

# Yankee Engineer

Building Strong

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District, Volume 46, No. 9 June 2012



Monitoring bird population,  
migration at West Hill Dam

Story on page 4



# Yankee Voices

Steven Patchkofsky and Marissa Wright



## Sympathy

...to **Mike Russo**, Resource Management, on the passing of his father, **Angelo Russo**, May 31. Mr. Russo enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1943 and had a long and impressive military career that spanned two wars and many years of honorable service to the nation.

## Congratulations

...to Thomaston Dam unit Park Ranger **John Haluchak** and his wife, **Shannon**, on the birth of their second child, **Owen William Haluchak**, June 10.

## Words Worth Repeating

"Life is a mystery to be lived, not a problem to be solved."

- **Soren Kierkegaard**

"Shared laughter creates a bond of friendships. When people laugh together, they cease to be young and old, teacher and pupils, worker and boss. They become a single group of human beings."

- **W. Lee Grant**

## Nguyen retires after 21 years of service



Lang and Hoang Nguyen

Survey Technician Lang Nguyen served 21 years of faithful dedicated service to the Corps until ill health forced him to retire in February. He suffered a devastating stroke shortly after retiring, preventing family and friends from giving him a proper send-off.

On April 24, after months of recovery, Nguyen was able to attend a private retirement luncheon at P.F. Chang's Restaurant in Natick, Mass. Nguyen requested that the celebration be very small and low key, so 11 of his family, close friends, and coworkers attended.

Maureen Murray, Survey Section, hosted the event. She presented Nguyen with his retirement certificate and pin. She also gave him a Corps Fleece Jacket from the survey field personnel, who were not in attendance, and a gift card from the luncheon participants.

Nguyen began his career with the Corps of Engineers, New England in 1990, serving in the Civil Engineering Section. He was reassigned to Survey Section in 2000 where he worked until his retirement. Nguyen's wife, Hoang, accompanied him to the luncheon.

## Receiving the Yankee Engineer After Retirement

Just a reminder that inclusion on the Yankee Engineer mailing list after retirement is not automatic. The mailing list is also used to keep retirees informed of special events such as Founder's Day.

In addition, District staff personnel and soon to be retirees utilize the list to invite others to upcoming retirement events.

If you are about to retire and would like to be included on the Yankee Engineer mailing list, e-mail Ann Marie R. Harvie (annmarie.r.harvie@usace.army.mil) with a mailing address.



# Commander's Corner:

## Celebrating a Great Organization ~ New England District Founder's Day 2012!

by Col. Charles P. Samaris  
District Commander



Happy Founder's Day! For your consideration, I've included two of my very favorite quotes from two of our stalwart Founding Fathers...

"It is ... [the citizens] choice, and depends upon their conduct, whether they will be respectable and prosperous, or contemptible and miserable as a Nation. This is

the time of their political probation; this is the moment when the eyes of the World are turned upon them."

~ George Washington

"Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclination, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence."

~ John Adams

As you may know, "Founder's Day" is really a celebration of the lineage, honors and achievements of the organization. But sometimes - in the midst of BBQs, pony rides, service awards, and other activities - we forget the true reason for which we gather together. So, permit me to delve momentarily into the history of "our reason" for celebrating Founder's Day - the New England District.

The New England District has a uniquely rich and proud lineage, dating back to the birth of the Army Corps of Engineers...and, in fact, the birth of our Army. During the opening days of the Revolutionary War, General George Washington named Boston native (and chief engineer of the Massachusetts Volunteers) Colonel Richard Gridley as Chief Engineer of the newly formed Continental Army. Shortly thereafter, in June 1775, General Washington charged Colonel Gridley with building fortifications on Breed's Hill in preparation for what would become known as the Battle of Bunker Hill. This action marked the beginning of our long tradition of "Engineering" service to New England and the Nation.

Interestingly, the New England District (Division), dates back to 1 May 1942 - when the New England Division grew out of the Northeast Division - and consolidated the geographically dispersed districts, projects and operations located throughout the six-state region. Over time, the New

England Division included districts in Eastport, Portland, Boston, New Bedford, Newport, Portsmouth, Providence, New London, New Haven, and New York - the first four of which date back to 1866. As post-WWII workload decreased, and districts cased their colors, the New England Division evolved into an "Operating Division." Subsequently, to operationally and organizationally align it with the rest of USACE, the New England Division cased its' colors in April 1997...and uncased new colors as the New England District.

As a District, we've had a challenging yet successful year. Although our Nation and its' government is in the midst of tightening its' financial belt, our uniquely balanced portfolio of missions and workload mitigated the overall impact of fiscal constraint. Because we are well-balanced, like the ebb and flow of the tides, cyclic or situational changes that affect one mission area are typically offset by similar yet opposing changes in another.

