

# Mordecai Matters



## 2005 Summer/Fall Events

- Friday, June 3 – Mordecai Living Museum: 1–2:45 PM, Beach Haven School, multipurpose room.
- Sunday, July 10 – Garden Tour and Cocktail Party Fundraiser: Beach Haven & LEHYC.
- Sunday, August 28 – Annual Meeting: 3 PM, Coast Guard Station.
- Saturday, September 17 – Fall clean-up, 9:30 AM.
- Saturday, October 8 – Trustee and Committee Meeting, 11 AM, Molly Allison Sailing Center.

## SKIMMER BEACH UPDATE

Despite concerns about the black skimmer population on Mordecai after the highest tide of the year on July 21st, a healthy count of 350 nests and 80 with chicks was observed after the storm by Dr. Joanna Burger from Rutgers University.

## President's Update: A Time of Rebirth

Summer on Mordecai Island is a time of rebirth and regeneration. The island grasses are green and life is present all over and around the Island. Small fish are abundant in the eel grass beds and soon will be full size fluke, weak fish and bass.

One morning two weeks ago, I noticed some individuals walking on the island. When I ran my boat to where they put ashore to verify their business, the visitors were Dr. Joanna Burger of Rutgers University and Fred Lesser of Wells Mills County Park. They were on assignment to count birds and nests on Mordecai. They counted “500 Black Skimmers and 357 nests. By actual

count, most were eggs but up to 50 were hatched and were a week or less old.” Yes, in spite of continued erosion, Mordecai is experiencing a population explosion.

Last week John Walton and I met with Tom Virzi, a Rutgers University doctoral candidate, who is writing his dissertation on the breeding, ecology, and reproductive success of American Oystercatchers inhabiting New Jersey (see article on page three). Mr. Virzi has found a strong correlation between nesting success and the level of human disturbance, presence of mammalian predators and other environmental factors. Mordecai is a special place and

*(Continued on page 2)*

You are invited to attend

## THE MORDECAI LAND TRUST ANNUAL MEETING & PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Sunday, August 28th, 2005, 3:00 to 4:30 PM  
Beach Haven Emergency Operation Center  
(formerly the Coast Guard Station)

West & Pelham Avenues

- ✓ Presentation by Tom Virzi  
*American Oystercatchers Inhabiting New Jersey*
- ✓ Update of Planned Events
- ✓ Annual Business Meeting

*(PRESIDENT'S UPDATE Continued from page 1)*

*“Mordecai is a special place and much of the success of our bird hatching is directly related to the lack of humans and mammal predators, such as raccoons and foxes.”*

much of the success of our bird hatchings is directly related to the lack of humans and mammal predators, such as raccoons and fox.

In early June the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes at the Beach Haven elementary school studied the ecology of Mordecai. These children wrote papers and made displays about flora, fauna, sea life and avian life on the island. It was amazing how scholarly their conclusions were considering their young ages.

The “Birds Eye View Garden Tour” in July was a great success. 12 homeowners opened their gardens to our supporters and the event was a treat for all who attended.

The next event on our calendar is our Annual meeting on August 28<sup>th</sup>

at 3 PM. As in the past, the meeting will take place at the old Coast Guard Station in Beach Haven, which now should be referred to by its proper name, the Beach Haven Emergency Operation Center. Attendees to this meeting will hear a captivating presentation by Tom Virzi.

We sincerely hope you will attend and learn about what is happening about, on, and around Mordecai.

Richard G. Oelkers  
President



*Above, Brandon and Corey with presentations; below, Land Trust members and 4th graders team up for “Mordecai Jeopardy”;* to right, KK and Annabel leading the game.



## Trust Generates A New Generation of Nature Lovers

On Friday, June 3rd, members of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes at Beach Haven School hosted an impressive “Living Museum” that featured the flora and fauna of Mordecai Island and other LBI ecological treasures. School Principal Pat Daggy and science teacher Deborah Harkness coordinated the program with English teacher Marjie Carnavale.

