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# MORDECAI MATTERS

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September 2000

## August 20<sup>th</sup> Mordecai Discussion A Success

Stokes Carrigan

*Vice Commodore, Little Egg Harbor Yacht Club*

We wish to express our sincerest thanks and appreciation to the many of you who attended the public discussion on August 20<sup>th</sup> at Little Egg Harbor Yacht Club. The topic was "Erosion and Shorebird Wildlife on Mordecai Island," featuring Dr. Stewart Farrell and Steve Evert of the Richard Stockton Coastal Research Center.

Saving Mordecai is a process of casting many nets. Several positive developments have resulted from the presentation, but as Dr. Stewart Farrell cautioned us, getting results can be a slow process. 'Diligence' and 'Patience' are our call words.

I opened the presentation with a pictorial tour of Mordecai. John Walton described how he and John Swendeman installed 96 stakes on Mordecai in October 1999 and then observed in July 2000 the extent of erosion during the past winter. We were shocked that on average, four feet of the western edge washed away last winter!

Steve Evert described Mordecai as a salt marsh island with an abundant diversity of habitats, including open marsh, salt ponds, exposed mud flats, shrub dominated areas, shallow water and eel grass. The shore birds, wading birds, raptors and wildfowl observed this past Spring on Mordecai include: the Great Blue Heron, Little Blue Heron, Great (American) Egret, Snowy Egret, Black-Crowned Night Heron\*, American Bittern\*\*, Sandpipers (Semipalmated & Least), Willets, Dunlins, Black-Bellied Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Glossy Ibis, American Oystercatcher, Black Skimmers\*, Gulls and Terns (Laughing, Black-back & Herring), Waterfowl and Diamond Black Terrapins.

\* Endangered species (NJDEP)

\*\* Threatened species (NJDEP)

Steve also cataloged the finfish and crustaceans observed by a marine science class in the *(Continued on reverse side)*



An American (Great) Egret fishing for prey in the shallow water habitat surrounding Mordecai Island, June 2000.

## Beach Haven Borough Adopts Resolution to Support Efforts to Save Mordecai

Bill Pilling

*Co-Chair, LEHYC Environmental Protection Committee*

At the Board of Commissioners meeting on August 28, 2000, Mayor Debbie Whitcraft introduced the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of the Borough of Beach Haven joins in the commitment of LEHYC to stabilize erosion on Mordecai and to preserve and protect its precious marine habitat, shorebirds, and wildlife and recommends to all interested persons, including governmental bodies, that funding be made available for such a project.

The resolution passed by a unanimous vote. We believe that this resolution will demonstrate local community support for this project. Copies of this resolution will be sent to our local federal and state legislators, as well as to officials at the Army Corps of Engineers and the New Jersey DEP. We thank Mayor Whitcraft and Commissioner Anderson for attending the presentation on Mordecai and their leadership in introducing this resolution.

**August 20<sup>th</sup> Presentation A Success** *(Continued)*  
shallow water eel grass beds. Who would have thought that Mordecai was harboring Florida pompano and grouper?

Dr. Stewart Farrell described the alarming progression of erosion on the western edge of Mordecai, based on NJDEP Tidelands aerial photos, dated 1971, 1977, 1986 and 1997. These maps show the cut in the northern part of Mordecai was firmly established between 1977 and 1986. Stew then described the variation in the north, middle and south shore profiles of the bay bottom along the western edge of the Island. The middle shore profile drops off more steeply and is the area of greatest erosion. Stew concluded his remarks by taking many provocative questions from the audience.

Bill Pilling ended the discussion with a description of the actions taken since 1998 to preserve Mordecai. He asked for local community support and involvement for this worthwhile project. Unless we respect and preserve Mordecai, it will be buried by the bay!

## Take the Mordecai Quiz

**Bill Pilling**

*Co-Chair, LEHYC Environmental Protection Committee*

Ruth Strong, a local resident and businesswoman, offered to arrange for a message on Mordecai to be placed on the TV monitors at various local commercial establishments. This is what you might see. Can *you* answer these questions?

### TAKE THE MODECAI QUIZ

On Mordecai Island or in its shallow waters, you might see (*True or False?*):

1. Threatened birds
2. Tropical fish
3. Severe Erosion

**Answers:** All true – The Black-crowned Night Heron, American Bittern (endangered), Black Skimmers are threatened species observed on Mordecai. Tropical fish are occasionally transported north in the Gulf Stream as very small larvae. The western edge of the Island is eroding fast!!

## Beneficial Use of Dredge Spoil

**Bill Pilling**

*Co-Chair, LEHYC Environmental Protection Committee*

Debbie Whitcraft, Mayor of Beach Haven, brought us good news. In response to complaints, the Army Corps of Engineers is conducting a survey of the channel opposite Mordecai to determine if it requires dredging.

We contacted the people responsible for this project at the Army Corps and NJDEP, regarding the beneficial use of dredge spoils on Mordecai. Mr. Gene Keller, Supervising Environmental Specialist, Division of Engineering & Construction, promised he would take a look at Mordecai as a possible dredge disposal site, but cautioned that there might not be funds available this year. He mentioned, as possible ways to employ dredge spoils, the use of a geo tube or a dyke to hold the spoils. We understand that Congressman Jim Saxton has made an inquiry to the Army Corps about use of dredge spoils on Mordecai.

## Now Is the Time To Write Congressman Jim Saxton

**Bill Pilling & John Cranmer**

*Co-Chairs, LEHYC Environmental Protection Committee*

Saxton is our man! Please take a moment to write to Congressman Jim Saxton to ask for his help. Here is what you can say: "Please continue to follow-up with the Army Corps of Engineers to inquire about using dredge spoils in a beneficial manner on Mordecai Island, Beach Haven, NJ, and what other measures might be taken to mitigate severe erosion on Mordecai." Correspondence should be addressed to The Honorable Jim Saxton, 339 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515. Phone: (202) 225-4765. See the sample letter attached for this purpose. In lieu of a letter, you can log on to his web site to send e-mail. His web site is: <http://www.house.gov/saxton/>

**Please send any name or address updates or comments to the attention of William Pilling, 2600 One Commerce Square, Philadelphia, PA 19103. Telephone: 215-564-8079  
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