

Six Ponds News

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(www.sixponds.org)

An Occasional Publication of the Six Ponds Improvement Association, Plymouth Mass.

RED-BELLIED COOTERS AND THE SIX PONDS

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As you enjoy the Six Ponds, perhaps you notice a large turtle with a domed shell basking on a log. Or perhaps from your kayak, you observe a distinctive black head, just breaking the water surface. This is the Northern Red-bellied Cooter, and endangered turtle, sometimes known as the Plymouth Red-belly. By the 1980's, when the Massachusetts population of this species was listed as "Endangered" by the US Fish & Wildlife Service, Red-bellied Cooters were thought to number several hundred individuals confined to fewer than 15 ponds in Plymouth County (the Cooter is also listed as "Endangered" by the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program of the MA Division of Fisheries & Wildlife: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dfg/nhesp/species-and-conservation/nhfacts/pseudemys-rubriventris.pdf>). Plymouth Red-bellies are completely isolated from other Northern Red-bellied Cooters, the nearest of which are found some 250 miles away in southern New Jersey.

To address the immediate threat that Cooters were facing, MassWildlife worked with partners to establish a "headstarting" program. We locate and cage nests to protect them from predators, collect a portion of the hatchlings each fall, and raise them in classrooms and other institutions all winter long. By keeping the turtles warm and feeding all winter, we can get them to grow much faster than wild hatchlings. When we release these turtles the following spring their larger size makes them much less vulnerable to predators and much more likely to survive. As the vast majority of nests and hatchlings perish at the hands of predators, this program actually benefits the "donor" population (by caging nests), and provides a source of headstarts to boost other populations.



Juvenile Red-bellied Cooter, South Cove, Long Pond, 2013

From 1991-1993, MassWildlife released approximately 115 headstarted hatchlings into Little Long and Halfway Ponds. Wild Cooters were not thought to be present in the Six Ponds before this in recent times, although archaeological evidence indicates that in the past Cooters were more widespread. Over the years we have received many reports from residents at the Six Ponds and other headstart release sites suggesting program success—observations of adult

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DON'T FORGET-SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL CHANGES SMART/PAYT

Plymouth's new trash and recycling program is now in effect. As of July 1, 2013 all trash must be in ORANGE BAGS. These can be purchased at 6 for \$6.25 at many locations around Plymouth as well at Benny's in Wareham, Hannaford in Kingston, Market Basket in Sagamore. The Market in the Pinehills sells them also. Currently the bags are 30 gallons but smaller ones should be available in September.

Recycling is strongly encouraged and not a hard way to help our environment. Many of you have been recycling anyway. The new regulations encourage more recycling. The 3 transfer stations will be open until January 1, 2014 where trash in the orange bags may be taken as well as recycling items. As of January 1, 2014, the Manomet Transfer Station on Beaver Dam Road will be the only one open.

Plymouth's curbside pickup of solid waste will begin January 1, 2014. If you chose to participate in this program you will be provided with the containers for both the trash and the recycling items. Any items to be recycled DO NOT go in the orange bags but in the larger recycle container and DO NOT need to be separated. Paper, cardboard, plastic, bottles, cans, etc. will NOT need to be separated. This is known as "single stream" recycling -- a much easier way of recycling.

For additional information go to the Town of Plymouth website at www.plymouth.ma.gov. You can also call the Treasurer/Collector's office at 508-747-1620 ext. 291 for payment information. For general service-call the DPW at 508-830-4162 ext. 100. You may also go to Town Hall on Lincoln Street.

Cooters... (continued)

turtles and some evidence of breeding. In 2013 we began a more intensive effort to evaluate the current status of Cooters at the Six Ponds. This has included capturing adults to estimate population size and attempting to document reproduction. I am indebted to the many generous landowners who have granted me access to their properties, helped document nests and hatchlings, and gave me other very useful tips. To date, not only have we been able to document the presence of fairly large numbers of adults, but also juveniles, including one



Red-bellied Cooter Hatchlings, Little Long Pond, 2013

subadult estimated to be about ten years old.

Although initial indications are positive, it remains too early to tell if we have achieved the goal of a viable self-sustaining population of Red-bellied Cooters at the Six Ponds. As we move forward with the study, we need your help, particularly to document reproduction and juveniles. If you see Cooters on land or

nesting—or any young Cooters, please let me know (jonathan.regosin@state.ma.us; 774-364-2443 cell).

Pine Barrens and You

Southeastern Massachusetts has the second largest block of pine barrens remaining in the world. (The New Jersey pine barrens is the largest.) Pine barrens are characterized by sandy soils, poor in nutrients and prone to drought. The vegetation is largely made up of pitch pine and scrub oak. There are many ponds harboring rare species, and also protecting the critical freshwater resources of this area. The state's second largest aquifer is found in this region.

