

FREE

ISLAND INFORMATION • ENTERTAINMENT • NATURE

THE BLOCK ISLAND

SUMMER TIMES

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2026





Find your perfect Block Island home.
Sotheby's International #1 in Rhode Island Luxury Market Share

Making Moves on Block Island



Active Under Contract

1596 West Side Road Block Island, Rhode Island
5 BR | 5.5 BA | \$6,750,000
Buyer represented by Cindy Pappas



Pending

526 Connecticut Ave., Block Island, Rhode Island
3 BR | 1 BA | \$990,000
Listed by Shannon Morgan



Pending

1720 Corn Neck Road, Block Island, Rhode Island
2 BR | 2 BA | \$2,150,000
Listed by Gail Heinz



Active Under Contract

1501 & 1551 Beacon Hill Road Block Island, Rhode Island
7 BR | 4 BA | \$3,384,250
Listed by Shannon Morgan
Buyer represented by Gail Heinz



Recently Sold

721 Corn Neck Road, Block Island, Rhode Island
3 BR | 1 BA | \$2,500,000
Listed by Cindy Pappas



Recently Sold

1614 Lakeside Drive, Block Island, Rhode Island
4 BR | 3 BA | \$2,235,000
Buyer Represented by Gail Heinz

Still Looking? Let Us Help You Find Yours.



1062 Dunn Town Rd, Block Island, Rhode Island
4 BR | 3.5 BA | \$5,750,000
Listed by Susie Weissman



1508 Dorry's Cove Rd, Block Island, Rhode Island
4 BR | 4, Full, 2 Half BA | \$5,450,000
Listed by Susie Weissman



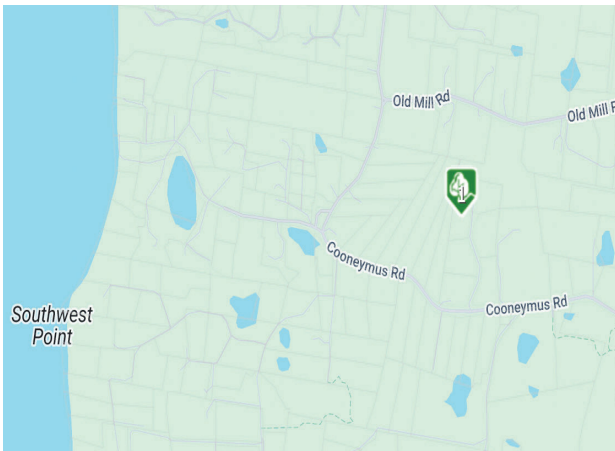
1087 Lakeside Drive, Block Island, Rhode Island
6 BR | 5.5 BA | \$3,950,000
Listed by Cindy Pappas



1448 Mohegan Trail Block Island, Rhode Island
4 BR | 2.5 BA | \$3,700,000
Listed by Cindy Pappas



1035 Mohegan Trail, Block Island, Rhode Island
3 BR | 3.5 BA | \$3,495,000
Listed by Cindy Pappas



0 Lee's Ridge Road, Block Island, Rhode Island
2.03 Acres | \$845,000
Listed by Gail Heinz

Representing distinctive properties for sellers and buyers and matching clients with Block Island's largest inventory of vacation house rentals, the Sullivan team has been introducing clients to the Island home of their dreams for over 50 years.

Visit us in the heart of Old Harbor and let us help you make this your Island.



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Community Calendar

September / October 2026



SEPTEMBER 1:
8 a.m.: Bird Banding at the Ocean View Pavilion. Free demonstration program for all ages.

11 a.m.: Nature Conservancy beach clean-up at Settler’s Rock. Need to perform volunteer hours for school or other organizations? This is a great way to help out. Garbage bags provided but bring your own work gloves.

Sunset (8ish): Soundwaves Movies on the Beach presents, “Song Sung Blue,” [2025, PG-13]. Fred Benson Town Beach Pavilion.

SEPTEMBER 2:
9 a.m.: Marsh-Mucking for Kids. Learn about all sorts of cool stuff at this salt marsh scavenger hunt. Kids need to wear water shoes and parents must attend. Andy’s Way.

9 – 11:30 a.m.: Block Island Farmers Market. Legion Park.

5 p.m.: Andy’s Way Bird Walk with The Nature Conservancy. Bring binoculars and shoes that can get wet. Meet in Andy’s Way parking lot.

7:30 p.m.: Night Sky Viewing. Lay back while a local naturalist narrates the season’s constellations, planets, and maybe a shooting star. Bring a blanket or towel, beach chair, flashlight and insect repellent. If the night sky is obscured by clouds, the program will be held the following night. Hodge Family Wildlife Preserve.

SEPTEMBER 3:
9 a.m.: The Nature Conservancy’s Walk of the Week. Join Lily Rubin for a walk exploring the history and uses of medicinal plants. Fresh Pond Trail on Lakeside Drive.

9 a.m. - 12 p.m.: Marina Market at Champlin’s Marina.

7 p.m.: America in its 250th Year from the Perspective of Father Daniel Berrigan with Sue Hagedorn and Carla Berrigan. Historical Society.

7:30 p.m.: Dark Night Sky Viewing with astronomer Kelly Beatty. Bring a blanket or towel, beach chair, flashlight and insect repellent. If the night sky is obscured by clouds, the program will be held the following night. Hodge Family Wildlife Preserve.

SEPTEMBER 4:
9 a.m.: Seining in Old Harbor. Come seine with The Nature Conservancy and observe the abundance of marine life in Old Harbor. Wear shoes that can get wet. Meet at Mary D. Park.

10 a.m.: Art and Nature at the Ocean View Pavilion. A program for all ages. Basic art materials and natural models will be supplied.

SEPTEMBER 5:
9 – 11:30 a.m.: Block Island Farmers Market. Legion Park.

5 p.m.: Opening Reception for Anne Whiting’s mixed media abstracts. Spring Street Gallery.

SEPTEMBER 6:
9 a.m. - 12 p.m.: Marina Market at Champlin’s Marina.

9 a.m. - 1 p.m.: Block Island Arts & Crafts Guild Fair. Historical Society.



Run Around the Block
12:30 p.m. Run Around the Block 15K Road Race. Starts at Isaac’s Corner.

SEPTEMBER 9:
9 – 11:30 a.m.: Block Island Farmers Market. Manisses parking lot.

1 p.m.: Andy’s Way Bird Walk. A bird walk for all skill levels. Bring binoculars and wear shoes that can get wet. Meet in Andy’s Way parking lot.

SEPTEMBER 10:
9 a.m. - 12 p.m.: Marina Market at Champlin’s Marina.

5 p.m.: Atwater and Donnelly Duo present traditional folk music and dance. Island Free Library.

7 p.m.: Sunken British Frigates in Narraganset Bay. 1778 with Bob Cembrola. Historical Society.



Nature Walks & Programs

All are Welcome!



Walk of the Week!
Every Thursday at 9 am

Explore Coastal Communities
Maneuvering Medicinal Plants
Hodge Wildlife & Wildflower Tour

natureblockisland.org

All-Terrain Wheelchair available for several Nature Programs and Preserve Walks.

Look for us at Trailheads & Farmers Markets

Nature Hot Spot





Stop by to pick up a trail map, hear about nature walks and learn about nature on Block Island.



BLOCK ISLAND CONSERVANCY

The Nature Conservancy



Block Island



Hurricane of 1938. Boats ashore in Rat Island at New Harbor.
Photo courtesy of the Block Island Historical Society.

TOWN OF NEW SHOREHAM

Hurricane Planning

The National Weather Service has been warning the East Coast that a potential major hurricane may strike within the next several years. We are asking everyone who owns property on Block Island or will be visiting during hurricane season (*June 1-November 1*) to create an individual plan which will prepare you for this type of event.

Please read the following carefully and make your plans in advance.

