



# The Octagon

Newsletter of the Faulkner's Light Brigade

July 2013

## Come Visit the Island on our new Webcam

Watch the Terns LIVE with the new Webcam! In late May, with the efforts of volunteers Steve McGuire, Tony Page and Jerry Turk, a new webcam was installed on the island. Though in real time the webcam has to be rotated remotely for a change of view, so patience please. We would love a new automatic cam when funds permit. Please visit the site and subscribe at <http://faulkners-light.org>. On May 28, WVIT NBC30 news featured a segment on Faulkner Island. McGuire sent the link to the live webcam stream on the Faulkner's Light Brigade website <http://faulknerslight.org/wordpress/faulkners-island-web-cam/> to Ryan Hanrahan on Sunday morning and he used a bit of the feed in the newscast. Hanrahan wanted to do a story on the hurricane Sandy damage to the island and it's impact on the wildlife habitat, so Rick Potvin, USFW Refuge Manager for the island took the group out on Tuesday morning, May 21. There were already many nests and eggs, but the colony was not quite in full attack mode. It would be soon. Follow this link to this informative news story: [http://www.nbcconnecticut.com/on-air/as-seen-on/Hurricane-Sandy-Damage-Threatens-Wildlife\\_Hartford.html](http://www.nbcconnecticut.com/on-air/as-seen-on/Hurricane-Sandy-Damage-Threatens-Wildlife_Hartford.html)

NORTH SPIT – FALKNER ISLAND – BEFORE & AFTER SANDY



## Join our Brick Campaign Don't let the Light go Out

Faulkner's Light Brigade is starting a capital campaign to raise funds for the Faulkner Island Lighthouse ongoing repair and maintenance and other island projects. Painting and maintenance of the lighthouse has been funded solely by contributions from members of the Faulker's Light Brigade for the last 20 years. Ideally painting and repair should be performed every five years. The cost of painting and repair completed in 2011 was \$121,000.

As part of this capital campaign effort, we are selling engraved bricks for the pathways around the island, which are designed to protect tern nests and eggs, while allowing access to the lighthouse and service building. We offer you the opportunity to participate in this exciting project. You may purchase a 4 x 8 inch brick, engraved with up to 3 lines of text (of your choosing) for \$75.00, or an 8 x 8 inch brick engraved with up to 6 lines for \$150.00. A line of text may contain up to 20 characters, including spaces and punctuation. If ordering more than one brick, please use one form for each brick. Checks should be made payable to Faulkners Light Brigade, PO Box 444, Guilford, CT 06437. Please call us at 203-453-8400 or email [info@faulknerslight.org](mailto:info@faulknerslight.org) with any questions.



The commemorative bricks will line the walkway in a random pattern. By purchasing one or more bricks, you show your support for maintaining the lighthouse and preserving the wild life habitat. The 1802 lighthouse is not only an aid to navigation but is also a local treasure. Faulkner's Light Brigade thanks you for your support.

The name Octagon refers to the shape of the historic lighthouse on Faulkner's Island, a beacon to mariners since 1802.

## If we build it... will they come?

*Sandy destroyed roseate tern habitat - Refuge staff hopes to create it elsewhere on Faulkner Island*

**Kristin Vargos USF&WS Biologist**

Although Sandy created a high quality piping plover and reduced the tern habitat on the Milford Point Unit of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, the super storm was also responsible for the destruction of prime roseate tern nesting habitat on the northern spit of the Faulkner Island Unit. The roseate tern is a federally endangered species which breeds in only one place in Connecticut... Faulkner Island. The north spit has historically been one of



*The north spit and east side of Faulkner Island.*

the most important areas on the island where this species nests. In 2011, Tropical Storm Irene tore away sediment from this area dumping it into the Long Island Sound and leaving only 150 square meters for the terns. Prior to this, an erosion project that fortified the eastern side of the island caused a change in the sediment deposit to this area and slowed accretion. Now after Sandy, there is only about 50 square meters of breeding habitat left on the north spit.

