

# Sound *UPDATE*

Newsletter of the Long Island Sound Study

FALL 2009

## Dolphin Diaries: Following the Dolphin Pod Around the Sound

By Kimberly Durham

Bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) are probably the most recognized species of cetaceans (whales, dolphins, and porpoises) in the world, found worldwide in tropical to cold-temperate waters. Bottlenose dolphins, which are known to live more than 50 years, can grow six to 12 feet in length. Their coloration varies from blue-gray to brown with white to cream colored sides and belly. There are two distinct types of bottlenose dolphins: coastal and offshore.

The coastal group, which is the type of dolphin sighted in the Sound in June, is generally shorter and slimmer than the offshore group. The coastal dolphins are often found in shallow, warm inshore waters of bays and rivers. The offshore dolphins are found in deep offshore waters of shelf edges and slopes and are often much larger and robust in body form. Coastal dolphins feed on a variety of fish and invertebrates while the offshore dolphins feed mainly on squid and small fish.



Noah Goldberg, SEATOW Western

**Bottlenose dolphins** (*Tursiops truncatus*) made a welcomed appearance in Long Island Sound this summer.

Historic sightings of dolphins and porpoises within the Long Island Sound can be dated back to pre-World War II times when pods of dolphins were a familiar sight to mariners and residents along the north shore of Long Island. Over the last few decades these sightings have become less frequent. Reports of cetaceans have been reduced to isolated individuals often compromised or stranded along the shoreline. The re-emergence of these marine mammals to the waters along the north shore of Long Island was highlighted this summer by the arrival of approximately 200 bottlenose dolphins to the waters of Cold Spring, Huntington, Northport, Hempstead, Oyster Bay, Smithtown and Rye, NY. Although the visit was short-lived, lasting less than a week, their presence captured the attention of many and brought to the forefront the beauty and challenges faced by Long Island Sound.

**Thursday, June 25, 2009 (8:20PM)** - The first report from the Suffolk County Police Department's Marine Bureau to the Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation's Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Stranding Hotline. The officers reported the presence of approximately 200 dolphins actively swimming within Cold Spring Harbor. The animals are described as gray and ranging in size between eight to 10 feet in length. Officers are advised to report the positive or negative presence of the animals the following morning.

**Friday, June 26, 2009 (9:30 AM)** - A call is received by the Huntington Bay Harbor Master reporting two large groups of dolphins actively swimming around the bay. The US Coast Guard Group from Eatons Neck,

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*Sound Update provides readers with news about the Sound and the Long Island Sound Study.*

## There are so many creatures in the Sound!

Long Island Sound is home to many amazing animals. The Sound provides crucial habitats that serve as nursery, feeding, and breeding grounds for lots of marine life. From dolphins to seahorses to sharks, this issue of *Sound Update* focuses on some of the more interesting residents of the Sound.

NY escorts Riverhead Foundation staff biologists Kimberly Durham and Jackie Callahan to the site where approximately 100 individuals are observed among scattered groupings. The species are identified as coastal bottlenose dolphins and the composition of the group is classified as a mixture of adults, juveniles, and calves. The dolphins are observed exhibiting a mixture of behaviors including lunge feeding, porpoising (leaping), breaching, and tail slapping. Although several vessels and kayakers are present there is no harassment of the dolphins noted and no signs of distress exhibited by the animals.

**Saturday, June 27, 2009 (9:00 AM)** - Reports are received describing dolphins travelling towards City Island and North Hempstead Bay. Officers with the Town of North Hempstead Bay, NY Constable offer their resources as a platform for the Riverhead Foundation to continue documentation of the dolphins. The presence of law enforcement is also deemed necessary to ensure a safe boundary between the recreational watercraft interested in a first hand glimpse of the dolphins and the scattered groupings of dolphins. Documentation of calves approximately one month in age excites the biologists as they listen to the dolphins vocalize in association with breaching, tail slapping and spy hopping (rises and holds position partially out of the water) behaviors.

