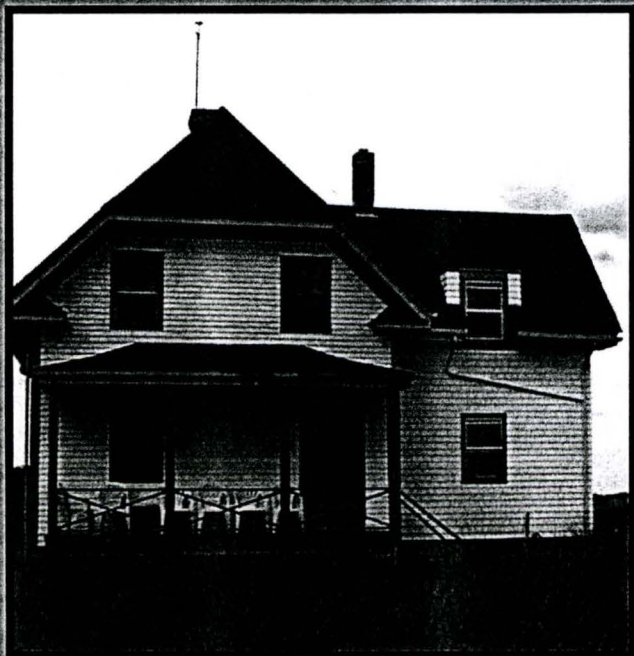
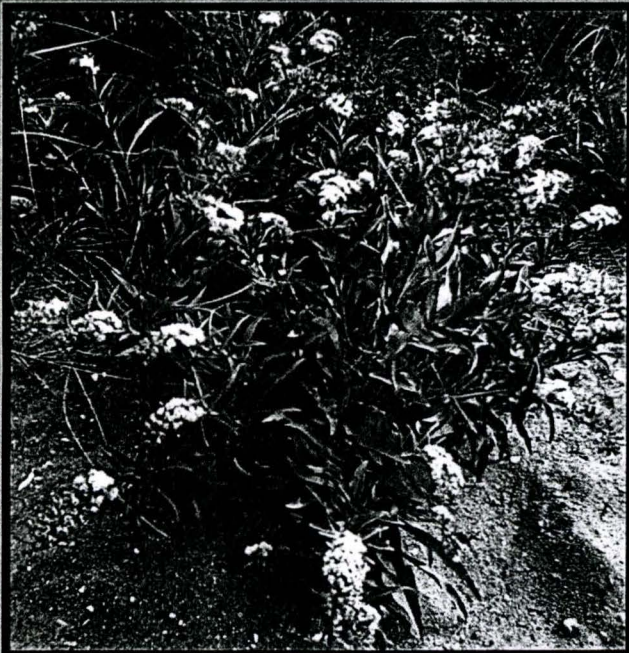


Kelly's Corner

BY KELLY HOBBS



The bass migration is one of the year's top activities for those who love being at the edge of the ocean, and who enjoy sport fishing and nature. Blues thrash, fluke flounder, but the bass glide majestically through the water, proudly displaying their beauty. I have admired and apologized to every bass I have hooked, released or retained. The autumnal equinox readies the waters; the first week of October is the height of the season, and no one likes to miss a day. As I write this article, I am at Race Point Light where I am a volunteer lighthouse keeper for the New England Lighthouse Federation (NELF). It's perfect timing -- the guests at the lighthouse are all fisher folk, too. They are renting the three upstairs bedrooms.

After a social evening of feasting on hors d'oeuvres, fruits and nuts which bookended lasagna and lots of red wine, we were early to bed, cards and books abandoned to ensure a 5am wakeup call. The next morning, everyone was up and out into the pre-dawn landscape of sand and shore. The couples drove to the backshore, and I traveled by foot to the beach by the lighthouse. The sky was starting to lighten, with no red sun yet in view. Four fishermen were on the beach: two fly, two spinning. Within minutes, the flurry started and in the silent excitement we all cast and hooked up bass.

Here, a lull in the fishing is a perfect time to enjoy the beauty of the location. The sky is a brilliant red with the reflection of a rising sun. It's then that the wind picks up and from your warmth you feel the change. You cast, you watch, you listen. An eel fisherman in his circling boat dredges the sandy bottom, and gulls cluster around him for a stray eel. He retrieves rakes full of sand eels (actually, they are fish called sand lances) and fills his boat with the catch to sell to the local baitshop.

The sun rises and its red color pales. The gannets arrive, with their torpedo-like bodies and lengthy stabilizing wings, coasting low over the water until their catch is spotted. They dive like a submarine with a great splash and then up again in the air, pelican-like but more graceful.