But, why has our portfolio remained so well balanced? Well, whether we're providing reliable, consistent support to oversea contingency operations; or executing a wide-range of unique military construction; or injecting much-needed urgency and accountability into our civil works mission; or effectively addressing the diverse requirements of our many interagency partners; it all boils down to the single most valuable asset resident within any successful organization - the people!

You and your fellow New England District teammates all bring unique professional skills and personal strengths to the collaborative table - and flat-out execute! Your proven results establish and maintain our credibility, build and strengthen our partner relationships, and foster and protect our great reputation across New England. YOU are the reason our portfolio remains so well balanced.

Delivering superior results to the people of New England and the Nation - with character, passion, and a strong sense of service - is a team sport. And you play that sport very well, just as our Founder's did during the formative years of our great Nation. You should be proud of yourselves! The nation appreciates you!

"I shall fight for justice and my country!"

~ Colonel Richard Gridley,  
Boston Native and  
our Nation's First Chief Engineer

**Essays!**





Photos by Kevin Burke

Park Ranger Christine Renzoni (left) observes as Beth Milke identifies the species that Emily Dahl is studying.

## *Bird Banding helps track aviary population at West Hill Dam*

If you like bird watching, West Hill Dam in Uxbridge, Mass., is the place to go. Bird banders have netted 96 species of birds at the New England District project and are keeping a close eye on the populations.

The 2012 Bird Banding began the week of May 6 and ended the week of June 3. Nets were set up throughout West Hill Park in order to catch the birds to band them. "Usually these banding sessions take place in the morning from 6:30 a.m., when the nets are first opened, until 10 a.m., when the birds become less active and we see a drop in the number of birds flying into the nets," said West Hill Dam Park Ranger Christine Renzoni.



Beth Milke cautiously gathers a bag containing a bird to band and set free.



Renzoni said that the netting and banding depends on bird migration. Weather and time of day are also factors in the amount of birds caught. "Birds are less active in the rain, and really sunny or windy conditions are unfavorable because the nets are easily visible to the birds," she said.

This year, volunteer Strickland Wheeler served as the licensed Master Bander for the event and held the required permit to band the birds. Paul and Beth Milke, also volunteers, served as sub-permittees and are also licensed banders. Licensed bander Brandi Van Roo and several other volunteers made up the team. "In order to do this work, someone must be licensed by the government," explained Renzoni. "Banding the birds is open to anyone that has an interest and is willing to get up early for the first net check at 7 a.m."

Once the birds are caught in the nets, the U.S. Government-issued numbered bands are placed around their legs and important information such as sex, age, and band number are recorded. "The banding is done for scientific reasons," said Renzoni. "The information that is collected from these birds is valuable to scientists. We see a lot of variation year-to-year, some of that having to do with the fact that we don't band every day, some having to do with normal variation in species numbers from one year to the next."

Recapturing previously banded birds also provides crucial information on how long bird species live in the wild. "A percentage of the banded birds are recaptured from 1-5 years later," said Renzoni. "That's a long life span for a bird."

The information collected from the bird banding initiative is shared with the U.S. Bird Banding Laboratory at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland. The center is a part of the U.S. Geological Survey. The information also goes to Massachusetts Fish



Mike Nork (left) and Hillary Siener wait as Beth Milke records information on the bird that Siener is holding before setting it free. Park Ranger Christine Renzoni (right) also participated in the bird banding project.

and Wildlife.

West Hill Dam was selected by Mr. Wheelock for this annual project because its diverse habitats (woodland, field, marsh) sheltered a good variety of birds. "Banding at West Hill started in 2001," said Renzoni. "Since then over 6,000 birds of 96 species have been banded here."

Renzoni will not be present for the 2013 event, as she is transferring to

the Pittsburgh District at Tygent Lake in Grafton, West Virginia. Despite the move, Renzoni has high hopes for next year's initiative and that the various species netted at West Hill Dam reaches 100. Bird watching is only one of the many recreational opportunities that West Hill Dam has to offer. For more information, visit the website at [www.nae.useace.army.mil/recrei/whd/whdhome.htm](http://www.nae.useace.army.mil/recrei/whd/whdhome.htm).



West Hill Dam Park Ranger Christine Renzoni holds a bird during the 2012 Bird Banding Event held at the project.





Photo by Kevin Burke

Swimming in Buffumville Lake is just one of many recreational opportunities offered at New England District projects.

## *Corps of Engineers to conduct visitor surveys at several District recreation areas this summer*

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will conduct visitor surveys this summer. This is part of a nationwide effort to survey visitors at more than 30 Corps-managed recreation areas. Visitors leaving these recreation areas will be asked about their length of stay and overall experience.

Participation in the survey is voluntary. Surveys at five New England sites in Connecticut and Massachusetts will be on various days and at various times between June 14 and Sept. 2: Mansfield Hollow Lake in Mansfield, Conn.; West Thompson Lake in Thompson, Conn.; Westville Lake in Sturbridge, Mass.; West Hill Dam in Uxbridge, Mass.; and Buffumville Lake in Charlton, Mass. Surveys at Mansfield Hollow will be at the dam

trailhead parking area.