**Saturday, June 27th – Wednesday, July 1** - Scattered sightings of isolated groupings of the dolphins continue throughout the weekend followed by the report of a large group of animals heading in a westerly direction along the south shore of Long Island. Although sightings of dolphins within Long Island Sound have decreased over the course of the summer, dolphins have continued to be reported along the south shore of Long Island in large pods.

*Durham is the Rescue Program Director for the Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation in Riverhead, NY.*

## The Sound's Seals and Sea Turtles

By Janelle Schuh

Mystic Aquarium, the founding member of the Northeast Region Stranding Network, has responded to more than 900 live and dead marine mammal and sea turtle stranding calls since 1973. The efforts of Mystic Aquarium's Marine Mammal & Sea Turtle Stranding Program are focused along the coasts of Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Fishers Island, NY.

The program serves four types of seals in Long Island Sound. The regional seals that make the Sound their home from September through June—sometimes never leaving at all—are harbor (*Phoca vitulina*) and gray seals (*Halichoerus grypus*). Since the mid 1990s, two species of ice seals—harp (*Phoca groenlandica*) and hooded seals (*Cystophora cristata*)—have been visiting the Sound from mid January to early May. These species are called ice seals because they are from Canada and areas near Greenland, where they spend most of their lives on ice flows.

Four types of sea turtles are also found in Long Island Sound from July through December: leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), green (*Chelonia mydas*) and Kemp's Ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*). The majority of these sea turtles leave the area before the winter months, though at times, some do not. These animals are cold-blooded, which means the sea turtles' body temperature changes with the ambient temperature in which they are living. This causes sea turtles to be particularly vulnerable to the cold. As the water temperature declines, so does the sea turtles' body temperature,

therefore leaving it hypothermic and unable to swim and dive. As a result, the sea turtle will either strand on shore or will be found floating and unresponsive on the surface of the water, a condition known as cold stunning.

You can help protect the seals and sea turtles of Long Island Sound by reporting all sightings so that experts can keep track of these creatures. Experts can also assist if you think an animal is in danger. They can determine if the animal is in need of medical attention, needs to be moved from a populated area, or just needs time to rest. To learn more about the Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Stranding Program at the Mystic Aquarium, visit [www.nero.noaa.gov/prot%5Fres/stranding](http://www.nero.noaa.gov/prot%5Fres/stranding).

*Schuh is the stranding coordinator at Mystic Aquarium in Mystic, CT.*

### Did you know?

All marine mammals are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972. The Endangered Species Act of 1973 further protects sea turtles and whales that are endangered. It is illegal to touch, feed, disturb, harass, hunt, capture or kill marine mammals and sea turtles.

#### Why can't I feed wild dolphins?

Feeding of wild dolphins can not only jeopardize their health and decrease the dolphin's willingness to forage for food, but can also result in the dolphins losing their natural wariness of humans, which increases their risk of injury from boats and entanglement in fishing gear.

#### Why can't I swim with wild dolphins?

Harassment (or any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance that has the potential to injure or disturb a marine mammal) is illegal under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Swimming with wild dolphins may lead to harassment.

#### How can I responsibly and safely view wild dolphins?

Observe wild dolphins, porpoises, and seals from at least 50 yards and limit viewing time to no more than 30 minutes. Do not circle or entrap marine mammals between watercraft, or between watercraft and the shore. Avoid abrupt movements or loud noises around marine mammals and move away if behaviors are observed that indicate the animal is stressed. Lastly, avoid touching or swimming with wild marine mammals, even if they approach you.

#### How can I safely watch wild seals?

Stay at least 50 yards from all wild seals. If your presence causes increased vocalizations or shaking/body tremors or a resting animal to lift its head with eyes on you, then you are too close. Also remember that seals do not get cold, as they have a thick blubber layer. If a seal is shaking, do not put a blanket on the animal or attempt to place it in a warm car. Instead, call one of the numbers listed below.

