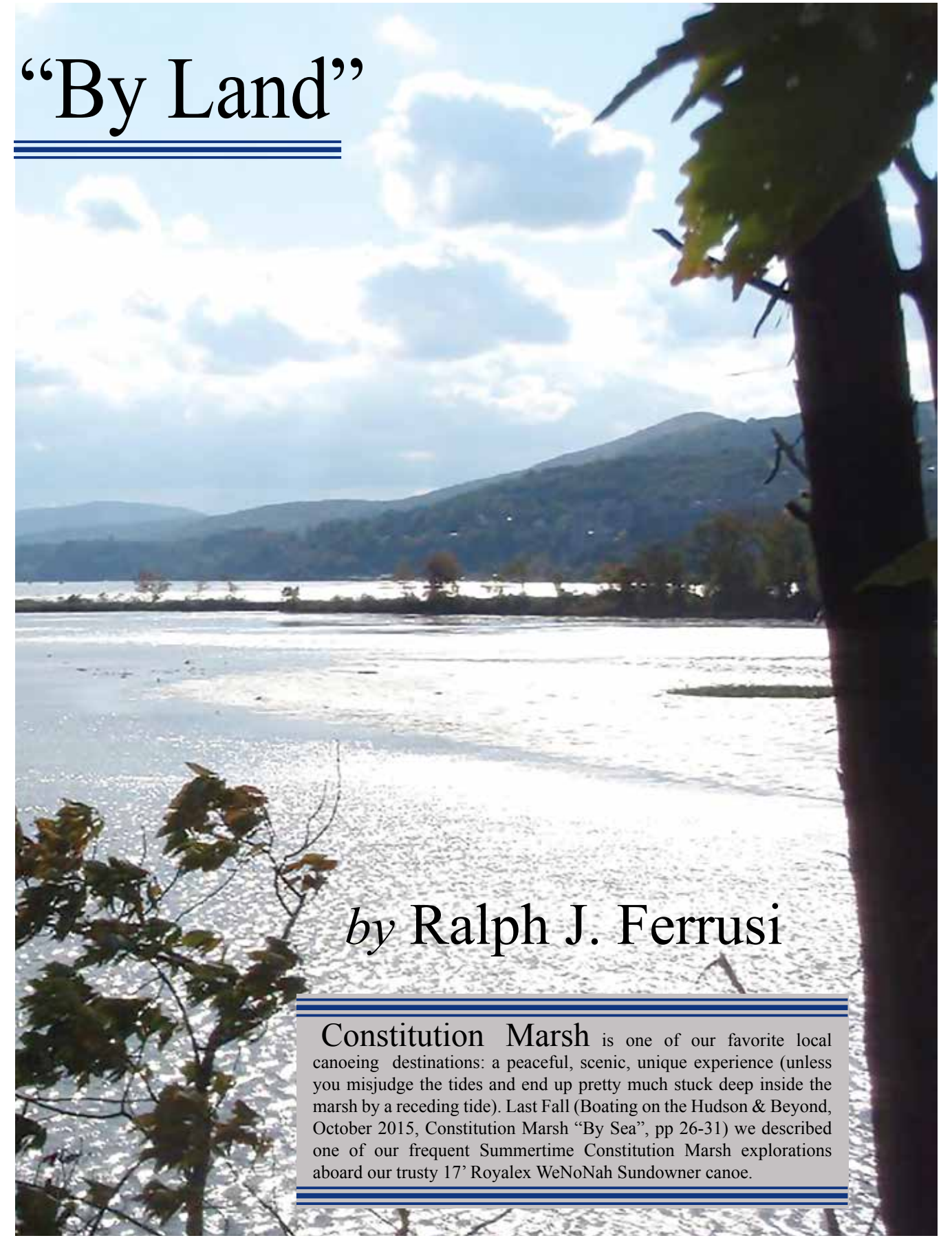


Constitution Marsh



“By Land”



by Ralph J. Ferrusi

Constitution Marsh is one of our favorite local canoeing destinations: a peaceful, scenic, unique experience (unless you misjudge the tides and end up pretty much stuck deep inside the marsh by a receding tide). Last Fall (Boating on the Hudson & Beyond, October 2015, Constitution Marsh “By Sea”, pp 26-31) we described one of our frequent Summertime Constitution Marsh explorations aboard our trusty 17’ Royalex WeNoNah Sundowner canoe.



