



# HPWA

## November Newsletter

Volume 10 Issue 5 November 2019 HPWA is a 501(c)3 Charitable Organization



Sunrise by Ulla Daggert

### Directors

Don Williams, *President*  
 Phil Angell, *Vice President*  
 John Foye, *Treasurer*  
 Beth Sobiloff, *Webmaster*  
 Lee Pulis, *Education Committee*  
 Paula Kuketz, *Water Safety Committee*  
 Martha Sheldon,  
*Membership Committee*  
 Geri Williams, *Newsletter*  
 Don Williams and Jack Kedian, *Water Quality Committee Co-Chairs*  
 Jerry Levine, *Invasive Species Committee*  
 Ramona Krogman,  
*Government Liaison*

### VISIT OUR WEBSITE

[TheHerringPonds Watershed.org](http://TheHerringPondsWatershed.org)

JOIN US

## President's Letter – A Very Good Year

by Don Williams, President

A hearty "**THANK YOU!**" goes out to our industrious Board of Directors and to you, our supporters for a banner year of accomplishment:

- Fall Town Meeting voted to purchase the **54 acre Condon Property** that is an important water recharge area for Great Herring Pond. Led by past president, **Brian Harrington** and **Martha Sheldon**, Membership chair,, \$38,380 was raised to contribute toward this effort. \$9000 of this came from our treasury. Thank you for your membership dues. (see Brian's article for more detail)
- **E. coli testing** revealed no problems in the 11 major swimming areas in Great Herring (GHP) and Little Herring (LHP) Ponds. **Jack Kedian** led the testing crew.
- The annual search for **invasive plant species** in GHP and LHP, organized by **Jerry Levine** and conducted by **Sara Grady**, revealed no harmful plants.
- Our herring count volunteers, organized by **Ramona Krogman** supported the electronic herring count from the Cape Cod Canal that showed the **herring count** for GHP and LHP has increased for the last 3 years and is second only to the 2000 count.
- **Membership** and **contributions** have increased to record levels this year! Thanks to all of you for your support and thanks to **Martha Sheldon** and **Chris Lewis** for a vibrant new membership brochure.
- **Beth Sobiloff** is working diligently to make our **website** more user-friendly. Watch for our launch of the new version.
- **Lee Pulis' Herring Run Simulator** was a big hit last April with at least 100 kids (and some adventuresome adults!) trying it out at Plymouth's annual Herring Fest.
- HPWA is committed to our greater community. This year, **Lee Pulis** spearheaded the drive to fund **4 camperships** at local camps for disadvantaged children. **Phil Angell** was instrumental in leading the **Shed Faire** fundraiser to raise this money.
- Our praiseworthy **newsletter** and informative **programs** are the work of **Geri Williams**.
- The **Annual HPWA Picnic** was organized by **Phil Angell**. A good time was had by all, even our resident bald eagle graced us with a Fly-By!
- **Paula Kuketz** initiated a meeting with David Gould and Chad Hunter of Plymouth's Division of Marine and Environmental Affairs to discuss new initiatives for **water safety**. David plans to ask Spring Town Meeting to fund a dedicated fresh water ponds patrol officer.

We are optimistic about starting work on a **Water Quality Plan** next spring. Geri has recruited Melissa Ferretti, dynamic chair of the Herring Pond Wampanoag tribe, to speak to us next summer about the Wampanoag's history with LHP and GHP. **Peg Burke** agreed to head a **watershed greeter's group** that will welcome and provide information for new residents of our watershed.

Does anything that we do appeal to you? Would you like to help? We would like to expand our community involvement and host more events in the future. Please consider donating your time and energy to a truly worthy cause – our water.

## From the Education Committee - Lee Pulis, Chair



**Owl box visitors** - Owl boxes are very active this time of year in the watershed. So many older trees with natural cavities for hole-nesting wildlife have been lost to storms, right-of-way trimming, and development, that man-made boxes are readily welcomed. In one 24-hour period in late October a single owl nest box hosted a day-roosting Screech owl, night visit from a Flying squirrel, home-shopping Red bellied woodpecker, and security checks by Chickadees, Nuthatches, Titmouses, and Blue jays.