A unique ecological feature found in pine barrens is a “frost pocket” formed by chunks of ice left to melt as the last glacier retreated thousands of years ago. These depressions act as sink holes for colder air and can even experience frost in warmer months. During sunny days temperatures can be much hotter at the bottom of these depressions. There are plants and animals that have adapted to these extremes and are dependent upon them.

Myles Standish State Forest has over 11,000 acres that are protected. It is the largest forest reserve in Mass. and has been identified by international bird conservationists for its significance to endangered and migrating species. Rare and endangered plants and animals can be found in our pine barrens include the red-bellied cooter, frosted elfin butterfly, prairie warbler, whip-poor-will, Plymouth gentian, New England boneset, and thread-leaved sundew to name a few.

Pine barrens are unique, endangered, and beautiful. Your help is needed to protect this area. Several groups have been formed to do just that. Friends of Myles Standish State Forest and the recently formed Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance, Inc. (SEMPBA) are working together with the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program and the Department of Conservation and Recreation on a project to collect data on the remaining pine barrens in our area. These data will be used to assess the extent and viability of the pine barrens and help determine conservation priorities.

A field outing was held recently in Myles Standish State Forest

for volunteers interested in Pine Barrens data collection and assessment. Several members of the Six Ponds Association attended. There will be other opportunities to learn how to collect data in our area. Data collecting is not the only way to help protect the pine barrens. Picking up trash, helping prevent illegal dumping, reporting the use of illegal motorized recreational vehicles (ORV) which are damaging this fragile ecosystem, are just a few of the ways YOU can help.

If you are interested in learning more about the work of these groups and possibly becoming a volunteer to help preserve this unique region go to the SEMPBA website at www.pine-barrensalliance.org, and Friends of Myles Standish State Forest website at www.friendsmssf.com.

Recycling Opportunity!

Plymouth Public Schools have partnered with Bay State Textiles to recycle old clothes, shoes and household items, which would probably have ended up in the trash bin.

Bay State Textiles has placed recycling containers at every public school in town and will pay each school \$100 for every ton of outgrown sweaters, old painter pants, long-forgotten stuffed animals, lone socks, worn bath mats and the like.

It is important that the items be dry and reasonably clean.

Items for donation should be placed in plastic bags so they stay dry. They will be transformed into refurbished clothing, household linens, wiping cloths, insulation and carpet padding.

The donations will have the added benefit of reducing the town's trash volume.

According to the executive director of the South Shore Recycling Cooperative, Plymouth pays about \$20,000 to dispose of roughly 1.7 million pounds of textiles discarded by residents each year. That material placed in a Bay State Textile container instead could bring in \$85,000 in revenue to the schools, she said.

Read more:

<http://www.wickedlocal.com/plymouth/topstories/x1641165596/PLYMOUTH-PUBLIC-SCHOOLS-Castoffs-to-cash#ixzz2VaJehJT>

Six Ponds Annual Meeting

The Six Ponds annual meeting and pot-luck supper will be Saturday, August 24th at 6 PM at the Wind-in-the-Pines Girl Scout Center. We will have our usual business meeting and elect officers and Executive Committee members. Families with last names beginning with A thru M should bring a salad or dessert. Those with last names beginning with N thru Z should bring a main dish. Ice water, hot coffee and tea will be provided. Please note that in accordance with Girl Scout policy alcoholic beverages will be prohibited. We hope to see you there!



Trashbusters!

Some of the intrepid SixPonders (and some of the collected trash) from Plymouth's Hometown Cleanup Day in May. Don't miss out on the fun -- save the date for the Fall cleanup: November 2 .

Paid your dues yet? If not, here's another chance!

An invitation to join or renew your membership in the Six Ponds Association **2013**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone _____

email _____

Dues: \$20/household per year

Mail to: Six Ponds Improvement Association
P.O.Box 1580
Plymouth, MA 02362

I/we wish to add
an additional
contribution of:
\$ _____

Six Ponds Executive Committee 2012-2013

Charlotte Russell - President	Craig Richards
Sherman Geller - Vice President	Roger W. Monks
Love Albrecht Howard - Secretary	Lawrence Silverman
Doug Post - Treasurer	Rusty Briggs
Les Plimpton	Lourdeen Casoni
Joe DeSilva	Walter Morrison -
Sam Chapin	(member emeritus)
Judy Savage	

Contributors to this issue:

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This photo shows girls on the chair swing at Sunnyside on Halfway Pond about 1920. Sunnyside was a summer-long camp run by the Barker family as a charity for girls from Boston (1896-1936). The camp building was torn down soon after the camp was closed, but the wonderful chair swing overlooking the pond was there for years longer.



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