

The Tidal Exchange

~E-news~
Of the



New York-New Jersey
Harbor & Estuary Program

News and upcoming events in the harbor!

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A NEW ADDRESS AND DIRECTOR FOR THE NY-NJ HARBOR & ESTUARY PROGRAM!

Program Moves to the Hudson River Foundation

The New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program has officially relocated its office and staff to the Hudson River Foundation. Robert Pirani has been hired by the Foundation to direct the program. Rob is familiar to many people around the Harbor from his former role at Regional Plan Association, where he was vice president of energy and environment. Gabriela Munoz and Kate Boicourt have joined the Hudson River Foundation as Program staff. Gabriela and Kate will bring their knowledge and continue their existing roles to the Program as they help launch new initiatives. Bob Nyman, HEP's former director, will remain at EPA, where he will focus on climate resiliency and other issues as the Regional Coastal Projects Manager.

Hudson River Foundation was selected last fall by Region 2 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to host the Program. Over the past 30 years, the Foundation has successfully collaborated with HEP and its many partners on numerous programs to support stewardship of the Harbor Estuary and improve the scientific understanding of issues that directly impact management decisions and policies. Long time participants in HEP will remember that the Foundation has hosted HEP staff in the past and has continued to be an active participant in HEP committees and initiatives. Dennis Suszkowski, HRF's Science Director, and Jim Lodge, HRF Senior Scientist will continue their respective roles as the Chairs of the Science and Technical Advisory Committee and the Oyster Restoration Subcommittee of the Restoration Work Group. You can learn more about the Hudson River Foundation at www.hudsonriver.org.

The promise of additional collaboration between HEP and the work of the Foundation to support science and stewardship in New York and New Jersey is one of the reasons for the move. The new non-governmental host will also enable HEP to be more nimble when it comes to pursuing additional resources and securing new commitments. HEP will continue to move forward on our broad Action Plan: cleaning up pollution in the estuary; restoring habitat and ecological health; improving public access; managing sediment to support economic and ecological functions; and engaging the public. But we will do so by focusing on collaborative efforts on several key initiatives. Initial conversations with the Management Committee, Citizens Advisory Committee and other partners have pointed us towards the need to help communities implement their long-term control plans and other clean water actions,

advancing restoration through the creation of living shorelines and coastal resiliency measures, and engaging local residents in the stewardship of waters and public spaces. Please stay tuned for additional information on this work in the months ahead. We look forward to working with all of you as we bring the waters we share to life.

Please note our new contact information:

New York - New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program
Hudson River Foundation
17 Battery Place, Suite 915
New York, NY 10004
Phone: (212) 483-7667

Robert Pirani, Program Director, [rob@harboestuary.org](mailto:rob@harborestuary.org)
Gabriela Munoz, Program Associate, gabriela@harboestuary.org
Kate Boicourt, Restoration Coordinator habitat@harboestuary.org

HABITAT UPDATE: CELEBRATING WORLD FISH MIGRATION DAY

HEP goes to the Lawrence Brook to track down eel and river herring

In May, HEP worked with NOAA, the Lawrence Brook Watershed Partnership, and the City of New Brunswick to track down migratory fish in the Lawrence Brook (a tributary to the Raritan River).

Why the Lawrence Brook? In partnership with the Lawrence Brook Watershed Partnership and the City of New Brunswick Water Utility, we are looking at the feasibility of constructing fish passages over two water supply dams. It's a great time of year to get a sense of what creatures might be in the area and able to migrate should fish passage be developed.



Glass eels were found!

Why this time of year? We targeted a new moon which means a higher high tide (easier for fish to move upstream) in a time frame when both baby eels (glass eels or elvers) and river herring might be moving up during their spring migration.

So..what happened?

The day was a success!
We expected to find eel via a deployed "eel mop" sampling device, netting, or an eel ramp. The first two methods were successful, and we found both glass eels (first year) and elvers (eels that have been in the stream long enough to absorb tannins, which provide a dark pigmentation)! The big surprise of the day was finding alewife, a kind of



Eel mop with fiddler crab

river herring. River herring populations are at historic lows, in part due to loss of habitat. [See this video of an alewife making its way upstream for the first time this year!](#)



HEP staff Kate Boicourt attempts to net a school of alewife

So...what does this mean?

