
NARROW RIVER NOTES

Narrow River Preservation Association: Protecting, Preserving and Restoring the Narrow River Watershed Since 1970/ September 2026

2026 NRPA Lesa Meng Scholarship Recipients

The Narrow River Preservation Association proudly recognized four outstanding local students whose academic achievements, leadership, and commitment to environmental stewardship exemplify NRPA's mission.

Since 1993, the Narrow River Preservation Association (NRPA) has awarded scholarships to graduating seniors residing in the Narrow River Watershed through its Youth Environmental Education Program. In 2007, the award was renamed the NRPA Lesa Meng College Scholarship in honor of former NRPA Board member Lesa Meng, recognizing her dedication to environmental stewardship.

Scholarship applications are evaluated based on a demonstrated commitment to environmental activities both within and beyond the classroom; the quality and originality of an essay focused on the river; a letter of recommendation from a science teacher; and overall academic achievement. (cont'd on page 3)

What Lives in the Narrow River? A Day of Discovery!

On Saturday, June 6, the Narrow River came alive with exploration and discovery as nearly 100 curious kids, seasoned biologists, families, and dedicated volunteers gathered to discover what lives in and around our beautiful estuary.

With five hands-on stations — from registration and a water bottle refill to microscopes, river sampling, and tables showcasing our discoveries — there was plenty to explore. Armed with seine nets, buckets, touch tanks, and microscopes, participants got up close and personal with the incredible diversity of life in the Narrow River.



Everyone was fascinated by the treasures pulled from the river, turning each net-full into a moment of excitement and discovery. Volunteer Chloe Wild even brought in a lively horseshoe crab for a closer look!

The day was a wonderful reminder that an incredible world of life is right beneath the surface — and right in our own backyard. A heartfelt thank-you goes to everyone who joined us and especially to the wonderful volunteers who made the event possible.

Ed Baker served as our lead scientist. Ed is the manager of seawater facilities at the Ann Gall Durbin Marine Research Aquarium. He was assisted by NRPA Board member and retired high school science teacher Kathy Couchon, along with retired teacher Helen Johnson.

It was a fantastic, hands-on day filled with curiosity, discovery, and plenty of muddy buckets! We hope you'll join us again for our next What Lives in the River? event on September 19. Until then, stay curious — and we'll see you on the river!

President's Cove

Going to Extremes

Dear Friends of Narrow River,

At the time of my last President's Cove in February, we were digging ourselves out from about 30 inches of snow. As I write this one in July, we are in a drought, there is a ban on outdoor watering, Narrow River water has routinely been 80°F, and we have experienced several heat waves here in South County. Why are we undergoing such extremes in weather?

We are experiencing here (and all around the world) climate change, a long-term shift in weather and temperature patterns for the Earth. The United Nations report on global climate change (www.un.org/en/climate-change/what-is-climate-change) notes that the Earth is warming and "The average temperature of the Earth's surface is now about 1.44°C (2.6°F) warmer than it was in the late 1800s-prior to the industrial revolution-and warmer than at any time in the last 100,000 years." Climate change consequences include water droughts and scarcity, more fires, more storms, more flooding, melting polar ice, rising sea level, and declining biodiversity due to decreasing habitats.

But how does warming air temperatures relate to more snow?

Warmer air holds more moisture than cooler air, so more water evaporates into the air. Once the temperatures get below freezing, the extra moisture results in heavier snowstorms, such as our Blizzard of 2026.

But despite all our snow, and recent rains, it takes a lot of water to re-charge our ground water. So it's not surprising that we are still in a drought. Because all our water comes from private or municipal wells, we need to conserve water and respect the outdoor water ban.

Global climate change becomes personal, as we see consequences here. What we see happening in the river and its watershed, is also happening worldwide. Another reminder that we are all in this together and our actions have consequences.

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

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OSPREY CAM UPDATE 8.13.26

After more than six years of continuous exposure to the elements, our osprey nest surveillance camera has failed and needs to be replaced. We are working to restore the system, but the new equipment and installation represent a significant and unexpected expense for NRPA.

