

## DIVING DEEPER INTO SCIENCE EDUCATION

by Kaitlin Gannon



There is no better way to learn about the environment than to get out and explore it! However, exploring certain habitats, like our underwater worlds, can be quite tricky. That is why The Wetlands Institute offers Science Education at Sea (SEAS) programs for students in grades 4 through college. The SEAS program is a unique field trip experience, originally developed by former Outreach

Coordinator, Travis Davis. The program allows students to learn about their local marine ecosystems while experiencing them firsthand. This three hour, boat-based program allows children to explore the ocean and bay habitats through activities such as crabbing, dolphin watching, fish and invertebrate sampling, and a live plankton lab. The SEAS program focuses on marine biology and combines hands-on, live marine animal interactions with traditional science concepts such as food webs and life cycles. While interaction with live animals is an important component in engaging students, we wanted to dive a little deeper and expand the scientific content of the SEAS program. Utilizing new methods and materials, our goal is to challenge students, allow them to formulate questions, and get them thinking about the bigger picture when it comes to the health and future of our oceans.

To reach our goal, we began by enhancing our most popular activity on the boat, the trawl net tow. A trawl net is used by both research scientists and commercial fishermen to collect marine organisms on the bottom of the sea floor. Students are involved in deploying the net into the water and hauling it back on board. This part of the program is always a huge hit and the students are amazed that they actually get to see what's living beneath the surface of the water! To expand this activity, in spring 2014 we introduced

a biodiversity assessment component to the program. The biodiversity assessment mimics how actual marine biologists analyze the health of a marine habitat. Just like the scientists, students record weather and water conditions and then identify, count and record the specimens collected in the trawl net. While conducting the biodiversity assessments, we have seen students utilize skills such as species identification, math, and team work, while also still engaged in the activity and having fun. The biodiversity assessment will also provide The Wetlands Institute with some useful data and allow us to identify species population trends over time. In time, our goal is to have this biodiversity assessment data available for teachers to use as an educational tool in the classroom.

But wait, we're not done yet! After the success of the biodiversity assessments, this year we plan on incorporating a water quality component into the SEAS program. During this new activity, students will test and analyze the physical and chemical properties of both bay and ocean water. The water testing will complement the student's biodiversity assessments, helping to explain why we see specific species inhabiting a certain marine environment. Differences in salinity, temperature, or dissolved oxygen are all big factors in determining how much (or little) biodiversity is present. Water quality testing will also help open discussions on topics that affect students and their community,

such as storm water, water treatment, watersheds, marine debris, just to name a few.

It is important to us that the SEAS program continues to be an impactful experience, one that students will remember for years to come. With these enhancements to the program, we hope students will not only have

a lasting impression, but will leave the trip feeling empowered to become environmental stewards in their community. Stay tuned as we continue to dive deeper into science education!



Promoting appreciation, understanding and stewardship of wetlands and coastal ecosystems through our programs in research, conservation, and education.

Founded in 1969 by Herbert Mills, Executive Director of the World Wildlife Fund

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Monday through Sunday: 9:30am to 4:30pm

**June 15 to Labor Day - Special Evening Hours**

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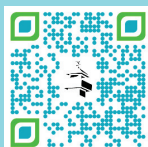
Members: *Free*

Non-members: \$8 Adults, \$6 Children 3-12

**Views From the Tower** is the quarterly newsletter of The Wetlands Institute and can also be found on our website.

1075 Stone Harbor Blvd  
Stone Harbor, NJ 08247  
609-368-1211

[wetlandsinstitute.org](http://wetlandsinstitute.org)



## MARSH MUSINGS

by Dr. Lenore Tedesco, Executive Director

I love to take time to write this column. It provides a wonderful reason to reflect on the status and rhythm of the Institute. The Institute, like the marsh outside my window, has its own rhythm. It's February and one typically thinks of this as the quiet, perhaps even sleepy time down by the shore. I know that to be very deceiving. Some days the salt pannes out my window are frozen and still, other times they are filled with Great Blue Herons, Black Ducks, Greater Yellowlegs, Red-Breasted Mergansers, and Kingfishers. Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, and Northern Harriers patrol the winter marsh hunting for their next meal. Deciding whether you think the marsh – or the Institute – is quiet or awash in activity – is one of perspective.

