

# NARROW RIVER NOTES

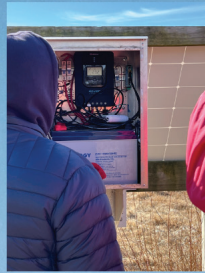
Narrow River Preservation Association: Protecting, Preserving and Restoring the Narrow River Watershed Since 1970/ June 2025

## Signs of Spring...

### Preparing for the Return of the Osprey!



Craig examines the nest area and cam - all need to be nice and snug...



Bob checking out the electronics which make it happen!

Led by NRPA VP Craig Wood, volunteers Bob Facey (our technology guru), Robyn York, and Bill York, convened at the osprey nest at Garrison House Acres in Middlebridge to get the site ready for the return of the osprey family. This property is maintained by Narrow River Land Trust and they share the support of this initiative.



THANK YOU!!!

### Navigating the Narrow

This event was held at the Mettatumet Yacht Club on Saturday 5 April 2025. The panel included:

- RI Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) Jeffrey Willis- Executive Director-jwillis@crmc.ri.gov
- South Kingstown Harbor Master Michael Stach- harbormaster@skpd.org
- RI Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM) EPO Kyle Murray
- United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Brian Smith- Brian.P.Smith2@uscg.mil
- Anthony Columbo-Mettatumet Yacht Club
- James Dean Vogel-NRPA

The elected officials in attendance were:

- Alex Menzies-Narragansett Town Council President
- Carol Hagen McEntee-RI House Representative (district 33)

The session was well attended with 45+ attendees. The session focused on boater safety and the planned dredging at the mouth of the river. Several action items were a result of the session. Included among them were to monitor locations where paddle craft and power boats are in conflict to establish clear navigational guidelines both on site and in the NRPA website. We need to generate rules of thumb for tide time locations – for example high tide in the pond is xxx minutes after high tide at the bridge.

*Continued on page 3*



Jeff Willis, Tony Columbo, Jim Vogel, Mike Stach, Kyle Murray and Brian Smith

# Presidents Cove


## The Importance of Science to Narrow River

Dear Friends of Narrow River,

From NRPA's 33 years of RiverWatch monitoring to our twice annual "What Lives in the River?" event, much of what NRPA does is science-driven. Scientific procedures are used to test levels of various water quality measurements in the River. Scientific calculations help us see trends in the results. River creatures netted at "What Lives in the River?" are identified by volunteer scientists from the University of Rhode Island (URI) and its Graduate School of Oceanography (GSO), the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and environmental consulting firms, using guidebooks written by scientists. Science is used to develop tide charts for the Middlebridge area of Narrow River: scientists placed a tide gauge in the river there for a while and then calculate the tides at other times. Scientific engineers design stormwater management structures to help keep bacteria out of the River. Scientists from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and RI's Department of Environmental Management (DEM) count and identify Narrow River's birds, shellfish, fish and phytoplankton. Scientists from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) monitor and protect salt marshes and uplands around Pettaquamscutt Cove. In 1986 the Narrow River Special Area Management Plan was developed by the scientists of the RI Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) and then updated in 1999. This plan describes the Narrow River and its watershed and promotes science-based decisions for managing these resources.

Please remember that NRPA benefits greatly from the work (including volunteer work) of scientists, and thank you for all YOU do for Narrow River and its watershed

Take care,

  
Veronica M. Berounsky, Ph.D.  
President, NRPA Board of Directors

### MISSION STATEMENT

The Narrow River Preservation Association (NRPA) engages people to preserve and protect the Narrow River (Pettaquamscutt Estuary) and its watershed.

### NARROW RIVER PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

PO Box 8, Saunderstown, RI 02874  
nrpa@narrowriver.org  
www.narrowriver.org

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Submissions and correspondence  
to nrpa@narrowriver.org

## Join NRPA!

Membership is NRPA's largest source of funding and connects you with all of NRPA's activities, events and advocacy. We accept checks payable to NRPA, credit cards, or your registered PayPal account. The mailing address is NRPA, P.O. Box 8, Saunderstown, RI 02874



*Thank You*

United Way of  
Rhode Island



You can give back to NRPA through your **United Way workplace campaign**. Simply write in Narrow River Preservation Association on your pledge form or search/write-in and add us via electronic pledging.

**Rhode Island  
Rivers Council**



Rhode Island Rivers Council has designated NRPA as the official watershed council of the Narrow River and its watershed.



