

# Mordecai Matters



## 2005 Tentative Calendar

- Saturday, April 2: Trustee and Committee Meeting: 7:30 PM, Molly Allison Sailing Center
- Saturday, April 23 10 AM: Mordecai Island Clean-Up in conjunction with ALO, LEHYC dock.
- Saturday, May 21: Spring Erosion Measurement: 12:30 PM, LEHYC dock
- Thursday, June 2: Trustee and Committee Meeting: 7:30 PM, Molly Allison Sailing Center.
- July TBA: Cocktail Party Fundraiser, LEHYC
- August TBA—Annual Meeting: 3 PM, Coast Guard Station.
- Friday, October 1: Trustee and Committee Meeting, Molly Allison Sailing Center.

## Did you Know?

Mordecai Island is home to one of the largest colonies of endangered breeding Black Skimmers on the Eastern seaboard.

## President's Update: the Work Goes On

The past several months have been very productive to our efforts. Grant writers for the Land Trust have filed an application to secure funding for a restoration project specific to the southwestern portion of Mordecai (see page 2). During the same time period, we filed another application with the NJ Audubon Society to be designated as a New Jersey Important Bird and Birding Area. (IBBA). At our Board of Trustees meeting on Oct 1, we amended our by-laws and then expanded our board of trustees to a total of 21 from the previous 7. At the same time we initiated a committee structure in order to spread out the responsibilities and specific tasks that had for-

mally been performed by just a few people. We have done a great deal of research on finding alternative building materials for our breakwater structure and, hopefully, we can begin to get reasonable costs estimates for the project.

Yes, we have been busy and we appreciate the help of all those who have volunteered on our project. We will need more help going forward, and the Southwest Mordecai Eco-Restoration will require a 50% matching funds from local sources. Please keep Mordecai in your hearts and minds as we approach year end. Thanks for your continued support.

Richard G. Oelkers

## Audubon IBBA Application in the Works

This September, Mordecai applied to be designated as an Important Bird and Birding Area by the New Jersey Audubon Association. The application, if accepted, would classify Mordecai as a unique site.

The New Jersey Audubon Society is in the process of choosing IBA sites; Mordecai could possibly be one of the first in the state listed as an IBA (Important Bird Area).

The IBA program started as a global initiative to save habitat for birds and other wildlife. The program's success spread to North America in 1995 and has been administered by the American Bird Conservancy and the National Audubon Society. There are now IBA programs in 46 states that have identified hundreds of important ar-

reas, protected tens of thousands of acres of habitat, and raised public awareness about the value of habitat for birds and other wildlife.

In addition, the IBA Program has led the way in forming productive partnerships of each state's conservation and birding communities. The IBA program has brought together the top ornithologists, wildlife agencies, environmental groups, and others around a common cause.

In New York, the criteria for identifying Important Bird Areas have been adopted into law, making habitat protection a priority on potentially millions of acres of state-owned lands. In Pennsylvania, the National Audubon was recognized as the



(Continued on page 3)

## Trust Applies for Grant to Restore Marsh Habitat

Mordecai Land Trust grant writers, Jeanne Runne and John Cranmer, have filed an application with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for a community grant to fund a biological restoration project specific to the southwest portion of the island. The amount sought is \$38,803, which is 50% of the estimated project cost of \$79,606 based on a 1-for-1 non-federal cost share.

The southern part of the island has suffered severe erosion since 1930 and won't be protected by the Army Corps project now in planning. In addition, this is an opportunity for the Trust to try biological means to restore marsh habitat because of the shallower depth of water in this area.

This Southwest Mordecai Ecosystem Restoration Project ("SWMER"), as described in the grant application, is for "restoration and biostabilization of areas along the southwestern coast of Mordecai Island; monitoring and measurement of Mordecai through aerial surveys; replacing and installing new stakes; placement of stone markers and related community out-

reach efforts."

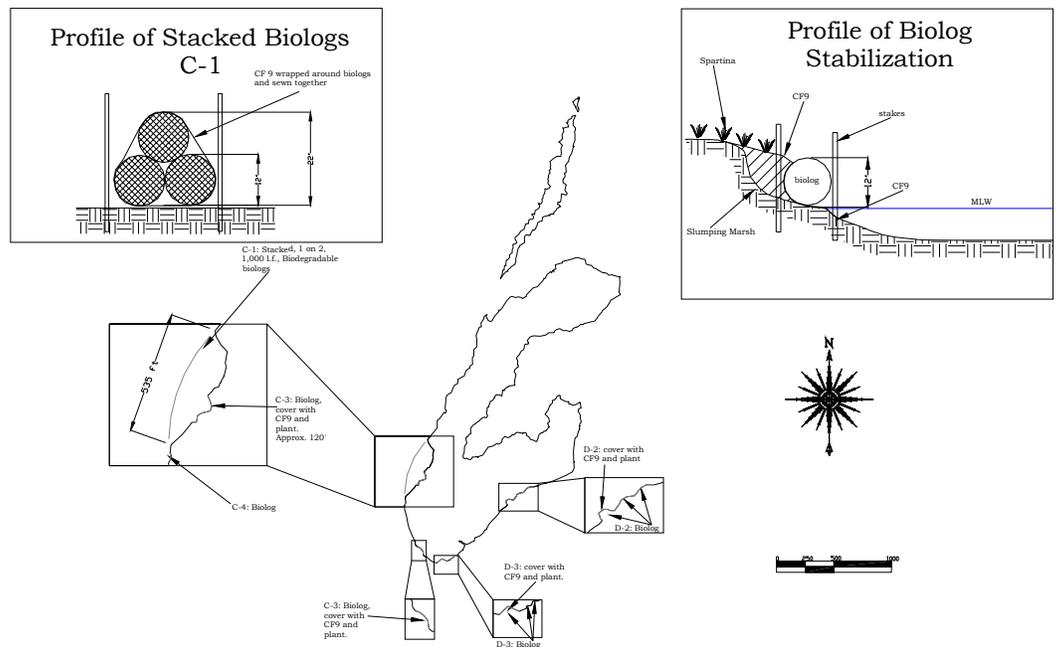
In plain language, this means that we will attempt to restore several small sections of the island, including a 500-foot area located on the southwest shore of Mordecai designated on the accompanying map as C-1, by installing a series of stacked biologs anchored by stakes and netting. These logs, which are made of biodegradable materials (coconut fiber), have proven effective in other projects in New Jersey and should have no long term environmental impact other than desired restoration of the marsh habitat.