So much is happening both behind the scenes and out in the community. The Stone



Harbor Point Restoration Project has just started the construction phase and we are planning extensively for the Beneficial Reuse of Dredge Material project to start field work in a few weeks. The education program with Russia is in full swing now, and Brooke and I are working on travel logistics, establishing relationships with the center partners, and starting the work of collecting education best practices. We head to Russia in mid-April. The education

teams are polishing and refining new program components and we are working every day on maintenance and repair work so the Institute is ready to go when school group activity



increases dramatically in a few weeks. The applications are rolling in for the summer intern programs and we are working very hard to replace the martin house at the Institute. The martins are already in Georgia and headed north so we only have a few weeks to have their new home ready! The rhythm of the martins is the time clock that we keep. Whether we are preparing for their arrival – or your arrival – all of us at The Institute are collectively wondering what happened to the quiet time?

We have been busy. In the coming days, we will be launching a restructuring of the membership program.

We have added an exciting new membership category for Lifetime Membership – an opportunity for us to honor some of our very long-standing members, and welcome others into this group. We have also provided for opportunities to better focus membership dues directly on supporting our mission and provided opportunities to decline some member benefits so that your membership dollars can go directly to program support.

We are also announcing our 2015 Festival and Special Event Calendar in this issue. Like the changing of the seasons, there have been some changes to the schedule, but also many things remain the same. The biggest change that we are announcing is that the Wings 'N Water Benefit Auction will be moving to a new venue – and getting a new name. The auction will be held at The Reeds in Stone Harbor August 1, 2015, overlooking the marsh with a view of the Institute and a stronger focus on supporting our mission and programs in a festive and exciting new way. Please see the article that presents the events schedule.

The Institute remains busier than ever. I am proud to have my sleeves rolled up and working hard every day to continue to elevate the Institute to new levels of excellence. Our impact to serving this community – plants, animals, and people – is stronger than ever. Your support and commitment to our efforts is a critical driver. We are still **Making No Small Plans**. Thank you for being by our side and believing in our work. Please come by and see your support at work.



# SPRING HAPPENINGS

As winter becomes spring, The Wetlands Institute will be open daily starting May 1, 2015! Unless otherwise stated, all activities occur onsite at The Wetlands Institute. Questions? Please call The Wetlands Institute at 609-368-1211.

**Salt Marsh Safari** - Starting in Marsh View Hall, watch our award-winning film, *Secrets of the Salt Marsh*. Then join us for a guided interpretive walk through the wetlands! Together we will travel along the new elevated walkway, down the salt marsh trail and out onto the dock overlooking Scotch Bonnet creek. To fully experience the marsh, make sure to wear shoes that can get wet and muddy!

**Free with admission – Daily: 11:00am and 2:00pm**

**Creature Feature and Craft** - We will highlight a different live animal or group of animals each day! Get up close with turtles, fish, crabs, sea stars and urchins, mollusks, horseshoe crabs and the animals of *Finding Nemo*. After the presentation, create a take-home craft related to that day's Creature Feature!

**Free with admission – Monday and Friday: 12:30pm**

**Catch'o the Day** - Get your feet wet (or wear waders!) as you discover what swims in the back bays. Help us drag a seine net through the water to find crabs, shrimp, fish and more. Activity recommended for ages 8 and up. Younger children are welcome to attend and can assist in removing creatures from the net! **(This activity is tide dependent and may not occur during low tide).**

**Free with admission – Wednesday: 12:30pm**

**Aquarium Feeding** - Act as an Aquarist for a day and help us feed the local marine life! We will open up feeding each weekend so you can see the turtles chasing minnows and the horseshoe crab eating shrimp. As you watch them gobble down their food, use our animal feeding surveys to record their behavior so we can make sure all our animals are happy and well fed. **(Not all animals are fed every day).** **Free with admission – Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday: 12:30pm**

**Seashell Sundays** - Starting a shell collection? Want to know where shells come from? Can't figure out what you found on the beach? Bring it in and we will tell you all about seashells, how to collect them without harming the environment and feature an assortment of live mollusks and cool artifacts.

**Free with admission – Sunday: 12:30pm**

Summer hours and activities start June 15, 2015! The Wetlands Institute will be open daily from 9:30am – 4:30pm with special evening hours until 8:00pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Please check our website calendar for programming updates as we transition from spring to summer hours!

## TIDEPOOL SHOP

by Joyce Ferguson

Turtle Fest on Saturday, April 4th, heralds the beginning of our spring season. The Tidepool Shop will be stocked with everything "turtle" from books and journals, plush turtles and puppets, T-shirts and hats, a new jewelry line and more! Welcome to author, Donna Zappala, who will make a return visit to introduce her new book, *Izzy's Hatchlings*. This is the third book in a series of children's stories about Diamondback Terrapins.