**To report a marine mammal or sea turtle that may need help, please call Mystic Aquarium at 860-572-5955, ext 107 (CT) or the Riverhead Foundation at 631-369-9829 (NY).**



Tracy M. Brown

**Hooded seals** are one of the four species of seals that live in Long Island Sound.

# Are There Sharks in Long Island Sound?

By Dave Sigworth

Many people view Long Island Sound as somehow being disconnected or separate from the Atlantic Ocean ecosystem. This is most apparent when they discover what lives in the Sound: Seals in the winter? Wow! Dolphins sometimes and even the occasional whale? Holy cow! And sharks!? No way!

Indeed, much of the Atlantic's coastal marine population lives in the Sound as well, or at least visits from time to time. And that includes the apex predators, the sharks.

Let's start right at the top, with great white sharks (*Carcharodon carcharias*). A 10-foot great white turned up this August in a fish trap off of Black Point, R.I. From there, it wouldn't be far to swim through the Race (the Sound's eastern opening), so it's not unreasonable to think that great whites visit. Anecdotal sightings also abound of thresher (*Alopias vulpinus*), blue (*Prionace glauca*), mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) and even hammerhead sharks (*Sphyrnidae sphyra*) in the Sound, especially in the eastern end.

But those are just the guests. Four species of sharks are considered to be common in the Sound:

- Growing to lengths of up to 10 feet, **sand tiger sharks** (*Carcharias taurus*) are the largest native sharks. Sand tigers have several identifying characteristics. The two dorsal fins are close in size (on most sharks, the front dorsal fin is larger). Also, the narrow teeth of a sand tiger shark are visible all the time, not just when it bites. In many other species, such as reef and blue sharks, the teeth are somewhat out of view until the shark extends its jaws to bite.



Maritime Aquarium

**Smooth dogfish sharks** are often caught on the Norwalk Maritime Aquarium's public Marine Life Study Cruises on the Sound.

- **Brown sharks** (*Carcharhinus plumbeus*) are also called sandbar sharks. They can grow to about eight feet long. They're recognizable by their especially pronounced front dorsal fin and short rounded snout.

- **Smooth dogfish sharks** (*Mustelus canis*) are often called "sand sharks", which can cause confusion, when the Sound also hosts sand tiger sharks and sandbar sharks. Smooth dogfish may be the most common shark on the Atlantic coast. It's one of the Sound's two species of dogfish sharks – both are thin and sleek, with eyes that are high on the head and seem disproportionately large. Dogfish are so called dogfish because they often swim and aggressively hunt in large packs. Growing up to five feet long, they're bottom scavengers that tend to stay closer to shore.

- **Spiny dogfish sharks** (*Squalus acanthias*) have a sharp spine in front of each dorsal fin that helps to deter predators. The spines aren't venomous but are often coated with bacteria-rich mucus, so you do not want to get pricked. By several accounts, spiny dogfish are the world's most abundant, most studied and longest-lived shark, known to reach 40 years of age. They grow up to four feet long.

Finally, you may be wondering: with all of these sharks out there, will they bite us? The most recent authenticated shark attack in Long Island Sound occurred in 1961. It was a non-fatal incident, but always use caution around any shark. If you're swimming, get out of the water and report the sighting to your local beach authority.

*Sigworth is the publicist for The Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk, CT.*

## On the Web...

Learn more about each of these species and current research and management of sharks worldwide by visiting [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sharks](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sharks).

Jim Herity



**Sand tiger sharks** are one of the few shark species found in the Sound.

# The Long Island River Otter Project

By Mike Bottini

Are there river otters on Long Island, NY? The last study that attempted to answer that question was done by Paul Connor in the early 1960s as part of a broader survey inventorying all of the species of mammals found on Long Island. It did not find any evidence of otters here at that time.