The island is shaped much like a mesa or plateau with a lower tier of rocky beaches and rip-rap, an upper level that is composed of grass and shrubs,



*New pea gravel and nesting boxes for the Roseate Terns*

and steep eroding banks connecting the two. The roseates have historically nested on the upper northern part of the island. In 1981, 32 roseate tern pairs nested here (*see Spendelov 1982 - An Analysis of Temporal Variation in, and the Effects of Habitat Modification on, the Reproductive Success of Roseate Terns*). Yet over the past few years due to increasing vegetation and declining habitat quality, they have not chosen this area as a nesting location.

The Refuge wildlife biologist has received a grant to create more roseate habitats on the island and has targeted the upper northern tip as a desired location. This area is high enough to avoid much of the storm erosion and has a history of being a roseate tern nesting spot. Refuge staff and volunteers will cut back the vegetation, put down weed blocker in strips, and cover it with pea gravel of just the right size and shape for the roseate terns. They will also set up nest boxes to protect the birds from predators and monitor the area all summer long.



*Volunteer installing nesting boxes*

One question remains though...if we build it, will they come?

## Guilford Boy Scouts

Guilford Boy Scout Troop 474 had the unique opportunity of going out to Faulkner Island for an overnight stay April 15-16, 2013. They were invited by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS), who own and maintain the island as a wildlife habitat. During their stay on the island the scouts helped with the preparation for the arrival of the Common and Roseate Terns in May 2013 and the removal of debris from Tropical Storm Sandy. The scouts were transported to and from the island on the USF&WS Landing Craft.



*BSA Troop 474 overnight on Faulkner Island*

Since the basic theme of scouting is education and fun, Local Historian Joel Helander, did a presentation on the island and lighthouse. As a special treat the scouts all had an opportunity go up to the top of the lighthouse. One of the scout leaders indicated that the boys have never slept so well on an overnight outing.



USF&WS and the Faulkner Light Brigade were thrilled that a local scout group had the chance to enjoy this unique opportunity and thank

them for their work on the island. It will serve a wonderful lifetime memory for the scouts and their leaders.

# Faulkner's Light Brigade Open House September 2012

The Open House for 2012 was scheduled for Saturday September 8<sup>th</sup> and Sunday September 9<sup>th</sup>. The week of

September 3<sup>rd</sup> was a busy one on the island. USF&WS had their work cut out for them with mowing 5 feet of vegetation. Stairs and other areas needed to be cleaned of bird



*A glorious Open House on Sunday*

droppings from the thousands of terns on the island for the summer. FLB was busy cleaning the blackboard and floor in the boathouse from the birds. Once the blackboard dried, it



*FLB VIP boat and USCG Vessel in basin*

was painted. While the paint dried, the stairs in the lighthouse were swept. Posters were placed on the blackboard and USF&WS placed benches in the boathouse and on the island for the Open House visitors.

The plan was to have 5 trips on the USF&WS Landing Craft on Saturday and 3 trips on Sunday. The reason for 3 trips on Sunday was to open the



*Capt. Bill Bussman and the water taxi*

island to private boaters, with a water taxi being made available to them from their anchorage, on Sunday afternoon. Unfortunately windy weather and rough seas required cancelling the event for the entire day on Saturday. After sharing the bad news with those planning on visiting the island and lighthouse, Rick Potvin, the USF&WS Manger, announced that they would make 7 trips on the Landing Craft on Sunday starting at 8 am. Those that wanted to visit the island were thrilled to hear this good news.

## 2013 Open House

Thanks in large part to the generosity of the Faulkner's Light Brigade (FLB), the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS) and the US Coast Guard (USCG), the 2013 Open House is scheduled for Saturday, September 7<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

Reservations will be required for those being transported from the Guilford Town Marina to the island. Pending weather there will be 5 trips on the US&FW service landing craft on Saturday, and 3 trips on Sunday. Sunday afternoon will be open to visitors on private vessels with water taxi service to the island.

FLB will not be taking reservations for the 2013 Open House until August 22nd. Information will be posted on the FLB website at <http://faulknerslight.org>.

