



# Chincoteague Island, VA Oyster Bay II Community Newsletter December 2015

Greetings OB II Friends & Neighbors,

It's hard to believe that December 2015 is upon us. T'is that wonderfully joyful time of the year when we're finally rid of the mosquitoes! Well, let's hope so.

Thank you Karen Frank and Neal Faircloth for sharing their terrific photos of a couple of our fine feathered friends (see above and next page) that they took at Assateague NWR. No, the above photo is not upside down – it's just a bit of Egret Yoga or a chance to look at life from a different angle.

Merry Christmas, Joyeux Noel (French), Feliz Navidad (Spanish), Buone Feste Natalizie (Italian), Nollaig Shona Duit (Gaelic), Wesolych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia (Polish) Judtlime pıvdluarit ukiortame pıvdluaritlo (Eskimo – inupik), Sheng Dan Kuai Le (Chinese – Mandarin), Kala Christouyenna (Greek), Mele Kalikmaka (Hawaiian), Frohe Weignachten (German), Gozhqg Keshmish (Native American – Apache), Kurisumasu Omedeto (Japanese) to one and all!

## Neighborhood News ...

There are no new neighbors to welcome this month but the clearing of a couple of properties is in the works. We'll report back with future developments.

## Updates From The Board ...

The project to restore the community drainage system is forging ahead and making steady progress. Due to the recent rain over the last few weeks the construction schedule has been affected. The Board appreciates your continued cooperation and patience during the process.



*Trenching in Progress*

Also, a reminder: any homeowner who is interested in having fill dirt that's been excavated from the digging out of the swales should contact Luke Britton (757.894.3503) and he will deliver it. You will need to put a stake or marker down to indicate where you want the dirt dumped.

# Singing In The Snow ...

By Dave Hudgins

Snow Buntings have been making their way into Virginia, returning from their high arctic nesting grounds. The Snow Bunting is a small song bird with white wings and black wing tips. Snow Buntings have a splendid white underside and copper back and face. Their copper ear coverts give the appearance of blushing — a modest bird. The Snow Bunting is about the size of a sparrow (6 inches), but with a long wing span of 12 inches.



Photo by Neal Faircloth

The Virginia shore is about the southern bounds of its migration range. They are typically seen in small flocks around the beach or in farm fields feeding on seeds

There are an estimated 30 million breeding pairs of Snow Buntings worldwide. However, they are considered a declining species. Snow Buntings breed high in the Arctic Circle, ranging around the entire North Pole region (circumglobal). Snow Buntings are bound by southern limits relating to light. In breeding plumage, they are very white and black. In the icy tundra, the coloration helps protect them from predators. The coloration, like other arctic species, is believed to be an adaption to living in constant day light for a good part of the year. Male Snow Buntings will make their way back to the Arctic by early April, when temperatures still hover in the negative double digits. The females will follow four to six weeks later, after the male has established nesting territory.

## Chincoteague Island, A Coast Guard Community

By Petty Officer 2nd Class Nate Littlejohn

An oysterman in a weather-beaten skiff prepares to tend his beds as a blood-orange sun peeks over the Atlantic horizon. A herd of wild ponies drink in a freshwater wetland where buffleheads and mallards hunt for breakfast among reeds on the glistening, glass surface. Laughing gulls fight over a jackknife clam, their cries muffled by the sound of crashing surf pummeling the sand.

The Eastern Shore of Virginia, making up the southernmost portion of the Delmarva Peninsula, is an isolated, often-overlooked stretch of land between southern Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Chincoteague, Virginia, a small island community teeming with maritime culture located just south of the Maryland border off Virginia's Eastern Shore, is one special place the Coast Guard calls home. Locals there are passionate about their town, customs and history. As it turns out, this often means they're passionate about the

Coast Guard – the seagoing service has been a seam in the social fabric there for generations.

The spirit of honoring past Coast Guardsmen in the Chincoteague area helped prompt the National Park Service to promote preservation of the old Coast Guard station located on neighboring Assateague Island. The Assateague Beach Coast Guard Station, located at Tom's Cove, was constructed in 1922. The structure served as the Coast Guard Station for the area until it was decommissioned in 1967 and became part of the Assateague Island National Seashore.

