



Connecticut NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE

eNewsletter

Summer Updates and Fall Events (Sept 2026)



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A note from Lauren Barrett, our Associate Research Scientist

Happy fall from the team at the Reserve! My favorite time of year is approaching, when the days are still long but ever shortening, there is a chill in the morning air, and critters and

plants start preparing for a restful winter ahead. I find that fall is a great time to reflect on the year's happenings, and this year my reflections are full of gratitude and pride after an eventful summer.

I'm Lauren Barrett, an Associate Research Scientist at the Reserve. On September 5, I celebrated one year with the Research team. I completed my PhD in UConn's Marine Sciences Department before moving to Washington, DC for almost two years to work on federal marine policy. Working at the Reserve has been a full-circle experience for me, like coming home after an adventure.



Over the past year, I've spent many muddy hours in salt marshes, snorkeled eelgrass meadows, navigated grant writing, mentored undergraduate researchers, managed and established the infrastructure and protocols for our eelgrass seed-based restoration project, and so much more. I am grateful every day to work and learn in the Reserve system, with people that are mission-driven, focusing on the protection and understanding of coastal ecosystems. We've had a very busy summer, but we've all taken it in stride and continue to work collaboratively and passionately towards our Reserve's mission.

We are very appreciative to those of you that follow and support our work! Keep reading below for each sector's recap of an eventful summer at the Reserve.



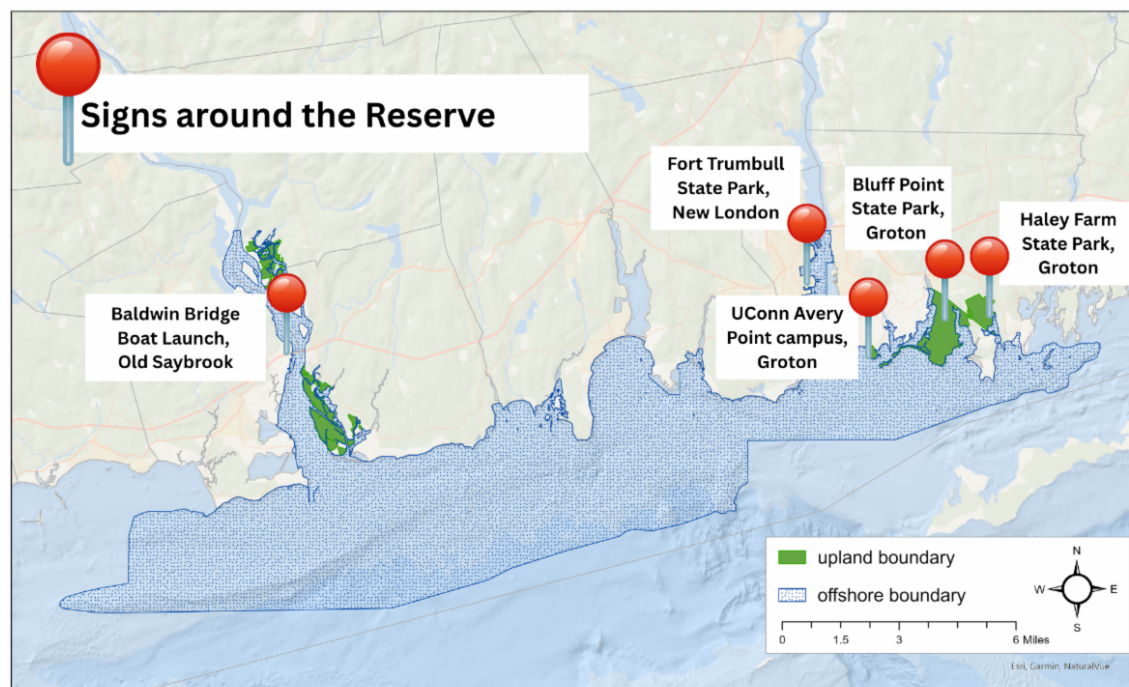
New educational signs installed throughout the Reserve

Keep an eye out for new signs at locations across the Reserve that highlight local wildlife, coastal habitats, and the history and importance of these special places.