The river otter (*Lontra canadensis*) was once common on Long Island, utilizing both freshwater and estuarine habitat to hunt for its main prey: fish. Several factors—unregulated trapping, habitat loss, and water pollution—caused a dramatic decline in otter populations over much of its range in North America, and local extirpations in many regions including Long Island. By 1900, otters were completely extirpated from 11 states and one Canadian province, as well as most of New York with the exception of remote areas in the Adirondacks.

The enactment of wildlife conservation laws and water pollution standards and the establishment of wildlife preserves have enabled many wildlife populations to recover, including the river otter. Since the 1980s, there has been an increase in the number of otter sightings and, unfortunately, the number of otter roadkills on Long Island.

In January 2008, with the support of the Peconic Baykeeper, an island-wide survey to document and map river otter “sign” (mainly their scat but in a few cases their tracks were noted) was initiated. Over January through March of 2008 and 2009, when otters are

actively seeking mates and regularly marking their territories with leaf scrapes, jelly-like scent secretions, and scat, over 150 potential otter ‘marking’ sites were surveyed. Evidence of otters was found at 30 sites on Long Island, including several tributaries of Oyster Bay, the Nissequogue River watershed, Arshamomaque Preserve in Southold, Mashomack Preserve on Shelter Island, the Grace Estate Preserve in East Hampton, the Little River in Southampton and the Forge River in Brookhaven.

River otters have very large home ranges, and these thirty sites most likely represent the ranges of less than a dozen otters, including three breeding pairs. Evidence of successful breeding was only documented on the north shore in the Long Island Sound watershed.

Initial results of the study indicate that the island is being slowly recolonized by otters, but much suitable habitat remains unoccupied due to the difficulty of otters to get there. Long Island is very densely developed at its western end, where young otters dispersing from robust populations in Westchester County and coastal Connecticut can reach the island. Mortality from motor vehicle collisions when otters leave the water to skirt around small culverts and dams also poses a formidable challenge.

Phase two of the project will explore management tools that can assist the recovery of this top-of-the-food-chain species here on Long Island. These include designing and installing wildlife-friendly culverts and providing ramps over dams to reduce roadkills, and fast-forwarding the island’s recolonization via a limited reintroduction effort at suitable sites on the south shore and in the Peconic estuary.

You can download a copy of the Long Island River Otter Project’s 2008 report and learn how to help with the survey by visiting [www.mikebottini.com](http://www.mikebottini.com).

*Bottini is a wildlife biologist for the Long Island River Otter Project.*

## What about river otters in Connecticut?

According to the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, although most Connecticut residents rarely have an opportunity to observe river otters (wild otters generally avoid contact with humans), the state’s river otter population is healthy and stable. For more information on CT populations, visit <http://www.ct.gov> and search for *river otters*.



Robert Sendlein

**River Otter** (*Lontra canadensis*) with a freshly caught Golden Shiner at St. John’s Pond, Cold Spring Harbor, NY.

## Is it a river otter or a mink?

Both river otters and minks are semi-aquatic members of the weasel family. Here are some tips to tell them apart:

### RIVER OTTER

**Body shape:** Torpedo-shaped bodies with short legs, a short snout and small, round ears.

**Body color:** Dark brown with a silver-brown underbelly.

**Weight/Length:** 15 to 25 lbs/3 to 4½ feet (from nose to tail).

**Tail:** Their thick, muscular tail comprises about one-third of their length.

### MINK

**Body shape:** Long bodies with short legs and small ears, but unlike the river otter their bodies are slim and they have a triangular, flat skull.

**Body color:** Dark brown fur, but have white spots on their chin and chest.

**Weight/Length:** 1½ to 3½ lbs/1 to 2 feet (from nose to tail).

**Tail:** Their furry, slender tail is less than one half the length of their body.

Larissa Graham



**Mink** (*Neovison vison*), like this one spotted on the Mill River in Stamford, CT, also use habitats around the Sound.