A) The Town of New Shoreham does not provide a prestorm shelter. We encourage residents and visitors to take the preplanning and necessary precautions to address their accommodations and safety needs.

B) We strongly suggest boaters follow the Harbormaster’s directive in seeking safe refuge.

C) If you are a visitor, please heed the directive to leave the Island if requested or if your accommodations do not provide adequate comfort for the storm. All ferries will cease operations and move to a safer harbor well before the hurricane arrives so you must prepare immediately especially if you are preparing to leave the Island.

D) If you are an Island resident, observe the following home preparedness:

- Check working conditions of all emergency equipment flashlights, electronics, battery powered radios.
- Have enough perishable food and water supplies on hand for 3-5 days.
- Bring in all loose items around the porches or property.
- Make sure your vehicles have gas, or if electric it is fully charged.
- If you have a propane grill, secure it and keep the propane supply off, and secured outdoors.
- Cover large windows with shutters or plywood, if possible.
- Have a first aid kit prepared.
- Fill bathtub and large containers with water for sanitary purposes.
- Turn the refrigerator to a colder setting and keep the door closed as much as possible.
- Medicine renewals - have enough of your regular medication for 1-2 weeks.
- If you are concerned about your location in a storm, consider staying with a friend who may be in a safer location. Corn Neck Road may not be passable due to high tides: flooding and access to Town may be cut off for some time.

Police Dispatch at (401) 466-3220 Please refrain from routine calls during the storm leaving the lines open for emergency requests.

Please stay inside until the storm has passed. Do not venture out in the calm of the storm, as this may be the eye as severe weather may follow.

Please refrain from walking on the beaches and break walls, as heavy wave surges make this extremely dangerous.

Heavy rain may undermine bluff areas, so please do not walk along any bluffs during or following the storm.

Prior and following the storm, make sure family or friends know where you are.



Community Calendar

September / October 2026



SEPTEMBER 11-13:
Block Island Pride. Various events and locations.



Block Island Pride

SEPTEMBER 11:
2 p.m.: Queerness in Nature. See the diverse spectrum of gender expression and sexual behavior, because nature is queer. Meet at Andy’s Way parking lot.

SEPTEMBER 12:
9 – 11:30 a.m.: Block Island Farmers Market. Legion Park.

12:20 p.m.: Block Island Pride March. Participants meet at Ocean View Pavilion at 11:30 a.m.

5 p.m.: Opening Reception for Jacqueline Phillips, painting. Spring Street Gallery.

Sunset (8ish): Soundwaves Movies on the Beach Presents, “Call Me By Your Name,” [2017, R]. Fred Benson Town Beach Pavilion.

SEPTEMBER 13:
9 a.m. - 12 p.m.: Marina Market at Champlin’s Marina.

SEPTEMBER 16:
9 – 11:30 a.m.: Block Island Farmers Market. Manisses parking lot.

5 p.m.: Andy’s Way Bird Walk. A bird walk for all skill levels. Bring binoculars and wear shoes that can get wet. Meet in Andy’s Way parking lot.

SEPTEMBER 17:
9 a.m. - 12 p.m.: Marina Market at Champlin’s Marina.

SEPTEMBER 19:
9 – 11:30 a.m.: Block Island Farmers Market. Legion Park.

9 a.m. - 5 p.m.: Passport to the Arts. Explore workshops and open studios around Block Island. Inquire at Visitors Center welcome station.

3 p.m.: The Nature Conservancy’s James Stover Exploration Series Wildflower Walk. Meet at Win-Dodge trail entrance off Cooneymus Road.

4 p.m.: Friends of the Island Free Library present Michele LaRue in “The Revolt of Mother,” a Mary E. Wilkins classic. Island Free Library.

5 p.m.: Opening Reception for John Warfel and Eileen Miller, ceramics and painting. Spring Street Gallery.

SEPTEMBER 20:
9 a.m. - 12 p.m.: Marina Market at Champlin’s Marina.

9 a.m. - 5 p.m.: Passport to the Arts. Explore workshops and open studios around Block Island. Inquire at Visitors Center welcome station.

5 – 7 p.m.: Passport to the Arts artist reception and raffle. Spring Street Gallery.

SEPTEMBER 23:
9 – 11:30 a.m.: Block Island Farmers Market. Manisses parking lot.

Noon: Andy’s Way Bird Walk. A bird walk for all skill levels. Bring binoculars and wear shoes that can get wet. Meet in Andy’s Way parking lot.

SEPTEMBER 24:
9 a.m. - 12 p.m.: Marina Market at Champlin’s Marina.

SEPTEMBER 26:
9 – 11:30 a.m.: Block Island Farmers Market. Legion Park.

5 p.m. Opening Reception for Eugene Flinn, painting. Spring Street Gallery.



Spring Street Gallery

SEPTEMBER 27:
9 a.m. - 12 p.m.: Marina Market at Champlin’s Marina.

11:30 a.m.: Block Island Historical Society Annual Meeting with Kim Gaffett on Elizabeth Dickens, Bird Lady of Block Island. Spring House.

1 – 4 p.m.: Bo Gempp Memorial Shellfish Restoration Fund Calamarifest and Raw Bar. Enjoy quahogs, oysters and a varied selection of Block Island Calamari, and Chef Phil’s famous Green Crab Bisque and delicious Smoked Fish Dip and more. Champlin’s Resort. Admission is \$30 per person. Tickets available at the door.

SEPTEMBER 30:
9 – 11:30 a.m.: Block Island Farmers Market. Manisses parking lot.

4 p.m.: Andy’s Way Bird Walk. A bird walk for all skill levels. Bring binoculars and wear shoes that can get wet. Meet in Andy’s Way parking lot.

OCTOBER 3:
9 – 11:30 a.m.: Block Island Farmers Market. Legion Park.

12 p.m.: Walk for Alzheimer’s. Ceremony starts at 12 p.m. Walk begins at 12:15 p.m. Fred Benson Town Beach.



Walk for Alzheimer's

5 p.m. Opening Reception for Ron Arnold, mixed media. Spring Street Gallery.

OCTOBER 7:
9 – 11:30 a.m.: Block Island Farmers Market. Manisses parking lot.

OCTOBER 10:
9 – 11:30 a.m.: Last Block Island Farmers Market of the season. Historical Society.

9 a.m. - 1 p.m.: Block Island Arts & Crafts Guild Fair. Historical Society.

4 p.m.: The Nature Conservancy’s James Stover Exploration Series presents Raptors Over the Fields fall walk at Lewis Farm. Meet at Cooneymus and Lewis Farm Roads. Transportation will be available for those who prefer not to walk.

5 - 7 p.m.: Art Auction Fundraiser. Spring Street Gallery.

OCTOBER 11:
12:30 p.m.: Block Island Half Marathon. Race begins at Fred Benson Town Beach Pavilion.

NOVEMBER 27-29:
35th Annual Holiday Shopping Stroll. Downtown.

NOVEMBER 28:
The Adrian Mitchell 5K Block Island Turkey Trot. Walk or run this 5K post-holiday event and work off some carbs. Race starts at 1:30 p.m. Start and finish lines at at the Fred Benson Town Beach Pavilion.



The Glass Float Project

Eben Horton creates “one of a kind” pieces on an individual basis out of his studio that he calls ‘The Glass Station’ located in downtown Wakefield, R.I. This project is funded by the Block Island Tourism Council and a Kick-starter funding campaign.

550 Glass Floats (glass orbs about the size of a grapefruit) will be hidden on Block Island. Floats will be dated, numbered

and stamped with the shape of Block Island. All floats are clear glass except except for a few that are special colored orbs. The hunt continues indefinitely – it only ends when all the floats have been found!

Floats will be hidden on the beaches and on the Greenway Trails. They will be above the high tide mark but never in the dunes or up the side of the bluffs.

They will be within one foot of either side of any Greenway Trail they are placed on. This is “finder’s keepers” but you are asked to only keep one per seeker, please. To register a float that you found go to www.blockislandinfo.com/glass-float-project/register-floats.

