

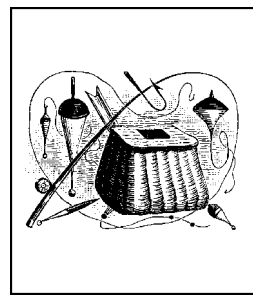
VINEYARD

Island of Martha's Vineyard, seven miles off southeast coast of Massachusetts. Winter population, 16,535; in summer, 105,624. Twenty miles from city of New Bedford, 80 miles from Boston and 150 miles from New York.



GAZETTE

Devoted to the interest of the six towns on the Island of Martha's Vineyard, viz.: Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, Tisbury (Vineyard Haven), West Tisbury, Chilmark and Aquinnah. These, with Gosnold, constitute Dukes County.



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Air Report

State of the Birds: Natives Down, Washashores Up

By PETER BRANNEN

A landmark study released this week by Mass Audubon portrays a dramatic shift in bird populations in the commonwealth, including a sharp decline in some native species and an increase in other species. And many of the most dramatic changes detailed in the report, such as a decline in grassland species and a marked northward shift in ranges, have been observed on the Vineyard.

The report, spanning five decades of data, draws from the USGS breeding bird survey, Mass Audubon's breeding bird atlases and numbers reported during the National Audubon Christmas bird count, an annual event that is especially popular, and competitive, on the Vineyard.

The report, titled State of the Birds, is a mixed bag. According to the USGS survey 39 per cent of Massachusetts breeding birds have significantly declining populations.

The results only confirm what long-time Vineyard birder Lanny McDowell has observed over the decades. Mr. McDowell, an avian photographer and writer who is a regular contributor to the Gazette, has been birding on the Vineyard since 1970, a period of time that closely mirrors the report's time frame.

"You hear frequent comments from other birders about the good old days or what it used to be like," he said this week. Mr. McDowell said in his experience he had seen declines in the volume and variety of transient birds.

Birds facing the greatest threat and the most precipitous declines across the state are those that nest on the ground and inhabit transitional or grassland habitats. And while the Vineyard has managed to maintain a comparatively large percentage of its grassland and agricultural land relative to the rest of Massachusetts, Mr. McDowell said he sees the same problems on the Island as those identified statewide by the Mass Audubon report.

"We don't have any bobwhites anymore," he said referring to the grassland quail species. "Everybody celebrates when somebody says I heard a bobwhite. Instead of a covey of 15 someone will see a pair and think it's a big deal. Ruffed grouse have been extirpated. Certain birds just aren't here anymore. Kestrels don't nest here, you don't see them except for migration. I don't know why kestrels are having a hard time."

Neither does Mass Audubon. In one section of the report titled "What's Happening to the American Kestrel?" the authors speculate that a combination of environmental pollutants like brominated flame retardants, pathogens such as the West Nile Virus, predation by Cooper's hawks and perhaps most importantly the loss of grassland habitat could be contributing to the precipitous decline. The bird's distribution across the state has dropped 50 per cent in the past 30 years. At Mass Audubon's Felix Neck Wildlife Sanctuary, director Suzan Bellincampi has tried to reverse that trend but with little success.

"When I got here one of the first

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EMANUEL THOMPSON HOLDS UP HIS 34.72-POUND STRIPER, WHICH AT PRESS TIME LED THE DERBY.

Peter Simon

Wounded Veteran Reels in Heroic Fish

By PETER BRANNEN

"There's my hero," said Martha's Vineyard Surf-casters Association president Janet Messineo as Emanuel Thompson walked into the Beach Plum Inn on Thursday morning. It had been a day since Mr. Thompson, an Air Force veteran from Virginia, had caught his derby-leading 34.72-pound striper on Capt. Buddy Vanderhoop's charter boat Tomahawk out of Menemsha, but he was still beaming.

"It's the biggest fish I ever caught," Mr. Thompson said. "It was a real struggle. I was like, don't rush it, don't rush it, don't rush it. Keep your point up, if he wants to fight let him fight, just reel it in a little bit, but I was struggling."

