

Welcome to THE COECLES HARBOR MARINE WATER TRAIL



Located within the nationally significant Peconic Estuary of Long Island, a region The Nature Conservancy has declared

"A Last Great Place"

Coeclles Harbor is a unique area, surrounded by many protected lands and undeveloped shorelines. This intimate corner offers the chance to quietly relate to nature.

TRAIL TIPS

The trail is approximately
5 miles round trip,
allow 3 - 4 hours.



To start the trail, turn southeast from the launch ramp, keeping the shoreline to your right



Stay close to shore for the best sightings.



Buoys are 20' from shore, marked with green leaves and white numbers.



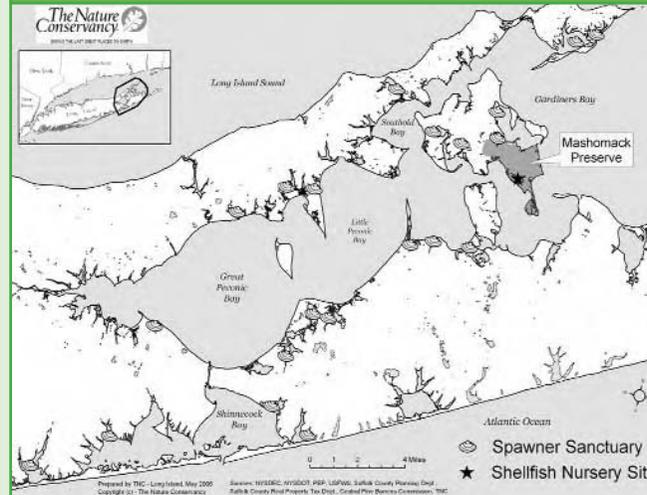
Stay alert for other boats.

MARINE CONSERVATION ON LONG ISLAND

Long Island has long been known for its beautiful beaches, bays, and bountiful seafood. However, in recent decades overharvesting, diseases and harmful algal blooms have decimated many species. The Nature Conservancy is working in partnership with government, baymen, environmental groups and academia to restore our shellfish and healthy bays.

Clams, oysters and scallops act like the filter in an aquarium, keeping the water clean and improving water quality. TNC's shellfish enhancement program is helping LI's waters thrive once again by:

Shellfish Restoration in the Peconic Estuary



Restoring shellfish populations by creating spawner sanctuaries where clams and scallops can grow and reproduce safely. These protected, no-take zones have concentrated numbers of shellfish, which lead to higher reproductive rates, and more shellfish for the entire area.

Using shellfish nurseries to "jump start" the bays' natural production. Over 2 million shellfish have been raised at Mashomack and released into the waters of Peconic Bay.

Monitoring the role shellfish play in improving water quality, controlling harmful algal blooms and enhancing habitat for other marine life.

For more information call Mashomack Preserve: 631-749-1001 or visit www.nature.org/longisland.

Taylor's Island: Yesterday and Today

This small island was originally named Cedar Island after the native Eastern Red cedars that thrived in the sunny, sandy habitat. Francis Marion Smith, the "Borax King" of 20-Mule-Team Borax fame, built the one room log cabin pictured here at the turn of the 20th century. It was a favorite spot for family picnics and summer gatherings.

S. Gregory Taylor, a Greek émigré and New York City hotel magnate, purchased the Island in 1937. Mr. Taylor willed the Island to his nephew Stephen Stephano for use throughout his life, and upon his death to the Town of Shelter Island. Taking possession of the Island in 1998, the Town followed Mr. Taylor's wishes that the Island be "for the use and enjoyment of the general public." Mr. Taylor's grave is located on the eastern side of the Island. The Taylor's Island Preservation and Management Committee was formed in December of 2005.



Cedar Island, circa 1905. Shelter Island Historical Society photo

Please visit the Committee's website, www.taylorisland.org to learn more and take a virtual tour of this historic site.

1. THE EDGE OF THE SEA IS ALIVE

Just off the Burns Road landing is a good example of a somewhat protected shoreline. Peat, built up by the marsh grasses, harbors ribbed mussels, crabs, snails and many other creatures. Clams hide in the mud and crabs may nibble at your feet. Windrows of eelgrass, seen best here in fall, hint of the abundant marine life in Coecles Harbor.