To see the list of globes that have already been found, visit www.blockislandinfo.com/glass-float-project/found-floats.



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Bruce and Peggy Montgomery—1999 - 2006
Jeffrey McDonough—1997 - 1999
Peter and Shirley Wood—1982 - 1997

The Block Island Times is a member of the New England Newspaper and Press Association, The National Newspaper Association, The Block Island Chamber of Commerce, and the Westerly Pawcatuck Chamber of Commerce.

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	Pam Gelsomini,
	Kim Gaffett
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Office Manager.....	Pat Tengwall

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Letters to the Editor, Press Releases.....	Tuesday, 4 p.m.
	Email: rmeyer@blockislandtimes.com
“Where in the World” photos	Email: rmeyer@blockislandtimes.com
Display and Classified ads:	Send to ptengwall@blockislandtimes.com by Mon., 2:30 p.m.

Correction Policies

Advertising: This newspaper does not assume any responsibility for an error in an advertisement. Changes to existing ads cannot be guaranteed if copy is received later than 2 p.m. on Mondays.
Editorial: This newspaper will correct errors in content. Opinions expressed in columns or letters to the editor are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of this newspaper. The Block Island Times reserves the right to edit all content, including letters to the editor.

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SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2026

Timmy Maia:September 1, 2, 3, 11, 13
Tumbleweed Preacher:September 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20
Hazzard County: September: 5, 6, 7
Darik and the Funbags: September 5, 6
Brazil Day: September 12
The Manatees:September 19, 20
Shawn Allen:September 26, 27

Latin Night:	September 1
The Neens:	September 3
Wicked Peach:	September 4, 5
Root Steady:	September 6
Never in Vegas:	September 11, 12
Quick Hits:	September 18, 19
The Yardbarkers:	October 2, 3
Knock 'em Dead:	October 9, 10

Monday, September 7: Last Disco Night of the season
Tuesdays, September 1 & 8: Country Night
Wednesday, September 2: Piano Bar
Wednesday, September 9: Delaney Schwarzer
Fridays on the Sunshine Deck: Shawn David Allen through October 9
Saturdays on the Sunshine Deck: Rob Davis through October 10
Sunday Funday: The Young Guns through September 13
The Social Assassins: September 4, 5, 6
Drag Show/Liquid Dance Floor: September 11
Maddi Ryan: September 18, 19
Real Weird: September 25, 26
Rob Davis and the Half Baked Horns: October 2, 3
The Booze Beggars: October 9, 10, 11

Mondays: Trivia Night
 Wednesdays: Karaoke Night
 Thursdays: Mac Brown
 Decades Karaoke: September 9
 80's Prom: September 12
 Oktoberfest: October 3
 Scary-Oke: October 28

The Neens:	September 3
The Zeneth Duo:	September 4
Leigh Gilbert:	September 5
Stevie Lightin':	September 7
Becky Bass:	September 11

Through September 20:

Sundays:	22 Brides
Mondays:	Scott Baer
Tuesdays:	Billy Musto
Wednesdays:	Billy Musto
Thursdays:	Big Lux
Fridays:	Scott Baer

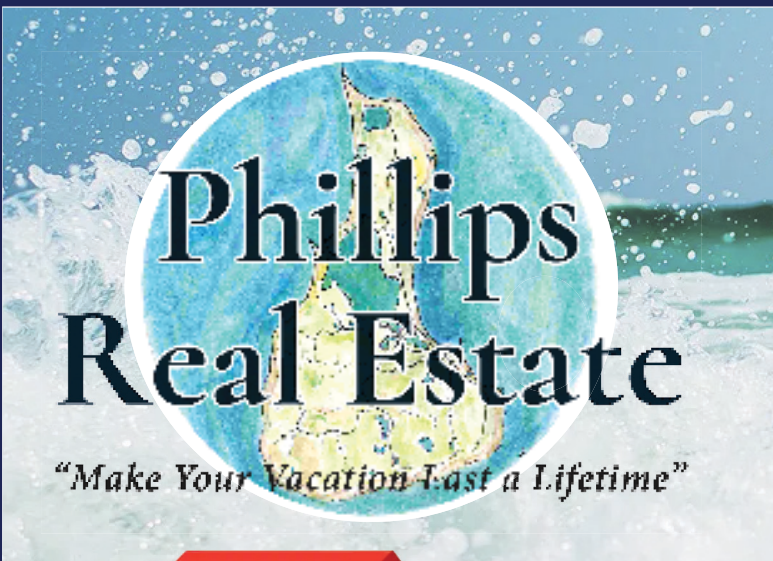
Through September 12:

Scott Baer: Friday nights inside at 8:30 p.m.

Shawn David Allen: Saturdays inside at 8:30 p.m.

Marc Douglas Berardo: Thursdays through Mondays at the Fire Pits at 5:30 p.m.

Shawn David Allen: Tuesdays and Wednesdays at the Fire Pits at 5:30 p.m.



Phillips Real Estate

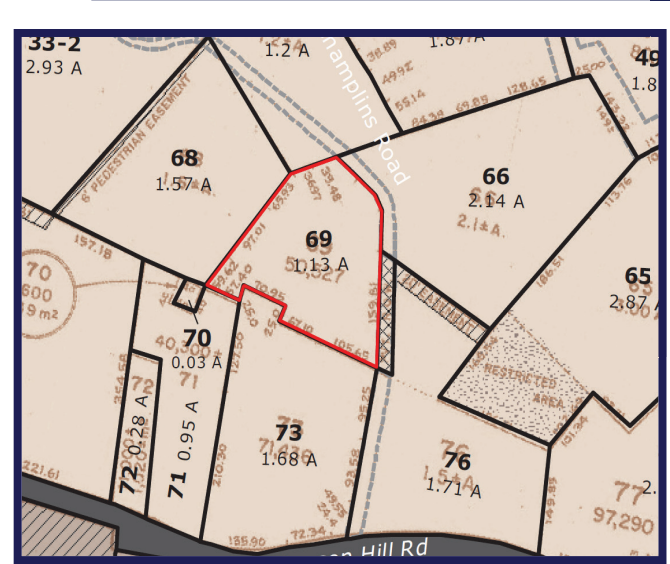
"Make Your Vacation Last a Lifetime"



1430 SOUTHWEST POINT

Perched on 3.13 private waterfront acres, this remarkable Southwest Point compound pairs direct beach access with sweeping Atlantic Ocean vistas and unforgettable sunsets. Rarely available, it offers an unparalleled blend of privacy, natural beauty, and one of Block Island's most coveted locations. **\$9,290,000**







1661 Sands Pond Road \$2,740,000

Situated on a 4-acre parcel with stunning Sand's Pond views, this unparalleled property is a true oasis. While there are opportunities for cosmetic enhancement in this 3 bed, 2.5 bath home, the structure itself is a masterpiece of design. The detached garage provides ample storage, while an upstairs apt. offers a retreat for a year-round Block Island resident.
Co-Listed w/ Block Island Realty

Beacon Hill Vacant Land \$825,000

Over one acre of vacant land set in a quiet neighborhood, accessed via a private lane-way off Beacon Hill Road. This unique parcel features interesting lot lines that add character and potential flexibility in site planning, offering a rare opportunity to design a home tailored to the setting. Enjoy a peaceful, private environment while remaining conveniently located to town. Survey & soil evaluation available.

1409 off Cooneymus Road \$2,680,000

Tucked away down a quiet country lane on Block Island's coveted southwest side, this classic Block Island-style Cape offers the perfect blend of privacy, comfort, and year-round living. Surrounded by beautifully crafted stone walls and protected conservation land, the home embraces a light, breezy aesthetic with painted hardwood floors, inviting living spaces, and timeless coastal charm.

