



Volume 21, No. 2 Fall/Winter 2021-22

EDITOR
JUDY BENSON

GRAPHIC DESIGN
MAXINE A. MARCY

WRACK LINES is published twice a year or as resources allow by the Connecticut Sea Grant College Program at the University of Connecticut. Any opinions expressed therein are solely those of the authors.

Electronic versions of this issue and past issues of Wrack Lines can be found at: <https://seagrant.uconn.edu/publications/wrack-lines/>

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Connecticut Sea Grant
Communications Office
University of Connecticut
1080 Shennecossett Rd.
Groton, CT 06340-6048

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CTSG-21-04
ISSN 2151-2825 (print)
ISSN 2151-2833 (online)



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From the EDITOR

Egrets and gulls commanded their watery kingdom from atop a large log as our boat meandered through Lord Cove. The electric motor purred, and the waves lapped gently. No one spoke.

My husband guided his boat, Solar Breeze, for Judy Preston and me one June afternoon as we explored this warren of channels and islands in the lower Connecticut River and took photos. Moments like this of beauty and wonder came along the way, the kinds that form attachments between people and places.

Soon, if all goes according to plan, Lord Cove and nearby marshes will have a new identity as one of the signature pieces of the Connecticut National Estuarine Research Reserve (CT NERR). With it will come more appreciation, more resources for stewardship, research, monitoring and education and perhaps more experiences that will deepen the connections between Connecticut's natural and human spheres. Through discovery, rediscovery and exploration, we can better realize ourselves as part of the environment outside our walls, not separate from it.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, a native American writer, academic and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, stated this idea eloquently in her best-selling book, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants*:

"It was through her actions of reciprocity, the give and take with the land, that the original immigrant became indigenous. For all of us, becoming indigenous to a place means living as if your children's future mattered, to take care of the land as if our lives, both material and spiritual, depended on it."

With apologies to Kimmerer, I'd suggest a slight revision to her quote to expand its meaning. I don't think she'd mind:

"It was through her actions of reciprocity, the give and take with the water and land...." Then, "to take care of the water and land as if...."

With the addition of "water" to the quote, it could be a statement of aspiration for the CT NERR —that the NERR framework for this assemblage of tidal waters and nearby lands is a means for us all to become indigenous, or at least more so. The different parts—Haley Farm, Bluff Point, the lower Thames River, the lower Connecticut River—are familiar to some and undiscovered by others, but through the new lens of the NERR can be seen and experienced anew by all with the mind, heart and senses.

Those opportunities for discovery and rediscovery are being found, too, by the researchers collecting and analyzing the waters of the Pawcatuck River and the sources of nitrogen it may be carrying into Little Narragansett Bay, fueling excessive algal growth. And within the imposing stone walls of the Peabody Museum in New Haven, teams are reimagining ways to tell the stories of the Earth through more inviting voices and perspectives.

Together, the stories about the CT NERR, Little Narragansett Bay research and the Peabody invite readers of this issue to take a fresh look at some of Connecticut's finest assets—its coastal treasures, storied institutions and the people who care about them, and perhaps become more like them.



Judy Benson, editor
judy.benson@uconn.edu



Three great egrets share a log with gulls in Lord Cove on the Connecticut River, designated to be part of the Connecticut National Estuarine Research Reserve. Photo: Judy Benson

Cover photo: Debbie Pickering and her daughter Mia, 3, visiting southeastern Connecticut from their home in Massachusetts, explore a beach at the mouth of the Thames River, one of the areas that will be part of the proposed CT NERR. Photo: Judy Benson