



## Newsletter #2 June 1, 2024

From **The Blue Hill Peninsula Rockweed Forum**. <http://rockweedforest.org>

**We are excited about summer** and the chance to get out and explore the rocky intertidal zone as often as possible.



**One of our goals** is to raise awareness about the ecological value of rockweed as a vital habitat for many species of fish and wildlife. You can help by sharing information about the ecology of rockweed with others, especially when you are out by the water, on the water, and in the water! When people can easily recognize rockweed and see its foundational role in nature, they are more likely to care about conservation.

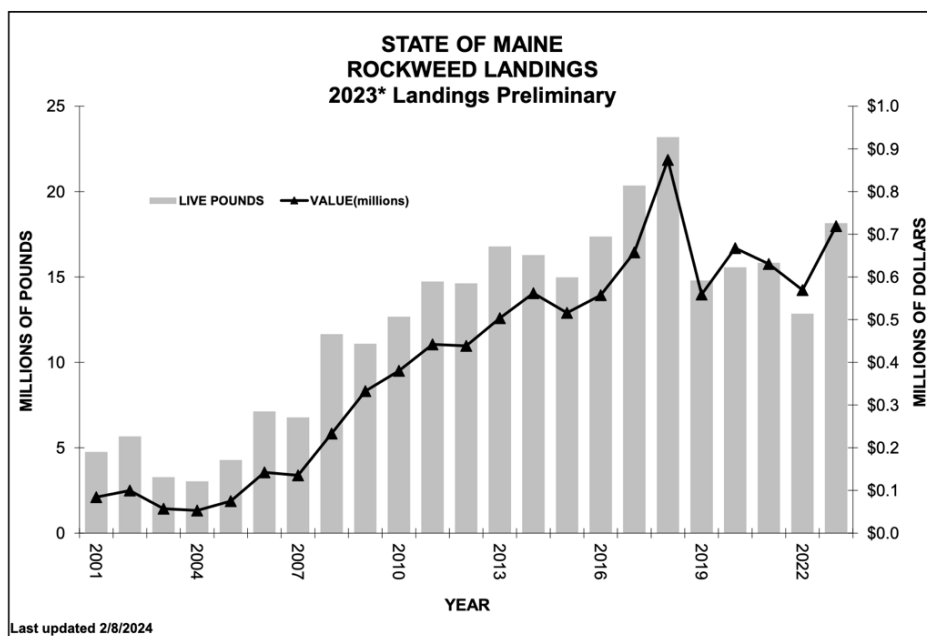


Various invertebrates beneath the rockweed forest.

The predatory snail, *Nucella lapillus* with eggs.

**Another goal** is to learn more about the extent of commercial rockweed harvesting in our area. Please let us know if you can provide details about where commercial harvesters are working, whether by hand-raking or using mechanical harvest boats. We would like to ensure that they are not harvesting from state parks or national parks and wildlife refuges, which is illegal. It is also illegal to harvest rockweed from private property without the property owner's permission – see the Legal page on our website for details, including advice for shoreline property owners. Additional resources for landowners can be found at the Maine Rockweed Coalition's website, <https://mainerockweedcoalition.org/for-landowners/>.

Underwater rockweed forests are abundant along our coast, but commercial demand for processing rockweed into fertilizer, plant biostimulants, animal food supplements, biodegradable fiber, and other products is increasing. After a 3-6 ft tall rockweed bed is harvested, the canopy is removed and cut plants grow only a few inches per year. Reported harvests in Maine increased to 18 million pounds in 2023, as shown in this graph:



(<https://www.maine.gov/dmr/fisheries/commercial/landings-program/historical-data>)

For helpful background about how the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) could manage rockweed more effectively, we recommend reading a recent article by Dr. Hannah Webber and colleagues in the Maine Policy Review, <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mpr/vol32/iss2/12/>.

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## Coming Events (see our website for details and updates)

**We are hosting two field workshops** about rockweed ecology on July 26<sup>th</sup> in Blue Hill and August 17<sup>th</sup> in Brooksville. Send us an email via [info@rockweedforest.org](mailto:info@rockweedforest.org) if you would like to reserve a spot.