13. END OF THE LINE . . .

...but the beginning of the food web. Look carefully in the grasses, among the algae and along the bottom for snails, mussels, shrimp, minnows, hermit crabs and a myriad of other camouflaged creatures. You may find evidence of a raccoon's midnight snack, or the trail of a meandering mud snail. The holes in the bottom are often the siphons of soft-shelled or other clams, filtering their minute food from the water. Blue claw, spider and green crabs may be lurking under algae waiting for their next meal. Ribbed mussels, considered inedible, are crowded among the roots of the marsh grasses. Bait fish such as killifish and silverside minnows ('shiners') flourish in this food-rich environment. Juvenile striped bass, weakfish, blackfish and bluefish ('snappers') seek the protection of the marsh's shallow protected waters. The abundant plant life and small animal species support a vast food web on which the rest of the bay depends. Maligned in the past as smelly, mosquito producing swamps salt marshes are now recognized as critical land/water buffers and the nursery of the sea.



12. DUCK, DUCK, GOOSE

Marshes provide habitat for many birds. The skeleton of an old blind betrays the past history of duck hunting in Fan Creek. Now a refuge, this creek protects many species such as black duck, mallards, buffleheads and Canada geese as they rest and feed here in the winter.



11. BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Contrast the quietness of this tidal creek to the busy harbor in summer. Water enters and leaves this creek twice a day bringing in cooler oxygen-rich water and sweeping the nutrient-rich marsh water out to the bay. Breeding birds may be singing in the surrounding woods as they stake out their territories. In the summer egrets and great blue herons stalk the quiet waters searching for their fishy prey. TNC owns the bottom of all the salt marshes on the Preserve, allowing protection of the clams, crabs and other marsh species. Access to Fan and Foxen Creeks is permitted as part of the Water Trail. We ask that you stay out of all other Mashomack salt marshes so that birds and other creatures may feed and breed without interruption.



2. THE WORLD BENEATH THE SURFACE

As you're paddling close to shore, take a look into the water. Eelgrass and algae such as rockweed sway in the waves, providing oxygen for the water and shelter and food for many marine creatures. The granite boulders in the water and scattered on the shoreline were carried from New England by a glacier over 15,000 years ago. Banded by algae growth and home to barnacles and other organisms needing a solid base, these glacial erratics exhibit different personalities at different tide heights.



3. WHAT'S THE POINT?

Foxen Point, the peninsula along your right (south-west) was protected by The Nature Conservancy and the state of NY in the 1970's. The undeveloped upland area supports foxes, deer, and other forest species. Along the shore sun-loving Eastern Red Cedars have been browsed by the abundant white-tailed deer- note the bare lower branches. To get to station 4, head south toward the osprey nest on the far shore. Use caution crossing this busy boat channel. Along your way, notice the white buoys forming a square in Congdon's Creek with a sign identifying it as a shellfish restoration area. For more information about TNC's work in marine conservation see the reverse.

CONGDON'S CREEK

Look right (west), toward the town landing. You may see a commercial fishing boat. Up until the mid-1980's many families relied on Coecles Harbor to provide scallops and hard and soft shelled clams to make a living. An algae bloom (brown tide) now periodically clouds the water, killing eelgrass and decimating the shellfish of the area. Its cause still a mystery, brown tide wiped out a way of life for many area Baymen. Careful conservation of our remaining land and water, with increased awareness of the importance of each individual's actions is needed to preserve this area's unique character.



4. MARINA OR MARSH?



Despite its scenic beauty, this creek is not a pristine salt marsh. Now part of Mashomack Preserve, it was dredged in the 1960's for the development of a private marina. The large nest of sticks was built by osprey, the brown and white fish hawk seen frequently in the summer. Ospreys breed here, then migrate to Central and South America for the winter. The black duck-like birds often resting on the rocks at the water's edge are cormorants, diving birds which also eat fish.

5. FOR PEAT'S SAKE



The peat at the edge of the water was built up by the marsh grass which dominates the intertidal zone. Sea lavender's delicate purple blossoms add color to the grass in the late summer, as does the succulent glasswort with its autumn red. The attractive but aggressive reed grass Phragmites flourishes on the edge of the marsh where fresh ground water meets the sea edge and is a mute reminder of where the wetland was disturbed and filled in. The oak trees line the original edge of the marsh which used to extend back another 100 yards.

6. ANIMATED SHORELINE



At low tide fiddler crabs can often be seen on the sand, scrambling into the grasses or small burrows if disturbed. Air breathing "coffee bean" snails move up and down the marsh grass stalks with the tide and dragonflies rest from their insect-catching flights on sunny days.