Mr. Thompson is one of seven wounded Iraq and Afghanistan veterans from Fort Belvoir military hospital in Virginia and the Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland participating in this year's American Heroes Saltwater Challenge hosted by Bob and Sarah Nixon, owners of the Beach Plum Inn, Menemsha Inn and Home Port Restaurant. As of last Friday Mrs. Nixon was still working to add one more fisherman to the rolls, Tyson Quink, a 23-year-old former college football player who lost both of his legs to a bomb during a deployment in Afghanistan.

"At first he wasn't very enthusiastic about coming up here but I think this week was just what the doctor

ordered," Mrs. Nixon said on Thursday.

After three days of fishing by boat out of Menemsha, and on land off Chappaquiddick, the vets had landed countless keepers, but none more impressive than Mr. Thompson's striper.

"When I finally pulled it up onto the boat Buddy looked at it and his eyes got big and he had a big smile on his face. I said, 'I need a break,' and he said, 'No, no, no. There's one out there that's bigger. We need to go catch it.'"

As it turns out, after Wednesday night's weigh-in

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No License, No Derby: Officials Toe Line on Saltwater Permits

By MARK ALAN LOVEWELL

Two fishermen participating in the 66th annual Martha's Vineyard Striped Bass and Bluefish Derby had their leading fish pulled from the contest on Monday, for not registering for a state saltwater fishing license. While the derby officials are not disqualifying the fishermen or sharing their names, the organization hopes that anglers participating in the contest get the message. To fish in the derby, anglers must comply with state and federal fishing requirements.

Last year recreational anglers were expected to register in a federally run fishing registry. This year, most recreational anglers are expected also to have a Massachusetts recreational fishing permit.

In a written release issued on Wednesday, Ed Jerome, president of the derby, wrote: "On Monday, Sept. 19, at a special meeting of the derby committee, the committee voted to disqualify two current division leading fish because the anglers who caught the fish did not possess a Massachusetts Recreational Saltwater Fishing Permit prior to weighing in the fish in our tournament."

"During the past year, the committee has worked long and hard to create a public awareness of this new regulation

via all of our forms of communication. Tackle shop owners have done the same in their shops, newspapers have explained the regulation in their columns and it is clearly posted for all contestants to see as they approach the derby scale to weigh their fish in." The full statement is available at the derby's Web site, mvderby.com.

It was a judgment call not to disqualify the fishermen from the contest. In past years, the derby has dealt with instances of cheating and exacted far harsher penalties; some anglers have been kicked out of the derby, others have been banned for years.

Mr. Jerome said this week that "this is not about lying, this is about complying."

He said the fishermen involved have since registered with the state for the license. One of the anglers was a visitor to the Island, the other continues to fish. He said the fishermen were just lazy in not registering.

"I am not trying to make it about the people, I am trying to make it more about getting your permit," Mr. Jerome said.

To insure compliance, Mr. Jerome

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CHELSEA BOUCHARD, MINI JUNIOR BLUEFISH (BOAT) LEADER.

Albert O. Fischer

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In Mixed MCAS Results, Students' Scores Go Up Yet Miss Some Targets

By REMY TUMIN

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System scores released this week reveal conflicting trends in Vineyard schools, where individual classes excelled but schools as a whole did not progress enough to meet new state and federal benchmarks.

Editorial on MCAS results appears on Page Twelve.

The Martha's Vineyard Regional High School was the only school to meet the state's adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets in English and math. However, Vineyard schools superintendent Dr. James H. Weiss this week called higher cutoff levels one of the reasons the schools were falling short of the targets.

Schools in Oak Bluffs, Chilmark and Tisbury did not meet AYP in either English language arts or mathematics, and the Edgartown and West Tisbury schools reached it in English but not math.

