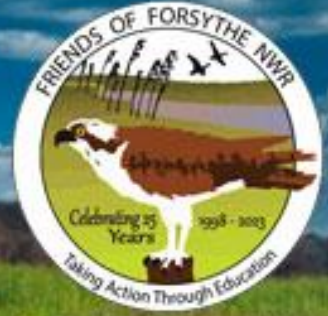


A Publication of the Friends of Forsythe SUMMER 2023



Summer at Forsythe/Credit Susan Puder

TAKING ACTION THROUGH EDUCATION

Long Beach Island Conservation Coalition

By Virginia Rettig, Manager

For many years we have had both positive and (less) positive engagement with the public at Holgate, our premier beach-nesting bird site at the southern tip of Long Beach Island. This 3-mile-long stretch of wilderness has become more important to the federally listed piping plover since Hurricane Sandy than it ever was before. The site offers wonderful surf fishing beginning in September when the beach re-opens to the public each year. Historically, there has been some conflict with the public who saw their long-time full access diminish in the 1990s when the plover became so rare. While we have been enjoying a great relationship and doing litter clean-ups with the NJ Beach Buggy Association and the Holgate Taxpayers Association each year, we knew there was more we could do to raise the awareness of the importance of Holgate to the public.

Conservation, continued on page 2

This newsletter is a publication of the FRIENDS OF FORSYTHE, a non-profit, 501(c)3, tax-exempt corporation that works closely with the Refuge. Friends are the bridge between the Refuge and the community, and contribute to its future by helping people understand that their actions today determine the legacy we leave for tomorrow.

Our mission is to support the purposes for which the Refuge was established and includes the following:

- For use as a sanctuary for migratory birds and non-migratory animals
- For protection of natural resources
- For the conservation of non-game, threatened and endangered species
- For promoting environmental education and experiences for children and adults
- For the development of other wildlife-oriented experiences that do not interfere with the primary mission of the Refuge.

We invite you to join. You can serve on the Board of Directors, assist as members of Advisory Committees, work in the Visitor Information Center and Nature Store, or provide your support by being a member. Please share your interest and experience. For more information, please email friendsofforsythe@gmail.com or go to <https://friendsofforsythe.org/>



Holgate Beach

Last year, we contacted several organizations that do conservation work on the island and through a series of meetings we discovered our number

one goal was to make a one-stop-shop for residents and visitors to find out what nature-related activities they could do on any given day. The result is "Island Times," a seasonal newsletter full of live links where people can find a fun activity any day of the week this summer (and beyond). We plan to release a newsletter quarterly and invite all of you to check it out. if you would like to sign up for the newsletter, email lbconservationcoalition@gmail.com.

Partner organizations include Alliance for a Living Ocean, Barnegat Light State Park, The Garden Club of LBI, Holgate Taxpayers Association, Jetty Rock Foundation, Long Beach Island Foundation, Long Beach Township Marine Field Station, and Re-Clam the Bay.



Recent Fish Kill in Galloway

By Virginia Rettig, Manager

In July, we had a fairly significant fish kill in the northwest impoundment of the Wildlife

Drive area of the refuge. The dissolved oxygen level in the pool dipped very low and that resulted in a sudden die-off of hundreds of fish. The primary species affected were gizzard shad and alewife. A combination of factors is believed to have resulted in the die-off. Air temperatures were high (it is summer after all), but also water temperatures were quite high in areas like Reeds Bay (we had reports of 80 degrees). Additionally, we were not adding water to this freshwater pool as we were preparing it for a mowing project to cut back phragmites for habitat restoration. We are now running fresh water through the pool to try to avoid this from happening again.



Aerial view of E.B. Forsythe NWR

Over many years, we've seen overall habitat value of the northwest pool diminish as it has converted to open water. Typical for areas of impounded water, over time the weight of the water often sinks the pool 'floor' to a point where it becomes difficult to manage without making changes to the system. For example, the water control structures that move water out of the pool are now higher than they were relative to the original pool floor so we cannot get the volume of water out of the system that we would like. This really limits our ability to manage the area. For now, the site will remain as is; however, we are studying all of the impoundments to determine how best to improve the ability to make great wildlife habitat long term.



Summer Programming is in full swing at the Refuge!