Jennifer Phillips GRI, ABR, SRS Broker
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COLUMNIST



Ocean Views
By Kim Gaffett

September & October:
the Year’s Golden Months

September is the best of summer, and October is the best of fall. Any day now, you will suddenly notice that the afternoon light has shifted to a more golden hue. Gone will be the harsh glare of summer’s yellow light. But, there is still plenty of summer left in September. The island’s summer 2026 waters were highlighted by many sightings of humpback whales, visible from island headlands or onboard fishing boats in the near shores. Also in the waters this past summer were large schools of mackerel and other bait fish, capturing the attention of whales, laughing gulls, and human anglers. With any luck, humpback whales will continue to be seen through September; as well as dolphins, which have been spied escorting the Block Island boat to and from Pt. Judith and doing laps in the New Harbor.

September is also prime swimming weather. The ocean has been warming all summer and the water temperature is now perfect for refreshing swims. September and October is the time to be at the beach – not just for swimming. As the mid-day temperatures start to moderate, a daytime beach walk is cooler and more luxurious – don’t forget to cast an eye seaward for a chance whale or dolphin sighting. September is also the time to be on the lookout for animals washed ashore. It is not unusual to come upon a washed-up leather-backed sea turtle. (Cause of death is often due to ingestion of plastic bags, which resemble the turtle’s favorite food – jellyfish.) Also, low tide walks along the edges of the Great Salt Pond offers opportunities to see and hear feeding American oystercatchers and greater yellowlegs. And, the time to take note of one of the island’s most beautiful native plants, sea lavender. Once you have identified those wiry puffs of light lavender dotting the shores of the New Harbor, you’ll look forward every year for the appearance of sea lavender, which materialize subtly and suddenly, like an apparition.

September and October is not wonderous only because of its ocean and seaside features and experiences. There are landside treasures too.

We are going into September having had enough rain to invigorate a lot of mushroom growth. And, if the rainfall pattern holds, October may turn out to be one of the best mushroom-bearing fungi seasons in years.

And then there are the birds... October is well known for its fall bird migration. Starting slowly in early September, birds are on the move to southern destinations. Among the earliest to leave the island are barn swallows and yellow warblers. (Barn swallows winter throughout S. American all the way to Patagonia; and northern yellow warblers winter in Central America and NW South America.) From mid-September to mid-October, raptors of all kinds rule the island skies – especially merlins and peregrine falcons. Then, in October huge numbers of songbirds use the island as a stop-over place for resting and feeding while on their migration southward.

In October you can expect at least one north-east storm. Always refreshing – almost cleansing: the ocean will be frothed with foam-edged swirls of lapis, cerulean and midnight blue. The brilliance of such a storm will be the counterpoint to an early fall evening marked by the glorious massing of monarch butterflies on the southeast side of evergreens; they are awaiting the warming rays of the morning sun, so they too can continue their migration south bound.

The end of October always comes too soon. The last week of October sees our winter birds return home: ruddy ducks, hooded mergansers, white-throated sparrows and if we’re lucky, we’ll get glimpses of northern saw-whet owls, and jaunty myrtle warblers will arrive to enliven the upcoming winter days.

To share with others the wonders of September and October, join one of The Nature Conservancy’s many public programs – go to www.natureblockisland.org to see the full calendar of autumnal activities.

Block Island’s September and October Microseasons

Tatting Turnstones: September 1 – 7

Life is on the move from summer locations to wintering grounds. Watch for the island’s ebb and flow of humans, common nighthawks, whales, green darners and other dragonflies, and all types of wandering shorebirds. It is also time to look for and pick the year’s first windfall apples, wild grapes, and hidden beach plums.

Caterpillars become Monarchs: September 8 – 14

Monarch caterpillars have transformed into a gem-like jade chrysalis and will soon emerge as butterflies to make their fantastic migration to Mexico. Early September is also the time of bat migration. The summer’s population of little brown bats will be joined by several other species as they migrate toward winter-time hibernacula. The New Little Brown Bat Moon will occur on September 10 at 11:27 p.m. And, the Lowest Clam Tides will be September 11, 27 and 28.

Fields of Gold-leaf: September 15 – 21

More than twenty species of goldenrod flourish during September: some species bloom early; others don’t bloom until the waning weeks of summer into fall.

Oothecas and Swallowtail Caterpillars: September 22 – 28

Many insects, which are cold blooded, are preparing for cool evenings, winter and next year. Monarch butterflies will roost together over night in great numbers on the southeast side of a tree, praying mantids are exuding their egg cases, called an ootheca, on dried flower stems in fields throughout the island. And, swallowtail caterpillars are eating heartily, getting ready to metamorphose their bodies into cocoons. The Autumnal Equinox will occur on September 22 at 8:05 p.m. Full Cocoon Moon will occur on September 26 at 12:49 p.m. And, the Lowest Clam Tides will be September 11, 27 and 28.

Migrating Bird Congregations: September 29 – October 5

Good-bye gray catbirds, hello myrtle warblers. The island is well known as an important stop-over place for migrating birds. Following a good northwest weather front look for warblers, vireos, thrushes, raptors, kinglets, and so many more species. Our summer breeding songbirds – gray catbirds, yellow warblers, and common yellowthroats - will be gone from here. But, our over-wintering species such as myrtle warblers and white-throated sparrows will soon be arriving.

Asters Abound: October 6 – 12

As the Goldenrods of September turn into lovely dried arrangements, the fields will in turn be adorned by arrays of small white aster, and the larger, dramatic, blue and purple New England aster. The Draconid Meteor Shower peaks on October 9. Not overly dramatic, the Draconids are characterized by slow, faint, yellowish shooting stars. The New Striper Moon will occur on October 10 at 11:50 a.m.,

Splashing Stripers and Milkweed Pods: October 13 – 19

October fishing is great for pelagic species such as false albacore and Atlantic bonito, and the bluefish will stick around through the end of the month. Striped bass, migrating south after a summer of northward movement, will peak around the island in mid-October.

Many of the island’s native plants are setting and dispersing seeds at this time. Perhaps the loveliest and most enchanting of these is the setting, drying, and splitting of the common milkweed pods, resulting in the release of thousands of seeds held aloft by plumes of down to facilitate dispersal.

White-throated Sparrows Arrive: October 20 – 26

Throughout October, shorebirds, songbirds and raptors are migrating and using the island as a critical stop-over spot for rest, refueling, and reorienting to the primary migration path along the east coast. As late October arrives, many of the migrating birds will find their wintering grounds on the island: this is the time to watch for winter wrens, myrtle warblers, and listen for the winter return of white-throated sparrows. The Orionid Meteor Showers will offer their best viewing on October 21. The Full Sparrow Moon will occur at 12:12 a.m. on October 26.

Glowing Shadbush & Saw-whet Owls: October 27 – November 2.

When the shadbush leaves turn golden, when the winterberry shrubs lose their leaves exposing brilliant red berries, and when the low-angled light of the season bathes the landscape in spender is when the island is truly at its most beautiful. And, this is the time when the magic and specter of saw-whet owls is in the offing. And the Lowest Clam Tides will occur on October 25, 26 and 27.



Sweet autumn dematis, an introduced and aggressive vine. Early September.



A coral fungus. (Photo: Caroline Mehn)



Chicken-of-the-woods mushroom, a candidate for Rhode Island state fungus



Goldenrod and Monarch butterfly



Ruddy turnstone

Take a hike

1. Hodge Family Wildlife Preserve

Walking Time: 1 hour
Degree of Difficulty: Easy
Distance: 1 mile round-trip
From Old Harbor Ferry Landing: 3.2 miles
This preserve is composed of coastal shrub and meadow habitat with great sunset and water views. To reach the parking lot travel north on Corn Neck Rd., turn left through the gap in the stonewall to a parking area defined by split-rail fencing. There is a link to Clay Head Trail. Cross over Corn Neck Rd. and walk south 175 feet. Trail is on your left and will take you through the Maze to the bluff trail.