**Fall Colors**- Folks from all over the world flock to New England in October for Nature's display of Autumn colors. Our Atlantic Coastal Pine Barrens forests are more fragmented and less colorful, but HPWA member Chris Lewis recorded striking colors on a pleasant October 22 walk in the David E. Alper Nature Preserve, with peak color of oaks still a week or so away.

**Isoscape Project**- Several HPWA members are still collecting monthly home well and ACEC pond and spring water samples in coordination with Glorianna Davenport (Tidmarsh Living Observatory) for analysis by Dr. David Boutt's project at UMASS Amherst. Results will be helpful in understanding watershed hydrology - where our rainfall originates and how fast it moves through groundwater and aquifer. For more info or to participate, visit: <https://www.umass.edu/newsoffice/article/researcher-asks-massachusetts-water>

## Juvenile Herring Behavior

While collecting a monthly water quality sample at the north inlet of Great Herring Pond, WQ Committee member Jim Smith observed thousands of juvenile river herring schooling upstream under the Carter's Rd bridge toward LHP. He watched for about a half hour and there was no letup. This brief video shows the rate of movement which was still in progress an hour later: <https://youtu.be/Ay2H8g4cwLQ> Typically they are thought to head out to sea in late summer or fall, but some reports indicate they may stay and overwinter in spawning ponds depending on factors like food supply, temperature, flow, etc.

## Fun-to-see Pine Barrens "Puff Adder"

A year or so before the Alper Preserve was acquired by the Town, HPWA members encountered a herpetology club member from Quincy there to hopefully find and show his son an **Eastern Hognose snake**, saying this was one of the best places to reliably find this harmless, very interesting species, partial to sandy soil...and toads. This specific species is considered rare and endangered. Recently a beautiful specimen was crossing a watershed yard where 3 youngsters got to see how they puff up, flatten the head, coil, hiss, and

strike like a cobra, but without ever biting (more like a head butt), and then roll over and “play dead” if further disturbed.



## A Joint Effort Preserves the Condon Property

by Brian Harrington, Past President

We are delighted by the pledges that our HPWA Friends and Members delivered in promised support for the purchase of 54 acres of land near Great Herring Pond called the Condon property! This land, once owned by the Hartford family, is west of Roxy Cahoon Road near the Keith Hartford Sailing Center on Great Herring Pond. It already has a developed trail, and is a treasure for its value as a wildlife corridor, for aquifer recharge (key for water supply to our wells, ponds and streams), as a living example of our globally rare pitch pine/scrub oak ecosystem, as a link to other tracts of open space, and for Plymouth’s build-out of trails linking open space. This land will be a legacy for future generations of Plymouth citizens.

HPWA has been a partner for this project, along with the Town of Plymouth’s Community Preservation Committee (CPC) and the Wildlands Trust. The CPC secured a purchase and sale agreement, and received approval and funding for the purchase at Fall 2019 Town Meeting. In a show of strong community support, our Herring Ponds Watershed Association raised pledges totaling \$38,380 towards the purchase, and with work of the CPC and Wildlands Trust, a state Land Grant of about \$400,000 helped clinch the purchase of the \$850,000 property.

Although HPWA does not buy or hold land ourselves, as part of our mission to protect the watershed, we do coordinate with the Town of Plymouth’s CPC and land protection organizations such as Wildlands Trust in trying to secure lands that are vital to the watershed. For example, we facilitated key donations when supplements to CPC funds were needed to secure a key 5-acre parcel along the Carter’s River, and another 43-acre parcel (now David E. Alper Nature Preserve) on a narrow ridge between Little Herring and Triangle Ponds.

A watershed is not just water. This new upland property has a huge value to our watershed;

- It is an aquifer recharge area, and this will benefit our watershed
- It is large and connects to 130 acres of land recently gifted for conservation to the Town
- It connects to the Old Valley Road Trail (which, in turn, connects to the “Thousand Acres” land to the west and to Valley Rd to the east)
- It abuts a large tract (> 100 acres) of privately owned open land to the south

These are all wonderful attributes. Thanks to all who helped make this purchase happen!

