

**From Trash to Treasure:**

**The Journey Continues...**



**The Saugatucket River in Words and Pictures**

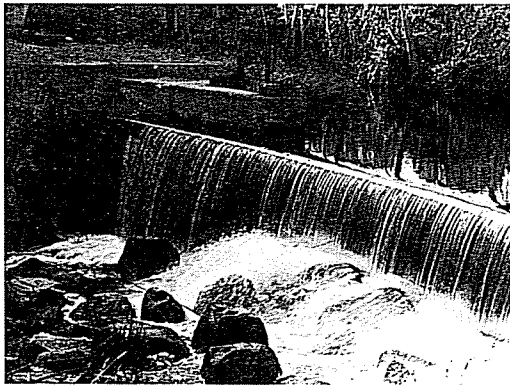
**By the Students of Mrs. Wildman's 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Class  
Wakefield Elementary School**

**June 2008**

## Think **TWICE** and be **NICE** to the **RIVER!**



Can you imagine that years ago people were able to swim in the Saugatucket River? From the Narragansett people, to the Hazards, to the present day, the river has been through many changes. **YOU** can help us improve the river's health and get it back to how it was in its "Golden Age." If we work together the Saugatucket shall flourish. If you take notice of what we have to say, then we can all make our wonderful river an even better place to be once more.



## Native Americans and the Saugatucket

The Narragansetts used to use the Saugatucket River for fishing, hunting, fast travel and even drinking water! They caught a variety of animals such as deer, bears, raccoons, rabbits, and squirrels. They caught these animals because of a wonderful river named the Saugatucket River.

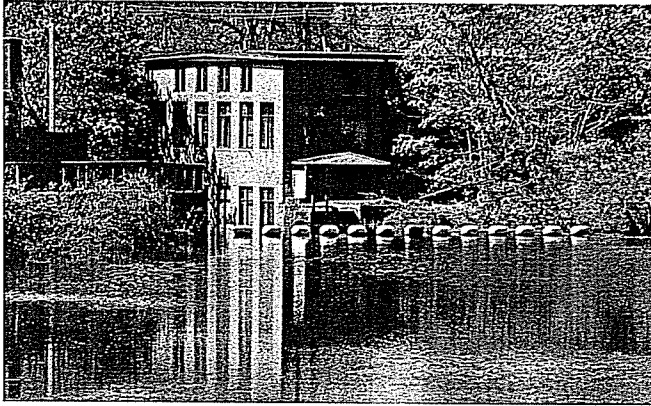


The Narragansetts would catch many types of fish in the Saugatucket. They caught a variety of trout, pumpkin seed, large and small mouth bass, pike, pickerel and catfish. They also used the Saugatucket River for fast travels because they didn't use cars back then. It was the fastest way of traveling. They would have to make many canoes for their voyages.

The water in the Saugatucket River was so precious to the Narragansetts that they would never **EVER** throw litter in the river. In their day, the river was so clean they could drink from it and swim in it. The Narragansetts greatly respected the Saugatucket River. The Narragansetts of the past would be saddened to see all of the litter in the river today, just as we are. Since then the river has changed because of our environment and pollution! We can still **HELP** it if we take a stand for a pollution-free river.

## The Hazards

The Hazards were honorable people who created most of the buildings and shops in Wakefield and Peace Dale. They ran the mills.



The Hazards were an extremely large family. The most famous of the Hazard children, Rowland G. Hazard, owned the railroad and named Peace Dale after his wife Mary Peace. He owned the Peace Dale manufacturing company that made woolen cloth. In 1805, the Hazards had a carding machine that turned wool and furs into yarn that would then be made into a rug or blanket and sold for profit.

During most years from 1878-1883 the Hazards decided they would give the workers a small amount of the mill's profit. Unfortunately, this didn't continue and later workers held 2 strikes in 1886 and 1906. The people who worked for the Hazards actually built the buildings in Wakefield such as the mills, the Guild and Peace Dale Congregational Church. The granite stone for these buildings was quarried in Westerly.

Unfortunately, over time, the mills released harmful pollutants into the Saugatucket River. These pollutants came from the fabric dye used in the mills. Finally, in the 1970s, the people who owned the mill cleaned up the dye pollution problem.

