Island Musings

Brilliant Island Sunsets Signal Autumn

In lateAugust each year the leaveson our weather-stressedisland trees turn vibrant, work crew tempos hasten then slow as projects are completed, and a crispness creeps into the evening hours. We will miss the rich summer experiences, but nature must rest from our interference.

August’s setting sun colors Thacher’s western waterway.
Photo courtesy of Gail Zeman

Night Skies

As the sun goes down on another wondrous season, we offer thanks to the many volunteers who keep these islands accessible and in good repair for everyone's enjoyment. This takes a great deal of hard work under the heat of the summer sun. For a brief respite, we have gathered some beautiful images of the islands at night. Let the enchantment of the skies transport you through magical sunset hours into the dawn of a new day, looking up and feeling energized for our future endeavors and plans.

VIEW PHOTOS HERE!

Slide show courtesy of Denise Farnsworth

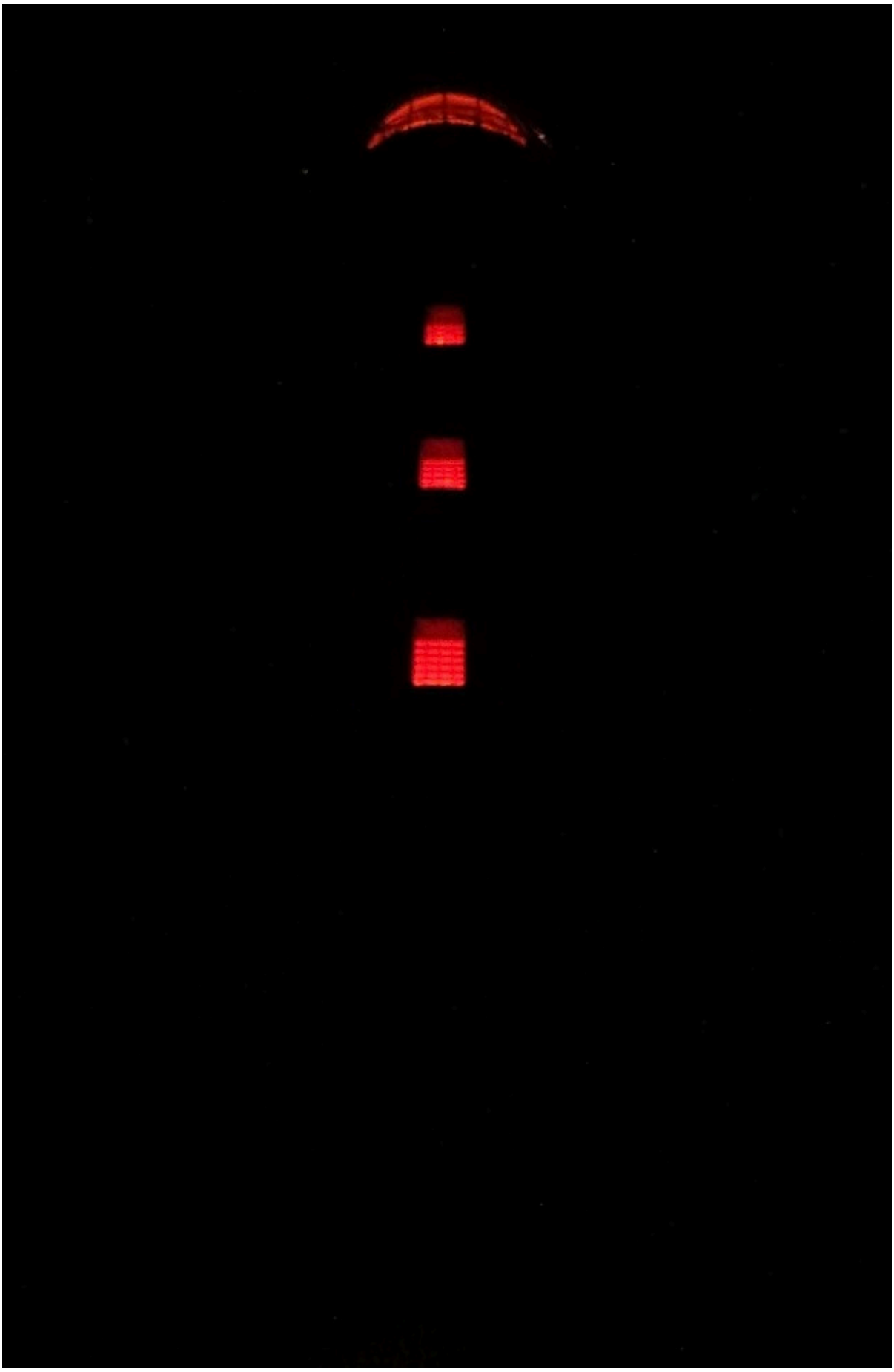
A Salty Commute

A five-minute trip to work is a dream come true for a half-dozen volunteers who regularly kayak out to Straitsmouth Island across Gap Head Cove. It is the highlight of their day. They arrive in time to secure the launch that brings other work crew members then they help unload supplies. The crossing can be a challenge on days when dense fog rolls in and the island is not visible. These six have developed a camaraderie; they look out for each other and promise to connect in the off season.

Kayak Crew are (l to r) Bill Sclafani, Chris Lovgren, Nathan Ives, Bill Whiting, Meredith Glaser and Randy Saville

Eyes on the Islands

Once known as “Ann’s Eyes,”, the twin lights of Thacher Island have warned sailors of danger for more than 250 years. In a recent reversal Rockport’s shoreline residents turned their eyes toward protecting the towers themselves. Seeing red lights where the South Tower stands, they feared an emergency and alerted TSI leaders. In-the-know keepers explained that visiting artists used lighting techniques to project color and patterns onto the SouthTower. All was well on Thacher…but please stay vigilant!



A limited-exposure photo taken of the illuminated South Tower shows Melissa Cox's work. A light and photo designer, she is one of several artists who worked on the island this year.
Photo courtesy of Denis Sukachev.

Jellyfish Invasion