(cont'd on page 3)





(Scholarships, cont'd from page 1)

Cooper Ansaldi, a graduate of Narragansett High School, will attend the University of New Hampshire, where he plans to major in wildlife and conservation biology. He hopes to pursue research focused on biodiversity, wildlife management, and long-term conservation strategies that support resilient ecosystems. Throughout high school, Cooper distinguished himself as a dedicated member of the National Honor Society, a four-year track athlete, and basketball player. He is also an avid photographer and served as vice president of the Narragansett Media Club, contributing to a wide range of student-led productions. Cooper also enjoys playing the harmonica.



Isabel Bouzaid, a graduate of North Kingstown High School, will attend Williams College to major in biology, with aspirations to pursue marine biology and contribute to the preservation and restoration of marine ecosystems. Isabel served as captain of her high school swim team, demonstrating leadership, discipline, and a deep connection to the water. She works as a lifeguard at Narragansett Town Beach and is an award-winning exhibiting artist. Isabel is also an active participant in local beach cleanups, reinforcing her commitment to coastal stewardship and community engagement.



Amber Leonard, a Narragansett High School graduate, will attend Trinity College, where she plans to major in biology with the goal of pursuing a future career in dentistry. Amber served as President of both the Ecology Club and the National Honor Society, reflecting her strong academic record and dedication to environmental advocacy. She was also a four-year member of Envirothon, contributing to competitive environmental problem-solving initiatives. As Captain of the Indoor and Outdoor Track & Field teams, Amber demonstrated leadership and athletic commitment.



Devin Silversmith, a graduate of South Kingstown High School, will attend Cornell University to study Environment and Sustainability, concentrating in Environmental Biology and Applied Ecology. A passionate bird enthusiast, Devin earned third place in the state science fair for his research on nocturnal migrant bird vocalizations, showcasing both scientific curiosity and technical skill. At SKHS, he competed as a cross-country runner and lacrosse player. Devin also works with the Audubon Youth Conservation League, serves as his class photographer, and is a member of the National Honor Society. His commitment to ecological research and conservation underscores his readiness to contribute meaningfully to the field.

Pictured above,
top to bottom:

Cooper Ansaldi, Isabel Bouzaid, Amber Leonard and Devin Silversmith

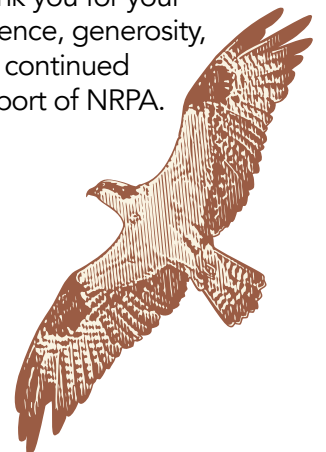
(Ospreys, cont'd from page 1)

We are very grateful to everyone who has already donated toward replacing the camera. Your generosity is helping us bring this much-loved community resource back online. We also thank the Farrell family, who have generously supported the camera's annual operating expenses since its inception and will continue that support once the new system is in place.

As we work to fund the camera replacement, we hope you will also consider supporting NRPA's other important environmental programs. **Vibrio testing, eelgrass monitoring, River Watch, and our other efforts to protect the health of Narrow River all require ongoing financial support.**

If you haven't already contributed, please consider making a donation or becoming an NRPA member. Every gift helps us continue this important work throughout the Narrow River watershed.

We hope to have the osprey video feed back in service this fall, after the ospreys — and the mosquitoes — have departed for the season. Thank you for your patience, generosity, and continued support of NRPA.



Every Yard Counts: Why We Love Bats – Heroes In The Dark

Peter August, Ph.D.

Professor Emeritus – University of Rhode Island
Science Advisor – Napatree Point Conservation Area

There are 1,500 species of bats worldwide. They are incredibly diverse, ranging in size from 2 grams (the weight of a U.S. penny – bumblebee bat) to 1 kilogram (2.4 pounds – flying fox). They are most diverse in the tropics but also occur in extreme northern and southern habitats. Bats eat a wide variety of foods, including insects, fruits, small animals like frogs and birds, blood (vampire bats), and nectar. Bats exhibit almost every kind of mammalian social behavior; harems (one male and many females), leks (males perform elaborate displays to attract females), monogamy (a male and female pair-bond for life), and promiscuity (females and males mate with many partners over a short period of time).