By Tracy Neal, Visitor Services Manager

- **Holgate Beach** - tabling and hands-on activities are happening most weekends, Friday through Sunday, approximately 9:30am – 2pm, weather dependent. Mary Jane, Conserve Wildlife NJ, and Visitor Services staff are leading hikes each Friday through August 25th at 10:30am.
- **Long Beach Township Marine Field Station** - is hosting daily family friendly programs. Join us for the Wonders of Holgate each Wednesday through August 23rd 11am – 12pm. More information can be found in the Long Beach Island Conservation Coalition's newsletter.

- **AC Boys & Girls Club Teen Center** – celebrate their 3rd annual summer camp at the refuge! Each week the youth participate in a different activity which include hiking, bird identification, sein netting in the marsh, archery, orienteering and kayaking.
- **AC Multicultural Affairs** - Virginia and Tracy will help host a pollinator planting day at the Absecon Lighthouse. Youth ages 5-12 are expected with their parents to help plant, learn about pollinators, and visit the lighthouse.
- **Local Events** - summer is the time for fairs and festivals! The refuge's staff has participated in several local events including the Long Beach Island Foundation's Barnegat Bay Day, Stafford Township's Green Fair, and Atlantic City's Chelsea Garden Grand Opening.

A big thank you to the Friends of Forsythe for your generous donation of snacks and drinks for our summer youth programs!



Ospreys and Piping Plovers Having a Tough Year

As many of our Osprey Cam followers can attest, osprey



Osprey, photo by Sue Puder

young are having a tough time in 2023 making it to fledge. This is occurring throughout New Jersey and along the Chesapeake Bay area. For those who have been watching our osprey pair on the Friends of Forsythe live view, two of the hatchlings didn't make it past four weeks old. This brood reduction is something that has attracted concern from our partners, Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey.

According to Ben Wurst, CWF senior wildlife biologist, "Ever since a spring nor'easter impacted the coast with strong onshore winds for several days, young osprey have been dying of starvation in plain sight. This year, weather has impacted the availability of fish and outcomes of nests in the Garden State."

Wurst states, "Brood reduction is actually quite common in ospreys, as they are specially adapted for it." But he added, "we have not witnessed such widespread brood reduction in ospreys over the past two decades. This year it was observed at almost every osprey cam nest in New Jersey." Decreased abundance of Atlantic menhaden, or bunker, may be an issue, as strong onshore winds made it hard for ospreys to find their favorite food.

He added, "Ospreys have done quite well in New Jersey over the past several decades, so the recent nest failure should not affect their long-term stability. It is only problematic if this trend continues, like the situation on Chesapeake Bay where many nests are failing and not meeting thresholds to sustain the population. The limited availability of menhaden is to blame. Ospreys are

indicating that something is wrong in the environment. The climate is changing, and we should all be concerned for the future of our planet and its inhabitants."



Piping plover, photo by Sue Puder

Just to note that the strong spring nor'easter also had negative impacts on all beach nesting birds, especially piping plovers at Holgate. Final tallies of successful nests will be available later in the fall. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge contracts with wildlife technicians to monitor beach nesters, signage, and track their behavior until they leave at the end of the season. If you would like to help support the Refuge's program to monitor and protect piping plovers, you can make a donation of \$100 to Friends of Forsythe, which will go towards the Refuge's efforts in 2024. In addition, you will receive a piping plover

'Adoption' kit, full of wonderful plover items, including a lapel pin, a plushy piping plover chick, an adoption certificate, a reusable Forsythe shopping bag, and



Adopt a Plover kit

other great items about these little plovers. Currently, the adoption kits are only available at the Friends of Forsythe Nature Store, located on Great Creek Road, Oceanville, NJ.



Jitney Tours

By Mar-Jo Attack



Jitney tours of the Refuge

The regular Saturday jitney tours started on March 18 and ended on June 24. During that time frame there were also 5 special tours for groups. We had the last special tour on Friday, June 30. Bridge Builders Youth group, from Flushing New York. They were middle school age students. It sounded like the highlight of the tour, for them, was seeing the eagle's nest. They were on a retreat staying close by.

There were about 107 riders enjoying these tours. Some weeks were cancelled because of rain. The tours should resume on Saturday, September 16, 2023.



Our monthly FRIENDS MEETINGS are
the **SECOND MONDAY** of each month
at the
**EDWIN B. FORSYTHE NATIONAL
WILDLIFE REFUGE**
Administrative Building
800 Great Creek Road
Oceanville, NJ 08231

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Wildlife Likes us at

<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofForsytheNWR/>