2. Clay Head Trail

Walking Time: 1.5 hours along main bluff trail.
Degree of difficulty: Moderate - some steep slopes and uneven ground
Distance: 2 miles for main bluff trail, 0.7 miles from Corn Neck Rd. to bluff trail
From Old Harbor Ferry Landing: 3 miles
Clay Head Trail traverses some of the most spectacular scenery on the eastern seaboard. To reach the trail, look for a post marker on the right side of Corn Neck Rd. Turn down the dirt road and go straight about a 1/3-mile to reach parking area. The main trail runs parallel to the bluff. Periodically you will see trails on your left heading away from the ocean. Known as the “Maze”, these intertwining trails are unmarked and are perfect for hours of wandering.

3. Meadow Hill Greenway

Walking Time: 15 minutes
Degree of difficulty: Moderate - some steep slopes and uneven ground
Distance: 0.4 mile one-way
From Old Harbor Ferry Landing: 0.5 mile
The trail extends from the corner of Old Town Rd. and Connecticut Ave to a point on Old Town Rd. approximately 1/3-mile to the west. Wonderful views to the north are available along this trail.

4. Greenway: Great Salt Pond to Beacon Hill

Walking Time: 45 minutes one-way
Degree of difficulty: Moderate - some steep slopes and uneven ground
Distance: 1 mile one-way
From Old Harbor Ferry Landing: 1.5 miles to north entrance, 1.7 miles to south entrance
This is the northern end of the Greenway trail system. It is possible to reach Great Salt Pond through the Ball O’Brien Park. The trail connects New Harbor to West Side Rd. and Beacon Hill Rd. allowing walkers to traverse 3 miles from Great Salt Pond to Black Rock Pt.

5. Greenway: South of Beacon Hill & Nathan Mott Park

Walking Time: 1.5 hours one-way
Degree of difficulty: Hard - steep slopes & uneven ground
Distance: 1.33 miles one-way
From Old Harbor Ferry Landing: 1.5 miles to Nathan Mott Park entrance, 1.7 miles to South Beacon Hill entrance

There are four different places to access Nathan Mott Park. The Greenway goes through the park, beginning at the midpoint of Beacon Hill Rd., continuing south, and then connecting to Turnip Farm. There is an entrance with a parking area on Center Rd. across from the airport as well as an entrance off Old Mill Rd.

6. Turnip Farm & Loffredo Memorial Preserve

Walking Time: 2 hours one-way
Degree of difficulty: Easy/moderate – a few steep slopes
Distance: 1.7 miles one-way
From Old Harbor Ferry Landing: 2.5 miles
There are four ways to access Turnip Farm and Loffredo Preserve. The Greenway trail comes in from Nathan Mott Park, winds through the farm and joins the path to Rodman’s Hollow on Old Mill Rd. The Loffredo Preserve, which can be accessed from the Dodge Cemetery or Turnip Farm, has some of the highest land on the island with views of the Block Island Sound, Eastern Long Island Sound and Montauk, Long Island.

7. Rodman’s Hollow

Walking Time: 2 hours one-way
Degree of difficulty: Moderate – steep slopes & uneven ground
Distance: 2.6 mile one-way
From Old Harbor Ferry Landing: 2.8 miles
To access the hollow, walk down Black Rock Rd. off of Cooneymus Rd. About a ¼-mile down on your left, you will see the trail entrance. The trail soon splits. If you bear left, you will be led through the bottom of the hollow, while bearing right will take you atop a knoll offering a wonderful panoramic vista. The trails intersect again and will lead you to the new trail head on the left. At the end of this trail, you can access the beach from both directions via a trail down the bluff.

8. Fresh Pond Greenway

Walking Time: 1 hour one-way
Degree of difficulty: Hard – steep slopes & uneven ground
Distance: 0.8 mile one-way
From Old Harbor Ferry Landing: 2 miles
The trail extends from Fresh Pond to Rodman’s Hollow. Beginning on the north end of Lakeside Dr., the trail continues past the pond up to a knoll which provides a breathtaking view of the pond and the eastern part of the island. You can continue on to Rodman’s Hollow by taking the link from the south part of the loop.

9. Fresh Swamp & Payne Farm Trail

Walking Time: 1 hour one-way
Degree of difficulty: Moderate – steep slopes
Distance: 0.9 mile one-way
From Old Harbor Ferry Landing: 2.2 miles
The trail begins across the street from Fresh Pond on Lakeside Dr., a few hundred yards south of Isaac’s Corner. Look for a wooden step stile along the stone wall. The trail offers a secluded, tranquil walk.

Block Island Trail System



10. Win Dodge Preserve & Lewis-Dickens Farm Trail

Walking Time: 1.5 hours round trip for Win Dodge and Dickens Trail combined
Degree of difficulty: Win Dodge: Hard – steep slopes and uneven ground, Dickens Farm: Easy
Distance: 2.36 mile round trip for Win Dodge & Dickens combined
From Old Harbor Ferry Landing: 3.3 miles
To access this trail, we suggest you walk along the dirt road from Cooneymus Rd. Win Dodge will be on your left. Follow the “Walkers Welcome” sign for an amazing view of the southwest part of the Island. Continue on the trail turning left onto the dirt road. Look for Lewis-Dickens Farm trail sign on your right.

11. Ocean View Pavilion

The Pavilion site is an "in-town" open space oasis overlooking the Old Harbor. It is: a peaceful place to rest, location of nature programs and a student garden, Ocean View Hotel foundation ruins, and beach access.

Other Walking Trails & Significant Views

While there are significant views throughout the island there are several small trails that offer great vistas. Look for the binocular symbol for these areas.

Please...

- Respect all signs marked private. Keep noise to a minimum.
- Do not bike on trails. No horseback riding allowed on trails.
- Stay off dunes and bluffs.
- Take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but footprints.
- Beware of Poison Ivy “Leaves in three, let it be!”
- During hunting season (fall & winter) wear blaze orange.
- Lyme disease is on Block Island. We strongly suggest you take precautions to avoid deer ticks. Wear long pants tucked into socks, stay clear of tall grass, and make body checks after any outdoor activity.

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A reimagined Block Island if gambling was legalized in the 1960s. (Generated with Google Gemini by Benjamin Hruska.)

Block Island: Rhode Island’s “miniature Nevada”

By Dr. Benjamin Hruska,
Assistant Professor,
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

“The New England branch of the Mafia is said to be interested in it as a possible gambling site,” a reporter wrote of Block Island in 1966, “and for the past several years, as chance would have it, bills have been introduced in the legislature.....to legalize gambling in the town of New Shoreham.”

In 1961, State Senator Francis J. LaChapelle of West Warwick, Rhode Island promised Rhode Island voters a tax-free future. Imagine, if all state sales and income taxes vanished? “We in Rhode Island could reap the harvest of economic gain and financial well-being to the state of Rhode Island,” LaChapelle

wrote, “by converting Block Island into a miniature Nevada.”

LaChapelle’s reasoning was simple. Geography. “Block Island is geographically suitable for an enterprise of this type,” wrote LaChapelle, “as it would be accessible to neighboring states by boat and air, and yet it is physically detached from what we commonly term the State of Rhode Island.” Supporters, the vast majority of whom lived on the mainland, used boosterism campaigns promoting Block Island’s potential as the “Las Vegas of New England” and the “Macao of the Northeast.”

A writer from Holiday magazine wrote that the utterance of these boosterism slogans “sent chills up and down the spines of the natives.” Transformations were descending on Block Island in the mid-

dle 1960s. “It served as a fortified stronghold during World War I and II,” a reporter wrote, “and is today gently besieged by the Mafia on the one hand and the bourgeoisie on the other.”

Casinos on Block Island? Visions of the Rat Pack walking off the *Quonset* onto a Block Island dock seem like the result of a bad acid trip. But, for 12 consecutive years, in the rotunda of the capitol building in Providence, LaChapelle sought the legalization of gambling on Block Island.

