



Visitor Programs and Events

Spring 2016

Sandy Hook, New Jersey

Find Your Park, National Park Week and the Centennial Celebration Did you Find Your Park?

Have you ever thought about what makes a park “yours?” Is it proximity or convenience, some place nearby where you go to rest, relax and recharge? Is it a special place that requires planning and effort to reach, perhaps far away? Or is it a state of mind that you can bring on whenever you are in a special place?

We know from talking with our wonderful visitors that Gateway, with its nature, vast beaches, open spaces, trails and its historic structures, provides a special place for many of you. With visitation figures hovering around eight million people per year, we are in the top three or four for visitation in the NPS, so we must be on the “I found my park” list for many of you. City dwellers in our area have a great desire to find park space. To see what other people have found, and to share “your park” go to www.findyourpark.com and have a look.

The annual National Park Week celebration, April 16- 24, is also the launch pad for the centennial celebration as the nation salutes and celebrates the 100 year anniversary of the NPS. As you might imagine we have some special programs and events planned for the summer season including some events occurring during the spring. We are producing a special Centennial Celebration Brochure which will be published for National Park Week.

At Sandy Hook, there is the Annual Coastal Defense Weekend and Ocean Fun Day to occur May 20-22. This celebration includes an evening Lantern Tour, a World War II Harbor Defense “Field March” Tour, and open houses at several batteries. Ocean Fun Day, sponsored by the New Jersey Sea Grant Consortium offers a day-long series of activities for the entire family. See the Sandy Hook Guide for details of these and other program offerings.



At Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge we have some special programs for kids planned: On Sunday March 6 at 1:00 PM, we have an Owl Adventure including a hike outside. Stick around for the Harp Petting Zoo Program at 3PM—you can see and hear and touch the harps that Mia Theodoratus will bring for show and tell.

On Sunday March 20, join us for a reading of *Sleigh Bells in Springtime* by Jessica R. Kratz, local author and NYC Parks and Recreation Ranger from Staten Island, who will be with us at 3:30PM. Find out what the reference to sleigh bells might be. Also celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the International Migratory Bird Treaty Act with a day of fun activities for the entire family, including bird-house building, birding walks, live bird demonstrations with Volunteers for Wildlife. Then join us to help re-plant the West Pond bird blind with native plants. Event is all day from 9AM to 4PM.

At Staten Island, on May 15 at Great Kills Park, join us for a Junior Bioblitz- Celebrate International Migratory Birds 9:30 AM. Working

The Protector, photo by Robert B. Hillman, an entry in Photo Contest, 2014.

with an expert, help to create a bird and plant checklist to use as you explore various habitats.

In Staten Island we are also offering a special Centennial Series: *Discussing the Untold Stories of the National Park Service*. These five talks on weekends in March and April will be given at the Fort Wadsworth Visitor Center.

On Wednesday May 25, the first day of Fleet Week, there is no better vantage point to watch the parade of ships enter New York City’s Harbor than the Overlook at Fort Wadsworth. A US Coast Guard representative will narrate the passing ships, and there will be an exhibit as well. Stick around for tours of Fort Tompkins. See the Staten Island Guide for details of these and other program offerings.

Enjoy Spring in Your Park, and stay safe...remember no swimming until the lifeguards are back on duty, Memorial Day Weekend.

--C. Markis

Sandy Hook Lighthouse & Keepers Quarters

Visitor Center Hours

Daily, 10 AM - 4 PM, March 1 – 5
Daily, 9 AM – 5 PM, March 6 →
The 1883 Keepers Quarters has exhibits on New Jersey Lighthouses. Tours are offered first-come first-served starting at 1 PM, with the last tour at 3:30 PM; 4:30 PM starting March 6. You must be at least 48 inches tall to climb the tower. A video in the adjacent barn is always available.

