



Island Musings

Splendid Midseason

Soaring above the islands on a perfect day offers a unique perspective on the treasure trove of geology and terrain they contain. In this photo Straitsmouth seems to point like an arrow at the mainland with Gap Head appearing to protect the island to the northeast.

When the last ice age was in retreat it left us this wonderland of rocky islands and a coastline featuring rock-fall moraines and flat outwash plains. It is no wonder these islands are so endlessly interesting to explore, photograph and paint.

Tap the blue box, below, to enjoy a video walkabout of Thacher Island.

WATCH NEW ENGLAND LIVING'S COVERAGE OF THACHER ISLAND

Video courtesy of [New England Living](#).



Straitsmouth Island and Gap Cove on a perfect July day.
Photo courtesy of Gail Zeman

Tramway Rebuild

The tramway, originally built in 1899 to bring coal and supplies to the whistle and keepers' houses, is undergoing major maintenance. Rebuilt 16 years ago, the pressure treated wood that underpins the rails is succumbing to the withering effects of the marine environment. A volunteer team of Jane Erb and Daniel Hoch are refurbishing the tram cars while other volunteers tear up and replace 125 feet of supports beneath the rails. The spur to the boat house remains open to transport demolition materials.



Volunteers Johnnie Martinez, David Kearns, Mike Hammerl, and David Narkewicz remove old wood in preparation for rebuilding the Thatcher Island tramway.

Photo courtesy of Syd Wedmore

Mechanized Fleets Keep the Islands Moving

Seven four-wheeled vehicles and multiple electric hand tools make it possible for volunteers to accomplish the mountains of work necessary to keep the islands visitor-ready. The ramp, boathouse, and keepers' houses require annual maintenance. Often severe weather damage and planned upgrade work on historic structures means major reconstruction. This work depends on five tractors, wooden trailers and two Kubota multi-task vehicles. Ongoing trail and structure maintenance requires power tools and the tractor-trailers haul supplies, construction materials, brush and debris.

This video shows the passage of one heavy vehicle onto Straitsmouth Island.

WATCH NOW!



Keeper Dewey Glick loads brush on workhorse tractor-trailer.

Photo courtesy of Camille Glick.

Thacher Island's "Cistern Chapel"

At the end of a hot workday, a shower inspires a keeper's gratitude for the island's water system and the cistern at its heart. This 40-foot-wide concrete tank holds about 25,000 of gallons of rainwater collected via channels in its metal roof, and it's protected by a massive bird-proof fence. The whole structure is affectionately dubbed the "Cistern Chapel." Water is pumped from there to tanks in the Assistant Keeper House cellar, then through a system of filters for home use and for firefighting all over the island.



Keeper Jeanette Haynes gives the water channels a spring cleaning.

Photo courtesy of Keeper Larry Haynes.

Island Mammal Population Growing

Mass Audubon, which manages Straitsmouth Island's Wildlife Sanctuary, uses motion-activated video cameras to help track the island's animal and bird population. The resulting footage, taken in daylight and during the night, offers an interesting and useful record of the deer, coyotes, raccoons and others who find refuge in this special habitat. Three fawns were born to two does, presumably on the island, since last season.



A still frame from a trail cam video shows a doe leading her fawn.

Trash or treasure?

At the western base of the North Tower, treasure hunters might find remnants of the original 1861 Fresnel lens that was decommissioned in 1934. It is said that “coasties” tossed prisms from the North Tower explaining why glass pieces are still found today. They also sold the bronze skeleton to buy cigarettes. The South Tower Fresnel lens (its twin) was preserved and in 2013, made its way back to Gloucester where it is on display, in all its glory, at the Cape Ann Museum.



Shards of fallen Fresnel lens prisms off of the North Tower.

Photo courtesy of Leslie Milne.

A Smith Family Tradition

The Smith family is in their 50th year of visits to Thacher Island — what a milestone! This year Miriam and David arrived from their home in New Jersey along with thirteen children and grandchildren, whom they entertained with island lore and lobster biology. Miriam first visited Thacher half a century ago when she came to see her uncle, Ferdinand Petrie, a renowned Rockport artist, author, stamp designer and gallerist whose works are in the Smithsonian and other prominent U.S. art collections.



David and Miriam Smith (center row, fourth and fifth from left) brought thirteen family members to Thacher in June.

Photo courtesy of Camille Glick.

Island Fun Fact:

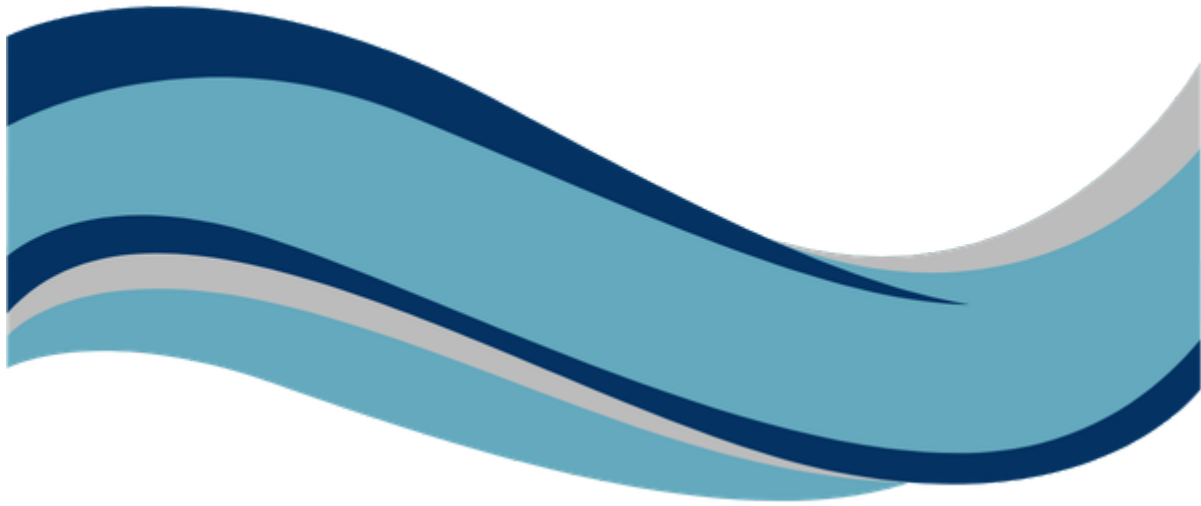
Who Ate My Chapstick?

First they noticed that the bathroom trash had fallen over. Then they saw little footprints in the bathtub — racoon prints! — and half-eaten earbuds and a chewed chapstick (coconut flavor) scattered from a toiletries bag.

So did he climb the twisting staircase to the second floor in Thacher Island's Assistant Keepers' House?

No. A torn window screen was the clue. Lesson: leave no opening unsecured lest your personal items fall victim to hungry masked marauders.

Endnote: The screen was replaced by a work crew that day.



See you soon!

Thacher & Straitsmouth Islands Association

Your Membership Matters!

We depend on membership dues and donations to help fund our vital mission. Thank you for your support! Not sure when your membership is due? Send us your questions and we will be happy to let you know!

Keep In Touch!

*www.thacherisland.org
info@thacherisland.org*

Check us out on Facebook & visit our website to learn more.

RENEW MEMBERSHIP

DONATE NOW

