



St. Luke's East Hampton Reflections from Fr. Ben June 25, 2026

On my morning walks, there is a moment when I climb a dune and have my first view of the ocean. To keep my Coast Guard Lookout training fresh, I take a moment to scan the horizon and prepare a mental report of the type, bearing, range, aspect, and drift of the vessels that are out there. (If not from maritime experience, you might recognize this type of report from old Star Trek episodes!)

If you have been to the beach, you know that the fishing boats are back. In the winter there might be one or two boats on the water. This morning there were more than a dozen, stretching in a line from East to West. The good news is that if the fishing boats are back, the fish are back. If the fish are back, the whales are back as well. I saw my first whale spout a few days ago and have heard of many sightings since.

Though whaling ships from Sag Harbor went all over the world, whaling in East Hampton was initially done from shore, first by the Indigenous people and then by the European settlers. Some of the first laws in East Hampton had to do with shore whaling and there is a resurgence of interest in the skeleton of a whale that washed up in Amagansett in 1907, which is currently in the Museum of Natural History. (If you are interested in the history of whaling, don't miss the current exhibit of Claus Hoie's whaling paintings at Clinton Academy, including the image at the top of this article.)

Two weeks ago, by my family's cabin in northern Michigan, a bald eagle flew out of a tree in front of Shari and me on an evening walk. When I was young, the DDT used in the farms made eggshells very fragile, which meant that there were very few birds beyond seagulls and crows. (We still spray our crops but do so with different chemicals in different ways, including the use of drones.) The return of the eagles is a sign that even the smallest of changes can make a huge difference, and that even in the most challenging of times, life can begin again. I feel the same way about the whales. Yes, they are still endangered. Yes, there is work for all of us to do. Their return says that change is possible. Their return is a sign of resilience and hope.