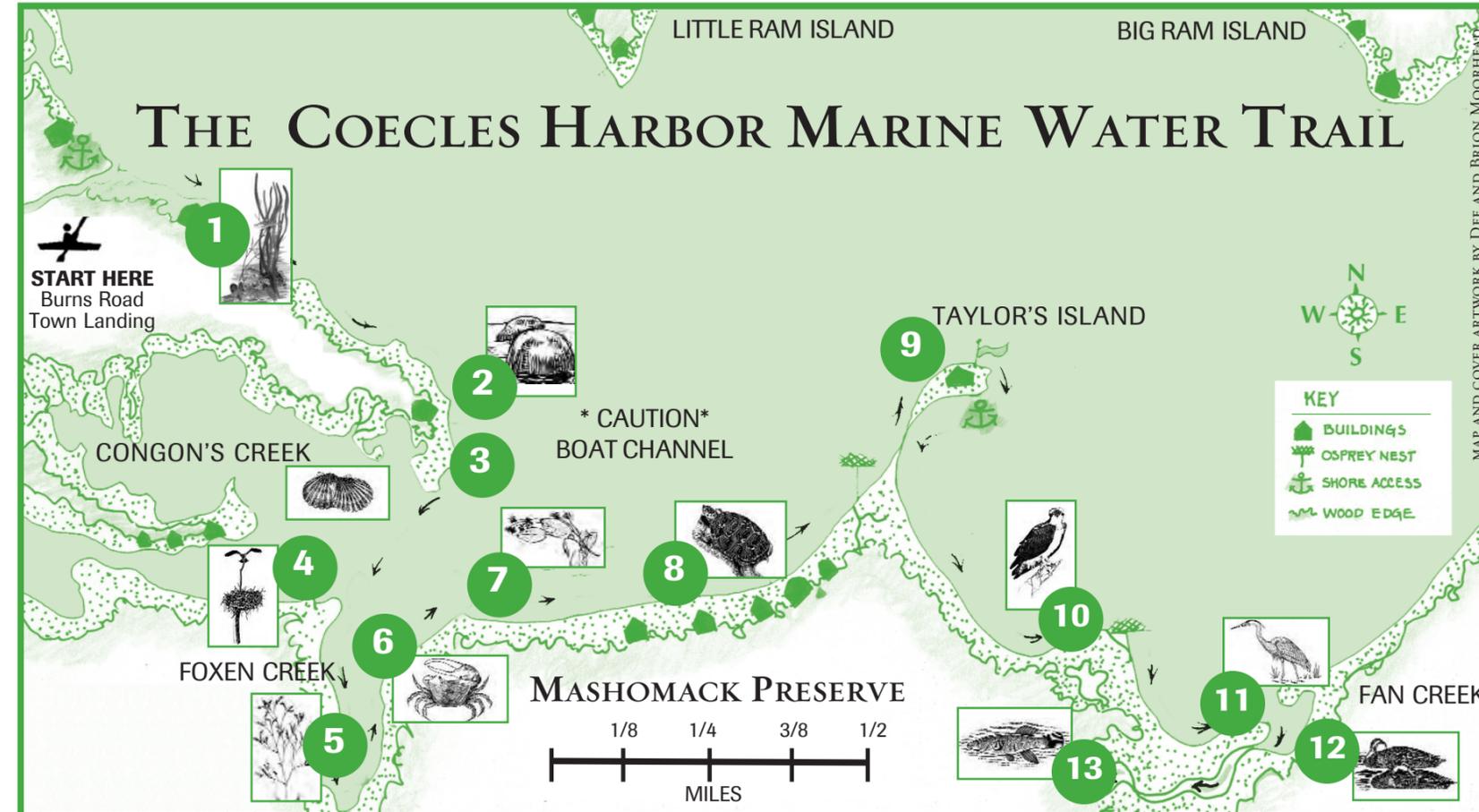
SAFETY NOTE: Do not get out of your boat in the marsh. In many areas the silty "quick mud" is very soft and you will sink deeply into it. Many of Mashomack's rare and endangered plants live along the marsh edge, and are extremely sensitive to any foot traffic.

7. PERFECT PERCH



Can you find an osprey perching on one of the dead trees? Resting and watching for a potential meal, the osprey prefer the visibility from these bare

branches. The surrounding maritime forest is a mix of oaks, hickories, sassafras and shad, all adapted to survive in the relatively harsh salt-water edge environment. Marsh elder and salt water edge shrub (look for their yellow or white flowers in the fall) live at the boundary between the marsh grass and trees. These hardy bushes are sometimes submerged by very high tides.