## Coming Events (continued)

**Public talk by Robin Hadlock Seeley, PhD, Executive Director of the [Maine Rockweed Coalition \(501c3\)](#): “Conservation of Maine’s Seaweed Forests: Great Progress, Great Challenges!”**

**When – Monday, July 15, 2024, at 5:00 PM**

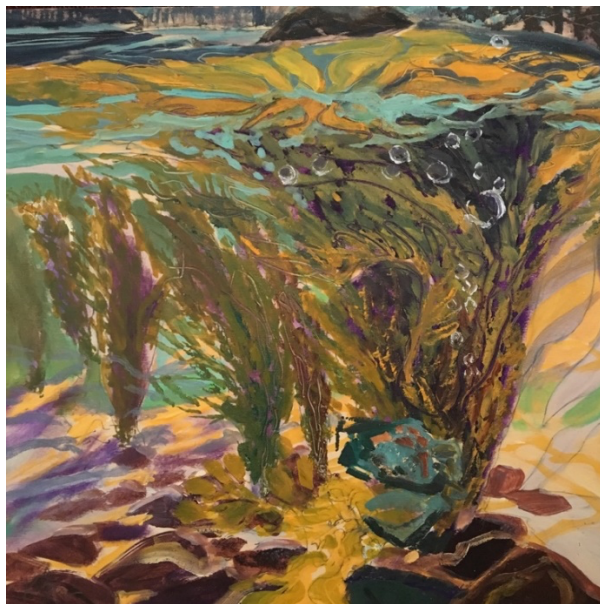
**Where –** Howard Room, Blue Hill Public Library, 5 Parker Point Rd.

**Description –** Robin will discuss how rockweed conservation is evolving on the Maine coast. Commercial rockweed harvesters, state agencies, the courts, the legislature, nonprofit conservation groups, and scientific researchers have all played a role in determining the balance between rockweed forest protection and exploitation. Maine courts and the legislature have been key in achieving the current degree of rockweed forest protection. Currently, the Dept. of Marine Resources (DMR) regulations to limit industrial-scale rockweed harvesting are few, and monitoring/enforcement is tricky. What are the prospects for further improving the balance between protection and commercial extraction of this vital coastal habitat and resource? Join us for a rich and timely discussion.

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## Art Appreciation

Rockweed and its intertidal milieu are featured in the work of several local artists whose work can be viewed on our website. We thank Galen Davis, Jeannet Leendertse, Lisa Tyson Ennis, and most recently, Krisanne Baker for sharing these beautiful creations. Here are two paintings by Krisanne:



**High tide with inhabitant, gshi, oil on panel, 12 X 12”**



**Rockweed, oil on panel, 12 X 12”**

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## Did You Know?

Rockweed (*Ascophyllum nodosum*) has smaller epiphytic seaweeds that grow attached to the rockweed fronds. *Vertebrata lanosa* is a branched, filamentous red alga which is found exclusively on rockweed. Its dark reddish-brown tufts are attached to sites usually on older rockweed branches where injuries have occurred, such as by snail grazing. Rhizoids of *Vertebrata* penetrate the tissue of *Ascophyllum* in a parasite-like mode, but there is no indication of the attachment being deleterious. Evidence suggests that the relationship is mutualistic – each seaweed benefitting from the presence of the other. *Vertebrata* makes a striking pattern when spread out in the water or on a piece of paper.

A second common epiphyte on *Ascophyllum* is the brown alga, *Elachista fucicola*, that forms dense brown tufts on older fronds. *Elachista* is found mainly on *Ascophyllum*, but can also be an epiphyte of others like *Fucus*.



Photo Lairich Rig

*Vertebrata lanosa* on rockweed



and displayed on paper

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**Want to get involved?** Contact us via email if you would you like to:

- Help with publicity for the Forum and our Events, including via social media.
- Scout for rockweed harvesting this summer and let us know where and when harvesting is taking place in and around Penobscot Bay.
- Help us inform shoreline property owners that they have the right to protect their property from rockweed harvesting.
- We are attaching an updated informational flyer about the Forum that you are welcome to print and post on community bulletin boards.



Sand Beach, Stonington



As someone who cares about rockweed conservation, you are welcome to send us comments, questions, and suggestions any time via email. Also, please encourage interested friends and colleagues to visit our website and join the mailing list. To learn more about rockweed natural history, follow us on Instagram, [rockweed\\_forest](#).

With best wishes,

*David Porter and Allison Snow*

Co-founders of the Blue Hill Peninsula Rockweed Forum

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