## Save the Animals!!!!

Animals, animals, and more animals. That is what you will see in the river if you don't pollute! Box turtles live in the river. They have dome shaped shells that are hinged at the bottom. They use their shells for a home and to protect them from their predators. The way their shell works to protect them is when they go into their shell they can close it tightly to make it impossible for predators to get in. Box turtles are known to be pets to some people. These animals can live to be 20, 40, 50 or sometimes even 100 years old. If you walk over the bridge and look down you will see many box turtles sunning themselves on the log in the water!



These animals could be left without a home if people keep littering and not picking up their dogs' feces. In conclusion, we hope you will take our advice and spread it around our town.

## River Testing

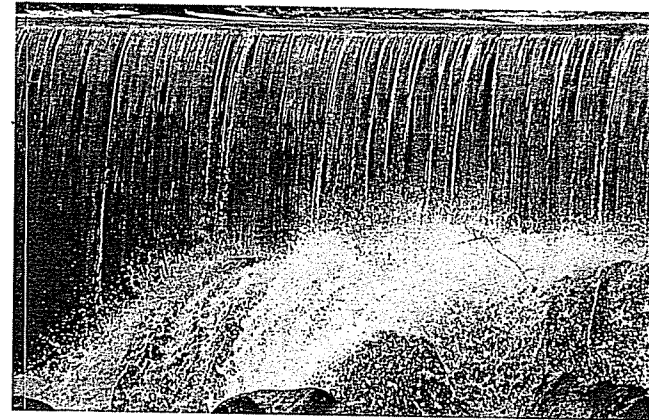
When you look at the 7.5 mile long Saugatucket River it is beautiful on the outside but how is it doing on the inside? Did you know that a while ago people could swim in the river and even drink right from it? People's habits changed the river and we want YOUR help to change it back to the way it used to be.



Mrs. Wildman's 5<sup>th</sup> grade class tested the river for dissolved oxygen to measure how much oxygen is in the water for animals to use. Now dissolved oxygen is excellent and is still improving! We are also testing for nitrates. Nitrates provide food for plants but can also come from pesticides. It can be good and bad. If there are not enough nitrates in the water, then the plants can't grow. If there is too high a level of nitrates in the water, then too many plants grow! The nitrate ratings in the river are doing well. Another thing we test is phosphorus which is also nutritious for plants. Phosphorus comes from soap products and is found in most fresh water bodies. To help stop the

phosphorus from being overproduced you can buy soap products that are phosphate-free. The rating for phosphorus in the river is the best it can be!

Moreover we are testing fecal coliform bacteria. This comes from the combined sewer overflow, leaching septic systems, bacteria in animal and human feces (thus the name). You can help stop fecal coliform contamination by picking up your animal's feces. The fecal coliform contains bacteria, viruses and protozoans which make drinking, fishing, and swimming a health risk. According to our testing, the fecal coliform bacteria in the river is doing poorly.

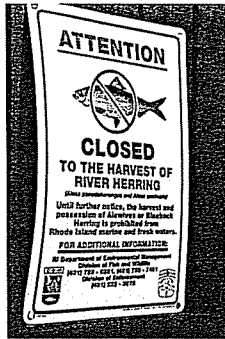


Lastly we test pH to measure how much hydrogen is in the water. If there is too much pH in the water, then some animals can live, but other animals could die. If there is too little pH in the water then some animals can survive, but others could die. If there is a perfect balance of pH then most animals could live. The pH rating our class got was excellent.

Our class loves to do water testing. We are proud to help the river to get back to where it started when the Narragansett People lived in South Kingstown.

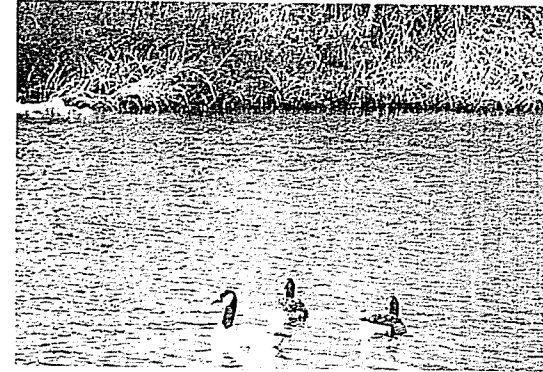
## Fish

The Saugatucket houses many kinds of fish such as alewives, American eels and trout. Because the Saugatucket is so close to the Atlantic, the eels and alewives are able to migrate all the way from the West Indies into the river to spawn. Think of traveling all the way from the West Indies to come to our river! Many coldwater fish that found refuge in the Saugatucket, such as sunfish, may be in danger because the dissolved oxygen levels may not remain high enough to support them.



