

# Back Bay Breeze

B A C K B A Y R E S T O R A T I O N F O U N D A T I O N

**SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:**

- New Bridge Rd Cleanup  
February 19, 8:00am
- Membership Meeting on  
March 2, 7:00pm
- 2nd Annual Barn Blast,  
March 26th, 1:00pm

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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends of the Back Bay Restoration Foundation,

As many of you may have noticed, the BBRF has been a little quiet as of late. Do not despair, we are still going strong and are still focused on our mission. The foundation had several administrative changes since August which gave the board of directors the opportunity to make a much-needed organizational realignment. One of the pivotal changes was searching for a new Executive Director. As many realize, the ED runs the daily business of the organization and keeps the heart beating. We are very fortunate to now have Ms. Jonique Whitehurst as our new Executive Director for the Back Bay

Restoration Foundation and welcome her with much enthusiasm.



Jonique and her husband, Rob, at the oceanfront for the Neptune Festival.

The new changes to the BBRF yearly events schedule may be somewhat out of the norm but I will personally assure our members and friends, that we are even more excited about what we have planned in the future and what we can do for Back Bay. The website will get new additions, we will have more visibility to our members and friends, and we will strive to get our mem-

bership and volunteers even more involved in our projects and programs.

The main change that most of you will notice and possibly raise your eyebrow is the change of date for the Flyway Feast. At the December 2010 Board of Director's meeting, a motion was officially recognized to move the event to October for several reasons. At the January meeting, it was voted on and passed. The main reason for changing the date was that June appeared to be too hot and the membership had been asking for a more temperate event for years. The other reason was that the BBRF had three main events within...

(continued on page 6)

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Wow, what a couple of weeks! I am so excited about the opportunity to serve Back Bay Restoration Foundation and its members.

Everyone has been wonderful helping me get settled in and caught up with what is going on within the or-

ganization. A big THANK YOU!

It has been too long since a newsletter was sent out, so I made that my first priority. The Board of Directors and I want everyone to know how important they are to the success of BBRF and how thankful we

are for your continued support.

Thank you for your understanding during this transition and I hope you enjoy the wonderful articles and information provided for you in this issue.

Sincerely,  
Jonique Whitehurst



Jonique and Julie Barnes at the 2010 Flyway Feast

## UPCOMING MEMBERSHIP MEETING

*If nature were not beautiful, it would not be worth knowing, and if nature were not worth knowing, life would not be worth living” - Henri Poincare*

It’s that time again, folks! That’s right, it’s our membership meeting!

In the past, we have always had a speaker come and educate everyone on an environmental issue surrounding Back Bay. Don’t worry! We still plan on continuing with this tradition; however, this

meeting is going to be a bit different. There has been so many changes with Back Bay Restoration Foundation in the last 6 months that we feel it would serve our membership best to have an informational meeting this time around. Therefore, our upcoming meeting will cov-

er some of the changes that we as an organization are making to better serve Back Bay and our members.

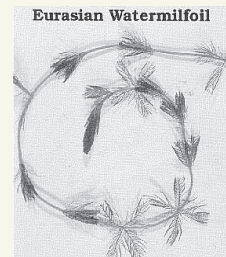
Please take the time to join us on March 2, 2011 at 7:00pm. The meeting will be held at the ABC EEC. Bring your ideas, questions and a friend!

## BEHOLD THE GRASS AND IT WAS GOOD BY TODD BARNES

In the past 5 years, Back Bay has experienced a rebound in health around its watershed due to many known and unknown factors. The decision to place Sandbridge residents on city water and

sewer, the acquisition of land surrounding the bay by the Fish and Wildlife Service creating a filtered drainage, and more environment-friendly practices by the local agricultural community have all been

partly responsible for the on-going recovery. However, once all of the human factors have been figured into the formula for recovery there remains the question, “How does Back Bay continue to proceed



Picture of Eurasian Water Milfoil

## BEYOND THE GRASS...CONTINUED

on its current path of wellness?"

