

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

When I was my daughter Trillium's age, I played in the mud and eelgrass at low tide and looked for sand dollars, sea urchins, periwinkles, clams, mussels, crabs, baby lobsters and sea cucumbers. High tide was the best time to swim when the water was warmed as it came in over sun heated rocks. I rowed the boat out across the cove to Leland Point. Sometimes I watched the herring boats circle schools of fish in nets in the cove, working with the tides. And later I would watch as hundreds of herring sated cormorants stood on the rocks of the point with their wings outstretched to dry. There were no bald eagles living on Frenchman Bay then because of the DDT. - Ruth age 45



- Western shore of Leland Point on Frenchman Bay
at 8:20 AM on 18 April 2012

It is low tide in summer and the mudflats show. A few sea urchins are sucking along the bottom waving their spines. A sea star is stuck to a rock. Baby flounders flit along the bottom when I place my foot in the mud. I gaze at the sun reflecting on the water near Leland Point where a family of eagles nests in the tallest tree. This is one of my views of Frenchman Bay. The other takes place on the other side of Leland Point in a laboratory also overlooking the bay. - Trillium age 12



- Low tide on the shore of Frenchman Bay near the
Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory dock
at 3:29 PM on 18 April 2012



Now I play in the mud less often. It's rich, bitter, earthy smell remains the same when the tide is low, but there is almost no eelgrass. I still like to swim at high tide. I love the way the salt dries on my skin. Now I watch the tides come and go. I photograph the water. I paint it. I try to track a line through its constant changes. Now I feel the tides in their twice-daily rhythm like a breath. I want them to tell me something. The tides are mostly silent, but sometimes when the winds have been up, the air is saturated with the sound of the waves pulsing on the shore. They announce the incoming breath of the tide before the inevitable exhale. Now above the tides and waves of Frenchman Bay, I watch the bald eagles nesting and raising their young on Leland Point. - Ruth age 45

- Western shore of Leland Point on Frenchman Bay
at 7:34 PM on 18 April 2012

At 5 a.m. I woke to the sound of my alarm and realized I was back in my bedroom at MDIBL. I had spent the summer of 2009 at the Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory in Bar Harbor, Maine and returned over Labor Day weekend to help my mentors, Drs. Jane Disney and George Kidder, finish the season's field work. Rolling out of bed in the dark, I shivered in the cold September air and reached for my wetsuit. I walked down to the lab, picked up our field equipment and stumbled down to the dock, still bleary-eyed with sleep. After untying us from the dock, I jumped on board the Fundulus and we sped off toward our eelgrass restoration site.

As I looked to the west, the moon was still glowing, luminous over Frenchman Bay. To the east, the sun was rising over a beautiful and colorful horizon. Not even the freezing cold water into which I plunged soon after could ruin such a perfect morning. I had found my sense of place here on Frenchman Bay, and I had been inspired to continue my study and preservation of the environment.

- Molly age 23

- High tide on the shore of Frenchman Bay near the Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory dock at 10:02 AM on 19 April 2012

At the lab, I switch on the microscope and examine a small round organism. It is a phytoplankton, one of the close to infinite number of them in the ocean. We monitor these organisms to make sure people don't eat shellfish contaminated by toxic phytoplankton. When I am done, I turn off the microscope and gather the parts of my wet suit that I will need in the morning when I will measure eelgrass as part of our restoration efforts. My friend Molly, who works in the Community Environmental Health Lab, will pick me up early when it will be low tide. I leave the lab for the day and return home to the other side of Leland Point. - Trillium age 12



- The water of Frenchman Bay from the
Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory dock
at 3:34 PM on 19 April 2012

No longer an undergraduate research student at the lab, I am an AmeriCorps/ Maine Conservation Corps volunteer. As an environmental educator, I educate and work with volunteers and local students on the importance of eelgrass as a habitat and the need for its restoration. Once filled to the brim with fish, Frenchman Bay is only a shadow of its former self. By restoring an important nursery habitat, we hope to return the bay to its previous healthy state. I have made a commitment to this bay, to its wildlife, and to myself to protect Frenchman Bay from further degradation and to promote its restoration and recovery. - Molly age 23

Eelgrass is an endangered plant. It used to grow throughout Frenchman Bay. In it lived the creatures: baby lobsters, cod, sea cucumbers. Few of these are there any more. Years ago the mussel draggers came seeking their shellfish and destroyed the precious ecosystem within the eelgrass. Part of what I do at the lab as a volunteer is to help bring the eelgrass back. I plant it with grids, I measure its growth, and I try to educate people about its plight. See? I just told you about it. - Trillium age 12



- Trillium and Molly on the Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory dock on Frenchman Bay with the eastern shore of Leland Point in the distance at 3:57 PM on 19 April 2012



Frenchman Bay, on the coast of Maine, separates much of northern and western Mount Desert Island from the mainland.

The Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory is situated on the northern shore of MDI just to the west of Salisbury Cove.

Leland Point is a promontory of land immediately west of MDIBL that reaches north into Frenchman Bay. Over the past few decades bald eagles have returned to nest on the point as well as in a number of other places on the bay.