

In the Mainstream

Newsletter for Members of the Norwalk River Watershed Association [NRWA]
New Canaan, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, Wilton, CT, and Lewisboro, NY

www.norwalkriver.org

Fall 2012

ALLEN'S MEADOW: THE SITE OF A MAJOR VICTORY IN THE BATTLE AGAINST INVASIVES!

By Elizabeth Craig

Thanks to the outstanding work of NRWA board member, David Havens, his son David, and Cub Scout Pack 70 at Allen's Meadow in Wilton, the section of the park around the pond is looking good this summer. It is filled with flourishing native plants including, pokeweed, jewelweed, milkweeds, sumac, goldenrod, bee balm, wild grape and more... What a change! Before Mr. Havens and his team took on this area with their clippers, as part of the America the Beautiful Grant awarded to NRWA by the USDA Forest Service and the CT Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), this section was dominated by some of the most notorious invasive plants in Connecticut including, Japanese Barberry, Burning bush (*Euonymus*), Multi-flora Rose, and Oriental Bittersweet.

Why is the invasive work done by Dave Havens and his crew so important? What is the point of clearing out an overgrown area to make way for these 'weeds' ...milkweeds, jewelweeds and pokeweed? To our native birds and butterflies these 'weeds' are beautiful. Our native wildlife needs native plants to survive. Clearing out the invasive plants gives native plants a chance to grow. An invasive plant will take up space and use the light, water and soil nutrients that would otherwise have been available for a native plant, and it will not pass the energy it creates from photosynthesis up the food chain.

The fact that local insects, birds, and deer may not eat the 'alien' plants has made them



Photograph courtesy of David Havens

Members of New Canaan's Cub Scout Pack 70 who worked with NRWA's Dave Havens to clear invasive plants from Allen's Meadow in Wilton last year.

popular with many gardeners over the years and been a selling point, since the leaves of the 'alien' plants do not show insect/animal damage. However, our native birds, butterflies, animals and the insects they eat to survive all prefer to eat native plants. To ensure their survival, we need to ensure their access to a high quality food source, found in native plants. Keeping invasive plants under control is key to restoring and maintaining the meadow, forest and wetland habitats found throughout the Norwalk River Watershed. Both CT DEP and NRWA are committed to reducing the number of non-native invasive plants.

Most people do not realize that beyond the playing fields of Allen's Meadow in Wilton lies a little birding gem. Allen's Meadow is something of a Connecticut birding hotspot and an important stopover site for migrating birds; its fall peak vies with any Fairfield site (excluding Cove Island Park in Stamford). Large numbers of sparrows make use of Allen's Meadow's

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NRWA RECEIVES GRANT FROM NORWALK REI FOR ENHANCEMENT OF NORWALK RIVER VALLEY TRAIL



Partnering with the Norwalk Tree Alliance and the Norwalk River Valley Trail Steering Committee, NRWA will use the REI grant of \$9020 to clean up and enhance the section of trail that connects Union Park to Mathews Park in Norwalk and is part of the evolving Norwalk River Valley Trail.

On October 6th at 10 AM, the community is invited to join us in Union Park at the end of Mott St. behind the Norwalk Public Library for a volunteer trail workday. We will clean up trash along the Trail, cut back invasive plants and replant native vegetation. The grant from REI will supply tools, seeds, plants, and refreshments.



Kayakers arriving at Calf Pasture during KFAC XII. Money raised goes to local charities including NRWA.

NRWA Chosen As Spotlight Charity In Kayak For A Cause 2012

KFAC paddlers have been raising money for charity by crossing Long Island Sound via kayak every summer for the last 12 years. This July, 35 paddlers set out on one of three possible courses: the traditional crossing from Long Island to Norwalk, a boomerang paddle from CT to CT of the same 12-mile distance, or a round-trip from Calf Pasture to Long Island and back. All paddlers arrived safely by early afternoon where friends and family members greeted them, and a celebration began, featuring live music, food and drinks. NRWA thanks the paddlers and the organizers of KFAC for the chance to participate and to benefit from the group's fundraising efforts.

community gardens, overgrown fields and wetlands, including the Song, Savanna, Chipping, Swamp, White-Throated and more. The abundance of these birds also attracts migrating hawks, with Coopers, Sharp Shins, and the occasional Merlin dropping in at this stopover site for a meal, too. Just a few of the many birds seen during the fall migration (late Sept to early Oct) include: Flycatchers, Thrushes, Brown Thrasher, and Warblers, including: Palm, Yellow, Blue-winged and Orange Crowned (rare).