During this time of renewal the Staff has been searching for Made in America, sustainable and local merchandise that supports the programs of The Wetlands Institute. In addition we have created several new custom items for you that are "take home" reminders of your positive Wetlands Institute experience. Look for bird houses and feeders and handy reusable bags with The Wetlands Institute logo all made of recycled plastic. We're excited about the green science kits, binoculars, telescopes and even rain gauges we have ordered.

Don't forget about our handsome and convenient new Gift Card that is a perfect gift to give on any occasion! We look forward to your visit and to share with you all that is new in the Tidepool Shop.

## 2015 SUMMER NATURE PROGRAM

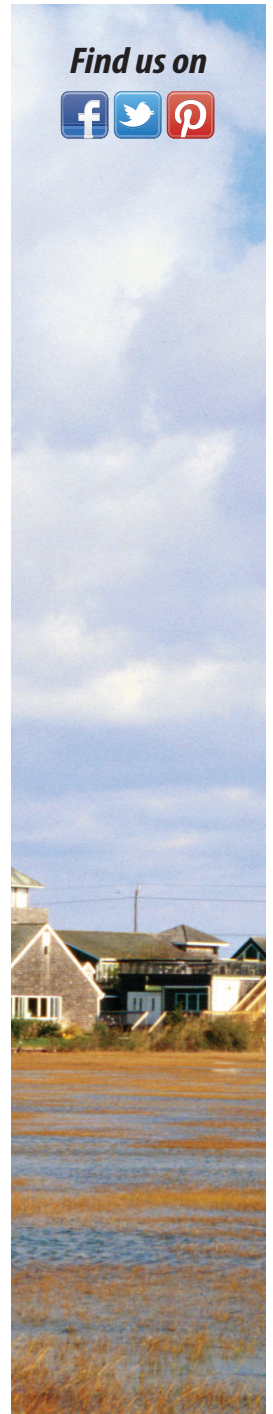
**Discounted registration ends May 1, 2015 so Get Your Kids Registered Today!**

The Wetland Institute's Summer Nature Programs are a great way for kids to spend summer discovering the New Jersey Shore in a fun and hands-on way! Throughout the week, kids will engage in science experimentation and exploration, play games, go on field trips, explore the beach, create arts and crafts, and much more all while enjoying a new theme each week:

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7
<b>SOSETZIG</b> Izzy's	<b>Nature</b> <b>I Spy</b>	Explore the Shore: the Science of Seaside Arts	 Walking and Talking Whales	Starry Summer Days and Sunny Nights	<b>WORLDWIDE</b> <b>WATERY WAYS</b>	<b>GREAT</b> GROWING GROUND STUFF

You don't want to miss it! For children ages 5-13, programs are held weekly from July 1 – August 12, 2015 and include field trips and beach days. Children age 4 can enjoy special programs during the weeks of July 13, July 27 and August 10, 2015. For complete details, including theme descriptions, pricing and registration information, please visit our website at [wetlandsinstitute.org](http://wetlandsinstitute.org) or call 609-368-1211.

Find us on





# VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

## Terrapin Storm Drain Rescue Volunteer Workshop

**Thursday April 23, 6pm – 7pm at The Wetlands Institute**

Our volunteers have collected data showing that hundreds of emerging terrapin hatchlings get trapped in storm drains each spring, many more than we find in the fall. Join our network of volunteers to help us rescue these hatchlings. Even a small commitment helps. The Institute will hold a training and information session explaining how you can get involved and volunteer to rescue terrapin hatchlings. To register for this workshop, please email Brian Williamson at [bwilliamson@wetlandsinstitute.org](mailto:bwilliamson@wetlandsinstitute.org).

## Research and Conservation Volunteer Opportunities

Are you interested in helping terrapins, horseshoe crabs and birds this spring and summer? If so, the Research and Conservation team needs your help! We are looking for dedicated volunteers to help with several of our research and conservation projects. The opportunities below are a great way to get out, enjoy, and learn more about our local wetlands, all while helping to study and conserve these important habitats. Training will be provided for all those who commit to help, and only a limited number of volunteers can be accepted for each project. Volunteers for the below projects must be at least 14 years old unless stated otherwise.