Gathering evidence of these two important migratory fishes is critical in order to demonstrate that there are active populations that could potentially migrate upstream using fish ladders. These fishes (eel and river herring) are facing many pressures that have affected their populations. If fish passage is feasible at the site, it could lead to great benefits for these species and the entire ecosystem!

Fish ladder construction begins in the Bronx!

New York City Department of Parks and Recreation broke ground recently to start the construction of a fish ladder at the 182nd Street Dam on the Bronx River. This fish ladder will allow migratory fish to move further upstream. The NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program is

supporting full designs for fish ladders at the next two dams upstream. If passed, this would contribute over 7 miles in additional habitat.



Construction begins at 182nd Street dam! (NYCDPR).

URBANITE WHALES? YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING...

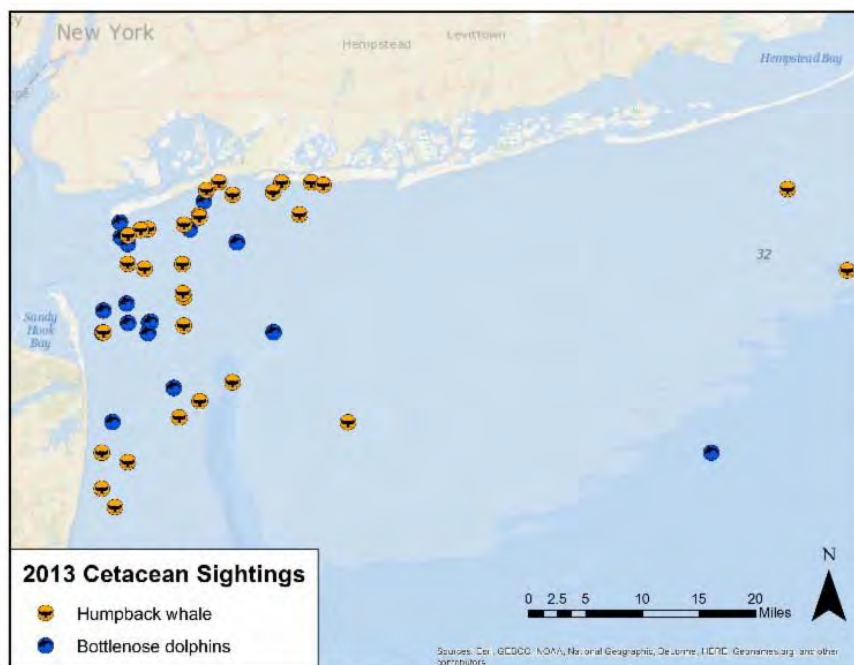
Marine Mammals Return to our Waters and Citizen Scientists are Keeping Track

*By Paul L. Sieswerda,
Director, Gotham Whale*



If people in the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan area think of whales, dolphins, or seals, most likely they imagine Montauk, Cape Cod, or even more distant and exotic locations.

However, in the last few years, that has all been changing. Whales and dolphins have actually returned, and people are discovering the wonders of these creatures up close and personal. Whale sightings are reported frequently by pleasure boaters and fishers each summer. So frequently that the reporting does not make the news unless the animal is sick or injured and wanders its way onto a beach, or into close quarters like the Gowanus Canal or some marina where humans can interact. More often, the marine mammals conduct their normal business offshore and it is only those people with boats that get to witness them. By the way, keep a safe distance from these animals and, if you see a marine mammal in distress, please report it to the [Marine Mammal Stranding Center](#) in NJ (609-266-0538) or the [Riverhead Foundation](#) in NY (631-369-9829).



2013 season of sightings aboard the American Princess, compiled by Gotham Whale: Paul L. Sieswerda and mapped by Christopher Spagnoli.

