



Beczak Club Kids Make Lasting Impression

Beneath the Waves

As the centerpiece of their community service project, the PEARLS section of the HSBC Environmental Club recently completed a beautiful handmade mural titled "Beneath the Waves." It now hangs prominently inside the Beczak Center.

The mural was designed to capture what the Hudson looks like underwater, and to further focus on and celebrate the biodiversity of species alive and thriving in the Hudson River. Club members concentrated on creating painted images of the plants and animals which are native to the river environment in Yonkers.

The colorful mural was completed in several stages. After a few weeks of introductory lessons, each club member selected a specific Hudson River plant or animal species to research. Then they studied the

form and function, diet, external anatomy, and Hudson River distribution of their species. Next, they practiced sketching their species on mural paper to achieve "scale-to-size" dimensions in comparison to species selected by other members.

Haifa Bint-Kadi, artist-in-residence at Groundwork Yonkers, then guided club members through the next creation step. After each student had perfected drawing their species on the mural paper, they were able to chalk their sketch onto the mural wall itself in exactly the correct distribution. The next step required mixing the appropriate colors to match the external coloring of their chosen species. Upon completion of their plant or animal paintings, students then had to compose all their notes onto poster paper to present at the mural unveiling.

The joyous unveiling ceremony and reception took place on May 1, 2006 in the



Spencer paints an eel

Beczak Center. It was a great success, attended by over 60 people, including the student/creators, their proud families, plus representatives from HSBC, Yonkers Public Schools and the City of Yonkers. This beautiful mural, infused with the spirit and dedication of our club kids, truly inspires an appreciation for the glorious life thriving in our beloved Hudson River. 🐟

Storm und Drain

Beczak's HSBC Environmental Club is proof that age is no barrier to making a BIG difference for your community. Fifteen club members, fourth and fifth grade students from the Eugenio María de Hostos MicroSociety School in Yonkers, helped raise public awareness about storm water pollution along the growing Yonkers downtown waterfront.

These young students, ages 9-10, lent their small hands to a big job by marking 40 storm drains in Larkin Plaza and along Alexander Street in conjunction with efforts by the Saw Mill River Coalition from Groundwork Yonkers. Throughout this past year, these youngsters met weekly, after school, with a Beczak educator to learn all about the Hudson River and its storm water pollution issues. Atop the predesignated storm drains, our club kids placed special



Fourth grader Zoribel Martinez places a marker on a storm drain in the Beczak parking lot

markers provided by the NYS Dept of Environmental Conservation which read: "Don't dump – Drains to Hudson River" or "Don't dump – Drains to Saw Mill River."

During storm events, storm water lifts and carries garbage and pollutants from driveways, roads, and lawns into storm drains, many of which pass directly into a large body of water. Most of the storm drains in Larkin Plaza and Alexander Street drain directly into the Hudson River or divert to the Saw Mill River, a tributary of the Hudson which runs under Larkin Plaza and meets the Hudson at the Yonkers Train Station.

The markers alert people that pollution entering these storm drains doesn't just magically disappear; it will pollute the highly vulnerable Hudson River watershed.

Sending a powerful anti-pollution message of awareness to the public is exactly what these wonderful youngsters, with the support of their school and parents, are attempting to do. We salute their valiant efforts. 🐟

BECZAK

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

35 Alexander Street, Yonkers, NY 10701
914.377.1900 • www.beczak.org

Beczak's mission is to educate people about the ecology, culture and history of the Hudson River by providing interactive educational experiences focused on the river. We do this so that everyone we reach can become better stewards of the Hudson and better citizens of their community.

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends:

Phew! That's all I can say as we wrap up another fiscal year. And what a year it was! Your response during our new Interpretive Center's first full year was overwhelming! We delivered 412 educational programs, a 152% increase over past years. We served over 11,000 people – a whopping 170% increase in one year. The demand for our programs has been so great, we cannot meet it and we are now out of space in the new Center. Hopefully as Alexander Street is redeveloped, we will find space for more classrooms and offices.