### Bird Identification on Institute Property

Walk our trail or perch on one of our viewing platforms and keep a list of bird species you see and hear. We will post the lists on our website so everyone can enjoy what our property has to offer! Your contributions will help us track which species are here, and how they are using the Institute property. Optics will be available for loan.

**When:** April - October, mornings and late afternoons.

**Eligibility:** Adult or Junior Volunteer. Bird ID experience, beginner and above. Willing to record and submit observations.

**Required Commitment:** Weekly, or minimum twice a month. Minimum of 1 hour.

### Trail Walks to Monitor Terrapin Nests

Have you noticed the small black cages around our property? These are exclosures we put around diamondback terrapin nests to keep predators away from the eggs. We patrol our property several times each day in order to spot nesting females and release newly hatched terrapins from the exclosures. Help us keep an eye on terrapin activity on our property so that nests can stay protected.

**When:** April – mid-July; mid-August – October.

**Eligibility:** Adult or Junior Volunteer.

**Required Commitment:** A minimum of 5 days.

### Clean Ocean Action Beach Sweep

The Wetlands Institute, in partnership with Clean Ocean Action, the Borough of Stone Harbor, and the Stone Harbor Property Owners Association, hosts a beach clean-up each Spring and Fall. These Beach Sweeps are open to all ages. No advance sign up is required for this event; simply meet at the 95th Street beach entrance on the day of the event to participate. Garbage bags, gloves, and datasheets are provided to all volunteers.

**When:** April 25 and October 24, 2015; 9am -12pm

**Eligibility:** All ages are welcome!

**Required Commitment:** N/A

### reTURN the Favor Walk Leaders

The Wetlands Institute has adopted several beaches in Cape May County to rescue stranded horseshoe crabs through the *reTURN the Favor* program. We need volunteers to lead walks with the public, conduct their own walks, follow program protocols, and accurately collect and submit data. Training and schedule will be provided.

**When:** May - mid-July. Sites may require early mornings and late evenings.

**Eligibility:** Adult Volunteer. Able to walk on sandy beaches, follow protocols, record data, and interact with the public.

**Required Commitment:** Minimum 1 walk/week for 4 weeks.

### Terrapin Barrier Fence Maintenance

We have over 4 miles of barrier fencing along Stone Harbor Boulevard that helps prevent terrapins from making hazardous road-crossings. The fencing is most effective when it is securely in place and free of weeds. We could use the help of a few volunteers to help keep our fencing in good shape.

**When:** May – August.

**Eligibility:** Adult Volunteer. Willing to work in hot, buggy conditions around poison ivy. Equipment will be provided.

**Required Commitment:** 1-2 days a month.

To get involved, contact [research@wetlandsinstitute.org](mailto:research@wetlandsinstitute.org) with your project of interest and details on eligibility and availability. Remember to check our website for additional and new volunteer opportunities.



## 3 Simple Ways to Go Paperless

1: **Email us at** [staff@wetlandsinstitute.org](mailto:staff@wetlandsinstitute.org)  
or 2: **Text** the keyword **PAPERLESS** to 42828  
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Paperless newsletters are not only more sustainable but they help reduce our cost so we can allocate more of your gifts to our programs.





# 2015 SPECIAL EVENTS CALENDAR

We are pleased to announce the 2015 Festival and Special Events Calendar for The Wetlands Institute. 2015 will be filled with many great opportunities to play, learn, volunteer, participate and enjoy the coastal and wetland ecosystems of southern New Jersey. This year's festival line up continues to showcase the remarkable natural phenomena of migration with both the **Spring Shorebird and Horseshoe Crab Festival** and **Fall Migration Festival**. Both provide a full weekend line-up of activities spread across several locations in the area. We will again offer program components that allow for active participation in horseshoe crab, monarch butterfly, or shorebird tagging and banding. Guided beach and marsh walks are sure to excite everyone from beginners to those looking to brush up on their bird identification skills or learn about conservation programs in the area. Naturalist led kayak and boat tours will provide access to the more difficult to spot birds, and a close-up encounter with the marsh and back bay ecosystem.

Our three 1-day events are themed, event days packed with games, contests, educational programs, and a host of great activities for families. **TurtleFest** is again on the Saturday of Easter Weekend, with a pancake breakfast, turtle egg hunt, crafts and fun. **Crabulous Crab Day** spotlights the delicious, interesting and even little known crab species that make the salt marsh their home. **Wetland Wonderland** returns again on Saturday of Thanksgiving weekend and celebrates the wonders of winter and the adaptations of animals to this difficult time.