# Birds Along the Shores of Long Island Sound

By Patrick Comins

Birds are a key indicator of the overall environmental health of Long Island Sound. More than 400 species of birds have been recorded on the Sound or along its shores, and more than 125 species are considered residents, a testament to the abundance and diversity of high quality habitats that remain in this ecosystem. National Audubon Society has recognized more than 20 sites as Important Bird Areas (IBA) on Long Island Sound in Connecticut and New York, including the pristine tidal marshes of the Barn Island Wildlife Management Area, the barrier beach systems of Long and Pleasure Beaches in Stratford and Bridgeport, the marine Islands of Falkner and Great Gull Island, the tidal flats surrounding Menunketesuck Island in Westbrook, and the undeveloped lands that serve as migratory stopovers for hawks and songbirds at places like New Haven's Lighthouse Point Park.

Some of the key species for which Long Island Sound's habitats are important include:

- **Saltmarsh Sparrows** (*Ammodramus* spp.)– Up to 20 percent of the total population of this species, which is vulnerable to global extinction, nest in the marshes of Long Island Sound.
- **Piping Plovers** (*Charadrius melodus*)– Connecticut's beaches support over 30 nesting pairs of this federally threatened species.
- **Roseate Tern** (*Sterna dougallii*)– Falkner and Great Gull Islands support over 1,000 pairs of this federally endangered species.
- **Semipalmated Sandpiper** (*Calidris pusilla*)– Each year, tens of thousands of these migratory shorebirds, listed on Audubon's Watch List of species of high conservation priority, stop over to rest and refuel on our beaches, marshes, and intertidal flats on their long migratory journeys.



Patrick Comins

**Saltmarsh Sparrows** (*Ammodramus* spp.) nest in the marshes of the Sound.

## The Shorebird and Horseshoe Crab Connection

Every spring horseshoe crabs crawl the shores of Long Island Sound to breed, laying millions of eggs. These eggs serve as a crucial food source for some shorebirds.

Similar to shorebirds, we also rely on horseshoe crab populations to keep us healthy. Biomedical companies harvest the copper-based, blue blood from horseshoe crabs and use it to test for bacteria contamination on medical devices and injectable drugs. After the crabs are bled, they are returned to the water, alive.

Although horseshoes have been harvested for years to be used as bait in eel and whelk fisheries, it was not until 1998 that a management plan was developed for horseshoe crabs. Now, researchers collect data on horseshoe crabs to ensure that horseshoe crab (and shorebird) populations are sustainable.

If you are interesting in helping to monitor horseshoe crab or shorebird populations, visit the "Get Involved" link at [www.longislandsoundstudy.net](http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net).

Patrick Comins



**Piping plover** (*Charadrius melodus*) lays its eggs on the Sound's beaches.

We have had some tremendous successes with Long Island Sound birds such as the recovery of osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) from only eight active nests in 1970 to its current status as a common and widespread nester. But some species have declined precipitously including Greater Scaup (*Aythya marila*), which has declined by over 90 percent since the 1960s.

The birds of Long Island Sound are facing great challenges in the future. Changing climate and rising sea levels threaten our tidal marshes and barrier beaches. Some species that depend on these unique habitats, such as Least Terns (*Sternula antillarum*) and Saltmarsh Sparrows are already feeling the effects of increased flooding during nesting season, and our highly developed landscape provides no place for these habitats to shift as sea levels rise. Development pressures threaten undeveloped coastal lands, and though this pressure has eased somewhat during the recent economic downturn, the economy has also dried up funding needed to protect remaining key habitats.

Coastal areas also face increasing pressure from human recreational activities that can be detrimental to coastal birds. Beach-nesting birds and roosting migratory shorebirds are extremely vulnerable to human disturbances that cause them to waste valuable energy avoiding a perceived threat, and to abandon their nests with dire consequences for vulnerable eggs or young. The trash humans leave behind benefits predators such as gulls, raccoons, rats, and cats that feed on eggs and young birds, wreaking havoc on ground nesting and migrant species. Taking your trash with you when you visit the Sound and keeping your cats inside will help to lessen these impacts.