## Welcome Sam and Mary!

by Don Williams, Water Quality Co-Chair

HPWA is happy to welcome our Fall interns from Rising Tide Public Charter School. Samantha Sawlers lives on Morey Hole in Manomet and Mary Haley comes from Halifax. Both are seniors and are interested in biology. After two orientation sessions with Don Williams in which Don outlined the watershed science and the role of HPWA in educating its constituents and maintaining and, hopefully, improving water quality, Mary and Sam decided that they would like to continue looking at water quality data with Don with the eventual goal of preparing a presentation for you, our members.

As part of their introduction to our watershed, Sam and Mary participated in the Water Quality Committee’s October sampling (they took the samples!) under the direction of Kim Tower of the Plymouth Division of Marine and Environmental Affairs and Jerry Levine of the Water Quality Committee. After the sampling, Don and Jerry conducted a tour of Great Herring Pond. This was the first time that Mary had ever been on a boat. We are learning more about roles of dissolved oxygen, nitrate and phosphorus in water quality. Mary and Sam will also learn about websites from Beth Sobiloff and about presenting data effectively from Lee Pulis.



## The Importance of Quality Water by Don Williams

We would all probably agree that Water Quality is important. Fresh water is only 1% of the total water on earth; some say that the

human race will be limited more by the scarcity of fresh water than by the need for new energy sources. I thought that in this, the last newsletter of the year, I would reflect on some of the joys that our watershed has provided for me:



- Teaching our grandchildren to water ski
- Taking a tour of Little Herring Pond with Jim Smith
- Playing with grandchildren at Three Rocks
- Sipping a glass of fresh water after mowing the lawn
- Watching an osprey fish
- Seeing my first resident bald eagle
- Kayaking with grandchildren up Carters River to Little Herring Pond
- Watching the sunset with Geri from our boat
- Sculling Great Herring Pond
- Counting 353 herring in a 10-minute period this year
- Seeing the bottom of the pond for the first time in several places during the summer of 2018
- Participating in my oldest grandson's first catch of a large-mouth bass
- Sharing the Great Herring Pond annual July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks display with family
- Working together with all of you and with our Board of Directors to ensure all will continue for future generations

Who doesn't love going out on a boat? Join us and help make a difference. Learn more about our environment. Share your watershed joys. Email me at [donald\\_r\\_williams2003@yahoo.com](mailto:donald_r_williams2003@yahoo.com) and help improve water quality!



## Notes on Massachusetts River Herring Annual Meeting – 2019

by Martha Sheldon

There is nothing like a meeting of 70 or so folks dedicated to the interests of herring to focus the mind on the fact that our streams and ponds are more than just lovely to look at: they are home to

many millions of fish.

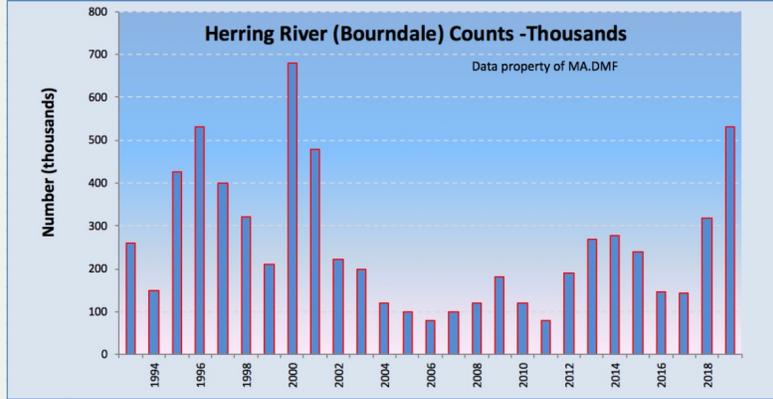
Three of us from HPWA traveled to the annual river herring meeting sponsored by [the River Herring Network](#) in Andover this year. The meeting is a great way to network with both professionals and the many super-dedicated volunteers who count fish during the spring runs in our Massachusetts' rivers. A highlight is always the **Count Summary** for the 43 streams reporting. I felt very proud when I realized that "our" Monument River (aka Herring River) had the *fourth highest count* in the state, **with 526,929** fish! Here are a few stats, along with the Counting Method, to give you the range:

Herring River in Harwich	1,223,263	(Electronic)
Mystic River in Medford	787,222	(Visual) they have a gazillion volunteers.
Nemasket River in Middleboro	714,941	(Visual)
<b>Monument River in Bourne</b>	<b>526,929</b>	(Electronic)
Town Brook in Plymouth	230,860	(Visual)
Beaver Dam Brook in Plymouth	2,246	(Visual) newly reconstructed run

Brad Chase, Mass. Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), gave an **update on diadromous fish (herring, American Shad, American eel, Atlantic salmon) issues**. There are 100 fish runs in 48 towns in Massachusetts, and there is much work still to be done in MA to remove impediments, both natural and human. Thousands of aging [dams](#) block rivers and streams across Massachusetts. Long past their prime, the dams damage ecosystems and can lead to dangerous flooding if they fail. An effort is underway to remove some of them.

A lot of **fish passage and habitat restoration work** is being done around the state. The DMF Fishway crew of 8 works on small fishways and also, with Federal partners, on large, multi-year watershed projects like the Jones River and Plymouth's **Town Brook** projects (highlighted as a "milestone project".) **Volunteer counts are valuable**, he said, as a source of education and community outreach, and in many cases supply the only data on river herring in streams. A final note, herring are not the only concern of the DMF. **Eel ladders** are being installed to help eels get over barriers (they can climb steep ladders but can't tolerate much flow), and one has been installed at Jenny Grist Mill in Plymouth.

Brad noted that the stocks of river herring are still considered "depleted" and "historically low." Historically these runs used to be enormous, in the order of millions of fish – but the good news is that with the ban on taking herring from streams in 2005 plus dam removal and construction of fish passageways, the trend is a steady increase in fish numbers. Below is a graph of the long-term trends for Herring River in Bournedale which has the longest data run of any stream in Massachusetts. 526,929 herring in 2019 is something to celebrate!



David Gould, Plymouth Department of Marine and Environmental Affairs, spoke about the fact Plymouth has been designated the headquarters of **World Fish Migration Day, on May 16, 2020**. HPWA will be participating in this event. <https://www.worldfishmigrationday.com>

Meghna Marjadi, a PhD candidate at U Mass Amherst, presented her initial work on **juvenile herring emigration in Monument River**. This aspect of the life cycle of herring is not well-studied. She is using video analysis to measure herring emigration. She is also measuring biological factors or environmental variables: zooplankton, seasonality, and weather. HPWA President Don Williams is assisting her.

What can you do to help herring? You can volunteer to become a fish counter on Great Herring Pond in spring 2020! Please contact [Ramona Krogman](#), **HPWA herring count coordinator**

## Protecting Against Invasives

by Jerry Levine, Invasive Committee Chair

On September 4<sup>th</sup>, Sara Grady, Ph.D., Watershed Ecologist and South Shore Regional Coordinator, Massachusetts Bays National Estuary Partnership, with the Invasive Species Committee spent the morning searching GHP and LHP, dredging up plants and examining them. Sara reported that **no invasive species were found in either Great Herring Pond or Little Herring Pond**. There are four species that have been present in all five years of sampling (2010, 2016-2019):

- Elodea nutalli* - slender/ western waterweed
- Najas guadalupensis* - common waternymph
- Utricularia vulgaris* - common bladderwort
- Vallisneria americana* - wild celery

We have not seen coontail (*Ceratophyllum demersum*) in our surveys in 2016-2019 but it was seen in 2010. This year we did see *Chara sp.*, stonewort, which hadn't been seen since 2010. Of the four species above, all of these were present in LHP too. In addition, we saw *Potamogeton crispus* in LHP, which we didn't see last year.

Jerry Levine, chair of the Invasive Species Committee, is discussing an aquatic invasive seminar with Sara for next year.



Jerry Levine harvesting pond weed samples

## Thank You, Members!

by Martha Sheldon, Membership chair

Because of your generosity over the years, HPWA as able to make a substantial contribution to the Town purchase of the 54-acre Condon property for permanent conservation restriction in our watershed. These are **your** dues at work. **THANK YOU!!**

THE HERRING PONDS



WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

## Our New Logo and Format

We hope you like our new logo designed by member Chris Lewis, a graphic designer, and our new Newsletter format. Send any suggestions or pictures you would like to see in future newsletters to Geri at [geri3williams@comcast.com](mailto:geri3williams@comcast.com)