The most exciting change to the event schedule relates to the *Wings 'N Water Benefit Auction*. After 32 years of holding the benefit auction under the tent at the Institute, the host committee is reimagining the auction and its venue. All things must change as the only constant is change. The host committee, comprised of board members and community leaders, is pleased to announce that the benefit auction will be restructured under a new name and at a new venue. The Inaugural **Wetlands Institute Summer Celebration** will be an exciting, cocktail party and benefit auction to support the mission and programs of the Institute. The celebration will be held at the *Reeds of Shelter Haven* on Saturday night, August 1, 2015. The evening's festivities will include great food and drinks, entertainment, the spectacular scenery and view to the Institute, and a live auction. Our emphasis will be on raising funds in direct support of mission-based programs. The new venue provides the perfect ambiance for the renewed focus. The Summer Celebration is the Institute's premier fund-raising event and a critical event to support the continued growth and development of the Institute into a world-class research, conservation, and education facility. Newly structured sponsorship opportunities are a perfect way to support the Institute, and distinctive VIP ticket packages are being formulated. We will be announcing news and highlights as the planning continues. Save the date – Saturday, August 1 – you don't want to miss all the excitement.

Find us on



## SAVE THE DATES!

### Turtle Fest

**Saturday, April 4 - 9am to 3pm**

Come enjoy a pancake breakfast for the whole family! While you are here, earn a few turtle bucks and cash them in for prizes... Go on an egg hunt, create arts and crafts, help a naturalist search for turtle hatchlings along the trail, enjoy special book readings by a local author and stop by the aquarium to say hello to the turtles and watch the animals have breakfast too!

**Non-Member:** \$10 Adult, \$8 child, \$30 family pack of 4

**Member:** \$8 Adult, \$6 child, \$25 family pack of 4



**April**  
**4**

**Turtle Fest**

**May**  
**16-17**

9:30am - 4:30pm  
**Spring Shorebird & Horseshoe Crab Festival**

**July**  
**17**

9:30am - 3pm  
**Crabulous Crab Day**

**August**  
**1**

6pm to 10pm  
**Wetlands Institute Summer Celebration**

**Sept.**  
**19-20**

9:30am - 4:30pm  
**Fall Migration Festival**

**Nov.**  
**28**

9:30am to 3pm  
**Wetland Wonderland**

# END OF YEAR GIVING

The Wetlands Institute is pleased to acknowledge all of the contributions we received towards our Annual Appeal, and in support of programs. The following are donations greater than \$100 received **between 11/1/14 and 2/10/2015**. Our upcoming Annual Report will feature a list of all donations we received throughout 2014.

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## Thank you!

We wish to acknowledge all those who supported our *year-end fund raising campaign*, held between November 1, 2014 and February 10, 2015. Since space in our printed newsletter is limited, our *electronic newsletter* includes a complete list of donors who supported us **during that period of time**. You can view this version of our newsletter by visiting our website:

<http://wetlandsinstitute.org/latest-newsletter>

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**WORLD SERIES OF BIRDING**



**The Marshketeers** are gearing up for another **24 hours of birding** intensity for good cause on **Saturday, May 9, 2015**. Our team – including staff and volunteers – is pledging their commitment to a full day and night in wind, rain, sand and mud, crisscrossing southern New Jersey, and consuming loads of coffee and snacks to find and identify as many species as they can, by sight or sound. The team will give special attention to spotting the **2015 Bonus Bird, the Ovenbird**, a small warbler that visits our region in the summer and builds a domed nest on the forest floor.

Can you help us by pledging your support for our team? This is an important fund-raising event for the Institute – in 2014, the Marshketeers spotted **120 species** and raised **nearly \$5,000!** We ask for your generous support to make 2015 an even better year for conservation! **Corporate sponsorships are also available.** Proceeds from this year's event will be used to support avian research and conservative programs at the Institute. There are several ways to support us:

1. Pledge an amount per bird species identified, and mail your contribution after the results are in for the year.
2. Contribute a fixed amount to send in right away.
3. Offer an additional pledge based on whether this year's "bonus bird", the Ovenbird is found.

**Please note:** To save paper and reduce our costs this year, we will not mail out forms. This way, we can devote all monies directly to our avian research and conservation programs. Call 609-368-1211 or make your pledge online at: [wetlandsinstitute.org/conservation/WorldSeriesofBirding](http://wetlandsinstitute.org/conservation/WorldSeriesofBirding)