Signs can be found at these locations:

- Baldwin Bridge Boat Launch, Old Saybrook
- Fort Trumbull, New London
- UConn Avery Point, Groton
- Bluff Point, Groton
- Haley Farm, Groton

Whether you're visiting for the first time or exploring a familiar spot, we hope you'll stop, take a look, and learn something new along the way.



Summer Recap

Education and Community Engagement

Since May, our Education Team attended or hosted 28 events, reaching more than 1300 people. Here are some highlights:

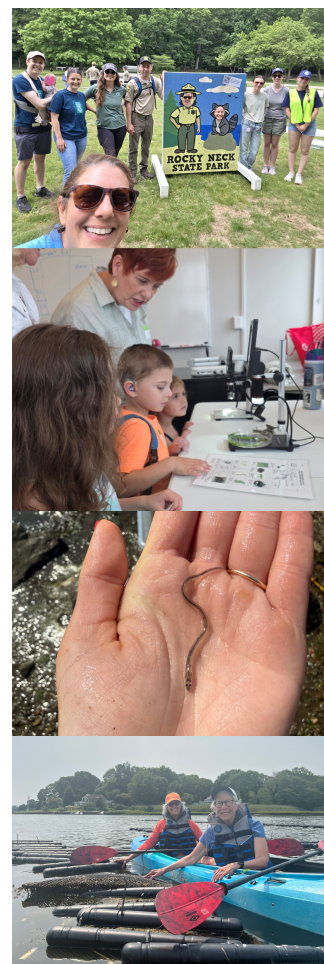
Beneath the Surface: The Wonders of Eelgrass - Fourteen educators attended this year's Teachers on the Estuary (TOTE) workshop and learned about eelgrass habitat, played an interactive Long Island Sound Eelgrass Game ([available for loan!](#)), and practiced hands-on data collection methods that they can use with their students.

Inclusive Storytime - We partnered with The Hello Lab and UConn Avery Point for an inclusive reading of *The Quest for the Cockle Implant* followed by crafts and learning. The event welcomed D/deaf, hard of hearing, hearing, and all languages as the book was read in spoken English and ASL.

The Wonders of Oyster - The Reserve, SixPenny Oyster, and CT Sea Grant teamed up to introduce Project Oceanology campers to local oyster farmers and teach them about aquaculture, natural eelgrass beds, and the internal anatomy of oysters.

Rocky Neck Celebration Series - The Reserve partnered with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and CT DEEP to host a series of celebration events at Rocky Neck State Park - Trails Day, History Day, and Nature Day. This is part of a restoration improvement grant to improve the park. Interested in providing your thoughts on how Rocky Neck State Park could be improved? Take the survey [HERE](#).

We've also started a few monitoring programs, including looking for "glass eels" or young American eels that are entering our rivers for the first time after swimming all the way from the



Sargasso Sea and collecting data for *Snapshot of the Sound*, a new program where environmental groups all collect fish, water quality, and observational data at the same time to see how it differs along our coast. We're hoping we'll be able to open these programs up to educators and volunteers next summer so stay tuned!

Coastal Training and Engagement

The Reserve's Training and Engagement program facilitated the [Long Island Sound \(LIS\) Eelgrass Collaborative](#) for its annual in-person meeting held at the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County Facility. The workshop focused on advancing eelgrass seed-based restoration by bringing together researchers, managers, and restoration practitioners to share knowledge and discuss best management practices. Reserve staff have also begun working with NY and CT state agency staff on a boater outreach project that will create materials describing ways to avoid impacts on eelgrass meadows.

We also hosted a North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative (NAACC) training. The two-day training provided participants with experience assessing road-stream crossings and culvert size, type and overall condition and their potential impacts on aquatic connectivity. In collaboration with the Reserve's Stewardship program, The Nature Conservancy, Save The Sound, CT DEEP, and South Eastern Connecticut Council of Governments participants put their training to practice by conducting culvert assessments throughout southeastern CT. Over 300 assessments completed is improving our understanding of aquatic connectivity throughout the region and will help resource managers prioritize restoration efforts.