10. OSPREY OBSERVATIONS

Look for a large brown and white bird in this stick nest. Ospreys are now a common sight from March through September, having rebounded from a precipitous drop in the '60s and '70s due to use of the pesticide DDT. This fish-eating hawk breeds on SI and can be disturbed by close approaches. Ospreys make an anxious-sounding chirping if distressed, and will sometimes leave the nest, exposing their 3 - 4 eggs or chicks to sometimes fatal heat or cold. If an osprey appears distressed, especially if it flies off the nest, please leave the area.



9. TAYLOR'S ISLAND

Originally named Cedar Island, Taylor's Island is now a Shelter Island Town park. The unique house originally built at the turn of the 20th century, serves as a landmark for vessels navigating Coecles Harbor. The Island was bulkheaded and filled during the 1930's and the log cabin was expanded in the 1940s. Deeded to the town by S. Gregory Taylor, the Town took possession of the Island in 1998. This site is in the process of being placed on the National Register of Historic Places. You are invited to go ashore here to rest or have a picnic. There is no access to Mashomack Preserve via Taylor's Island. For additional views and news of Taylor's Island, visit www.taylorisland.org. See a brief history of Taylor's Island on the reverse.

8. HOUSES IN THE PRESERVE?



These dozen properties were purchased before TNC protected Mashomack in 1980. The homeowners have opted for several different types of shoreline hardening structures, including the traditional wooden seawall and the more natural looking stone rip rap. These structures slow erosion of upland areas but can accelerate the disappearance of sandy beaches in front of the wall. Nesting birds and diamondback terrapins may lose their habitat, along with plants that live along the water's edge.



Have fun, but please paddle safely!

DO

- ✓ Wear a life jacket.
- ✓ Know your paddling capabilities.
- ✓ Keep your eye on approaching weather.
- ✓ Bring drinking water.
- ✓ Carry out all trash you bring in or find.
- ✓ Be aware that larger boats may not see you.
- ✓ Respect private property, including trap buoys, boats and docks.

DON'T

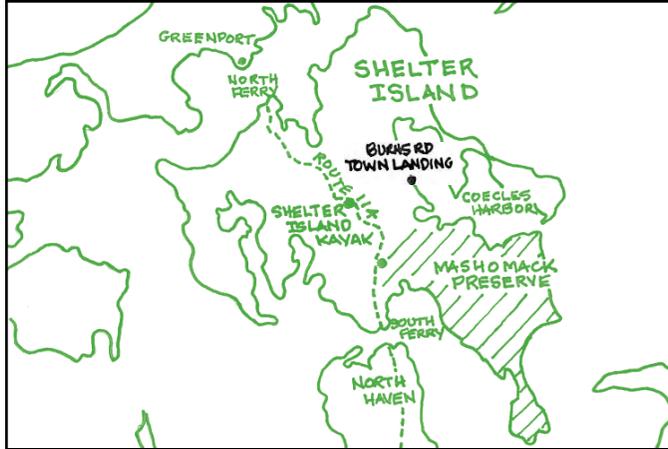
- ✓ Remove any wildlife or plant life.
- ✓ Combine alcohol and paddling.
- ✓ Forget how many small actions can have a big impact.

Shore access is permitted at Burns Road and Congdon Road town landings and Taylor's Island only.

NOTE: Kayaking and canoeing are inherently dangerous sports. The Nature Conservancy, Shelter Island Kayak, Inc. and the Town of Shelter Island make no representations, warranties, or guarantees, explicit or implied, about the safety or condition of the Coecles Harbor Marine Water Trail. All users of this Water Trail do so at their own risk.

rev - 5/06

The Coecles Harbor Marine Water Trail begins at the east end of Burns Road, Shelter Island, NY.



The Water Trail is a joint project of:

The Nature Conservancy
Shelter Island Kayak, Inc.
Town of Shelter Island, NY.



SAVING THE LAST GREAT PLACES ON EARTH

Mashomack Preserve
79 So. Ferry Rd, Shelter Island, NY 11964
631-749-1001 | www.nature.org

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and water they need to survive.



Tours and Rentals
631-749-1990 | www.kayaksi.com



TOWN OF SHELTER ISLAND

Emergency 911
Police 631-749-0600
Town Hall 631-749-0291
www.shelterislandtown.us



THE COECLES HARBOR MARINE WATER TRAIL

- an interpretative paddling experience -

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