

SANCTUARY

THE BEACH BIRD BENEFACTOR

A native of Massachusetts, Catherine "Cate" Muther and her family now live in San Francisco. As a youngster, Cate spent her summers on Cape Cod and in Plymouth; so it was simply coming home when she and husband, Dennis Aftergut, bought a cottage on Plymouth's Long Beach. During the family's first summer at their beach house, Cate talked with one of the Society's Coastal Waterbird Program interns about Massachusetts Audubon's work on Plymouth Beach. She learned about the program's role in safeguarding nesting sites of endangered piping plovers, least terns, and other species in Plymouth and other coastal communities; and she made an initial contribution to support its work.

Since then, Cate has become involved in several aspects of the Coastal Waterbird Program: housing interns in the family's cottage, hosting Massachusetts Audubon members and other groups for beach education walks, and providing multiyear financial support for program operations and advocacy. She credits Scott Hecker, director of the program, with fostering her interest in the diversity of nesting and migratory birds on Plymouth Beach, and her understanding of their coastal habitat and the dynamics of barrier beach ecosystems.

The Coastal Waterbird Program works with a long-term vision toward change, employing various resources and tools—science, law, activism, and land conservation. According to Cate, creating a network of relationships with other conservation and advocacy groups strengthens the work of each organization and leverages their influence. "Scott Hecker's passion, commitment, and drive are critical components of the program's success," she says.

Through her involvement and support, Cate encourages others to learn more and become engaged in protecting Plymouth Beach and other coastal habitats in southeastern Massachusetts, Cape Cod, and the Islands. "The work the Society is doing on Plymouth Beach has strategic significance for the entire region and coastline of New England," she says.



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