

# *Parker River Clean Water Association*

## *Newsletter*

*Spring 2013*

### **THEY ARE BACK!**

Herring started arriving in early April at several North Shore locations, according to Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) biologist Ben Gahagan. PRCWA volunteers have been observing Alewives entering the fish ladder at the Central Street location in Byfield. A google document spreadsheet is available online for those who wish to enter data at their dated time slot.

Observers should be impressed with the new equipment installed at the ladder by DMF employees. Ben's team has installed an automatic counting system, radio antennas and pen at the top of the ladder to capture migrating fish. DMF will use the information collected to evaluate passage efficiency of the fishway and also look at residence times and mortality in the river.

A number of herring will be released upstream at Pentucket Pond in Georgetown so they can learn if migrating fish are able to make their journey back to the sea. PRCWA looks forward to sharing the results of this information with our members at the end of season.



*New Central Street electronic counter and fish pen in Byfield*

## In Case You Missed It

Thank you to all those who attended the **PRCWA 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting** in January at the Byfield Library. The room was jam-packed to welcome Norm Smith from Mass Audubon, who works to protect the Snowy Owl. Adults and children alike were enthralled by his lecture and live Barn owl specimen.



*Norm Smith with Barn Owl*

### Flatbread Pizza Night a Great Success!

PRCWA's Pizza Night Fundraiser event in February raised over \$600 to be used to fund Blanding's Turtle Research in Georgetown, Groveland & Boxford. A special thanks goes out to Fiddler's Loft who provided such great entertainment.

Scala's Art studio again raised money through a separate fundraising event to benefit these rare turtles. Thank you so much Lisa & Sebastian!

### Double Your Support for PRCWA

Recently, one of our members made a generous donation to PRCWA. His workplace, Gorton's, has a Matching Gift Program. After completing the paperwork, we received a matching gift from the company. Matching Gift Programs are a great way to help non-profits like PRCWA. Visit our website for more information on the program, or ask if there is a Matching Gift Program at your workplace.



# *Fading Images*

*Solitary places, where we taste the pleasures of believing  
what we see is boundless, as we wish our souls to be.*

*- Percy Bysshe Shelley*

If you have been part of these surroundings for many years, there are certain landscapes that become ingrained in your mind. One is the sight of the Common Pasture farm belt from Route 95 or Scotland Road. Currently, there is a plan to place a solar array in the midst of this pastoral setting.

PRCWA supports the need for clean energy projects to offset the amount of pollutants entering our atmosphere, but there need to be protections in place by our State environmental agencies that go further in protecting rare species priority habitats, water, and historic resources that are an invaluable part of our heritage.



*The Little River winds through the Common Pasture*

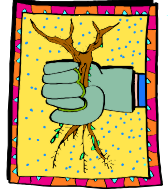
## **Paved Paradise, Put in a Parking Lot**

Another natural setting that hunters, hikers, and naturalists adore is the abandoned roadbed of JB Little Road through Crane Pond Wildlife Management area in Groveland. There are plans by the Groveland Highway Department to repave and create a regular thruway through this idyllic setting that is an important wildlife migratory pathway for rare species and a quiet nesting area for a vast number of birds.

One wonders how important it is for the residents of West Newbury to shave off a few minutes of commute into downtown Georgetown, rather than to leave the area in its more natural State.



# WEED WARRIORS NEEDED!



**Parker River Clean Water Association joins the effort to eradicate perennial pepperweed from The Great Marsh and surrounding watershed**

Perennial pepperweed was first seen in Essex County at Joppa Flats, Newburyport, in 2001. This plant is a ferocious invasive, which has spread across the U.S., crowding out native wetland species and overtaking valuable range lands.

Staff and volunteers with Massachusetts Audubon, the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, New England Wildflower Society, Trustees of Reservations, Essex County Greenbelt, 8 Towns and the Bay, Gulf of Maine Institute, Ipswich River Watershed Association, and Plum Island Kayaks, have been working to map, manage, and monitor the occurrence of pepperweed in Essex County, in an effort to combat the spread of this serious threat.

The mission of the PRCWA to protect water and wetland resources in our watershed easily encompasses this as a project which needs our attention and support. Certified herbicide applicators from the partnering organizations have been treating dense stands, but where the plants are just beginning to invade, it is preferable to remove them by hand. This is where help is urgently needed.

Lynette Leka will be coordinating "pulling parties," asking that you join us for an hour or several hours, during the cool parts of days in June – the most successful time for pulling, when the plants are in bloom. We have agreed to take responsibility for patches along the Plum Island Turnpike, and at a couple of locations in Newbury.

Like any weeding, it is hard work and boring, but think of it as good exercise, good company, and a terrific feeling to look back at the accomplishment – seeing an enormous reduction of plants in subsequent seasons, and knowing how you have contributed to the health of our marsh system in return for all it contributes to our own lives.

