

October 2009

Dear nature lovers and park goers,

The leaves are turning colors and falling, the marsh grasses are beigeing, and the water is cooling quickly. Our short, sweet summer days are coming to an end, and at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport the first season of the nature center is wrapping up. It seems like yesterday that kids were flying their newly made kites on the lawn and walking with nets in hand to go explore the inter-tidal zone. The park is equally beautiful in the winter, but our guests from now on will be mostly birdwatchers looking for migratory birds passing through the extensive and diverse refuge.

As the first naturalist for the Sherwood Island Nature Center I would like to thank everyone who made our successful first season possible, especially all the visitors who came and usually came back. I would also like to thank the Friends of Sherwood Island and the CT Department of Environmental Protection for providing this rewarding opportunity, along with the eight interns and volunteers from our local schools, our other naturalist Mike Rowinsky, a biology teacher at Greens Farms Academy, and all our donors and supporters.

The new Sherwood Island Nature Center is a place where social diversity and ecological diversity are celebrated under one roof, and where learning opportunities for all ages are born. What we have helped to create together is a unique opportunity to make environmental education a tangible reality, to introduce the local habitat, get people outdoors, and change the way we live in a world that gets smaller every day.

By providing environmental education to a public that visits us from the entire eastern seaboard and beyond, we are embracing our social responsibility as a town and passing on a legacy of respect for nature that will change many individual lives. Since the last nature center was disassembled more than 5 years ago, Sherwood Island has been missing a place where people can come for more information and a closer look at the diverse ecosystems that the park encompasses.

The park's 200 plus acres include a wetland, an oak forest, untamed stands of wild grasses and flowers, clear-cut picnicking areas and two beaches with extensive inter-tidal zones. Sherwood Island is more than just a place to come to the beach; it is a sanctuary for wildlife and boasts a diverse habitat that is kept pristine and beautiful by our state workers and local volunteers. It is a place to savor slowly, and spending time here nourishes the imagination and pacifies the soul. We'll see you in the spring for another season of fun and learning for all!

Alan Berman, Naturalist 2009