Despite how busy we have been, we completed a master plan for exhibits in the Interpretive Center. Over the next several months, you will see ten to twelve new interactive exhibits about the Hudson River. First up will be a touch screen computer kiosk with our estuary monitoring data displayed in a user-friendly fashion. The kiosk will also house an educational game about invasive species, a short time-lapse film on tides and the benthic map of the river bottom. Rounding out this display will be informational panels about our marsh. We will also focus one of our spotting scopes on the marsh so visitors can see for themselves what's going on.

Thanks to a generous donation by Con Edison, visitors to Habirshaw Park and Beczak will soon be able to help create "Garbage Gauge," a display about the man-made items that find their way into the Hudson and onto our shores. This lesson in pollution and ways to reduce it will be housed behind the Center in the park. These two exhibits will be joined by many more and you will just have to come to Beczak to see them for yourself.

Filling the Center with educational exhibits is just one of the things we are working on to serve you better at Beczak.

As this newsletter goes to press, we are working hard to open the Center and Habirshaw Park on Saturdays with public hours and programs starting in the fall. We invite you to visit and try out the exhibits for yourself. We are planning monthly weekend workshops as well.

We are also offering children's birthday parties at the Center. Flexible programming that ranges from seining (if the tides permit) to crafts and educational activities will make any child's birthday fun and memorable. (And they will learn about the Hudson but we won't tell them if you won't!)

Volunteer docents will be key to our success and if you are interested in becoming a docent, or any other volunteer position, please contact Sarah Macdonald, our Volunteer Coordinator.

Finally, a personnel note. I am sad to report that we lost Tripper, one of our canine mascots. He was 15 years old and enjoyed spending his final days at Beczak. In May, we were joined by Dewey, a lively youngster who is keeping us on our toes. He enjoys chasing geese, playing in the park, and is available to anyone who needs a little puppy love in their lives. Just come down to Beczak for a visit.

Regardless of your motivation, we look forward to your visit to Beczak. With all the changes, you will want to come by often and bring your friends and family. Let us know what's on your mind. We need your feedback and input. You can reach me by e-mail at ksavolt@beczak.org or at 914-377-1900.

Once again, I hope to see you soon,

Kathy Savolt



HUDSON RIVER PARAMETERS

PART 2: SALINITY



Editor's Note: This is the second article in a series focusing on the environmental conditions of the Hudson that are monitored continuously by Beczak. You can read the series at www.beczak.org.

Here at Beczak, we are often asked the question "Is there salt in the Hudson River?" The answer is yes and no. There are actually three types of water in the Hudson, each one containing different amounts of salt: freshwater, saltwater, and brackish water.

Freshwater enters the river through precipitation (rainfall and snowmelt) and also through groundwater. Freshwater contains very little or no salt. Saltwater enters the river from the Atlantic Ocean. At high tide, saltwater flows north from the ocean into the Hudson River and mixes with freshwater to create brackish water, the third type of water in the river. This mixing of freshwater and saltwater, along with the tides, is what makes the southern 153 miles of the Hudson River an estuary. Estuaries like the Hudson River are highly productive and diverse ecosystems.

Salinity, or the amount of salt that is in water, can be measured in units called parts per thousand (ppt). One part per thousand represents a proportion of salt to water equal to one gram of salt in one liter of water. Consequently, two parts per thousand equal two grams of salt in every liter of

water. Freshwater has a salinity from 0 – 0.5 ppt. The salinity of saltwater in the open ocean is between 33 – 35 ppt. Brackish water corresponds to the intermediate range between fresh and ocean water.

Freshwater dominates the northern part of the Hudson River. The transition from fresh to brackish water is called the salt front, and occurs where the salinity reaches 0.1 ppt. Typically, during the summer and early fall, the salt front is located around the cities of Newburgh and Beacon. Precipitation increases the volume of freshwater in the river, diluting the salt concentration and pushing the salt front further downstream. During spring runoff or major storms, the salt front sometimes reaches south of the Tappan Zee Bridge. Drought and heat will decrease the volume of freshwater in the river, pushing the salt front further north.