Stewardship

The Stewardship Sector made strides toward protecting our coastal ecosystems in partnership with community volunteers as well as local and national non-profit, public, and private organizations. Here are a few highlights:

- We hosted 12 events in Groton, CT that educated and mobilized 52 volunteers, and implemented chemical-free removal of over 1,060 pounds of invasive plant species, including Japanese knotweed, black swallowwort, phragmites, and bittersweet, from our shorelines. We've also been collaborating with other Reserves across the country to establish and engage in nationwide protocols for forest inventory analyses.



- We partnered with the CT DEEP, CTNERR's Stewardship sector has continued leadership on a project at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve restoring critical salt marsh habitat and improving public access.
- In collaboration with our Research and Education sectors, we supported the Nature Conservancy (TNC)'s restoration of degraded salt marshes at Rocky Neck State Park, in partnership with CT DEEP and Woods Hole Group.
- In collaboration with the Maritime Aquarium and the Reserve's Research Team, we established salt marsh monitoring protocols across the Long Island Sound that will be used to measure the effectiveness of restoration projects like these and determine the impacts of climate change on these precious habitats over time.

- We supported a TNC-led project in partnership with Save the Sound, CT DEEP and the South Eastern Connecticut Council of Governments to advance effective management of culvert crossings to support CT's resilience goals and habitat connectivity.

Research and Monitoring

With a growing team, new monitoring efforts, and several projects moving from planning into the field, there has been plenty happening across the Reserve and beyond.

Eelgrass Restoration - This summer, the team collected ~560 liters of reproductive eelgrass shoots from the Pine Island, Bushy Point, and South Dumpling Island eelgrass meadows. The shoots are now being maintained in a new land-based system designed to hold the reproductive material while the seeds mature, allowing us to collect and process them for future restoration efforts. Alongside our partners at Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), the long term goal is to develop the capacity to collect, hold and process 7-8 million eelgrass seeds per year for restoration purposes throughout Long Island Sound.

Marsh Monitoring - Alongside our collaborators at the Maritime Aquarium and UConn's Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, we visited more than 10 marshes across Connecticut and New York and spent nearly 20 days in the field using a combination of Marsh Rapid Assessment Methods (MarshRAM) and other vegetation and hydrologic monitoring techniques to evaluate marsh condition and establish baseline data. This work is helping us develop standardized monitoring approaches that can be used across Connecticut's coastal marshes and will ultimately serve as the foundation for CTNERR's long-term marsh vegetation monitoring program.

Pathogen Monitoring - For our fourth consecutive summer, the Monitoring Team participated in the Pathogen Monitoring Network, expanding our Connecticut sampling effort to four waterbodies: the Lieutenant and Duck Rivers in Old Lyme, Baker Cove and the lower Thames River in Groton, and the Poquonnock River in Groton. This season alone, we collected samples from 23 stations over 15 weeks. Each week, samples were analyzed for fecal coliform, E. coli, and/or enterococci. Across our four waterbodies, that adds up to 975 individual bacteria analyses over the course of the season! These data contributes to a larger, Sound-wide monitoring effort led by the NY Interstate Environmental Commission, Harbor Watch, and CT DEEP. The goal is to track bacterial conditions in coastal waters and better understand and monitor potential human health risks.

Behind the Scenes - We've also continued building the foundation for CTNERR's long-term monitoring programs, including moving forward with the building of the deployment rigs and reconnaissance sampling to ground truth our upcoming water quality and meteorological stations.

Upcoming Reserve Events

Invasive Plant Training

September 29, 2026 1:00 – 4:00 pm

If you are interested in identifying, mapping, and managing invasive terrestrial plants then this event is for you! Join UConn CLEAR, CT Sea Grant, and the CTNERR team for a hands-on training in Old Saybrook. Register today – Space will be limited to 20 participants.

