
Marine Animal Stranding Weekend



Friday, November 13-15, 2009

Special Lectures & Workshops on Data Collection

Beach Patrols in Search of Stranded Turtles and other Marine Animals

Seal & Seabird Cruise into Wellfleet Harbor

Every year in the month of November sea turtles that have lingered in Cape Cod Bay succumb to the dropping water temperatures, become cold-stunned, and wash ashore on bayside beaches. For over 20 years, the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary has been involved with the rescue of these endangered turtles and with the help of a cadre of local volunteers our response and success rates of saving these rare marine turtles have soared.

This is also the time of year when other marine animals can be found stranded on local beaches. Torpedo rays, ocean sunfish, and coastal and pelagic birds are among the wildlife we may encounter. Please note that it is most likely that these particular species will not be alive if found. However, we can gain a lot of insight into their natural history and biology by collecting baseline data on these individuals, and possibly performing necropsies (animal autopsies) on them.

Mass Audubon's Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary invites you to take part in a special weekend focusing on the natural history, biology, and rescue of these marine animals.

While we can never predict in advance when or if sea turtles

and other marine animals will strand, our weekend is scheduled during peak time according to past records. Ultimately wind and weather conditions will determine whether the animals are washed ashore, but this weekend is designed for participants to get a "hands-on" perspective of rescue and rehabilitation efforts by getting involved with patrolling the beaches in search of stranded turtles, collecting baseline data on stranded animals, and performing necropsies on deceased individuals. Through this involvement, scheduled lectures, and a seal and seabird cruise into Wellfleet Harbor, participants will walk-away with an in-depth introduction to the natural history of sea turtles and other local marine animals.

The cost for the weekend is \$220 for Mass Audubon members and \$245 for non-members. Accommodations in the sanctuary's dormitory may be available for an additional fee. Meals are not included (except for dinner on the first night and lunch on the last day). Registration is required.

For more information or to register please call the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary at 508-349-2615 or email wellfleet@massaudubon.org

Marine Animal Strandings: A Cape Cod Field School

November 13–15, 2009

- Fri., November 13** 3:30 p.m. **Arrival, Welcome and Introductions**
- 5 p.m. **Group Dinner** at Local Restaurant
- 6:30 p.m. **Lecture:** Sea Turtle Biology (with shells, specimens and slides)
- 8 p.m. **Night Patrol:** Group will be split up and assigned a leader to search beaches for cold-stunned sea turtles. Ending time determined by whether or not turtles are found.
- Sat., November 14** 8–10:30 a.m. **Beach Patrol:** In search of cold-stunned sea turtles, stranded ocean sunfish, torpedo rays, marine mammals, sea ducks, et cetera. Winter beach ecology covered as well.
- 10:30–11 a.m. **Lab Work:** Introduction to processing stranded sea turtles
- 11–11:30 a.m. **Lunch break:** Bring a brown bag lunch
- 12–2:30 p.m. **Seal & Seabird Cruise**
Boat trip aboard the Naviator into Wellfleet Harbor and along Great Island and Billingsgate Shoal in search of grey seals and wintering seabirds and sea ducks.
- 4–6 p.m. **Lab Work:** Necropsy and/or processing stranded animals
- 9 p.m. **Night Patrol** (as described on Friday night)
- Sun., November 15** 9–11:30 a.m. **Beach Patrol** (as described on Saturday morning)
- 11:30 a.m.–1 p.m. **Lab Work:** Necropsy and/or processing stranded animals
Introduction to processing stranded sea turtles
- 1–2:30 p.m. **Group Lunch** (provided) & **Wrap-up**
- 3 p.m. **Goodbyes.** Thanks for coming!

Please Note: All activities meet at Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary. Due to the unpredictable nature of wildlife strandings, this schedule is *very tentative*, timings of activities are approximate, and changes will most likely be made to accommodate weather and wildlife strandings/sightings. Instructors will make participants aware of any changes; however, participants will also be responsible for touching base with instructors to confirm schedule. For all outdoor activities dress very warmly in layers of clothing, bring binoculars and a flashlight (for the optional night patrol).

*Shared housing may be available in the Sanctuary's dormitory for an additional fee. Please contact Education Coordinator Melissa Lowe at mlope@massaudubon.org or 508-349-2615 for details.