Dear Readers,

I hope you started off 2012 productively and happily. I know I did. My New Year’s resolutions were to have fun ice skating with my family, and to get Wrack Lines onto press! Both are now thankfully accomplished. It’s also a time to reflect on the past year. Tropical Storm Irene visited the East Coast with a vengeance, and you’ll see a statewide summary of her legacy in this issue, with some ideas on how to be ready for the next storm.

There are also some Sea Grant research projects and activities from the past year, still ongoing, described here. We hope you find them stimulating. Did you know that the first seaweed aquaculture underwater farming in Long Island Sound began in 2011?

During 2011, my favorite outreach activities included presenting three great outdoor workshops relating to the wonders of algae. In July it was Seaweed Saturday with the Friends of Outer Island. The island is a wildlife preserve and one of the fascinating Thimble Islands. Enthusiastic people of all ages arrived by kayak, motor boat, and water taxi to join in. Virginia Baltay explained how the island is used for education, in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. After we observed the ecology and collected, identified and pressed the seaweed, Judy DeSalvatore prepared a wonderful sushi lunch with nori, an edible seaweed. The second workshop included a great shoreline nature walk with the Watch Hill Conservancy in Rhode Island, to examine the algae there. The third was for a group of U.S. Army National Guardsmen, who wanted to learn about the native seaweeds, including which are edible and how to prepare them. The Guardsmen also wanted to find out things about our local shellfish, which my expert colleague Tessa Getchis was happy to provide. Because we like to treat our military friends right, we made a complete meal with miso-kelp-wakame soup, seaweed salad, sushi, nori-carrot bread, and Irish moss snow pudding (blanc-mange) for dessert. Professor Charles Yarish joined me in presenting, but he let me do all the cooking! Mark, in the photo, had seconds and wanted the recipes!

I was also delighted to get on a boat in Bridgeport in October and again in December to witness firsthand the harvesting of the first Gracilaria crop and the planting of the first kelp seed strings in Long Island Sound. You can read all about it here.

I’ve put more fun photos from these activities on the inside back cover.

All in all, it was a good year for me despite the ordeal of the storm, and we couldn’t ask for a milder December. I hope 2012 will be even better. We’d love to hear about how you enjoyed Long Island Sound and its coast in 2011, so send us your letters and great photos! Till next issue...

Your editor,

Peg Van Patten