Bats serve society in many ways.

- **They pollinate and disperse plants we depend on; for example, bananas, guavas, mangoes, balsa, and cocoa.** The next time you are enjoying a refreshing Margarita, thank bats! Tequila is made from agave plants that grow in the deserts of the southwestern US and Mexico. They are pollinated by bats. No bats, no agave, no Margaritas!
- **Bats do not get cancer.** Scientists are just now learning why. Bats have two copies of the gene that attacks and kills cancer cells. Humans only have one copy of this gene. The research community is on this!
- **Bats consume crop pests.** The savings to farmers in not having to buy and apply pesticides to control the insect pests bats eat is estimated to be \$23 billion/year.

Rhode Island has seven species of bats. They all eat insects and can consume more than their body weight every night in bugs. For example, one of our most

common bats, the Big Brown Bat can eat 600-1,000 mosquito-sized insects an hour! Do the math, that is a LOT of flying bugs each night. Rhode Island is a difficult place to live year-round if you eat insects. We have plenty of bug-food for bats in the warmer months, but none in winter. Our local bats cope with winter in two ways. Like many Rhode Islanders, our Tree Bats (three species, they roost in trees) migrate to southern states to escape the cold and where bugs are available all winter long. Our hibernating bats (four species) find a cave, mine, or even an attic and hibernate the winter away. Hibernating (a deep sleep) is a great way to cope with winter. Hibernating Little Brown Bats, can



An *Eptesicus* Bat

live up to 25 - 30 years! A deer mouse of comparable size (does not hibernate) lives but a few years. The secret to longevity - never say no to a winter's weekend nap!

Finally, how can you not love an animal our German friends call Fledermaus – flying mouse. Others call bats “mouse angels.” Although some cultures consider bats scary - think Dracula and Halloween - Chinese revere bats! The Chinese word for bats (Fu) has the same sound as the word for prosperity and longevity (Fu). This is why you see silhouettes of bats on Chinese dishes and furniture – hopes that good fortune will bless the owner's household.

Bats are a wonderful part of Rhode Island's biodiversity. Let's celebrate the benefits bats bring us all. With your next Margarita, whisper “thank you bats!”

Meet Julia

Julia comes to NRPA as our new Seasonal Events Coordinator, bringing over a decade of experience helping teams turn big ideas into reality. Her background is in project management, but what she really loves is the part most job titles leave out: bringing people together around something that matters. She has a knack for keeping the details organized and the timeline on track, all while making sure everyone involved, from volunteers to partners to first-time attendees, feels welcomed and



included. That combination of structure and warmth is exactly what makes for events people remember.

Outside of work, Julia lives in South County with her husband, their young son, and a notoriously mischievous cat named Tiny Shenanigans. Much of their family life happens outdoors, along the same river and coastline this organization has spent decades working to protect. She's raising her son to know this land the way she does: as a place worth caring for.

For Julia, joining NRPA feels less like starting a new job and more like stepping fully into work she already believed in. She's looking forward to helping bring the community together, one event at a time, in the place she calls home.

Veteran Champ, Newcomer Win Latest Narrow River Turnaround Swim

The top two finishers in this year's annual Narrow River Turnaround Swim had very different histories with the event.

Stuart Cromarty won the men's one-mile open-water race June 20 in 26 minutes, 6 seconds, continuing a streak of competing every year since the event began in 2004. Claire Thomas, who finished second overall and won the women's division in 28:02, was swimming the river for the first time.

The two led a field of 98 competitors who started at La Farge Point Park in Saundertown, swam a half-mile down the Narrow River, turned around and finished at the starting point. Organized by the Narrow River Preservation Association (NRPA), the race draws top open-water swimmers along with participants looking to challenge themselves.