To ensure that Long Island Sound remains an important resource for both people and birds for generations to come, we must act now to inventory key avian resources, step up investments in the acquisition and stewardship of key coastal sites, and develop strategies for adapting to changing sea levels. You can help by volunteering to inventory or monitor coastal birds, becoming an IBA stakeholder group, or speaking out in favor of increased funding for the Sound.

*Comins is the director of bird conservation for Audubon Connecticut.*

# The Northern Lined Seahorse

By Kimberly Petersen Manzo

One of the most unusual and fascinating fish, the seahorse, can be found inhabiting the waters of Long Island Sound. Only one species out of about 35 seahorse species found worldwide is native to the northeast, the temperate species the northern lined seahorse (*Hippocampus erectus*). This species is found from Nova Scotia to Uruguay, dwelling in shallow vegetation during the warmer months and migrating offshore during winter. It prefers beds of eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) or macroalgae (seaweed) as habitat, but can also be found clinging to artificial structures such as aquaculture cages and nets. Seahorses rely heavily on vegetated habitat in order to successfully evade predation and stalk prey, not to mention “hang on” when rough waters occur.

Barely recognizable as fish, seahorses have evolved into extremely specialized predators. They are masters of camouflage and stealth movements, ambushing prey such as amphipods, copepods, and other small crustaceans. Twenty million years of evolution have enabled the seahorse to modify from a more pelagic form to having very unique characteristics. With no need for a caudal fin (tail), teeth or scales, these common traits were traded for a prehensile tail for anchoring, a long, tubular snout for sucking in food, and skin without scales. Other distinguishing traits include a horse-like head, an upright body, independently-moving eyes and the ability to change color and grow appendages called cirri, adding to its cryptic appearance. The Northern lined seahorse can be identified by white lines down the neck and white dots on the tail.

Seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp.) have life history strategies that make them particularly vulnerable to habitat loss and overfishing, including small home ranges, low mobility and low fecundity. Eelgrass, our native seagrass species, has suffered tremendous declines in the past decade, as with most seagrasses worldwide, due to coastal degradation, poor water quality, and other mostly human-related factors. Significant loss of eelgrass habitat (approximately 90 percent since 1930) in our local waters has likely limited the number of seahorses that can survive here. In fact, The World Conservation Union’s red list of endangered species has the Northern lined seahorse listed as “vulnerable”.

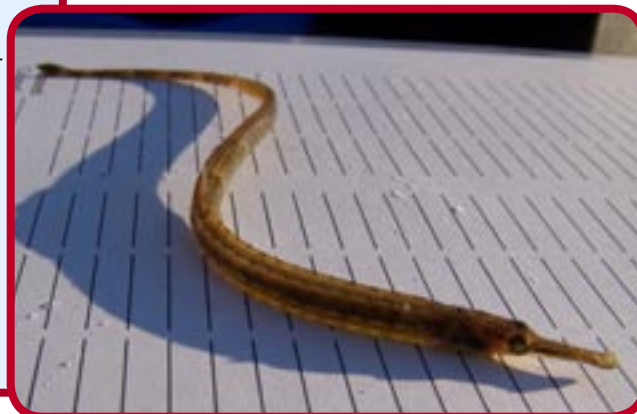
## The seahorse’s relative: the pipefish

Northern pipefish (*Syngnathus fuscus*) are also found in seagrass beds around the Sound. Here are some fun facts about pipefish:

Pipefish do not have teeth. They capture prey (such as copepods, amphipods, fish eggs and other small marine animals) by expelling water from the trumpet-like mouth. This causes a vacuum motion, which sucks in water that contains food!

