

CUMBERLAND ISLAND MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

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THE OUTLET CLOSED, 17 SEP. 2017



ARTIFICIAL
DRAINAGE
MARCH 2021



THE OUTLET, March 2021

Editors: C. Ruckdeschel and A. Mahoney

WHITNEY OUTLET

The freshwater outlet, which drains Whitney Lake and associated sloughs, was closed by Hurricane Irma in 2017. (CIM Newsletter, Vol.28(3), Sep. 2017) That was the first time in over 40 years of monitoring of that drain that the primary dunes in that area have been physically closed, preventing outflow of freshwater. The closing of the dunes is a natural evolutionary process by which freshwater sloughs are formed. In the subsequent four years, a healthy freshwater interdune system was created due to that dune closure. This is the type habitat used by American eels, now listed as Endangered by the I.U.C.N, many frog species, alligators and birds, including: Least Bittern, Gallinules, Moorhens, Red-winged Blackbirds, etc., and it is within the Wilderness. How exciting to witness natural geological processes in action!

Then on March 20 2021, destruction. People had shoveled out drain channels from the freshwater slough through the primary dune, presumably to lower the standing water on a road. The newly formed slough was full of freshwater when the people intervened, and upon release it tore through the interdune and ripped the primary dune open wide in its rush to the sea. Such a sad commentary on the park. It has now been six to seven months since the destruction of those primary dunes and the devastating effect on the functioning of the dune-interdune system. The new outlet flow is both in and out; freshwater out and saltwater in, which is devastating to the interdune vegetation and thus the natural functioning of the system.

The National Park Service (NPS) was advised of the situation on 22 March, and replied that their goal was to “make sure the Wilderness Areas remain untrammelled.” ??? On 4 April, still with no sign remedial action had been taken, the park was asked to “remedy the freshwater flow (loss) as soon as possible.” Their response was curt: “the outflow of water has been halted.” A check revealed that someone other than park staff had apparently shoveled small plugs of sand into the excavated channels leading from the slough. That stopped the low volume flow then draining from the slough, but would not hold back the full volume of water when the slough filled. And the primary dune, which is the ultimate barrier between the freshwater and the sea, remained razed, ravaged, unable to perform as a barrier to incoming sea water. In another correspondence, the park said they were trying to quantify the loss of freshwater. For what purpose, they did not say.



FROM INSIDE THE DUNE BREACH
LOOKING EAST

The Regional NPS Office on 26 April commented, “it is questionable whether active intervention is necessary to allow resources to recover. We don’t generally intervene when any action... is likely to be undone by natural processes.” This hardly sounds like an assessment made by an ecologist familiar with the dynamics of barrier islands.

Five months later, in September, Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) people visited the site and found another attempt had been made to further enlarge the breach in the dune. In their next communication the NPS admitted



10 September 2021 SECOND ATTEMPT

there were “several resource concerns: freshwater and sea-water mixing in the wetland system, loss of habitat, and loss of protection from the dune system,” yet all they proposed was to investigate the incidents jointly with DNR, with no active intervention to protect the resource, which is their responsibility.

The next day, a letter from park Superintendent Gary Ingram advised all residents that South Fraser/Cut Rd. was closed to motorized traffic. That road is within the Wilderness, which prohibits motorized or mechanized equipment, he said, with no mention made of the NPS Special Use Permit held by the Table Point Co. Inc., a Carnegie family owned property. The



**S. FRASER RD./S. CUT TRAIL
3 MAY 2021**

permit was given when the Perkins family transferred their property to the national park. It covered vehicular use over a road Charles Fraser built in the 1970s, and allowed the Perkins vehicular beach access from 1980 to its expiration in 2000. Since then however, all parties apparently have assumed the permit remained in effect.

CI MUSEUM NEWS

VOLUNTEERS at CIM

Three volunteers, Amy Brunson, a librarian at Libbie Mill Library in Henrico Co., VA; Leah Sherry, with Turnip Green Creative Re-use.org Center in Nashville, TN; and Rene Barker, who focuses on sustainability in TN spent eight days in April copying archival material



AMY BRUNSON IN CIM

in the museum. All original historical documents will ultimately go to the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library at the University of Georgia. Among other things, the library focuses on historical manuscripts and natural history archives and records. The copies will not be made available to the public at this time, but they will allow transfer of the originals without a loss of resources here.

NPS

WILDERNESS INTERN

Bridget Murray, an enthusiastic young gal with a good head on her shoulders, came to Cumberland through AmeriCorps in January 2021. AmeriCorps, a government organization that works directly with non-profits or government agencies to serve well-intentioned management goals, sent her to establish a baseline of environmental conditions for Wilderness management. Without a baseline to measure change, there can be no measurement of success in management. She was working on the island through March, and completed all but a few items on her list. Remaining are things that involved third parties such as air and water quality, which the Park agreed to finish.



BRIDGET MURRAY, WILDERNESS INTERN

Bridget is now completing her M.S. degree in geology at Alabama, while working with the GIS and data services program at Grand Canyon National Park.