* * * * *

The scholar James Howard Kunstler defines community as, “something akin to a living organization composed of different parts that work together to

Continued on page 9

Block Island Historical Society



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SUNKEN BRITISHFRIGATES IN NARRAGANSETT BAY, 1778 SPEAKER: BOB CEMBELLA	SEPT 10 7:00 P.M. HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING	SEPT 27 11:30 A.M. THE SPRING HOUSE
ELIZABETH DICKENS: BIRD LADY OF BLOCK ISLAND SPEAKER: KIM GAFFET	SEPT 27 2:00 P.M. THE SPRING HOUSE

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Block Island: Rhode Island’s “miniature Nevada”

Continued from page 8

make the whole greater than the sum of its parts – that is, a community.” The gambling controversy revealed that it was much more than just full-time residents rallying to defend Block Island. Letters flooded the mailroom of the State House from Connecticut, New York, Delaware, and even a full professor from the University of Illinois. Those writing against the measure included seasonal residents, day-trippers, and even people who had never been to Block Island.

Beatrice Bea Dodge (1912-1982) worked as the town librarian and as a kindergarten teacher. She also served as a board member of the Block Island Historical Society and was active in Block Island’s chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. “The senator,” Bea Dodge wrote in an open letter to the editor, “would isolate Block Island like a medieval plague spot.” In reiterating what was at stake for Rhode Island’s only town not connected to the mainland by bridge, Dodge wrote, “There are not many places left in our age of the organization, the superhighways and the status seeking, for people to unwind and live each day at a time and pace set by the individual himself. Block Island is such a place.”

“Senator LaChapelle puts Block Island,” Dodge wrote, “in the position of being able to save the state from its financial difficulties and he makes our refusal to comply an extremely unpatriotic act. How far we have come from the ideals of Roger Williams!”

Bea was not alone as the vast majority of islanders rejected the idea. “If Block Island has gambling,” another resident wrote, “the state will get the money and our town will have the headaches.” Another pointed to Block Island’s centuries of self-sufficiency. In short, the politicians in Providence could keep their mainland ideas for the mainland. “If we have financial problems, we will solve them,” one resident wrote, “We’ll do it by our own hard work, as we have been doing for 300 years now.”

“Gambling would drive decent citizens from the island if not brainwash them with vice,” one letter from Norwich, Conn. read, “The state’s first duty is to protect the citizens.” One from Hillsdale, N.Y. suggested introducing legislation regarding the “feasibility of renaming the town of West Warwick, (the home district of La Chapelle) the ‘Las Vegas of the East.’”

The leading voice in Providence against the legalization of gambling was New Shoreham Representative Samuel D. Mott. “I believe that I am speaking for the majority of residents of Block Island,” Sam Mott wrote, “as well as myself when I say we don’t want another Las Vegas.”

“The roulette and other types of gambling,” Mott wrote, “are only the beginning. The other vices will follow.” He concluded his written remarks with, “A few years ago I talked with a former Nevada legislator about gambling and he said to me, ‘For God’s sake, don’t let it happen on Block Island.’”

The Block Island Residents Association (BIRA) was also a vocal opponent against gambling. The association’s secretary, Eileen Lee, wrote that BIRA “does not believe slot machines, roulette and the roll of the dice would do anything to promote the island’s cultural life.” Another full-time resident wrote, “If we lose income, we gain integrity, and integrity and moral strength of a community and state are irreplaceable treasure no amount of money can buy.”

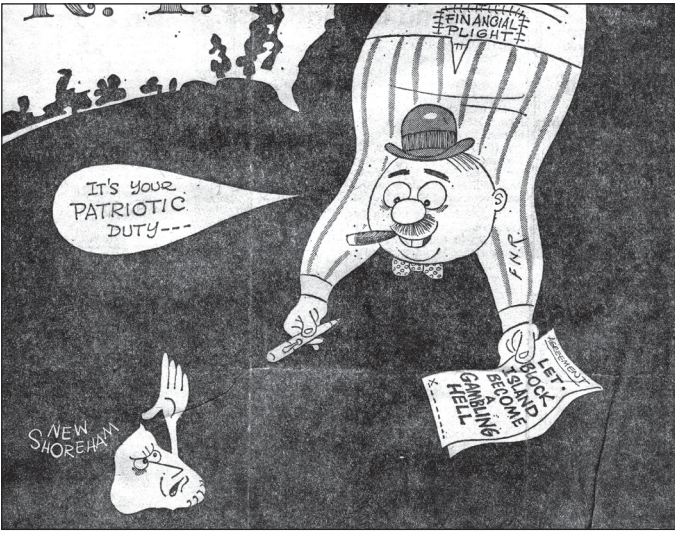
LaChapelle's efforts to legalize gambling on Block Island resulted in several heated town meetings. One that formally ended the years-long controversy took place in 1970 in the island’s largest room. Over 200 citizens of Block Island showed up in mass at the school’s gym.

A lone Rhode Island State Trooper officer was in attendance. When LaChapelle walked into the gym he told the trooper he was very happy to see him there.

As reported, “After hearing the islanders out – they were against the measure, almost to the man – LaChapelle told them he would not introduce his bill next year, or ever.” The reporter described the reaction to LaChapelle’s comments with, “The news brought cheers from those of us who love this place and want it to be left alone to go its own Yankee-independent way.”

“That meeting was a visible symbol of the islanders’ power to protect their lifestyle, to determine their own destiny,” another reporter wrote. “And such is the island’s ambience that even recent arrivals from the mainland are equally careful to protect the character of the place.”

This newly discovered agency was found just in



In this cartoon, Block Island is portrayed as a hand rejecting the concept of legalized gambling as the solution to the state’s financial issues. Island resident Beatrice Bea Dodge (1912-1982) wrote in reaction to the gambling measure, “How far we have come from the ideals of Roger Williams!” (Block Island Historical Society)



In 1947, the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce hired an advertising firm to promote the town. Thus, the 44-foot neon cowboy known as Vegas Vic was born. In this editorial cartoon, Vegas Vic attempts to entice the solitary Block Island resident to embracing casinos. The Block Islander, wearing his trademarked long-billed fishing hat, is not impressed, replying with “No, By Ginger!” (Block Island Historical Society)

time, as other threats percolated in the minds of certain mainlanders, such as condominiums on a small section of the island known as Rodman’s Hollow.

PHOTO CONTEST

The Friends of the National Wildlife Refuges of Rhode Island announce their 26th Annual Amateur Photo Competition to highlight the beauty of the five refuges that comprise the Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

Photos will be accepted in the following categories: refuge wildlife, refuge flora, refuge wildlife habitat/landscape and photos taken by children age 14 and under, of any subject on a refuge.

All photos must have been taken on one of the five national wildlife refuges in Rhode Island that include Ninigret

NWR, Charlestown, Block Island NWR, Trustom Pond NWR, South Kingstown, Sachuest Point NWR, Middletown, and Chafee NWR at Pettaquamscutt Cove, South Kingstown and Narragansett.

Amateur photographers are encouraged to enter their existing refuge color photos or to take new ones. The color photos must be 8 by 10 inches and not matted or framed. For full details and photo registration see the contest flyers by visiting our website at www.FrinedsNWRofRI.org or pick one up at the visitor centers.

Photos and a \$10 entry fee per photo must be received by September 8, 2026. There is a maximum limit of four (4) photos per contestant. Checks should be made payable to the Friends of NWR-

R.I. Contestants at any time can deliver their photos between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. to the Sachuest Point Visitors Center in Middletown, R.I. or the Kettle Pond Visitors Center in Charlestown, R.I. Photos may also be mailed at any time to the Friends of the NWR-RI, 50 Bend Road, Charlestown, R.I. 02813.

All photos entered will be exhibited at Sachuest Point Visitors Center, Middletown, R.I. from Saturday, September 19 to October 3 and then displayed at Kettle Pond Visitors Center, Charlestown, R.I. from October 4 to October 19.

