

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/>

There is no charge for Connecticut residents, but donations to help with postage and printing costs are always appreciated. Visit: <https://uconn.givecorps.com/causes/7154-the-connecticut-sea-grant-fund>

Change of address, subscription information, cancellation requests or editorial correspondence should be sent to the address below:

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

To be added to the mailing list for a free print copy or the list serve to be notified about the electronic version, send your street and email addresses to: judy.benson@uconn.edu.

www.seagrant.uconn.edu
www.facebook.com/ctseagrant
www.instagram.com/ctseagrant

CTSG-23-08
ISSN 2151-2825 (print)
ISSN 2151-2833 (online)



For archived digital issues and subscription information, tap QR code on your smartphone.

From the EDITOR

Waves galloped like white horses in the waters off the UConn Avery Point campus on the morning of the “Messing About in Boats” event on Sept. 15.

A storm brewed offshore, making for less-than-ideal conditions for a day of rowing, kayaking and fishing activities for students, organized by the newly established Connecticut National Estuarine Research Reserve (CT NERR) and CT Sea Grant, Avery Point campus, Project Oceanology and the John Gardner Chapter of the Traditional Small Craft Association. But the attentive and knowledgeable staff and volunteers who led the boating took extra care to give thorough instructions and keep a close eye when students wielded oars, paddles and fishing poles. Many of the 60 students were first-timers to water sports.

Early in the day, one young woman screamed and jumped out of a rowboat while it was still on the beach. She had just been soaked by a rogue wave. She left the beach, too fearful to venture from shore. Philip Beheny, the small craft association volunteer leading the rowing, acted with wisdom and compassion. He moved the rowboats from the beach to a nearby dock. There, skittish students could feel more comfortable learning to use the oars in a cove behind a breakwater, while he stood on the dock holding a line attached to the bow of their boat. The young woman who jumped out of the boat later got back in from the dock, her confidence restored.

During the kayaking trips, Prescott Littlefield, waterfront programs manager at Avery Point, decided mid-morning to shepherd groups from an engine-powered Boston Whaler instead of a kayak, so he could respond more quickly if students needed help.

He and Beheny did what the best teachers do: adjusted their plans to meet their students where they were. That was one of the reasons “Messing About in Boats” turned out to be good experience for participants despite the raucous weather. In surveys afterward, most said they’d like to do it again next year.




The event took its name from a famous quote in Kenneth Grahame’s *Wind in the Willows*, the classic children’s book. The main character, Water Rat, tells his friend Mole:

“Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats. In or out of ‘em, it doesn’t matter. Nothing seems to matter; that’s the charm of it. Whether you get away, or whether you don’t; whether you arrive at your destination or whether you reach somewhere else, or whether you never get anywhere at all, you’re always busy, and you never do anything in particular.”

Doubtless this passage has inspired many to try boating or fueled an already budding passion. Maybe the experience at Avery Point had the same effect for some of the participants. But, as the quote suggests, that’s not really what matters. Instead, it’s the experience of being on the water, in whatever way you can, that resets our perspective. This was one of the valuable lessons at least some of the participants surely took from “Messing About in Boats.”

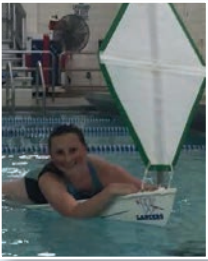
In all, “Messing About in Boats” was a day of learning, not in the traditional classroom sense, but through the classroom of the sea that can be even more powerful. It was one demonstration of the theme of this issue. As the articles relate, the many ways of learning about marine science can come from classroom aquariums, field trips and from building and launching a small, unmanned sailboat. Marine learning can also be enhanced by researchers and educators who study how and what people learn about the ocean, how they are affected by it and work to promote more widespread knowledge of the marine world. And then, of course, there are the invaluable lessons learned by simply spending time in nature, listening to the water, as the Mole discovered:

“The Mole was bewitched, entranced, fascinated. By the side of the river he trotted as one trots, when very small, by the side of a man who holds one spell-bound by exciting stories; and when tired at last, he sat on the bank, while the river still chattered on to him, a babbling procession of the best stories in the world, sent from the heart of the earth to be told at last to the insatiable sea.”


