

WATERSHED

A Newsletter of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association

Volume 19 No. 3

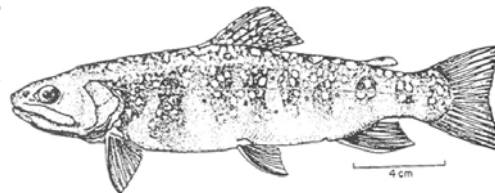
SUMMER 2002

New Field Science Initiatives for Summer

Brook Trout Study, Transient Water Monitoring, Minimum Stream Flows, and TMDLs in Estuary

The summer of 2002 will be marked by scientific initiatives new to our plan of work, as identified in the Pawcatuck Watershed Action Plan.

With the assistance of Dr. Saul Saila, URI professor emeritus, WPWA will undertake a quantitative analysis of brook trout *Salvelinus fontinalis* in lower order streams in the watershed. With partial funding from The Nature Conservancy's John Wald Science Grant, and equipment on loan from VHB, Inc., WPWA launched a study of native brook trout habitat in June. The study will extend to an assessment of minimum stream flows and various fish assemblages with funding from the Partnership for Narragansett Bay. Working with Dr. Saila are interns Melany Cheeseman from the University of RI, and Katherine Fisher from Brown University. The investigation will



Brook trout, *Salvelinus fontinalis*, 19cm, still showing lateral parr markings.



Mel, Katherine, and Dr. Saul Saila

continue through August, and Dr. Saila hopes to share his findings in the form of a publication to likely be released in the winter of 2003.

Dr. Saila will also lead his team on a transient water monitoring effort in the Queens River watershed this season. Transient monitoring, as opposed to ambient monitoring, looks at short-term toxic events through the deployment of electronic data loggers in surface water bodies. These devices are battery-powered and contain their own internal computers which take readings on a preset basis for various parameters. The data loggers being used by WPWA have sensors that detect temperature, pH, salinity, specific conductance, and dissolved oxygen. They can be programmed to take a reading at 15-minute intervals over two weeks, allowing detection of a toxic event that may occur over a very short period of time. These devices, on loan from the Environmental Protection Agency, will be deployed at various locations along the Queens River, above and below potential pollution

sources. Partial funding for the study has been provided by the RI General Assembly, through a grant sponsored by Senator Donna Walsh.

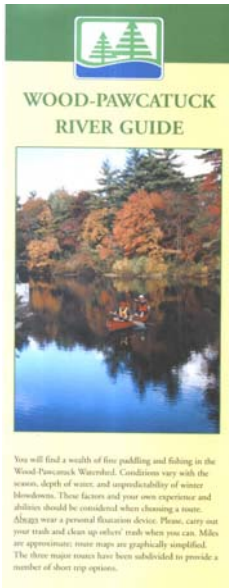
There is much need for minimum stream flow data in Rhode Island. It is an important criteria in terms of a stream's ability to support aquatic life, particularly in the midst of dry periods when competition for water supply is at peak from agricultural, domestic, and commercial uses. WPWA's brook trout and fish assemblage data will provide some data. Additional data will be generated from the ongoing stream monitoring program. Physical parameters of stream water quality will be measured, as well as stream levels and flow volume. Special thanks to Linda Green at URI Watershed Watch for providing training to program volunteers.

Finally, WPWA will assist RI Department of Environmental Management Office of Water Resources in the deployment of data loggers in the Pawcatuck Estuary to measure dissolved oxygen, chlorophyll, and other physical parameters under the state's TMDL (total maximum daily load) program. WPWA volunteer David Luce has been trained in the use of the instruments, and will work with Chris Turner and Veronica Masson of RIDEM.

Hickox and Heyder revise River Guide
2nd Edition now on sale

The fabulous full-color second edition of the popular Wood-Pawcatuck River Guide is now available. Following a complete sell-out of the first printing of the guide, river experts Charlie Hickox, also an original guide author, and Elly Heyder have revised the guide, making necessary updates to the text, and changes to the map legend to make the guide more user-friendly.

The second printing of 5000 copies was made possible through the efforts of Hickox and Heyder, and the gen-



erous contributions of our sponsors URE Outfitters of Hope Valley, South County Tourism Council of Wakefield, McQuade's Ace Home Center of Westerly, and Lathrop Insurance of Westerly. Each sponsor contributed \$500 toward the cost of printing and production.

The original design of the map, created by designer Russell Kolton, remains unchanged. Sun Graphics designer Andrew Burris employed the framework of Kolton, and made changes to details as directed by Hickox and Heyder. The guide is published in loving memory of Polly Matzinger, whose concept for the map was

the inspiration for its original production in 1992.

