

at the road entrance to the Aquarium. The Spring plant sale was very successful, and they continue their bi-weekly trash pick-up. They also had a Christmas tree for the Hospice Festival of Trees.

The new officers for 1991-1992 are Joan Dawson, President; Marjorie Sellers, 1st Vice President; Lois Jean O'Keefe, 2nd Vice President; Maggie Johnson, Recording Secretary; Jean Jané, Corresponding Secretary and Marge Michael as Treasurer.

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BOATERS AND THEIR FRIENDS - attend an island party Sunday, July 21, at 4:00 p.m. until flood time. Location is the island south of the Bluffs between ICW markers green 7 and red 8. Get there on anything that floats. Bring food and drink. Low tide about 12:30 p.m., high about 7:00 p.m. Five days before full moon. Any questions call 247-6381 or 6260 and ask for the Commodore.

Also attend an island party Tuesday, August 20th at 3:00 p.m. until flood time - same location as above. Let's try Tuesday as it is not so busy in the sound. Any questions - call 247-6120.

OWLS PATIENT OF THE MONTH: GREATER SHEARWATER

For two years, we have been alarmed by the ever-increasing number of common loons being admitted to OWLS in the spring. The birds all show the same symptoms; severe emaciation, weakness, and liver damage; the mortality rate has been almost 100%. Bodies sent to the National Wildlife Laboratory for autopsy were thoroughly tested; lead-, mercury-, and pesticide-poisonings were ruled out. No one could identify the strange disease... but after all, it was just one species.

This spring, Northern Gannets with the same symptoms began to come in; then in June, Greater Shearwaters. Now we're talking about birds who spend most of their lives 50 miles out in the ocean [even their nests are on remote islands] and dive 100 feet to catch fish!! Wildlife is far more sensitive to changes in the environment than we are; whatever was affecting these birds could also be affecting us.

Both Federal and State budgets have been cut so much that there is no funding available to do post-mortem studies on wildlife. It was up to OWLS [and our limited resources] to do our own research. We picked one Shearwater who seemed healthier than the others, and made him our "guinea pig". We experimented with new tube-feeding diets and drug therapies; we sent blood samples off for analysis [at our expense]; we made many long-distance calls trying to interest experts in this "mystery disease". Currently, we are working with the Wildlife Clinic at Tufts University, the avian medicine department at N. C. State, and a Canadian wildlife vet. Reports are beginning to come in of large numbers of dead loons and gannets in Virginia and Minnesota. People are starting to pay attention...because we at OWLS "made a big noise".

Our test shearwater has recovered - the only one so far. Last week, Olympus Dive Center took us to the Gulf Stream on one of their boats to release the bird. Hopefully, his blood and his treatment history will help us find out what is killing our oceanic birds...and perhaps poisoning us, too.

SPECIAL THANKS TO: Olympus Dive Center for transporting a bird to freedom. Lessie Davis for all her extra hours in caring for one very sick shearwater.