Judy Benson
judy.benson@uconn.edu

Cover: Teachers drag a seine net at Sheffield Island during a Long Island Sound Mentor Teacher workshop in July. Above: Illustration by Ernest H. Shephard from the 1933 edition of *Wind in the Willows*, published by Charles Scribner’s Sons.

CONTENTS



4
THE SERENDIPITOUS TRANSATLANTIC TALE OF ONE TINY BOAT
Lancer's big impact

8
HOW A GEOLOGIST COMPREHENDS THE CONVOLUTED CONNECTICUT COAST
Learning from the past to make better decisions in the present



13
WHEN MARINE SCIENCE COMES ALIVE, TEACHERS BECOME STUDENTS AND STUDENTS BECOME TEACHERS
From school aquariums to outdoor classrooms



16
OCEAN LITERACY
Ocean literacy campaign brings marine lessons to schools and beyond

20
OCEAN IDENTITY
Research examines how and why the ocean shapes our sense of self



About OUR CONTRIBUTORS

SYMA EBBIN

Syma Ebbin serves as both a professor at the University of Connecticut's Avery Point campus and the research coordinator for Connecticut Sea Grant, teaching courses in environmental and marine science and policy. She engages in social science research focused on fisheries and other marine and coastal issues. She developed and administers CTSG's Art Support Awards Program, which awards competitive grants to local artists working on coastal and marine themes. She obtained doctorate and masters' degrees from Yale University, a Master of Science from the University of Alaska, Juneau, and a bachelor's degree from Williams College.



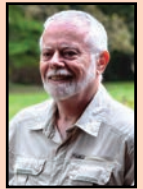
MIRIAH RUSSO KELLY

Miriah Russo Kelly is an assistant professor of environmental science at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven. Her teaching and research focus on the human dimensions of ocean and coastal climate change. She works mostly in the area of international climate change policy and decision-making and studies collaborative and transdisciplinary approaches to addressing complex environmental problems. Her research interests include environmental conflict and ocean development, including stakeholder and community awareness of marine climate issues, with a focus on coastal adaptation and developing sustainable blue economies.



RALPH LEWIS

Ralph Lewis, Connecticut state geologist from 1998 to 2003, is a certified professional geologist with 48 years of experience and is author of more than 100 articles on the geology of Long Island Sound. He is a professor-in-residence in the Marine Sciences Department at the University of Connecticut/Avery Point and a member of the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering. Lewis is a former member of the Ocean Studies Board of the National Academies of Science and received the Dr. Sigmund Abeles Award from the Connecticut Science Teachers Association.



DIANA PAYNE

Diana Payne is an ecologist, educator, photographer, writer and associate professor in residence/education coordinator with Connecticut Sea Grant. She holds leadership roles in multiple organizations including the National Marine Educators Association (NMEA) Ocean Literacy committee and Ocean Decade Working Group. Payne is a Fulbright Scholar and international expert on ocean literacy. She serves on the Steering Committee of Ocean Literacy With All and is Vice Chair of the IOC/UNESCO Ocean Literacy Group of Experts. She holds degrees in biology/estuarine ecology, a Connecticut educator certification, and a doctorate in educational psychology.



JUDY BENSON

Judy Benson has been communications coordinator at Connecticut Sea Grant and editor of *Wrack Lines* since 2017. Before that, she was a newspaper reporter and editor, concluding her journalism career at *The Day* of New London covering health and the environment. She is the author of a book created in collaboration with artist Roxanne Steed: *Earth and Sky: Nature Meditations in Word and Watercolor*, published in 2021 by New London Librarium. She earned both a bachelor's degree in journalism and a Master of Science in natural resources from UConn.