The result of the work of all of these fine people is a canoe and kayak guide of which WPWA is extremely proud. Already in big demand, the guide can be found on store shelves throughout Washington County, as well as southeastern Connecticut. Call the office at 401-539-9017 for locations. The guide is priced at \$4.50. It can also be purchased directly through WPWA, where members may take advantage of a discounted price of \$3.50.

WPWA owes a tremendous debt of gratitude to Charlie Hickox and Elly Heyder, who have given their time and talent to not only this guide, but to our many river initiatives. They are irreplaceable friends to WPWA.

Program Building Gets Its Facelift
Champlin funds dedicated to restoration

The before and after photos tell the story.

WPWA's program building is poised to once again play host to visitors young and old ready to discover the wonders of our watershed environment.

The structure, once used for programs but later for lumber storage, is undergoing its own restoration, with shingle siding, new windows and doors, and a new roof to follow.

Skilled carpenters from MS Enterprises have transformed the façade from hideous to heavenly. Old concrete blocks were chipped away, an unused doorway removed, new trim and fascia installed, and finally new shingles, have given the building a whole new life.

Recently volunteers Ana Flores

and Susan Masket, two area artists planning art workshops for this fall, pitched in to paint the interior floor and clean the ceilings to give the inside a lift.

Of course the location could not be better for the use. Panoramic views of the Wood River and Barberville Dam, and the relaxing sounds of the waterfall, make this the ideal space to enjoy the surroundings and engage in learning.

The renovations have been made possible by the Champlin Foundations. Portions of last year's \$25,000 capital grant have been used to transform the structure. Funding from the Horace A. and S. Ella Kimball Foundation, and in-kind donation of crushed stone from Wescon Corporation of Connecticut, completed the surrounding stone driveway.

"What's most remarkable is the streetscape improvement," says executive director Lori Urso. "Before

the renovations you wondered if the place was abandoned. It was poorly kept. Today it's not only nice for us, but for anyone driving by, which is very important."

Members and friends are encouraged to pay a visit to see the difference for themselves. Look for upcoming events to be held on site.



What "was" above, and what "is" below—with a little more work to go.



Art For Living: a Benefit Auction

Annual gala slated for August 24th

Enchantment: art. . . relics from the past. . . friendship. . . nature. . . creativity. . . food. . . fun. . . Recycling in our own lives. . .

What more could you want? It's all available Saturday, August 24 at the annual Benefit Auction for the Wood-Pawcatuck

Watershed Association. The evening begins at 5 p.m. with viewing, cocktails and light supper. Bidding at the live auction starts at 6:30 p.m. The Silent Auction closes at 7:30 pm.

The theme this year is Art for Living, expanding on the idea of auctioning more than art pieces. Art in our watershed includes the exciting talents and services offered by persons who practice the art of living in their lives.

Bid on a bird walk or canoe and kayak lessons, or learn how to construct a cold frame. Buy a load of compost. Bid on a winetasting and walk through a newly planted vineyard; a lobster boat ride and picnic; a dinner prepared by a "master" chef, just to name a few.

Of her "Dinner with Dante" winning bid at last year's event, Pamela Crandall exclaimed

"I don't know what I paid, but it wasn't enough! This was the most amazing dinner and evening I've had in quite some



Artist Linda Woods paints "en plein air" in the watershed.

time." Ann Rothschild, winning bidder of "Preserving Family Memories" oral history, said, "thanks to the offer I bid, I now have safely protected my mother's irreplaceable and priceless recollections of her life."

Of course, there will also be large and small works of art created by artists from the watershed and beyond, auctioned by Bob Ward. Both small and large art pieces, some completed en plein air (meaning created outdoors within the watershed environment) and others in the studio will be offered.

Protecting the environment is one of the major themes in this year's special "Art for Living" offerings. To complement the theme, artist Susan Masket will weave a web of mixed media, trapping discarded items which could have been recycled.



Historic Carolina Mill setting.

And all of this within the enchanting grounds of the historic Carolina Mill owned by John and Lois Quinn on Route 112 in the village of Carolina, described by John as "an extravagant adventure in nostalgia."

This is an opportunity for all of us to come together for the benefit of the watershed community.

Tickets are \$50 per person. Participating artists will pay \$20 and those who donate the entire purchase price of their artwork will receive complimentary admission. Tickets are limited and in demand for this event. For information contact WPWA at 401-539-9017 or email info@wpwa.org.



Silent auction pieces on display inside the Mill.

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James and Bernice Clancy

Joyce and William Clark III

David and Nancy Clayton

David and Cassandra Crandall

Ann Crawford and Bill Bishop

Bob and Eileen Bohler

(cont'd page 5)

Eagle Scout Projects Grace Watershed

This spring, WPWA teamed up with Eagle Scout candidates from Troop 1 Hope Valley to provide a number of projects that improve environmental conditions in the Pawcatuck Watershed. Most of the funding for these projects came from Materials Only Grants awarded to WPWA by the RI Trail Advisory Committee. The scouts were responsible for developing the designs, obtaining materials and tools, making necessary contacts, and then organizing and supervising other scouts and volunteers as they did the work.

