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Professor presents harbor discoveries

BY JAIME GARZON
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The Village of Mamaroneck Board of Trustees had a special visitor at its meeting last week.

Brian Jensen, an assistant professor in Manhattanville College's Department of Biology, was there to present the findings that he and his students discovered in a study of the marine life in Mamaroneck Harbor.

"Marine biology is a lifelong love of mine," Jensen said.

A native of Poughkeepsie, Jensen has been involved with different educational programs and environmental groups that studied the Hudson River for years.

According to Jensen, his students found some very impressive samples in the harbor.

"A number of different species are living in the harbor. We found several types of fish, including banded rudderfish, northern pipefish, northern puffer, striped killifish, mummichog, sheepshead minnow, marsh killifish, striped bass, winter flounder, white perch, menhaden, bay anchovy and Atlantic silversides," Jensen said.

Jensen discussed the populations of different species inside and outside of the gunderboom. "The gunderboom is an aquatic filter — the one in Mamaroneck is meant to reduce coliform bacteria," he said. "Many coliform bacteria can cause illness in humans and can indicate fecal contamination."

Jensen's class also looked at the differences between the ecology inside the gunderboom and that outside of it.

"I think the greatest impact it has on the harbor is the fact that within the gunderboom the water quality has improved enough that people are able to swim. As far as the impact on the entire harbor, I think it is minimum. The gunderboom is only enclosing a fairly small area, and there is certainly enough habitat outside the gunderboom. The one really interesting thing that we found was that the population of soft shell clams was considerably higher inside the gunderboom," he said.

According to Jensen, a tropical species was found in the harbor.

"We caught a banded rudderfish. These are predominantly tropical fish. They live most of their lives as far south as Brazil. These and many other predominantly tropical fish get caught up in the Gulf stream and are brought north. The banded rudderfish has been recorded north of here as well," Jensen said.

"We found what I guess one could call 'healthy' populations of fish and invertebrates both inside

and outside of the gunderboom."

A graduate of Siena College in 1993, Jensen earned his Ph.D. in biology from the University of Delaware in 2000.

Jensen completed two short post-doctoral fellowships at the University of Delaware and the University of Pennsylvania.

Jensen started teaching at Manhattanville in 2002.

"It is a very small school with small classes," he said. "It has been very rewarding that I can have really close contact with the students."

"Harbor Island is dealing with pollution. With that in mind, I think Brian did a very thorough job. His words were very enlightening," said Mayor Philip Trifiletti.

"An educational center that studies the environment and water pollution is in the master plan," Trifiletti added.

The master plan, which is currently under public review, takes into consideration environmental concerns tied to the harbor, the mayor said.