"The Assateague Beach Coast Guard Station is the park's only nationally significant cultural resource," said Deborah Darden, National Park Service superintendent at the Assateague Island National Seashore. "It is critically important to understanding the park's history that we find a way to preserve the station and tell its story."



Photo Courtesy of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services

Missing puzzle pieces to the station's story, and of the Coast Guard in the area surrounding Chincoteague, are likely held by the people who live there.

"There are a significant number of Coast Guard veterans who are either from Chincoteague Island, buried on the island or retired to the island," said Lt. Cmdr. Justin Strock, supervisor at Coast Guard Sector Field Office Eastern Shore. "There is an extremely rich Coast Guard tradition on Chincoteague."

One retired Coast Guardsman, Kerry Bowden, a Chincoteague native who served in the Coast Guard for 30 years. Now works for the service in a civilian capacity as the housing officer for Coast Guard Sector Field Office Eastern Shore in Chincoteague. Bowden, like many locals, discovered the Coast Guard while growing up on the island and decided to join after high school. "Lots of people from Chincoteague join the Coast Guard and Coast Guard members from far away discover Chincoteague during their service and decide to retire here," said Bowden. "The Coast Guard offers employment opportunities here and Chincoteague offers old-fashioned, small town living that appeals to a lot of folks. You walk down the street and you know the people you see. Coast Guard members get involved in the community and are among those familiar faces. They help maintain cemeteries here; they provide a color guard for memorial services and participate in the parades. As a local here in Chincoteague and as a retired Coast Guardsman, I can say I'm proud of both."



More than 350 Coast Guard retirees reside on the island year round. This inspired an annual island tradition known as the Coast Guardsmen of Yesteryear Breakfast. Every year since 1999, on the Saturday morning before Veterans Day at the school on Chincoteague, approximately 100 – 150 retired Coast Guardsmen and members of other uniformed services gather for a breakfast in celebration of their service to the nation.

Active-duty Coast Guard members in Chincoteague had the opportunity to meet with one unique former Coast Guardsman and WWII veteran on April 27, 2015. Richard Smith, who was awarded a U.S. Coast Guard Bronze Star 69 years after his honorable actions during the Battle of Guam in 1944, visited Chincoteague to speak about his Coast Guard service, including his experiences serving in WWII. Aids to Navigation Team Chincoteague, Station Chincoteague and Sector Field Office Eastern Shore personnel recognized Smith's service and presented him with a plaque. Smith, a resident of Salisbury, Maryland, and native of East Liverpool, Ohio, served in the Coast Guard from 1942 to 1945. A medical corpsman, Smith spent five days on Guam in 1944 and tended to approximately 36 men during battle. "The highlight of my Coast Guard career was serving as a pharmacist's mate in Chincoteague," said Smith.

While living Coast Guard heroes and historic Coast Guard treasures accentuate the island's unique character, Chincoteague's true claim to fame lies with the wild ponies on Assateague Island and the pony-penning week held every July. Coast Guard crews play an important role in the events that draw international attention each year.

The Chincoteague ponies, made famous by the Misty of Chincoteague series written by Marguerite Henry beginning in 1947, are believed to be descendants of horses brought to the island by 17<sup>th</sup> Century colonists looking to avoid livestock laws and taxes on the mainland. In 1835, the practice of pony penning began with settlers rounding up ponies and taking them off the island. In 1924, the first official Pony Penning Day was held by the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company, where ponies were auctioned as a way to raise money for equipment. The annual event continues in the same fashion to the present day.

The ponies are rounded up on Assateague Island and driven into the water by volunteer "Salt Water Cowboys" on the last Wednesday of each July in the event known as the Chincoteague Pony Swim. The annual event draws tens of thousands of spectators from around the world. Coast Guard Station Chincoteague crew members are charged each year with enforcing a safety zone on either side of the channel where the ponies make the swim.

The day before the swim each year, the Coast Guard hosts an open house in Chincoteague drawing up to 2,000 people. Locals and people from away learn about safe boating, tour Coast Guard facilities and assets, and mingle with the Coast Guardsmen stationed there.