You may already know that Monarch butterflies need milkweed plants to reproduce. The Monarch caterpillars feed strictly on milkweeds, and the bitter alkaloids ingested from milkweed leaves help protect the adult Monarchs from predators. Adult butterflies also enjoy the nectar from milkweed flowers. Invasive plants such as black swallow wort and multi-flora rose may choke out milkweed and other important native plants. The removal of these invasives is important for the survival of our local butterflies.

Every garden, large or small, should include some milkweed plants, which you can grow from seed or purchase from a local nursery. Try mixing a few milkweed plants in your flowerbeds. Their presence may deter deer browsing, because the milkweeds are toxic to deer. For example, you can mix white milkweed with your daylilies, it is a pleasing combination, and the milkweeds may keep the deer from eating all your lilies.

Interested in helping restore native habitat and learning more about invasive plants? Join us Saturday, October 6th at 10 AM in Union Park at the end of Mott St. behind the Norwalk Public Library for an introduction to Connecticut's invasive plant species. Bring work gloves and join our trail restoration day sponsored by REI. We will pick up trash and remove invasive plants from the NRVW walking/biking trail there and replace them with native grasses and wildflowers. For more information, call 877-NRWA-INFO.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

NRWA programs highlight the importance and features of the Norwalk River and its watershed and ways people collectively and individually can improve the region. Programs are free, unless specified, but space may be limited; reservations are suggested. Call the leader listed or **NRWA toll free at 877-NRWA-INFO (877-679-2463)** for information, directions, and reservations.

September 15, Saturday. Coastal Cleanup Events. International Coastal Cleanup Day is sponsored by the Ocean Conservancy and organized locally by the CT Fund for the Environment's Save

the Sound program which lists 25 cleanup sites on September 15th, including three in Norwalk, at ctenvironment.org.

September 23, Sunday, 1:30-3:30 PM. Sail The Sound With NRWA Aboard Schooner SoundWaters. Join NRWA and SoundWaters for an interactive tour aboard an 80-foot replica of a Chesapeake Bay Sharpie Schooner. Subsidized fee of only \$20. Passengers will have the opportunity to enjoy the Sound and participate in learning stations that highlight the impact of human activities on the health of the Sound. Participants will sample and

Plenty of Kayaking in 2012

By David Park

Area residents were treated to several presentations on local sea-kayaking by "yours truly" during 2012. The free events were attended by several hundred people, and dozens of my guidebook, "Kayaking in and around the Norwalk Islands" were sold. Most talks were held at public libraries including Westport, Wilton, Ridgefield, New Canaan, Rowayton and East Norwalk. Events were also held at the Norwalk REI store and at the Sherwood Island State Park Nature Center in Westport.

In addition to the details of local kayaking, the discussions covered kayak safety, the Norwalk Islands and coastal wildlife. Throughout the presentations, I noted the importance of how the stewardship of the Norwalk and Saugatuck River watersheds affects the water quality and ecosystem of Long Island Sound and all the great wildlife that is thriving there today.

I joined the NRWA Board of Directors a few years back because I was well aware of how small amounts of water pollution from within the Norwalk River watershed can adversely affect the ecosystem of Long Island Sound and the recreational use of the Sound, including paddle-sports.

Check our website for more information on how to protect the watershed at home and at work. The kayak books are also available for purchase there.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Enclosed is my tax-deductible, annual membership contribution of \$ _____.

I would prefer to receive the semi-annual newsletter, *In the Mainstream*, via:

- The name and address written below, or
- The email address listed below.

Riparian Society

Steward \$1000 and up
Protector \$500-\$999
Patron \$100-\$499

Basic Membership

Supporter \$50-\$99
Donor \$30-\$49
Other \$ _____

Yes, my company has a Matching Gift Program. Company Name _____

Please make check payable to: NRWA, Inc., and mail to the Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc., P.O. Box 197, Georgetown, CT 06829

Name _____ Tel. _____ Email _____

Address _____
Street Town State Zip

Or you can donate on-line using PayPal through our website!

www.norwalkriver.org

Events continued...

test water quality, work together to raise the sails, haul the nets, and examine firsthand the rich diversity of life that exists beneath the waves. The tour features live animals and discussion with an emphasis on specific stewardship actions that individuals can take to protect species, habitats and water quality. Children over 6 are welcome. Register online through a link under Upcoming Events on the homepage of our website: norwalkriver.org or call 877-NRWA-INFO. Meet, rain or shine, at Stamford Harbor, 860 Canal Street. SoundWaters is a non-profit group offering educational programs for over 21 years. Schooner SoundWaters is a US Coast Guard certified vessel and is fully insured.

