Further history of Gowanus creek and canal and animal life

General history blurbs

brooklyn community district 6

Original inhabitants: canarsee native americans

Gowanus - first appeared in dutch documents in 1640

canal begun construction in 1849 and ended in 1860

turned into a 1.5 mile long commercial waterway to provide commercial access to gowanus bay

developer edwin litchfield (look into him) formed the brooklyn improvement company in order to dredge the owanas creek and a nearby stream so it could be navigable

sandstone brought in from nj after the creation of the canal helped build the brownstones (some are still preserved today)

At the peak of industry in the area those who were wealthy tended to live uphill or inland away from the water to escape the toxic water. Those who lived near the water were usually working class or lower income. There is now an interesting shift. The wealthiest of people now live near the toxin riddled canal.

raw sewage was dumped directly into the canal and gasworks, coal yards soap factories, tanneries and meat packing industries were present

In the 1880's it was so deeply affected by pollution that the locals began calling it "lavender lake"

19th century coal based industry was a major factor for the pollution of the waterways because of the mass amounts of coal tar that were dumped (along with sewage)

Gowanus watershed is one of the areas in the city at highest risk for flooding. It is directly exposed to high-water surges coming up the canal. Much of the area is at sea level and is classified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as zone A, the highest-risk category for flooding.

battle of long island site

battle of long island august 27 1776

british defeated the americans

first major battle after america declared independence

denton mill is one of the hotspots of the battle where american soldiers were thought to flee across the marshland

many soldiers were dead or missing their bodies are thought to be buried in the gowanus area

found a potential grave site at 201 ninth street between 3rd and 4th avenue

Current aquatic wildlife

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Extremophiles (archaea)  Survives in extreme environments. Its presence in the water is a classic sign of extreme pollution. |  |
| mummichog fish that can survive in extreme environments and are sedentary. This is the main fish known to call the canal its permanent home. |  |
| white clouds of "biofilm" also called “white stuff” - bacteria, protozoans, chemicals and other debris that have been found working together and sharing genetic information in order to survive. The whitestuff has adapted in a way that the it is able to survive in the toxic low oxygen environment of the canal  Scientists are taking samples of the white stuff in order to create possible new antibiotics. |  |
| Ribbed Mussels (few but are being reintroduced) |  |
| Because of the tide different animals have been found in the water. However, they do not stay for long durations of time and are known as transient species for the canal. |  |
| Blue crabs (transient) |  |
| Horseshoe crabs (transient) |  |
| Eel (transient) |  |
| Bluefish (transient) |  |
| Striped bass (transient) |  |
| Sludgie the whale (single sighting transient) |  |
| Dolphins (single sighting transient) |  |
| Seals (single sighting transient) |  |

Jasper Danckaerts, a Dutch missionary.

[“It was not possible to describe how this bay swarms with fish,” Danckaerts wrote, “both large and small, whales, tunnies and porpoises, whole schools of innumerable other fish, which the eagles and other birds of prey swiftly seize in their talons when the fish come up to the surface.”](https://brooklyneagle.com/articles/2015/10/23/the-gowanus-canal-a-neglected-and-misunderstood-waterway/)

Sources read today that are not on bookmark list

<https://brooklyneagle.com/articles/2020/01/17/the-gowanus-canal-will-never-be-clean-opinion/>

<https://www.newswise.com/articles/polluted-gowanus-canal-may-be-source-of-new-antibiotics>

<https://www.sciencehistory.org/distillations/the-gowanus-canal>

<http://www.fishfiles.org/there-is-life-in-the-gowanus-just-dont-try-to-swim-in-it/>

<https://gowanussuperfund.com/history/>

<http://www.okologie.org/blogs/2014/2/26/saving-a-superfund-brooklyns-gowanus-canal>

<https://brooklyneagle.com/articles/2015/10/23/the-gowanus-canal-a-neglected-and-misunderstood-waterway/>

<https://forgotten-ny.com/2005/12/lavender-lake-the-gowanus-canal/>

<https://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/digital-exhibitions/a-tour-of-new-netherland/long-island/breuckelen/>

(US dutch heritage)

<https://www.bklynlibrary.org/digitalcollections/items?search=gowanus+canal&q=items&page=2>

Gowanus historical images

<http://gowanuscanal.org/brooklyn%E2%80%99s-forgotten-sustainable-energy-tide-mills>

Contact for possible overview or recording of talk

Sources found and will pursue tomorrow

<http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/arch_reports/922.pdf>

<https://research.library.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1035&context=environ_2015>

<https://www.proteusgowanus.org/proteus-gowanus-archive/hall-of-the-gowanus/index.html>

<http://tidemillinstitute.org/Portal/docs/NY%20Brooklyn%20Gowanus%20Brouwer's%20Mill%2005.pdf>

Main dutch tide mill history