The answer presented itself to me at this year's annual Sandbridge Volunteer Rescue Squad's Pig Picking. I was approached by two very concerned lot owners needing an answer as to why there was such an abundance of "Eurasian Milfoil" in the canal in front of their camp sites at the southern end of Sandbridge.....and how to wipe it as clean as Gandhi's driving record. After the initial shock of their request, and while explaining the gigantic importance of waterborne vegetation in the ecosystem, I found myself recounting the historical decline and rejuvenation of

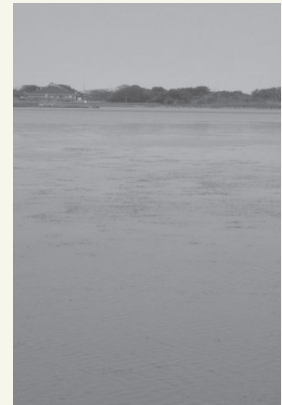


of Back Bay. The story of the bay's heyday, to its collapse, and now its recovery was told with as much local inspiration as I could muster. After much discussion and what must have appeared as a half hour long game of charades from any distant observer watching me, I felt that we may have gained two new converts. I readied myself for the tickertape pa-

rade that usually follows such a grand pontification and was asked, "So what kind of weed-killer can we put on the grass?" Thank goodness for the close proximity of the beer truck and a large cup from Sandbridge Realty or the shock from that question could have caused me to have fainted straight away. The importance of what they considered an eye sore and hindrance to their canals would be made this day or it would be time for me to hand in my president's badge.

The Eurasian milfoil is *considered* an invasive species by many since it is not native to these waters and Back Bay. No one knows exactly how it became established in the area but an educated theory would lead one along the lines of foreign shipping vessels flushing their bilges and the seeds making their way into the estuaries and sounds, much like phragmites is assumed to have come to the marshes. I have also heard accounts of exotic aquariums being dumped into ditches and canals that had the milfoil as part of the fish's habitat. This particular SAV (a term used for any Submerged Aquatic Vegetation) tends to carpet an area

with a somewhat dense curtain of lush, green vegetation below the wa-



ter and goes to seed in the late summer of the year showing tiny sprigs of seed pods just breaking the water's surface. Locals would simply call the vegetation "grass" and when it would spread across an expanse, it was dubbed a "grass slick" due to its ability to seemingly calm wave action to a slicked surface.

To the casual observer, milfoil seems to be the prevalent SAV in Back Bay these days, but it will become quite obvious upon closer investigation that there are numerous other native species just below the surface that have long been dormant from their ancestral home. Grasses like redhead grass, wild celery, eel grass, and sago were all once delectable grasses for the historical migratory waterfowl, fish, and shellfish of the bay. All of the native SAVs provided shelter for small invertebrates

## BEYOND THE GRASS...CONTINUED

which set the basis for the food chain. The shade that they provide cools the water and prevents algae and stagnation that could cover the surface and deplete oxygen levels for smaller fish and animals. But arguably one of the most important functions of the bay grasses is their ability to capture, filter, and hold suspended sediment in the bay's water column allowing photosynthesis to take place at deeper levels. This allows more grass to pollinate and grow. As the bay gets cleaner, the grass grows in deeper and deeper depths towards the center of the bay until the ecosystem is turned into a giant water filter. Most of us have some sort of filter installed on our taps or water pumps at home. The SAVs not only serve as food and shelter, but as a cleanser for the water.

As my captive audience at the Pig Picking inched closer and closer to the dark side of my speech, I finally decided to go straight for the kill. Thinking that I may be losing them with all of this talk about different grasses and filtration, I simply asked them if the two months that they spend at their vacation home was worth affecting the SAV seed bed that people, animals, fish, and birds rely on for the other ten months that they were absent? That's right, I went for and played on their conscience. Was killing a necessary and pivotal part of the local environment worth a little inconvenience when driving their boat out to the bay? I was going to tell them that baby seals and kittens lived on the grass but I didn't want to push my luck. By the time that my Nobel Peace Prize speech for environmental genius was complete, there were two more people that understood the

importance of the grasses in the bay, even if one of them may be considered invasive.

As the sun began to set in the western sky over Shipp's Bay, I raised my cup from the beer truck that had initially given me the courage to take on such an important debate, and saluted the Eurasian milfoil. I finished my good-byes and made my way back to the boat dock where I had arrived earlier. While making my way along the SAV-covered canal that visibly showed the Eurasian milfoil 'slicked' in the campground waterways, I swear that I heard the sound of tiny claws and fins applauding as to be saying, "Encore, Todd, encore...and thank you"..

