

BUCKEYE BROOK TRAIL: THE LOWER BROOK



LEVEL	Beginner to Intermediate
START/END	Conimicut Point Park
RIVER MILES	3.75 miles round-trip
TIME	2.5 hours round-trip
DESCRIPTION	Flat Water to Chop, Current
SCENERY	Coastal, Salt Marsh, Historic
ACCESS	Several Put-ins, Varying Conditions

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This paddle explores the Buckeye Brook watershed from Conimicut Point Beach **1**, on the upper reaches of Narragansett Bay, to West Shore Road, where it is a narrow tidal brook. Tide, wind, and current are key elements to planning the right course for this paddle. At lower tides, the entrance to Mill Cove at Narragansett Bay **3** is not passable except by dragging a boat (water shoes are recommended; there is some glass and other debris in the streambed), and shallows emerge along the paddle. At the highest tides, clearance under the Tidewater Drive bridge **6** becomes low and passage can be difficult; portaging over Tidewater Drive is not recommended. Wind on Narragansett Bay and Mill Cove can be significant, as can navigating incoming and outgoing tides at the entrance to Mill Cove from Narragansett Bay. The best start time from Conimicut Point Park is approximately one hour prior to a normal high tide, so that the

paddle can be completed while the water remains high and while the current remains controlled and generally in the same direction as the paddle.

Conimicut Point Park offers ample parking and a beach launch for this paddle into Mill Cove and up historic Buckeye Brook to West Shore Road **8**. At the Conimicut end of the paddle, you may see shorebirds including sandpiper, yellowlegs, oystercatcher, egret, and heron. When you enter Mill Cove between Spot Park **2** and the Riverview Beach spit **3**, you will see the foundation of a former seafood restaurant that was washed out in the Great Hurricane of 1938, which caused considerable destruction in the Conimicut Point area. You will pass the remnants of a Colonial tidal mill beside the 18th-century Moses Greene House **4**, which is rumored to have served in the Underground Railroad and the rum smuggling trade. Prior to passing under Tidewater Drive Bridge **6**, you will pass by the stone footings of the United Electric Railways bridge **5**, which carried summer residents and tourists by trolley from Providence to Warwick resort neighborhoods such as Riverview and Bayside, as well as Rocky Point Park. Once on the western side of Tidewater Drive, you may find salt marsh wildlife such as painted turtles, hawks, and possibly river otter. This area was home to a Native American summer encampment, and it is common to find arrowheads and other relics here today **7**.



BUCKEYE BROOK

Buckeye Brook originates in Spring Green Pond near Hoxsie Four Corners, flowing under Airport Road and into Warwick Pond before continuing southeast to Narragansett Bay. Its watershed includes much of central Warwick. South of Buckeye Brook's mouth, Warwick's shoreline is comprised of Victorian-era neighborhoods leading to Rocky Point Park. The brook takes its name from buckeyes (BUCK' - ees), the anadromous alewife and blue-back herring that make their annual spring spawning run up the brook.



BUCKEYE BROOK: IN THE HEART OF WARWICK

Winding among Warwick's houses and streets, you will find free-flowing Buckeye Brook, whose history starts with the Native Americans who populated the banks of the brook and lived off its plentiful resources. Later, farmers drew water from the brook for their farms that occupied much of central Warwick prior to suburbanization in the mid-20th century. Today, the brook is mostly hidden by wooded areas, creating a buffer that allows paddlers to experience parts of the brook with little interference from the bustle of modern Warwick. The brook is home to a surprising array of wildlife, including shorebirds, turtles, eels, river otter, hawks, deer, coyote, and fox. At its mouth, mussels and clams abound, as well as blue crab and oysters.

THE LOWER BROOK: WARWICK THROUGH THE CENTURIES

In the short paddle from Conimicut Point Park to West Shore Road, there are references to every era of Warwick's history. Many Native American artifacts have been found along the banks of the brook, where the Narragansett Indians made summer encampments. While the precise location of Roger Williams' 1639 baptism by Warwick pastor Ezekiel Holliman is unknown, it may have occurred in Buckeye Brook or one of its tributaries. A century later, in 1750, Moses Greene built his home where Buckeye Brook meets Mill Cove. The home may have served a role in the Underground Railroad—a secret cellar room is accessed by a stone wall that slides aside on iron tracks. The room may have also been used by rum smugglers in the "Rogue's

Island" era of the state. Next to the home is the foundation of a tidal mill, built to harness the brook's power in the state's early industrial era. By the end of the 19th century, the brook became the setting for Warwick's growth as a vacation destination for the state's burgeoning urban population.

BROOK TO BAY: WARWICK'S VICTORIAN SEASIDE

At the mouth of Buckeye Brook is Mill Cove, dividing the neighborhoods of Conimicut to the north and Riverview to the south. After Rocky Point Park was founded around 1850 and became a go-to summer destination, Warwick's shoreline became speckled with summer residents in its large hotels, shingled mansions, tiny cottages, and platform tents. The trolley line built to service Rocky Point had stops in seaside neighborhoods, with service every five minutes during the busiest periods. The trolleys would stop at Conimicut Village, the commercial center for the area; Shawomet Beach, now known as Conimicut Point Park; Riverview, with its casino and boarding house; Bayside, with its large hotel and bathing pavilion; and Rocky Point, with its shore dinner hall, dancing hall, observation tower, and rides. A number of factors, including the Great Depression, the Great Hurricane of 1938, impaired water quality in the upper bay, and the suburbanization of Warwick, led to a decline of Warwick as a summer resort. However, this historic shoreline remains one of Rhode Island's gems, offering outstanding public access at Conimicut Point Park and the new Rocky Point Park, as well as a mile and a half of beach in between.

ALWAYS WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET AND CARRY A WHISTLE OR OTHER SOUND PRODUCING DEVICE, PREFERABLY ATTACHED TO YOUR LIFE JACKET. PADDLERS SHOULD CHECK WATER LEVEL AND TIDES, WEATHER, AND WATERWAY CONDITIONS PRIOR TO EVERY TRIP. REMOVE WHAT YOU BRING, CLEAN UP MORE IF YOU CAN. PLEASE RESPECT PRIVATE PROPERTY. REPORT ANY PROBLEMS YOU ENCOUNTER TO THE BUCKEYE BROOK COALITION AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IF APPROPRIATE.



Buckeye Brook Coalition (BBC) is the non-profit 501(c)(3) entity and RI Rivers Council member charged with protecting and preserving the Buckeye Brook watershed. BBC activities include clean-ups, fish counts, lectures, restoration projects, and advocacy before governmental authorities. www.buckeyebrook.org

The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP) protects and preserves Narragansett Bay and its watershed through partnerships that conserve and restore natural resources, enhance water quality and promote community involvement. NBEP supports the RI Blueways Alliance which is dedicated to creating a comprehensive water trail network to link Rhode Island's rivers, lakes and ponds to Narragansett Bay and to the rivers in Massachusetts that flow into the bay. The trail will be used to promote safety, conservation, recreation and economic development. www.ExploreRI.org



Watershed organizations throughout the Narragansett Bay watershed showcase paddling opportunities on downloadable paddle maps. The full list of maps is available at ExploreRI.org.