SCENES FROM THE SWIM

"It's a fun event," said Thomas, a South Kingstown resident. "Everyone is sort of local, and the swimmer community is really a powerful force around this area."

Cromarty, originally from South Africa, said he returns because of the race, its setting and NRPA's environmental work.

"It's a great organization that really spends a lot of time sampling the river and making sure that it's kept clean," he said.

The course's 180-degree turn is also a nod to the race's name. The river underwent a major turnaround in water quality after once being considered too polluted for swimming. In 2004, it was deemed safe, and the annual race was born.

The event has grown significantly and is now considered the unofficial start of the area's open-water swimming season. This year, water temperatures were about 72 degrees, with heavy winds. Swimmers followed buoys and kayaked lifeguards.

"One of the things that happens every year is I get comments about how beautiful this spot is to swim," said race organizer Veronica Berounsky. "You're in nature. It's a nice place."

The field included swimmers ages 11 to 80. Eight competitors were 70 or older, while another eight were 14 or younger. Finishing times ranged from 26:06 to 1:38:04.

The wind slowed some swimmers, but Cromarty pulled away on the return leg and finished nearly two minutes ahead of Thomas.

"We've swam it in perfect weather, and we've swam it in pouring rain," Cromarty said. "It's the setting, the race itself, the people, the organization that keeps me coming back."

Thomas finished just ahead of Kate Porter (28:08), Trent Theroux (28:11) and Abby Bauman (28:29).

"Today was perfect," Thomas said. "The water was like 72, sun shining, a little bit of wind made it exciting on the way back."

Generations Grow Up On Narrow River



Gabriel Nagel is a high school student at Eno River Academy in Hillsborough, North Carolina. Every summer, he stays with his family, who has been on Narrow River since the 1940s. This summer, he has had the unique opportunity to assist with the annual eelgrass survey in the lower part of the river. It was truly a great experience for him, allowing him to explore his interest in conservation while helping an area that has been a part of his life for many years.

In school, his favorite subjects are math and science, and Gabriel also plays the clarinet in jazz band. He is part of his school's Cross Country, Track, and Swim teams, which helps him relax and have fun after a long day. Gabriel is also a Life scout, soon to be Eagle, in his local unit, and currently holds the position of Senior Patrol Leader. His favorite part of scouting is the hiking and canoeing trips that his troop does a couple of times per year.

In his free time, Gabriel enjoys being active, reading fantasy or dystopian books, and spending time outside. He also spends lots of time in Duke Forest with his older brother, younger sister, and triplet sister and brother.

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



Individuals wishing to donate via a Stock Transfer or a Qualified Charitable Distribution from an IRA please contact nrpa@narrowriver.org.

Thank You

Rhode Island Rivers Council



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



Narrow River Land Trust (NRLT) was founded in 1982 with the mission of preserving land in the Narrow River (NR) Watershed to protect water and agricultural resources, wildlife habitat, and open space for recreation. Since their founding, NRLT has conserved over 660 acres of land in the watershed, protecting it from development. They work cooperatively with private owners and local communities to ensure that these areas are protected for now and for future generations. Garrison House Acres, located near Middlebridge, is one of the important ones with its pastoral open space and a beautiful walking trail that abuts the river.

For more information about NRLT, please contact office@narrowriverlandtrust.org.
narrowriverlandtrust.org



Volunteer with NRPA!

Looking for a way to give back to your community and help protect Narrow River? NRPA welcomes volunteers of all interests and abilities — from helping at events and educational programs to environmental monitoring and community outreach. There's a place for you to get involved!

Visit the **Volunteer** section on our website to learn more and join us in protecting and preserving Narrow River.



NARROW RIVER PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

MANY THANKS TO NRPA's 2026 SPONSORS!

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SAVE THE DATE

for the 2026 Annual Meeting of



NARROW RIVER PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

October 6, 2026

Reception 5:30 pm.

Meeting 7:00 pm.

*Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum
815 Gilbert Stuart Rd, Saunderstown, RI*



NARROW RIVER PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

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