Since 2011, the American Princess, a 90 ft. whale watching vessel, has conducted trips out of Rockaway that bring local residents out to search for whales. Dolphins are a common sighting, either along with the whales, or in large schools by themselves. Gotham Whale, the research and education arm of this operation has been able to use this platform to conduct "Citizen Science" by serving as naturalists and recording the sightings in a database that may help to better understand their movements so close to the very active New York-New Jersey Harbor. Understanding the population dynamics and principal locations for these animals will be important as the harbor's traffic continues to grow. Gotham Whale has begun the NY Humpback Whale Catalog where individual whales are identified by their unique fluke coloration. To date, 13 individual humpbacks have been identified. These results will be compared with similar programs along the coast to track their movements, such as the [College of the Atlantic](#), the [Center for Coastal Studies](#), and [Whales Bemuda](#). Passengers on the American Princess cruises have been sharing their photos to help contribute to this citizen science effort.



Much like fingerprints in humans, humpback whales have distinctive and unique coloration patterns on the underside of their tail fin (fluke).
Picture by Gotham Whale

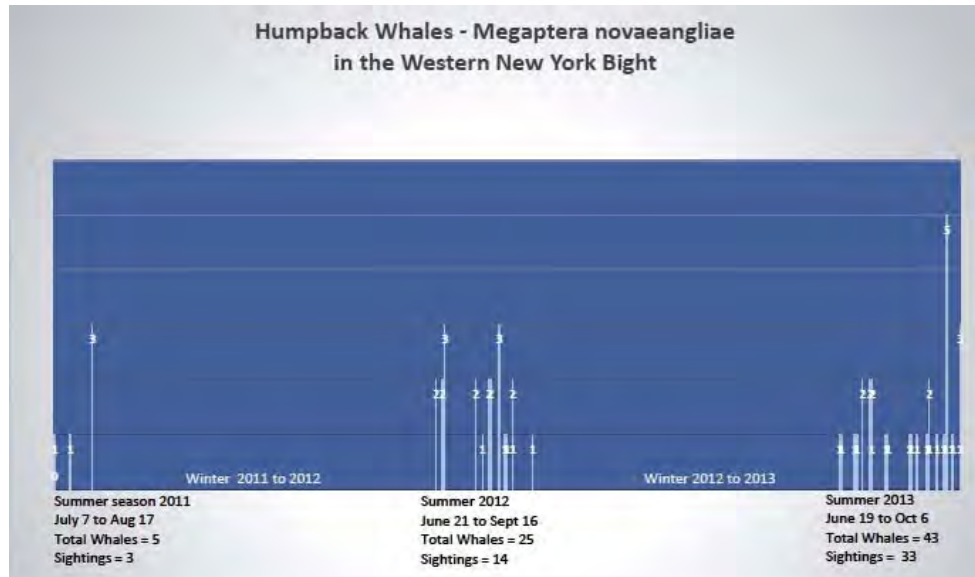
Seals and whales were common inhabitants in NY waters in pre-colonial times. While Native Americans would hunt what they could, they had limited means and made little impact. Colonial development and firearms soon eliminated seals from the harbors and the Age of Whaling all but chased every whale to far flung corners of the world; surviving in numbers only in the distant tropics or in polar ice. In addition, the Harbor has suffered the abuse and degradation of its waters and ecosystems by almost every insult known to humans. The return of marine mammals is a promising sign of the efforts to restore the harbor and protect marine mammals.



Humpback whale lunge feeding off Sandy Hook. Photo by Philip Ng, a citizen scientist aboard the American Princess.

Harbor seals are regular winter residents on Swinburne Island, just off the eastern shore of Staten Island and whales are sometimes seen right under the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, at the very entrance to the Harbor and within the NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program's core waters. There are many reasons for this return, some global, some local. Whaling, for the

most part, has been internationally banned and the United States has the Marine Mammal Protection Act in force since 1972. In our region, great strides have been made by myriad environmental agencies and activists to clean up and restore the harbor. As conditions improve, the pyramid on which all life depends is being rebuilt. Phytoplankton (algae) forms the base, on which small animals (zooplankton) feed. Larger fish, particularly menhaden, thrive on this soup and, in summer, the local coast is bubbling with great schools of these fish. Big fish eat little fish, and the menhaden are consumed by everything larger, including whales. Humpback whales, lunge feeding, can be seen gulping through menhaden schools with jaws overflowing. The mouth of the Hudson River is filled with life and while continued improvement and eternal vigilance is always needed, it is remarkable to see such signs of returned creatures both great and small.