Nike Missile Radar Site

Parking Lot L at Horseshoe Cove
Saturdays, April 23, 30 & May 7, 14
Sundays, April 10 & May 22
12 PM – 4 PM
Tour the site where radar once guided nuclear armed Nike missiles during the Cold War era. Veterans of the Nike System serve as tour guides, pointing out and explaining all the radars and controls used to steer the Nike Guided Missiles.

MARCH

Seal and Waterfowl Winter Walk

Building #18, Littoral Society Headquarters
Saturday, March 5
11 AM – 1PM
Join the Littoral Society on a trek throughout Sandy Hook to observe the seals and waterfowl that overwinter in New Jersey. The group will car caravan to multiple locations. Remember to bring binoculars. Afterwards warm up at Littoral Society Headquarters with snacks and toasty beverages. Fee based program: call 732-872-0055 for more information and reservations. ♥ 1 mile.

American Woodcock – Sights and Sounds

Sandy Hook Lighthouse
Saturday, March 12
5 PM – 7 PM
Join a park ranger to listen and look for the aerial courtship displays of the American Woodcock. Bring binoculars and wear comfortable clothes. ♥ 1 mile.

Stars of Sandy Hook Jupiter at Opposition

Parking Lot E (Beach Plaza)
Saturday, March 19
8 PM – 10 PM
Join a park ranger and the Amateur Astronomers Association to view Jupiter, which will be at its closest approach to Earth and its face will be fully illuminated by the Sun. It will be brighter than any other time of the year. Dress for the weather and bring telescopes.

Army Ground Forces Association

Battery Gunnison
Saturday, March 19
12 PM – 5 PM
The Army Ground Forces Association, dressed in 1943 era coast artillery uniform, is a volunteer group restoring and interpreting Battery Gunnison/New Peck and its 6-inch guns. Visitors are invited to stop by on this work and training day to chat and learn more about the historic time period of March 1943, when work was underway for the conversion of Battery Gunnison/New Peck.

Spring Equinox Walk on Sandy Hook

Building #18, Littoral Society Headquarters
Sunday, March 20
5 PM – 7 PM
It is called the equinox because it's one of two days in the year when daylight and darkness agree to equally share the 24 hours in a day. Celebrate the equinox with an early evening walk on the Hook. Free, call the American Littoral Society at (732) 291-0055 to make a reservation. ♥ 2 miles.

Lighthouse to Lighthouse Tour

Start at Sandy Hook Lighthouse; conclude at Twin Lights Historic Site
Sunday, March 27
5 PM – 7 PM
Park Historians Margaret Carlsen and Thomas Hoffman lead this special tour through the Sandy Hook and Twin Lights lighthouses (respectively). First tour the Sandy Hook Lighthouse then car caravan to Twin Lights. Reservations required, please call (732) 872-5970.

Seal and Waterfowl Winter Walk

Building #18, Littoral Society Headquarters
Wednesday, March 30
11 AM – 1PM
Join the Littoral Society on a trek throughout Sandy Hook to observe the seals and waterfowl that overwinter in New Jersey, and remember to bring binoculars. The group will car caravan to multiple locations. Afterwards warm up at Littoral Society Headquarters with snacks and toasty beverages. Fee based program: call 732-872-0055 for more information and reservations. ♥ 1 mile .

APRIL

Holly Forest Walk

Parking Lot E
Friday, April 15
4 PM – 6 PM
Some of the oldest American Holly trees in the country can be found among Sandy Hook's nearly 300 acres of holly forest. We will hike through the restricted 64-acre maritime forest area and get to see an undisturbed holly forest with some of its oldest, rarest, and largest trees. Waterproof footwear is recommended. ♥ 1 mile.

Surf Fishing Clinic

Building #18, Littoral Society Headquarters
Saturday, April 16
8 AM – 10 AM
Join Jeff Dement, Tagging Director, for a day of surf fishing and instruction on the beach. He will cover the basics of casting, knot tying, lure/bait selection, and "reading" a beach. All skill levels are welcome. Rods, reels and tackle will be provided. Children under 18 are welcome with a supervising adult. Bring lunch. This is a fee-based program. Call (732) 291-0055 to make a reservation.

