

Sippewissett Association Newsletter

Unexpected Visitor to Gunning Point Beach

While walking on the beach with her son on December 15, Lisa Condon, a resident of Gunning Point, made a startling discovery – a monstrous dead fish, measuring over five feet long.

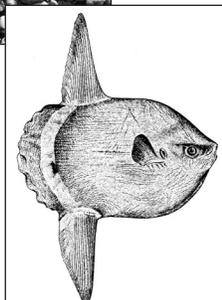
Lisa phoned the New England Coastal Wildlife Alliance (NECWA) who sent a biologist to examine the animal. Carol “Krill” Carson, a marine biologist and founder of NECWA, identified the animal as an ocean sunfish (*Mola mola*), a young male, 5.4 feet long. Strandings of ocean sunfish occur each fall and early winter with as many as 50 carcasses washing ashore in New England from September through January. This was the 24th ocean sunfish examined this season by her organization.

continued on page 4



A dead ocean sunfish found on Gunning Point Beach by Lisa Condon and her son on December 15, 2016.

The adult ocean sunfish is the heaviest boney fish in the world, reaching over 2000 lbs. (drawing by H.L. Todd)



Gunning Point Beach – Use Policy Clarified

This land is owned by Salt Pond Areas Bird Sanctuaries, Inc. It is protected conservation land. We are working to ensure the use of this property for beach recreation while also protecting animal habitat and fragile vegetation that stabilizes sand dunes and prevents erosion.

- Please remain off the dunes at all times.
- Please do not leave your personal belongings overnight.
- Personal items (including but not limited to chairs, toys, beach items, boats, kayaks and canoes, etc.) left anywhere on the property and/or trails will be removed.
- Please be respectful of this property and leave nothing behind when you leave.

Thank you for your cooperation.

The above language will be posted on signs at Gunning Point Beach starting the summer of 2017. Salt Pond Area Bird Sanctuaries, Inc., (SPABSI) acquired ownership of these beach lands through a Land Court settlement in 2010 (*Corcoran Sweeney v Bowin et al.*) and subsequent purchases of beach lots from a Langley / Keyes heir. These actions were taken, at significant cost, to stabilize ownership and protect the shore and community access from rapacious real estate speculators.

Long-term residents have observed, over the past several years, an increasing storage of personal water craft and beach chairs at the beach. Last summer, 28 personal water craft and over 100 chairs were counted and photographed.

continued on page 4

The Mizell-Hoskins Trailhead

The Kelly Woodland acquisition was completed June 29, 2016, by the joint owners -- The 300 Committee Land Trust and the Buzzards Bay Coalition. In keeping with their long-standing conservation commitment, the Kelly family donated their 2.6-acre wetland adjoining the separate 0.51-acre buildable lot to form the 3.13-acre Woodland parcel, named in their honor. This parcel connects the 400-acre Beebe Woods, to the east, with the 28-acre Flume Pond Conservation Area, to the west, to form a protected wildlife corridor linking interior Town woodlands with the water's edge at Buzzard's Bay.

The Sippewissett Association membership provided \$45,000 toward the Kelly Woodland acquisition. At our December 2016 Board meeting, Board Member Dr. Merle Mizell announced his intention to provide additional needed funds to establish a small parking facility at the Kelly Woodland providing new access for walkers -- the only access from Sippewissett Road -- to an expanded trail network throughout these now-connected conservation lands.

The parking area, with a crushed stone surface, will provide five parking slots partly surrounded by a split rail fence. One walking path will lead eastward to Beebe Woods; another, leading westward, will cross Sippewissett Road on a painted crosswalk leading to the established trail system on the Flume Pond Conservation Area. Permanent signage for the Kelly Woodland property will be installed near the parking lot entrance on Sippewissett Road, along

with roadside traffic signage to promote safe pedestrian movements. All aspects of the project will continue to involve close coordination among the private land trust owners and all Town Departments and Committees with applicable jurisdictions, responsibilities, and capabilities.