The Hudson River in Yonkers is usually brackish. However, large amounts of precipitation can push the salt front so far south that we can have freshwater in Yonkers. In fact, this occurred after the major storms we experienced earlier this past summer. You can see this for yourself by looking at the

salinity data online for June 30th through July 3rd. Keep an eye on the salinity of the river to watch it change throughout the seasons. Can you guess what the salinity is today? ◀

BECAK'S ESTUARY MONITORING SYSTEM

Our monitoring equipment brings the conditions of the river to your computer in real time.

Maintenance Notes

We have a new web address to access the online data that does not require a username or password: www.nexsens-datacenter.com/webdb/beczak.php

The old web address will still work with the username and password, if you would prefer to continue to use it.

The weather station has been down since July 9th. It was returned to the manufacturer for repairs. A replacement unit has been sent and should be reinstalled shortly. Call us at 914-377-1900 for an update.

The temperature and conductivity sensor on the water quality meter also failed and needed to be replaced. The probe which was recording temperature and salinity reading data between 5/17/2006 and 6/13/2006 was inaccurate. A replacement probe was reinstalled on 6/13 and is now fully operational.

The water quality data was not recorded between July 9th and July 28th because the memory on the meter was filled to capacity and the meter could not store additional data. The memory has been cleared and the meter is now fully operational.



Fresh water flowing into the Hudson River at Beczak during a storm event dilutes the salt in the usually brackish water



IT HAPPENED IN HABIRSHAW PARK

Something Mysterious Washed Ashore

We never know what we may find when exploring our own beach and marsh at the Beczak Environmental Education Center on the shores of the wondrous Hudson River. Every time we venture out we find something new – various shells, driftwood, crab molts and the ever-so-popular water chestnut seeds.

However, on June 20, 2006 something very unusual took place when a rather uncommon specimen carried ashore as a result of the daily changing of the tides. As you probably know, every day the tide goes up for six hours (high tide) and the tide goes down for six hours (low tide). As a result of this tide cycle, many treasures of the river are washed up onto our beach and marsh.

A startling discovery took place during a special art program, as we were enjoying a beachcomb at dead low tide. A program



Wow! More than 3 feet!



Scutes on the back of the sturgeon

participant spotted something mysterious stuck in the mud flat of the marsh. As we cautiously moved closer we saw it was an Atlantic sturgeon!

The splendid fish was already beginning to decompose and give off a foul odor, but we were still able to piece together its separate parts to get an approximate measurement. The sturgeon was 38 inches long from head to tail. This sturgeon looked like it may have

been caught in the deadly blades of a boat propeller, but we will never know for sure exactly what happened. It is unfortunate that the fish died, but our staff was excited by this rare find. Currently, we are in the process of drying our mystery sturgeon, so that we can preserve the scutes (the bony, plate-like scales on the outside edges of the fish) and remaining parts so visitors to our center can better know of both the pleasures and perils of marine life in the Hudson River. 🐟

Come Rain or Come Shine

The Yonkers leg of the sixth annual Great Hudson River Paddle 2006 was officially canceled due to stormy weather, but some people are gonna paddle (and visit Beczak) come rain or come shine. 🐟



Beczak Educator Jenn Mokos prepares seine net while Paddlefest participants glide by our beach



Kayakers circled 'round while Beczakers seined

Photo: Joan Jennings



What's the Scoop? More Butterflies, Less Poop!

Comments from visitors about the goose droppings that pepper our paths have troubled us for quite some time. While we had high hopes that our hand-clapping, foot-stomping, chase-them-with-the-dogs techniques would discourage these big, pesky geese from returning, studies show that Canada geese are a stubborn species requiring multiple chasings every day for several weeks before their habits might change. And really, who has time to chase geese?



Before – Surface runoff picks up speed over non-vegetated areas and carves out channels.

Changing the habitat is considered one of the most effective, practical ways to discourage Canada geese from entering an area. Canada geese mainly eat aquatic and terrestrial grasses. On land they prefer to graze in open areas with low vegetation where threatening predators are in full view, and have no place to hide and stalk (for example, a vast lawn just like our Habirshaw Park).

Without resources for replanting the entire lawn, our options were limited. Enter – the “no-mow zone.” With cooperation from the City of Yonkers Department of Parks and Recreation, we created a shrubby meadow area by simply not mowing the grasses. Geese that normally inhabit the

park arrive from the water and waddle their way to the good feeding grounds. The new “No Mow” zone creates a visual barrier between the water and the juicy park plants, and discourages geese from leaving their safe haven on the open water.