Pipefish use their unique shape to help them avoid predators. They align themselves vertically within grass beds to imitate a blade of eelgrass!

Larissa Graham



**Northern pipefish** (*Syngnathus fuscus*), such as the one to the right, also live in the Sound.

## On the Web...

For more information about and photos and videos of seahorses and eelgrass, visit [www.seagrassli.org](http://www.seagrassli.org).



Chris Pickrell

**A juvenile seahorse** (*Hippocampus erectus*) clings to eelgrass at a habitat restoration site in Long Island Sound.

One of the most well known and interesting facts about seahorses is that the male becomes pregnant and gives birth! Once a mate is chosen, these very social creatures tend to remain monogamous, and this “marriage” is reinforced with daily greetings including exchanging colors and wrapping tails. Courtship is even more pronounced, with very colorful and lengthy displays and even “dances” lasting many hours prior to mating. Eventually the female deposits her eggs (usually several hundred) into the male’s brood pouch and he then fertilizes and incubates them for about three weeks. The male then goes into labor, actively pushing until the brood is forced out of his pouch. The young are perfect little replicas of their parents, and must immediately fend for themselves. When born, the young seahorses are less than 1/2 inch in length, and can grow to over 6 inches during their lifespan of three to five years. Mating occurs from May to October, and virtually nothing is known about the remaining months when they migrate to deep waters. Hopefully with increased awareness, habitat conservation, and restoration, the seahorse will once again become a common inhabitant of Long Island Sound.

*Petersen Manzo is the Eelgrass Program Educator for Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program.*

# Congressional Spotlight: Rosa DeLauro

**Party:** Democrat  
**Position:** CT's Third Congressional District  
**First elected:** 1990  
**Now serving:** 10th Term in the House  
**Education:** Columbia University  
**Birthplace:** New Haven, CT



Congresswoman DeLauro's office

**Q.** What are the issues related to Long Island Sound (LIS) that most concern you?

**A.** For the 28 million people living within 50 miles of its shores, Long Island Sound is a critical economic, recreational, and environmental resource. In fact, Long Island Sound contributes more than \$5 billion annually to our economy. I believe that protecting the overall health and vitality of the Long Island Sound should be a priority—both for elected officials and Connecticut residents.

Over the last several years, we have faced several challenges in the Sound including the lobster die-off and multiple proposals for energy projects which would have been constructed in or through the area. As stewards of this regional and national treasure, we have a responsibility to ensure its protection and preservation.

**Q.** How have you been supporting the protection of LIS?

**A.** Long Island Sound is a treasure shared by the citizens of Connecticut and New York, who have invested billions of dollars in efforts to preserve the Sound and clean up decades of pollution. I was very proud to be a part of a bi-state effort that led to the Sound's designation as an estuary of national significance—one of 28 in the nation.

I have worked with several groups to protect the health and vitality of the Long Island Sound—from assisting the lobstermen when we faced a significant lobster die-off to the grassroots efforts to block projects like the proposed Islander East Natural Gas Pipeline and the Broadwater Liquefied Natural Gas Facility.

In the House, I now serve, along with my colleague Steve Israel from New York, as Co-Chair of the Long Island Sound Caucus. It is through this bi-state effort that we have been able to pass legislation like the Long Island Sound Restoration Act and secure much needed funding for the continued efforts to preserve and restore the Sound's shoreline and waters.

For generations, Long Island Sound has been a multi-use waterway. It has been the home to a vibrant fishing, lobstering, and shell-fishing community, a means of transporting goods throughout New England, and a recreational playground for avid boaters. Long Island Sound and estuaries like it run through the very heart of our regions' heritage. I believe that we should honor those traditions by ensuring that our children and future generations understand all that it has contributed to our history and what it can continue to contribute to our future. That is why I have also worked to secure funding for programs like the

Mystic Aquarium and Institutes for Exploration operated by the Sea Research Foundation. Through these programs students in classrooms across Connecticut can gain an appreciation for all that Long Island Sound has to offer.