To kick off this season's efforts, all are invited to a training "pull" on Saturday, May 18, 9:00 am, at the Ipswich Library. Lynette can be available to work with you on the following mornings: June 1, 2, 3, 13, 14, 19, 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30; and late afternoons/evenings on June 2, 13, 18, 19, 23, 24, 26, 27, and 30. You will need drinking water, hat, gloves, work clothes, and waders if you have them (if not, the refuge has pairs to loan). After bagging the plants, they need to be transported back to the refuge headquarters parking lot – if that is not convenient, a truck will be sent to collect the bags.

Please join the weed warrior task force and help with this critical project, by getting in touch with Lynette at [lynette.leka@yahoo.com](mailto:lynette.leka@yahoo.com), or leave a message at 978-499-4445.



## **AROUND THE WATERSHED**

### **PRCWA volunteers out in full force on April 27<sup>th</sup>!**

A “Stormwater Faire” was held at the Parker River Wildlife refuge. Several local coastal communities sponsored the educational workshop. PRCWA members and other nonprofits each took part in teaching children how to keep our ponds, rivers, and oceans clean, and to respect the creatures that live there. Children who attended earned a Junior Protector badge and other prizes as part of their great learning experience.



***PRCWA volunteer Marlene Schroeder instructs children on how plants contain stormwater***

After a hearty breakfast, PRCWA volunteers took to the Little River Nature Trail (LRNT), as part of Newburyport Park Commission’s “Operation Clean Sweep.” In addition to removing trash, those volunteers who came out dealt with the important task of widening the nature trail to prevent ticks from falling on visiting hikers.



The LRNT roughly follows the Little River which is a major tributary to the Parker River and contributes to the well-being of the Common Pasture and the Great Marsh. In 2001, PRCWA proposed and received permission to construct a nature trail on land donated to the City by Mass Highway to be used for observation, exercise, jogging and cross-country skiing in the winter.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### *Rowley River Paddle*



Back in the late 1960s, folk singer Pete Seeger came up with a plan for cleaning up the Hudson River. He would build a boat and sail it along the river holding concerts along the way. Seeger reasoned that people would see the condition of the river and would become so alarmed they would be moved to preserve it. Funny thing, it actually worked. The people attending the concerts would become the activists that eventually led to the passage of the “Clean Water Act.”

In many respects, the annual Parker River canoe/kayak paddle is probably our most important event. If we don't see the beauty in what we have in our little river system up here on the North Shore, then how can we inspire people to protect it?

Please join us for the PRCWA Annual River Paddle of the Rowley River on May 25th. We will park and launch at the end of Railroad Ave in Rowley by the Essex County Greenbelt Association (ECGA) parking area. Further details to come!



**Parker River paddlers remove invasive plants from Mill Pond**

### ***More Invasive Pulling***

Plans are currently in the works for pulling more of the invasive Water Chestnut plant out of the Mill Ponds in Rowley. ECGA's Dave Rimmer has worked with the Rowley Conservation Commission to get an extension of the Order of Conditions plan to improve the pond area. PRCWA will be seeking volunteers armed with gloves and dressed in work clothes (you will get dirty!) to join our flotilla of canoes in late July to get the job done. Stay tuned for more details.





## *FROM THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER*

### REMEMBERING WALKERTON

A story appeared recently in a local paper about the gutting of a deer inside and around a pump house by two employees of the Rowley Water Department. The action led to a significant fine levied against the town of Rowley by the Department of Environmental Protection and caused two employees of the Rowley Water Department to resign.

While many may consider the punishment by the DEP harsh, one must consider the potentially devastating pathogens that can emerge from the intestines of warm-blooded animals. E. coli is a bacteria that is often harmless, but in some instances can cause serious illness or death.

In 2000, right around Mother's Day, a storm event caused the Walkerton, Ontario shallow groundwater wells to become contaminated by a dangerous strain of E. coli. Due to the lack of diligence by the Walkerton Water Department employees, who failed to notify the public of the severity of the problem for ten days, seven people died and over half of the 5,000 residents suffered from severe gastronomical illness. Most of those who died were children, whose mother's tried to stave off the effects of dehydration by unknowingly giving their children more contaminated water.

The eventual investigation led to criminal proceedings of those who hid the danger from the public. It was also determined that no amount of disinfectant could rid the water mains of the bacteria, leading Canada's Water Ministry to order the entire water distribution system of Walkerton be replaced at a cost to the taxpayers of Canada of 160 million dollars.

The people of Walkerton still bear the emotional scars from that tragic event. How can one trust that serious illness will not happen again from just one sip of water? The lessons learned can best be summed up in a prayer delivered by a local minister:

***"I want to take you back to before the water crisis when things were normal and we went to our taps and turned them on. We felt safe. Our water was thirst quenching. It was readily available. We had no fears. And we washed. It provided us with all kinds of recreational activities from the pool to when it came down in the form of rain. And then what we referred to "the flood" happened. And for a while, rain clouds took on a new meaning. And we started to think of them as something that brought illness and death. And the water out of our taps took on a new meaning. For it too brought illness and death. And it brought sorrow to the hearts of all."***

***- Pastor Beth Conroy, Walkerton candlelight vigil – May 2000***