September 22 and 23, Saturday-Sunday, 11 AM – 5 PM. Audubon Greenwich's HawkWatch Festival & Green Bazaar. Come celebrate the annual hawk migration over Audubon Greenwich's "Quaker Ridge Hawk Watch." There will be live birds of prey shows, games and activities for all ages, eco-friendly business exhibits, great food and music. Rain or shine. For additional information, visit greenwich.audubon.org.

September 24, Monday, 9:15 – 11 AM. River Study - Adult Training. Followed by the on-site training from 12:15-2:30 PM. Veteran's Park School Auditorium in Ridgefield. Contact Donna Roscoe at donna@roscoe.cc.

September 30, Sunday, 12:30 -3:30 PM. Kayak Tour to Norwalk's Chimon Island. Join the Westport Historical Society for a kayak trip to Chimon Island, one mile off the coast of Norwalk which is part of the Stewart B. McKinney Wildlife Refuge. The tour will be led by NRWA board member, David Park, author of *Kayaking in and around the Norwalk Islands*. Participants will paddle out to the island in a group for a hike around the shore and a picnic. David will discuss the island as well as the other Norwalk Islands. The group will depart from the Small Boat Shop, 144 Water St in South Norwalk. Fee: \$20. Bring your own kayak or to reserve a rental, call: 203-854-5223 and mention this event. Register at westporthistory.org or 203-222-1424.

September 30, Sunday 9-11 AM. Norwalk's Third Annual Between the Libraries Family 5K Run/Walk. The route includes the stretch of Norwalk River Valley Trail from Union Park to the YMCA. The race starts and ends at Union Park at the end of Mott Ave down the street from the Library. After-race festivities include food and a band to celebrate the runners (and walkers!). Register at norwalklib.org.

October 4, Thursday, 7:30 PM. NRWA and Wilton Library Present Alison Jones, Founder of No Water No Life, Interviewed by NRWA Board Member, Daryl Hawk. Jones is a conservation photographer who has documented ecosystems and their management for over 20 years in Africa and the Americas. After copiloting over thousands of miles of Africa's vital rivers and lakeshores with a camera at the ready, she became immersed in studying global issues of water. She founded *No Water No Life*® in 2006 to raise public awareness of the vital importance of freshwater resources, the perils of watershed degradation and the opportunities for sustainable resource management. Free event. Register at wiltonlibrary.org or 203-762-3950, Ext. 213. Wilton Library, 137 Old Ridgefield Road, Wilton.

October 6, Saturday, 10 AM-1 PM. Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT) Volunteer Trail Work Day at Union Park, Norwalk. Join NRWA, Norwalk Tree Alliance, NRVT and REI to help enhance the section of the NRVT that runs from Union Park to Mathews Park. Volunteers will clean up trash along the trail and cut back invasive plants. A grant from REI will supply tools, seeds and plants for re-seeding with indigenous wildflowers and grasses, as well as refreshments. Meet at Union Park at the end of Mott St. behind the Norwalk Public Library. Bring work gloves. Rain date Oct 7th.

October 13, 20, 27, & November 3, 9:30 AM-12:00 PM. Earthplace Stream Exploration and Monitoring Workshop for High School Students & Adults. This four-week Saturday workshop will explore how the health of a stream or river is measured and why we all should be concerned. Hands-on water testing will be highlighted. Participants may wish to volunteer for on-going monitoring of

the Norwalk, Five Mile, Pequonnock and Saugatuck Rivers. Fee: \$45 Earthplace members & students; \$75 non-members. For registration, call 203-227-7253. Earthplace is located at 10 Woodside Lane, Westport.

Thursday, October 25, 8:00AM–4:20 PM. Invasive Plant Symposium Presented by the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. The NRWA co-sponsored conference will address the development of practical solutions and methods for invasive plant management and detail the actions needed to promote native species, improve natural areas, and benefit wildlife. Students and adults welcome. Early registration \$45 if by September 21; students \$25 with valid school ID. Regular registration \$55. Register at www.hort.uconn.edu/cipwg.

