



# ATLANTIC MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Promoting Conservation Through Action

## NEWSLETTER

ISSUE TWO | FALL/WINTER 2017



### ON THE BEACH

Monitoring and cleaning the beaches to lead the way toward a trash-free marine environment

### STRANDING UPDATE

What we are learning about the health of marine mammals and sea turtles in our waters

### INSPIRING YOU

Engaging and motivating the community to take action in conservation



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## A LETTER FROM OUR CHIEF SCIENTIST

Dear Supporter,

The last year has brought around many changes and a ton of firsts. Since our inception a little over one year ago, we have grown from four volunteers to a team of five staff members and 28 volunteers who have dedicated thousands of hours to respond to the issues facing marine mammals and sea turtles in New York.

Since our last newsletter published this past May, Atlantic Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) has received authorization to respond to live and deceased stranded sea turtles, in addition to marine mammals. Our staff and volunteers are dedicated to identifying the causes of stranding events and identifying the ways we may be able to mitigate these issues. Something we have learned is that the occurrence of stranded deceased marine animals is often overshadowed by live stranding events. This year alone we have responded to more than 120 deceased marine animals, 10 of which were large whale strandings around Long Island from the Rockaways to Orchard Beach, and Montauk to Orient Point. Coupling this with increased sightings of humpback whales and bottlenose dolphins, it is apparent that our ecosystems are changing.

Over the last 25 years we have seen the introduction of gray seals to the area and an increasing number of harbor seals. We have seen the building of ecotourism in the form of seal and whale watching, once sequestered to the east end of Long Island now operating out of Freeport and the Rockaways. During the summer of 2017, a new seal watching venture emerged out of Greenport. This project was able to document the year-round occurrence of gray seals in New York waters and proves to be a valuable resource to identify the changes in our environment. This summer also marked the opening of the newest park in New York, Hallock State Park Preserve. This park provides AMCS and the public access to a portion of Long Island Sound beaches previously not monitored. Through the educational lectures provided here, we hope to increase the number of beach monitors in the park and along the shore, a project that is aimed at dedicating resources to finding cold stunned sea turtles to ensure they can get rapid access to the care they need. I encourage you to join us at our public lectures, beach clean ups, and seal cruises to learn how when we work together, we can promote conservation and save marine life.

Sincerest regards,  
Robert A. DiGiovanni, Jr.



## COMMUNITY ACTION UPDATE

Together, we have made positive strides toward a trash-free world through beach cleanups, inspiring the next generation to become stewards of the environment through lectures, and educating the community on our marine environment and its inhabitants.

Though our work is far from done, we are proud to share our recent successes.

### WE HAVE BEEN...

**Cleaning 45+ miles of beaches** including Bailies Beach in Mattituck, Cupsogue Beach County Park, Hallock State Park Preserve, Meschutt Beach in Hampton Bays, Patchogue River, Shinnecock East County Park in Southampton, Sunken Meadow State Park, West Meadow Beach in Brookhaven, Wading River State Park, and more.

**Educating the public through marine mammal and sea turtle lectures** at Downs Farm Preserve, East Islip Summer Camp, Hampton Bays Public Library, Hallock State Park Preserve, Kings Park Public Library, Masters School, Peconic Community School, Pratt University, and Westhampton Library.

.....  
**WE HAVE COLLECTED  
550 LBS OF TRASH!**  
.....

We're only just getting started.  
Check out how you can get involved in  
our programs at [amseas.org/get-involved](https://amseas.org/get-involved)



## STRANDING UPDATE

Since January, AMCS has responded to 121 animal strandings, including 44 dolphins, porpoises, and whales, 37 sea turtles, and 40 seals

In the Northeast, there are two ongoing Unusual Mortality Events (UME) affecting humpback whales and right whales. AMCS Necropsy Program Director Kimberly Durham has been designated by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as the onsite coordinator for the humpback whale UME. She is also a North Atlantic Right Whale Necropsy Team Leader, and the NYS Sea Turtle Stranding Coordinator.

Without understanding why animals are washing up dead we cannot make informed decisions on our impacts. Necropsies provide insight into the health, movement, and status of a population. With this information, we can better educate the public on the marine environment and its inhabitants while also expanding research programs.

NYS Stranding Hotline: 631-369-9829  
Report a sighting: [sightings@amseas.org](mailto:sightings@amseas.org)



## PARTNERSHIPS & RESEARCH

Working together is essential in the work we do. Whether it be partnering with other organizations in the stranding network or coordinating with local authorities, the US Coast Guard, and more, we're proud to work with others in the stranding community.