The photos will be judged by a panel of photographers prior to the show. First, second and third place winners will be chosen in each of the four categories. The Best of Show will be awarded a \$100 cash prize. Other prizes will

also be awarded.

For more information about the contest or entry forms, e-mail RThieke@cox.net or call the or visit our website www.FriendsNWRofRI.org.

The Friends of the National Wildlife Refuges of Rhode Island is a volunteer member-based nonprofit organization devoted to conservation and development of healthy habitat for flora and fauna at Rhode Island’s National Wildlife Refuges, and to safe, accessible, ecological experiences for refuge visitors. The Friends group helps secure funds for and works on refuge projects designed to meet the goals of the US Fish and Wildlife Comprehensive Plan for Rhode Island’s acres of federal refuge habitats.



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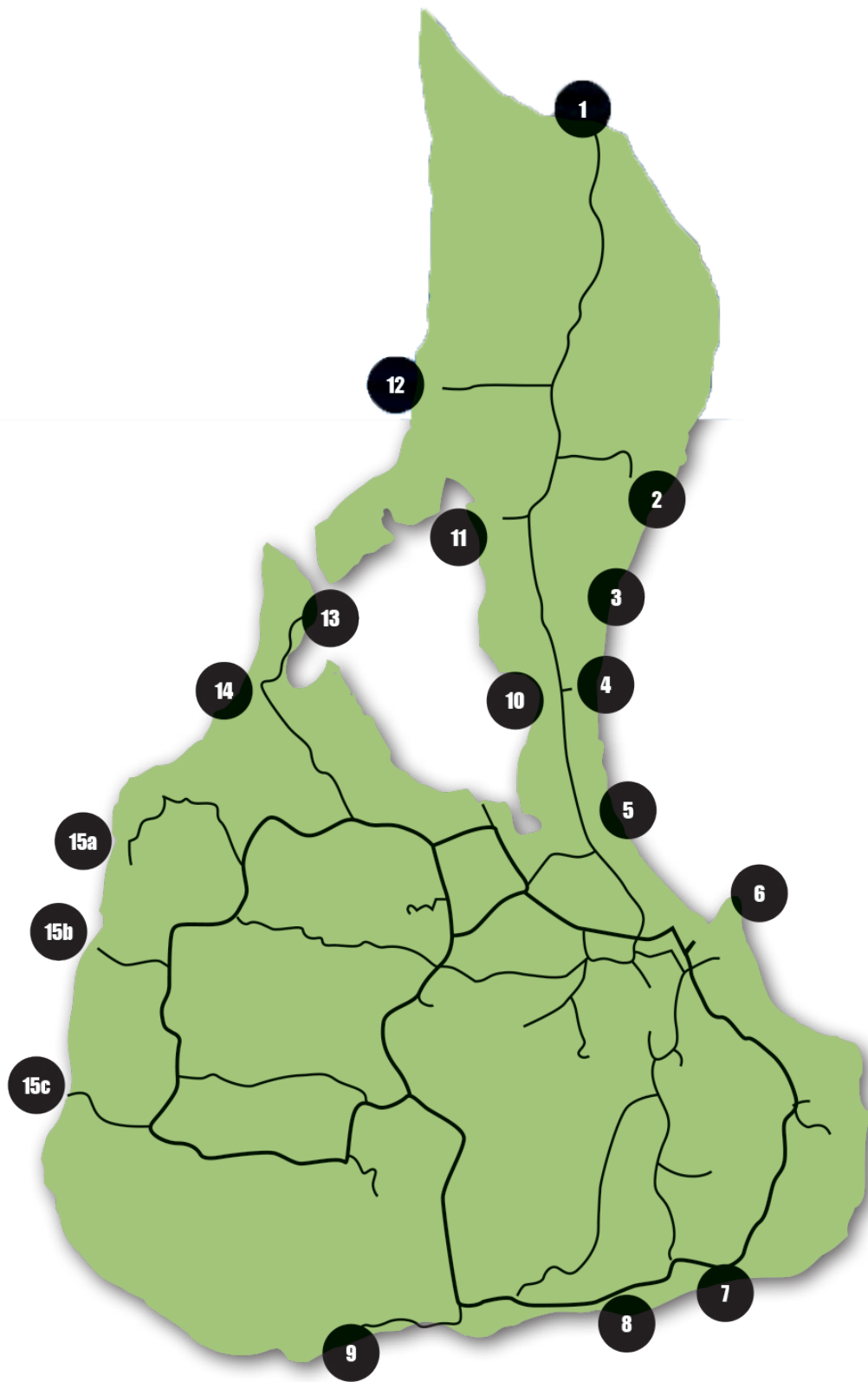


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* not scientifically proven

On The Beach



Photos by K. Curtis

It's a simple fact: all Block Island vacations include a day at the beach. Block Island has 17 miles worth of unspoiled coastline and pristine beaches. While numerous beaches offer strong, consistent swells for wave sports, others are calmer and more placid, perfect for sunbathing and swimming. There are beaches that are ideal for families with children seeking a low-key spot, beaches where you may be the only one around, or beaches that are more action-packed. Use this guide to help find the best beach for you.

Fred Benson Town Beach Pavilion

Right smack in the middle of the big stretch of beach on the east side of the island is the Town Beach Pavilion which is open 7 days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Labor Day. Life-guards are on duty from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the full season. Beach chairs, boogie boards and umbrella rentals are available daily. Food is served all day with everything from cold drinks and ice cream to hamburgers and french fries. Bathrooms and showers are available (token showers).



1. Cow Cove is located near Settlers Rock. Although the shoreline is rocky, it offers some of the best coastal views and also sports the historic North Light. This is not a safe place to swim because of a strong rip tide. Be careful where you walk too: the beach is a nesting area for many rare birds.



2. Mansion Beach lies at the end of a dirt road with the same name. The island's most stately mansion once sat like a jewel on a hill overlooking Jerry's Point. Fire destroyed the house and it was never rebuilt. However, the beach fits the name by being the island's grandest.



3. Scotch Beach is a quarter mile north of Fred Benson Town Beach. Scotch is a sandbox for kids and the place to go for vacationers looking for a hotly contested game of volleyball. There is a small parking lot between the road and the dunes.



4. Fred Benson Town Beach home to Block Island's fully equipped bathhouse. Showers, lockers, food, and rental items, the beach is staffed with lifeguards in the summer months. The parking lot was expanded to accommodate more cars.

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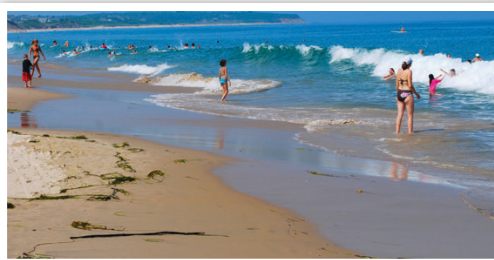
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5. Baby Beach is a well-sheltered beachfront at the south end of Crescent Beach, where children can easily play in the shallow waters. It's an ideal place to check out the abundant sea life such as small crabs and starfish and go hunting for shells and sand dollars.



6. Ballard's Beach is located on the south side of the Old Harbor breakwater and adjacent to Ballard's restaurant. Staffed with lifeguards throughout the summer months, it is also a popular destination for sunbathing, swimming, and volleyball.



7. Mohegan Bluffs beachfront at the bottom of the steps descending from the bluffs. A favorite spot for surfers and beautiful, secluded place to swim.



8. Vaill Beach is a large beach at the bottom of a hollow. The path to it is located at the bend in Snake Hole Road. At the base of the bend turn left and walk for approximately 50 yards. The surf here is rough and rocks line the shallows, so swimmers should exercise caution.