Friday, October 26, 5-9 PM (raindate Sunday, October 28, 12-4 PM). Howl Prowl At Woodcock Nature Center. Activities include hay rides and a wolf presentation featuring a real wolf. Sponsored by Woodcock Nature Center, 56 Deer Run in Wilton. The cost per family for this fundraiser is \$40 (individuals are \$20 each) and reservations are necessary. See woodcocknaturecenter.org for more info and call 203-762-7280 to register.

Interested in Volunteering?
River Rangers, Hike or Kayak/
Canoe Leaders, Trail Workers,
Board Members, Grant Writers,
Website Designers...these are just
some of the volunteer positions we
would like to fill. The more help
we have, the more we can do. Let us
know your interests, expertise, and
where you would like to help.
Contact info@norwalkriver.org.

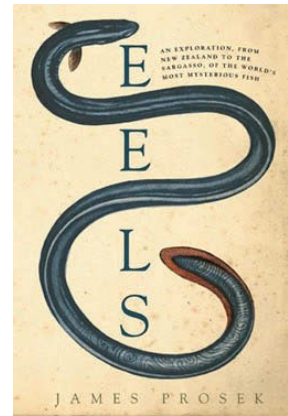
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Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc.
The Norwalk River Watershed Association, incorporated in 1996, is a not-for-profit membership organization whose mission is to improve the water quality and aesthetic value of the 40,000-acre Norwalk River watershed; to encourage recreational use of the existing trails and open space; and to promote research, education, cooperation, and action on the part of the stakeholders in the seven watershed towns in CT (Ridgefield, Redding, Wilton, New Canaan, Weston, and Norwalk) and NY (Lewisboro).
Officers of NRWA Board of Directors
Kristen Begor, President (Wilton)
Mark Riser, Treasurer (Ridgefield)
Louise Washer, Secretary (Norwalk)

877-NRWA-INFO
(877-679-2463) Toll Free

Protect water and the organisms that need it. Do NOT flush medicines down the drain or toilet. Instead turn them in at the pharmaceutical collection day in your town.

HIGH WATER MARKS: ARTISTS AND CONSERVATIONISTS JAMES PROSEK AND ALISON JONES

NRWA would like to recognize two area artists for their outstanding commitment to the environment and to thank them for taking the time to speak with members of the Norwalk River Watershed community this year. In May, author, painter and Easton, CT resident, James Prosek, spoke at NRWA's annual meeting about his book, *Eels: An Exploration, From New Zealand To The Sargasso, Of The World's Most Mysterious Fish*. "The yearly journeys millions of adult eels make from rivers to oceans must be among the greatest unseen migrations of any creature on the planet," writes Prosek. And part of that journey for the American eel takes place in the Norwalk River. Prosek explained the wonders of this amazing fish that travels hundreds of miles to spawn and can even traverse dry ground if necessary. The New York Times described Prosek as, "An underwater Audubon," who is "as good a writer as he is a painter." His newest book *Ocean Fishes* will be published in October by Rizzoli.



Photograph courtesy of Daryl Hawk

Conservation photographers Alison Jones and Daryl Hawk will speak about the world's watersheds October 4th at the Wilton Library.

On October 4th, another artist and advocate for the world's watersheds, New York conservation photographer Alison Jones, founder of *No Water No Life*, will join NRWA and the Wilton Library for a discussion of her life's work. Photographer and NRWA board member, Daryl Hawk, will interview Jones about her photography and *No Water No Life*, which she began "to raise public awareness of the vital importance of freshwater resources, the perils of watershed degradation and the opportunities for sustainable resource management." NWNL focuses on six case-study watersheds to "illustrate current universal threats to freshwater systems and offer possibilities of sound management policies and solutions." The group documents and raises awareness about threats to North America's Columbia, Mississippi and Raritan River Basins and northeastern Africa's Nile, Omo and Mara Rivers. Jones will discuss how she combines photography with scientific research to help save our planet's water sources. Join us at the Wilton Library Thursday, October 4th at 7:30 for this free event. Register at wiltonlibrary.org or call 203-762-3950, Ext. 213. Wilton Library, 137 Old Ridgefield Road, Wilton.