FLB will also have the annual Photo Contest for pictures taken on the island during the Open House so visitors should plan on bringing their cameras.

Sunday was great! The volunteers set up at the Guilford Marina at 6 am to be ready for the early visitors. Island volunteers were transported by the USF&WS Landing Craft at 7 am. The first visitors arrived



*USF&WS Manager, Rick Potvin, discusses the lighthouse, island, and wildlife habitat*

on the island around 8:30 am. All visitors to the island were treated to a humorous presentation by Rick Potvin about the lighthouse, the island and the wildlife habitat. There were more than 300 visitors on the island on Sunday. Everyone had a chance to go up in the lighthouse. While waiting to go into the lighthouse, the visitors were enter-



*Andy Weaver entertains visitors*

tained by Andy Weaver. Andy, a lobsterman in the area for several decades, frequently visited the Coast Guardsmen stationed on the island. Visitors were offered a guided



*Rick Potvin and daughter, Terry, who volunteered for the Open House*

tour to the North Spit by a USF&WS staff member. Visitors had a chance to sit on the pier and walk on the beach after going up in the lighthouse. All visitors were most appreciative of the opportunity and left the island with a big smile.

## Remembering the Past... "Name that Island"

*From the March 2000 Octagon Newsletter*

"The first name given to Faulkner Island for which any record exists is the name used by the native American people who lived along the south central Connecticut shoreline. They called the island Massancummock meaning the place of the great fish hawks.

The first European to find the island was probably the Dutch explorer Adren Block who sailed through the waters of Long Island Sound as early as 1614. The island appears on early Dutch maps as "Valcken Eylandt." This name is very likely borrowed from the English translation of the native American name. The early English settlers called it Falcon Island. Andrew Leete, the son of Connecticut Governor William Leete, became the first owner of Falcon Island in 1677. The name evolved from Falcon to Faulkner. The Faulkner family of Leete's Island in Guilford provides an illustration of how the spelling may have evolved. Charles Faulkner (1731-1803) was a lifelong resident of Leete's Island. He served in Captain Vaill's Coast Guard during the American Revolution and was wounded when a marauding party of British raided Guilford in 1781. Charles' grandfather used the spelling "Falconer."

President John Adams signed an Act authorizing the purchase of Faulkner's Island for the construction of a lighthouse on March 3, 1801. The deed transferring title to the island from Meded Stone to the U.S. Government identifies the island as "Faulknors." This should have settled the issue of the spelling of the island's name, but it did not. The U.S. Board on Geographic Names, a board established by President Benjamin Harrison composed of various Federal agencies, determined that the name should be Falkner Island in 1891. That is why the U.S. Geological Survey and other government agencies insist on the Falkner spelling and that explains why readers of this publication will notice two different spellings of the island's name in this issue. Popular

usage and the Faulkner's Light Brigade continue to embrace the spelling which appears in the 1801 Act of Congress."

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## Guilford Fair Parade September 22, 2012

The Faulkner's Light Brigade (FLB), together with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS), were pleased to be a part of the Guilford Fair Parade, now known as the Guilford Citizen's Day Parade, on Saturday 9/22/12. FLB had two vehicles decorated with signs and bunting. The USF&WS had a truck, with signs promoting visiting a National Wildlife Refuge. Their pickup truck was very popular with the children because Teddy Roosevelt the Bear was riding in the back. There were lots of applause and thumbs up as we proceeded down the parade route. A fun day was enjoyed by all who participated!



*Parade Spectators*

## Theodore Roosevelt Bear Visits the Parade

*Shaun Roche, USF&WS Visitor Services Manager*

The staff of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge were happy to join the Faulkner's Light Brigade at the Guilford Citizen's Day Parade September 2012. In attendance were Rick Potvin - Refuge Manager, Patricia Kusmierski - Biological Technician and myself.