Humpback whale sightings: numbers per cruise, 2011-2013 seasons. This dataset (albeit small) suggests that both the number of whales and the number of sightings have increased.

For whale watch cruise schedule and Citizen Science Programs:

www.Americanprincesscruises.com

www.Gothamwhale.com

www.facebook.com/gothamwhale

HURRICANE SANDY COASTAL RESILIENCY GRANTS AWARDED

June 16 - Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell announced \$102.7 million in grants to support 54 projects along the Atlantic coast. The grants will fund science-based solutions to restore wetlands and other natural areas, better manage stormwater using green infrastructure, and assist states, tribes and local communities in protecting themselves from major storms such as Hurricane Sandy. The program is being administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.



Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell helping plant marsh grass in Sunset Cove

The majority of the projects are in areas severely damaged by Hurricane Sandy, including 24 projects in New York and New Jersey receiving nearly \$50 million. Several projects will take place at sites identified in the [Comprehensive Restoration Plan](#) for the NY-NJ Harbor, including [Liberty State Park](#) in NJ and [Spring Creek](#) in NY. In particular, \$4.85 million were awarded to restore [Sunset Cove](#), where HEP has recently funded a preliminary site analysis as a first step toward restoration. The DOI/NFWF grant will enable restoring five acres of wetland and seven acres of upland habitat, enhancing water quality, providing shellfish habitat, and increasing public access and recreation.

The overall Program and the support for specific projects in the estuary received broad support from elected officials and the advocacy community. *"The widespread flooding and devastating damages of Superstorm Sandy showed us just how vulnerable our coastal and riverfront communities are. Our shoreline parks and natural resources offer crucial storm surge defenses for otherwise unprotected neighborhoods throughout the Harbor region. Thankfully, the Interior Department recognizes the important role these natural defenses will have in future storm surge events,"* said James Tripp, Harbor Coalition Co-Chair and Senior Counsel at Environmental Defense Fund.

[Click here](#) for a full list of funded projects.

More information can be found in press releases by the [U.S. Dept. of the Interior](#), the [Harbor Coalition](#), and the [National Parks Conservation Association](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

For more events, check out our [calendar](#). To post your Estuary-related event in our calendar, [please send us the details!](#) For up-to date events, [like our facebook page](#).

SAVE THE DATES

June 20-24: [North River Historic Ship Festival](#).

June 25: Duke Farms Dialogues: [Framing Climate Change](#) (webinar).

June 30: Moodna Creek watershed's [special dinner and book signing event](#) with guest speaker & author John Waldman.

July 12: Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance's [City of Water Day](#).
Governors Island and Maxwell Place Park in Hoboken, NJ.

Through Sept 6: NY/NJ Baykeeper's [Eco Tours](#). For dates and details,
see the flyer.

October 9 & 10: [Passaic River Symposium VI](#): Intersecting Priorities.

Nov 1-6: Restore America's Estuaries [7th National Summit on Coastal
and Estuarine Restoration](#): *Inspiring Action, Creating Resilience* in
Washington, DC.

For **human-powered boating events**, check out the [NYC Water Trail
Association calendar](#).

FUNDING AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

New York City Department of Environmental Protection's [2014 Green
Infrastructure Grant Program](#). **Deadline: October 21.**

[ioby](#) (in our backyards), a community funding platform, accepts
applications for environmental projects across the nation on an ongoing
basis.

City Parks Foundation: [Community Group Recovery and Capacity Fund
Grants](#). **Deadline: Rolling.**

PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITIES

[Proposed Plan for the Lower 8 Miles of the Lower Passaic River](#).
Deadline: August 20.

[TIDES](#)

[CURRENTS](#)

[COAST GUARD](#)

