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From the EDITOR

I ALMOST FELL OUT OF MY SEAT IN THE BUSHNELL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER ON THAT COLD SATURDAY EVENING IN JANUARY.

Yo-Yo Ma was on stage, giving a one-man show of music and conversation, when he told the audience that he didn't know he wanted to be a professional cellist until he was about 40 years old.

This was an astounding statement coming from one of the most beloved cellists the world has ever known, who began playing at age 4 and performing for audiences at age 5. Now 69, Ma would have been giving concerts and recording for decades by the time he was 40. But he didn't know he wanted to be a cellist? He explained the paradox this way: he had been wedded to the cello so young, and followed a track to Juilliard, then Harvard, then the concert circuit to great accolades and honors. He felt like he was carried by strong currents into this life almost unconsciously. Curiosity about other pursuits nagged him—he was interested in archeology, anthropology, science, nature, literature, philosophy and so many other things. What if he had pursued one of those instead?

Then one day, he had an epiphany.

"I realized I could explore all these worlds through my cello," he said.

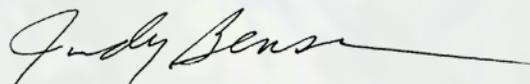
After that, he started the Silk Road Project of concerts and recordings with musicians from Eurasian cultures, and collaborations with an eclectic mix of singers and instrumentalists of bluegrass, jazz, Brazilian, Syrian and other genres. Recently, he began "Our Common Nature," a project described as "a cultural journey to celebrate the ways that nature can reunite us in pursuit of a shared future." Midway through the concert at the Bushnell, he had a Maya Angelou poem projected on a screen behind him and asked the audience to recite it with him. He ended the performance by showing a series of otherworldly images from the Hubbell Space Telescope projected on the screen behind as he played, discovered through his friendship with an astronomer.

As I thought about the show afterwards, I realized Ma was one whose unique niche had found him, but not until he fully embraced it—found it on his own terms—did he reach a new level of creativity and connection that touches his audiences deeply.

In this issue of *Wrack Lines*, we meet six individuals who have found their own special niches within the environmental sphere. Deb Abibou and Sarah Schechter are carving out new avenues for building resilience in Connecticut communities. Clayton McGoldrick is blazing a trail in seaweed aquaculture, Jim Carlton has made a distinguished career of tracking marine invasives, while Doreen Abubakar gives new meaning to the phrase "force of nature" in her native New Haven. And in an example from recent local history, Victor Loosanoff forged an unlikely path into groundbreaking aquaculture science that laid the foundation for today's shellfish industry. The common thread in their stories, and that of Ma, is that harnessing your passions for the greater good—whether to spread beauty, improve the environment, enrich lives, help the economy or some combination—yields personal satisfaction and fulfillment at the same time.

One of the quotes from Ma I found on his website summed it up best:

"We're not born creative or destructive. Each one of us has the ability to create or destroy, to leave the world better than we found it, or worse."



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Above: Yo-Yo Ma Photo: Jason Bell, courtesy of the Bushnell Performing Art Center

Cover: Zachary Gordon, CT Sea Grant assistant extension educator, holds up a blade of kelp with sorus reproductive tissue found while diving in Long Island Sound. Photo: Clayton McGoldrick

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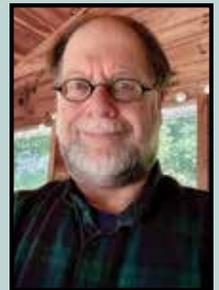
MEGAN BARD

Megan Bard was a municipal and breaking news reporter in Connecticut and Massachusetts for print and online news organizations for 15 years. About a decade ago, she transitioned to higher education communications, sharing stories of cutting-edge research from a public medical university and highlighting the value of a liberal arts undergraduate education from a private college. She is a freelance writer and editor and, since 2024, an instructor for the UConn Department of Journalism.



RONALD GOLDBERG

Ronald Goldberg began his career at the NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center's Milford Laboratory in 1973 as a co-op student and retired as acting director in 2015. As a researcher he developed methods for aquaculture of juvenile surf clams and investigated coastal habitat use by young-of-the-year winter flounder. With the cooperation of commercial shellfish farmers, he conducted field experiments on the ecological effects of shellfish dredging on benthic organisms, showing generally minor effects from well-managed leased beds such as those found in Long Island Sound.



CLAYTON MCGOLDRICK

Clayton McGoldrick is the mobile seaweed lab technician with Connecticut Sea Grant. His work focuses on seaweed aquaculture research and operation of the mobile lab as a kelp nursery system along with developing and disseminating educational resources. He is interested in the future of regenerative aquaculture as a sustainable food source that supports coastal ecosystems and local working waterfronts. Clayton joined Connecticut Sea Grant in 2023 after earning a bachelor's degree in Marine Sciences from Stony Brook University.



JUDY BENSON

Judy Benson has been communications coordinator at Connecticut Sea Grant and editor of *Wrack Lines* since 2017. Before that, she was a newspaper reporter and editor, concluding her journalism career at *The Day* of New London covering health and the environment. She is the author of two books, the latest titled, *The Book of Todd*, a collaboration with her late husband published in cooperation with New London Librarium (nllibrarium.com). She earned both a bachelor's degree in journalism and a Master of Science in natural resources from UConn.