Celebrate the NPS Centennial

Junior Ranger Trail Steward

Spermaceti Cove - US Life Saving Station LOT (Between Lot D and Lot E)

Saturday, April 23

11 AM – 12:30 PM

Join the park rangers to celebrate National Park Week. Learn about the plants and animals along the Old Dune Trail, and clean up their habitat at the same time. ♥ 1 mile.

Army Ground Forces Association

Battery Gunnison /New Peck Preserved

Saturday, April 23

12 PM – 5 PM

The Army Ground Forces Association is a volunteer group in 1943 era coast artillery uniform restoring and interpreting Battery Gunnison/New Peck and its 6-inch guns. Visitors are invited to stop by on this work and training day to chat and learn more about the historic time period of April 1943, the preparation for the May 1943 initial activation of Battery Gunnison/New Peck, and the restoration and preservation projects currently underway.

Going Bunkers

Spermaceti Cove Parking Lot (Between Lot D and Lot E)

Sunday, April 24

2 PM – 4 PM

Join the park historian for a tour of Battery Mills, a WWI coastal 12-inch gun battery. Bring flashlights/head lamps, and wear comfortable shoes.

Arbor Day Tree Walk

Building #18, Littoral Society Headquarters

Friday, April 29

4 PM – 6 PM

Join the naturalists of the American Littoral Society and explore Sandy Hook's unique ecosystem. Bring your binoculars and cameras, to capture the different flora and fauna of Sandy Hook. Free, call (732) 291-0055 to make a reservation. ♥ 2 miles.

Boy Scout Merit Badge Program: Oceanography

Building #22, NJ Sea Grant Consortium

Saturday, April 30

10 AM – 2 PM

Explore Sandy Hook and experience the science of the ocean during this four hour "hands-on" program, conducted both outdoors and in the NJS GC laboratory classroom. Open to individual boy scouts. Advance registration required. Register online at www.njseagrant.org/education/scout-programs or contact Jody Sackett: JSackett@njseagrant.org or 732-872-1300, ext. 20. This is a fee-based program.

Celebrate the NPS Centennial

Spring Beach Sweep Clean Ocean Action

Parking Lot D

Saturday, April 30

9 AM – 12:30 PM

Clean Ocean Action's Beach Sweeps is a biannual, statewide beach cleanup that occurs at over 70 locations throughout the state of New Jersey. Each beach sweeper becomes a citizen scientist for the day as they record each piece of debris that they collect. This turns a one-day, cleanup event, into a legacy of data that impacts research and legislation. For more information, please visit Clean Ocean Action's website: www.cleanoceanaction.org.

MAY

Secret Places on Sandy Hook

Parking Lot M

Sunday, May 1

2 PM – 4 PM

Take a walk with a park ranger to explore the historic rapid fire batteries in Fort Hancock. Remember to bring insect repellent. Call (732) 872-5970 for details and reservations. ♥ 0.5 mile

Boy Scout Merit Badge Program:

Environmental Science

Building #22, NJ Sea Grant Consortium

Saturday, May 14

10 AM – 3PM

Discover the ecology of Sandy Hook's maritime environment in this highly active five hour program, conducted both outdoors and in the NJS GC laboratory classroom. Open to all individual boy scouts. Advance registration is required. Register online at www.njseagrant.org/education/scout-programs or contact Jody Sackett: JSackett@njseagrant.org or 732-872-1300, ext. 20. This is a fee-based program.

Stars of Sandy Hook

Parking Lot E (Beach Plaza)

Saturday, May 14

8 PM – 10 PM

Join a park ranger and the Amateur Astronomers Association to view Mars and the crescent moon. Dress for the weather and bring telescopes.

Full Moon Sky Watch

Building #18, Littoral Society

Headquarters

Thursday, May 19

6 PM – 8 PM

May is the month of the Flower Moon. Learn about the moon and stars, and their influence on local creatures at the shore. Learn tips for star-gazing on the beach and spotting satellites. ♥ 2 miles.