Maps of Mordecai and posters of bird, fish and plant species were abundant. But best of all was the kids’ enthusiasm when they displayed their new knowledge and projects to schoolmates and visiting adults and engaged them in related games and activities.

Guests at the July 10<sup>th</sup> cocktail party following the Mordecai Garden

Tour had a chance to see (and play) some of the best entries. After a round of “Mordecai Jeopardy” hosted by Annabel Maschal and KK Hager, participants will never confuse eel grass with spartina again. And Corey McGlynn was happy to tell listeners anything they wanted to know about Mordecai’s history, birdlife and erosion rates.

The “Living Museum” was the first project of Mordecai Land Trust’s educational outreach program.



## Guest Speaker to Detail Bird Nesting Success

Our Annual Meeting guest speaker this year will be Tom Virzi. Mr. Virzi is in the final phase of his PhD from Rutgers University, Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Natural Resources.

In 2004 Mr. Virzi completed a one year pilot study, which was conducted at Island Beach State Park and the Sedge Island Marine Conservation Zone in Barnegat Bay. He recently finished his first year of a two year study on the American Oystercatcher that will be used for his PhD dissertation. He is particularly interested in two additional areas: the Holgate Division of the Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge and the Stone Harbor Point Bird Sanctuary.

Tom's dissertation is a study of

the breeding ecology and reproductive success of American Oystercatchers inhabiting New Jersey. He is looking for a correlation of nesting success where there is a low level of human disturbance, and little presence of mammalian predators.

At a recent visit to Mordecai Island, Mr. Virzi said, "I have found some evidence supporting my hypotheses on Mordecai Island because of its unique location." Mr. Virzi is an enthusiastic speaker and his slides and information on Oystercatchers and Black Skimmers will be of interest to all attendees. After the presentation, the Trust will give an update of planned projects and elect our outside trustees.



*New Jersey residents: above, the Black Skimmer and below, the American Oystercatcher.*



## Bird's Eye View Garden Tour Exceeds Expectations

Despite the heat wave that gripped LBI on July 10th, and the still air and bright sunshine that accompanied it, over 200 visitors toured 12 Beach Haven gardens and attended The Bird's Eye View cocktail party at Little Egg Harbor Yacht Club.

Mordecai Land Trust's first garden tour exceeded our goals, both in tickets sold and financially, with income generated of over \$10,000.

90 plus volunteers worked the event, which culminated in an evening at LEHYC overlooking Mordecai, and where participants were witness to another beautiful sunset.

The trust thanks the many contributors who helped to make the event so successful, including the 16 restaurants who donated food, Rommel's Liquors, George and Karen Amann for tickets, and those who contributed baskets and prints for

auction and raffle items.

Most importantly, the Trust thanks the dedicated committee and volunteers who worked many hours organizing the tour, and our supporters, who continue to help us in our efforts to save Mordecai Island.



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

## Sweet Lemonade and Fossil Shells



*Above: Phillip Rubin presents his donation to MLT president Richard Oelkers. To right, Henry Thomas exchanges his contribution for a handbake.*

Two intrepid young men showed the true spirit of volunteerism last month in their efforts to help save Mordecai.

Phillip Rubin was one of the many generous donors at the Mordeci Garden Tour and Cocktail party on Sunday, July 10th. Phillip set up a lemonade stand on the tour route, selling the liquid gold to the very thirsty crowd in the 90 degree heat. This young entrepreneur awarded the Mordecai Land Trust a whopping \$50.

Meanwhile, seven year old Henry Thomas, grandson of MLT treasurer Marilyn Thomas, apparently has inherited some of his grandmother's accounting skills. Last month Henry collected shells on the beach, painted them, and sold them for \$.50 on his grandparents' lawn.



Telling potential buyers, "Would you like to buy a shell or a fossil for the benefit of Mordecai Land Trust? It's tax deductible to help save Mordecai Island," Henry collected \$23 to donate to the cause.

Thank you to Phillip and Henry for their hard work and much appreciated contributions.