

## = Great Captain Island =

Great Captain Island , also known more familiarly as " Great Captain 's Island , " is an island off the coast of Greenwich , Connecticut . The 17 @. @ 2 @-@ acre ( 70 @, @ 000 m2 ) island is the largest of a three @-@ island group that also includes Little Captain and Wee Captain . The island is a remnant of a glacial moraine and has a large glacial erratic on the southern side , the island 's east and west sides are connected by a tombolo . The island has had several owners , but has been owned in whole by the Town of Greenwich since 1973 . The island is home to the Great Captain Island Light , a 19th @-@ century lighthouse that was restored in 2009 and relit as a non @-@ navigational aid in 2012 . The actual navigation aid is a skeletal tower erected in 1970 . Great Captain Island is one of the state 's 26 " important bird areas " according to the Connecticut Audubon Society . The town operates a ferry service to and from the island from about the second week in June through the second week of September . Trails have been laid out for visitors , and the western part of the island has picnic tables , grills , restrooms , and posted swimming areas . The island is open year round , with a ferry running during the summer . No public tours of the lighthouse or island are available .

## = Location and geology =

The 17 @. @ 2 @-@ acre ( 70 @, @ 000 m2 ) island is the largest of a three @-@ island group that also includes Little Captain and Wee Captain . The Town of Greenwich states that the Great Captain Island " is a remnant of a glacial moraine . It contains a diversity of rock types- gneiss , schist , granite @-@ with a very large glacial erratic on the southern side . " The island 's east and west sides are connected by a tombolo , and the southern side has a lagoon that winds its way around the lighthouse .

## = History =

There are two theories for how the island got its name , the first of which is that the island is named after Captain Kidd who was rumored to have buried a treasure of gold and silver on it . The Town of Greenwich acknowledges both this and another theory that states that " [ t ] he " Captain " of the title reportedly memorializes Captain Daniel Patrick , a partner in the first recorded real estate transaction in Greenwich in the 1640s and the town 's first military commander . "

In 1763 , George III granted the island to John Anderson . In 1829 , the federal government purchased 3 @. @ 5 acres of land on the southeast part of Great Captain Island from Samuel Lyons . The states of New York and Connecticut both claimed the island in the 19th century but , after 50 years , a commission resolved the dispute in favor of Connecticut . The lighthouse keepers and their families farmed on the tract of land and the other areas of the island were used for hunting , fishing and recreational use . In 1926 , the rest of the island was sold to a developer who built and opened an exclusive clubhouse on the site . Opening in 1930 , at the beginning of the Great Depression , it soon was closed . The Town of Greenwich acquired the island through foreclosure and sold the property to Port @-@ Green Corporation . During this time , the Coast Guard inadvertently destroyed the clubhouse by dropping flares on it while searching for a missing plane . A fire in 1955 would destroy the rest of the club . In 1955 , Areotech Industries purchased the island and used it as an employee recreational spot and built cabana cottages on it in 1957 . During its ownership with Areotech , it was re @-@ named Huckleberry Island , until the Town of Greenwich purchased it in 1966 for \$ 90 @, @ 000 . In 1973 , the federal government turned over the remaining tract of land upon which the lighthouse rests .

## = Lighthouse =

The Great Captain Island Light was first constructed in 1829 on the 3 @. @ 5 acre tract of land that Samuel Lyons sold to the government . The lighthouse was of poor construction and was replaced

in 1868 with a new granite dwelling with attached lantern . The lighthouse is of the same design as lighthouses at Sheffield Island in Norwalk ; Morgan Point in Noank ; Old Field Point Light and Plum Island in New York ; and Block Island North in Rhode Island . The lighthouse was deactivated in 1970 when a skeletal tower replaced it . The Town of Greenwich acquired the property in 1973 and had full @-@ time caretakers on the site until the lighthouse became too dilapidated in 2003 . A successful restoration effort was completed in 2009 and a non @-@ navigational light was activated in 2012 . In 1991 , the Great Captain Island Light was added to the National Register of Historic Places . In 2010 , a September 11 memorial plaque was installed to " honor the 23 people who lived in Greenwich , or had a connection to the town " , who died in the September 11 attacks " . A non @-@ navigational 4 @-@ second flashing green light was installed in the lighthouse on February 13 , 2012 . The lighthouse is currently occupied by a family who act as caretakers of the property .

= = Wildlife = =

Great Captain Island is one of the state 's 26 " important bird areas " that provide an essential habitat for one or more bird species , according to the Connecticut Audubon Society . Great blue herons have been on the island since the 1990s . Great egrets , snowy egrets , and black @-@ crowned night herons also live on the island . The island was once known as the state 's largest heron and egret rookery , but in the early 2000s their populations shrunk dramatically , with summer counts down from a total of 364 in 1998 to 98 in 2004 . Patrick Comins , director of bird conservation for Audubon Connecticut , thinks that the bird populations have been hurt by human disturbances and possibly by competition from cormorants and a great horned owl that lives on the island and has fed on the birds . Comins also said that overall pollution in Long Island Sound waters might also have an effect .

Wading bird populations on the island by year

In the uplands of the island , an area that used to be lawn has been replaced with oak , hickory , ash , cherry , tree of heaven and sassafras . By the lighthouse , several openings in the shrubbery have been made to provide a variety of habitats for wildlife and a barrier of shrubs has been planted on the cliffs east of the lighthouse .

= = Access = =

The town operates a ferry service to and from the island from about the second week in June through the second week of September . Trails have been laid out for visitors , and the western part of the island has picnic tables , grills , restrooms , and posted swimming areas . The island is open year round , with a ferry running during the summer . No public tours of the lighthouse or island are available . In 2012 , Hurricane Sandy damaged the area and washed away the walkway .