The summer months in Chincoteague, and pony penning week in particular, are critically important to the island's economy and culture. "Most off-island people don't understand how much pony penning week means to the people of Chincoteague Island," said Coast Guard Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Aaron Hofmeister, a crewman at Station Chincoteague. Another thing pony swim spectators and boaters from far away might not realize is the danger of

operating a boat in the waters around Chincoteague. Constant shoaling in the area means waters deep enough to navigate one day might be too shallow the next. "Chincoteague offers the crew great opportunities to conduct Coast Guard missions in a very unique and challenging area of responsibility," said Chief Petty Officer Hank Deatrich, the officer-in-charge at Station Chincoteague. "This area keeps us all fresh and makes us stay vigilant in our duties as the constant shifting of shoals and limited water make it very challenging."

Following seasoned local mariners on shortcuts outside marked channels can easily land visiting boaters aground. Even experienced boat operators in the area can run into trouble due to shoaling.



*Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Nate Littlejohn*

"As hard as it is to operate in this area due to the constant shoal shifting, I must say working here has made me a better navigator," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Madeline Sorrentino, a boat operator at Station Chincoteague. "Boating on these waters made me understand the importance of good seamanship and area knowledge."

The Coast Guard is not always able to reach boats that run aground in these shallow waters and often depends on help from local mariners. "The watermen here adapt every day to the shifting shoals and have often been of great service in approaching different areas on the water," said Petty Officer 1st Class Timothy Jacobs, a boat operator at Station Chincoteague. Perhaps the cooperation between the locals and the Coast Guard in Chincoteague stems from the fact that many were Coast Guardsmen, are related to, or know somebody who served in the service.

The island community and the seagoing service are intertwined historically and culturally. Hopefully passion and support for the Coast Guard will remain there for years to come. Preservation of the old station might lie with learning more from those who served there, and with those currently working to educate others about the station's potential.

"The old Coast Guard station complex represents so much," said Vicki Walsh, National Park Service employee at Tom's Cove Visitor Center at the Assateague Island National Seashore. "It can be used to tell many stories. The stories of its construction, its different structures, its location, of weathering the storms, of the service that took place there – the organization behind the work, the Coast Guardsmen who carried out their missions there. The structure and its location are a physical link in the continuing chain of service to sea-going people. The place is an opportunity that needs to happen."

## All Around Town ...

There may be a bit of a nip in the air but if you choose to run to one of these events during the month of December, you're sure to warm up:

### **Wed., Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4:30pm - 7:30pm, Kiwanis Pancake Supper**

The Chincoteague Kiwanis Club will hold its annual pancake supper at Bill's Seafood (4040 Main St.). Kiwanis members and Bill's staff donate their time and tips to help families in need at the holidays.

Tickets are \$6 and you can get them at H & H Pharmacy, Mason Oil Co. or from any Kiwanis Member. Money raised will help make Christmas merrier for many this year. For info, visit [www.chincoteaguechristmas.com](http://www.chincoteaguechristmas.com).



### **Sat., Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>, 7pm, Chincoteague's Christmas Parade**

A truly old fashioned Christmas parade on our very own Main St., it will feature floats, marching bands, color guards, Saltwater Cowboys, Fire Companies from around the Eastern Shore, and much more. Even Santa's going to be coming to this party! There will be prizes and awards given in a variety of categories. An awards ceremony and close up visit with Santa Claus takes place at the Firehouse after the parade. For info, visit [www.chincoteaguechristmas.com](http://www.chincoteaguechristmas.com). Note, if weather does not permit parade to take place, it will be rescheduled for Mon., Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> at 7pm.



**Sun., Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>, 1pm - 3pm, The Great Gingerbread Challenge** – You're invited to watch the creative side of Islanders. Multiple teams, three judges and one boss! Don't miss this live interactive event taking place at the Chincoteague Center (6155 Community Dr.) which promises to be great family fun and a lot of laughs. This year's competition will benefit the Chincoteague Food Pantry. Admission price: canned and/or dry [goods](#). For info, visit [www.chincoteaguechristmas.com](http://www.chincoteaguechristmas.com).

### **Sat., Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>, 1pm, Orchestra of the Eastern Shore Christmas Concert with Sing-along**

– Come to the historic Cokesbury Church in Onancock (75 Market St.) and listen to selections from Handel's Messiah with participants, soloists and the orchestra. To participate, bring your own score if you have one; limited numbers will be available to borrow.