## THE BLUE GOOSE EXPRESS NEEDS DRIVERS

With Spring and Summer fast approaching, it's time to start preparing for the tram's busy season.

We have a wonderful set of volunteers, but we need more! This is

an excellent opportunity for you to show the out-of-towners, and locals alike, the wonders of Back Bay Wildlife Refuge and False Cape State Park.

Interested individu-

als need to have a valid driver's license and an interest in wildlife/nature and/or history with a desire to learn!

Please call BBRF or send an email to [information@bbrf.com](mailto:information@bbrf.com)



## FALSE CAPE STATE PARK UPCOMING EVENTS

2/13/2011 & 3/13/2011

**1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Winter Wildlife Watch**

**Location:** Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge

Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and False Cape State Park present a wildlife watching tour on the Blue Goose Express Tram. Observe migrating ducks, geese, swans, and other wildlife that inhabit Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and False Cape State Park. Reservations are required. Call (757) 721-2412. The cost is \$8/adult; \$6/children & seniors. **Extra Event Fee Charged**



Picture from the False Cape State Park website.

03/25/2011 – 03/27/2011

**Wild Women Weekend**

**Location:** Little Island Park **No Children Please. Extra Event Fee Charged.**

Experience a weekend in the outdoors dedicated to women, ages 21 and up, and discover the natural and cultural history of False Cape State Park. Participate in nature walks, identify native plants with demonstrations on their uses for food and medicine, tracking, beachcombing, kayaking and more. The cost is \$200 per person and includes food, lodging, and educational materials. Event will run from 4 p.m. March 25 through noon on Sunday, March 27. To receive a brochure call the park at (757) 426-7128. Register by calling the park's reservation center at 1-800-933-PARK.

Contact information for False Cape State Park:

**Phone:** (757) 426-7128 **Email Address:** [falsecape@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:falsecape@dcr.virginia.gov)

## BBRF UPCOMING EVENTS

**M**ark your calendars! The New Bridge Road cleanup is here again and we need volunteers! We will be meeting at 2949 New Bridge Rd. at 8:00am on February 19. Coffee, donuts, and water will be provided. If you have any questions or would like to volunteer please call 757-721-7666 or email [jonique.whitehurst@bbrf.org](mailto:jonique.whitehurst@bbrf.org)

**B**reak out of those winter blues! Join us at the 2nd Annual BBRF Barn Blast on March 26th at Cedar Hall Farms! Food, beer, and music provided by multiple local bands. Presale tickets are available for \$35 or \$40 at the door. Must be 21. Call 757-721-7666, email [information@bbrf.org](mailto:information@bbrf.org), or visit [www.bbrf.org](http://www.bbrf.org) for more information.



WE'RE ON THE WEB  
WWW.BBRF.ORG



**B A C K B A Y  
R E S T O R A T I O N  
F O U N D A T I O N**

3022 New Bridge Rd  
Virginia Beach, VA 23456

Phone: 757-721-7666  
Fax: 757-721-7666  
E-mail: [information@bbrf.org](mailto:information@bbrf.org)  
ED E-mail: [jonique.whitehurst@bbrf.org](mailto:jonique.whitehurst@bbrf.org)

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**L E T T E R F R O M T H E P R E S I D E N T C O N T I N U E D**

3 months of each other: The Back Bay Forum, the Back Bay Barn Blast, and the Flyway Feast. It became too much of a logistical strain on the group and membership. Unfortunately, this year's forum was postponed because we were unable to place a new Executive Director into that position until January of this year. The Executive Director is instrumental and manages the planning and scheduling of the forum. The postpone-

ment of the forum was very hard for the BOD to accept but felt that we were only going to hold a first class event or nothing at all. The BBRF fully intends to have the Forum in March of 2012 and each year after that.

As it has for the last twenty five years, the foundation still remains focused on our mission for water quality, education, and advocacy with regards to Back Bay and the watershed. We look forward to

seeing and hearing from you soon.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Executive Director, we are honored to be part of your organization,

Sincerely,

Todd Barnes

Back Bay Restoration Foundation,  
President