The facility will have an information kiosk with maps and local information, with nearby wooden benches. The trail design with attention to local geology and vernal pools and wetland features is currently in process.

Dr. Merle and Lorraine Mizell lived in Sippewissett since the 1970s and raised their two children, Michael and Tracy, here during summers. The children held summer jobs locally and sailed and swam in Buzzard's Bay and Flume Pond throughout their childhood. It is with memories of these happy years, supported by the magic ambiance of Sippewissett, that he has made his recent generous gift. When we suggested naming the new facility "The Mizell Trailhead" he paused and recommended the name, instead, be "The Mizell-Hoskins Trailhead", to celebrate the effort initiated together by himself and Dr. Hartley Hoskins, nearly half a century ago, to secure these conservation lands. A task begun so long ago, with many dedicated participants along the way, is now near completion.

Bahama Mama Spotted

Our Andros Island correspondent writes: "I was lucky enough to be in the Bahamas for some plover surveys earlier this month, and spotted our old friend from Falmouth foraging on a mudflat on the island of Andros. It's good to know that she came through Hurricane Matthew OK and is back on her wintering grounds.

The resighting was Feb 8, 10:00 AM, 24.8515 N, 77.905 W. She was with a flock of 47 piping plovers feeding on the flats."

Known locally as "Bahama Mama" this tagged piping plover, the subject of several past newsletters, has nested for years at Wood Neck Beach and Trunk River in Falmouth. She may be eight years old.

Quisset Gardens

The Sippewissett Association is comprised of family members from 14 subdivisions bordering on the 2.8 mile-long Sippewissett Road, plus several homes built directly along Sippewissett Road. We intend to publish histories of each of the subdivisions in future newsletters. The first is an article about Quisset Gardens (or Marvin Gardens) written by Steve Chalmers, a resident since 1986.

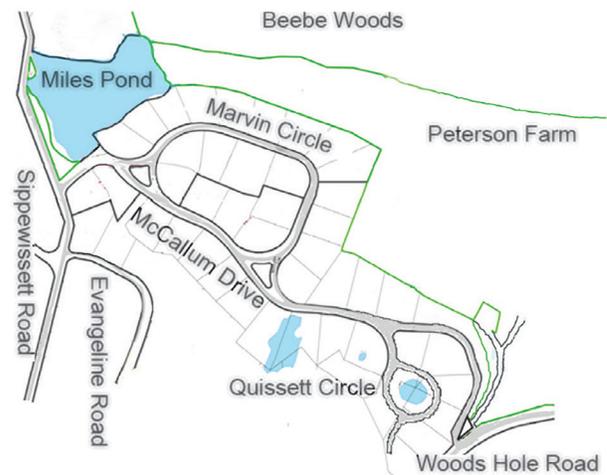
Editor

Quisset Gardens comprises 43 nominal one-acre building lots between the Woods Hole Road and Sippewissett Road at Miles Pond, on a dramatic glacial landscape. Russell McCallum owned the land at the time of his death in 1960. His house, (built sometime after 1930), overlooking Miles Pond, was at the end of a long, winding driveway. There were three structures on the property: the McCallum house, a small house built for Russell McCallum's personal doctor and a very small house for Russell McCallum's servant. They all remain, although the servant's house is no longer a dwelling.

The McCallums had beach rights to Racing Beach, but no direct access to Sippewissett Road. They would drive up to the Woods Hole Road, down on Ransom Road and then north up Sippewissett, Janet Burt Chalmers recalled from childhood visits to her friend Lally McCallum.

Russell McCallum's widow, Alice, lived in Belmont in the winter. One of her neighbors there was Alexander Marvin, who bought the Falmouth property from her in 1964. Alexander Marvin began developing the land in 1965. He named the development "Quisset Gardens," which is carved into a boulder facing the Woods Hole Road. The developer and builder are on the obverse - "Alex Marvin Dev, Stivaletta Bldr". Nowadays, the inmates tend to call it "Marvin Gardens."