### **Sun., Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>, 2pm, Kid's Tea Party with Mrs. Claus**

Once again, Mrs. Claus, accompanied by Santa's elves, will travel all the way from the North Pole to be the guest of honor at the "Christmas by the Sea" children's tea party at the Hampton Inn on Main St. There is limited seating at this event and pre-paid reservations are required: \$15 per person. Call 757.894.0924 for info. Hot cocoa, kids-sized sandwiches and Christmas cookies will be served. Kids are encouraged to dress for a tea party.

**Thurs., Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>, 7pm - 11:30pm, Flat Foot Sam and the Educated Fools with Special Guest Mary Shaver at the Island Theatre** – The Chincoteague Island Arts Organization (CIAO) will be sponsoring this concert on New Year's Eve at the Island Theatre.

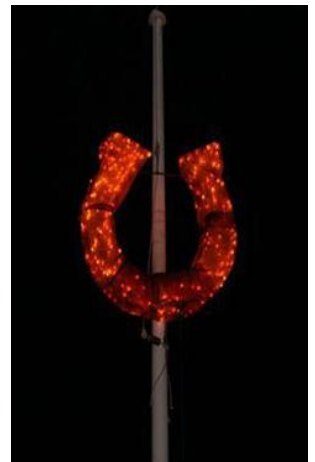


Flat Foot Sam (Sam Peightal) performs a unique blend of Swing, Jump, Chicago and Down In the Basement 'Gut Bucket Blues'. In addition to being a dynamic front man, Sam is a strong and soulful singer. Whether he's shoutin' jump blues or crooning a ballad, he delivers. Flat Foot Sam has been performing on the East Coast for over 25 years.

Mary Shaver has been singing all her life. She is first and foremost a blues artist influenced by the likes of Slim Harpo and Big Mama Thornton. She labels her own style as "Texas, Louisiana and Chicago Blues meets Memphis Soul" and local critics and musicians have likened her powerful voice to all her idols. Ticket price is \$20 and they are available now online or from H & H Pharmacy (Maddox Blvd.) and Sundial Books (Main St.). Doors open at 7pm. Soft drinks, beer and wine will be available for purchase. For additional info, visit [www.ciarts.org](http://www.ciarts.org).

### **Thurs., Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>, 10:30pm, New Year's Eve Pony Island Horseshoe Drop and Costume Promenade**

– Come to an end of year celebration and party that culminates in a promenade of crazy costumes just before the countdown to the stroke of midnight. That's when the lighted horseshoe drops just in time to ring in the New Year! Location is at Robert Reed Downtown Park. Don't forget to dress warm, wear a hat and gloves and comfortable shoes for dancing!





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*Phil Hoey*

*Ethan Simonson*

Budget Audit Committee

*Phil Hoey (Chairperson)*

*Tim Landolt*

Communications Committee

*Jean Hubbard (Chairperson)*

*Dave Hudgins*

*Andy Suchoski (webmaster)*

Community Improvement Committee

*Dave Hudgins (Chairperson)*

*Jean Hubbard*

*Buford T. Rowland*

Documentation/Records Committee

*Maria Paccioretti\* (Chairperson)*

*Dave Hudgins*

Maintenance Committee

*Tim Landolt (Chairperson)*

*Kathy Bradley (on-site rep)*

*Ethan Simonson*

Utilities Committee

*Kathy Bradley (Chairperson)*

*Jack Keene (on-site rep)*

*\*Corporate Registered Agent for Oyster Bay II Community  
POA and Oyster Bay II Water & Sewage Company, Inc.*

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IMPORTANT NOTE: Be on the lookout for your 2016 POA Dues Notice. All OB II POA, Inc. and OB II Water & Sewage Co., Inc. payments and correspondence should be sent to:

OB II POA, Inc., or OB II W & S Co., Inc.  
P.O. Box 642  
Chincoteague, VA 23336

Please recycle whenever possible. The Recycle Center is located at 5073 Deep Hole Rd. Open daily (except Tuesdays) from 7am – 6pm. There are additional bins for donations of clothing and shoes and a dumpster for used tires. Thank you for keeping our community clean.

If you have a Community concern that needs urgent attention, please call: Jack Keane or Kathy Bradley.

Please help with our newsletter! Email your ideas, photos, suggestions to [jhlovesdogs@yahoo.com](mailto:jhlovesdogs@yahoo.com).