Letter from the editor

Dear Readers,

This Fall/Winter 2007 issue of *Wrack Lines* has a strong conservation emphasis. Sure, other weighty topics are in the news, such as the national economy and the mortgage lending housing crisis. But to quote Henry David Thoreau, “What’s the use of having a house if you don’t have a decent planet to put it on?” At no time in history has it been more important for human beings to adopt a conservation ethic than today—and we hope to convince you that working on conservation projects can be fun as well as ethically and economically rewarding.

In the case of Suzanne Zack’s feature, you’ll be introduced to a gastronomic crustacean delight, a resource you probably didn’t know existed. It’s royal red shrimp, or “Stonington Reds”. This resource, unique to our region, was discovered as a harvest alternative to commercial fish whose dwindling numbers are stringently regulated by conservation plans. We’ll tell you where to find it on the menu and how to cook it up.

Tessa Getchis shows us that things are not always what you intuitively guess—for example, wouldn’t aquaculture gear such as shellfish cages surely harm eelgrass if they are put in its habitat? The answer, at least in Long Island Sound, might surprise you, and is a good lesson in not jumping to hasty conclusions. Solutions to complex environmental questions can apparently still be found!

Juliana Barrett and Andrea Lowerth show us a restoration effort they have been leading. The effort aims to control invasive species and revive two ponds belonging to a private beach club. They hope the project may serve as a model for other such projects elsewhere along the shoreline. Along with many UConn Avery Point students, faculty, and staff, I drive by these two ponds every day, and I’ve always been curious about them.

Jenna Whewell, a UConn undergraduate student, intrigues us with how the human perception of beaches has changed over time, along with their shifting seasonal shapes, tied to today’s perceptions and the consequent actions people insistently take to try to make them stay put.

My contribution to the issue involves a cruel and illegal practice—shark finning—carried on in the name of soup. You’ll learn what federal agencies are doing with new technology to help stop it. Sharks are an important ecological resource as well as an economic one that are being widely misused and illegally exploited.

Finally, there is a memorial page to a great pioneer in conservation, Dick Goodwin. He passed away this year, but his legacy continues on through the many people he inspired during his lifetime.

Even though winter winds are blowing, and your favorite garden flowers are history for this year, you can still think green! Before you peruse the seed catalogs, why not work on developing a conservation plan for your home, yard, or community? Any time is a great time to get involved personally with conservation issues and efforts. Our Sea Grant program, which has always strived to foster conservation and wise use of coastal and marine resources, has now adapted our mission statement to include foreseen benefits to future generations as well as present. My colleagues and I encourage you to investigate the many existing conservation organizations and select the ones that appeal to you to support.

Peg Van Patten, editor

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