edward Brown, and Peter Kastner. Visit [wrwa.com](http://wrwa.com) for info on how to send in your pictures.

Stumped on what to get your friends, relatives, coworkers for a birthday or holiday gift? You're in luck, because WRWA has plenty of options for gifts for the Westport River enthusiast.

A \$40 WRWA membership is the perfect gift for anybody who has a connection to the Westport River.

Know someone who wants to show his or her support of WRWA and look really slick at the same time? We have our popular baseball hats at \$20 and warm fleece jackets at \$60 in mens' and womens' sizes.

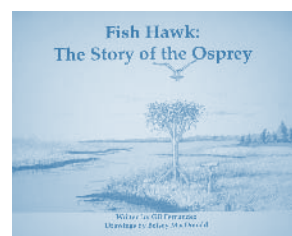
Also nice is our WRWA cotton t-shirt in adult (\$10) and kids' (\$5) sizes.

Another great gift is *Fish Hawk: The Story of the Osprey* written by well-known Osprey expert and advocate Gil Fernandez and illustrated by local artist Betsey MacDonald. The book is \$10.

You can carry all of these things around in one of our WRWA tote bags, available for \$15.

How will everyone thank me for these wonderful presents, you ask? Well, you can slip it into conversation that we have packs of note cards for \$10. Each pack contains three cards each of four different illustrations by Betsey MacDonald.

To order please call (508) 636-3016 or come by the WRWA office at 1151 Main Road in Westport, MA.



## From the Woods to the Water Continued

better after spending some time outside.

But if this is so, our technology and “civilization” have so far outpaced our genetic evolution that we are now poised on the brink of the complete destruction of the biodiverse, ecologically balanced, natural environment we need to survive. Our man-made replications—Wilson calls some “abominations”—from wetlands to sheep, are based on a wildly imperfect, primitive and incomplete understanding of the connections among life communities. Decoding a few genetic strands does not make us Creators.

Homo sapiens has existed as a life form on the planet for about 150,000 of its four hundred million years. We have, to quote Professor Wilson once again, “all by our bipedal, wobbly-headed selves” altered the wild eco-systems of our planet so as to begin their extinction: “the only human impact that is irreversible.”

As alien invasives go, we Homo sapiens pretty much take the cake. Perhaps it is we described a century ago in Yeats’ “The Second Coming”:

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Scientists and poets know more than I do and are doomed equally, one by the logical consequences of evolution, one by the melodic demands of rhetoric. I can’t fathom science still mute on *before* Creation or *after* Annihilation, or any rougher beast than Snuffleupagus. If I can find my other Bean boot, I’m going back to look for a plant I saw at the Herb Hadfield Reservation. I think it might have been a small whorled pogonia.

—Lucy Keefe



## WRWA Calendar of Events Programs require reservations

**Call WRWA 508-636-3016 for  
information or to sign up.**

December 11 • 5 P.M. – 7 P.M. • WRWA Holiday Open House. Wing Carriage House • 1151 Main Road, Westport.

January 30 • Time T.B.D. • Eyes on Owls with Marcia Wilson - educational owl program.

January 24 & 25 · 9 A.M.-5 P.M. • Wilderness First Aid • Macomber Community House • \$140 • Contact WRWA at (508)636-3016 to register for course.

The popular *Shrink Your Footprint Series* will return this year in January, February, and March. The first event will focus on food, the second on water use, and the third will be on home cleaning products. Dates are to be confirmed soon.

The Westport River Watershed Alliance is hosting a Wilderness First Aid Course. This course is a must for anyone traveling in the wilderness, from the outdoor enthusiast to the trip leader. This wilderness emergency medical course will be coordinated in partnership with SOLO Wilderness Medicine, leaders in the field of rescue and emergency medicine both in the US and abroad. Participants completing the course will receive a certification in Wilderness First Aid. Call WRWA to register. Dates: January 24 & 25, 9am-5pm. Cost \$140



Westport River Watershed Alliance  
1151 Main Road  
P.O. Box 3427  
Westport, MA 02790-0703

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