

Spring 2010

## Letter from the Editor Spring/Summer 2010

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## Happy Summer, all!

Although I mean it sincerely, it seems hollow, almost flippant to send out that wish when we are all devastated by images of the horrific *BP Deepwater Horizon* oil spill in the Gulf and its monstrous consequences to the wildlife and humans who depend on the ocean. Recently I was astonished to learn that there is a gambling web site where users can bet on which animal species will most likely become extinct due to the spill. Most likely odds (4/5), are on losing the endangered Kemp's Ridley sea turtle for all time. This doubly saddened me as these majestic turtles are sometimes visitors to Long Island Sound, and also, I hate to think that anyone wants to cash in on their demise. I decided to find out more, so I looked up figures collected by NOAA, the Coast Guard and other spill partners on impacted animals. Within the spill impact area then, 278 sea turtles had been reported. (That means, the ones they could find washed up or in the spewing and spreading gunk.) Of those, 232 were stranded dead animals. Another 20 were stranded and alive, at least when counted; all were coated in oil. Some were indeed the Kemp's Ridley; others loggerheads or green turtles. Twenty-five more turtles, dead or alive, were found in the murky waters. The good news is that a few turtles (20 or so) survived and were cleaned up and sent away for rehabilitation. Whether there will still be a surviving population capable of breeding is another question. I read that 29 dead dolphins were found, and then I couldn't bear to go on checking to see how badly bluefin tuna and pelicans have fared.

At the same time, NOAA reports the closure of 37% of the entire Gulf of Mexico's economic exclusion zone to fishing. For different reasons, a 5-year moratorium on lobstering is being proposed for southern New England, to help dwindling stocks recover.

As if that weren't enough disaster, NOAA predicts an "extremely active" hurricane season for the Atlantic basin this year. The Atlantic Ocean sea surface temperatures are above normal, with record highs up to 4° above average, making cyclone generation more likely. Latest models suggest that future New England hurricanes will pack a bigger whallop than those of the past. Thus, we should all try to be prepared for the worst this hurricane season.

Despite this tragedy and uncertainty, we go on with our daily lives, breaking into a smile now and then, and so I thought Milan Bull's colorful piece on birding in Connecticut with his vibrant photos would not only cheer us up, but also inspire us to get some healthy outdoor exercise too. Miley notes that birds bring both color and song to our lives, and what could be better than that?

Another remedy for us to feel good and help the environment too is to get out and get involved in the International Coastal Cleanup. This year, Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound and its partners are organizing cleanups in many locations around Connecticut, slated to take place on September 25. Two of the oiled sea turtles I mentioned earlier were also entangled in marine debris. Beach cleanups really help reduce that debris, and all ages can join in. Contact organizer Kierran Broatch at Save the Sound for more information.

As for me, I don't gamble but I'm rooting for the Ridleys.



Kemp's Ridley sea turtle

Kim Bassos-Hull, Mote Marine Lab

'Til next time,

*Peg Van Patten*

*Wrack Lines* editor