Horseshoe Crab Walk

Parking Lot B

Friday, May 20

6 PM – 8 PM

Get up close and personal with a living fossil. Take an evening walk to look for spawning horseshoe crabs. Wear foot gear that can get wet. Free, call the American Littoral Society to make a reservation (732) 291-0055. ♥ 1 mile.

Twilight By the Bay

Building #1, History House Porch

Saturday, May 28

7 PM – 8:30 PM

Experience Fort Hancock at twilight with a park ranger. Learn about Fort Hancock's significance over the past 250 years. Parking is available behind History House. ♥ 1.5 miles

Celebrate the NPS Centennial

**COASTAL DEFENSE
WEEKEND
OCEAN FUN DAY
MAY 20 – May 22, 2016**

**World War II Harbor Defense
Lantern Tour**

Battery Gunnison/New Peck

Building #28, Post Guardhouse

Friday, May 20

6:30 PM – 9:30 PM

Volunteer living historians from the Army Ground Forces Association (AGFA) will be in uniform as World War II era coast artillery soldiers and will take you for a walk that includes several Harbor Defense gun batteries of Fort Hancock, highlighting Battery Gunnison/New Peck. Bring a flashlight and wear sturdy shoes. ♥1.5 miles.

**World War II Harbor Defense
“Field March” Tour**

Battery Gunnison/New Peck

Saturday, May 21

12 PM – 4 PM

AGFA will be in uniform as World War II era coast artillery soldiers and will take you for a “tactical walk” across Fort Hancock. This includes the “disappearing search lights”, fortifications near Fishing Beach, Batteries Kingman and Mills and multiple remnants of fortifications along the route. Wear good walking shoes and bring a bottle of water. Reservations at info@armygroundforces.org. This is a fee-based program (\$15 fee required). ♥ 4 miles.

**Battery Gunnison /New Peck
Preserved**

Sunday, May 22

11 AM – 4:30 PM

AGFA in WWII uniform bring Battery Gunnison/New Peck and its 6-inch guns to life, as if they were in final modernization and activation in May 1943. Learn about Army Harbor Defense Operations, the interior battery vintage electric system, and Fort Hancock Army medical support in May 1943. Visitors can participate in loading the guns, tracking ships, learn artillery math and experience soldier life.

Celebrate the NPS Centennial

Mortar Battery & Battery Potter

Sunday, May 22

12 PM – 4 PM

Batteries will be open with tours provided by park rangers and volunteers.

Ocean Fun Day

Building #22, New Jersey Sea Grant

Sunday, May 22

11 AM – 3 PM

Spend the day with your family enjoying hands-on fun while learning about our environment. Join NJSGC and their Ocean Fun Days partners for this popular pre-summer event. Learn how to use a seine net or join the youth fishing clinic. Test your boating safety knowledge or become a beach comber and search for natural treasures on a guided tour. Hear from NJ scientists and researchers all about the inner workings of the ocean and how to protect it for generations to come. The event includes dozens of exhibits and children’s activities. Free admission.

REGISTRATION OPEN

Marine Science Day Camp

NJ Sea Grant Consortium,
Building #22

June – August

9 AM – 3 PM (weekdays)

Registration is now open for NJ Sea Grant Consortium’s Marine Science Day Camp. This camp is for children who love the ocean and want to learn more about it. The camp is held at Building #22 in Fort Hancock and led by experienced science educators for boys and girls in grades 3 through 9. Camp begins June 27. For details including registration information visit our website www.njseagrant.org or call 732-872-1300, ext. 19. This is a fee-based program.

--end of listings--

Do you receive email notifications of Gateway’s programs and events? If you are not on our mailing list and would like to be, please send a message to Charles_Markis@nps.gov, with ‘program guide’ in the subject line and we will add you.

The ♥ symbol denotes a hike or walk of moderate activity. Improve your health, as you enjoy your park.