Massachusetts coastal waters were besieged by Lion's Mane stinging jellyfish this summer. Primarily dependent on the currents for their motility, they washed up on the Straitsmouth and Thacher ramps, including 15 found one August morning on Thacher! The cause of this phenomenon is not clear but thought to be a combination of warmer spring waters, plenty of zooplankton to feed on, and the prevailing currents. Even dead jellyfish can pack a wallop of a sting if the tentacles are encountered. Stay clear!

Lion’s Mane Jellyfish invasion.
Photo courtesy of Leslie Milne.

Island Gem – The Thacher Island Museum

On the west side of the Keeper's House, visitors will find the island's historic museum. Artifacts include a full-sized mannequin of an 1850 uniformed keeper, a "to-scale" drawing of the original twelve-foot Fresnel lens, and a sitting room complete with pump organ (circa 1893). Take in the 15-minute film *The History of Thacher Island* (Ann Patrice Hickey with Paul St. Germain) and relive the Thacher shipwreck. Hear about the evolution of the lighthouses and the critical role the Thacher Lights have played in the navigation history of Cape Ann.

Early lighthouse keeper replica in Thacher Island Museum
Photo courtesy of Peggy Flanagan.

Senior and Junior Crewmen

They come in all ages, the crew members who shuttle visitors, volunteers and supplies between the shore and the two islands. This year Bob Krause, Shore Services Coordinator, reports that 20 mariners split duties on the water over 50 boat days making trips to and from the two islands. A few have been on the launches for a dozen years or more; brothers Will and Fraser Shelton are fairly new recruits, trained specifically for the seasonal job. Capt. Krause welcomes all interested and able applicants to apply for this varied and scenic work.

Captain Bob Krause (left) is joined by crewmen Roy Johnson, and high school students William and Fraser Shelton.

Island Fun Fact:

Pill Bugs Swarm the Helipad

Thacher Island is home to a colony of pill bugs (commonly called roly polies). They are actually land-dwelling crustaceans rather than insects, making them more closely related to crabs, lobsters and the giant ocean isopod. They can roll into a ball for protection and feed on organic material in dark, damp places,f making them good soil decomposers.

This active group of isopods was discovered in the area of the helipad, feasting on bird droppings one dark August night.

See you in the spring!

Thacher & Straitsmouth Islands Association

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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!

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