*Governor Mollay and TR Bear*

The parade has become one of the staff's favorite events of the year. It poses a great opportunity to connect with the people of the Guilford area while



Pat Widlitz, Fred Farnsworth & Governor Malloy

having quite a bit of fun. This year we introduced a new character to the parade – Theodore Roosevelt Bear. Judging from all the handshakes, waves and smile's that TR

Bear received, he was a very welcome addition indeed.

TR Bear is one of two mascots used by the National Wildlife Refuge System (the other being a blue goose character created by J. N. "Ding" Darling). TR Bear was created to honor the conservation legacy of Theodore Roosevelt, 26<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. Many people know about TR's involvement in protecting iconic national parks, such as the Grand Canyon and Mesa Verde. People may also have heard that he created 150 national forests during his 7 ½ years in office. However, only a few people realize that the idea of a federal refuge set aside just for wildlife was one that Theodore Roosevelt originated himself.

In early 1903 when concerned citizens informed TR that thousands of birds were being shot weekly on a federally-owned island in Florida, the president reacted in his typical pro-active way. He quickly asked the Attorney General, Philander Knox, if there was any law prohibiting him from declaring a national bird reservation there. When the answer came back that it was legal and constitutional to do so, Roosevelt issued

an executive order establishing Pelican Island, near Vero Beach, as the first national wildlife refuge in the country.

TR went on to establish fifty

more of these bird reservations throughout the United States and its territories.

TR Bear, a cuddly figure that sports a Rough Rider cavalry hat and bandana, as well as the famous Roosevelt moustache, is a great character to represent the US Fish and Wildlife Service. He represents not only America's great conservation president, but also the wildlife that TR attempted to protect more than a century ago. It was great fun to portray him, and I am pretty sure that the people of Guilford (as well as Governor Malloy) enjoyed meeting him. Hopefully TR Bear will be available for this year's parade too.



TR Bear, USF&WS and FLB Parade gang

## Looking for New FLB Board Members

*Would you like to participate in the preservation of a local treasure?  
Would you like to help maintain a special wildlife habitat?  
Would you like to improve access to Faulkner Island?*

In 1991, the Faulkner's Light Brigade (FLB) was initially formed as a commission of the Guilford Preservation Alliance. Its fundamental mission was to investigate ways of saving the historic Faulkner's Island Lighthouse and the island itself.

FLB plans to continue its work through the restoration and preservation of Faulkner Island and the Lighthouse. The Brigade also plans to ensure a high quality outcome for the preservation of the wildlife habitat. This is being done in conjunction with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, who own the island, and the US Coast Guard, the owners of the lighthouse.

**Some of the Brigade's achievements include the following:**

**1995** FLB worked with the CT Congressional Delegation on the "Rescue Campaign" for erosion control on Faulkners Island.

**1996** completion of a new stairway made of weather resistant tropical hardwood that went from the dock house to the top of the island.

**1999** completion of the first lighthouse restoration in partnership with the Town of Guilford.

**2001** completion of a unique erosion control project on the east embankment of the island, using trap rock in a stone revetment, that went twenty feet up the inclined slope.

**2002** Two Hundred Year Anniversary Celebration with an estimated 2,500 attendees participating in an array of activities including five round trips around the island on the schooner Quinnipiack, an informational program by the US Fish and Wildlife Service for those fortunate enough to visit the island and a fascinating program at Guilford's Jacob's Beach.

**2004** An exhibit at the Henry Whitfield State Museum was an opportunity to get a close and refreshing look at the

“Bicentennial Beacon: Faulkner Island Lighthouse, 1802-2002”. It was the first interpretive center devoted to the refuge and light station.

**2007** A major project was completed with the removal of the existing wooden dock with its pilings, installation of a steel bulkhead around a concrete pier, dredging of the boat basin and construction of a floating dock with four pilings.

**2008** The Generator Building was renovated to house the USFWS interns who study the birds throughout the summer months. The expanded facility provides better space for working, cooking and lodging.

**2009** FLB became a freestanding organization with the approval of their Tax Exempt Status by the Internal Revenue Service in November 2009.

**2009** The Junior Brigade was formed to encourage the involvement of high school students. The Junior Brigade is involved in work parties on the island in April and the Open House in September of each year.