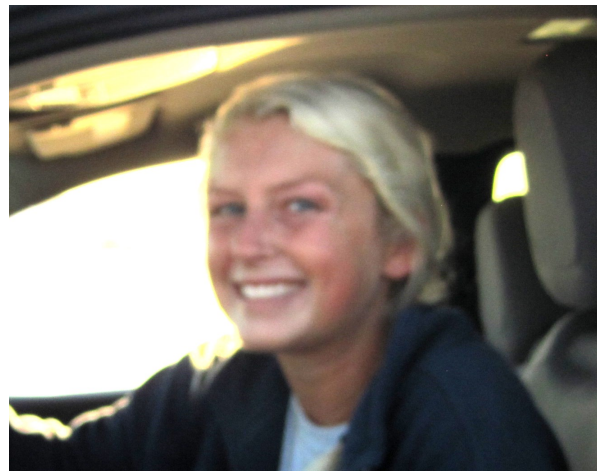
SEA TURTLES

The usual state protocol was followed this year regarding moving clutches of eggs laid low on the beach. Nesting was good with 645 nests recorded as of the end of September. Nest predation was minor thanks to the supervisor of the project, Doug Hoffman, and his interventions.

The two turtle girls, Rachel Keaton, from Newnan, GA and Lizzie Hancock, from Alabama, remained through the entire season.



RACHAEL KEATON



LIZZIE HANCOCK

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS

10 April A *Cypselurus*

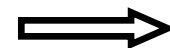
Melanrus Atlantic, Flyingfish, DOB at South Point .



16 April Octopus DOB
Delicious!

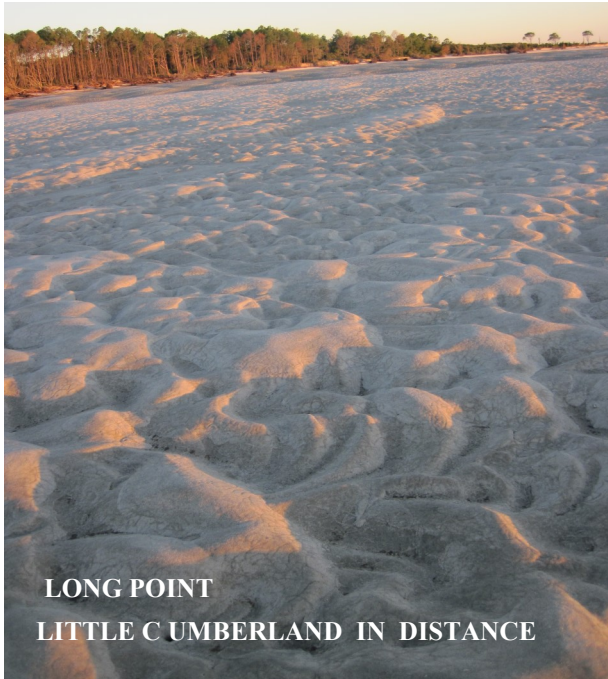


16 April Many thousands of *Stomolophus*, Cannonball jellyfish DOB for a week.



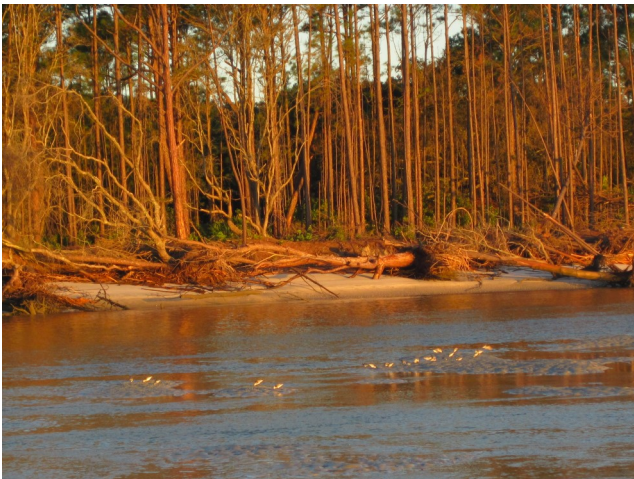
28 May Four Canadian geese together on beach.





LONG POINT
LITTLE C UMBERLAND IN DISTANCE

24 September Giant sand bar has formed at Long Point. Little CI in distance.



24 September Christmas Creek between birds at edge of sand bar and Little Cumberland Island.

FERRY DOCKS

The three major Park Service ferry docks, St. Marys, Dungeness, and Sea Camp, have been repaired following damage from hurricanes Matthew (2016) and Irma



26 March REPAIRS TO SEA CAMP DOCK FINISHING UP

(2017). On 2 April 2021, the NPS advised they were finally all back in service. During the intervening four or five years, on the mainland the ferry docked at the

old Gilman property, which required a substantial hike to and from the NPS parking lot and visitor center.

NEW ROOF ON BIG HOUSE PLUM ORCHARD

The leaking roof on the big house at Plum Orchard was finally addressed by the NPS. Serious leaking had been a problem for some time and the blue tarp on the roof on the east end had become a “fixture.” Water complaints by resident volunteers were constant.

