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A Jewel in Our Midst: a photo essay of the Connecticut River

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A Jewel in Our Midst: a photo essay of the Lower Connecticut River

Nancy C. Balcom and Juliana Barrett

What's so special about the lower Connecticut River? Everything! Its unique tidal marshes, ecology, geology, scenic areas, and fascinating history make it a treasure to residents and visitors alike. It is one of the 1,713 "Wetlands of International Importance" designated throughout the world, and it's right here in our state. Through the efforts of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and The Nature Conservancy, the Connecticut River Estuary and Tidal Wetlands Complex was recognized under the Ramsar Convention in 1994. The Ramsar Convention (named for Ramsar, Iran where it was signed in 1971), is an intergovernmental treaty focused on the conservation and environmentally-sound use of critical wetlands and their resources.

Connecticut Sea Grant Program recently received a grant from Environmental Concern, Inc., on behalf of the Ramsar Committee, to reinvigorate public awareness and appreciation for the Connecticut River Estuary and its surrounding tidal wetlands. Funding for the grant comes from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's *Wildlife Without Borders Global Programs*. As part of the grant, Connecticut Sea Grant is promoting wetland conservation of this estuary through programs that engage and educate municipal officials and teachers in towns bordering the lower Connecticut River, as well as residents throughout the State. Connecticut Sea Grant is

documenting the characteristics of these wetlands and capturing images of the area's natural beauty, recognizing that not everyone has the means or opportunity to experience the beauty of the lower River's brackish and freshwater tidal marshes firsthand. The following pages provide a glimpse into the facets of this wetland jewel. Enjoy!

Editor's Note: Connecticut Sea Grant is creating an educational Power-Point presentation about the habitats, processes, wildlife, and wetland values of the lower Connecticut River. The presentation will be made available on compact disc for middle/high school teachers in 2009.

For more information, contact Juliana Barrett at juliana.barrett@uconn.edu.



Pickerel weed

Nancy Balcom



Cormorant swimming

Nancy Balcom



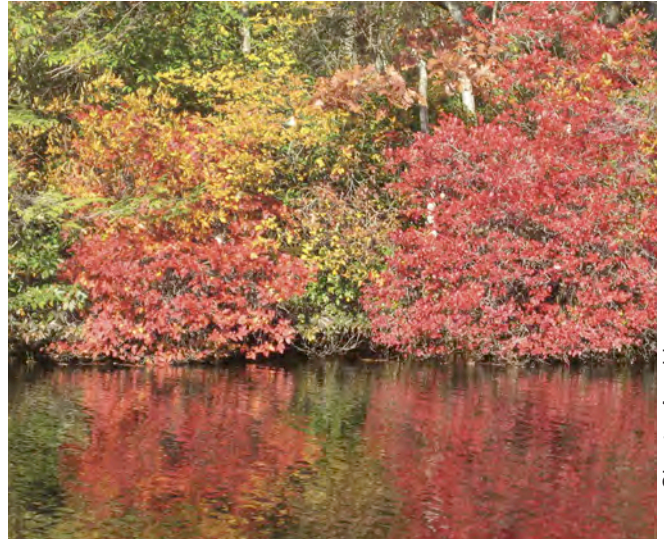
Painted turtle near Deep River

Nancy Balcom

Nancy Balcom



Cordgrass along a tidal creek



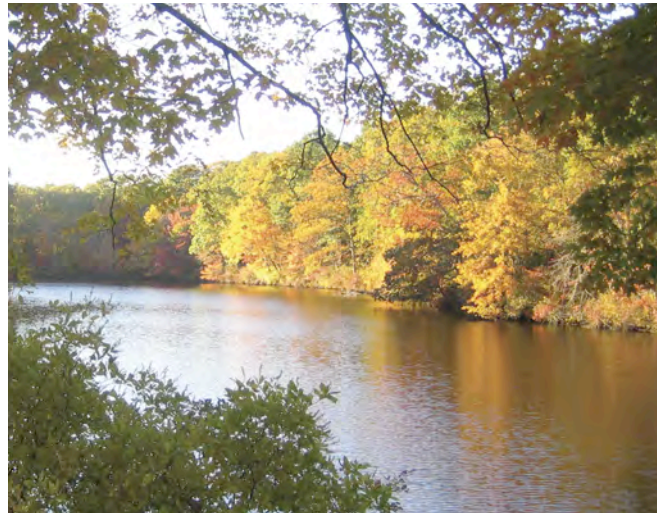
Chester Arnold

Autumn paints the river

Juliana Barrett



Four snowy egrets at Great Island Marsh



Chester Arnold

Mill Pond, Essex

Nancy Balcom



A line of bulrushes in a marsh along the river

Nancy Balcom



Wild Rice along the river banks