## Sign up for Sound BYTES!

The Long Island Sound Study is now producing Sound BYTES, an electronic newsletter that highlights upcoming events and current projects. Sign up for Sound BYTES under the heading "E-newsletter" on our website at: [www.longislandsoundstudy.net](http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net).

**Q.** What is your favorite way to experience the Sound?

**A.** Though I am not a boater, I do enjoy all that the Sound has to offer. The beautiful waters and extraordinary habitats that run along Connecticut's shoreline—I most enjoy just soaking in the whole experience!

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# “What Can I Do?”

## Simple ways you can protect the wildlife of Long Island Sound.

**1 Create a wildlife-friendly backyard.** Choose native plants for your lawn and landscape. Native plants require less maintenance (for example, fertilizing and watering) because they are adapted to the local environment and will provide food and shelter to native wildlife. Add bird or bat houses to your yard or garden to attract and shelter these species. Visit the National Wildlife Federation’s Web site at [www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife](http://www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife) for more ideas.

**2 Let wildlife be.** Often times when we find a young animal alone, we think it is abandoned. Usually, this is not the case; wild animals often leave their young unattended for several hours or more. If you find an animal that you think is abandoned, do not touch it unless it is in immediate danger (if you do touch it, wear gloves to protect yourself!). Call your local nature center and ask to speak to a wildlife rehabilitator; they can access the situation and provide assistance if needed.

**3 Report marine mammal and sea turtle sightings.** Experts can determine if the animal is in need of medical attention, needs to be moved from a populated area, or just needs time to rest. To report a marine mammal or sea turtle that may need help, please call Mystic Aquarium at 860-572-5955, ext 107 (CT) or the Riverhead Foundation at 631-369-9829 (NY).

**4 Keep chemicals out of the Sound.** Hazardous chemicals, personal care products, electronics, and pharmaceuticals have been shown to have a negative effect on some marine life. You can help keep harmful chemicals out of our waters by properly disposing of these items. Ask your town about waste pick-up days or visit [www.earth911.com](http://www.earth911.com) for disposal and recycling sites near you.

**5 If it goes on the ground, it goes in the Sound!** Marine life depends on the coastal habitats around the Sound for feeding, breeding, and nursery grounds. Help keep these areas clean by not littering and reducing polluted runoff. Remember, storm drains lead to the Sound, so limit the amount of pollutants (fertilizers, pet waste, trash, pesticides, oil, etc) in your neighborhood that can be washed into storm drains by rainwater!



**Recycle or  
pass on to a friend!**

Long Island Sound Study  
c/o New York Sea Grant  
146 Suffolk Hall  
Stony Brook University  
Stony Brook, NY 11794-5002



Riverhead Foundation

**This juvenile** bottlenose dolphin was one of the 200 dolphins spotted in the Sound this summer (see front cover for story).

**6 Keep our beaches clean.** Now that the summer has ended, help us keep wildlife safe by cleaning our beaches. September 19th, 2009 was International Coastal Cleanup Day and beach cleanups will be taking place over the next few months! Visit Save the Sound’s website at <http://ctenvironment.org> (CT) or the Northeast Chapter of the American Littoral Society at [www.alsnyc.org](http://www.alsnyc.org) (NY) to find a beach cleanup near you!

**7 Be Green.** By conserving water and fossil fuels and limiting waste, you can help protect the wildlife around you. Recycle and buy recycled products, bring re-usable bags when you go shopping, take public transportation when you can, turn off electric devices when you’re not using them, don’t waste water, and keep your heat low in the winter and air conditioners down in the summer.

**8 Get involved.** Why not volunteer to help researchers collect data that will protect the species that live in and around Long Island Sound? Visit our “Get Involved” web page at [www.longislandsoundstudy.net/volunteer.htm](http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net/volunteer.htm) for a list of organizations that need volunteers—just like you!

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