

Coast Watch



Anglers at Ellis Cove on the Salmon River.

STEWARDS HAVE GONE BLOGGIN'

Photo by NYSG Steward Coordinator Mary Penney

During this past summer's Oswego County Conservation Field Days, local fifth graders built a squirrel's nest at the "Habitat and Dwelling Steward Program Station."

Photo by Mary Penney



Stewards and other participants netted 200+ pounds of trash on Lakeview Wildlife Management Area during the National Littoral Society Beach Cleanup Day. The most common items: plastic bottle caps and balloon string.

Photo by River Steward Greg Chapman



Most times during the summer and fall, you'll find the Eastern Lake Ontario Dune and Salmon River Stewards educating the public about the value and proper recreational use of the area's vital environmental resources. This could be at one of the River's access points or a state park, wildlife management area, nature preserve or natural area along the lakeshore. But, for the first time this past summer, the stewards began regularly documenting their experiences in an interactive blog, www.elodsrstewardprogram.blogspot.com.

Contributing to the blog encouraged the 2009 stewards to look at the resource areas in new ways. Although each blog entry was authored by one steward, all six stewards contributed content each week.

Chief Steward **Greg Chapman** says, "Thinking about what my weekly blog contributions would be prompted me to actively identify aspects of the area that might be overlooked or misunderstood by some visitors to the region, or that could be interesting to someone who had not previously experienced natural resource areas."

Chapman and the other stewards blogged about the wildlife species they saw; reported interactions with kayakers, beach walkers, and anglers fishing for such species as freshly-stocked landlocked Atlantic salmon and steelhead; provided information on why the eastern shore of Lake Ontario is critical habitat for migrating and resident birds and what makes the Salmon River Falls Unique Area unique; and noting the impacts and influences their efforts are having on the greater community.

A Chinook salmon caught in the lower stretch of the Salmon River.

Photo by Mary Penney



River Steward Liz Wolff assisted with Salmon stocking. "I learned that it's best to release the fish when the water is moving more rapidly, thus containing more oxygen," says Wolff.

Photo courtesy of Liz Wolff

In an entry from July, Dune Steward **Stacy Furgal** wrote, "I've noticed Sandy Pond Beach Natural Area is looking better and better each day, thanks to the efforts of both stewards and beach goers alike. It is not uncommon to see people bringing their own trash bags to fill with beach litter."

"The product that the stewards produced is impressive," says NYSG's Dune and River Steward Coordinator **Mary Penney**. "Using new technology like this blog has proven to be a successful tool for reaching new audiences, and repackaging our already successful program. Stewardship has been a fantastic educational tool for our newfound E-audience as well as the stewards themselves."

This was the second blog that highlighted a NYSG-managed program in as many years. After producing last summer's "Shipboard & Shoreline Science on Lake Ontario," the well-received daily blog for Centers for Oceans Science Education Excellence (COSEE) week-long teacher training, NYSG's Web Content Manager **Paul C. Focazio** worked with Penney to create something similar for the Eastern Lake Ontario Dune/Salmon River Steward Program.

Focazio says, "It has been a perfect fit to have the dune and river stewards document their experiences with the public throughout the summer and fall. We've offered Web surfers, especially those away from these resources, a first-hand account of, among other things, touring the beaches that provide public access along eastern Lake Ontario and the Salmon River Falls Unique Area."

Looking back on the experience, Salmon River Steward **Elizabeth Wolff** says, "My favorite part of the blog was showing that the stewards are multifaceted individuals. The blog is just one more way for us to reach out and educate the public about the natural resource areas in our own voices."

And what says the public, the users of this blog? **Kavin Bahler**, from Williamsville, NY, said, "The Eastern Lake Ontario Dune and Salmon River Steward blog is wonderful. It gives great information that always keeps me coming back for more." **Sarah Howey**, from Waverly, NY, added, "This blog is an informative and interesting peek into the efforts of the stewards



Sandy Pond Beach Natural Area in August 1997 and 2009. Notice the increase in vegetation has completely covered the walkover in places. "By monitoring dune changes, we can pinpoint potential blowout areas and take measures to slow the process, such as installing snow fencing or planting dune grass," says NYSG's Mary Penney.

Photos courtesy of www.nysgdunes.org

to educate the public and to protect this unique part of the world."

Kyle Teufel, from Syracuse, NY, commented, "The blog was a great way to inform someone like myself, who didn't know much about the River, about life at the River and the River community. I thought it was very cool how the bloggers wrote about the children and the educational programs. It's great to see that [the stewards and the kids] are able to get outdoors and learn."

— **Paul C. Focazio and Mary Penney**



... for a map of the areas the Stewards monitor and blog entries through this year's summer/fall seasons.