Fecal coliform bacteria is one of the many reasons why fish are unsafe to eat. Feces decomposes but flows into the river and pollutes it. The fish have to breathe that every day! Those fancy fertilizers on TV? They give you a good lawn but they also kill the fish with their chemicals and they nourish the plants. This may be good for the plants but fish have less space for their homes and to move. The litter that you throw on the ground, where do you think that goes? It either decomposes and kills more fish or, Chomp, Munch, Slurp! That's right. Animals will eat the garbage that people carelessly throw on the ground. Can you live your whole life as a killer of fish? You don't have to if you use biodegradable products and animal friendly dish soaps!

## Birds



The Saugatucket basin alone contains 88 individual species of birds. Here are just a few of them:

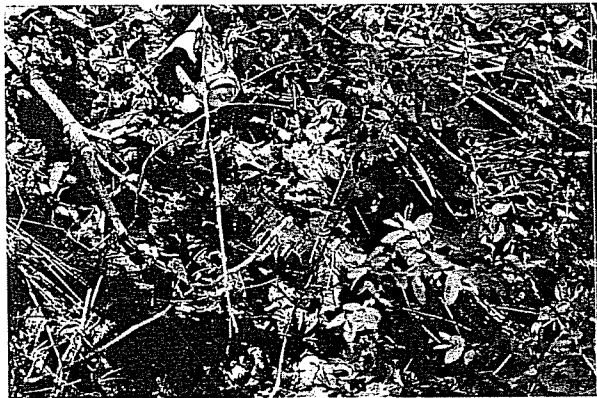
- The Osprey, also called the Seahawk. It weighs 1.4-2 kilograms and eats fish, rodents, salamanders, other birds, and reptiles.
- Herons. Diet: fish, voles, and mice.
- Mallard ducks. The female mallards are called hens, males are called drakes, and the babies are called ducklings. Drakes are brightly colored with a green head, a white ring around the neck, and bright yellow beaks. They grow to be about 20-23 inches long. They like to eat insects, worms, frogs, snails, slugs, small shellfish, and grasses.
- Kingfishers: habitat: the woodland and wetland. Diet: small fishes, crayfish, frogs, insects, and reptiles.
- Cormorants-Weight: 12oz. Location: coastal areas.
- Glossy Ibis are found everywhere but Asia and Antarctica. They can grow!

During the time when the river was completely unpolluted, there were many more birds that enjoyed living in their clean river habitat. Unfortunately, years ago, the mills dumped many chemicals into the water. But now, the students at Wakefield School are trying to help the river make a comeback. The birds are beginning to return to the Saugatucket River!

## Saugatucket Trash

Seeing cigarette butts on the ground  
A historical landmark on the line  
Use the garbage cans around you  
Good to go to and take a walk with your family  
A beautiful place to look at if we take care of it  
Too much trash  
Unpleasant death for animals choking on litter  
Could be stunning if everyone cleaned it up  
Keep your hopes alive for a clean river  
Educate others about pollution in the river  
Take care of your surroundings

To keep your river clean you need to recycle  
Respect the river  
A resource that should be treated properly  
Swimming or drinking river water is dangerous  
because of pollution  
Help our river become a fantastic resource again!



After all that our class has taught you, we hope you put this information into perspective and keep our river clean! From the Narragansetts, to the Hazards, to Wakefield's present day citizens, our river's life has gone from, treasure, to trash, and back again. So do the best you can, and **SAVE OUR RIVER!**



**Start with yourself, and end with purity!**



**Think TWICE, and be NICE to the RIVER!**



### **Acknowledgements**

**This student generated booklet was written to educate our community about the beauty and needs of the Saugatucket River. Everyone can take simple steps to help improve the water quality and appearance of this great resource. Buying non-toxic cleaning products and pesticides, picking up dog feces and litter, and not feeding ducks are just a few of the easy steps you can take to cleanse the river. Take a walk along the river and enjoy! Special thanks go to:**

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**Mrs. Wildman's 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Class  
Room 1  
Wakefield Elementary School  
101 High Street  
Wakefield, RI 02879  
[www.skschools.net/WA](http://www.skschools.net/WA)**