As promoting conservation of the marine environment is no easy task, partnerships within the stranding network have proven to be crucial. This past June, AMCS Chief Scientist Robert DiGiovanni joined Pacific Marine Mammal Center in California to satellite tag and release a rehabilitated sea lion. He also participated in the satellite tagging and release of a rehabilitated seal

with Marine Mammals of Maine in September.

AMCS is also working with Mystic Aquarium's Animal Rescue Team, and Marine Mammals of Maine on a collaborative training initiative that provides resources for large whale response and necropsy examinations for New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and southern Maine. Necropsy examinations require many skilled personnel to gather the level of information necessary to determine a cause of death and any relevant health issues. By working together, all of these organizations gain continued training and experience as stranding events increase in each of our geographic response areas.





## COLD STUN SEASON

There are four species of sea turtles found in local New York waters. AMCS biologists have responded to 37 deceased sea turtles in 2017. Our education efforts focus on reminding the public that when these animals can be found in our waters, we need to share the environment responsibly. While NY waters provide important developmental habitat for turtles during the summer months, they should migrate to warmer climates during the fall, and the animals that do not migrate in time need your help during cold stun season.

Cold stunning, which is similar to hypothermia, makes it difficult for sea turtles to eat, swim, and migrate south to warmer waters. These are threatened and endangered species that face threats of illness and death during their time in New York from early fall through the winter months.

### YOU CAN HELP!

Join AMCS at sea turtle lectures and beach monitoring walks throughout Long Island to teach the public how they can help save these animals. Adopt your local beach and walk as much as possible to search for sea turtles in danger. Always report your efforts to AMCS biologists so we can determine how much beach is covered and what hotspot sea turtle areas might need more walkers.



# WHAT'S COMING UP IN 2018



We are thrilled to see people embrace conservation of the marine environment, and we're looking forward to many events across New York this fall and winter.

From the North Fork, South Fork, and Shelter Island Fire Island National Seashore, Port Jefferson, Brookhaven, and beyond, we're talking to libraries and school groups, joining fairs and festivals, and so much more.

Join us by checking out [amseas.org/events](http://amseas.org/events).

Interested in having our biologists speak to your group?  
Contact us by emailing [education@amseas.org](mailto:education@amseas.org).

Join us on a seal cruise in Shinnecock Bay leaving from Stony Brook Southampton in 2018!  
Scheduled dates include: January 13, February 17, March 3, March 24, April 8



## 2018 GOALS

**1. Have a presence on 60 miles of Long Island's shoreline** conducting beach cleanups and monitoring

**2. Increase our volunteer program to 50 active volunteers.**

*Join us: [amseas.org/volunteer](http://amseas.org/volunteer)*

**3. Obtain a truck trailer to support stranding operations and investigations** into the cause of mortality of sea turtles, seals, whales and dolphins in New York and surrounding waters.

On average, about 100 animals strand on New York shores or become entangled in marine debris each year, but the frequency and complexity of strandings are increasing every year. AMCS is looking for support to acquire a truck and tow behind trailer for a Mobile Response Unit (MRU). The MRU will enable the response team to take all necessary equipment to a large whale stranding in Montauk or Coney Island, a beach monitoring and cleanup program in Orient or Brooklyn, or transfer cold stunned sea turtles, as requested by NOAA, throughout the region to rehabilitation centers. AMCS educators will lead interactive discussions across Long Island to inspire change in human behaviors that will positively impact the environment and build partners in the community. Our beach monitoring efforts will ensure that more sea turtles will be found in time for intervention, and volumes of marine debris will be removed from the environment, therefore no longer able to harm marine life.

We have made a great start in raising funds for this program, but we still need your help to reach our goals! Become a member of AMCS today. Your support brings us one step closer to making a positive impact in New York's marine environment and the stranding community.

**We're almost there, and you can help! Visit [amseas.org/take-action](http://amseas.org/take-action)**



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## Thank you for your support!



NYS Stranding Hotline: (631) 369-9829

Report a Sighting: [sightings@amseas.org](mailto:sightings@amseas.org)

Want to Volunteer? Visit [amseas.org/volunteer](http://amseas.org/volunteer)

Become a Member: [amseas.org/memberships](http://amseas.org/memberships)



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