Roughly three weeks after not mowing, the plants had grown to a height that discouraged the geese, and “Presto!” no one has reported seeing any in the park since. The pesky, insatiable geese now remain on the beach or in the water, off shore...So there!

While keeping geese away, the no-mow zone also functions to control stormwater that drains from the gradually sloping park and into the river.

Vegetation slows surface (land) runoff (compared to paved surfaces or even bare

soil) thereby decreasing the rate of erosion; however, it is not enough to simply have plants. Stem height also plays a significant role. Plants must be abundant, and must be maintained at a sufficient height to be optimally effective at trapping sediment, and encouraging absorption of runoff.

By implementing our new “no-mow zone” we have seen a dramatic decrease in the erosion caused by large storm events. Our “No Mow” policy helps protect the park from rapid erosion, and the river from sedimentation and pollution.

Our newly vegetated buffer attracts butterflies and birds normally restricted to the more lush areas of our park – the marsh and dune areas. Butterflies for poop: not a bad tradeoff. “Poop No Mow” – that’s the truth! 🐞



After – A goose-eye view of the park, from the beach.



KIDS' CORNER

Create your own Hudson River mural.

Draw the following animals into the Hudson River scene below, placing them in the location listed.



American eel
rocky bottom



striped bass
middle water column



blue crab
hiding under driftwood



seahorse
in the water celery



hogchoker
muddy bottom

BE CZAK'S CATCH

Here is a list of what we caught in our nets between April 10 and August 2, 2006. They were all caught using a 30' seine net along our beach.

- American eel
- amphipod
- Atlantic croaker
- Atlantic silverside
- Atlantic tomcod
- banded killfish
- bay anchovy
- blue crab
- bluegill sunfish
- bluefish
- comb jellies
- common carp
- herring (excluding shad)
- largemouth bass
- mud/sand shrimp
- mummichog
- naked goby
- northern pipefish
- shore or grass shrimp
- soft shelled clam
- striped anchovy
- striped bass
- white mullet
- white perch
- white sucker
- winter flounder

The Hudson River

water celery

middle water column

rocky bottom

driftwood

muddy bottom



VOLUNTEER NEWS

As of July 31st, 104 volunteers have generously donated 633 much-appreciated hours of their precious time to Beczak in 2006. Go volunteers; you rock!

Volunteers this year have helped Beczak in so many vital ways: keeping the park and marsh clean, weeding and planting the garden beds, cleaning the aquaria and feeding the fish, helping with vital fundraising and even editing this newsletter. Volunteers ensure that our events run smoothly and they spread the good news about our important mission by staffing information tables at festivals all around the county.

Volunteering with Beczak is also a great way for high school and college students to fulfill their required community service hours. Volunteer service might also be structured as an internship, often for valuable education credits.

We are currently recruiting for many volunteer positions at Beczak, including the inaugural group of docents. We probably need something that matches your interests and talents. Please contact us for more information.

Looking to do something meaningful with another family member? We have 5 groups of volunteers who volunteer with other family members. Call us at 914-377-1900 to hear more about our family-friendly volunteering opportunities. Young children are welcome if accompanied by a responsible person over the age of 16. This is a wonderful opportunity for parents and grandparents to work side-by-side with their children and grandchildren.

On September 16th we will host a volunteer recruitment fair sponsored by the Volunteer Center of the United Way. This will be a great opportunity for all to find out more about volunteer possibilities with Beczak and with many other worthy organizations from the area. Hope to see you there.