In addition to the careful placement of the biologs, we intend to plant spartina grass to reduce the harmful effects of waves.

The grant will also provide funds for desperately needed aerial surveys and resetting the stakes we use to measure erosion. This project is very important and it is our sincere hope that our ideas might be considered as an acceptable solution to help other sedge islands in New Jersey.



*"... this is an opportunity for the Trust to try biological means to restore marsh habitat because of the shallower depth of water in this area."*



## A BRIDGE TO WHERE?

### *Records shows the island was slated for development.*

Sometimes a rumor turns out to be true, even if it is over a half century later. When I was summering in Beach Haven during the 1950's I had heard there were "talks" and "plans" to develop Mordecai Island. In writing the history of Mordecai I referred to them, but never had any real proof.

While doing research recently on another subject I discovered five sets of 1952 plans by architect George Daub of Delancey Place, Philadelphia (though his seal reads Barnegat City) for the development of the Beach Haven Lagoons and the Whittaker home ("Sunshine Point"). Imagine being able today to configure lagoons most any way one wanted; but this is what was done back then.

Beach Haven Lagoons became known as Webster Lagoons, and the Whittaker home on the northern point South of Mordecai still stands (though not for long) with three other homes on "Sunshine Point," all located on a private shell drive.

The most striking thing on all of these

plans was a "future bridge to Mordecai" leading from the end of Virginia Avenue to Mordecai Island! Virginia Avenue is a short street veering right as one heads north on Leeward Avenue along the bayfront.

Our lives would be so different today if Mordecai was full of homes and a bridge ran from Virginia Ave. to the Southern end of the island. Gone would be the pastoral view we enjoy today, the birds, the sea creatures, and our easy boating access through the southern end of Liberty Thorougfare. A very scary thought for all of us who care about Mordecai Island and its future.

Luckily for Beach Haven this 1952 plan for a bridge to Mordecai Island was never carried out. Why it was not may be a subject for another article, that is, if I ever figure it all out . . .

Gretchen F. Coyle



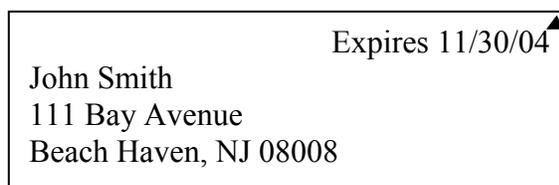
*“Our lives would be so different today if Mordecai was full of homes and a bridge ran from Virginia Ave. to the Southern end of the island.”*

*(AUDUBON Continued from page 1)*

1997 Conservation Organization of the Year by the Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation for its IBBA Program achievements. The Trust was encouraged by the New Jersey Audubon Society to apply because Mordecai's high concentration of threatened and endangered species. The drawback is its lack of accessibility. Whether we are nominated or rejected, we hope to strengthen our relationship with the Society and continue our conservation efforts of protecting our diverse avian population and the biodiversity of our unique habitat.

### Don't Know When Your Membership Expires?

The expiration date appears on your mailing label. Use the enclosed



envelope to renew or become a member today!

The Trust is a nonprofit Section 501(c)(3) organization.

INFORMATION FILED WITH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL CONCERNING THIS CHARITABLE SOLICITATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF



Address Correction Required

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**We're on the web! [Mordecaimatters.org](http://Mordecaimatters.org)**

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## Vandals Deface Display

One night in mid September, someone maliciously defaced one of our interpretive displays on Essex Avenue. A neighbor reported to the police that the sign was mangled, torn from its mounting brackets and deliberately tossed into the Bay. Although the Beach Haven Borough retrieved the sign, it was damaged beyond repair and must be replaced.

These signs are for the education and enjoyment of island residents and visitors. Please keep a watchful eye for those who wish to deface and vandalize our displays. Vandalism is just another form of terrorism. Vandals are engaging in criminal behavior that restricts the enjoyment of our freedoms. Please report any problems to the police or to Borough officials.



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***Not just for the birds.*** *Diamond back terrapins are year round residents of Mordecai, hibernating in the winter in water or in muddy areas. The only naturally occurring reptiles of the coastal marsh, they can be seen warming themselves on sunny days or swimming near the island as they search for fish, insects, mollusks, and crustaceans.*

*Terrapins are sometimes visible from the street ends facing Mordecai, their noses peeking out of the water as they come up for air. More information is available on one of the interpretive displays on West Avenue.*