Starting the end of April, three of the scouts tackled a problem area on Tefft Hill Trail in Arcadia Management Area. The trail descends a steep bank then traverses a small wetland area before crossing Brushy Brook. For their projects, Jared Lombardo had a bridge rebuilt over the brook; Chris Bok constructed bog bridges to protect the wetland, and Bryan Russo had water bars installed and the slope graded to resolve the erosion problem.



In June, Ben Lord completed work on the Browning Mill Pond Trail that WPWA had started in 1999. He had the scouts finish installing fencing on the west side of the pond and repair broken parts of the existing fence. He also had erosion control steps installed, repaired an eroded bank, and installed more bog bridges in



the wet areas on the north-west side of the trail.

Also in June, Adam Hillier and Rob Grant did a couple of projects on WPWA property. Adam had erosion



control steps installed on a steep bank leading down to the Barberville Fishing Pier. Rob had his helpers



clean the garage and then constructed storage areas for the kayaks, canoes and equipment WPWA uses for programs. Another scout, Nate Potter, will be landscaping a steep bank near the fishing pier with native vegetation. The native vegetation will both stabilize and improve the bank while providing educational opportunities to visitors to the pier. Funding for Nate's project will come from a Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program grant administered by Natural Resource Conservation Service. Nate hopes to finish this project by the beginning of July.

Two other scouts from Troop 1 also completed projects in the watershed. Eric Fitzhugh had volunteers spread new mulch for protection at the playground at the Crandall Field in Ashaway. Mike Conklin worked with the Richmond Rural Preservation Land Trust to construct a hiking trail on the newly acquired Bradner Preserve in Richmond.

All of the scouts and their families did a wonderful job on these community service projects.

Opening Day, Earth Day Combat Litter Woes

Thanks to Bess Eaton Coffee and Bakery shops, and numerous volunteers from WPWA and Trout Unlimited, opening day anglers were again treated to free coffee in reusable mugs to help raise awareness about the problem of litter.



As tradition has dictated, the day was greeted by thousands of anglers hoping to hook the big one. But opening day is more of a celebration of the start of spring and the fishing season. It's great fun for all, and a day enjoyed by many families out together to enjoy the rivers and the local environment. And for WPWA, a day to educate sportsmen on litter reduction.

Another annual tradition, Earth Day, brought nearly 50 volunteers out to river access sites to clear debris. M.J. Murphy donated a dumpster to collect the waste, and hauled it to RI Resource Recovery Corporation, where the tipping fee was



waived. Funding via RIDEM Earth Day Mini-Grants helped provide necessary supplies. Many many thanks to all participants for playing your part in this important annual event.



WPWA CANOE AND HIKING GUIDES

Order Form

Wood-Pawcatuck River Guide

By Charlie Hickox and Elly Heyder

\$4.50 per copy (\$3.50 members)

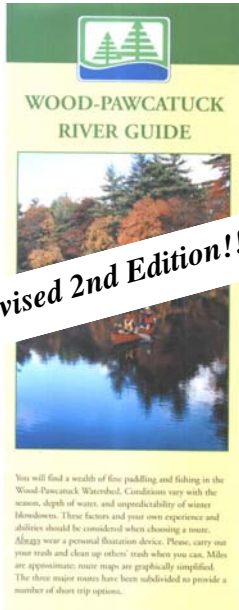
Navigate the Wood and Pawcatuck Rivers from source to sea with this colorful folded map.

Walks in the Watershed

By Charlie Hickox and Elly Heyder

\$4.50 per copy (\$3.50 members)

Sixteen of the watershed's best loop hikes contained in a handy pocket-sized guide



Quantity:

_____ *Wood-Pawcatuck River Routes Map*

_____ *Walks in the Watershed*

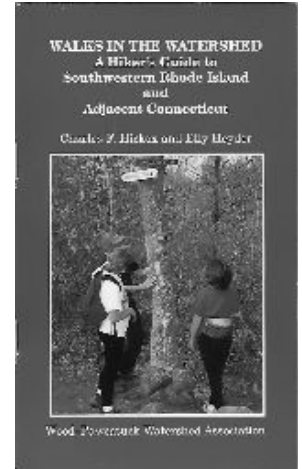
_____ *Pawcatuck Watershed Report (free)*

Add \$1.50 postage and handling per item.