Mr. Marvin initially put in two roads: McCallum Drive and Marvin Circle, which isn't a circle at all. McCallum Drive follows the original driveway to the bottom of the hill where it veers to the left and makes its way to Sippewissett Road. Marvin Circle splits off at the bottom of the hill to run between the lots abutting Peterson Farm and the next tier of lots. It rejoins McCallum Drive by Miles Pond. The original driveway curved to the right at the bottom of the hill and arrived at the western end of the house. One very old utility pole beside the old driveway is still visible on a vacant lot. Access to the house is now from Marvin Circle. The doctor's house is now reached from McCallum Drive.



Mr. Marvin lived in several new houses until they sold. He wanted to control the development so he did not form a neighborhood association. Mr. Marvin didn't like fences. He did like garages, although as he grew older he turned his own garage into quarters for his caregiver. He planted cherry trees, a number of which still flower every spring.

The town required a \$12,000 bond from Alexander Marvin to ensure the roads were properly paved. The roads were not paved

continued on page 5

Unexpected Visitor *(continued)*

According to NECWA, stranded individuals were healthy juvenile fish that strayed into bays and inlets around Cape Cod, and, later in the season, succumbed to cold-stunning and helplessly wash ashore. Rarely, they are rescued alive and moved offshore.

The adult ocean sunfish is the heaviest known fish (excluding sharks) in the world. It has an average adult weight between 545–2,205 pounds. The species is native to tropical and temperate ocean waters around the globe. It resembles a fish head with a tail, and its main body is flattened laterally. Sunfish can be as tall as they are long when their dorsal and ventral fins are extended.

Ocean sunfish live on a diet consisting mainly of jellyfish, and because this diet is nutritionally poor, they feed voraciously to develop and maintain their great bulk. Females of the species can produce more eggs than any other known vertebrate -- up to 300,000,000 at a time.

Sometimes mariners come upon these huge fish lying flat on their sides at the water's surface, for all appearances dead. But when closely approached they can explode in evasive activity. They can also display sudden, violent animation during breeding season.

Adult sunfish are vulnerable to few natural predators, but sea lions, killer whales, and sharks will consume them. Among humans, sunfish are considered a delicacy in some parts of the world, including Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. In the EU, regulations ban the sale of fish and fishery products derived from the family Molidae. Sunfish are frequently ensnared in gillnets.

To learn more about NECWA visit their websites at www.necwa.org and www.nebshark.org.

Gunning Point Beach *(continued)*

One Gunning Point resident mirrored a common sentiment: she said she cherished the former uncontaminated natural coastal landscape at the beach, but now "it looks like the pool and patio section at Walmart's." The problem is not limited to this beach; an employee of the Town Beach Committee said recently they have removed up to 600 items of abandoned property from the Surf Drive beach each year.

All of the beach and land within 100 feet of wetland resource areas is subject to the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (which in this case is enforced by the Falmouth Conservation Commission [Concom]), as well as to Falmouth's own Wetlands Bylaw and Concom's broader mandate. A portion of this land and the enclosed pond is now subject to State- and Town-approved Conservation Restrictions held by The 300 Committee Land Trust (T3C), who perform annual inspections for compliance. On June 3, 2016 T3C reported violations of the CR, involving storage of beach items, that also violated the aforementioned wetland protection laws. A representative of the Concom later concurred, and stated that the violations needed to be eliminated or an Enforcement Order would be issued by the Town to the owner of the land -- in this case SPABSI.

