



e-newsletters

Rhode Deal The Dish

Engaged Weekly Round-up

CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP

Weekapaug Inn Video Tour

By [Jamie Coelho](#)

Jun 20, 2013 - 10:10 AM



Weekapaug Inn naturalist Mark Bullinger.

Photo courtesy of Weekapaug Inn.

This is a web extra video from the upcoming July issue of Rhode Island Monthly magazine.

On a bright morning, the Weekapaug Inn's resident naturalist, Mark Bullinger, hoists a birding scope over his shoulder, and we stroll toward the beach. He might be the only hotel naturalist in the country, and guided nature walks are one of the many daily activities for inn guests who want to learn about the area's coastal beaches and wildlife. As part of his job, Bullinger also organizes kayaking, paddleboarding, sailing, biking and stargazing adventures, all included in guest stays.

The Weekapaug Inn was originally built in 1899 close to the beach, but after a hurricane destroyed it in 1938, the former owners, the Buffiums, decided to rebuild adjacent to Quonochontaug Pond, where it resides today. Last fall, new owners restored and reopened it as a four-season inn that has already earned Relais and Chateaux status. Yet it also appears on the National Register of Historic Places for Rhode Island because architectural elements and furnishings were historically preserved.

Luckily, its current location protected it from Hurricane Sandy, but the beaches and dunes endured changes. "Because there's no development on our beach, it's not considered damage," says Bullinger. "It's just doing what it does naturally."

We step onto the sand and I marvel at the brilliant blue surf. In the distance, I see Block Island and Long Island, only twenty miles away by boat. I kick off my shoes and we continue our trek along the shore as Bullinger explains Weekapaug's geological composition. "The land is made up of heavy rocks and stable soil, including gravel and clay," Bullinger says. "It's good for foundations and can stand up to waves." Every so often, he collects small, round, smooth stones of granite and quartz, which he shows guests how to transform into jewelry.

A sandy, tree-lined path leads us to Quonochontaug Pond. He sets down the scope and we look through the lens searching for birds frequently spotted in the area; piping plovers, herons, egrets and osprey. Along the edges of the pond, I find scallop shells, the remains of rock crabs, slipper limpets and even a giant horseshoe crab. Bullinger says in late-May, during a full moon, thousands of horseshoe crabs migrate to this pond. Much like their human counterparts, they've chosen the ideal respite. *25 Spray Rock Rd., Westerly, 888-813-7862, weekapauginn.com.*

Enjoy a video tour inside and outside the newly restored inn.

Posted at 10:10 AM in [ridaily](#) | [Permalink](#)