The English language arts target for students testing "proficient" increased from 90.2 per cent last year to 95.1 per cent this year, and in mathematics from 84.3 per cent last year to 92.2 per cent this year. So schools could improve their scores yet fall short of the higher targets.

But there was good news too: Individual grades across the Island earned top rankings.

The Tisbury School fourth grade English language arts scores ranked number one in the state at 99.3 per cent, and the Martha's Vineyard Charter School's 10th grade English scores earned them the top ranking as well.

The West Tisbury School's eighth grade science class ranked first for the second year in a row, and the Up-Island Regional School District's eighth grade English scores earned them fifth in the state, at 99.3 per cent proficiency.

Other highlights include the up-Island and Edgartown School scoring 94.2 per cent and 91.7 per cent respectively in the fifth grade special education subgroup, earning them first and second place.

Mr. Weiss put the results in context.

"There are three things to keep in mind here. Number one, we have a higher percentage of advanced and proficient students this year than last year and that number is rising," Mr. Weiss said.

"Second, performance ratings can be high or low, and ours are all high or very high; we performed very well."

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Just Outside Historic District, Bungalow Set for Tear-Down

By REMY TUMIN

A 1920s bungalow in Edgartown is slated to be torn down, the town selectmen learned this week.

Norman Rankow, a well-known contractor and owner of Colonial Reproductions, came before the selectmen at their weekly meeting on Monday to apply for a curb cut but when the board learned of the plan to demolish the Colter house on the corner of Morse and North Summer streets, they were chagrined.

"That's unfortunate, that's very unfortunate," selectman Margaret Serpa said.

"Margaret, I understand your sentiments," Mr. Rankow said.

"It's the last bungalow in town," responded Ms. Serpa.

"I reacted the same way, it kind of makes you sick to your stomach," town administrator Pamela Dolby said.

"The point being is you're not losing parking spaces, you're just shifting them down," Mr. Rankow said, steering the conversation back to the curb cut discussion.

Mr. Rankow said the owners of the property next door to 42 Morse street want to buy the house and guest house

(which is not historic), tear them down and build a three-bay garage on the property. The property sale has not concluded yet.

Ms. Serpa said she was concerned about setting a precedent for three-bay driveways, but selectmen reluctantly approved the curb cuts.

The house sits just outside the historic district which was adopted in 1987 and is confined largely to the heart of the downtown. The entire Edgartown village was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984, but the designation has no restrictions or rules to protect the houses from demolition. At the time of the designation the village was considered rare and historically pure in architecture, on a par with villages like Nantucket and Marblehead with its eclectic mix of some 500 19th and 20th century wood frame federal, Greek Revival, Queen Anne, Colonial and arts and crafts style houses.

Under an Edgartown town bylaw, any house slated for demolition must be offered to affordable housing groups for moving to another location. The offer

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Island Leaders Fight to Restore Personal Social Security Help

By PETER BRANNEN

The Social Security Administration has stopped making monthly visits to the Island, leaving the people who live here with no option but to travel to Falmouth to meet in person with a representative. Town leaders are clamoring to have the visits reinstated, but the federal agency says the likelihood of that happening is slim to none.

In January, Oak Bluffs council on aging director Roger Wey learned that the monthly visits from a Social Security Administration representative to the Island would be discontinued. The council on aging had hosted the visits and at first Mr. Wey was told that the cut in service was due to anti-government security concerns in the wake of the Gabrielle Giffords shooting in Arizona. A month later he was told that the cut was in fact due to budgetary cuts. Either way Mr. Wey is concerned.

"It's very important that they come to the Island because for people with disabilities and older people it's very difficult and expensive to get to the

social security office in East Falmouth to get their questions answered," Mr. Wey said.

He said on average about 15 people attend the monthly sessions. A social security representative did visit the Island in July but Mr. Wey said it was to help process paperwork for foreign summer workers.

At their meeting last week West Tisbury selectmen sounded off about the new policy.

"It is disturbing," said selectman Richard Knabel. "A lot of older people rely on that access, even if it's once a month, rather than having to go off-Island. We deserve an answer."