These surveys will provide the Corps with baseline information to be used for budgeting and planning purposes. The Corps hopes to learn more about visitor recreation habits to better plan for new trends in the way leisure time is spent at Corps sites. Findings will help ensure that recreation facilities at Corps lakes are operating efficiently to maximize visitor outdoor opportunities and enjoyment.

Interns from the Student Conservation Association will conduct the short interviews (less than 3 minutes) with visitors. The survey has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget. The Corps routinely conducts visitor interviews at its lakes and river projects in an effort to gauge

visitors' experiences and concerns.

The Corps is the nation's largest federal provider of outdoor recreation, managing more than 400 lake and river projects in 43 states and hosting more than 370 million visits per year. With 90 percent of these recreation areas within 50 miles of metropolitan areas they provide a diverse range of outdoor activities close to home and to people of all ages.

For more information on the survey and Corps recreation sites nationwide, visit [www.corpslakes.us/visitorsurvey](http://www.corpslakes.us/visitorsurvey).

For more information about Corps recreation sites in New England District go to the website at <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil>.

*(New England District Press Release)*

## *New England District emphasizes water safety at federal recreation areas during summer months*

Warmer weather is here and with summer-like temperatures more people will be recreating near or in the water through the summer months. Now is the time to start thinking about water safety. Each year, approximately 4,000 people drown in the United States. In fact, drowning is the second leading cause of accidental death for children. Yet, it is possible – just by wearing a life jacket or taking other precautions – to reduce drowning deaths.

In boating-related fatalities, 91 percent involve boat operators who had not received any boating safety instruction, according to U.S. Coast Guard statistics. These USCG statistics are available at: <http://www.uscgboating.org> under statistics.

To help ensure that individuals stay safe on America's waterways, the U.S. Coast Guard urges boaters to take basic safety precautions such as wearing a life jacket, participating in a boat safety course, getting a free vessel check, and never boating under the influence of alcohol or drugs. By practicing responsible boating habits, people can help contribute to a safer, more enjoyable experience on the water. Here are some safety tips from the Corps of Engineers to help recreation seekers stay safe in the water at federal recreation areas through the summer months.

### *Watch your children*

It only takes a child an average of 20 seconds to drown, according to water safety officials. Watch your children at all times when around the water. Don't let them wander very far from the adults and never let them go into the water unless you know it.

### *Alcohol and water activities don't mix*

Alcohol is a leading contributing factor to fatal boating accidents, according to the U.S. Coast Guard. Just one beer can impair balance, vision, judgment and reaction time. Research shows that about four hours of boating – with exposure to noise, vibration, sun, glare and wind – produces fatigue that simulates drunkenness. Boating fatigue combined with alcohol consumption intensifies the effects of both and increases accident risks.

### *Boaters should know the rules*

Boaters should take appropriate safety classes, be familiar with governing state laws and have proper safety equipment onboard. Many states require boater education or boat operator licenses. As an added incentive, many insurance companies offer discounts to boaters who have successfully completed a boating safety course.

While boating make sure you wear a life jacket. Don't just carry one on board. Make sure it is U.S. Coast Guard-approved and appropriately sized. Most states require children under the age of 13 to wear life jackets. Know your state law!

Don't overload the boat (consider boat size, number of passengers and extra equipment before loading). Check your boat for all required safety equipment. Carry a set



Kayaking on Buffumville Lake.

Photo by Kevin Burke

of navigational charts. Check the weather forecast. File a boat plan with family or friends who are not on the vessel so in case something does happen or you are late returning someone will know your approximate whereabouts.

### *Learn to swim/know your limits*

Never dive head first into lakes and rivers – the results can be tragic. Never rely on toys such as inner tubes and water wings to stay afloat.

Don't take chances by over-estimating your swimming skills or give in to peer pressure. Reach or throw a flotation device to help someone in trouble. Don't go in the water! Swim only in designated swimming areas. Use the buddy system and never swim alone. About half of all drowning victims are alone when they drown. It's smart to take swimming lessons and learn to swim.

### *Federal recreation areas in New England*

There are numerous opportunities to enjoy recreation at federal reservoirs and at the Cape Cod Canal in New England through the summer months. Most areas feature small lakes with facilities designed for day use such as picnicking, swimming, boating, fishing and hunting. There are also a few facilities for overnight camping. Most Corps-managed recreation areas are open through the middle of September. There are beaches and boat ramps available at reservoirs and lakes in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire and Vermont. For more information go to the Corps' New England District web site at <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil> and select "recreation" and then select your state and nearest location on the map.



# Dredging up the past



Photo by C.J. Allen

Lt. Col. John Rovero (from left), Joe Faloretti, Jamie Kordack, Mike Curran and Merlon Bassett wait patiently to start marching in the Bunker Hill Day Parade in Charlestown, Mass., in this June 18, 2000 photo.

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