**2010** The second restoration started in October 2010 and included power washing with fresh water transported to the island, repointing the interior and exterior, the application of an all-white breathable coating to make the tower weather tight, painting of the lantern gallery, installation of ventilated stainless steel doors, repair of the 12-pane casement windows in the face of the west wall and restoration of the original weathervane.

**2012** The new website was created with the early history of the Brigade, a weather station, a webcam, an island quiz and lots more. Everyone has the ability to subscribe to the website using their email address. When new articles are posted on the site, a blast email will be sent to everyone who has subscribed to the site. The site is located at <http://faulknerslight.org>.

**2012** Keith Mueller, from Killingworth, CT, does award winning avian art and wood sculpturing. He generously carved a Common Tern for the Faulkner’s Light Brigade first Silent Auction.



**2013** FLB is starting the “Brick Campaign” which is highlighted in this issue. The plan is to have a brick walkway from

the top of the wooden stairway to the Generator Building.

The mission of the Faulkner’s Light Brigade is an ongoing one. Better public access is on the agenda. The popular Spring Lecture Series and the Open House on the island in September are two of the Brigade’s special annual events.

If you have an interest in becoming a Board Member please contact Marie Pohlman, Chairman of the Nominating Committee at 203-421-3123.

## Faulkner’s Island at Sunset

### *Exerpts from the Lightkeepers Diary*

*Elizabeth Delemarre*

My husband John and I had the pleasure of being Island Keeper’s on Faulkner Island one September. This was an opportunity given to us by the US Fish and Wildlife Service Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge.

Watching the sunset from Faulkner Island is a special treat. After dinner each night we would sit on the front lawn of our generator shed residence. We would turn our chairs to face Goose Island to the west, its brave flag silhouetted against the colorful sky.

Flocks of young terns were still on the island after the adults had started home to their winter quarters in South America. These younger terns would circle Faulkner at sunset again and again flying lower each time. As the sun sinks slowly, the birds would start to settle down near the north end of the island to sleep until the sun rises.



*Photo courtesy of USF&WS*

Bright or pale, red, orange, yellow, purple and even green, each sunset was different and each was beautiful. We would watch the huge red and orange globe drop closer and closer to the horizon.

As the sun's lowermost edge seemed to touch the water, we half expect to hear sizzling and see steam rise. It takes only a few minutes for the sun to entirely disappear from view beneath the horizon's water line.



There were always a few distant boats that stop to watch the sunset colors in the sky magnificently reflected in the water all around. The sky and water quickly fade to silver and then to grey. The boats would then start for home one by one.

On the opposite side of Faulkner Island, oil tankers bound for New Haven harbor, anchored for the night with rows of brightly lit windows, as if an all night party was taking place on board.

The lighthouse tower's light starts to revolve and throw its beams into the growing darkness. Lights all along the Guilford coastline begin to illuminate a few at a time. There are twice as many stars visible in the island sky as can be seen from the mainland. As the clear air cools off, we would go back inside our generator shed residence for a restful night.



## Photo Contest Winners September 2012



*Francis Arpaia  
Brooklyn, NY*



*Virginia Baltay  
Guilford, CT*



*Lynne Kerber  
Agawam, MA*

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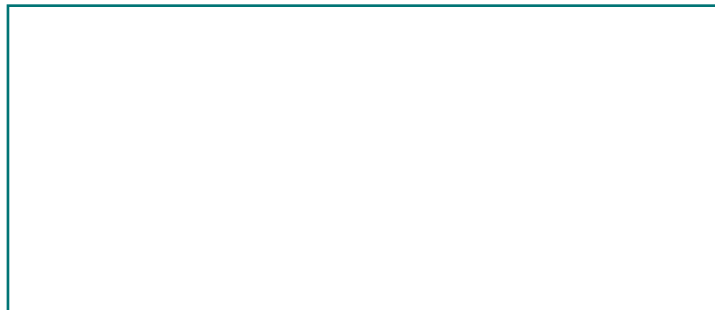
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