"It seems to me ludicrous that they can't send somebody over one day a month for whatever reason," added selectman Jeffrey (Skipper) Manter. "It's a terrible inconvenience."

Dukes County commissioner and Tisbury selectman Tristan Israel said he has made it his "mission" to restore

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SERGEANT JERRY SOLIS CASTING OFF CHAPPY.

Pictures by Peter Simon



VAL SCOTT LEARNS ABOUT BAITING WITH JANET MESSINEO.

Wounded Veterans Are Strong Presence in Fishing Derby

From Page One

at derby headquarters in Edgartown, there wasn't a bigger one out there, at least not yet.

After a long exhale Mr. Thompson reflected on the week. "It was a great experience," he said, "And exciting."

On an overcast and drizzly Tuesday the veterans cast their lines into the rips from East Beach on Chappaquiddick from afternoon until early evening. A campfire was built as the day turned chilly and the Home Port Restaurant provided a spread of burgers and potato salad on a foldout table, but many of the men and women instead stayed at their poles waiting for the next bite.

Robert Scott and his mother Valence of Long Island manned a rod hoping to continue their week's hot streak of bluefish. Mr. Scott suffered a traumatic brain injury during a tour in Iraq in 2009.

"I speak a lot for Robert," said Mrs. Scott. Ten years ago her son was a trader for Goldman Sachs in downtown Manhattan when the world changed.

"He missed the 7:37 train that morning and took the 8:03 train instead and believe you me that's what saved him," Mrs. Scott said. That September morning Mrs. Scott wouldn't hear from her son for eight hours and when they were finally reunited, Mr. Scott was changed.

"When he got home I saw my son and he was gray," she said. "Gray head, gray face, his black suit and briefcase were gray."

Soon after, Mr. Scott enlisted in the Army. Shortly before he was set to return home from a tour in Iraq in 2009, Mrs. Scott received a call that Robert was in a coma. He had suffered a traumatic brain injury and would not emerge for two and a half weeks. Mrs. Scott later learned that her son been clinically dead for 30 minutes and as a result he suffers from short term-memory loss. While he was in his coma Mr. Scott says that he saw a bright light, and then he saw his late grandmother.

"I heard her say wake up," he said. Only his grandmother had put it much more colorfully. Ever since, Mr. Scott has carried his grandmother's bible

wherever he goes.

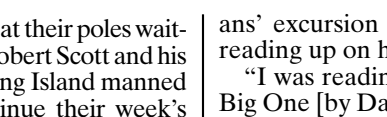
"Everybody at Walter Reed says you're a lucky boy, someone was looking out for you" Mrs. Scott said. "When I walked in to his hospital bed that one day and I heard my son say, 'Good morning Mom,' I screamed so loud, I said, 'What a mighty God.' That was the first time I cried. Prayer works. I don't worry about nothing anymore."

After everything Mr. Scott has been through he said he enjoyed the change in scenery. "It's very relaxing," he said as he looked out over the ocean.

Jack Nixon, today 10 years old, dreamed up the idea for the veterans' excursion three years ago while reading up on his angling.

"I was reading this book called The Big One [by David Kinney] and under

BAITING FOR A BIG ONE.



ans' excursion three years ago while reading up on his angling.

"I was reading this book called The Big One [by David Kinney] and under



TYSON AND TERA QUINK ENJOY POST-FISHING CHAPPY COOKOUT.

the book was a newspaper article about wounded veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq and I told my dad I wish those guys could fish," he said on Tuesday.

"It's been a great experience."

For Scott Beauchamp, a two-tour Afghanistan veteran, also from Long Island, the support of the Vineyard community has been moving.

"It's been a lot fun, a lot of fishing, and a lot of good people here taking a lot of their time to show that people still care about us in the military," he said. "We just really appreciate it."

As of Tuesday Mr. Beauchamp had caught seven blues and one striper, a

21-pounder at that. By the end of the week he would win the Saltwater Challenge's High Rod Award by catching 24 fish.