[Learn more here.](#)





Guided Bird Walks

Oct 17 @ 9A - Haley Farm State Park
Nov 14 @ 9A - Rocky Neck State Park



Friendly and fun expert birder, Joe Attwater (Conservation & Education Coordinator for The Audubon Society), will lead the walk.



**SPACE IS LIMITED
REGISTRATION REQUIRED**



No birding experience needed



Binoculars and guides will be provided



1.5-hour walk through easy to moderate conditions



Free to attend

**Scan to REGISTER
or learn more**

s.uconn.edu/ReserveEvents

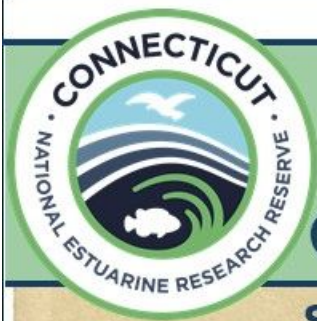


Questions? Contact Larissa
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or (860) 446-7371



Connecticut
NATIONAL ESTUARINE
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The Forgotten Rail at Midway Yard (now known as Bluff Point State Park)

SAT Dec 12, 2026 @ 10A or 1PM
(Weather date: Dec 13)
Register for more info



Led by historian Joe Baril, this 1.5-hour walk will be mostly flat with some hills and uneven terrain.



Learn about the history of Midway Yard built in 1904 and abandoned in 1939.



See the remnants of the turntable pit and roundhouse foundation.

Scan to REGISTER



or visit
s.uconn.edu/ReserveEvents

Questions? Contact Larissa at
CTNERR.Education@UConn.edu or (860) 446-7371

Upcoming Partner Events



Sustainable & Resilient Communities



Upcoming Field Trips

Sign Up Today!

Upcoming Field Trip Opportunities

Hammonasset Beach State Park Coastal Resilience Workshop

Thursday, September 16, 2026
9:30 am - 2:30 pm

Meigs Point Nature Center, 1288 Boston Post
Rd, Madison, CT 06443
[Learn More and Register Here](#)

West Haven Coastal Resilience Tour

Friday, October 2, 2026
9:30 am - 2:30 pm

West Haven City Hall
355 Main St, West Haven, CT 06516
[Learn More and Register Here](#)



LONG ISLAND SOUND
PARTNERSHIP

Photo Credit: Corrie Folsom-O'Keefe

[Hammonasset Registration](#)

[West Haven Registration](#)

[Long Island Sound Coastal Resilience Month Field Trip
Opportunities](#)

SRC Workshop - Hammonasset [LINK](#)

SRC Workshop - West Haven [LINK](#)

International Coastal Clean-Up Day

September 19, 2026

10:00AM-12:00PM

Canal Dock Boathouse
475 Long Wharf Drive,
New Haven, CT 06511

Shuttle loop will run between the
Library, New Haven Green, and
Canal Dock from 9:45AM-12:15PM.

Join us to take action and protect local marine ecosystems by
cleaning up our coasts!



Together, we can make a tangible impact on reducing marine
debris and preserving the natural beauty of New Haven's shoreline.



Save the Sound®
Action for our region's environment.



Free registration is requested, but not required!



Fall Native Plant Sale

Wild Ones Mountain Laurel Chapter

September 18-19

[Register Here!](#)

Waterfest 2026

Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed

September 19 | 11:00 AM-4:00 PM

[Register Here!](#)

From Data to Action: Lawn Fertilizer Outreach Workshop

LISP / CT Sea Grant / NY Sea Grant / UConn CLEAR

September 22 | 9:30 AM-4:00 PM

Housatonic Community College, Bridgeport, CT

[Register Here!](#)

Regional Stormwater Collaborative Meeting
Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SECOG)
September 24 | 8:30 AM
[Register Here!](#)

Wild Feast
Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed
October 10
[Register Here!](#)

Eightmile River Watershed RiverFest
Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Watershed
October 18 | 1:00–4:00 PM
[Register Here!](#)

CIPWG Biennial Symposium
Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG)
October 28
[Register Here!](#)



Email us at: ctnerr@uconn.edu

[Visit our Website](#)

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