Name _____

Address _____

Mail form and payment to:
WPWA
 203 Arcadia Road
 Hope Valley, RI 02832



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- Gloria Courtois
- Katherine Cowles
- Joseph DeAngelis
- Eleanor Delamater
- Bernie Derjue
- J. Michael Divney
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- Robert and Karen Woods

From the Executive Director

I want to thank all members who have renewed their memberships with us during the past month. If you don't see your name listed, your dues are outstanding. Please take the time to renew. If you have renewed and are not listed, please contact the office to be sure your membership has been updated. WPWA relies very heavily on member dues to support our work, so please take the time to send yours along and support your watershed.



I am particularly excited about the new initiatives discussed on page one of this newsletter. I want to thank Dr. Saul Salla for his time and dedication to our association, and the local environment.

WPWA continues to enjoy the support of many foundations and government agencies. Here is a listing of recent grant awards:

- Horace & Ella Kimball Foundation
\$13,000 capital grant
- Partnership for Narragansett Bay
\$10,125 to study fish assemblages and minimum stream flows
- RI Department of Transportation
TEA-21 Enhancement Funds
\$35,000 to improve Switch Road public river access in Richmond
- Westerly Conservation Commission
\$900 for water quality monitoring
Town of Charlestown
\$500 operational subsidy
- Stonington Conservation Commission
\$200 operational subsidy
Town of Richmond
\$500 operational subsidy
- Hopkinton Conservation Commission
\$950 for water quality monitoring

We are most grateful for the confidence shown and support given.

Louise Wood

July is Learn-To-Fish Month

Co-sponsors: RIDEM Aquatic Education Program, Trout Unlimited Narragansett Chapter, United Flytyers of RI. Pre-registration is required. 401-539-9017

July 9, Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Family Fun Fishing Day

Carolina Trout Hatchery, Richmond, RI.

\$5 covers bait and a hotdog lunch. Ages 15 and under.

Bring your own fishing pole.

July 16, Tuesday, 1 pm -3:30 pm -

Fly Tying Workshop

Fly tying instruction for youths aged 10 to 16

\$10 per person includes equipment and materials

Try out your flies on the Wood River after class.

July 26, Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. -

Family Fun Fishing Day

(same as above)



Splendid August Events

August 13, Tuesday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Project Wet Teacher Training Workshop

Aquatic education instruction for elementary school teachers.

Selected lesson plans and activities, along with discussions of curriculum compression taught by Christine Dudley of the RIDEM Aquatic Education.

\$25 fee includes Project Wet curriculum. Course is worth one CEU.

Bring a lunch.

August 14, Wednesday, 5 to 7 p.m.

Summer Splendor on the Wood River

Enjoy a leisurely paddle at the best time of the day to take in the sights, sounds, and scents of the Wood River in the summer.

\$5 per person. Meet at the WPWA headquarters.

Bring your own boat. Limited boats available for rent.

August 24, Saturday 5 to 8 pm

Art For Living: a benefit art auction

An enchanted evening and gala event where art and environment join in the historic setting of the Carolina Mill.

Silent auction and live auction featuring auctioneer Bob Ward.

\$50 per person includes cocktails, light supper, and self-guided tour.

Call 401-539-9017, or email info@wpwa.org for ticket information.

***Phragmites australis*: Have you seen it?**

Native plant holds key to understanding invasives

You most likely have seen *Phragmites*. *Phragmites australis* (common reed grass) has become widely distributed throughout the Northeastern US, bordering ponds, marshes, and roadways. The dense stands of the plant, with its tall stalks and bushy heads, are considered by many to be a nuisance. In fact, the plant has invaded many areas (often following human disturbance) for about the past thirty years, altering the natural dynamics.

It's been determined, however, that this 'pest' species is actually a non-native of European origin. In



its new environment, it has out-competed not only other wetland plant species, but also strains of *Phragmites* that are native to North America. The exotic strain has been so successful in comparison with the native, that at present the majority of *Phragmites* stands we see are of the European origin.

Since the distinction between the native and exotic was discovered, we have been attempting to find remaining sites of native *Phragmites*. We are trying to find such stands here in Rhode Island. It is hoped that if such stands are found, they will lead to a better understanding not only of the native strain, but the exotic one as well. This information will lead to better control of

the rapidly spreading European type and conservation of the native type.

We are asking for your help. It would greatly assist us if you could, in the course of your monitoring, note the presence of *Phragmites* stands. The chart on page 2 indicates some of the characteristics that distinguish the native from the exotic. Any information about *Phragmites* sites would be very helpful.

If you have any questions, or if you have information to provide, please contact:

Adam Lambert
Department of Plant Sciences
University of Rhode Island
Kingston, RI 02881
(401) 874-2750

alam9114@postoffice.uri.edu

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In addition to my dues, I am enclosing an additional contribution of \$ _____

All but \$5.00 of your dues is tax deductible within the limits of the law.

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WPWA Headquarters

203 Arcadia Road, Hope Valley
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 info@wpwa.org
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