Thank you volunteers – you do make a big difference! ➡

Art Moves the Eye as Sculptures Fly

Art has been looming over our heads at Beczak – literally. Hastings-on-Hudson artist Sheila Benedis exhibited her one-of-a-kind artworks at our Center, by hanging her original handwrought pieces from the rafters. Comprised of red-osier dogwood, handmade paper, netting, and plaster, the pieces were created to express dynamic movement, suggesting metamorphosis. Suspended from our ceiling rafters, Benedis' lightweight pieces moved with the breeze wafting in from the Hudson, which caused each distinctive artwork to take on a unique life of its own. Visitors enjoyed trying to decipher which animal each art piece resembled. The successful exhibit, presented in conjunction with the Blue Door Art Association, opened during Yonkers Mayfair on May 6th and continued through the middle of June. ➡



A piece from Sheila Benedis' Chrysalis series hanging from the ceiling in Beczak

form in different natural objects. Visiting students were deeply impressed by how much they were able to learn “to see” during this fun-filled, two-hour experiential workshop. To learn more about Judith's work visit www.science-art.com ➡

New art-inspired projects continued in late June. Beczak hosted talented guest artist and art tutor Judith Aronow, who came to share her drawing techniques during our Beachcomb & Sketch program. After combing our beach and marsh, then picking through our collection of Hudson River artifacts, participating students exercised their newly expanding drawing techniques. Aronow patiently guided the group through exercises in seeing detail, texture, light and



Artist Judy Aronow with students Elizabeth Morgan (left) and Lona Fitzgerald (right)

BE CZAK FAQ

This new Beczak Net feature addresses some of the Frequently Asked Questions we hear at Beczak.

Where do you buy the fish in the tanks?

Every fish, crab, shrimp and otherwise living creature in the tanks at Beczak have come directly from the Hudson River. The tanks contain river water and the fish are fed what they would eat if they were still in the river so that we can return them safely to their home.

Where does Beczak get money?

Beczak is a non-profit organization that serves the general public. We receive about 60% of our budget from donations. These donations come from individuals, corporations and foundations. Another 30% comes from government sources – mostly competitive, restricted grants from New York State. The remaining 10% comes from program fees from schools, camps and other groups. Donations to Beczak are tax-deductible, provided no goods or services were received by the donor.

How does Beczak spend our donations?

We spend your donations providing environmental education programs and equipping the Interpretive Center. Over 60% of our budget is for salaries, mostly for our education staff. This year, we are planning to fill the Center with interactive exhibits, open on Saturdays on a regular basis and hire administrative staff to handle the increased paperwork.





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For more information or to
book a Beczak Birthday for
your child, call today.

NEW

FROM THE DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Since the last newsletter, Beczak has received the following grants for which we are extremely grateful:

- **\$5,000 from Con Edison** for a new exhibit at the Center that will teach people about litter that pollutes the river. Watch for an announcement of the Grand Opening.

- **\$5,000 from Ginsburg Development Corporation LLC** for new exhibits at the Center. We plan to mount several exhibits this year about many aspects of the river.

- **\$3,750 from Blackacre Partners LLP, represented by Paul Adler**, for solar shades for our Center. These shades will allow us to reduce UV light while preserving the wonderful view of the river and Palisades. We will reduce our energy costs and the amount of algae we scrub from the fish tanks.

- **\$2,500 from Ciba Specialty Chemicals Corporation** to support our science-based educational programs.

- **\$750 from Fuji Photo Film, USA** to help defray the expenses of this newsletter.

Our Fifth Annual Environmental Breakfast was a huge success. County Executive Andrew J. Spano was honored by 200 attendees for his achievements in preserving Westchester's environment and his support of Beczak. We raised over \$17,400 – a new record. A big thank you to our sponsors and everyone else who participated. A list of the sponsors is on our website.

To help with increased expenses, Beczak has launched a Major Gift initiative and thanks Charlene Paden and Paul Elston who have become founding members. Watch your mail for how you can help teach children about the wonders of the Hudson.

Thank you to all who donated to The Tripper Fund created in honor of our late mascot. We raised \$1,000 which will be invested in the Center. For information on creating a fund to honor someone you love, please contact the office at 914-377-1900.

When our tidal tank motor stopped working a few months back, Bruce Hack of On Line Power Technologies, Inc. in Yonkers came to the rescue once again. Thanks, Bruce, for repairing the motor at no cost!

Please remember Beczak in your will using the following language: "I bequeath to Beczak Environmental Education Center, Inc. a not-for-profit corporation located at 35 Alexander Street, Yonkers, NY 10701, ___% of my residuary estate for its general purposes." If you want to designate a gift to a specific program, please call us to discuss. ☛