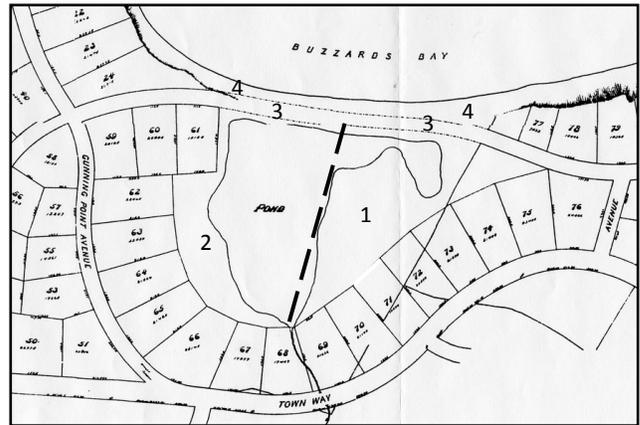
Additional interested parties here are owners of lots in the 1897 Sippowisset Subdivision, who hold deeded rights to the beach and shore along Buzzards Bay and are subject, by deed, to restrictions on how the beach can be used. Many Sippowisset Subdivision deeds include the following language: "And together with the right to use and enjoy the beach on Buzzards Bay...for all purposes for which beach land is commonly used but not for the erection or maintenance of any buildings or structures or the keeping or placing of boats, in common with

continued on page 5

Gunning Point Beach *(continued)*

the keeping or placing of boats, in common with others now or hereafter entitled thereto.” “And together with the right in common with others now or hereafter entitled thereto of access to said beach, over the streets, roads and ways shown on said plan.”

It is incumbent upon SPABSI (and their many supporters) to see to it that the beach properties are cleared of offending items. It has come to our attention that there is some interest in a possible partial solution to the storage of boats in a new rack compliant with applicable law. Such a solution would require approval by the Concom and by owners of the land. The Sippewissett Association is available to host an ad hoc discussion to explore this matter. Interested participants should contact us at our P.O. Box 501 address to participate in such a discussion. The liberties of the past, unfortunately, can no longer be sustained. Hopefully, we can identify an acceptable course in the gentle, neighborly manner we all want to prevail in our community.



Areal Jurisdiction or Owner

- All – 1897 Plan of Sippowissett
- All – Town of Falmouth (Concom wetland laws)
- 1 – Corcoran-Sweeney, LLC
- 2 – SPABSI (300 Committee – Conservation Restrictions)
- 3 – SPABSI / 1897 Plan of Sippowissett, Langley Keyes
- 4 – SPABSI (Purchase from Langley Keyes)

Quisset Gardens *(continued)*

properly, however, and the money was forfeit, and the roads remain private. They are a bit rough to this day, which tends to reduce through traffic. In his time, Mr. Marvin took care of the roads. He had a huge Ford station wagon, and as he was a small man, he appeared to be looking through the steering wheel. Once or twice a year he would hire a couple of men with some asphalt in a truck. He would make their lives miserable by following them in his car, telling them where he wanted potholes filled. After he died the roads got very bad. We formed a voluntary association about 20 years

ago, mainly to keep the roads passable. When the McCallum Drive and Marvin Circle lots were sold, Mr. Marvin put in Quisset Circle. Houses were built there from 1984 to 2000.

Where roadways join there are three triangles that are too small to build on. Mr. Marvin’s heirs do not maintain them nor do they pay the very minimal taxes. The town could take them for taxes, but then the town would have to maintain them. The standoff continues; the triangles remain in limbo and are maintained by the residents.

Steve Chalmers

Sippewissett Association - Newsletter

Inside

-  Unexpected Visitor - Monstrous Fish
-  Gunning Point Beach - Use Policy Clarified
-  New Trailhead at Kelly Woodland
-  History of Marvin Gardens Subdivision
-  "Bahama Mama" Plover Sighted

Calendar

March 19, 2017 ~ Winter Social,

Cape Codder Clubhouse, Standish Avenue,
2-5 PM. Meet your Board of Directors and
winter neighbors. Renew friendships.
Refreshments.

June 24, 2017 ~ Annual Meeting

10 AM Falmouth Public Library
Hermann Meeting Room
Coffee at 9 AM

Sippewissett Association

P.O. Box 501

Falmouth, MA 02541