The low quality cedar shingles, installed in 2001, were removed and replaced this year with a new type shingle. For seven months, March through September 2021, workmen from Register Roofing Co. in Jacksonville, labored on the roof replacing the old shingles with a faux-cedar plastic-type shingle, which will presumably have a longer life. Made by DaVinci Roofscapes, they are advertised as made of “virgin resins fortified with UV stabilizers” for color stability. They also have a Class A fire rating, Class 4 impact



NEW PLASTIC SHINGLE LEFT, OLD CEDAR RIGHT

rating, a 110 mph wind rating, and a lifetime warranty.

Sounds too good to be true. These folks are on to something and the roof does appear authentic from the



REMOVING SHINGLES 29 MARCH

ground.

Cedar shakes, like fat pine shakes, were at one time the roofing material of choice, but only old growth trees could provide durable quality wood. Old growth lumber is rare these days, which opened a niche for a new kind of shingle.



4 JUNE INSTALLING NEW PLASTIC SHINGLES



OCTAGON HOUSE & PUMP HOUSE AT PLUM

Also, beginning in May, Jeff Knapp and crew worked on the Carnegie era Octagon house, which ultimately

received a new roof and many new structural elements. It had been neglected for years, since its imminent demise was likely due to its proximity to the river. As some protection from the river, a retaining wall was constructed some time ago, but it too needs constant attention.



CEILING OCTAGON HSE



OCTAGON HOUSE COMPLETED. RETAINING WALL TO LEFT.



THE PUMP HOUSE

The pump house, immediately behind the big house, also received a new plastic roof and other repairs.

CLEARING PLUM ENVIRONS

In May and June, the NPS \$100,000 Bobcat exercised its muscles on the area surrounding the Plum barn and the NPS radio tower, which is in the Wilderness, leveling all but substantial trees. Several interesting historical objects were uncovered, but the area now looks

like a war zone. How the NPS plans to "maintain" what will now turn into a thick jungle of growth, is a mystery.



"BOBCAT"

TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Vegetation grows quickly on the island, sometimes obliterating trails. Occasionally trees fall across the paths, causing them to be circumnavigated or re-routed by users. In the past, conservation or school groups have come to clear trails but their availability is erratic and uncertain, and their time here limited.

ACE to the rescue! The American Conservation Experience group, a non-profit which began in Arizona, partners with federal, state, and local land management agencies to provide environmental service opportunities for young people. They offer practical and professional training and experience while improving public land.

In June, I happened to be on the ferry with three gals carrying packs and a couple cross-cut saws! They all wore "ACE" shirts and appeared quite competent. The leader, Juls or Jewels (have been unable to get specifics from the NPS) explained that some cross-cut saws were better than others and that it took special knowledge to sharpen them properly. Mechanized equipment, such as chain-saws, is prohibited in Wilderness, so this female crew spent every day clearing island trails by hand. Three cheers for ACE! What a wonderful feeling, seeing that the Park Service here was recognizing the Wilderness and following its management guidelines!



ACE TRAIL CREW

The SETTLEMENT

Handrails made of 2x4 lumber



FIRST AFRICAN
BAPTIST CHURCH



**BACK STEPS ON ALBERTY HOUSE
BEING REPLACED**

were constructed on the Alberty house and the church in March. The old cement block and brick steps at the Alberty house were demolished and replaced with wooden ones.



HOMEMADE MODEL

BICYCLES

There has been a halt in bicycle rentals by the park. Apparently two people sustained injuries while riding the bikes. No details are available. Personal bicycles are still allowed to be brought over on the ferry, and allowed to be used to access campsites, even the northernmost Wilderness campsites ... even pulling trailers.



BICYCLE AND TRAILER AT BRICKHILL CAMPGROUND



MODERN QUICK-HITCH VARIETY

NEW FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN



The park Fire Management Plan (FMP) must be regularly updated and it was this year. It is now even **MORE DEVASTATING TO THE NATURAL SYSTEMS !** The plan begs questions on every page. The following is an example. It begins with the statement, “Adaptive Management is the cornerstone of this FMP.” The first step listed in the Adaptive process is to “identify desired conditions...,” so practices will be “based on clearly defined outcomes...” It goes on to explain that the Seashore “has not formally developed desired future conditions (DFC) at this time.” They were to have explored research funding options in 2020, and “will plan to include the DFC in the 2023” update.

That means that justification for all the destructive burning they have done and firebrakes they have ripped through the recovering natural communities were all based on ...what? What purpose will it serve the resource? It will facilitate control of fire, but that it all. According to this plan, no natural communities are identified nor exempt from prescribed burns. Terrapin Point is scheduled for burns in 2022, 2024 and 2026. That action pretty much assures that the area will become a pine forest rather than an upland maritime forest, which is its natural trajectory. It also means that the direction given by Congress in the enabling legislation of the park (“...the seashore shall be permanently preserved in its primitive state...”) is not being followed. More on this soon. Check the **WildCumberland.org** website for details.