"This is me and my wife's first vacation since all this has happened to me," he said. "Even prior to going overseas you don't really get a whole lot of time beforehand so this is our first getaway in a couple years. Some of us will never get an experience like this. This is a place I've always wanted to go to but it's one of those dreams that realistically just ain't gonna happen. But thanks to a lot of people here, they made it happen."



OFF TO SEE THE SEA WITH TOM LANGMAN.



JACK NIXON, CENTER, SURROUNDED BY VETERANS BROUGHT HERE THANKS TO HIS IDEA.

Unlicensed Anglers' Fish Disqualified

From Page One

said, "We have the ability to do spot checks." He said the derby organization can check electronically whether a derby participant is in fact registered with the state.

Derby organizers have said they do not want to portray themselves as the waterfront police when it comes to administering the annual contest. But neither do they want a derby angler who has not complied with the state regulations to take a prize in the con-

test. The derby gives away more than \$300,000 in prizes over the month, which includes a brand new 21-foot boat and a four-wheel-drive pickup truck. Mr. Jerome was among those anglers who participated more than two years ago in the process of establishing the saltwater fishing license.

Most anglers are required to register with the state, even senior citizens (for those 60 years of age, the permit is free save a small processing fee — usually \$10). Those under 16 years of age, and those who are disabled, are exempt.

Fishermen who are angling on a charter fishing boat also are exempt.

"I see this as an opportunity to raise the awareness," Mr. Jerome said. Every angler joining the derby must twice attest to their compliance with the state regulations. The first time is when they register and pay their admittance to the contest, and a second time if they weigh in a big potential winner. In that moment, after weighing in their fish, they must sign a form saying they have the permit.

There are more than 1,800 anglers registered in the contest, as of yesterday.

The derby began on Sunday, Sept. 11 and since then more than 724 fish have been weighed in, weighing over 7,600 pounds. Almost half of all the fish weighed in so far are bluefish. Over 3,000 pounds of striped bass have been weighed in.

Anglers are competing to catch the largest striped bass, bluefish, bonito and false albacore. There are daily, weekly and overall prizes offered.

The fish coming into the headquarters are big. The largest striped bass caught from a boat, 34.72 pounds, was weighed in Wednesday night by Emanuel Thompson, of Virginia. The largest shore striped bass, 30.76 pounds, caught from the shore was brought in by David Nash, 62, of Edgartown on Monday morning. On Tuesday, he said that in a night of fishing, this was the only hit he had, and it came in the early morning, at about 1 a.m. "I fish all over the Island, and wait for the right time and tide. It is so complicated fishing out here. The more you fish out there, the more the odds slip in your favor," he said.

Throughout the past week, anglers

have been bringing in their fish to the derby weigh-in headquarters at the foot of Main street in Edgartown. It is usually an impressive scene as the anglers carry in their fish at night from 8 to 10 p.m. They also weigh in their fish daily from 8 to 10 a.m.

The basic registration entry fee for the derby costs \$45.

Beginners looking for a big fish are given this advice by Tony Rezendes, 69, of West Tisbury, whose birthday was Tuesday, when he weighed in a 26-pound striped bass. Mr. Rezendes owns the Square Rigger Restaurant with his wife, Doreen. "Put the hours in and don't give up," he said.

Mr. Rezendes said he has fished a lot and he gives a lot of credit to his crew at the restaurant for their time. "I missed one night," he said. This fall he puts in a lot of time with his 35-year-old son, Dana.

Mr. Rezendes said he gets a kick out of getting advice from his son. "Sometimes he will tell me how to fish," Mr. Rezendes said. "He knows what he is doing."



KATHERINE O'BRIEN LEADS JUNIOR DIVISION FALSE ALBACORE.



WEIGHING AND FILLETING HAPPENS EVERY NIGHT AT DERBY HEADQUARTERS.

Pictures by Albert O. Fischer



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