# Navigating the Narrow

Continued from cover



Shirley Freitag, Executive Coordinator  
Jim Vogel, NRPA BOD Member  
Craig Wood, NRPA Vice President

Questions came up about what is going on with the public boat launch at Pollock Rd. in South Kingstown – more communication with the local stakeholders and project timelines

are necessary. Where is the no wake zone in the vicinity of Lacey Bridge? NRPA needs to confirm between South Kingstown and Narragansett where that wake zone is. Can better visuals be presented? Water quality is the number one priority for swimmers, paddlers, boaters, and anglers, Data on the NRPA website is confusing and not current – more action needs to be taken to address problem areas and non-source pollution sites. Jeff Willis, CRMC Director, addressed the need to balance the 3 major areas of concern around dredging - recreational, ecological, and fishing - and it sounds like CRMC is working to help get the first phase of the permitting process across the line. The engineering and permitting will need to address long-term maintenance.



Helpful materials provided by South Kingstown Harbormaster, The Coast Guard, and RIDEM

Thank you to the panel and the audience for the opportunity to interact on these topics of concern for all.

## SOUTH KINGSTOWN HIGH SCHOOL Congratulations to 2025 Science Fair Winners!

Exploring the world of science through brilliant science projects.



**Owen Kosterides** (left) receives his award from NRPA board members Sally Sutherland and Kathy Couchon. Owen's device uses the current from the river to charge his cell phone!

Our other winner **Aiden Thakai**, focused on climate change effects on marine shellfish. He showed the damage to shells caused by increase acidity from increasing levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are absorbed by the ocean.



# On Pettaquamscutt 2025 Winter Speaker Series

"On Pettaquamscutt" is a collaboration between Narrow River Preservation Association, Friends of Canonchet Farm, South County Museum, and the Maury Loontjens Memorial Library. 2025 marked the 12th season of these presentations on the environment and history of the Narrow River Watershed.



David Smith, Dr. Blaine Hymel, Shirley Freitag, and Rosemary Smith for On Petta

On March 30, NRPA welcomed their speaker, Dr. Blaine Hymel, from the Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island. Dr. Hymel introduced the audience to the work of the clinic and its network of 35 Home Rehabbers throughout Rhode Island. Most importantly she also briefed them on current environmental toxicology issues, their significant impact on local wildlife populations, and ways to protect our diverse ecosystems and the animals that inhabit them.

Dr. Blaine Hymel considers a visit with a patient successful if, by the end, the patient won't look at her. If they actually flee, that's even better. "The fact that they run away from us is a good thing," says Hymel. The patients, of course, are injured wild animals that she and others treat at the Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island, where the goal is to release the animals to the wild as soon as they are healthy enough and prevent them from becoming acclimated to humans.

Blaine Hymel started as a volunteer at Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island in 2013 and quickly went on to become an at home rehabber, staff member, and later animal care coordinator. Blaine earned a BS in Biology at University of Rhode Island and then received her doctorate from Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University and completed a rotating internship at Bulger Veterinary Hospital in Lawrence, Massachusetts. She is now the Wildlife Clinic Veterinarian.

Thank you, Blaine, for your fascinating and educational presentation which can be found here. Thank you also to David and Rosemary Smith for coordinating these events and for including NRPA.

# Heave Ho & Away We Go!

About twenty URI Sea Shanty Singers brought their merry voices and instruments to Tower Hill Brewing Co. on December 13 to benefit NRPA. They passed out lyric sheets to encourage audience participation, and sing-along they did! The maritime songs were entertaining, and easy to learn, the crowd was happy to join in the songs.

This multigenerational group of URI faculty, students and community members have been singing together for four years. Retired Coast Guard Captain Dave Hills leads them, the Sea Shanty Social Club. Built around camaraderie and a love of singing, the sea, and sea shanties, the Singers perform locally to benefit charities.

The Singers returned to Tower Hill Brewing on January 31st, this time they passed the hat to benefit both NRPA and the California Wildfire Relief Fund. NRPA volunteers and Board members handed out NRPA information to the crowd packed into the Brewery. We appreciate the support of the singers and Tower Hill Brewing Company.

Here, from the URI Magazine, is an article about the Sea Shanty Social Club. <https://www.uri.edu/magazine/issues/summer-2024/seashantyclub/>



Marianne Chronley and NRPA Board members Denise Murphy, Brian Matiucci, and Veronica Berounsky



# Osprey Education Program 2025 Report – Craig Wood

One of NRPA's best-loved programs is our osprey education program for local fourth graders. We visit local schools and provide a presentation (including video and live cams) about osprey in late March or early April as the osprey are returning from their annual migration. Teachers often build upon our presentation with activities and exercises that reinforce the concepts we bring to the classroom. In 2017, we enhanced our program by acquiring an osprey mount of our own – a young female. We affectionately named our mount "Pette", short for the Indigenous name of Narrow River: Pettaquamscutt. We find that people are fascinated by her, and it really sparks interest in osprey. You can see Pette at many of our public events. We also have a beautiful banner that shows the full size of an osprey with its wings spread. The children enjoy trying to spread their arms as wide as the wings.