The marsh is also accessible “By Land” via a short trail in the Constitution Marsh Audubon Center and Sanctuary out to “Jim’s Walk”—a beautifully constructed 700-foot boardwalk out into the heart of the marsh that could be described as a “Walkway ON the Hudson”—built in memory of the late biologist, manager and warden James P. Rod. The boardwalk offers an extraordinary opportunity to actually walk out deep into the marsh, and experience it pretty much as you would in a boat.

Constitution Marsh Audubon Center and Sanctuary (CMACS), a 270-acre tidal marsh managed by Audubon, has been a wildlife sanctuary since 1970. It “provides refuge for breeding and

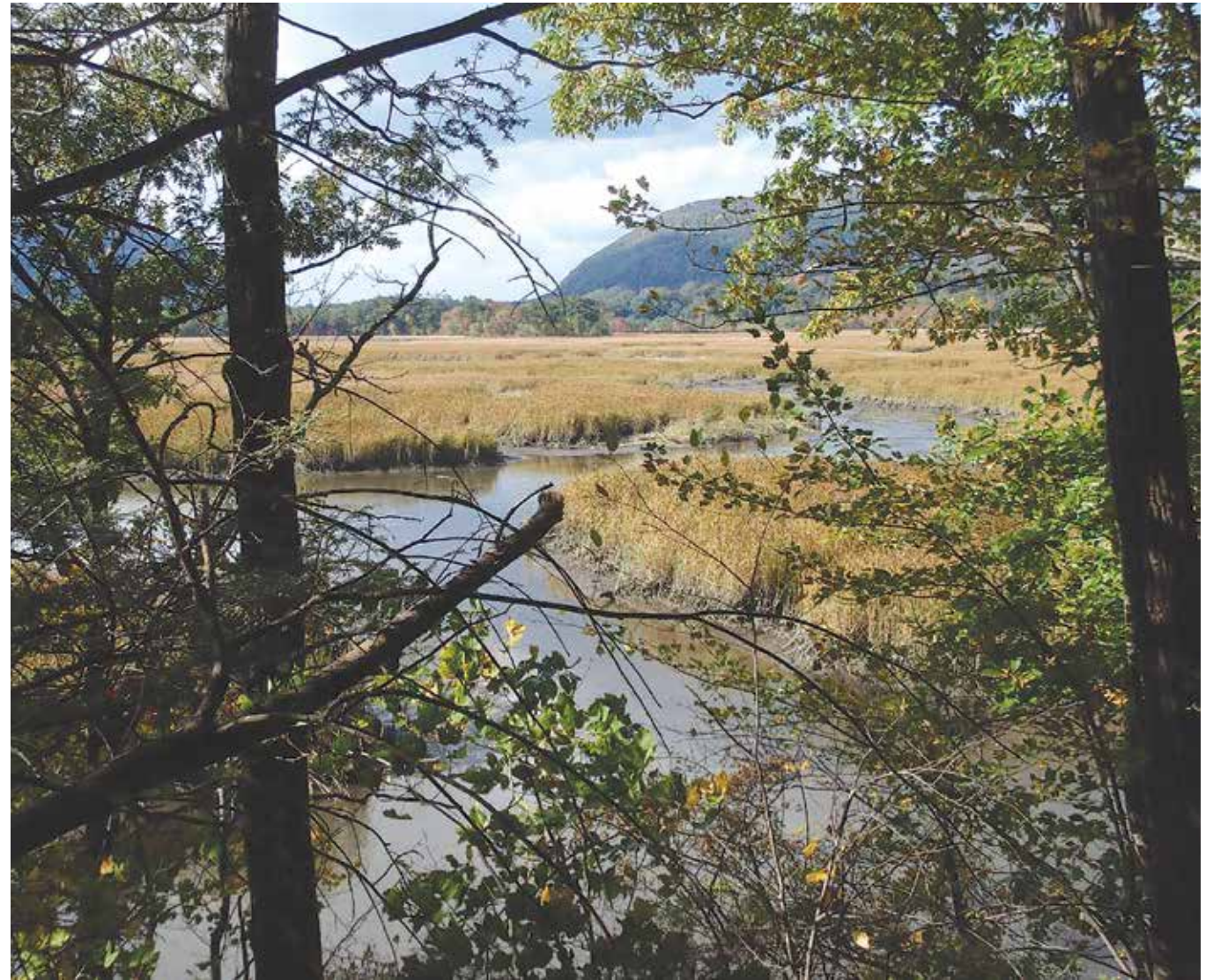
migrant birds and offers irreplaceable habitat for the plants, fish, and other wildlife of the Hudson River estuary. It has been designated an Important Bird Area by Audubon and a Bird Conservation Area by New York State.” The mission of the sanctuary is to provide stewardship of the wetland and to teach others about it. An interesting and informative Education Center is on the grounds. A variety of programs are available for school groups of all ages. A guided public interpretive canoe program is offered (reservations, fees). www.constitutionmarsh.audubon.org

To get to the Center from the south, turn left on (dirt) Indian Brook Road off Route 9D a short distance downhill north of Dicks Castle and the bridge over Indian Brook. From the north, turn right off Route 9D unto Indian Brook Road, south of Cold Spring and just beyond the entrance to Boscobel.

