SANDY HOOK, GATEWAY NRA: BEACHES ARE ONLY THE BEGINNING

Maren Morsch: When you say "Sandy Hook" to people there's two things they usually think of. One is the fort area since it was what a[n] active military base for such a long time, or the beach. However, it really has become a really great way to teach the public about all different sorts of barrier beach ecology.

(Background: Alright guys keep coming in. Make sure your poles are angled.)

Seining is a good way to show people all the different life that inhabits the Bay on the marsh areas. You kind of hold the sticks like hockey sticks and you bring it back in toward the beach with the net in between, and pick up whatever creatures are floating around on the bottom. You can find lots of small fish, silver sides, killifish, pipefish (which are relatives of the seahorse), different sorts of crabs, rock crabs fiddler crabs, green crabs, we have all of them out here. So, it's always an adventure as to what you're going to find.

And there are very few animals and plants that are adapted to living in an environment that's flooded with saltwater twice a day, which is why I think the salt marsh is so unique.

Thomas Minton: Sandy Hook is a constantly evolving six-mile barrier beach. The sand around it does shift and change, but this is a natural process that happens all over Sandy Hook on a regular basis.

Battery George Arrowsmith is a three-mount eight-inch gun battery built to protect Sandy Hook Bay in 1906. When this battery was first built, there was a large stretch of beach out in front of us. The emplacement would be here intact today had it not been for the natural sand erosion. Over time, the beach out in front slowly disappeared, and the forward wall collapsed into the Bay and ultimately had to be demolished.

Maren Morsch: A very special part of the Army's occupation out here is that they saved all these wonderful natural resources from being developed.

We have one of the largest stands of eastern holly in the whole country. Any plants that live here have to be highly adapted to the high level of water loss that they would experience. Holly, itself, is highly resistant to water loss because of the special leaves it has. They have a special wax coating on them, and that keeps a lot of their moisture intact inside the plant. The holly forest is just one of the very special places we like to preserve and protect that will allow you access to this wonderful resource.