9. Black Rock boasts expanses of sand and a series of coves at the base of a cliff. Swimming is difficult due to the large number of rocks, but it's a perfect place for an oceanside hike. The area takes its name from a large, dark rock that rests offshore in about 15 feet of water that has spelled the end for many ships. Located a pace off the main road, it's best to walk or bike to get there.



10. Mosquito Beach, also known as "Dinghy Beach," is located just across the road from Scotch Beach, a quarter mile north of Fred Benson Town Beach. It provides a place for boaters in New Harbor to tie up their rafts and dinghies. The majestic views of Great Salt Pond, make it a good backdrop for photos.



11. Andy's Way is the island's premier clamming spot. Standing at the end of a dirt road that bears the same name, it's a good place to take a stroll. Just north is Beane Point, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife property that is home to many rare birds.



12. West Beach is lightly trafficked and has gentle surf. It's perfect for walking and is close to the North Light.



13. Coast Guard Beach is at the end of Champlin Road and derives its name from the old Coast Guard station that was formerly located there. Don't swim here, but it's a good place for clamming and fishing.



14. Charlestown Beach is popular with fishermen because it has a long jetty at its end. Typically uncrowded, it's a nice spot to watch the boats come into the harbor or explore the former Coast Guard station that is now town-owned.



15. Grace's, Dorry's, and Cooneymus coves are secluded beaches on the west side of the island. They are perfect for a challenging hike or for those looking for an out-of-the-way spot to catch a sunset or a moonrise.

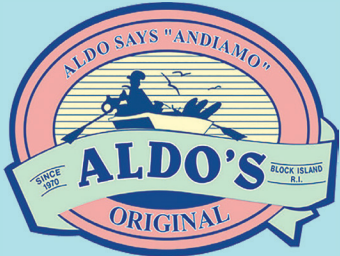


Rentals at Diamondblue
Diamondblue Surf Shop beach rentals are close to town and are located at their store in Bridegate Square. Daily and hourly rentals of beach chairs, umbrellas, stand-up paddle boards, surf boards, and kayaks are available through Columbus Day weekend.

Help Protect Our Dunes

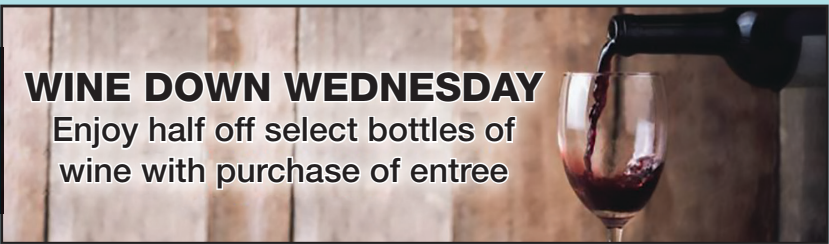


After Hurricane Sandy and subsequent 2013 winter storms devastated dunes along Corn Neck Road, and in particular those protecting Crescent Beach, volunteers installed snow fences to clearly mark rights of way to the beach from Corn Neck Road and beach parking areas. The fences help the dunes replenish, so please do not move them. And keep to these designated trails, so that new plantings to help anchor the sand have a chance to take root. ***They are an important line of defense to this fragile ecosystem.***



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COLUMNIST

Writer’s Block

By Mary Lou Cushing

Miss Elizabeth Dickens (1877-1963), longtime neighbor, naturalist, and beloved friend, left behind a legacy of gentleness and devotion that still warms the hearts of those who knew her. Her influence was never loud; soft-spoken by nature, she nonetheless shaped an entire community through steady kindness and a lifelong love of the natural world. Elizabeth lost her mother at an early age and grew up as an only child, learning about nature and birds from her father, whose quiet knowledge became the foundation of her own. After his passing, she stepped into his role as treasurer of the church. When Reverend Walter Conary would ask whether there was money available for a project, she would simply reply, with calm assurance, “We have sufficient funds.”

One of her most memorable gifts to me was a lamb she gave me on my birthday. I named him Ezra. The little creature followed me everywhere, even into the house, leaving muddy hoofprints across the kitchen floor. My mother would sigh, and I would dutifully scrub the tracks away.

Each December 26, George Elliot Sprague and I joined Miss Dickens for the annual bird census walk. We set out at eight in the morning and followed our route until noon, stopping midway along the beach to rest. Miss Dickens always arrived prepared: a Thermos of hot chocolate, three tin cups, sandwiches, and her unforgettable mincemeat cookies. As we ate, she jotted a few spare notes on her pad – simply the birds we had seen. Her diaries were famous for their brevity, yet they captured decades of careful observation: birds, weather conditions, and the occasional special event.

We took turns with her binoculars, scanning the water birds while she made her quiet entries. At noon, she went to a friend’s home for lunch and a ride back, while George Elliot and I continued to his house. My father, having finished his Lewis Farm milk route, arrived before us, and George Elliot’s mother had a hot lunch ready.

Other small groups walked their own census routes and phoned their bird-census results to Miss Dickens. She gathered every report, and my mother – who wrote for the *Providence Journal* – sent the information to the paper so it appeared in the next edition.

Although not a classroom teacher, Miss Dickens served on the school committee alongside John Thomas



Miss Elizabeth Dickens, seen here with binoculars to her eyes, and wearing men’s boots, is joined by Elliot Sprague and Mary Lou Lewis (Cushing). The building in the background is the West Side Life Saving Station. (Photo courtesy of the Block Island Historical Society)

(Alice’s father), my brother Rob Lewis, Ken Rose, and Eliza Willis. During the school year, she devoted one full day each month to leading a bird-study program for all students. Each child wrote a list of the birds they had seen during the previous month, then read and discussed their sightings in the seventh- and eighth-grade classroom.

Behind the glass display cases in the seventh-eighth grade classroom stood an impressive collection of birds, found lifeless yet still well-preserved. When Block Islanders found a dead bird in good condition that was not already on display, Miss Dickens sent it to a taxidermist, and it later joined the collection. My own great blue heron stands among them, labeled with my name, just as students in earlier years had done.

Not every child arrived with expertise. When a new student entered the school, the newcomer knew nothing about birds. A boy offered to make a list. When the newcomer’s turn came, the third bird read aloud was the

“Philly Lou bird.” Miss Dickens smiled gently and called it a “dream bird,” and the room erupted in laughter. Her kindness softened every moment.

Visitors to Miss Elizabeth Dickens’s home experienced her quiet hospitality as she slipped into the kitchen to prepare a small snack. Those invited into her living room admired a space that reflected a lifetime of curiosity; Indian artifacts found on her property, bookcases filled with National Geographic magazines and bird guides, and antiques tucked into every corner. Her deep knowledge of birds and the natural world was well-known.

Graduation nights were especially memorable. Near the end of the program, Miss Dickens would rise and call each student by name, recalling small, kind details from their childhood as she handed out diplomas. In 1953, a class of five – including me – stood before her as she spoke warmly about each one. It was a pleasant closing to a special evening.

Even in her early eighties, she continued to tend her large vegetable garden. She once asked my father to plow it a little closer to the house so she could pass vegetables through the basement windows. I helped her from time to time, grateful for the chance to return even a small measure of the kindness she had shown over the years.

Occasionally I received notes from her, always signed in her familiar way: “I hope you are as well as Elizabeth Dickens.” I still have her last Christmas card with that same message.

In time, the community gathered to honor her with a “This Is Your Life” program, celebrating all she had given to the island. Although I could not attend due to a prior commitment, I later heard the warm, glowing remarks that filled the room – a testament to how deeply her quiet life had touched so many.

The last time Miss Dickens joined us for a holiday gathering was at my brother Bill’s home, a warm and lively evening. Bill was a remarkably close friend of hers. She arrived with genuine excitement, especially eager to meet my baby daughter, Karen.

Miss Elizabeth Dickens never sought recognition. Yet her influence lives on in the memories of those she guided, the birds she recorded, the students she encouraged, and the quiet kindness she offered. Her legacy of gentleness, curiosity, and devotion to the natural world continues to warm the heart.

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