The horizon is lined with tuna boats. The four-wheel drives can be heard droning farther behind, switching beaches after the first hit of the big morning tide of the new moon. The land starts to awaken and the bay creatures head to the backshore. Shorebirds -- peeps and sandpipers -- show up at the water's edge as if on cue in this drama of the beach. Greater yellowlegs join in the shore sounds. Song sparrows "strike up the band" with their cheery songs. Goldfinches and catbirds start their day. A marsh wren perches on the railing of the lighthouse porch as I write.

Goldenrod plumes over the sides of a trail well traveled by fox, coyote, rabbit, weasel and mouse. Poison ivy sports seed clus-



ters that resemble tiny, itchy Riesling grapes. Rosehips are well ripened and still delectable...once you have checked for worms. The air is cool on this October day. The sky is clouding and mackereling. The Pilgrim Monument is visible through all these colors, changing from a shadow in the pre-dawn sky, to flame, to gold and finally to the granite it is. The monument, too, weathers one more day as part of the landscape -- the daily activity around it will rise and fall, as will the temperature, wind, light and moisture.

We will all wait for the light and tide at the end of the day -- the end of the low tide and the return of the deep sea to our feet, and we will fish and we will hope and we will enjoy. Anticipation is half the fun! A few, short days from now the bass will be gone. The weather will be cold. The magic of bass fishing will turn to the work of cod, flounder and dab fishing. Others will go to warmer climates to fish. The comfort and the fun of bass fishing will come again with the annual June migration, but June is too far away.

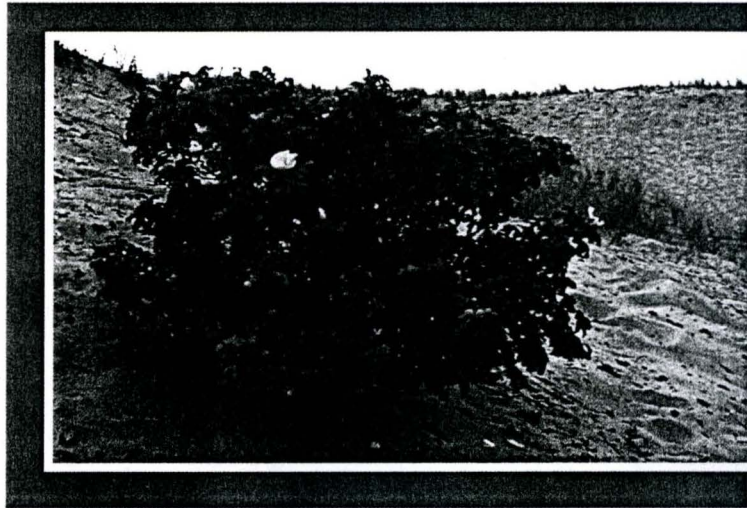
Being centered in this natural beauty with a sole and simple purpose releases the mind from the work or duties or the routine you will pick up after leaving the beach. You watch the gannets again, powerful divers in search of food. A lone monarch butterfly flutters around the area of my casting. I wait, not wanting to damage those delicate wings -- yes, delicate, but intent on carrying this small creature all the way to Mexico. The monarch seems to stay in place, soundlessly treading the breeze. Is it keeping us company for awhile or is it making a decision? With land only feet away and the vast ocean ahead, how will this tiny creature fare where sturdy gannets thrust themselves into chilly waters, where tuna and whale swim beneath, where many a storm will challenge its long and risky voyage? One more flap and the monarch is off, bravely setting course and not looking behind. Monarchs are so much a part of the season now; in 1927, when Henry Beston wrote *The Outermost House* in a beach shack in Eastham, he saw his first monarch and attempted to chase it over the dunes and was left breathless, of course, by the might of its wings.

My attention is now taken by the clouds. They have so many different formations and colors, self-sculpting as they gently float in the light wind and decorating the sky with the exceptional beauty that October brings. Classic paintings come to mind, great myths and battles painted below voluptuous

and accommodating skies. I have heard that many great artists sketched and painted their skies in "October's bright blue weather" for use throughout the year.

A pair of loons dives in search of food, reacting to each other between dives. The loon is the first species in your bird book, the oldest studied species and my last company of the day. We all ply the waters, no matter if the result is beyond our view.

We will return here when harsh winter passes and spirited spring charms us back to these shores, company to one another again. ■



A Note From Jan Kelly: In the article on Thanksgiving at the Old Colony in the last issue, a photo of two of the O.C. Thanksgiving founders, Pam and Buddy Johnson, was omitted because of space limitations. Here's there photo now!