This year Craig Wood, NRPA vice-president visited 6 schools: Hamilton, Monsignor. Clark, Narragansett, West Kingston, Matunuck, and Peace Dale. 15 classrooms visited and 325 4th grade students were in attendance.

The students can earn "Osprey Observer Certificates" by completing specific assignments and, to date, 24 of them have been issued

Many thanks to Craig Wood for his time and enthusiast presentations, to Alison Kates for arranging the visits, to Bob Facey for technical assistance with the web cam, and to the Farrell family for their support!



*"Thank you so much for another awesome presentation!!!!"*

Jessica Grossi Hamilton Elementary

*"I just wanted to thank you so much for your presentation last Wednesday. The kids loved it!"*

Shelly McConnell Matunuck Elementary

# The Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) by A. Karuna Lohmann

Every year, the Narrow River Preservation Association chooses a different mascot to feature on their Narrow River Turnaround Swim merchandise. This year's mascot is the snapping turtle. Having remained nearly unchanged for around 260 million years, the turtle species, including the snapping turtle, is like a living fossil; one that exists all over Rhode Island, for everyone to see!

The species of snapping turtle found in Rhode Island is the Common Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*), which also inhabits Canada and parts of South America. It is mainly aquatic and is found in many bodies of fresh or brackish water, including rivers, lakes and marshes. The Common Snapping Turtle is both an omnivore and a scavenger; its diet consists of fish, aquatic invertebrates and vertebrates, birds, carrion, and plants. As a scavenger, it is integral to eco-

systems because it keeps bodies of water clean by consuming rotting animal remains (Gotte et al.)

The snapping turtle is the biggest turtle species in Rhode Island. It can grow to around a foot long and can weigh more than 35 pounds (Gannon)! Its skin is black, brown or tan, while its carapace is dark green or black. The snapping turtle's Latin name, *Chelydra serpentina*, or "tortoise snake", is named in honor of the turtle's long, serrated, snake-like tail ("Common Snapping Turtle Fun Facts"). Although the snapping turtle and the eastern musk turtle have a similar appearance, they can be differentiated by their size and markings. The snapping turtle is larger than the musk turtle, and the musk turtle has identifying white markings on its face.

To survive the cold winter temperatures, the snapping turtle brumates. Similar to hibernation, brumation involves the slowing down of metabolism and heart rate to conserve energy. In the spring, the snapping

turtle basks in the sun and seeks out nesting sites, where it will lay eggs – typically 1 - 2 clutches, or rounds, of 11 - 83 eggs – in late spring or early summer (Gannon). In late summer or early fall, the eggs hatch, and dozens of little turtles peep out of the nest and make their way to a new home, sometimes crossing roads in the process.

Since it takes a long time, around 5 - 7 years, for turtles to become sexually mature, and turtle populations are often isolated by roads or other development, the death of even a single individual can impact a whole population. Therefore, it is vital to be aware while you are driving, especially during months when turtles are active. If you see a snapping turtle crossing the road, you can use a nearby object like a stick to gently guide it across the road to safety, rather than picking it up by its tail, which can injure it. By being on the lookout for turtles while driving and helping them to cross roads safely, you can help to preserve the future of this ancient and ecologically vital species.



## Works Cited:

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NARROW RIVER PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION



## NARROW RIVER PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

### NRPA 2025 Events

#### **June 7, 'What Lives in the River'**

Saturday 9-11am @ 95 Middlebridge Road  
*Bring the kids! Explore what lives in Narragow River.*

#### **June 21, 18th Narragow River Turnaround**

**Swim** Saturday 9am @ URI Boathouse, North Kingstown *One mile open-water swim in Narragow River.* <https://narrowriver.org/turnaroundswim/>

#### **July, 12 Environmental Awareness Day – in partnership with Narragansett Parks and Rec.**

**Saturday** 9am – 1 pm @ Narragansett Town Beach  
*Exhibits and fun activities for all ages*

#### **August 9, 'Art by the River'**

Saturday 9-11am @ 95 Middlebridge Road  
*Art for all ages and skill levels along the river.*

#### **September 20, 'What Lives in the River'**

Saturday 9-11am @ 95 Middlebridge Road  
*Find fish, crabs, microscopic critters, and more!*

#### **October 7, NRPA's Annual Meeting**

@ URI Coastal Institute, Narragansett. Presentations about the river, Friend of the River Award.

*Visit [narrowriver.org](https://narrowriver.org) for more happenings and general information concerning the Narragow River Watershed*