Drive slowly and carefully; the road gets



This quarter-mile dirt road down to the sanctuary is pretty steep.





The boardwalk offers an extraordinary opportunity to actually walk out deep into the marsh,

narrow, and there are a couple of blind turns where you are reminded to sound your horn. You'll eventually reach a T-intersection where, straight ahead, there are eight numbered parking spaces for the Sanctuary. *NOTE that parking here is strictly limited to the eight numbered spaces.* Local police (and probably the locals along the road) keep an eye on this. If you park anywhere else you may be ticketed, or, towed... From my experience, the eight parking places are often full up, even during the week. If you're fortunate enough to get a parking space, head right (downhill) down Warren Landing Road.

This quarter-mile dirt road down to the sanctuary is pretty steep ((and can be pretty rough and rutted); on your way down, keep in mind the walk back UP will be more strenuous than the walk down. At the bottom, the Education Center is the second building on the right. It's well worth a visit if it's open (probably a good idea to check the website or call— (845) 265-2601—there are aquariums and many other interesting displays, and a lot of info about the marsh.

The boardwalk is a short—about a half-mile—mostly easy walk over a low “knob” from the Ed Center. To get to the trail to the marsh and the boardwalk, pick up

the medium-blue diamond-shaped plastic trail markers to the right of the Center and start heading towards the marsh on a smooth, mostly level wood-chipped trail with views out over the marsh to the left. Eventually swing right, and head UP nicely-placed stone steps, fairly steeply (but not overwhelmingly steep) to a can't-pass-it-up photo-op over the marsh and beyond to the left, then at the high point of the trail reach a rustic wooden bench on the right with a Grandstand view of the marsh, the river, and West Point; a great place to sit for a while and soak it all in.

Beyond, the trail starts dropping down to the boardwalk; tread carefully; it's rougher and rockier from here on down. Head out onto the wide, sturdy boardwalk and be amazed and astounded at the unique opportunity to actually walk out into a vast, peaceful Hudson River marshland. There are several benches, informational signs, and a boat landing, and extraordinary marsh-level views of Taurus, Storm King, and the Highlands. This is an extremely peaceful place, and you might want to



spend a good amount of time here, soaking it all in, reflecting or meditating to your own rhythm or to the rhythm of the tides: they change every 12 ½ hours, and rise and fall 3 ½ feet.

A few important things to note: During duck hunting season, hunting is prohibited in the sanctuary, but is legal in much of the marsh, and visiting the marsh this time of year is discouraged. There could be some gunfire nearby. Insects could be a nuisance in warm weather. As usual, be aware of black-legged ticks in the woods. And, sorry Fido, dogs are not allowed.

Get in touch with Ralph at: rjferrusi@frontiernet.net



IN OUR THOUGHTS...

Thomas F. Fitzgerald, Jr.
12-05-16

" Thomas F. Fitzgerald Jr., 62 of Cortlandt Manor, NY born and raised in Peekskill, NY passed away peacefully on December 5, 2016. Mr. Fitzgerald was born in December 1953 in Peekskill, NY to Thomas and Lucy Fitzgerald, educated at Assumption School and Peekskill High school, graduating in 1971. He married Marilyn Hubner in 1981, and soon after the couple was blessed with three children, Dawn, Thomas, and Brendon. During a 41 year career at Con Edison he worked his way up from a Mechanic to Project Manager in Facilities Management, he retired in 2014. Known to many as "Fitzy" or "Captain Tom" he was a proud Vice Commodore of the Cortlandt Yacht Club where he loved yachting and spending time with friends at the club.

He is survived by his wife, Marilyn Fitzgerald, children Dawn, Thomas, Brendon, and his cherished grandson Damien. He is also survived by his five siblings; Patrick Fitzgerald, Kathy Townsend Fitzgerald, Joseph Fitzgerald, Anne Fitzgerald Gile, Elizabeth Fitzgerald Riley; and many beloved nieces and nephews. He is predeceased by his beloved brother Michael Fitzgerald who passed in 2014. He will be dearly missed by all, and remembered for his love and dedication to his family, friends, and colleagues.

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